REVITALIZING AN INDIGENOUS MUSICAL TRADITION: A STUDY OF KORANKYE'S APPROACH TO SUSTAINING THE *SEPEREWA* MUSICAL TRADITION

By

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Declaration

I, PAPA KOW MENSAH AGYEFI, declare that this work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: Signed by candidate

Date:23rd January 2021

Dedication

To all well-wishers of the Ghanaian music industry

Abstract

The Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) convention of UNESCO is arguably the most powerful institutional voice in the field of conserving cultural practices on an international level. This initiative and other initiatives of UNESCO have become prominent guidelines and blueprints in international, national, and local policies since the Declarations of Masterpieces in 2001, 2003 and 2005 and the highly successful 2003 ICH Convention. There is a steadily increasing body of research on music cultures and their sustainability. Basically, sustainability is a set of mechanisms and acts in place in order to prevent humans from the destruction of resources in order to maintain an equilibrium that does not cause the quality of life of communities to decrease. However, there have been various contentions by many scholars as to what we mean by sustaining a musical tradition or culture. Scholars like Bell Yung (2009), Jeff Titon (2009), Baron Beardslee (2014) and others have argued that the romanticizing of these initiatives by UNESCO is not the best method as the initiatives themselves appear to have done more harm to cultural heritage than good. They suggest that other approaches should be explored to investigate the best ways to manage cultural heritage.

It is in this vein that my research examines the role of Osei Kwame Korankye, one of the exponents of the *seperewa* tradition in Ghana, in sustaining the musical instrument and its tradition today. It explores his approach and how he uses multiple techniques in achieving this goal. I focus on his efforts as a *seperewa* player and a teacher of the instrument at the University of Ghana. Korankye's desire is to create and revitalize people's interests in the instrument and its praxis. He has taught the techniques of the instrument to foreigners and locals alike since 1994 when Professor J.H. Kwabena Nketia realized his importance as a cultural repository.

Framed within the theoretical orientation of the capability approach, which seeks ways to enhance and understand possible range of choices, and the abilities of individuals as well as communities, I discuss ways in which Korankye's method leads to an intervention that addresses the sustenance of the *seperewa*. I argue that Korankye's model of sustaining the *seperewa* tradition is oriented towards the adaptation of music traditions to new performance contexts and teaching environments, hence he offers cultural communities a range of options to choose from rather than an imposed singular methodology.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1. Introduction

I have always been intrigued by indigenous knowledge systems to the extent that I desired to quit formal education after high school and train under a traditional healer in order to learn the conceptualizations and philosophies around traditional herbs and healing. This initial interest was transferred towards something else after my father convinced me to continue with school. I enrolled at the university to study Sociology, Social Work, and Music. I started out in Music as a classical piano student, but I soon felt a dwindling of interest in classical music. I then redirected my focus to Ghanaian traditional music and its instruments, learning to play the *atenteben*, a bamboo flute and the *seperewa*, a traditional harp lute, with a family likeness to the Mande kora.

After a while, I began to sense how bleak people's expressions were towards the music culture I was pursuing. I felt this way because of stereotypical comments from friends and other people close by, as well as reasons I was yet to find out. This realization almost made me lose interest in engaging with these indigenous instruments and traditions. My interest and curiosity, however, urged me to continue because I saw, furthermore, that national functions and commercials in Ghana employed these same indigenous materials and performances. Hence, I endeavoured to find out why national functions employed indigenous materials, in the wake of the stereotypical attitudes from the general citizenry. I initially convinced myself with the hypothesis that the employment of these traditional elements was a positive decision to provoke people's nostalgia or to portray Ghanaian cultural heritage. I employ nostalgia in this sense because history makes us understand that Ghanaian and other African communities had their way of life, which was indigenous, until the abrupt disruption by European culture. The impression from these traditional players was essentially what drove me in this work, and this motivation serves as the foundation for my argument.. I then began to question the general perception Ghanaians had concerning their traditional instruments and practices to know why a greater percentage of the population would not take seriously anything traditional, but the government and other reputable organizations employed these for 'special' functions. I use 'special' in this case to show how traditional indigenous practices were and still are not employed in the generic day-to-day activities of the citizens, yet these practices dominate annual and occasional activities.

It was in this mission to understand the Ghanaian perception about indigenous praxes that I found and became interested in the work of Osei Kwame Korankye, a teacher and player of the *seperewa*, who

was mostly called upon to perform at national and special functions. Korankye became my *seperewa* teacher and was willing to teach me at no cost when I expressed interest in the *seperewa.* This was because few people and students at the Department of Music were interested in traditional musical practices. Korankye was willing to teach anyone who showed interest in the *seperewa* because the treatment he and his colleagues in traditional music received from people in Ghana was not encouraging enough. He told me that if his generation did not pass on what they knew to the younger ones, there would be nobody to continue the legacy they had built. I also found out that Korankye had been working on reviving the interest of people in the *seperewa* and its related music for some time, and that latter revelation sparked my interest in focusing rather on the reception and attitude of contemporary Ghanaians towards Korankye's work.

This thesis attempts to find out what Korankye has gone through in reviving and sustaining this musical tradition, the reception he has received for the duration of this quest and how positive these finds will be, in national and global discourses concerning cultural sustainability. This work continues to discuss how the recent discourses in academia about culture and musical traditions have taken the form of sustainability and safeguarding as well as revitalization after the declarations by UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) on tangible and intangible cultural heritages as was shown in Grant's (2016, 27) submission. This shift, or awakening, which is traced back to the UNESCO Declarations of Masterpieces in 2001, 2003, and 2005 and the highly successful 2003 ICH Convention, has focused initiatives across the globe on revitalization and sustainability of traditions bringing to the fore relatively new concepts and theories for enquiry and analysis. It must be noted, however, that the concept of sustainability had been ongoing within societies and communities, through government organizations, NGOs, and other activists albeit on a relatively smaller scale before the UNESCO declarations (see Bruinders 2012, Britz 2019, Cooley 2019).

It is indeed a truism that East Asia has a long history of setting up a mixture of preservation and promotion strategies which were used to counter loss of indigenous musical and other cultural forms (Hafstein 2004, Howard 2012). Mention could be made of initiatives in Japan, China, and Korea as they have long established programmes and initiatives to curate and preserve the musical traditions and artefacts that seemed to be endangered (Mengoni and Matsuda, 2016). The paradigm shift for concerned individuals, communities, and agencies, however, had much to do with UNESCO, notably with its appointment of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2001, 2003 and 2005, and with the adoption in 2003 of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Beardslee (2014) explains how in each of the three masterpiece rounds, China, Korea, and Japan featured as contributing countries. The 2001 masterpieces featured traditions from Asia including the Chinese *kunqu* opera, Korean Chongmyo *cheryeak* and Japanese Nogaku theatre. In 2003, also from Asia, there were Chinese *guqin* zither music, Korean *p'ansori* and Japanese bunraku puppet theatre and in 2005, Korean *Gangreung Danoje*, Japanese kabuki theatre and Uyghur *muqam* melodic and modal system were also featured in the 43 Masterpieces that were proclaimed. All these traditions have musical elements, and this shows that East Asian initiatives for sustaining musical traditions have been fairly successful. The UAE, Australia, the US, and countries in Africa like Ghana and Mozambique have had their own government, institutional, community and other initiatives that worked towards the direction of sustainability before the declarations by UNESCO (see The Burra Charter, 2006 and Sindelar, 2017).

Mention can be made of community initiatives like the Philadelphia Folklore Project, which works to sustain vital and diverse living cultural and artistic practices in the Philadelphia region since 1987, and there are recorded successes since its inception. Rooted in the histories, traditions, and everyday lives of the people of Philadelphia, all of their public programmes aim to increase respect for, understanding of, and access to local grassroots arts and humanities through organizing public events, performances, school residencies, workshops, exhibitions, and other educational efforts (Philadelphia Folklore Project, 2016). The Smithsonian Institute, which was founded in 1846 can also be mentioned in this regard as it is said to be the world's largest museum, education, and research complex, with 19 museums and a national zoo. The institution seeks to shape the future by preserving the heritage of some American and other traditions, discover new knowledge, and share its resources with the world (Smithsonian, 2020).

The Australian Institute for Conservation of Cultural Materials, the ICAMD (International Centre for African Music and Dance) established by Nketia at the University of Ghana and many others from different regions can be mentioned in that regard (J.H.K Nketia Archives). Hugh Tracey is another person who has contributed to the survival of African music cultures. He founded the ILAM (International Library of African Musics), which is one of the world's great repositories of African music. Hugh Travers Tracey was an English ethnomusicologist who lived from 29 January 1903 to 23 October 1977. He and his wife documented and archived Southern and Central African songs. Tracey made over 35,000 recordings of African folk music from the 1920s to the 1970s. ILAM is a research institute dedicated to the study of African music and oral arts, preserving thousands of historical recordings dating back to 1929 and supporting current fieldwork. The bulk of its collections have been digitized and are available on its website.

Communities across Africa also have festivals and annual programmes, which seek to reinstate traditional practices and remind the citizens of their heritage and to build nationalism, a sense of 'who we are' when we get together as a state (see Akuupa, 2011) . Individuals like J. H. K Nketia and Daniel Amponsah (popularly known as Koo Nimo) from Ghana have been passionately involved in cultural preservation and development from two standpoints. I choose to restrict myself to these two men because they are very much connected to my work. That said, I would like to reiterate that there are records of other musicians and scholars who have made efforts to preserve musical and other cultural traditions in Ghana. Nketia was a scholar who set up an archive for local traditions at the University of Ghana in 1992 whereas Koo Nimo is a palm wine guitarist who performs and composes music incorporating local elements to showcase the almost forgotten cultural heritage of the Akans of Ghana. In some major cities in Ghana, there are museums of art and centres for the teaching and cultivation of drumming and dancing where teachers voluntarily participate in these projects as part of their moral and cultural duties and for the sake of posterity. People such as office clerks and even some politicians attend classes in these projects after working hours to improve their drumming and dancing and other artistic cultural skills. There are, as Nketia (1959, 35) notes, "certain things which the people of Ghana wish to preserve, things which they value. They do this firstly through museums and archives, and secondly by giving recognition to cultural activities and ensuring that they were passed on to others. Education and other methods are used both for the preservation of existing forms and for giving guidance to future practices."

There is, on the other hand, a growing amount of literature that question these interventional initiatives, relating to ethics, commodification, and the like, about the approaches employed by these agencies and which ones will be in the best interests of the communities and traditions under discussion. Many scholars have argued that the UNESCO model and other top-down approaches are problematic and hence need to be reconsidered as some have suggested different approaches to the preservation, conservation and safeguarding of these 'dying' traditions in order to realize positive results (Titon 2009, Howard 2012, Cooley 2019). Monetary or financial influence tend to affect the intervention of sustainability acts or initiatives and this approach has proven to be problematic in recent years because it tends to eliminate the contextual importance of the whole initiative and commodifies the traditions in question.

Yung (2009) argues that the declaration by UNESCO changed more than it preserved, and this is what Titon (2009, 121) refers to when he suggests that the initiative, no matter how positive the intentions are, may have unintended consequences. Titon continues to critique the UNESCO safeguarding regime's failure to see the practices that it addresses in its list and declarations as elements in a larger,

interconnected ecosystem (Titon 2009, 124). The liability seems to lie not in the idea that practices are being preserved but rather in the unenlightened methods like the top-down approach that UNESCO uses to achieve this goal. Beardslee (2014, 5) posits that "[I]nterventions to aid the continuation of tradition,…might work if only better methods and a more holistic orientation were found". He also argues that preservation of practices is not the right goal to pursue in our applied work, however defined or executed because the whole concept of preservation is taking a problematic turn and that at the core, these practices contain flawed concepts that make them unsuitable bases and frameworks for intervention. He argues that "[i]n short, heritage is something that is built, and the products of the 'building' of intangible heritage – the festivals, workshops, books, films, archives, inventories, plaques, and exhibits – exist in a certain relationship with their objects but are not the same thing as those objects".

Beardslee continues to mention a disjuncture between 'heritage' as used by UNESCO in its materials and the actual practice of heritage safeguarding, he defines as "a process that is an act of creating something new rather than finding something old." He also explains that "[t]he paucity of written sources about a place, population, or practice (and the wilful ignorance of some that do exist) allows the casting-back of a present-day state of affairs into the past, allowing things that are occurring now (and are the products of and reactions to the same modern world to which they are presented as antithesis) to be regarded as ancient, timeless, and unchanging" (Beardslee 2014, 204-207). Nketia's speech in 1963 at the Institute of African Studies Convocation, quoted in Harper and Opoku-Boateng (2019, 76) posited that "We believe…that the arts must develop and that the study of African traditions should inspire creative experiments in the African idiom". This statement tends to support the points about the preservation of cultures raised above. Nketia, in essence, managed to secure funding for an archive in the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana and that initiative has yielded some benefits, giving resources and information to current researchers, and concerned Ghanaians who wish to know their past and make informed decisions on forging a way forward.

Nketia intended to explore and conserve as many Ghanaian traditions as possible, which might be related to a number of other sustainability programmes. Nketia focused not only on inanimate material preservation but also on human archives through which he employed Korankye first as his personal assistant in his institute. Korankye later moved to the Department of Music at the University of Ghana to teach the *seperewa* to students and people interested in the tradition. It is in this light that this work seeks to interrogate the approaches and methods employed by Korankye in revitalizing the appreciation for the *seperewa* musical tradition in Ghana.

According to established narratives from researchers like Nketia (1994), and others, the early parts of the 18th century saw the founder of the Ashanti kingdom, *Otumfo* Osei Tutu capture the *seperewa*, a traditional harp lute, with its player after a war between the Gyamans of present-day Cote D'Ivoire and the Ashantis of present-day Ghana. Albeit a smaller version, the *seperewa* is similar to the West African bridge-harp, the kora. The older versions of the *seperewa* had six strings but newer ones may have up to 14 strings. The Ashanti king is said to have loved the music of the *seperewa* so much that his successor had the instrument covered in gold and kept it in Kumasi (the capital city of the Ashanti region) among his royal holdings. There is no evidence that the Ashanti king restricted the usage of the instrument by the public, hence *seperewa* was eventually adopted and used by common citizens. The *seperewa* was adopted into non-court village life and became an important part of group singing and storytelling traditions. The instrument was played in unplanned gatherings, as musicians would sing proverbial, praise, and play songs among others, which had themes centred on concepts of struggle, love, and death experienced by the musician himself or his listeners. These narratives and oral tradition paint the picture that the usage of the *seperewa* played a major role through the ages, yet little research and academic work of any significance have been conducted on the instrument and its music.

It is noteworthy, however, that colonial travellers, explorers, government officials, and missionaries such as Bowdich (1819), Beecham (1841) and Brodie (1853) among others, have all documented the existence of the *seperew*a dating as far back as the 17th century in the Gold Coast. Not much has been written about the instrument by these colonial travellers, hence, this work will explore the history from recent writings. *Seperewa* is known for its function in the courts of the chiefs, for traditional entertainment and communication of ideas among the Akan people of Ghana. Korankye, my main consultant in this work, explained that the *se-pere-wa* as I have divided it, is a result of the speech-imitating characteristic of the instrument. '*Se*' means to speak, '*pere*' means to touch or pluck, and '*wa*' is a diminutive suffix, which literally means small. Inferring from the above explanation, the name of the instrument can be explained as, this small instrument speaks when you pluck or touch it. Korankye is known as one of Ghana's foremost *seperewa* players and he has done a great deal to re-popularize the *seperewa* by teaching in institutions like the University of Ghana and the University of Education Winneba, collaborating with highlife musicians, performing at national events and other functions. Korankye says, like the Ashanti *atumpan* drums, the *seperewa* is basically capable of speaking by imitating the Twi language's tonal contours.

The *seperewa* player can recite proverbs, praises, and appellations in this manner, by sync-singing with the *seperewa,* something like scat singing in jazz. At the same time, in a declamatory, quasi-

recitative fashion, the *seperewa* player may also sing as he delivers praises or proverbs and recites appellations. Because it is not as popular as the traditional musicians expected it to be in contemporary Ghana, people (of which I was a typical example) who come across a *seperewa* performance marvel at its unique style, as they are able to relate to the speech surrogacy, a cultural characteristic in Akan. This is common with some instruments in Ghana but not common with the string instruments. Therefore, and for many other reasons, Korankye, a player and teacher of the *seperewa* and its musical style, says he has devoted his life career to the revitalization and revamping of the tradition.

In an informal interview[1] with Korankye in 2017, he mentioned to me that he has embarked on this quest to revive the rather endangered instrument and its tradition by exposing and teaching the instrument to foreigners and contemporary Ghanaians. He has travelled extensively within Ghana and abroad for performances and workshops as well as recording collaborations with other musicians, in his efforts to revitalize the reception for this instrument and its traditions. Only a few had come into contact with the *seperewa* due to reasons I am yet to understand. The *seperewa* was almost extinct as far as performance and audience are concerned until Korankye dedicated his life's career to sustaining this musical instrument and its traditions by exposing it to the contemporary Ghanaian community and parts of the world. This study will interrogate the work of Korankye and his efforts to revive the *seperewa* and its musical praxis to understand his approach and how successful (or not) he has been. The methods he has employed in his quest, its successes, and flaws as well as challenges he has faced will be interrogated to situate the findings within the discourse of sustainability.

The general public rhetoric and academic narratives indicate that the introduction of the European guitar and sea shanties by Kru men aboard war ships supplanted (or displaced) the *seperewa* and its repertoire of songs. Harper, quoted on the *Akwaaba* music website in 2016 posits that "it goes to show that the instrument, once widely played in Ghana's Ashanti region, has faded from public memory after being replaced by the guitar in the early 20th century."

The preliminary findings of this research revealed that whatever the cause for the disappearance of some cultural elements of society, especially traditional rudimentary practices, there was always another part of society's members who still wanted to connect with or saw relevance in what was disappearing or being disappeared. This is visible at state and other important occasions where Korankye and other indigenous musicians were invited to play as curtain raisers or praise singers. The only issue that concerned me with this situation is that the interventions to revisit the old traditions or otherwise, which results in the employment of indigenous musicians in state functions and highly

[1] This interview was in 2017 when I was still in Ghana and learning to play the seperewa with Korankye. We engaged in many discussions before I settled on researching him and his initiatives of reviving the seperewa.

ranked commercials have not been sufficient. The employment of these traditional elements, as I hypothesized initially, cannot specifically be categorized as an intentional decision to provoke people's nostalgia or to portray Ghanaian cultural heritage. This hypothesis is proven in this work as not entirely true. This is one of the reasons why I chose to investigate the case of the *seperewa* of Ghana championed by Korankye. Secondly, Korankye has been successful in setting up a seperewa *ensemble* at the University of Education in Winneba, where performance is eventually igniting interests of students and some community members in the instrument and other traditional praxes. Therefore, it appears that his technique is a useful one from which we might learn.

After reflecting on the history of the *seperewa* and the evolution of Ghanaian popular music assessing the friction between the employment of traditional musical elements and 'modernization', I consider the significance of reincorporating traditional elements into contemporary Ghanaian music. I then reassess the common current narrative of the nation's loss of cultural identity as disproportionately attributed to the upcoming generation of musicians, cultural stakeholders, and the general citizenry. I continue with a contextual sketch of the life and work of Korankye, who makes, sells, teaches, and performs *seperewa* music in Ghana and beyond.

This study presents an opportunity to begin asking, how receptive Ghanaians are towards revitalization initiatives by cultural bearers, especially with regard to the *seperewa* and Korankye.

1.2. Problem Statement

Scholars like Erlmann (1999) and Turino (2003) have posited that the rapid changes in the world fuelled by new technology and globalization (what I call the globalization effect) have had diverse effects on the musics of various groups of people who consider themselves bound by ties like geographical location, common histories and so forth. Turino (2003, 53), agrees that there are cultural exchanges occurring in different levels but does not agree with the generic term 'globalization'. He contends that "the terms global and globalization are increasingly being indexically tied to one particular programme - the expansion of capitalist cosmopolitanism". It is the cultural exchange factors of his argument that I capitalize on. The globalization effect, however, has opened possibilities for musical traditions to travel miles beyond their places of origin; something that was not possible some years ago, giving opportunities to some traditions to thrive while others disappear. Schippers (2016, 3) builds on this idea when discussing the notion of sustainability and explicitly notes, drawing inspiration from Seeger's argument in the UNESCO Masterpieces of Tangible Cultural Heritage project, that the disappearing of some musical cultures is not natural, but being sabotaged or

disappeared by some human forces. Some of these forces include religious forces, copyright, and legislation (in general terms, policies, and laws), majority 'cultural' groups, infrastructural challenges, and socio-economic changes, amongst others. This ideology that some musical traditions are being disappeared whether intentionally or not has resulted in external forces like UNESCO, NGOs and government organizations stepping in to intervene on behalf of these minority groups and traditions, which are being affected by globalization with the assumption that communities of these minority traditions are powerless in these cases.

I, hence, raise a subtle but important question in this situation channelling it to the interests of the communities under discussion. Are these 'interventional sustainability actions' in the interests of the communities, or do these external agencies impose them on the communities, thinking they are positive acts of salvaging and preserving diversity? Schippers (2016, 26) notes that "[T]o contribute to sustainable futures (in a way that provides sufficient basis for the actual survival of musical practices as part of an unbroken, living tradition) there is the need for musical practices to be examined in their contemporary global context in collaboration with the communities themselves." I also ask what activists and organisations mean when they talk about sustainability of a musical tradition? It is indeed common knowledge that musical practices and traditions in general include beliefs of various groups of people and hence must be protected to preserve the very essences and fundamental sacred values and cosmologies of the groups. It must also be noted that historical events, beliefs, and origins of groups are embedded in their traditions and hence various efforts need to be put in place to conserve such holdings of these groups. It is out of this ideology that I argue that sustainability in its entirety is important, just as the Brundtland Commission in 1987 defined this concept as, "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs […]. In essence, sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations" (quoted in the German Almanac of Sustainability 2017). Notwithstanding, do activists mean to salvage the loss of certain practice of ethnic groups, assuming they have no idea how and why they have to preserve their own traditions? Are preservation and sustainability initiatives community-oriented or are they utilised for personal and institutional gains?

Another sensitive and inherent question I want to explore is the reasons why communities seem to accept initiatives of sustainability from agencies or organizations with higher cultural authority and reject initiatives from lower ranked bodies like individual activists? Could it be for financial benefit or

is it that the higher ranked bodies might define the logic behind these initiatives better than the lower ranked bodies? I refer here to how UNESCO has managed to put together some world heritage lists for preservation, but individual applied ethnomusicologists and activists interested in sustaining musical traditions like Korankye will have to struggle hard to gain acceptance or, worst-case scenario, give up. One example concerns the efforts of Eric Sunu-Doe, a PhD student at University of KwaZulu Natal, whose aim has been to revitalize palm wine music of Ghana for three years now. He was alone in this initiative, not getting anywhere, until he gained the attention of the BBC and the University of Ghana. Since then, three different successful bands have arisen from his initiative. My concern is, why were his efforts ignored until he caught the attention of higher agencies? These are part of a set of questions, which I interrogate to understand the logic of sustainability and the entire upsurge in the sustainability of musical practices, especially of communities that might want to just move on with life and embrace modified cultural practices which appear as new practices. I use this set of questions to address the case of *seperewa* musical traditions from Ghana (specifically *Akan*) and the reception of Korankye over the years, since he embarked upon the quest to promote the instrument in 1994. In my view, these initiatives appear to not have been received well after 26 years of implementation and action. There could be internal or external reasons, which are acting against Korankye's initiatives and therefore this project is designed to interrogate the holistic approach Korankye employs in order to better understand the situation.

1.3. Objectives of Study

The work seeks to find out the following:

- How has Korankye's efforts in preserving the *seperewa* musical tradition in Ghana affected the reception of the instrument in Ghana?
- Which methods, as learnt from Korankye's case, can sustainability agencies apply in their initiatives towards revitalising indigenous culture?

1.4. Significance

I use Amartya Sen's (1999) capability approach, which he proposes as an alternative approach in welfare economics, to unpack this case study. The capability approach suggests that the well-being of a person is measured not by their absolute or partial happiness, or by their quantified access to a given

collection of products or monetary profits, but rather by the substantive freedoms or capabilities of choosing a life that the individual has reason to value. In using this theory to explore this Ghanaian initiative towards sustaining the *seperewa* and its repertoire, not only do I contribute to the scant literature on *seperewa* music and the socio-political environment within which the music evolved, but I also demonstrate the concept's worth as an alternative to normative sustainability and revival programs that turn out to be cultural imperialism, as several academics have examined. Furthermore, I build on evidence from the Ghanaian context to understand some concepts and issues in the discourse of sustainability. This work will bring out some of the sociocultural, political, and philosophical underpinnings of sustainability quests. In that vein, it will add to the body of literature on issues of sustainability in relation to culture and society. It will also build a relatively stronger historical narrative of the *seperewa* musical tradition and discuss how Korankye has managed to revitalize the *seperewa* and its music. Finally, it will give my readers a sense of how receptive the Akan community is towards revival initiatives around certain elements of their own traditions.

1.5. Scope

I focus on Korankye who is a *seperewa* instructor at the university of Ghana, what he has been through in the revitalization of the *seperewa* tradition and how his methods have yielded results over all the years he has embarked on this initiative. His role and purpose as an instructor at the university will all be assessed and evaluated. The work will ultimately assess the approach in this case study towards reviving a musical tradition and how that approach has impacted the Ghanaian musical culture as well as how it can be compared to the UNESCO approach, bringing out the positive and negative effects of Korankye's approach.

1.6. Literature Review and Theoretical Engagement

In this work, I argue that Korankye's model of sustaining the *seperewa* tradition is oriented towards the adaptation of music traditions to new performance contexts and teaching environments, which is to say he offers cultural communities a range of options to choose from rather than an imposed singular methodology. According to Titon (2009, 121) "[d]iversity underlies the philosophy of musical conservation with the view that all musics contribute, actually and potentially, to the adaptational capabilities of humankind. Proclamations of masterpieces by remote agencies, the creation of heritage spaces, and work within musical communities represent different kinds and degrees of culture worker

involvement. Experience, as well as the ecological principle of connectedness, shows that proclamations alone, however well-intentioned, may have unintended consequences that work against safeguarding musical masterpieces." It is with this notion that I posit that instead of imposing what might seem appropriate for communities based on ascribed heritage as argued by many scholars, communities should be empowered and their abilities enhanced to shape their own practices to keep, discard, borrow, and adapt as they choose. The capability approach, developed by Sen (1999) and recently employed by Beardslee (2014) to critique the concept of safeguarding as guided by the declarations of UNESCO, is an appropriate framework for this work.

Beardslee and other scholars, inferring from Sen have contended that the capability approach, as an alternative to the protection of heritage as a basis and starting point for our acts, judges the well-being of an individual not by their absolute or marginal happiness, or by their quantified access to a given collection of goods or monetary profits, but rather by the freedoms or abilities to choose a life that the person has cause to value. Beardslee explains that Sen's emphasis on capabilities, which is the freedom to choose which activities to engage with or not, must be the primary point of focus in any goal of development. The expansion of human freedoms to live the lives they choose to live and not an imposition of what others think might work for them is the basis for this framework. The emphasis of this framework's logic on personal freedoms is what makes it a potentially effective alternative framework rather than the hegemonic frameworks employed by some other agencies and agents of sustainability. Beardslee further posits that "[r]ather than encourage people to accept the importance of a practice (a particular functioning) that we deem appropriate to them based on ascribed cultural identity, we should seek ways to expand their freedoms to take part fully in this process of emergence—to choose for themselves how to participate in and shape their lives, musical or otherwise" (Beardslee 2014, 7). Inherent in this research is the use of Korankye's initiative as a case study to explore factors responsible for the promotion of the interest and capabilities of individuals to engage with cultural elements.

Sen (1999) says the capability approach (CA) assesses the well-being of a person not by their total or marginal satisfaction, or by their quantified access to a defined set of goods or monetary income, but rather by their substantive freedoms or ability to choose a life that a person has reason to value. This is what he advocates that social actors get to use as an alternative to preserving heritage as a framework and starting point for our actions. Applying the capability approach theory to Korankye's intended sustainability initiative towards the *seperewa* is crucial at this point because this merger will help us understand his intentions better. The CA has been extremely influential in development policy and practice of the last few decades, and "Sen's ideas (and the developments of them made by other

thinkers in the field of development) have been instrumental in the formation of the UN's Human Development Index" (Beardslee 2014, 231). Other scholars have, considering the capability approach, discussed topics dealing with ethics, women's rights, and issues of measurement and application. Sen, throughout this work, has challenged commonly held beliefs used in deducing welfare by stating, among other things, that "development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy. Expanding the freedoms that we have reason to value not only makes our lives richer and unfettered, but also allows us to be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with – and influencing—the world in which we live" (Sen 1999,15). "Incomes – or any other type of resources – are seen as an insufficient proxy for well-being because of other conversion factors (social, environmental, personal) that may affect an individual's ability to turn them into the things they wish to be and do" (Robeyns 2008, cited in Beardslee 2014). Korankye's work, as I see it, gives that liberty to the people of Ghana to choose how they would use the *seperewa*. His main motive is to expose people to what seems to be waning and allow them to decide what to do with it. I will examine Korankye's work in the subsequent pages with this mindset.

The seeming decline in cultural and moral sensitivities in the Ghanaian music scene, as was expressed by most of my consultants, can be ascribed to many factors, but most of these factors, as I came to realize, stem from the globalization effect as I referred to earlier in this chapter. It must be noted, however, that many scholars have described borrowing of cultural elements and hybridity, which are results of the globalization effect, as important activities in enhancing musical traditions of groups of people. Nketia (1959) shows that the copying and borrowing of elements from different traditions are not new phenomena as local communities borrowed and added to their cultures as they traded and intermingled with others near and far for centuries. These phenomena however escalated at an alarming rate in the wake of modernization and globalization to the extent that concerned agencies began to put in salvage initiatives to guard the affected traditions. The earlier position of Schippers that there is a need for musical practices to be examined in their contemporary global context in collaboration with the communities themselves in order to enable sustainable futures, brings back the question of how these salvaging initiatives are conceptualized and implemented. Using the UNESCO model as a point of reference, many scholars have contended against several of these initiatives (see Yung 2009 and Titon 2009) whereas some have called for a re-examination of the conceptualisations and implementation of these initiatives in order to realize positive results (Beardslee 2014, Noyes 2006, Hesselink 2004).

However, on the other hand, Oduro–Frimpong (2007), providing an empirical understanding of glocalization investigates the resources Ghanaian hiplife artists' use in creating distinct local musical

cultures. He posits, inferring from writings of Miller (1995), Kraidy (1999, 2001, 2003, 2008) and Murphy (2008), that globalization processes are not threats to local cultures and that the local manifestations of global products do not, in any way, devalue the authenticity of the local. It is clear that musical exchange and borrowing have been happening forever, to the extent that some scholars have argued that there is no pure musical tradition related to any geographical settlement (Titon 2009, Weiss 2014). That is to say a Ghanaian musical tradition will definitely have borrowed elements from different regions due to interactions with people around.

In continuation with the argument about cultural specificity and keeping with the work's initial placement, others have suggested that coming into contact with musical certain sounds and activities will clearly help you tag a musical tradition to a certain African locality. That is, when such musical elements from specific geographical areas are heard, they can be quickly identified and associated with those locations. As said earlier, Deja (2014, 2) addressed regional musical features and claimed that after several years of listening to and collaborating with Malawian musicians, he began to equate minor audible specifics and musical nuances (i.e. a guitar strumming pattern, a drum machine manufacturing technique) with these musical traditions, understanding them to be recognizably Malawian. This finding adds to the controversy because it seems that Ghanaian traditional musicians argue that contemporary music has forgotten Ghanaian music's foundations based on this thinking, that there is a decline in Ghanaian cultural sensitivities in current music.

In previous positions, traditional musicians proposed that Ghanaian cultural components should be incorporated into commercial or popular culture. The core point is that modern musicians are not consciously interacting with history, and that this is so common that Ghanaian cultural components would eventually disappear from popular music. Concurrently, Nketia (1959) asserts that there is a "danger of the older form of folk music being discarded by literate and urbanised Ghanaians as Ghana becomes more and more "industrialised." This is a pending situation which the traditional musicians tend to fight against. Korankye's efforts, hence, are based on the idea that contemporary Ghanaian music is gradually lacking indigenous Ghanaian elements which Nketia, on the other hand also adds, that "Nationalism is cultivating a new pride in Ghanaian folk music as a result of which, attempts are being made in the world to conserve or promote the tradition of the best of the older style of folk music" (ibid). With all of this information at my disposal, I prefer to contend that things are not all "doom and gloom". Culture is universally accepted to not be static and therefore Ghanaian music culture evolves, but the elderly generation still complains about contemporary music, as the evolving music appears to be significantly different from what the elderly anticipated.

1.7. Methodology: Data Collection and Processing

In this work, I ascribed to an approach that helped me explore and understand the ways my research participants view the issue of loss of culture in Ghana. I was looking for answers to general questions my participants have owing to what they face in the musical field, these answers were based on data collected in their setting. The data analysis was, hence, inductively built from personal experiences of my participants to broad themes which could be linked to situations in the musical field in Ghana. The final written report has a flexible structure, combining the research participants' experiences, audience expectations, government influences and the researcher's personal experiences. This was an inductive style which sought to focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation. Preliminary findings were based on data from social media and personal experiences as well as informal interviews I conducted. From November 2019 to January 2020, I collaborated with seven participants who were well-versed in classical Ghanaian and Akan tribal songs. These participants were John Collins (an ethnomusicologist and lecturer at the University of Ghana who has written much about Ghanaian highlife and its evolution), Osei Korankye, Baffuor Kyerematen (player of Ashanti traditional instruments and lecturer at the University of Ghana), Aaron Sukura Bebe (Xylophone player and lecturer at the University of Ghana), O.B. Safo Kantanka (a link to researchers and Ashanti Chiefs at Manhyia Palace), Justice Brobbey (Director of the Manhyia Palace Museum), and Daniel Amponsah (Koo Nimo, a palmwine musician and resident scholar in Kumasi). I also collaborated with a few students, mainly from the University of Ghana, as well as some general community members who possessed cultural awareness. Musicians from the groups and other young people were also engaged to learn about current musical tastes. I arranged interviews with my interlocutors, participated in general group music life to understand the role of the seperewa and other indigenous musical elements in it, and filmed some musical events and cultural meetings for study using audio and visual media. Korankye's revitalization initiative is what is under investigation. I scheduled interviews with him to better understand what his ultimate motive has been all these years, which approaches he employs to get the desired results and how these approaches have yielded results over the years. I spent time with him during his lessons with some of his students and attended some of his performances. The time spent during his lessons informed me on how he transfers knowledge to his students and personal assessments were made of the ways in which he organizes his teaching sessions. At his performances, I had the opportunity to assess his delivery, the themes he explored and how audiences responded to him. I also searched through the news and other media platforms to assess attitudes and responses to his initiatives. During these times, I was able to assess the availability of infrastructure and the contexts of performance, and how these affect the initiatives of Korankye. All

these activities informed me, as to how individuals, the Akan and the broader Ghanaian community receive these initiatives.

John Collins is an ethnomusicologist at the University of Ghana. Collins is also a guitarist who has worked, recorded, and played with a number of Ghanaian and Nigerian bands including E. T. Mensah, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Koo Nimo, Kwaa Mensah, Victor Uwaifo, and a whole lot. He has written extensively on Ghanaian highlife music and its evolution. His knowledge of the dynamics of the music scene and Korankye's work were sought.

Aaron Bebe and Baffuor Kyerematen, instructors and *seperewa* players at the University of Ghana's Department of Music, have performed with various bands featuring the *seperewa* across the country while playing their own specialized instruments. These are different contexts of performances as compared to Korankye's contexts, as they play with contemporary bands while Korankye plays as a solo performer. Bebe mostly plays the xylophone from the Northern region of Ghana whereas Baffuor plays many traditional instruments but specializes in the Ashanti traditional drums, hence they are also traditional performers in the music business. I scheduled meetings with Bebe and Baffuor to discuss their views on the current stance of the *seperewa* in contemporary Ghanaian music and their viewpoints on the sustainability quest of Korankye. Times spent with Bebe and Baffuor were informative about the traditional musical scene and how it affected Korankye's initiatives.

I met with Daniel Amponsah (popularly known as Koo Nimo), a palm wine musician, who is well endowed with information on Ghanaian traditional music cultures. He performed with Korankye on many platforms across the globe. He is a palm wine guitarist (the musical tradition that supposedly replaced the *seperewa* tradition) and is still prominent in the Ghanaian popular music scene as he still performs on national and international platforms with his band, sometimes featuring Korankye. The meeting with Koo Nimo was to seek his knowledge and opinion on broader issues of culture and its dynamic nature, how this dynamism can be managed to make the best of culture and if the efforts of Korankye are helping to make *seperewa* tradition relevant in contemporary Ghana. He was pleased that Korankye and the *seperewa* gained the interests of scholars lately.

The *Asantehene's* court could not be left out, as that is the environment where the musical instrument first made contact with Ghanaians. I visited the *Asantehene'*s court and the Kumasi Museum to gather and validate historical accounts of the *seperewa* and its usage amongst the Akan community until it got copied by other people. This visit and the interaction with the traditional gatekeepers made me understand how the instrument travelled from the chief's court to the general citizens.

1.8. Field Experience

In November 2019, I arrived in Accra to begin research for this dissertation. For three months I resided in different provinces of the country and worked with four musicians, three at the University of Ghana's Music Department, and one, Koo Nimo, over two hours, on two different occasions at the Centre for Cultural Studies in the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in the Ashanti region, where he works. I sought people's perception and opinions in a semi-formal structure in my daily discussions with them on the University of Ghana campus. I also worked with a consultant from the court of the Ashanti chief, Opanin Kantanka, and I was taken through the history of the Ashanti kingdom by a tour guide at the Ashanti Museum. Some of the objectives for this research were to build a strong historical narrative for the *seperewa*, investigate the usage and seeming decline from mainstream Ghanaian music and to seek to understand people's perspectives on indigenous musical instruments and traditions. I worked closely with the musicians, spending time with each one in their respective office spaces because most of them were busy outside of office hours either in performances or other family-related activities brought about by the festive season. I had the chance to visit Korankye a few times at his rehearsal and also had a chance to experience one of his performances. Another objective of my research around the Ashanti court was to acquire a better understanding of the traditional music scene, the dominant media for distribution and how the traditional musicians fit into this context. I only had the chance to attend one national event, Ghana University Students' Association games, which employed many traditional performances. I also monitored music channels on television and radio to get a general feel for the musical tastes of the citizens. The issues traditional musicians took up with contemporary musicians, the media and other musically or culturally authoritative organizations were palpable, and the path toward understanding the dynamics and issues involved, required my own subjective (re)assessment.

1.9. Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into four chapters; the first chapter introduces the reader to the foundation and framework of the thesis, the second chapter traces the historical narratives around the emergence of the *seperewa* on Ghanaian soil, specifically in the Akan (Ashanti) traditional area. This establishes the background and beginnings of the instrument in Ghana and what it came to be used for, how it was used and why it was used. This chapter also explores any semblance of the Akan culture in the Seychelles, which contributes to a university research project and it gives us a sense of the kind of

agency Akan traditions might have wielded in the early parts of the twentieth century in the lands around the Indian Ocean. I hone in on the sustainability practices of Korankye, in the third chapter to interrogate who he is, why and how he is trying to sustain the musical instrument and its tradition and how his approach deals with issues of sustainability. In the fourth chapter I conclude my findings and make suggestions for future research in this area.

CHAPTER TWO

2. GHANAIAN MUSICAL SCENE: PAST AND PRESENT

2.1. Introduction

This chapter briefly charts the historical evolution of what came to be known as Ghanaian music. I trace this music from the pre-colonial era, highlighting the dominance of indigenous practices from earlier times until contact with Europe; *seperewa* and its music being the main focus. I use the term Ghanaian music in this thesis to refer to most forms of musical genres in Ghana (Hiplife, Highlife, Afro-Pop and other musical genres) whereas I use the term Ghanaian traditional music to refer to indigenous genres, untainted by modernity. In academic writing, the discussion of Ghanaian traditional music largely draws from the southern part of Ghana. I will discuss how Ghanaian musicians responded to contact with European culture, traditions, and exposure to the usage of European instruments. How traditional practices evolved and what is described as an urgent need for an intensification or re-visitation of these practices, as in what Korankye is doing with the *seperewa,* is also discussed. Korankye and some of the research consultants have complained of a decline in indigenous knowledge and practices in Ghana, they see this situation as a result of the current generation's overdependence on foreign cultural elements, which they perceive as threats to indigenous practices. I will also hint at the possible transfer of Ghanaian traditional music from the Ashanti kingdom to the Seychelles Island at the turn of the twentieth century. The aim in this chapter, is to take readers through situational happenings in the Ghanaian musical scene, how it has been managed so far and its repercussions. The aim, however, throughout this thesis is to explore alternative methods of preserving cultural heritages around the world, focussing on Korankye's *seperewa* initiative.

2.2. Precursors to the *Seperewa* Musical Tradition

Scholars and historians talk about the pre-colonial musical landscape of the Gold Coast region (the geographical area of the country now known as Ghana) and divide it between the north, which is predominantly populated by descendants of people from Gur and Mande-speaking communities, and the south, which consists of areas occupied by descendants of people speaking Kwa languages such as Akan, Ewe and Ga. The musical traditions of the people of the north can be traced back to the Sahelian musical traditions, as they are thought to have links to the Sahel's ancient kingdoms. Opanin Kantanka,

my correspondent from the Ashanti chief's court, explained to me how it is believed that a portion of the Israelites managed to free themselves from ancient Egypt and landed up in present-day Ghana, around 500 AD. Harper (2016) likens an aspect of Ghanaian culture, the *seperewa* of the Ashanti kingdom, to harps of the Sahel, he posits that, "As a fan of the harp traditions of the Sahel and Sahara, the *seperewa* [from Ghana] gave me a way of hearing how these styles had filtered down to the West African coast and been shaped by Akan languages, dances, rhythms, and philosophies" [https://oseikorankye.bandcamp.com/album/seperewa-of-ghana-3mmer3-nhyina-ns3, accessed January 20, 2020]

Kantanka continues that because the migration from Egypt was not a day's journey, they first settled in the Ghana-Mali-Songhai empire regions[2], in the northern parts of Africa, borrowing crafts, cultural elements and even instruments from cultures they came into contact with. As it has already been established, borrowing of cultural elements from people as we continuously interact amongst different cultures is a non-ending phenomenon. They then moved further towards the coast, stopping intermittently and finally settling in the northern part of Ghana, then later moved to the Brong Ahafo region, after which a greater part of them left and went to settle in the present-day Ashanti area called *Adanse* and *Amanse*.

It was in this area that some of them moved on and spread throughout the lower parts of Ghana, even to the coast because of quarrels and the desire for more land and space. The separation continued for a significant amount of time and some people went to settle in present-day Ivory Coast. It was during these periods that power kingdoms started to arise with the first being Denkyira Kingdom in the central region, later the Akwamu Kingdom and others followed. This submission is confirmed by Reindorf (1895) in his historical narrative of the Gold Coast and Ashanti which he based on what he calls traditions and historical facts through a period of about three centuries. An anthropologist, Martin Kwasi Abroquah (2010), has also argued that Ghana's inhabitants are traditionally from Canaan, and were in reality the first group of people to defeat the ancient Egyptians in battle. He substantiates his argument by describing how Jojakyem, the name of one of Judah's kings, was adopted and shortened to Akyem, which is now the name of a town in the eastern region of Ghana.

Opanin Kantanka took me through a series of events that happened with the Akan people who are said to have left Egypt and settled in areas along sub-Saharan Africa, and finally in Ghana. He made me aware that history has it that the people of Akan, originally Canaanites were enslaved in ancient Egypt and managed to free themselves with the help of the Thursday god they used to worship in Egypt. I

[2] This is supposedly where the name Ghana was adopted from, after independence (Conrad, 2010)

have not found any sources supporting these narratives of the Akan migrating from ancient Egypt, so I suggest there could be further investigations into this issue.

Musical characteristics of the people of the northern parts of Ghana incorporate mixtures of vocal melodic compositions on mainly stringed instruments such as the *kologo* lute and the *goje* fiddle, and less often on wind instruments such as flutes and horns with polyrhythms clapped or played on drum sets. Aaron Bebe (personal interview, 2020) describes how *gyil* music, or say music on the xylophone, is also popular in the northern parts Ghana, especially in the north-western parts, which people from Wa and Lawra occupy. Throughout these places too, there is a long history of praise-singing practices, often accompanied by a stringed instrument. Music in northern Ghana is primarily set to a pentatonic scale and its vocal art incorporates melisma in its delivery.

Music in southern Ghana, on the other hand, is mainly associated with social functions and it is mostly served by drums and bells and other percussive instruments. Drumming, especially the talking-drum tradition (*atumpan*), which is distinct from northern drum forms, depicts how music is fundamentally a part of southern community life. Nketia (1959) acknowledges this but adds that there have been exchanges between the North and South that have resulted in new musical realities. According to him (1959, 32), "the Akan (Ashanti, Fante, Akwamu, etc.) *atumpan* (talking) drums are found in many places in Ghana—on the coast (among the Ga), along the Volta (among the Ewe and the Adangme), in the north (among the Dagomba, Mamprusi, Wala and Gonja). The language of the drums … has remained largely Akan in these non-Akan areas. The music of the Akan court—*fontomfrom*, horn music and the music of warrior organisations—will be found in non-Akan areas in southern Ghana, while in Dagomba area the music of Akan warrior organisations has led to the creation of a dance called *kabenwaa* (Asante dance)".

Scholars have recorded historical events in the region of the then Gold Coast, especially in the south, tracing the musical trajectories which took place and how they came to be known as Ghanaian music. In an interview with John Collins, he explained how academics drew from the southern music in thinking and writing about the music of Ghana, these were areas occupied by the Ga, Ewe, and the Akan groups. He added that the reason southern music was popular was probably due to trade and the cocoa business that was very active in the region. He continued that the southern part of Ghana was the place where most activities were happening and groups in the south were connected with economic and social activities. He referred to a historical truce where the guitar was accepted in the Southern parts of Ghana in the 1920s. The cocoa growers in the south, such as Mampong and other locations, had a substantial income and could thus purchase gramophones. All these clues feed into the argument

that life in the southern parts of Ghana was more organized as compared to life in the north where groups of people were sparsely distributed with little connections and exchanges in material and philosophical cultures.

Koo Nimo expressed that the people of the south were also open to innovation, and people could afford guitars, and this, as Collins explained, is the reason why the music of the *seperewa*, which was one of the dominant stringed instruments in the south was transferred to the guitar. Koo Nimo also explained that the people realized that the guitar could play more scales, chords and was louder than the *seperewa*, hence they transferred music from the *seperewa* to the guitar. The guitar, however, did not totally supersede the *seperewa* as the guitar could not be used in traditional ceremonies and functions in place of the *seperewa*. The northern parts of modern Ghana use imports from the south in various ways, such as a variety of modern folk music popularly called dance band highlife, which came from a combination of *seperewa* styles on guitar and European harmonies. It must be noted that highlife had different variants throughout its formation in Ghana, which Collins (1994, xii) names as palmwine, brass band, *konkoma*, guitar band and dance band.

Nketia (1959, 31) points out three types of changes that took place in the music of Ghana, mentioning that the first could be traced to the change resulting from the cumulative effect of the creative efforts of individuals (largely anonymous) or groups of individuals within a given society of a fairly homogenous character. Secondly, he traces some changes to the interaction of such homogenous societies through geographical contiguity facilitating economic or other pursuits, through religion, or in the past, through war. He finally traces changes resulting from the impact of the arrival of Europeans on the African continent, which continues to occur, albeit at a reduced intensity.

In terms of Nketia's (1959) criteria for change and continuity in Akan musical styles, it can be posited that the musical types, their content, or repertoire were modified, or expanded as time went by. Thus, the repertoire of traditional songs involving genealogical references which continue to the present, or references to historical events such as the praise chants of the Dagomba or dirges of the Akan, or *adowa* songs about people, may be built up gradually. Similarly, one finds creative additions being made even in the field of drumming through the formation of new ensembles, re-creations of old ensembles, acquisition of new types of drums, and the creation of new dances. Korankye says it was characteristic of the Akan group that musical genres are set to meet the requirements of the social lives of the people, for recreational events in their daily lives, for various ceremonial occasions, for building solidarity of the society and its internal associations. The Ashanti is one group that has sustained their cultural traditions, adding to the repertoire and style as time went on.

Opanin Kantanka mentions that, in Ghana, the kingdom of Ashanti was the last to be conquered by Europe, about 120 years ago, and that is one of the reasons why the people of Ashanti have still been able to maintain their traditions. He mentions that the people of Ashanti are strong willed and determined, which accounts for the reason some leaders had to be captured and expatriated before they completely submitted to European dominion. According to Opanin Kantanka, one thing that made the Ashanti kingdom powerful in its cultural practices was that the Ashanti never suppressed elements and practices of their subjects after these subjects were captured, mostly through war. They did well to assimilate elements that they found unique and intriguing into the Ashanti culture. The Ashanti people paid special attention to those with extensive cultural knowledge or talent, whether in artifact creation or combat skills, and hired them to produce for the Ashanti empire.

2.3. The Seperewa Story

Figure 1 Image of an antique type of *seperewa* without tuning pegs. Photo credit: wikipedia.org

Figure 1.1 Image of Korankye, playing his modified *seperewa*. This *seperewa* is modified with guitar tuning pegs and increased strings. Photo credit: author

According to Koo Nimo, the people of Bono (Brong Ahafo), Sefwi, Beguri, Gyaaman (Ivory Coast) and Ashanti are notable players of the *seperewa*. It is even a main instrument in the church of *Nkansa*, a local church in some of these areas which employ traditional elements in worship. *Seperewa* is almost disappearing and there is an urgent expression by people, mostly from the older generation, of the necessity to save the situation. Koo Nimo told me that I will find two *seperewa* harps in the Manhyia[3] Museum, which were instituted by Nana Osei Tutu as memorials for the instrument that he loved so much. As covered in the first chapter, Nketia states that the *seperewa* and its player were captured in the 18th century as loot or plunder in a battle between the people known as the Gyamans in Cote D'Ivoire and the Ashantis of Ghana today. The Gyaman tribe, also spelt as Jamang, is said to be part of a medieval Akan nation in Ghana's Bono area which was divided by European fragmentation leaving a part of them in Ghana and the other part in Cote D'Ivoire. The article by Agyemang J.K. et al (2013) titled "The Impact of Colonial Rule on the Gyaman State" discusses how the fragmentation of the African continent by European authorities, during the nineteenth century, led to the territorial split into two or more countries under various European administrations.

The European powers did not take into account the cultural and historical borders of the people of Africa during the partition; Africa being a continent with a diverse range of cultural groups. In West Africa, for example, the split resulted in the presence of certain Nzema people in both Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana. Some people from the Dagarti ethnic group are found in Burkina Faso while others have

[3] Manhyia is the court of the Ashanti Chief, parts of it have been institutionalized, having libraries, museums among others for educational purposes.

stayed in Ghana. Today, Ewes may be found in Ghana, Togo, and Benin, and so forth. The *seperewa* in the hands of the Ashanti was instituted as a court instrument but it gradually became part of non-court village life and became an important part of the singing and storytelling practices of the Akan region, with Ashanti being the dominant group. The instrument was played in unplanned gatherings as musicians, among others, would sing and play love and praise songs that had themes focused on the musicians' or their listeners' conceptions of pain, passion, and death. These narratives and oral tradition paint the image that over the years *seperewa* usage and consumption has played a major role, but I found that little research of significance on the instrument and its music has been carried out.

The *seperewa* was and still is used to recite appellations to the chief, it excites and makes the chief's soul happy even if his spirit is troubled or burdened. This activity continues to be enjoyed within the Ashanti kingdom. The words that are used in the appellations are deeper and have much stronger cultural relevance to the chiefs and other important personalities. That is why the first King of the Ashanti kingdom is believed to have admired it, and the terminologies employed have deeper meanings than usual. The *seperewa* mostly performs as a solo instrument but Koo Nimo and some others have incorporated other instruments in the performance contexts influencing its reception (Beeko 2005, 71). They add the guitar and other traditional instruments like the *prenprensiwa* (lamellophone) and claves. The *seperewa* used to have just six strings which gave it the name, *ahoma nsia* (six strings). According to Nimo, this name is what was used to refer to the guitar after it was introduced into the Akan culture. The strings used in the past were called *dowa,* which were later replaced with nylon guitar strings.

According to Kantanka, *seperewa* is utilized in a variety of situations and is prevalent in village and folk life, as seen by musicians assisting in religious events, entertaining people, and being paid for their services. As mentioned before, the *Nkansa* church in Ghana uses the *seperewa* for church worship activities and has performed in some churches as a way of performing local praises to the creator. I can also speculate that some other musicians, apart from the ones I have mentioned, use it in other worship activities, and lastly, players mostly call on God and other gods whenever they begin to perform. The social aspect is for entertainment of the chiefs, other important dignitaries and for personal entertainment of the musician or his audience. The *seperewa* can be used in important functions where elders gather because it employs a lot of cultural elements, which are presentable even to the president of the nation and players in the Ashanti court come from ascribed families just as in the griot tradition in Gambia and Senegal. The religious aspect of the *seperewa* is located within the sung words, which give reverence to the elders, ancestors, the gods, and God Almighty. The *seperewa* relaxes on the player's lap and requires both hands to pluck the two sets of stacked strings. The strings

come from a convergent point at the back of a wooden box on which lies a stretched animal skin, which serves as a resonating chamber. The resonating chamber supports the bridge that holds the strings in independent positions.

The playing of the *seperewa* for chiefs and dignitaries in public functions made outsiders, who were not necessarily in the *seperewa* players' lineage, adopt the style. The *seperewa* eventually became a general community instrument, now granting access to ordinary players. One could not indulge in some cultural arts in public without permission from the chiefs or those in charge, but that directive changed as well as other directives of cultural prohibitions. People were hence liberated to learn to play the *seperewa* because governance in the whole Gold Coast fell from the hands of the kings. This is how the *seperewa* was introduced to other regions and people adapted the performance, changed the tunings and other aesthetic elements to fit their cultural scales and discernment. Bebe is a player of the Ghanaian xylophone and shares an office with Korankye at University of Ghana. He has learnt to play the *seperewa* and he sometimes tunes it to the pentatonic scale so he can play some of the northern music on it. This diffusion came when the Ashantis lost their power to the Europeans in 1902. The current *seperewa* lineage in the Asantehene's court, however, is still active although the chief of that lineage is dead, and they are scouting for a replacement. Very soon, another person will be enthroned to take care over the affairs of the *seperewa* lineage.

2.4. The Akan String Theory

Some people have defined the *seperewa's* tuning style as a stack of strings on the right and left sides of the *seperewa* with just two chords, a dominant 7th on the right and a dorian or minor 7th on the left, harmonically putting it in the mixolydian mode since it possesses the flattened 7th. In essence, each side of the *seperewa* has two sets of strings, and the general harmonic musical application is as follows: the first note on the right set of strings is doh or C if it is tuned in the key of C. The first note on the left is ray or d, and the rest of the strings are played in that sequence. That means 1 (doh), 3 (mi), 5 (sol), and 7 (ti or taw) will be on the right side set of strings. The left side, on the other hand, will have 2 (reh), 4 (fah), 6 (lah), and 8 (the octave doh). My harmony and counterpoint lecturer, Ken Kafui, once demonstrated his theory in class, attributing the flat 7th of the Akan scale to laziness, that they did not make the effort to reach the major 7th and thus adopted the flat 7th in their scale. I disagree with that because although the Akan scale used a lot of the flat 7th, other recordings show that the *seperewa* may also have a major 7th. This, I believe, is a stylistic characteristic of the musical culture that occurs as a result of the musicians' aesthetic preferences. Korankye helpfully explains how he

utilizes three tunings, the minor (usually dorian mode), the major 7th and the dominant 7th or mixolydian mode. This tuning method, also known as the Akan scale, influenced one guitar style, *yaa amponsah*, which impacted much of the musical repertory that came to make up one component of highlife music. The Kumasi trio was the first to record *Yaa Amponsah* in the early 1930s (see Okantah, Sunu-Doe and Agyefi, 2018). Since then, several musicians have used the single compositional harmony in their songs, transforming *yaa amponsah* into a musical concept that has influenced Ghanaian songwriters of all genres. I maintain that this was a stylistic feature of the instrument and it happened as per the musical taste of the musicians. Korankye explained how he uses three different tunings, the minor (which I found to be mostly the dorian mode), the major 7th and the dominant 7th or mixolydian mode. The *seperewa's* performance contexts and range have also evolved. The *seperewa* was initially employed for praise singing in honour of the Ashanti chiefs, dignitaries, and other important personnel.

Even though the contexts of performance changed from mostly solo performance to band performances, however, Korankye maintains the old context of praise singing and solo recitative style. He occasionally, though infrequently, works with other musicians to play in a band setting. Aaron Bebe, Asa, Kyerematen, and Afro Moses are a few well-known *seperewa* players who play in direct opposition to Korankye's style, fully band setting. As a result, Korankye has increased the instrument's range from one to two octaves which he says has given it a "bonny sound", allowing for fun collaboration with other instruments. Compositions that employ stories and other traditional knowledge and proverbs apparently tend to provoke people to enquire and delve into the past, which eventually reveal some historical facts to them. These are some of the reasons why, I think, Korankye believes that there is a good chance for his style of music to survive in the music industry in Ghana. Nketia, on the other hand, broadening the scope, believes that individual compositions and songs from the general traditional repertory help to sustain the instrument and its tradition to which Korankye agrees. In other words, he suggests that the repository of songs in the general repertory facilitate the sustenance of the instrument and its traditions.

2.5. Akan philosophy, music, and material culture

As already stated above, the original context of the *seperewa* and its music changed when the instrument left the courts of the Ashanti chief and entered community life. Korankye calls *seperewa* music a 'sit down' music, which is to say that audience members have to pay much attention, listen attentively, and contemplate the lyrics. He says most of *seperewa* music does not require the listeners

to be busy with other things because the performer intends to send delicate messages across, a message about sanitation or the environment, a social happening or telling a story with moral lessons and listeners may not even have time to dance because it is like a philosophical presentation by the performer (see Beecham 1841, 71). Koo Nimo also says this is one of the reasons why the *seperewa* style must not be forgotten:

> The style of the *seperewa*, mainly the *odonson*, which translates as 'letting love prevail' gives the performers the opportunity to speak to their listeners in such a manner that provokes the listeners' deep thought. The performer has the opportunity to talk morality in a more provocative way, see now, we are in an era of moral nakedness. The use of these language styles tends to provoke thought and that is what makes the traditional style different from the other recent styles. Imagine saying the maggot was killed by palmwine or the mudfish dies of thirst, these things are not bound to happen under normal circumstances so if they speak like that, it tends to tease a deeper level of thought. (Koo Nimo 2021, personal interview)

He continues to explain how he derived a great deal of his style of playing on the guitar from the *seperewa* style known as *odonson* which applies a lot of arpeggios and the use of simple chords giving the player some room to 'sing' or recite words over the instrumental part. *Odonson* style is the hallmark of Akan music; the audience listens to what the performer says and not what he plays. Nimo says he applies *odonson* in his compositions mainly because of his love for the style and how this style can easily be played on the guitar. The *seperewa* finger-picking style, however, was transferred onto the guitar, first documented in the 1930s (Schmidt 1994, Beecham 1841, 71).

Ampene (2020) shows throughout his book how Ashanti music generally requires its performers to know proverbs, literary usage of language and in-depth knowledge of traditions and customs as well as history because of its delivery, the audience listens to the words and not the instrumentation. Lyrical delivery is more important than the musical nuances and that is the reason, I think, there is an upsurge of concern by the elderly and other patriotic[4] Ghanaians that the customs and traditions need to be revived. Bebe mentioned to me that Professor Emielu, a Nigerian visiting scholar at the University of Ghana Department of Music, explained how awkward he felt at a musical meeting in the United States where non-Africans were trooping in with indigenous African instruments while he, the African, was there without any instrument from his African culture. This is not to say it is compulsory to carry artefacts from your native land wherever you go, but to show how people cherish indigenous cultural elements, especially from Africa. Even though they also have issues about 'dying' traditions, Bebe says most African countries like Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Guinea, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe portray their indigenous cultures and instruments with pride. He says in most performances outside Ghana, he

[4] I use this to refer to the people who hold dear Akan traditions and hope they do not fade away.

sees how people from these countries cherish and adore their indigenous cultural elements. Bebe, however, blames the pioneers of highlife music like ET Mensah, Pat Thomas, Amakye Dede and the rest, who failed to meticulously use traditional and local instruments in their music. Almost all of them explicitly used western instruments like the guitar, saxophone, piano, trumpet, and drum set, with a little touch of the indigenous styles and instruments. Korankye says it is not entirely their fault as they were overwhelmed by novelty and were exploring these novel styles. It is however a truism that whatever people listen to and are exposed to the most, those are what they will be accustomed to so the pioneers could have helped the current generation in that sense. Bebe mentions furthermore that:

"the media also plays a role in this mishap, even today, the media is not helping to promote the traditional instruments, it looks like everyone is concerned about money now and hence, even to get airplay, you have to pay and if you don't have money, your music sits in your room". (personal interview, 2020)

2.6. Contemporary traditions and the essence of the learning approaches of the *seperewa*

Nketia (1994,120) has argued that the cognitive models and generative processes of the *seperewa* is attracting contemporary composers, and this is a continuity of tradition which must be traced to its emergence and possible cultural repercussions. He also mentions that the cognitive models and generative processes are being transferred from generation to generation, which throws some light on why and how contemporary composers are employing the newly modified styles. This revelation, however, was made by Nketia in the latter part of the twentieth century. The position and stance of most of my research participants differ from Nketia's stance and as I have portrayed earlier, my consultants are unable to see what Nketia was saying about contemporary music. This may be because of the perceived massive 'change' they see occurring and their unmet expectations. Opanin Kantanka says he thinks the *seperewa* tradition and its cognitive praxes have faded significantly during these few decades into the 21st century and he posits that the *seperewa* tradition and traditional music generally have failed to make a significant impact in this century. Koo Nimo also expresses what I see as his disappointment in the 'failure' of the current generation to harness the availability of advanced technology in this era to gain and improve upon knowledge and praxes of the past. He told me this story:

I was admitted at the hospital in 2014, a near death experience and I was visited by someone strange in the middle of the night. He said that 'Koo, don't fall sick, Koo God is alive.' So, I prayed to God that I have no say in my existence but if you want me dead, I will die, I just ask for one thing, I have learnt a lot in this life that I cannot just go with them, please give me an extension so I transfer this knowledge to the next generation. I think God heard me that is why I am alive today. I feel there is much to give from the elderly, but I am not aware what is happening in this generation, people have personal interests influenced by the European contact and that is what, I think, affects what they do with what they learn. Sometimes, their actions are also affected by contemporary interests, in that, they tend to follow what the masses accept and hence, are

not ready to dare and challenge the status quo, knowing that something feels displaced. The young people believe in the charm of the unknown and have no time to sit and learn from the elders, that is how knowledge gets lost. There is this story in Akan folktales about Kweku Anansi, where he decided to gather all wisdom of the earth and hide it so he can claim monopoly over wisdom, in his efforts to hide what he had gathered, he decided to climb the tallest tree and hide it there with the pot hanging in front of him, climbing became so difficult and his son, Ntikumah was watching all this while, he advised his father that he must keep the pot behind him so he could climb easily. This did not go down well with Anansi because he thought he had gathered all wisdom in the world, only to realise that his efforts had been in vain, he then got angry and left the pot to hit the ground and scatter throughout the world , hence no community or country can claim monopoly over wisdom. This is why the young ones must learn their part of the wisdom from the older generation. (personal interview, 2021)

Through this story, Koo Nimo is trying to let us understand why he thinks the current generation must make time to learn from the elders. He believes that God made it possible for him to live so he can transfer the knowledge he has gained to the next generation. He continues by chipping in a quotation by Professor Mark Oliver, which says "knowledge is acquired and that is not wisdom, wisdom comes only from the interplay of science and society".

Koo Nimo continues to explain how wisdom plays out in different societies for which reason people can only apply certain types of wisdom in their societies. He explains that societies have different ways of dealing with situations around them and those situations are exclusively for those societies. He seeks to explain that the mechanisms used by one society due to their conditions cannot possibly be employed by another community. An example is the employment of adaptive mechanisms the people of Zimbabwe used to save themselves from flooding; they employ dual season cropping, temporary migration, and structural designs to mitigate the effects on the general population (Chanza 2015, 107). This system could probably not work for any other community; thus Koo Nimo employs this understanding to put more value on indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). In other words, there is wisdom and relevant survival knowledge in the indigenous knowledge systems and some of these are employed in traditional artistic expressions, hence the deliberate or otherwise rejection of IKS will negatively impact future generations.

Opanin Kantanka also took me through a series of events or happenstances that has been said to have facilitated the dwindling of traditional practices, and hence *seperewa* music. He mentions that foreign religion, language, and the whole European encounter affected traditional praxes, which I corroborated with writings from other scholars, which even happened between different ethnic groups before contact with Europe. It is believed that European missionaries attached every African cultural practise to idol worship and that attachment is seen to be part of the reasons why the *seperewa* is fading away. For instance, there were and still are general beliefs that anything relating to chieftaincy employing traditional elements is affiliated to idol worship and hence Christians and Muslims were not encouraged to engage with them. Kantanka says people were excommunicated or suspended for a

while from European institutions if they were found associating with traditional practices. The missionaries had established schools and Ghanaian locals wanted to enjoy the benefits of these institutions, so they chose to listen to them rather than to associate with what the Europeans abhorred – traditional practices. As a result, the general consensus emerged that anything traditional is affiliated to idol worship, so many people chose to dissociate themselves from anything traditional to avoid being tagged idol worshippers and attracting its related sanctions. Besides, the globalization effect, had a negative impact on the traditional practices of Ghana. Kantanka asserts that one of the basic ingredients of any culture is language and so the western language, English, and western culture had a huge effect on the traditional instincts of contemporary Ghanaians.

He says this effect of globalization or modernization, necessitating the writing and speaking of English as the mainstream language, has, in the long run, affected traditional culture. People who manage to have acquired a little bit of education and are able to express themselves in English, French or other European languages attract more social respect than those who are only fluent in local languages and cultural knowledge with little to no knowledge of European languages and customs. The average Ghanaian then developed a habit of seeing people who are deeply traditional as 'bush' people and backward, hence I tread cautiously to say that the system and the resulting effects on the behaviours of the Ghanaian citizens, then, unconsciously suppressed traditional practices and elements. This situation happened in many aspects, such as in instrument choice, dress, accent, and other ways of cultural expression, but things are changing currently, after 63 years of independence in Ghana. Although people are now embracing their Ghanaian culture, my consultants claim the rate of change is slow.

2.7. Tracing the *seperewa* and Ashanti traditional music in the Indian Ocean/Seychelles

This section seeks to contribute to a project called 'Re-Centring Afro Asia: Human and Musical Migrations in the Pre-Colonial Period 700-1500 AD'. As the name of the project suggests, what interested me in this programme is that the aesthetic fields of the Afro-Asian community with the opening up of Africa's contribution to the Southwestern Indian Ocean, has not been explored much. To add to it, scholarship overall has been "Anglocentric" with a vast archive that speaks to Africa's social, political, and cultural past remaining unexplored. This section explores the contribution of the Ashanti Kingdom in the cultural make up of one of the island nations in the Indian Ocean, the Seychelles. Since the Ashanti kingdom shares a history with the *seperewa* in Ghana, especially in the court of the Ashanti Chief, I saw an opportunity to investigate its part in this historical connection.

The Ashanti chief, Nana Prempeh I, was taken captive with about 50 of his cohorts to the Seychelles at the beginning of the twentieth century after their defeat in the last Anglo-Ashanti war. The Ashantis were given a place of abode, apparently called the Ashanti camp, where most of them lived throughout their stay on the island. Their stay was long enough to enable intermingling with indigenes and other political prisoners on the island. This section explores the contributions of the Ashanti kingdom to the cultural makeup of the islands and to find out if the *seperewa* or other musical artefacts were sent to the islands. It will also trace any element of the Ashanti culture that may have influenced the general cultural makeup of the Seychelles. I was unable to do field research due to the global pandemic so I am drawing on the little information I could gather from the Ashanti Court in Ghana, articles about Ashanti in the Seychelles and other online documents to substantiate my claims.

Historical accounts of the Indian Ocean in general portray lands in the ocean as prominent sites for exchange in products of goods and people from different nationalities as a result of trade and slavery. The Indian Ocean predominantly had contact with people from Asia, the West and Africa, but Burton (1980) argues that few cultural traits can be found of the African origin in the islands due to a multiplicity of factors. Some of these factors being the conditions under which the labourers were imported, the difference between slavery arrangements, indenture and so forth. In the same light, arguing for a reconstruction of the history of the musical exchanges in the Indian Ocean, Blench (2014,16) suggests that an "expansion of models of exchange to include a variety of data sources can help construct a richer image of the past".

These highlights suggest that there is a deficit in the whole historical picture of the islands, which submerge some of the contributions of different peoples especially the Africans, who had contact with the islands through the economic exchanges and slave trade. For this reason, there appears to be an urgent need to rectify the deficit in these historical accounts of the islands in the Indian Ocean. Boswell (2008), however, explains the challenges in identifying and managing especially intangible cultural heritage in the islands and posits that there are advances towards tangible heritages because tangible materials are readily visible and identifiable, but that similar advances towards intangible ones have yet to be developed. One major reason she gave for the underdevelopment of intangible heritage identification and management is the multiplicity of ethnic groups and hence, the multiplicity of cultural heritages. She also explains how major ethnic groups in Zanzibar have managed to dominate the minor ones in dominant affairs and the minor ones are mostly of African origins.

It is no different in historical writings on the Seychelles Islands where not much information has been recorded of the Africans, whose contribution to the cultural makeup of the island cannot be over

emphasized. The Seychelles is an archipelago of islands found in the Indian Ocean which served as a prison zone for royal prisoners from across the African continent and this is where my interest lies. It is exactly 122 years ago that Nana Prempeh, the thirteenth king ruler of the Ashanti Kingdom who ruled from March 26, 1888, until his death in 1931, was captured and deported with his alliances to the Seychelles. He did not want to accept the rule of the British Empire over the Ashanti kingdom so there were some altercations between the king and the representative of the British Empire which led to the king's capture and deportation to the Seychelles. He was first sent to the Cape Coast Castle and later moved to Sierra Leone and from there, with his cohorts, to the Seychelles, which at the time had a population of only 19,000 in the early part of the twentieth century. (Meriton-Jean and Uranie, 2015).

The King, Nana Prempeh along with his cohorts, some of whom were his chiefs, his wives and others who were close to him and hold allegiance to him. They were 54 in all initially, but a second batch was deported to join them a short while after they had left. The second batch was led by the queen mother of Ejisu, Nana Yaa Asantewaa. Even though it is common knowledge that the king of the Ashanti kingdom always moved with his linguists, which might include the *seperewa* player who was the praise singer, a list of those who were deported along with him shows that he went with only a few of his linguists. The linguists were also known as *Kwadowmfo/akyeame* (plural of okyeame), which transliterates in some way as verbal artists. Okyeame's role embraces a wide range of tasks, including mediation, legal advocacy, policy troubleshooting and preserving and interpreting the royal past. The most obvious public function of the okyeame, which leads to the common characterization of the profession as that of a linguist, is a major middleman between the king and his counsel. According to Opanin Kantanka and the head curator of the museum in the Ashanti court, the Ashanti camp in the Seychelles made a significant impact in Mahe, the place where most of the Ashanti lived. This impact of the Ashanti presence in Seychelles is also indicated by writings from the Seychelles Ministry for Youth Sports and Culture (n.d) and Adu Boahen (23). The Seychelles Ministry for Sports Youth and Culture newspaper article (2015) takes readers through a series of events what happened from the time the people of Ashanti went to the Seychelles Island until they were given the freedom to go back to Ghana. It begins with an abstract that states that "[d]uring the turbulent days of empire the colony of Seychelles was home to quite a few exiles."

The Seychelles Ministry for Youth, Sports and Culture (2015), citing Tony Mathiot tells the story of the banishment of one particular King whose exiles have had an enduring social impact on the island where he stayed … for twenty-four years. Adu Boahen gave a lecture on the 19th of August in 1972 at the National Cultural Centre in Kumasi, Ashanti Region, during the National Festival of Arts and posited that "[t]he history of a reign full of such historic, dramatic and calamitous events cannot be

dealt with in a single lecture. What I intend to do here today is to treat only one of the episodes mentioned already, namely, what happened to Prempeh and his group during their exile on the Seychelles Islands where they arrived on 11th September 1900 and from where they were not to be repatriated until 1924. I have chosen this particular episode because it is the one that has never been treated by any historian." Adu Boahen takes his readers through the events that led to Prempeh's enstoolment, and also the events that unfolded before their capture, to the Seychelles.

After 24 years on the island, from 1900-1924, the King and his people were finally allowed to go back to Ghana on condition that he would not wield the same amount of power he had before the deportation. His chieftaincy was limited to Kumasi, which was the capital city of the Ashanti Kingdom. A lot had happened within these 24 years: many of the Ashanti people had become settled in the Seychelles, some people, including the king's mother and others, died, and were buried on the island, some had established their families and livelihoods on the island, so they chose to remain behind. Two former chiefs and three of the king's sons had married Seychellois women and established their families, so they continued living on the island. Their stay also meant there was a continuation of intermingling and sharing of cultural beliefs with the original citizens.

Sustainability as is the central theme of this thesis, can be perpetuated in light of transmission, looking at how tradition or cultural traits are transmitted from one area to the other in the activities of the culture bearers. In the light of transmission, I have assessed and analysed online information as much as I can with critical analytical tools of some musical elements of the island, to see how identical these elements are with the original Ashanti cultural elements.

The transmission of cultural elements of groups of people has been ongoing for centuries in almost all cultural areas and the movement of a portion of the people of Ashanti to the Seychelles cannot be left out. The World eBook library on Seychellois music describes the music as that which incorporates multiple influences in a syncretic fashion. It mentions other pan-African genres as part of the influences, but specific mention is not made of music from West Africa or Ashanti music, to be precise. Holidify and other sources on Seychellois music also discuss how the music is rich because of its hybrid nature or elements from different regions. Africa is a major contributor as many political prisoners and freed slaves from Africa ended up settling on the island for various reasons. According to Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (2020):

"[a]fter the creation of the settlement L'Etablissement Du Roi" on Mahe in 1778, the French settlers brought more slaves from Reunion – today still a French department in the Indian Ocean – to establish the foundations of the islands' plantation economy which at that time was cotton and coconut. As from the 1780s, hundreds of slaves kept arriving each year to the shores of Seychelles. They came from West and Central Africa – formerly Zaire – now the Democratic Republic of Congo

– and the south-eastern coast of Africa – Mozambique and Madagascar. In the 1880s hundreds of indentured labourers from Madras, India, arrived to work on the construction of roads. Half of them returned to India and the rest remained in Seychelles where they had children with the Africans and Creoles. Around that same time came the Chinese immigrants from Canton who were involved in commercial trade."

It is indeed true that Seychelles is a country with no specific racial attachment but one with a diverse racial make-up, the SBC news in 2020 states that a person can be "a mix of culture and colours with the influence of Europeans, mainly French and British, together with African and Malagasy slaves, and Indian and Chinese traders". I believe the same can be said about the musical and cultural elements of the Seychelles. One of the means and ways culture is transferred is that the practitioners move with it wherever they go. Inferring from the cultural transfer by its practitioners which has been established above and that the makeup of the Seychelles population is a mix of people from different places, it can also be said that the cultural makeup of the Seychelles island is a mix of different cultures.

There is no written or otherwise recorded evidence that the Ashanti camp was isolated from the mainland Seychelles, the place was only referred to as Ashanti camp, because enslaved Ashanti citizens settled there. The Ashantis were not treated as slaves but as important exiled personalities who had an amount of freedom to live normally, without coercion, hence there was an extraordinary intermingling and exchanging of goods and customs, which cannot be overlooked.

"Settled on Mahe, the largest of the Seychelles Islands, and in the relative comfort of the Le Rocher estate, the Asante exiles were granted an extraordinary degree of freedom in their everyday lives. The Ashantis are said to have celebrated births and deaths in the Asante fashion, observed the Adae in honour of their ancestors, cultivated farms, and found continued utility in Asante medicine" (Acheampong 2017).

Opanin Kantanka also presented the Ashantis as a people who do not take lightly their cultural practices no matter what transpired, and I can only posit that musical activities existed within the Ashanti camp in the form of praise singing, lullabies, children's play songs and songs sung when elders gathered in the evenings. Even though mention is not made of the music's existence or characteristics in the mainstream musical writings of the Seychelles, music would probably be embedded in the day-to-day activities of the inhabitants of the Ashanti camp or school life within the areas of the camp (Stone, 1973). Tony Mathiot says the king's exile had an enduring social impact on the island Mahe where he stayed, and this statement supports my assertion that the Ashanti camp on the whole made an impact on the island.

It is recorded that during the exile of the Ashantis they set up a school, which later enrolled some indigenes. Because there were uncertainties about how long the stay would last, the Ashantis had to cultivate in larger quantities some of their known crops, to sell in order to survive and be economically

secure for the unknown future. That aside, the report by Acheampong, published by the Seychelles Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture points out:

"[t]he climate in the Seychelles [was] tropical and supported familiar crops such as plantain and cocoyam. Thus, the Ashanti were not deprived of their staple fufu. The flora and fauna were strikingly familiar to the Ashanti versions, and the skilled herbalists were able to practice their craft. A name that was not mentioned in Wilks' account is *Ankaasehene* Nana Boatin, who was a skilled herbalist. The point of contact between the Ashanti herbalists and the wider Seychellois community was the Ashanti women. Thomas Boatin, son of the *Ankaasehene* Nana Boatin and born in the Seychelles, informed the author (August 29, 1997) that the Ashanti male elders lived lives of retired dignity. They did not mix much with the Seychellois, but their wives and children did. Nana Yaa Akude, the *Ankaasehene's* wife, often informed him of ailments in the Seychellois community. Nana Boatin then prepared medicines for these ailments and his wife took these to her Seychellois acquaintances."

It is also said that life at the Ashanti camp was calm and peaceful which suggests that there were some productive activities in the camp. Drawing inspiration from the above information, I can only posit that because life in the camp was mostly dominated by Ashanti mores, there were Ashanti cultural expressions in whichever way possible and hence, I would do a deduction from the standpoint of comparison. By so doing, I am able to draw conclusions on how the traditions of Ashanti were transmitted to mainstream Seychellois traditions. As mentioned earlier, Seychellois traditions cannot be tied to a sole region or continent, we therefore proceed to say that Seychelles music is a syncretic product that is a result of multiple influences. More cannot be said about Seychellois music because a great deal of work is needed to do that type of comparison, which time does not allow me.

However, a complex form of percussion music called *Kanmtole* and a blend of other pan-African genres are readily evident characteristics of Seychellois music that can be linked to Africa, of which Ashanti cannot be left out. Percussion and complex rhythms are a trademark of the Ashanti tradition as indicated by Ampene (2020) and other scholars, showing how Ashantis use drumming in every aspect of their culture. Historical accounts of the Ashantis in Seychelles do not mention any drumming activity whilst they stayed on the island, but in the absence of evidence, confirmed documentation of Ashanti drumming can be employed to make a case. Ampene (2020) and other scholars have shown that the people of Ashanti incorporate drumming in their ceremonies and other traditional related functions. Acheampong and other sources also have made us aware that the stay was for about 24 years and life in the camp was not restricted, so since the people of Ashanti incorporate musical traditions and customs in almost all their activities, there is a high possibility of transfer of some Ashanti rhythms and drumming to parts of the island.

Bobre is the string instrument which was used before the violin and the acoustic guitar in Seychellois folk music, but much information is not given about it in writings about Seychellois music. This

revelation shows that string instruments from Africa, such as the *kora* and the *seperewa* were not prominent in the makeup of Seychellois music. The *bobre* is a traditional musical bow, mainly used in traditional genres, *sega* and *Maloya* in the Indian ocean islands: Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles and Réunion. It is a long arch built of fibre-stricken wood with a resonating calabash. It is played with a stick to hit the string, and while it is no longer used in Mauritian sega, it is still popular in Réunion and Maloya. With these few insights, I can only posit that more of the lifestyle and philosophies of the Ashanti were transferred to the island and not much of the music. There could undeniably be other musical nuances that were influenced by the presence of the people of Ashanti, but this needs deeper research, which the nature of this work and period of the pandemic did not allow.

2.8. Conclusion

As we have seen in this chapter, the historical evolution of what came to be known as Ghanaian music has been quite an interesting one from the pre-colonial era, where we see the dominance of indigenous practices from earlier times until contact with Europe. Ghanaian music was more ethnocentric and did not employ any foreign cultural elements until the Europeans arrived on the coast. My usage of Ghanaian traditional music as demonstrated in this chapter largely draws from the southern parts of Ghana. The Akan *seperewa* was a very vibrant string instrument until the guitar was introduced by Europeans. One of the tentacles of Ghanaian music which amalgamated into highlife, palmwine music, applied the *seperewa* but the guitar replaced it in mainstream highlife music because the guitar had volume and could play many chords as compared to the *seperewa*.

Korankye and some of my research consultants have shown dissatisfaction for the significant decline in indigenous knowledge and practices in Ghana which is a result of copying and borrowing of foreign cultural elements that threaten indigenous practices. To add to the cultural intensity of the people of Ashanti, I have traced how the people of Ashanti brought some of their traditional practices to the Seychelles island where they were incarcerated. Ghanaian traditional music, mostly from the southern parts must be considered in mainstream musical acts and discourses. As was seen in the earlier parts of this chapter, Ashanti music mostly concentrates on the lyrics and hence the musician needs to speak in a way I will refer to as culturally acceptable. It behoves the musician to learn the acceptable lyrical content and figures of speech and hence, people should endeavour to study with older musicians. The Ashanti musician also needs to learn proverbs and must be able to appropriate them in his music. Koo Nimo said proverbs are used for three main reasons, which are appropriate in their own ways, to settle disputes, to employ deeper speech which might not have been appropriate for children if they

understood, and to make light of what might have been a serious or abominable speech. These are some of the reasons why I think, the Ashanti traditional musical influences on the Seychelles Island must be investigated in order to be unveiled.

CHAPTER THREE

3. ETHNOGRAPHY OF KORANKYE IN THE CONTEXT OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC

3.1. Introduction

The situation surrounding traditional music in Ghana currently is not encouraging due to the general attitude of the Ghanaian society towards it and hence pursuing traditional music in Ghana is not as attractive as it used to be some decades ago. Most of the cultural bearers I have interacted with, throughout my life and during the three-month fieldwork in Ghana are saddened by the dire situation they find themselves in. I keep asking why they still perform traditional music in spite of their grief. The answers I get mostly revolve around the love and passion for tradition, which gives them motivation to continue with traditional music. Most of them say they find satisfaction in what they do, thus being involved in something else other than indigenous music might not be satisfactory enough. I also realized that most practitioners found themselves in traditional music by default or through situations they could not explain. In the case of Korankye, he found himself involved with traditional music because of situations that surrounded his upbringing. In this chapter I attempt to explore the life and musical history of Korankye. I also explore his influences on other musicians and how his approach has come to make Ghanaian traditional music and instruments gain a significant amount of recognition and admiration in contemporary Ghana. I look at Korankye's efforts with an objective eye weighing his methods against the capability approach theory.

My interest in the work of Korankye and the *seperewa* draws back to my childhood when I became fond of traditional music, listening with my parents to their musical selections. I had learnt to appreciate traditional authentic[5] local musics with their imperfect and unprocessed qualities. This upbringing made me less interested in contemporary music and I turned my attention to traditional music. It was during this period of following traditional music that I came across the music of Korankye and his somewhat novel instrument, the *seperewa.* I was not very certain what to make of the new discovery, so I did not follow it up immediately, but I continually followed my passion for listening to and appreciating traditional music whenever I could.

Most traditional musics have stories embedded in them and what fascinates me is that I learn practical and applicable lessons from these stories. I will admit that not all traditional songs have these qualities,

[5] This type of music has no auto tuners and studio additives so one hears the 'authenticity' of the words, the voice of the musician and the instruments. The word authentic used here is debatable but my choice to use it was influenced by the fact that current studio works have auto tuners, compressors, reverb, and many other effects to streamline and sift the sounds, eradicating all-natural sounds that would have come with the normal microphone-voice relationship.

nonetheless, the general characteristics of traditional music made me focus my attention and interest on it. Just like many traditional folk musicians, Korankye mastered local traditional idioms, clauses, and speech from the older generation, which is one characteristic of traditional folk music. Korankye's case is peculiar because he had parents from two different Akan dialects and so he managed to master both dialects. "My mother speaks *twi*, which is the language of her birthplace, the Ashanti region of Ghana, and my father speaks *Sefwi*, which is the language of his birthplace, Sefwi, in the western region of Ghana. People are always perplexed as to where I am from because I use both languages in my compositions and performances." People are thus confused as to where exactly he belongs as a result of his fluent usage of both dialects of the Akan language in his compositions and performances. Korankye is from a royal family and was born on the 24th October 1964 to Peter Kwabena Osei and Mary Abena Korankyewaa. The combination of both names gave him Osei Korankye. Korankye is the male version of Korankyewaa, his mother's name.

3.2. The Formative Years of Korankye

Figure 1.4 Korankye with his *seperewa*, in an interview with the author in his office, adorned with his traditional wear. Photo credit: author

Korankye hails from Sefwi Ahweaso Soroano where his grandparents settled; it was in that settlement his parents met and got married. He is the first of eight children and had a desire to become a medical doctor because his passion was to help people. He explained to me thus:

I told my father in a semi-serious way, but he took it seriously and moved me to Bibiani, where the standard of education was a bit higher than where I was. I progressed through the elementary school in Bibiani with a good academic record till my father, upon consultation with me, decided to move me to a different place, still in search of an educational system that will make me realize my dreams. My father died a few months later and my mother got married again considering the

heavy economic toll her husband's death pulled on her. My stepfather managed to help me complete middle school that I was denied and wanted to help me continue through training college. Preparations were in place for me to continue my education, but my stepfather's sisters prevented him from helping me because they felt the man was not being fair to his own children and some other family members who did not have the same opportunity. I had also learnt to play the *seperewa* from my grandfather two years before my father's passing. I used to play the *seperewa* at some functions and I would send all the monies I made from performance to the house, for buying some food items. This attitude is part of the reasons why my father developed trust and love for me. (Korankye 2020, personal interview)

It is commonplace in the hinterland villages that parents, whether by blood or not, try to educate their children in the wake of modernization as globalization had reached these areas, making them aware that the best opportunity a parent can give to their wards is to educate them. Korankye explains that life in the village is not very promising as most of the children only get basic education and end up working on the farms or doing menial jobs as administrative assistants in the village offices. He also explained that he had an ambitious desire to move to the city because he knew people in the cities were doing well in the job market, that is one of the reasons he wanted to be a doctor. He believed being a doctor was one of the secure job havens because government institutions used to employ all freshly graduated medical students. Both his fathers decided to help him realize his dream but situations beyond their control prevented them from doing so.

3.3. The Beginning of his Struggles

Unfortunately, Korankye inherited parental responsibilities at a very young age because of the passing of his father. He had to provide for his younger siblings, eventually quitting school and having to work on the farms. When Korankye realized that the farm work was not financially satisfying enough, he embarked on a journey to the city, to Accra, in pursuit of financial stability for himself and the family. He began to sell second-hand clothing and anything he could get hold of in order to make a living. Most people who are desperate enough to travel from the village to the cities in Ghana have the option to either beg for funds by the roadside or engage in petty sales. Korankye chose to do petty sales and he carried the *seperewa* with him through his daily routines, creating little opportunities to perform. The unfortunate aspect is that he only performed on the streets with no properly organized audience because most people did not know the *seperewa*, and the ones who had knowledge of it had already lost interest in traditional music. The musical life of the city comprised highlife, burger highlife and hiplife[6] music so the audience for traditional music had dwindled. In Ghana, indigenous music is active

[6] Highlife music originated around the early 20th century from traditional music of southern Ghana, it later spread to western Nigeria, and flourished in both countries in the 1950s. Highlife employed instruments like the electric guitar, drum set, percussion, trumpets, keyboard, and the bass guitar. It was when the Ghanaian music industry became redundant due to political reforms and higher import taxes that musicians who had experienced life abroad, especially

in ethnic and traditional performances, but, as my consultants complained, traditional music is not as active in the popular music realm as it should be. As previously mentioned, traditional music is periodically used by the government and other larger entities in their operations, but as we can see, the practitioners continue to complain about the lack of opportunities since there is no deliberate engagement with these indigenous practices. In 1995, Korankye went in search of Nana Ampadu, a highlife musician who employed lyrical approaches similar to that of the *seperewa* in his music. Upon meeting Korankye, Nana Ampadu narrated a dream he had two years before in which he dreamt he would meet a *seperewa* player. Korankye and Nana Ampadu were both delighted that they finally met: Korankye's reason was because he had met a high-profile musician and Ampadu's reason was because he had seen a dream come true. Korankye went with Ampadu to a meeting of the Musicians Association of Ghana and Korankye performed to the members of the association. Later, newspapers published that a 'new' instrument had been discovered. As Korankye had also learnt to make the *seperewa,* Ampadu requested one to be made for him. As it happened, the era of highlife was waning around this time. There is a phrase in Ghana known as *sankofa* which translates "to go back for the good you have left behind", and the general reasoning is that successive generations can learn about their history and more if they are exposed to some of the things of the past. Even though Korankye's supposed discovery did not take that turn, he did not give up.

3.4. A First Positive Turn of Events

Still in pursuit of financial stability, Korankye travelled to Kumasi in 1993, the capital city of the Ashanti region to meet Koo Nimo, the renowned palm wine guitarist. Koo Nimo told me how his palm wine guitar finger-picking approach employed some of the *seperewa* styles and he had been looking for Korankye for some time. Upon meeting him, Koo Nimo told Korankye that Professor Nketia from the University of Ghana was looking for him as he needed someone who had indigenous knowledge to work at his newly established institution, the International Centre for African Music and Dance (ICAMD). Koo Nimo had already met Korankye 10 years before and had hoped that he would become influential in traditional music[7]. He then directed Korankye to Nketia, who employed him to work at the ICAMD. Korankye says things happened so rapidly and successively that he soon established

Hamburg, changed the music style. They employed the studio pre-recorded beats over highlife songs, and it was termed burger highlife. Hiplife, however grew out of the mixing of hip-hop and highlife, with more of singing in Ghanaian local languages, mostly *twi.* One striking characteristic of hiplife is the rap that became imminent in Ghanaian local songs.

[7] Korankye recalled that Koo Nimo came to meet him and his grandfather in 1987 through research which was being conducted by Dr. Andy Kaye from the University of Pennsylvania, who was working on highlife music.

himself in the job he still has at the School of Performing Arts. He mentions that he assumed office as an instructor of Akan music and *seperewa* culture.

Korankye says he loved the institution, which was formed in 1992 at the University of Ghana because it was "an institution that focused on the development of materials and programmes in African music and dance. It was also to provide a platform for archival documentation and a centre for African music and dance. Nketia had the desire to promote and coordinate research in creative projects in the music and dance cultures of Ghana. He also thought that there could be 'human archives', people who had embodied the knowledge of Ghanaian traditions, hence his search for and employment of Korankye" (Korankye 2020, personal interview). At this point in the life of Korankye, he says he knew his position as a prominent figure in the Akan community was meant to be because he had never considered himself working as a tutor in a university, after his inability to further his education. His determination to succeed is what kept him going.

3.5. A Second Phase of Struggle

After a while, Korankye became frustrated in his newly found space.

> I was not very happy because of my inability to speak English fluently but the founder of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, Mawere Opoku, encouraged me that I could overcome my inability to express myself well in English if I dedicated time to personal study. The people I was working with also challenged me because I was supposed to communicate with them as easily as I could. I decided to register for a diploma course at the University, but the performances and work did not allow me to finish and write my first exams. (Korankye 2020, personal interview)

Korankye recalls all these struggles and does not count them as failures but experiences that toughened him up in life. He says he would not have survived his current situation if he had not been through all these situations before. He was also encouraged by other positive circumstances that came along with the struggles. Korankye focused his attention and energy on the positive circumstances that came along with the work and space in which he found himself and forged forward. He says he had gotten to a stage he envisioned years ago, to help others and work with dignitaries and important personalities. It was in the same year he started to work with Nketia that he was invited to Pretoria, South Africa to perform for the swearing in of the first democratic president, Nelson Mandela, and other dignitaries, when South Africa gained independence from apartheid rule. The performance in South Africa shot him into international limelight so he ended up being invited to Europe and the Americas, the first of which were Norway and the United States of America. He says, "In retrospect, I have met a lot of dignitaries and been on bigger stages in this life that I am sure would not have happened if not for my *seperewa*."

3.6. His Determination

Korankye says he challenged himself to do better and get to a level of stability and satisfaction. His passion to help others and succeed took a different turn as he found himself in a different space, transferring cultural knowledge, playing music, and getting paid, giving him an appreciable financial standing. Working with Nketia, he was required to demonstrate to students, researchers, and visitors what the *seperewa* could do. In this capacity, Korankye says he received many offers from visitors and other researchers to travel overseas to work, something most people would not have thought twice about. Korankye, however, decided not to leave Nketia because they had mutual respect for each other, he saw Nketia as the one who gave him the platform to perform on world stages. This quality of mutual respect is what we find in most traditional practitioners and that is what I generally find appealing about the older generation. Nketia's centre was later dissolved and was put under the Institute for African Studies (Judith Opoku-Boateng, Ekow Cann, Samuel Aniegye Ntewusu and Sandra Owusu 2020, 377).

3.7. The Final Phase

Frustrated and struggling after the dissolution of the ICAMD, Korankye was forced to join the Ghana Dance Ensemble, at the Dance Department, in the School of Performing Arts. He recalls that working with the ensemble was not very easy because the renumeration was minimal, and he was forced to teach the *seperewa* privately in order to earn extra income. In thinking about the dilemma, Korankye decided to follow his love of teaching people the *seperewa*, which did not yield many players at the time. He then left the dance ensemble to join the Department of Music, also in the School of Performing Arts as an instructor. Korankye says; "this situation also became frustrating over time because I did not raise enough money in teaching and was not officially employed at the Department of Music. I then wrote a letter to the Head of the Department, who made it possible for me to be compensated for my time as an instructor, the wish was granted but I found something intriguing here. Because of our low level of education, most traditional practitioners do not get the necessary respect and renumeration we deserve while working in the formal sector, and my case was no different" (Korankye 2020, personal interview).

Nonetheless, Korankye says he was motivated by something more than money and fame. He said, "my vision, all this while, has been to leave a legacy for the *seperewa*, to give the unborn generation the chance to experience authentic Akan musical tradition". He also explained how the *seperewa* is gaining ground, but it is still not where he would like it to be. When he initially followed traditional music and practices, he recalls that the situation was so bad that his close Ghanaian acquaintances used to laugh

at him and call him all sorts of names because the instrument was seen as something of a relic, "but I have realised that it was a matter of time because Ghanaians are now beginning to see the relevance and need for culture, hence, the reception of traditional instruments and musical traditions" (Korankye 2020, personal interview).

3.8. Korankye's Disgruntlement

Recounting his story, Korankye mentioned that unlike the period before contact with Europe, the *seperewa* was active in Ghanaian expressive cultures, especially during the1700s and 1800s when it first came to the Ashanti court as a praise instrument for the Ashanti king. Korankye has this to say, "I am not happy about how the general Ghanaian populace treat traditional artists like myself". He said this, following a remark I made about the fact that there had been a significant change of attitude towards traditional culture and its practitioners. Korankye was positive that an evident change would happen if traditional cultures and practitioners are not treated as just providers of interludes and small colourful additions to the current conversations in the Ghanaian expressive industry. He recounted several events where he was asked to provide cultural interludes to the main programmes. He said the feeling was and has always been good when he gets invitations like that, even with the beautiful audience reception, but the treatment from the stakeholders and programme organizers has not been the best. He recalled several instances where he is still waiting for payments due to him by programme organizers, especially media houses. It is Korankye's desire that the respect accorded to other dignitaries and invited guests will be accorded the traditional artists too.

3.9. Other Traditional Music Players/Artistes

Just as mentioned earlier, most of the indigenous artistes were either born into the tradition or found themselves in situations that did not allow them to escape it. Some chose it for reasons of exposition to the tradition which ended in evoking a passion for the tradition or reasons they cannot explain in words. Bebe, the xylophone player who shares office with Korankye had this to say, "So, like I said, I was born into it and I grew up around people who were playing it" (Bebe 2020, personal interview). The people of Lawra in the Upper West region of Ghana believe that two signs indicate that a child will be a traditional (*xylophone*) musician. 1) When the child is left-handed (the left hand plays a major role in playing the *xylophone*) and 2) When the child exhibits signs of interest and passion for the *xylophone.* Bebe, who is from Lawra, related a story from his childhood; his mother told him that he

exhibited these characteristics at a very young age. He could play xylophone in a manner that surprised everyone because he played very well with good control and dexterity.

"At my (maternal) grandfather's funeral also, my mum told me that an old man said words of blessing unto my life when I crawled towards the xylophone when it was in performance. I also learnt to play the *seperewa* in 1995, when Korankye came to the university to work. I was so attracted to the sound and because of that I approached him, and he gave me a few lessons, I began to practice and before I realized, I was even composing my own songs on it. Most of the songs you hear me play with my band, featuring the *seperewa* are my own songs. So, after learning an instrument that is not from my culture, I had to make the instrument relevant to my musicality. You will have an Akan making music with a xylophone. You see, a musical instrument is a musical instrument, what you need is the sound it makes, and you can manipulate it in a way that it tends to favour your music. I learnt to play the mbira the same way, I had a student from Zimbabwe in 1996 who came to learn to play the xylophone. He came with an mbira and I fell in love with the sound too. You know, the mbira has some similarities to the xylophone so the same way the guy was my student, I was also his student, so it was a hand-go-hand come thing and there were times I had to even borrow his mbira over the weekends to practice" (Bebe 2020, personal interview).

Koo Nimo studied classical guitar and lab techniques in chemistry but ended up playing folk-style palm wine music. He said he found little interest in what he studied and was more interested in the folk guitar style and tradition. He also admits that the places he has been to and the contacts he has made are all because of palm wine music, not classical guitar, or chemistry. Koo Nimo's story, as partly discussed in the second chapter indicates that the elderly artistes of traditional music feel that the younger generation is not willing to incorporate the viable past in contemporary artistic expressions. Therefore, the current generation and subsequent ones are supposed to solicit and revisit the past and the positive elements of their culture and use them to their advantage. He mentions a quote and uses it to explain his point:

"The oak tree cannot develop its native majesty from the flowerpot, you see, the flowerpot is only used for nurturing but not for the realization of the full potential of a plant, so you, the current generation, must get out of your comfort zones and learn from the elderly. (Koo Nimo 2020, personal interview)

3.10. **Findings and Public Opinions**

Through interviews with Korankye, cultural bearers, as well as discussions with students in the University of Ghana, I can posit that there are pros and cons of the methods employed by Korankye in his desire to revitalize the *seperewa* in Ghana. There are also both positives as well as negatives with regard to the whole European encounter. We see firstly that Korankye finds himself in a social system that has been built on essentially European narratives and lifestyles with a little African touch, making it difficult to realize, to his full potential, what he has envisioned for himself and the *seperewa* tradition. Most of my research consultants agree that contemporary Ghanaians have been starved of things that are local and indigenous, hence, their very own cultural practices look and feel foreign. Agawu (2016, 5) confirms this with a survey on the impact of colonialism in Africa. He explains how the material

presence of foreign musical instruments in Africa is very tangible and obvious. That is why, I think, most of my consultants complained about being tagged old fashioned and without any future, when they started pursuing what they loved. I am an example of these ridicules because I stopped playing classical piano and decided to focus on the *seperewa* and the *atenteben.* I was called names and my friends did not want to associate with me in musical terms because they perceived me as awkward. I was encouraged, in these discussions with my research participants when I heard that they had gone through similar situations but did not give up.

Secondly, colonialism, whatever form it took, has had a heavy toll on traditional practices and this is confirmed also by Agawu (ibid). Just as Opanin Kantanka made us understand, the colonial influence was so great on traditional practices, deriding everything related to tradition because they were regarded as idolatrous and unworthy to be practiced. It is indeed true that the traditional system employed human sacrifices in some situations, but that aside, I find the situation to be misinterpreted because the colonizers did not understand the nuances of the tradition. The ideology behind human sacrifice is not clear to me but some have said it was rare and practiced in peculiar situations. I am led to suspect that this aspect with a few others made the colonialists abhor the entire traditional system. Traditional worshippers, as every tradition does, used traditional instruments and other elements for their worship practices hence, the whole traditional system was tagged inappropriate. It was the colonialists' sole purpose to do away with anything indigenous just to be able to enforce their will and power on the indigenous people, making colonial rule possible. Unaware of the colonizers' plans, indigenous people agreed to most of the new knowledge systems. We continue with the realities of the past and I hope this type of thinking against traditional practices is resolved as time elapses.

The essentializing of traditional practices led to a local shying away from tradition and wholly accepting foreign, European elements and culture. This situation eventually led to a decrease in interest and support for local and traditional elements. This is basically the system Korankye and the other traditional musicians find themselves in. The situation has persisted for some decades, which is why, I think, most traditional musicians are not getting the required support they deserve. It was a recurring theme with almost all my consultants that after rendering services to higher institutions and other agencies, they have still not been paid. In contrast, some of the students and current younger musicians I had contact with, in Ghana, claim the situation is becoming better. I have learnt, through this study, that a lot of factors come into play but most of my consultants put the blame on the colonists because of the system which was created due to the denigrating attitude towards traditional musicians by the colonial officers. But just as Chanza (2015) reminds us, there are indigenous-based survival adaptations that cannot be taken for granted, thus the rejection of cultural practices might not end well.

We find some of these adaptations in many cultures and the Akan are not exceptional. Koo Nimo also made me understand that there is the need to combine whichever knowledge we gain from elsewhere with traditional and local wisdom to make the best of them.

Korankye's style, on the other hand, is biased towards traditional musical elements. The sharp distinction in musical preference when it comes to any type of music is an ongoing activity among every culture but just as UNESCO and Erlmann (1999) have explicitly indicated, the world is now more of a global village where the mobility of cultures cannot be neglected. The Akan culture has not escaped this development owing to colonialism, globalization, and economic interactions with other cultures. The *seperewa* we are discussing now is not originally from the Akan lineage of Ghana. The borrowing of elements from other cultures can be traced from many years back and Korankye's focus on reviving interests in traditional practices has to contend with the global narrative. UNESCO and other organizations find reason in preserving some of these cultural elements, it is reasonable and argued well but just as most twenty first century researchers point out, culture is dynamic, and change is certain, hence, it is not advisable to apply static measures to guard against 'infiltration' of other cultures.

Even though the capability approach theory which has inspired this thesis gives the indication that it is good to document the elements of cultures for subsequent generations, I suggest there must be critical reasoning around the methods we employ in these endeavours. The documentation of these elements come in many forms, some of which are in compositions, articles, books, and oral histories. We see that some of the media for documentation are more effective than others and just like Korankye, I suggest that the current citizens concerned about loss of culture in Ghana must find ways and means to document them for posterity. The internet will be a good archival source for cultural resources because recording in any medium and online storage will preserve them for a long time. This way, the new generation gets hold of what there was as well as what there is, giving them the opportunity to decide for themselves, choosing with which parts of culture they will engage.

As was indicated by my consultants and Agawu (2016, 6) post-colonial Ghana was left with novel institutions like the church, police, army, and the entertainment industry and these came with musical conformities which had little or no place for the traditional instruments and music in general. Agawu also shows how the musical language changed and accepted all the foreign styles, leaving behind very little indigenous musical knowledge. Agawu, in the end asks his readers to "rethink the extent to which European influence has come to determine our construction of the "purest" of African musics, and to embrace the challenge of formulating a view of our creative activities not under the weight of a nostalgic look at the past but through a realistic look at the present." (Agawu 2014, 29).

3.11. Conclusion

As we have seen in this chapter, some individuals have tried to make traditional music visible and viable even in this apparent diffused cultural presence in Ghanaian music. Efforts of people such as Osei Korankye, Koo Nimo and others cannot go unmentioned. It is through them that some of us have been able to access indigenous Ghanaian music. These traditional musicians' approaches are distinct because some have combined elements of traditional music, playing the *odonson* and other styles on guitars and other European instruments but Korankye feels that all traditional musical forms, instruments, and cognitive practices need to be preserved as is, so that current and future generations decide what to do with them. In Korankye's case, we see that he had little to no interest in foreign musical elements, and that explains why he believes that traditional elements must be preserved. He has travelled to different places in the world with the *seperewa* and has seen other instruments, but he is undoubtedly not affected by these exposures. His work, however, has seen an increase in the number of strings of the seperewa, a change in the tuning from the earlier scale that had the flattened seventh and a change in the form of the instrument employing the tuning pegs of the guitar in the new *seperewa* he makes. Korankye employs traditional philosophical ideas and knowledge in his performances and that is what his music advocates. He has also managed to perform a few of the contemporary songs that have included traditional characteristics, he believes that music must have a clear and sound message for its listeners.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this study, I have sought to assess the work of Korankye regarding the *seperewa* musical tradition in the context of sustainability and through the theoretical lens of the capability approach. I considered this work with two main objectives which were firstly, to assess the degree of positive or negative results Korankye's efforts in preserving the *seperewa* musical tradition in Ghana have yielded in the period he has ventured into this quest and what the reasons could be, and secondly, which methods, as learnt from Korankye's case, that sustainability agencies can apply in their initiatives towards indigenous culture. These objectives have guided me through this work although some were not explicitly dealt with. It was also with the understanding that there was a general misunderstanding by the Europeans with regards to traditional practices and all its associations, which resulted in a gradual decline in these practices. I have grappled with this issue throughout this work and we came to understand that there is a vivid friction between contemporary arts and traditional expressive arts, especially music, their cognitive processes, lyrical content, philosophical explorations, and moral engagements. A friction, I think, that will bring to light the fruitful contributions of both past and present musical expressions and activities. The project has also assessed the impact the people of Ashanti made on the Island of Seychelles in the early decades of the twentieth century.

To help understand the focus of this work, I sought to understand the world system in the eyes of sustainability, how it has come to be and the basic nuances of this paradigm, which groups are affected and why. We saw that some cultural elements keep 'disappearing' and whatever the cause for the disappearance of these cultural elements of society, especially traditional rudimentary practices, there is still another part of society's members that want to connect with or see relevance in what is disappearing or being disappeared. Some members of the present and past generations reminisce about the 'good old days' and that was one of the motivating factors of this research. Apparently, the said good old days have a lot to offer in terms of culture and traditions but as it has been indicated in this essay, the younger generation has managed to come up with their version of what the good old days were about and is working with the current world order, where global cultures are emerging. This cultural change and adoption, due to external influences is not a new phenomenon, as seen in the work, but you find some members of the older generation feeling uneasy about it. There is not a simplistic dichotomy between the global and the local, and lots of other factors can be considered regarding this issue, but I do not want to generalize based on what Korankye's work has proven. Nevertheless, you

will still find a majority of the musicians, artistes and audiences gravitating towards the new paradigm of hybridity.

Narrowing the focus to Korankye's work regarding the *seperewa* and tracing the evolution of Ghanaian traditional music from earlier times until contact with Europe, it is obvious that the borrowing of cultural elements, change and continuity are not new concepts. The story of the *seperewa* is a typical example, the main and accepted narrative indicates that *seperewa* came to the Gold Coast region because of war and conquering of the *Gyaaman* people by the Ashanti kingdom. The people of Ashanti adopted the instrument and personalized it, giving it the name *seperewa* which transliterates to this small instrument speaks if you touch it. The *seperewa* became an Ashanti court instrument, later expanding to the whole Akan ethnic group. It was through these uses that the *seperewa* was imitated by the common citizens. The common citizens also made explorations with this instrument through which the palm wine musical tradition was born. Change and continuity happened to the *seperewa* tradition and its practise took on different forms, even affecting the instrument. This research, focusing on Korankye's initiatives and motivation, has revealed that the Ghanaian community, albeit not a majority, has embraced change and continuity giving the instrument and its culture a place in the globalized world.

Through exploration of the uses and functions of the *seperewa* tradition, it was also discovered that there are substantive reasons to why the older generation do not want the seperewa style, *odonson*, which translates as 'letting love prevail' to diminish and vanish from the Ghanaian culture. This style gives the performer the opportunity to recite proverbs to their listeners in such a manner that ends up engaging and provoking their intelligence. The use of this style tends to provoke thought and that is what makes the traditional style different from the other styles. *Seperewa* and other traditional music require players to know proverbs, literary usage of language and in-depth knowledge of traditions and customs as well as history because in the delivery, listeners pay attention to the words and not much to the instrumentation and rhythm. It is also revealed that partial listening and attention to lyrics is prevalent in the other styles where rhythm and instrumentation dominate, so Korankye and others think the *odonson* style is worth preserving so that every generation will have the style to socialize its younger ones. Lyrical delivery is more important than the musical nuances that is the reason, I think, there is an upsurge of concern by the elderly and others that the customs and traditions need to be revived. The *odonson* style needs to be preserved but just as the capability approach suggests, the current generation must be given the freedom to choose and take the relevant parts of this style and apply it in their own way. Just as we found that it is not good to forcefully cause any group to preserve

its cultural elements, Korankye's work sees to it that the current generation is exposed to the styles of their predecessors, so they have enough cultural resources to choose from and to make it their own.

The colonial encounter as well as the effects of the Christian religion and the introduction of the English language were named as the factors which greatly affected traditional praxes, and these are part of the reasons why Korankye has decided to expose the current generation to the *seperewa* tradition, hoping some people will take an interest in it. It was established that missionaries attached everything related to African traditions to idol worship and that most Ghanaians were strongly convinced of Western theological dogma where you would be excommunicated or removed for a period if you are seen to be associating with traditional practices. Boaheng (2014, 9) verifies that "Christian Akans were forbidden to participate in the rites of ancestor-worship." Kantanka confirms that converts were not allowed to observe the ceremonies related to festivals, such as drumming and dancing since they were considered unchristian, but other missionaries allowed their converts to be on-lookers but not participants of any ceremonies relating to culture. The association of traditional cultural activities with idol worship is what overshadowed the desires of the people of Ghana, and even today. The desires and thoughts of people have shifted as they prefer technologically advanced cultural activities over traditional cultures. For these and other reasons, the current generation is not acquainted with the Ghanaian social and cultural practices.

In essence, one thing was certain: Korankye claims that the contemporary music business is based on capitalism, with financial gains, popularity, and public following, and that this is why the narrative of traditional musicians appears to be misplaced. Because of the nature of the capitalist music business, producers and promoters define trends, themes, and styles, unless musicians are financially independent and wish to make a difference with their music. He does not take fault with any musician, but the system, and that is why he hopes there can be a slight effort on the side of the musicians to incorporate culturally related elements in their music. Aaron Bebe also takes issue with political leaders. He says politicians endorse musicians with bigger audiences because they seek favour with the masses and want to win political votes and therefore indigenous musicians do not get the necessary attention to flourish in the industry. My field consultants agree that an endorsement of traditional musicians and their work by political and other important personalities will go a long way to generate reverence for traditional music. They feel that the threats to traditional music can be mitigated if their complaints are heeded to, by the industry officials and other important personalities.

Projections and Future Research

The capability approach points culture workers and enthusiasts towards less of the top-down approach and more towards partnerships among cultural communities. I find Titon's (2009, 124) reasoning more appropriate here where he admonishes that we avoid the ideology that people own culture which tends to put us into a realm of ownership, but instead gravitate towards thinking that we are stewards of culture. We must think of a music culture as something living, a renewable daily resource among us, and move into a discourse of sustainability, people in partnership, taking on the privilege and excitement and reaping the rewards of stewardship.

To my mind, the idea of the capability approach will go a long way to add to the contributions that the sustainability paradigm has brought to seemingly dying cultures worldwide. This work is a beginning of investigating other sustainability approaches and will benefit from further research that focuses on other cultures, cultural bearers and musicians who want to change the status quo. I see this approach will help sustainability agents focus and work on 'dying' cultural traditions, essentially in Africa. It will also reveal the relatively appropriate methods sustainability agencies can apply in their initiatives.

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