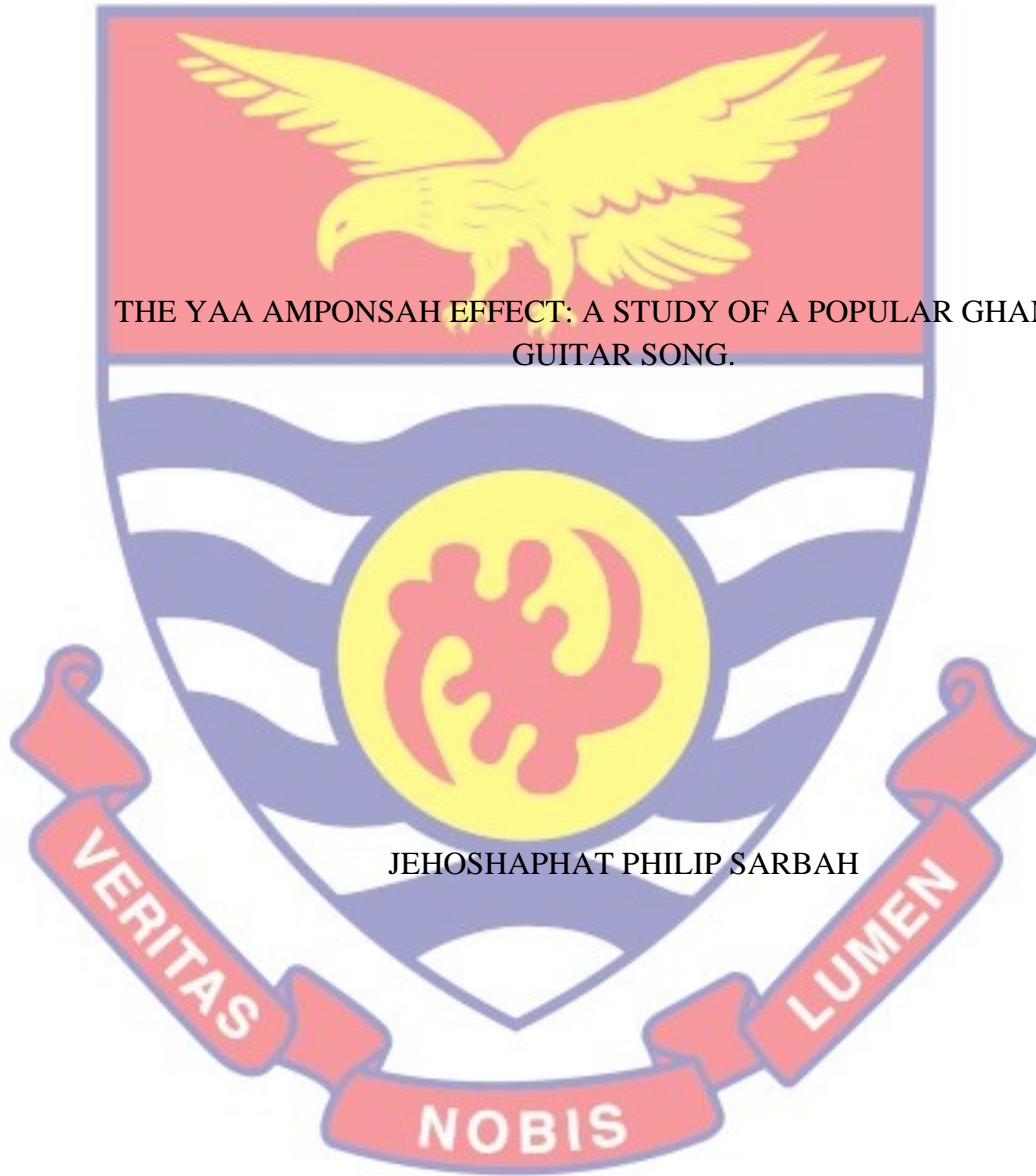


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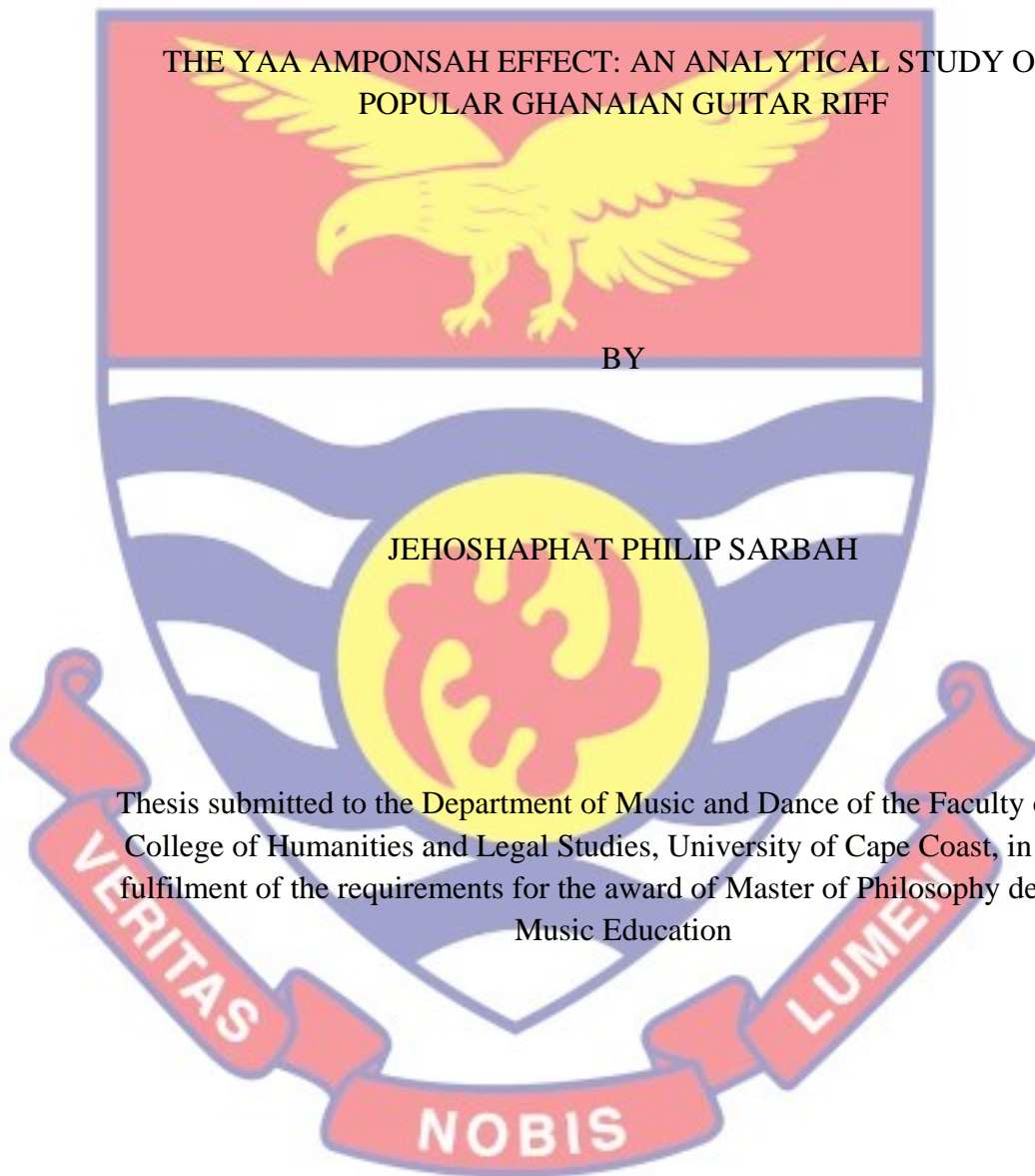
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THE YAA AMPONSAH EFFECT: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF A
POPULAR GHANAIAAN GUITAR RIFF

BY

JEHOSHAPHAT PHILIP SARBAH

Thesis submitted to the Department of Music and Dance of the Faculty of Arts,
College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in
Music Education



DECEMBER, 2021

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:..... Date:.....

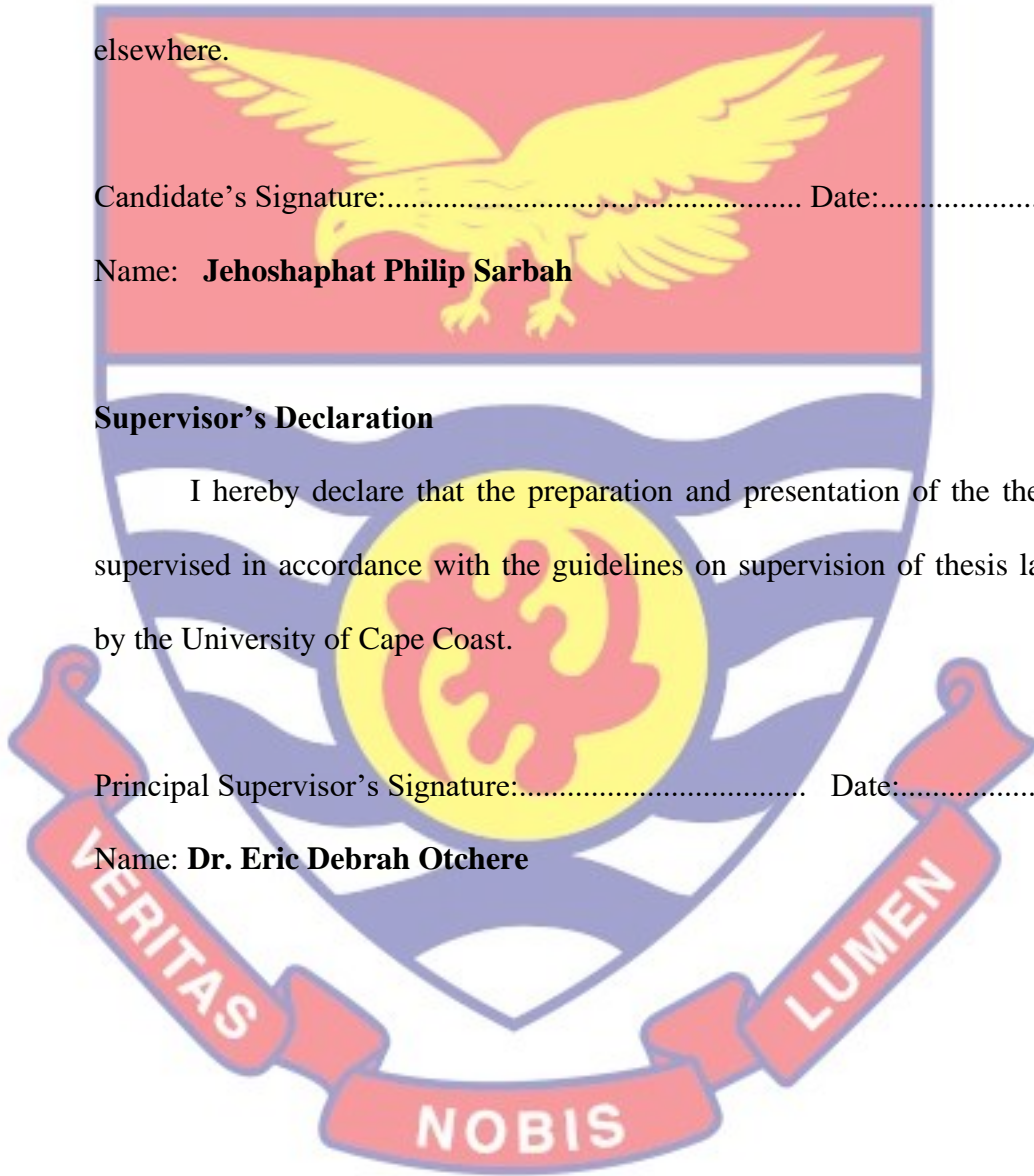
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Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: **Dr. Eric Debrah Otchere**



ABSTRACT

The Yaa Amponsah guitar riff has been described as the lingua franca indigenous Ghanaian guitar play (Collins, 2006). Researches like (Adum-Attah, 1997; Collins, 1989, 2006, 2018) provide a brief history of Yaa Amponsah focusing on her identity, but there is no analysis based on the lyrics of the recorded versions of the song. Sprigge (1961), analysed the rhythm used in Yaa Amponsah and found similarities with Akan ensembles like *sikyɛ*, apart from this there is little to no analysis of the guitar riffs used in the recorded versions of the Yaa Amponsah song. This research sought to analyse guitar riffs used in five recorded versions of the Yaa Amponsah song and also tell a narrative about the Yaa Amponsah song. Using the qualitative research, discourse analysis method and key informant interviews, I sought to fill the lacuna identified. Analysis of the data pointed out that the Yaa Amponsah originated from the *seperewa* music, however, the guitar riff became popular as a result of the National dance band competition held in 1972 with the riff built on the chord I, IV, V progression. Analysis of the song text brought about the narrative about Sam refusing to give up on lost love and his inability to act on his feelings for Yaa Amponsah. The findings revealed that there are inconsistencies in the narrative of the recorded versions that I analysed. The inconsistencies could have arisen from the fact that the underpinning motives of the original and the subsequent ones were not identical. It stands to reason that whereas Sam's version was targeted at winning a loved one back, the subsequent artists who recorded intended it to serve a more hedonic and aesthetic function.

KEYWORDS

Yaa Amponsah

Guitar riff

Sam

Narrative

Hedonic

Aesthetic

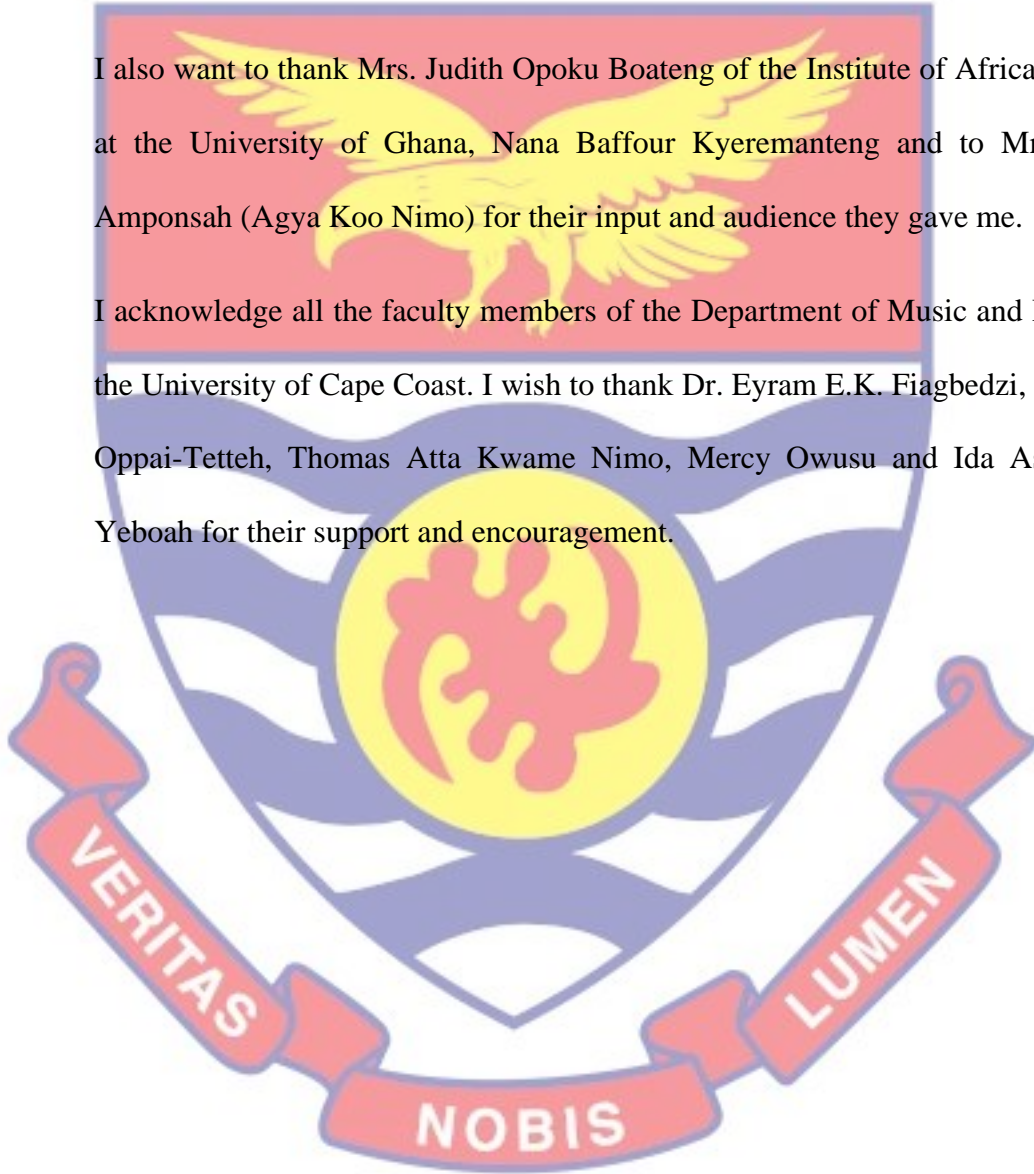


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I also want to thank Mrs. Judith Opoku Boateng of the Institute of African studies at the University of Ghana, Nana Baffour Kyeremanteng and to Mr. Daniel Amponsah (Agya Koo Nimo) for their input and audience they gave me.

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DEDICATION

To all guitarists who started their guitar journey with Yaa Amponsah.



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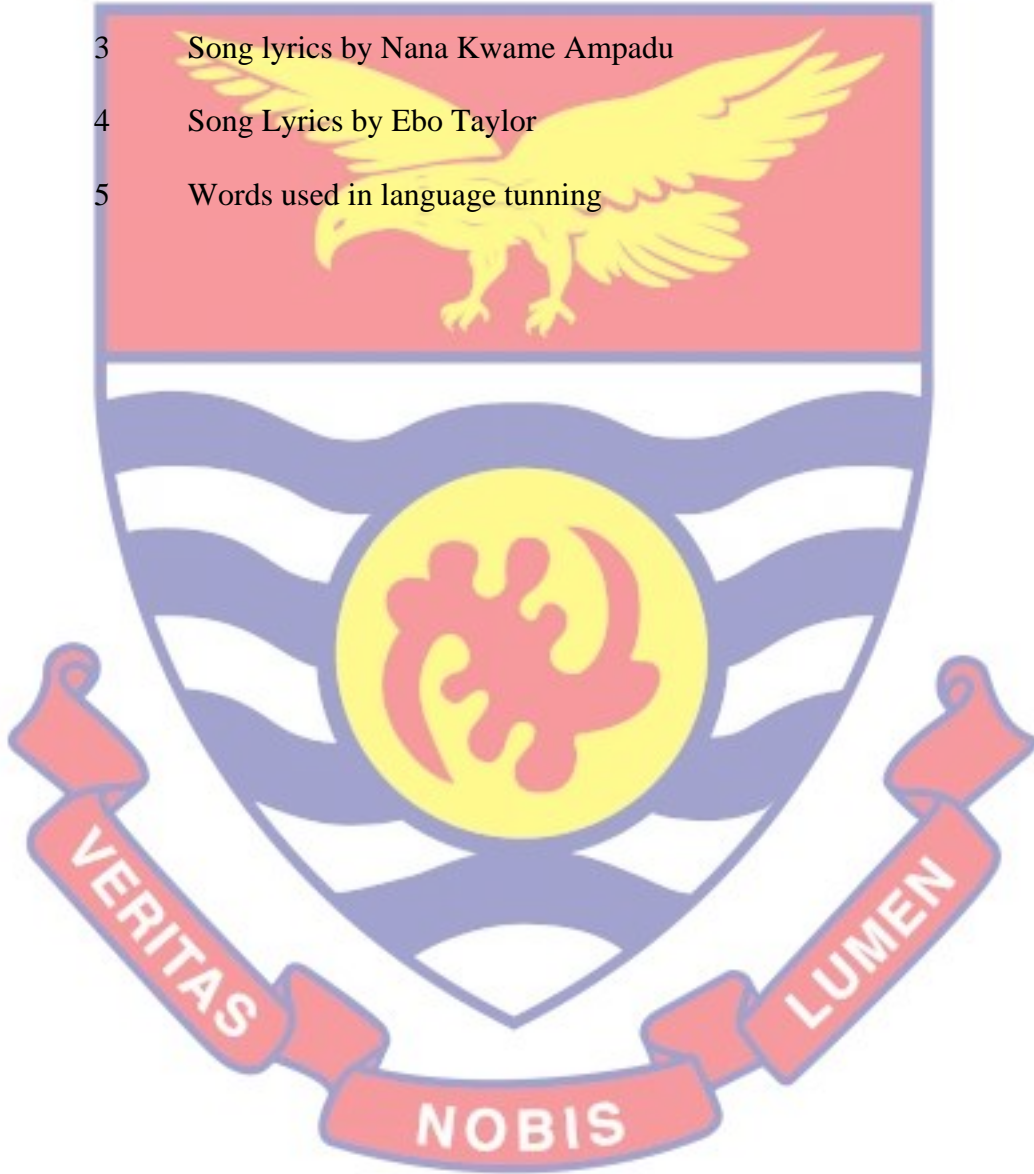
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EXAMPLES OF THE YAA AMPONSAH SONG

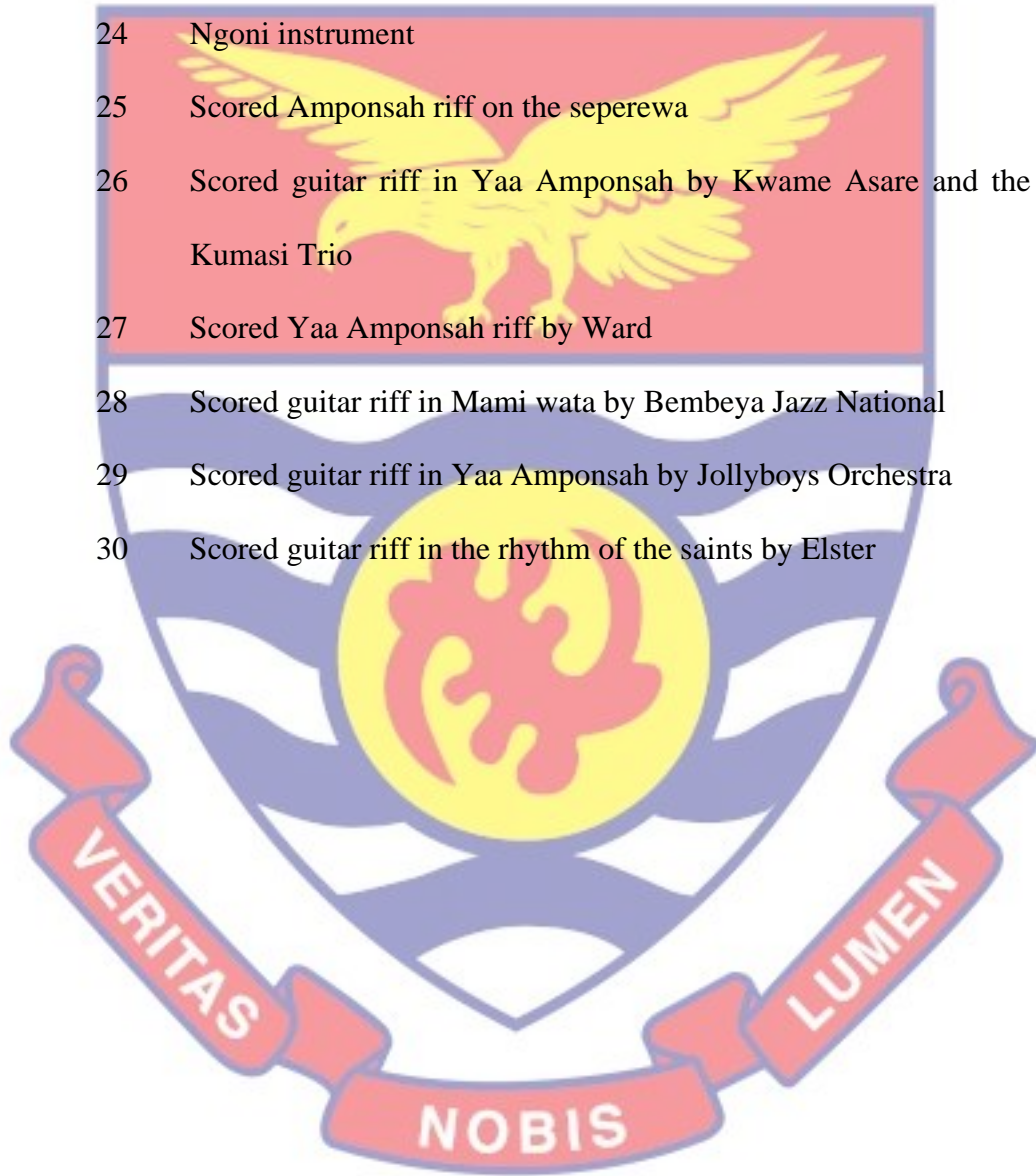
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The first time I came into contact with the Yaa Amponsah guitar riff was in the church of Pentecost at an early age. This particular guitar riff accompanied a lot of songs in the church. So, when I had the opportunity to learn the guitar at church, the first riff I learned was the Yaa Amponsah riff without knowing any history about the song. When I gained admission into the University of Cape Coast to pursue music, I picked the guitar as one of my instruments to play because I had some background experience through the church. Upon meeting my guitar instructor, the first thing he asked me to play was Yaa Amponsah. He said that “as a Ghanaian guitarist, you need to know how to play Yaa Amponsah, and if you do not know how to play it, then you are not a guitarist.” I played what I thought was Yaa Amponsah, which looking back to that time, was a simple version of the riff I had heard. He picked a guitar and played a complex version of the style; after that, he told me what I played had the basic requirements of Yaa Amponsah, what he called the mainline in Yaa Amponsah, but reiterated that my version was simple. Looking back to that time, I realized that I had not listened to the earliest recording of the riff by the Kumasi trio but was playing what I had heard people play during my time at church. I agreed to his assertion that what I played, even though it sounded like Amponsah, was too simple and light in texture. Upon further research, I found out that there are many variations of the Yaa Amponsah. My research made me aware of the lack of analysis in terms of

lyrics, history and the composition of various recorded versions of Yaa Amponsah.

Statement of the Problem

Miles (2017), describes a gap in research as a primary basis in investigating any problem, phenomenon, or scientific question. Miles identified seven gaps in research, evidence gap, knowledge gap, practical knowledge gap, methodological gap, empirical gap, theoretical gap, and population gap. I have identified a knowledge gap with regards to the various recorded versions of the Yaa Amponsah song. Miles (2017), described knowledge gap as lacuna which seeks to fill a knowledge void. Researches like (Adum-Attah, 1997; Collins, 1989, 2006, 2018) provide a brief history of the Yaa Amponsah song focusing on her identity, but there is no narrative of the song based on the lyrics of the recorded versions. Apart from (Collins, 2006; Sprigge, 1961) analysis of the rhythmic similarities of the Yaa Amponsah and some Asante ensembles like *sikiyi* and *kete apenten*, there is little to no analysis of the guitar riffs used in the recorded versions of the Yaa Amponsah song. In a quest to address the knowledge gap in terms of the similarities and differences between various recorded variations of the Yaa Amponsah guitar riff and tell a narrative of the Yaa Amponsah song through the analysis of the lyrics used in different variations of the song, the study is warranted.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyse the guitar riffs and lyrics in recorded versions of the Yaa Amponsah.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the recorded versions in Yaa Amponsah guitar riff
2. To tell a narrative about the Yaa Amponsah song

Research Questions

1. What accounts for the variations in the Yaa Amponsah guitar riff?
2. What is the narrative behind the Yaa Amponsah song?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study would aid music educators with literature concerning the similarities and differences between the recorded versions of Yaa Amponsah and a narrative to the song. This study would provide literature on how narrative theory is used in the study of popular music texts.

Definition of Terms

Rooksby (2010), defines a riff as a repeated melodic line often played by a rhythmic or melodic instrument like the guitar or keyboard that forms the basis or accompaniment of a composition.

Limitation

Due to Covid 19 pandemic and its repercussions it was impossible to schedule interviews with Ebo Taylor and Nana Kwame Ampadu.

Delimitation

Simon and Goes (2013), define delimitation as a study of characteristics that arise from defining the boundaries and conscious exclusion and decision plans made in the developmental stages. This study focused on lyrical analysis and the guitar riffs used in five Ghanaian composed recorded versions of the song named Yaa Amponsah. The study does not cover the analysis of other instruments used in the recorded versions.

Organisation of the Study

Chapter One of this study comprises the background to the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, the significance of the study, definitions of terms, limitations of the study, delimitation of the study and how the study is organized. Chapter Two is a general review of related literature. It covers the empirical review, and conceptual framework. Chapter Three has the research design, population, sampling procedure, data collection and data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data processing and analysis, and the chapter summary. Chapter four has the results and discussion after analysing the data in chapter three. Chapter five has the summary, conclusions, a recommendation, and a suggestion for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The goal of this study was to look at the guitar riff used in recorded renditions of the Yaa Amponsah song and tell a narrative for the Yaa Amponsah song by synthesizing the lyrics. This chapter examines studies by other researchers that are thought to be relevant to this topic. I use the empirical review of literature to compare the findings of this study to those of other similar studies to validate or refute past findings and conclusions, as well as to place the current study in context. The empirical review and theoretical framework are separated in this chapter. The empirical review offers insights into similar works by other academics in the fields of guitar history, African guitarism, the seperewa and the guitar in Ghana, and Yaa Amponsah. The conceptual framework concludes the chapter.

A history of the guitar

Guy (2013), says the word guitar originated from a Sanskrit word for string, “*târ*.” According to Alves, (2015), the guitar's linguistic origins can be linked to Sanskrit-derived dialects from northern India, such as Urdu and Bengali as well as those from central Asia, most notably modern Persia. After analysing numbers involved in the Sanskrit and Persian language Alves (2015), revealed several instruments had a connection with *tar* which means string. These instruments derived their names by adding an adjunct to specify the number of strings on the

instrument. Therefore, the words *dvi(do)*, *tri(se)*, *chatur (char)*, and *pancha(panj)* in Sanskrit became linked with the numbers two, three, four, and five. The word *quitarra* bears a striking resemblance to the Greek word *kitharas*, and Kasha (1968), posits that because the *kitharas* and *lyres* had the same number of strings (4), there could be a similarity. The etymological similarity between the words *kithara* and *guitar* has prompted some scholars, such as Bessaraboff (1941), to speculate that the *guitar* arose from the *kithara*, a theory that has been debunked by others, such as Kasha (1968). Kasha's essay mentions four postulates that have been created and tested against archaeological and literary evidence: *accordatura*, *morphology*, *complexity*, and *geographical continuity*. Alves (2015) uses two postulates developed by Kasha to counter the idea of the *guitar* having originated from the *kithara*. Alves posits the number of strings tends to increase with time, based on the *complexity* postulate. With this in mind, the *kithara*, which had seven to eleven strings, is unlikely to have evolved into a four-course instrument throughout the Middle Ages. The fact that the *kithara* had up to twenty strings before it became obsolete adds to the credibility of this theory. According to Alves, the *morphological hypothesis*, which he defines as an instrument's evolution process, can be tracked to its origins by monitoring very minute changes over extended periods of time. Prior to Kasha's presentation of these hypotheses, researchers such as Chase (1959), explored for alternate answers to the topic of the *guitar's* forebears, because the *kithara's* lack of a neck was a certain justification for its rejection as a forerunner. *Lutes* with long necks were discovered along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (early Mesopotamia and

Anatolia), lutes from Uzbekistan (dating from the first century), and Egyptian bas-reliefs from the Eleventh and Twelfth Dynasties (3762-3703 B.C) are all possible antecedents, according to Chase (1959). Tyler (1980), debunks historians' misinterpretations of the terms guitarra, guiterne, chitarra, and gittern, which they found in mediaeval texts and assumed were related to the guitar. These words, according to Alves, pertain to small, high-pitched instruments, but not to guitars. One of the most contentious questions about the guitar is that is it indigenous to European regions or brought to the Europe by the Arabs from about 500 to 1400–1500 CE? The guitar was generally acknowledged as having been brought into the Europe by Arabs. This hypothesis traces the ancestry of the guitar to the Arabic instrument known as *ūd*, an instrument that was played with the plectrum and had a short neck and had a round back. Although this hypothesis is reasonable, looking at the morphological postulate used to refute the kithara hypotheses, there is an apparent ancestral link between the *ūd* and the guitar. Scholars like Guy (2013), claims the Europeans fitted the *ūd* with frets and changed it into the lute.

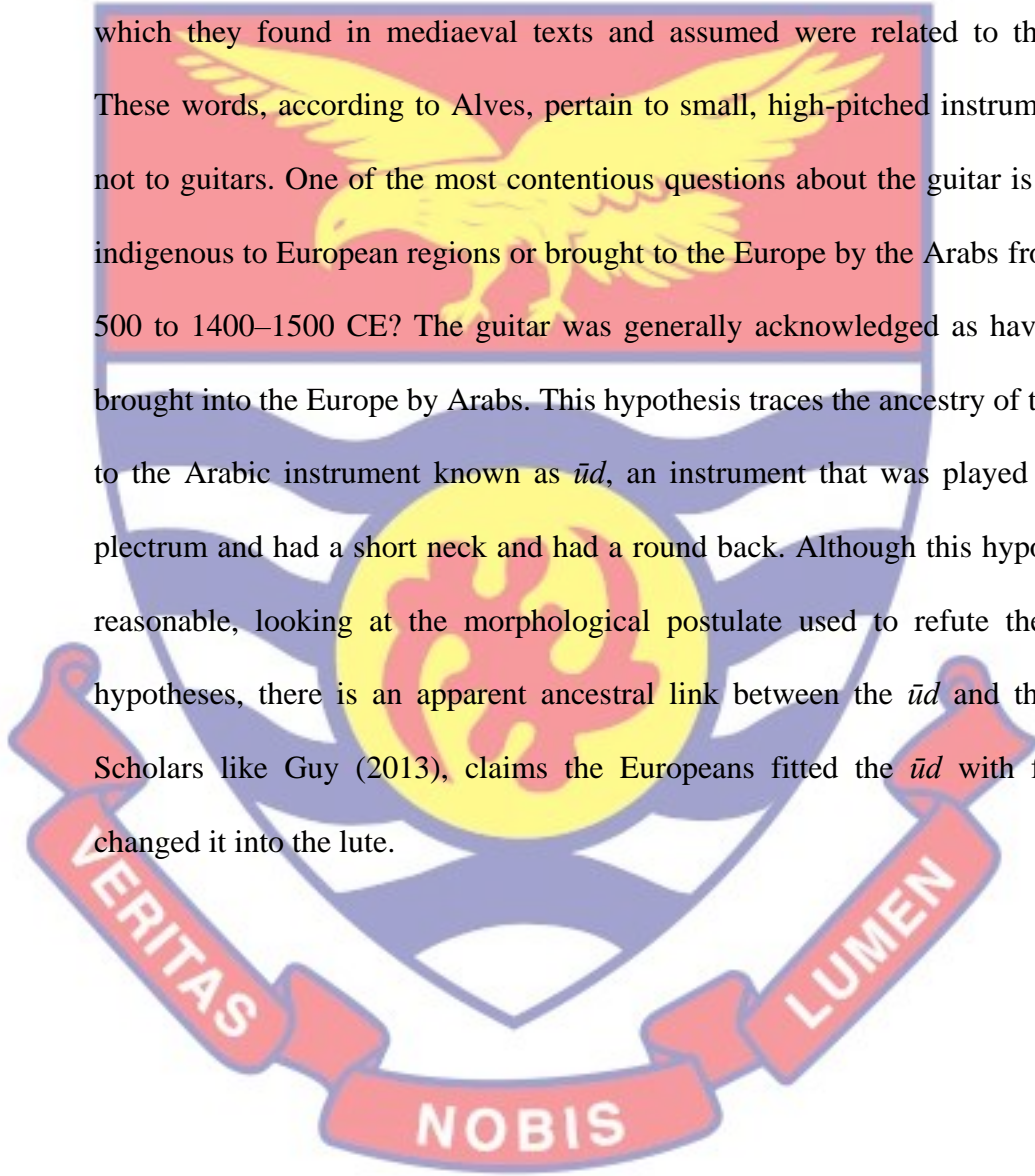




Figure 1: Al'ūd

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/art/ud>

A close look at the hypothesis presented so far begs the following question: is the guitar an amalgamation of both European and Arabian culture? The answer I would give is yes because there is a plausible trace of ancestry starting from the *ūd*, an Arabian instrument, to the lute, which can be described as an *ūd* with frets, as already stated above, lending credence to the *ūd* theory is the morphology postulate. Tyler & Sparks (2002), point out that the guitar would have had to evolve from instruments with single neck. Paying close attention to the fretted *ūd*, the lute, Alves (2015) & Jahnelt (2000) points out that one central aspect of classification during that time was the length of the neck which is connected to

the function and type of music that each instrument performs. Short lutes used numerous strings in series to transmit melodic sections without requiring extensive stretching of the hands by utilizing the instrument's first few places, obviating the requirement for a lengthy neck. Long-necked lute melodies, on the other hand, would be played on only one or two strings, with the rest providing accompaniment. As a result, long lutes typically contain only one or two strings, but short lutes typically have more than four. Applying the complexity postulate, as a result, lends even more credibility to the hypothesis. As long lutes, which I hypothesize as to the basis for the guitar, started with two strings, they moved to have an additional four, making its total strings six. I agree with Alves that including both harp-like and lute-like instruments as part of the process that leads to the appearance of guitar-like instruments at the same time would not be out of place. Alves (2015) mentions the first six string guitar, which dates from 1759 and is housed at The Hague's Gemeentemuseum. The instrument is labelled 'Francisco Sanguino me fecit,' and it is the first guitar to have a fan-strutting system to strengthen the table in the year 1759, in Sevilla.' Guy (2013) believes the guitar's modern appearance dates from circa 1850, when Spanish manufacturer Antonio Torres enlarged the size of the body and changed its proportions. It quickly became the established building norm, and it has remained unchallenged to this day. In comparison to the previous design, his guitar design was chosen because it improved volume and tone projection.



Figure 2: A guitar

Source: <https://brewminate.com/the-guitar-in-the-classic-and-romantic-periods-c-1750-1850/>

Alves (2015) and Wade (2010), posit that the discontinuation of course use was driven by the interaction of two critical components. New metal bass strings were being manufactured, and the difficulty of keeping two strings of a course tuned had been answered. A course is one or two adjacent strings on a guitar that are closely spaced relative to the other strings and are frequently played as a single string.

The precursor to the guitar in Ghana

The Hornbostel and Sachs's classification method of instruments was designed for musicologists, ethnologists, and curators of ethnological collections and cultural history. Several studies like Jairazbhoy (1990) and Kartomi (1990) have all criticized the Hornbostel-Sachs method of classification for the treatment of borderline instruments and also for ignoring dilating reeds or split reeds that are in South-East Asia and few other places. Still, I would use that classification system because I agree with Lee (2019) when he argues that the Hornbostel and Sach's method was created for theoretical and practical purposes. The guitar is under the chordophone subsection. Other instruments in the chordophone subsection within the confines of Ghana include the seperewa and the kologo. ¹The kologo instrument is a two-stringed lute. It is made up of the body composed of a calabash gourd resonator, which is covered by hairless animal skin. It is also made up of a wooden neck that protrudes from the gourd. The two strings of the instrument are made up of a bass and a treble string. A skin of an animal is tied around the wooden neck to hold the strings down, wrapped around a tuning peg. He notes that the addition of a tuning peg is a result of modernization. The author further posits that the instrument described can be found in the Northern parts of Ghana and the Southern parts of Burkina Faso. There are other instruments similar to the kologo in terms of construction, like the *kolgo*, *koliko*, and *koriko*

¹ ('Who Knows Tomorrow?', n.d.)



Figure 3: Kologo

Source: <http://kologomusic.blogspot.com/p/what-is-kologo.html>

The molo from Nigeria and the *xalam* (or *khalam*) from the Wolof ethnic group are two examples of comparable instruments found in the West African sub-region. *Bappe*, *diassare*, *hoddu*, *komsa*, *komo*, *kongtigi*, *koni*, *konting*, *ndere*, *ngoni*, and *tidinit* are some of the other names. The number of strings, which can range from one to five, and the material utilized in the body of the instrument, such as wood or gourd, are two major variations between these instruments.

Matczynski (2011) posits that *seperewa* is an amalgamation of the Akan language, *se* which means speak, *pre*, which means touch; and *wa*, which means small. Boateng (2016) and Harper (2016) says that the *seperewa* was a spoil of war after the Asante's captured it from the Gyaman of Bonduku in the present-day northern Ivory Coast at the southernmost tip of the trans-Saharan trade. Mali controlled the trade in the medieval periods. The *seperewa* has links to the Kora and Harp of the Sahel region. Osei Tutu (ruler of the Asante's) kept the instrument covered in gold for himself, employing a man who played it and bringing him to Kumasi as his personal singer. Beecham (1841) and Cruikshank

(1853) have documented the *seperewa* in the Gold Coast dating as far back as the seventeenth century. Over time, other sub-chiefs were allowed to get the instrument. Harper (2016), says that by the 1820s, the *seperewa* had moved from the courts to the homes of the masses. It is important to note that, once the *seperewa* moved out of the palaces into the hands of the locals, it was not only used to sing praises and appellations of the chiefs. It was also used in accompanying philosophical ideas and topics at funeral grounds and places where palm wine was drunk. Harper points out the fact that although the *seperewa* has lineage from Mali, the songs it produces are no way Malian in nature. Boateng (2016), claims the instrument could be adjusted to a hexatonic scale or a pentatonic scale. According to Adum-Attah (1997), the *seperewa* has no standard tuning. The instrument is tuned to suit the vocal capability of the singer. Adum-Attah goes on further to say that the instrument is tuned to the intervallic distance among the text “*ekoo nni nse nka ntam*”. Adum-Attah makes mention of the fact that the verbal text used in tuning the *seperewa* helps to remind the instrumentalist of the intervallic distances among the notes.

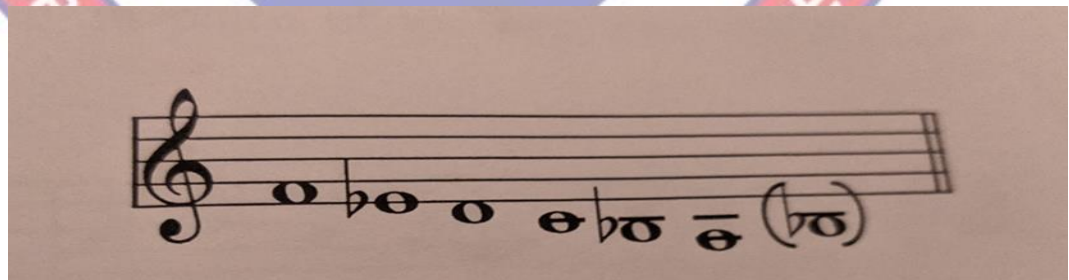


Figure 4: Intervallic distances between the notes of the *seperewa*.

Source: Adum-Attah (1997)

Adum-Attah posits that the intervallic relationship among the sung notes of the given text remains the same for all seperewa players. Still, it might differ slightly due to the individual's vocal range. It's also worth noting that there are six notes in the text to whose intervallic relationships the strings are tuned. The last note (the bracketed B flat), in the transcribed version, is played as a chord several times at the end of the text. The player sings the text to the first six notes and either only plays the last note in the way of a chord on the strings or hums it while playing. Matczynski finds similarities between the Akan seperewa and the kora of Mali and Senegambia. The seperewa is held against the torso, and both hands are used to pluck the parallel sides of the instrument. These strings run from a bent piece of wood to a bridge sitting atop a wooden box with goatskin stretched over the top. The seperewa in its first construction had only six strings (do, re, mi, fa, sol, la); newer varieties may have 8, 10, 12, or even more.



Figure 5: Seperewa

Source: <https://aloudafrica.blogspot.com/2016/04/seperewa-harp-of-royalty-and-african.html>

Literature gathered spoke more to the influence of the instruments found in the Southern parts of Ghana as having influenced the guitar culture of Ghana. Combing through the literature, scholars like Collins have alluded to the role the seperewa played in the influence of the guitar, which begs the question of other chordophones from different ethnic groups like the kologo.

History of guitar in Ghana

Schmidt (1994) claims that the guitar was introduced to the shores of Africa by the Portuguese; she goes on further to state that several writers alluded to the guitar being on the African continent as far back as the end of the nineteenth century. In Ghana, no single document provides the date the guitar was introduced, but Collins (1989) claims that the guitar became important with the arrival of the Kru seamen. Schmidt mentions that the Kru seamen who were initially from the south-eastern coastal area of Liberia have been credited as the first Africans to have nativized the guitar. Brooks Jr (1976) and Schmidt (1994) posits that the Kru is the prominent people responsible for disseminating pidgin English along the West coast of Africa and the primary agent for the diffusion of guitar in the early twentieth century. Schmidt goes on further to say that the Kru travelled along the shores of Ghana, Nigeria, Zaire, Angola, South Africa, Jamaica, England, and some cities in the United States of America like New York. Adika (2006) makes mention of the fact that while the Kru men worked on Western sailing and steamships, they learned to play mobile seamen instruments like the guitar, concertina, banjo, mandolin, harmonica, piccolo, pennywhistle. Collins (1989) claims that the Kru provided entertainment at seaport taverns

playing the guitar and other instruments. They were joined by the locals who played drums or rhythm on bottles, capturing the audience's attention who sat and enjoyed palm wine; hence, the name 'palm wine guitar' derived its name from its musical context. To Collins, the guitar was the essential instrument to the Kru, who applied the two-finger way of playing the guitar. The history of the guitar in Ghana can be associated with colonialism. But through the Africanization of the instrument by the Kru and the innovation of Ghanaian instrumentalists the guitar has become an important and integral part of the musical history of Ghana.

African guitarism

Collins (2006) defines African guitarism as the application of African principles to the Western guitar. As the discourse of decolonization ensues, several scholars like Schmidt and Collins have recognized the guitar's role in remodelling indigenous genres across the West African sub-region. Rycroft (1961) refers to African guitarism when he alludes to a Zulu guitarist Mwemda Jean Bosco, who had a standard tuning Spanish guitar he self-learned through African musical ideas. Kauffman (1975) asserts that indigenous musical polyphonic principles may be more efficiently expressed on the western guitar than local gourd bows. The guitar allows singers to project on to one guitar additional voice part that is hard to achieve on a gourd bow. Kauffman's article focused on how African musicians created and adapted the guitar. Schmidt (1994) goes on further to say that most guitar styles can be traced back to older music traditions, like seperewa in the case of Ghana. Schmidt also gives an example of the jelis, a group of hereditary professional musicians who have been able to adapt to the guitar and

have made many guitar virtuosos because they had developed the technical facility and creativity from other instruments, which made the shift possible, Schmidt gives an example of acoustic or “folk guitarists,” who mainly were labor migrants of the 1940s and '60s who transferred the elements of the mbira technique to playing the guitar.



Figure 6: Mbira

Source:

https://ichngo.net/network_detail/?category=&id=70&subject=INVENTORIES.

Brown (1994) asserts that the guitar and mbira represented a dichotomy of values and culture in Zimbabwe. He presents a symbiotic relationship between the guitar and the mbira in Zimbabwe. To him, the choice made by the Zimbabweans to play the guitar or the mbira or to develop new guitar or mbira styles has shown they have reconciled tensions between rural and urban life. The symbiotic relationship between these two instruments has shaped a contemporary culture in Zimbabwe that takes elements from rural and urban, African and European sources. He postulates that the assimilation of musical ideas from the Europeans was forced on to the Zimbabweans. People thought that the dependence on European institutions and their way of thinking would lead to social progress. He goes on further to say that by the early 1940s, the guitar had begun to usurp the role of the mbira in music-making, and it was as a result of labor migration, which led people to move to South Africa to work on white farmlands. The guitar and mbira co-existed until the guitar usurped the mbira among the lower classes and urban music culture. Musically, Brown (1994) asserts that the folk guitarists bridged the gap between rural and urban music by transferring some elements of mbira playing style to the guitar and expressing the consciousness of the first generation of urban migrants. Thus, for the older musical traditions to survive, Schmidt (1994), posits that transformation to a new genre (instrument) could be a survival strategy. Schmidt asserts that guitar music in Africa has been influenced by traditions before it, whether knowingly or unknowingly. She uses the term "modern traditionalists" to describe guitarists who draw on older, indigenous traditions as sources of musical, ideas, inspiration, and identity. An example is the

Maskanda, a contemporary South African music whose popular instrument is the guitar. The guitar dwells on musical traditions from the Zulu (Davies 1994). Schmidt uses the word "progressive indigenization" in personal communication with John Collins. She says the term should not be viewed lightly as an extension of older forms but as a process of developing a musical aesthetic and a command of different genres, which to me begun to throw light on the discourse of African guitarism unknowingly. From the literature discussed, it is evident that the principle of African guitarism is entrenched in the guitar's usurpation of some local instruments. The most popular instruments are European instruments that we have assimilated into our African culture; hence, students now find it easier to identify with foreign instruments than traditional instruments. Perusing the literature on the discourse of African guitarism makes the discourse of decolonization in the space of African music difficult to understand. Questions I ask myself with the ongoing discourse of decolonization are how does the current education system provide an insight to what happened before? And what is meant by decolonization? If decolonization means doing away with foreign elements in our education system, then I think it is not possible because the current generation has adopted these foreign elements embedded in our educational system as "African". So, if academia cannot provide a laid-out plan as to what happens after decolonization has been achieved or the processes to decolonization in a world that has been described as a global village, then the talk of decolonization is an *ad hoc*. But, if decolonization means the understanding of current situations, knowing the borrowed elements in our education system, to create an awareness

of what was, to help build what is expected, then decolonization is possible. I think it is impossible to do away with the foundations laid down for us, as it is deeply rooted in the structures of the West. I see that there is nowhere to run from the effects of colonialism, as is it evident in every aspect of the life of a modern-day African. But what I think we can do is admit what is ours, what is not ours, what we have adapted to move on as a people, and make these differences explicit.

The seperewa and the guitar in Ghana

Adum-Attah (1997), Boateng (2016) and Harper (2016), all allude that the importance of the seperewa in the southern part of Ghana saw a decline with the introduction of foreign instruments like the guitar. Boateng mentions that, according to oral history, after the rural musicians got into contact with the Kru, they learned some of the techniques and practices used by the Kru in their guitar play. Rural musicians, according to Boateng, converted the guitar riffs played by the Kru into expanded chord progressions built on the harmonies of the seperewa, creating styles like odonson, which became popular among local guitar ensembles. However, Collins notes that the tunes of traditional Asante “blues” known as Odonson were transferred from the seperewa to the guitar, and Adum-Attah also agrees with this statement. Also, Harper states that many traditional songs were transferred onto the guitar. Therefore, the guitar is playing what the seperewa played. Schmidt (1994) points out that older guitar band highlife styles like odonson, which differed because of their performance techniques, were transferred from the seperewa to the guitar. King (1966), states that the Ghanaian

highlife guitarist played riffs identical to what the seperewa played. Matczynski (2011) further mentions that the seperewa's playing technique inspired the unique style of playing the highlife guitar. He claims that palm wine music and other highlife genres arose as a result of guitarists' predilection for tuning pegs, mass production, durability, and portability. Nonetheless, the seperewa's melodic style and technique were kept and transferred to the guitar. Local musicians transformed Kru guitarists' guitar riffs into expanded chord progressions-built harmonies of the Akan seperewa, resulting in styles like odonson, which was said by Boateng (2016), is hard to accept. This is because the seperewa had long been in use in the music scene long before the guitar arrived. If the rural Ghanaian musicians converted guitar riffs based on traditional harmonies, then I ask, what were the rural musicians playing on the seperewa? I agree with the assertion made by Adum-Attah, (1997) and Collins (1989) when they say that what the guitar played was transferred from the seperewa.

The Yaa Amponsah song

Collins (1994) posits that the song is about a lover who married a woman (Yaa Amponsah), and then they separated. According to him, Kwame Asare and his Kumasi trio recorded Yaa Amponsah in June 1928. Collins, (2006 p.179), wrote the lyrics of the refrain of the song in English:

Let's remain lovers, even though our marriage is over.

Nothing can stop my love for you,

Not even your mother who threatens to douche me with pepper

Nor your father with an enema of boiling water.

You are so sweet;

If I were a millionaire,

I would have given you all my wealth:

Your silky hair, your graceful neck like adenkum gourd,

Your blackberry eyes.

Collins points to the fact that there have been several recorded renditions of Yaa Amponsah, like E.K Nyame's rendition, E.T Mensah and the Tempos band's rendition, and a Nigerian version by the Jolly boys Orchestra. Collins (2018) claims that the song was composed around 1918 in an Akan community called Apedwa. He continues that Kwame Asare and a group of young men had been sent as cocoa brokers by a British Merchant, S. Barnet. While there they established the town's first guitar and concertina band and the town's first dancing club. They employed their drummer's sister, Yaa Amponsah, to teach the locals how to dance their highlife in imported ballroom style. Collins further states that a British Achimota College music teacher, W.E Ward recalls hearing the song played by a guitarist in Kyebi in 1924, and Ward later notated it in 1927. According to Adum-Attah (1997), the Yaa Amponsah melody was composed at Apedwa in the Eastern Region in the 1920s by Arthur Sam, a Fante storekeeper from Anomabo. The man settled in Apedwa after staying in Britain for some time. He further says that Sam fell in love and married a woman from Apedwa called Yaa Amponsah, who was also known as Agnes Asiamah. Sam was a very adept

guitar player, and so when the marriage fell on rocks, he composed this song to woo her back. Adum-Attah (1997) claims that the song was a street ballad in the early 1920s. Collins (1989) posits that the Yaa Amponsah riff was an adaptation of the mainline riff that the Kru introduced. Sprigge (1961) suggests that the composers of Yaa Amponsah melody may have found inspiration from the indigenous Akan triple offbeat to create the melody. He sees similarities between the Kete Apenten rhythm, the sikyi rhythm, and the Adowa rhythm. Collins (2006) suggests that after the mainline riff had been introduced to Ghana, the Fante guitarists developed a playing style against the mainline riff instead of playing alongside it. According to him further says that perhaps, the Fante style that developed playing against riff is responsible for the offbeat applied by the Fante guitarist, an example of African guitarism.

From the literature gathered, there seems to be paucity on analysis done on the Yaa Amponsah song, and there is no narrative of the song. I also couldn't find a transcription of the lyrics of any version of the Yaa Amponsah song. I was able to find the refrain of the 1928 version in only English. Although Collins talks about the Yaa Amponsah song there is nothing concerning the transcription and translating of the 1928 version of the song or any other version of the song. Davies (1994) posits that the guitarist as a music specialist in African popular music bears a strong resemblance to the role of a professional storyteller, spokesperson, or a praise singer, and not only were these traditional roles of musicians carried into popular music but it carried along with it the high level of professionalism, individual creativity of musicians like the *jeli* and griots who

have kept stories alive through music and also told stories or histories using accompanying instruments like kora. Inferring from what Davies said, I think it is plausible that the Yaa Amponsah song is a song that tells a story about a lover who married a woman but the marriage broke down.

Theoretical framework

Ravitch and Riggan (2016) says that theoretical frameworks might be borrowed from other scholarly research or created by the researcher for the study being done by the researcher. For my research, I have adopted Scherer and Zentner (2004) emotional effects of music: production rules. Originally, the article is based on the hypothesis that music expresses emotion. The paper sought to formalize the processes whereby music elicits emotional effects in listeners beyond what the music sounds. They also discussed different determinants and their interaction type in producing affective outcomes within the confines set out. A rule is defined as regularity or lawfulness of the effects discussed that can be expressed in concrete predictions or hypotheses: they proposed structural features, suprasegmental features, performance features, and listener features. All of the qualities of a composer's score that a skilled performer must respect are divided into two categories: segmental features and suprasegmental features. Segmental features are the acoustic properties of the musical structure's building blocks, which are individual sounds produced by the singing voice or a musical instrument, which can be individual tones or chords. This hypothesis directs my research by focusing my attention on the harmonic structure and chordal progression used in the many recorded versions of Yaa Amponsah.

Performance features are how a performer executes a piece of music. This consists of a stable identity which is made up of stable identity and ability. The stable identity is made up of physical appearance, expression, reputation, and ability which is made up of the technical skills, interpretative skills of the performer, transient performer related variables also known as performance state, which comprises interpretation, concentration, motivation, mood, stage presence, audience contact. The performance feature in my study helps me to be able to choose a particular version of a recorded version of the song.

Listener features refer to the listener's socio-cultural identity and the symbolic coding conventions prevalent in a particular culture or a subculture. These features are comprised of interpretation rules shared in a group, culture, or subculture, inference disposition based on personality, prior experience, and musical talent. Transient listener states such as motivational state of the listener, concentration, and mood may also affect the inference drawn from the music. The contextual feature refers to certain aspects of the performance and the listening situation. The location of the performance and the listening situation may be a recording studio, open-air site, or in a car. The listener features allow me to be aware of my biases whilst doing the work.

To help me tell a narrative using the lyrics in the recorded Yaa Amponsah songs I used the narrative theory by Nicholls (2007) as an analytical tool in the study of popular music texts. Nicholls outlines five basic levels at which narrativity can operate in popular music. The first level is what he refers to as a control level, in which there is no narrative discourse in the musical context because there is no

plot per se in the lyrics. The second level is when the lyrics contain narrative discourse aspects that are neither reflected or supported by the (neutral) musical background. The third level is where the lyrics incorporate narrative discourse aspects that are backed up by the musical background. The fourth level has components of narrative discourse in both lyrics and music, which work independently to some extent but always in relation to an overarching plot, which matches the Yaa Amponsah song. A complicated narrative discourse is rendered across numerous media, including lyrics, music, writing, and art work, at the final level. The application of narrative theory to popular music, according to Nicholls, truly comes into its own when it comes to the analysis of bigger units, whether prolonged tracks or, more specifically, albums having a large number of distinct songs that are in some way related to one another. So, with this I narrated the Yaa Amponsah song by creating a playlist of all recorded versions of the Yaa Amponsah song, and synthesizing them based on their narrative similarities to tell a story or stories in relation to the overlying story.

Chapter Summary

In chapter two, I did an empirical review of studies conducted by other researchers that are related to this study. I also looked at two theories and how it directed my work.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Overview

This study analysed the recorded versions of Yaa Amponsah and also sought to tell a narrative of the song. This chapter deals with the methodology adopted for the study. The methods section describes the rationale for applying specific procedures or techniques to identify, select, and analyse information applied to understanding the research problem, thereby allowing the reader to critically evaluate the study's overall validity and reliability (Kallet, 2004). The research design, population and sample procedure, research instrument, data collection, and data analysis procedure are presented.

Research design

Qualitative research is a method of investigating and comprehending the meaning that individuals or groups attach to a social or human issue. This process entails the development of new questions and processes, the collection of data in the participant's environment, data analysis that builds inductively from specifics to broad themes, and the interpretation of the data by the researchers. Those who engage in qualitative research promote an approach to study that values an inductive approach, an emphasis on human meaning, and the necessity of presenting a situation's complexity (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Hodges et al. (2008) describes discourse analysis as studying and analysing the use of language. Tannen, D., Hamilton, H.E., & Schiffrin, D. (2015) says the

description of discourse analysis falls into the following groupings: (1) anything beyond the sentence, (2) language use, and (3) a broader range of social practice that includes non-linguistic and non-specific instances of language. Rather than agreeing on a single definition, Tannen et al., (2015) argue that a wide range of definitions represents the various approaches to discourse analysis. Discourse analysis, according to Foucault (2013), is more than simply the language of an individual speaking; it is also the wider systems of thought inside a historical place that makes certain things thinkable and sayable while also limiting who can say them. Three approaches to discourse analysis are described by Hodges et al. (2008). The first method is formal linguistic discourse analysis, in which samples of oral or written material are taken and analysed for linguistic, grammatical, and semantic uses and meanings. The second approach is the empirical discourse analysis, where samples are taken from oral language and written text: and data on the uses of the text in a social setting for a micro and macro analysis of the ways in which language and or texts construct social practices. The last approach is the critical discourse analysis. With the critical discourse analysis, samples are taken from written text or oral languages and data on the uses of the text in social settings: and data on the institutions and individuals who produce and are produced by the language texts, for a macro analysis of how discourses construct what is possible for individuals and institutions to think and speak. In order to achieve the set-out research objectives the researcher adopted the discourse analysis design.

Population and sampling procedures

The population of my study is all commercially released songs titled Yaa Amponsah from the first known recording by the Kumasi Trio in 1928 to the year 2020. A sample is a subset of actual data sources selected from a wider pool of possible data sources. Probability sampling and nonprobability sampling are the two most used methods for picking samples. The former relies solely on a group's population size to determine how many of its members will be included in the sample. Simultaneously, the latter focuses on choosing sample members based on their capacity to meet particular requirements. Yin (2015) states that in qualitative sampling, samples are chosen in a deliberate manner with the goal of selecting samples that will yield relevant data in the given topic of study. For this study, my samples are the recorded Yaa Amponsah songs from the year 1928 to the year 2020, sung or performed by Ghanaians. Upon searching through the J.H.K Nketia archives, the Bokoor African Popular Music Archives Foundation (B.A.P.M.A.F.), the personal library of John Collins, and YouTube, I sampled songs totalling five, they are

1. Yaa Amponsah by Kwame Asare and his Kumasi trio released in 1928.



Figure 7: Kwame Asare and his Kumasi Trio

Source: J.H.K. Nketia archive

2. Ogyatanaa show band from the Yerefrefre album: Yaa Amponsah released in 1974



Figure 8: Yerefrefre album cover
Source: J.H.K. Nketia archive

3. Nana Kwame Ampadu from the Evergreen tunes Vol V: Yaa Amponsah special released in 1975.
4. Ebo Taylor from the Appia Kwa Bridge album: Yaa Amponsah released in 2012

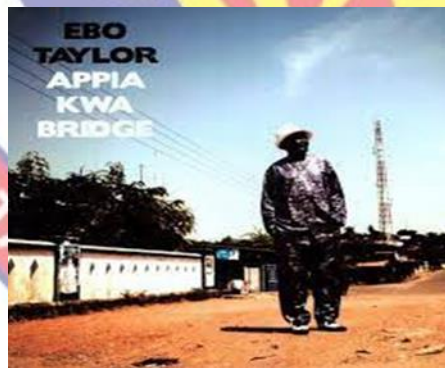


Figure 9: Appia Kwa Bridge album cover
Source: J.H.K. Nketia archive

5. Agya Koo Nimo: Yaa Amponsah instrumental released on YouTube in 2013. From the Album Vintage Palm wine, Licensed to YouTube by The Orchard Music (on behalf of Otrabanda Records & Music); Concord Music Publishing, BMI - Broadcast Music Inc., Muserk Rights Management, and 3 Music Rights Societies.

A key informant, according to Marshall (1996), is an expert source of information. Interviewing an individual or a group of individuals who are likely to supply needed information, thoughts, and insights on a certain issue is also defined by Kumar, (1989). According to Kumar, key informant interviews are mostly qualitative and are conducted with the use of interview guides that outline the subjects and issues to be discussed throughout the session. My key informants for this research were Agya Koo Nimo of the African Studies Department of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and Nana Kyeremanteng of the School of Performing arts, University of Ghana, Legon. Tremblay (1957) says that for one to qualify as a key informant, the person should have a role in the society that has exposed them to the knowledge the researcher wants. My key informants are widely known globally as having mastered the guitar and the seperewa, that is why I chose them. There were other people I tried to interview like Ebo Taylor, Nana Kwame Ampadu, Aka Blay and Osei Korankye, but I could not schedule meetings with them due to the covid 19 pandemic.

Data collection instruments

Flick (2017), qualitative data collecting entails selecting and producing verbal (or visual) material for the sake of analysing and comprehending phenomena, social domains, subjective and collective experiences, and related meaning-making processes. Talking, listening, seeing, and analysing items such as sounds, photos, or digital phenomena can all be used to collect data. Qualitative data collection, according to Flick, strives to give resources for an empirical analysis of a phenomenon that is the subject of a study. It also aids in the development of a methodological viewpoint on the phenomena and the selection of a methodological approach. This helps define a methodological approach for collecting adequate data for understanding the exciting phenomenon, a problem at hand. The songs used for this study were obtained from the J.H.K Nketia achieves at the University of Legon, the personal library of Professor John Collins and YouTube. For my key informant interviews I used the unstructured interview format. Since I needed an in-depth knowledge about Yaa Amponsah, using an unstructured interview format allowed me ask to follow-up questions (probe) to some of the things they had said that needed further clarification. The questions for the semi-structured interview guide were developed by me with the help of my supervisor. Items on the interview guide were geared towards gaining insight about seperewa and the Yaa Amponsah song.

Data collection procedures

The songs used for this research were collected from the J.H.K Nketia archive at Legon, You Tube and the personal music library of Prof. John Collins.

Yaa Amponsah from Ogyatanaa's Yerefrefre album and Nana Kwame Ampadu's Yaa Amponsah from the Evergreen tunes Vol V: which was released in 1975 was collected from the J.H.K Nketia archives. At the J.H.K Nketia archives, I found that they had many collections of highlife songs from the 1920s to the early 2000s. I had to go through over one thousand songs in my quest to find songs with the Yaa Amponsah. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the J.H.K archives worked on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, due to my time table I had to spend a week at the archives. I finished my sampling at the J.H.K. Nketia archives on 20th May, 2021. I sampled the songs by playing and listening to them.

Kwame Asare and his Kumasi Trio's Yaa Amponsah was sent to me via email by Prof. John Collins. I made first contact with Prof. John Collins via email on the 2nd of May, 2021. Through series of emails, he sent me the song on 19th May 2021.

Agya Koo Nimo's Yaa Amponsah instrumental and Ebo Taylors Yaa Amponsah from his Appia Kwa bridge album was downloaded from YouTube on the 5th of April 2021.

Data analysis procedure

To analyse the Yaa Amponsah riffs, I adopted some critical concepts from Scherer and Zentner (2001), emotional effects of music: production rules to analyse the riffs I would be working with. These key concepts are structural features, performance features, listener features, and contextual features.

Structural feature is divided into the segmental features and suprasegmental features. Segmental features consist of the acoustic characteristics of musical building blocks of musical structure made up of individual sound tones produced by a singing voice or a specific instrument. The segmental features would also consist of the individual tone, interval, and chords. The suprasegmental features consist of systematic configurational changes concerning sound sequences over time. To analyze the structural features of the songs, I used Cubase 11, spectra layers 7, finale 2020, and Melodyne 5. In analyzing the segmental features like individual tones, intervals, and chords. I uploaded the songs as a wave stereo file into Cubase 11.

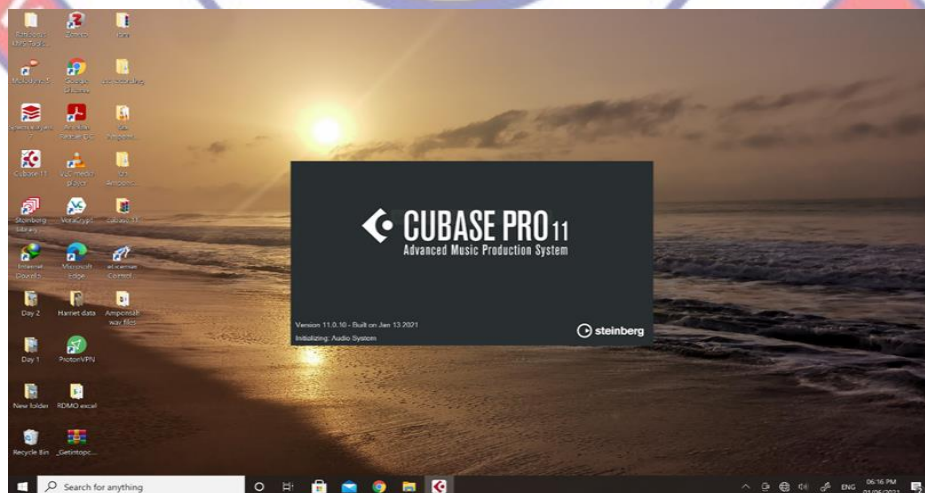


Figure 10: Opening Cubase 11 pro software

Most of the songs have bad sound quality overall. So, to bypass this problem, I used spectral layers 7 to extract the lead vocal and guitar parts of the songs to get a cleaner version of the song without other instruments. After this, I used either the Melodyne 5 or the Cubase 11 pro to get the guitar parts in a midi (musical instrument digital interface). I listened to the guitar midi and made corrections to the work of the A.I. because the quality of the original songs was bad. After that, I sent the midi to finale 2020 for the music to be scored.

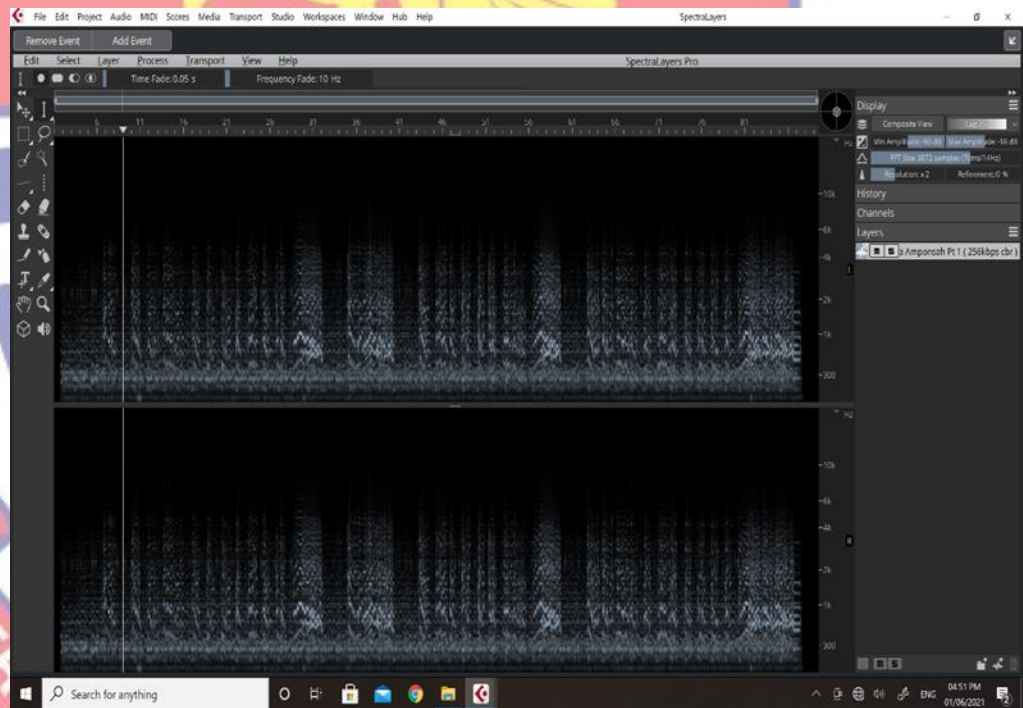


Figure 11: Spectra layers opened in Cubase 11

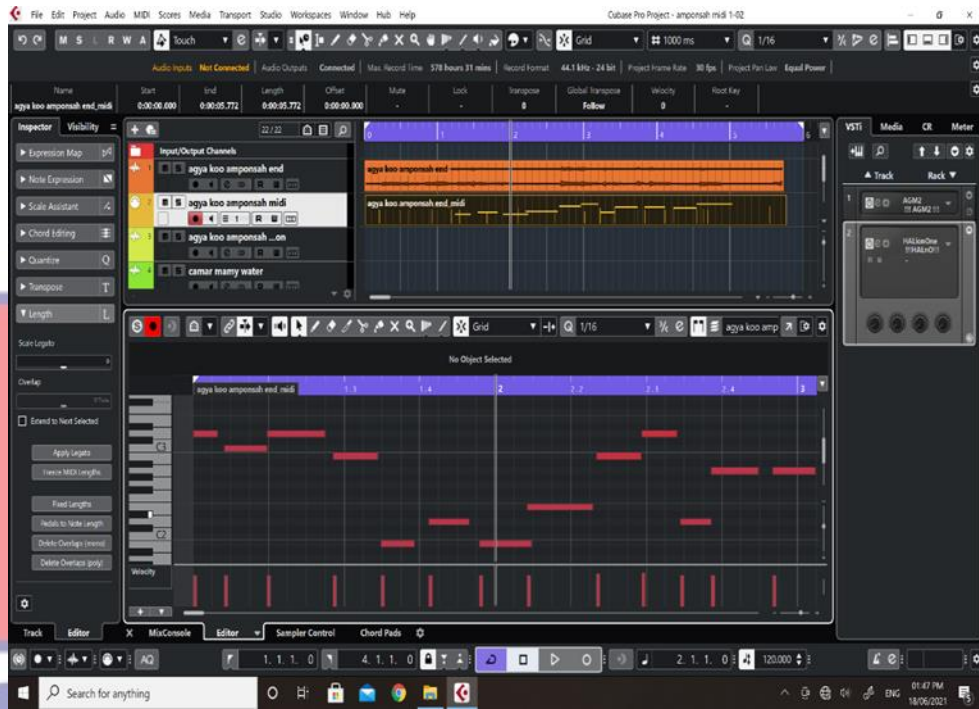


Figure 12: Unmixed song and midi file in Cubase 11

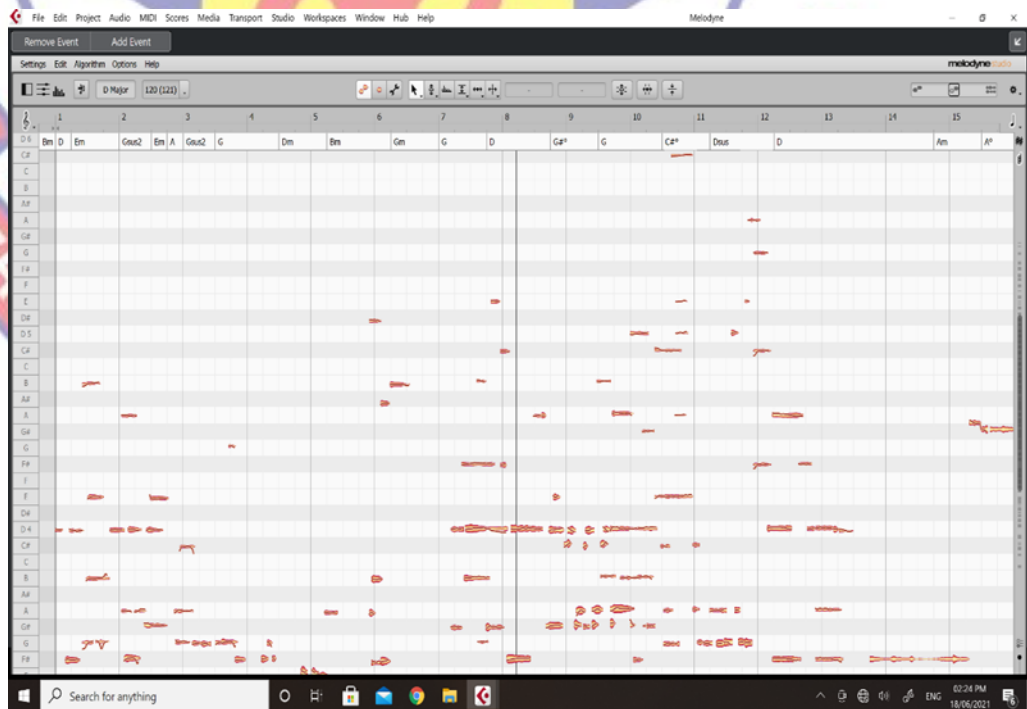


Figure 13: Pitch detection on melodyne

YAA AMPONSAH

EBO TAYLOR



Figure 14: Scored midi file on finale

I first used this procedure to transcribe the original variations of Yaa Amponsah to get the segmental characteristics I got from the original variations to pick the variations of Yaa Amponsah from the J.H.K. Nketia archive and from Prof. John Collins.

Performance features. This feature refers to how the performer executed the particular piece of music. This is made up of stable identity, which comprises physical appearance, expression, reputation, and performance-related variables referred to as performance state onwards, including interpretation, concentration, motivation, mood, stage presence, and audience contact. To get this feature, I used the metadata on YouTube pages and from the archives.

Listener features. This refers to the individual's socio-cultural identity and symbolic analysis conventions prevalent in my society and what the listener can make out of the song.

Contextual features. This attribute relates to specific aspects of the performance and listening scenario; for example, the performance and listening situation could take place in a concert hall or a recording studio. The year in which a song or riff was first released. The music can be broadcast by loudspeakers, headphones, or without any technical assistance. The music could be uninterrupted, or it could be interrupted by the sirens of an ambulance or the coughing of a concertgoer. Metadata from YouTube and the archive were also used to create this functionality.

To tell a narrative of the Yaa Amponsah song. I listened to the four of my sampled songs. I placed them into a playlist and grouped the songs based on the narrative similarities based on the already provided narrative history provided by Collins (1994) that the song is about a lover who married a woman (Yaa Amponsah) and then they separated. After listening to the songs, I also developed my own narratives based on the lyrics of the songs and converging narratives of these songs. Of the four songs, Nana Ampadu's version and Kwame Asare's versions had a lot of similarities in terms of narration techniques so I synthesized these two songs to form one narrative. In an interview with Daniel Amponsah, popularly known as Agya Koo Nimo in his office at the African studies department of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology on

Monday 26th October, 2020, I used his narrative of the Yaa Amponsah song to form a narrative using Ebo Taylor's version of Yaa Amponsah.

Chapter summary

This chapter looked at the research design used for this study, the population and sample methods, data collection instruments, data collection procedures and the data analysis procedure.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Advanced Organizer

The purpose of this research was to analyse Yaa Amponsah song and also tell a narrative for the story. Overall, I chose five locally composed songs with the title Yaa Amponsah. Qualitative data was collected using discourse analysis procedure and key informant interviews.

Presentation of lyrics

Table one (below) contains the original lyrics and its corresponding English translation of Kwame Asare's version of Yaa Amponsah recorded in 1928.

Table 1: Song lyrics by Kwame Asare and the Kumasi Trio

Twi	English
<i>Cbaa Amponsah</i>	lady Amponsah
<i>ma gyae aware, gyae aware</i>	I have gotten a divorce
<i>Cdc yewu Amponsah</i>	my love Amponsah
<i>ma gyae aware</i>	I have gotten a divorce
<i>Cdc yewu Amponsah</i>	my love Amponsah
<i>ma gyae aware</i>	I have gotten a divorce
<i>Wc na ntete</i>	your mother should pick pepper
<i>moko bj sam</i>	Give me an enema with it
<i>wc agya noa nsu</i>	your father should boil hot water

hyew mbj sam Give me an enema with it
Amponsah ma gyae aware Amponsah, I have divorced you
Wa yase nwii bj your pubic hairs
ma wc abc ka would make you go in debt

Wc tiri nhwii your hair
tesj siri kyi ahoma like silk thread
Wc tiri nhwii Your hair
tesj siri kyi ahoma, Amponsah like silk thread Amponsah

Cbaa Amponsah Lady Amponsah
na me dc no yi is the one I love
Cbaa Amponsah lady Amponsah
Te sj bronu besia is like a white lady
Cdc yewu Amponsah My love Amponsah
na me dc no dodo is the one I love so much

Yaa Amponsah me nni Yaa Amponsah I don't have
sika bjjj wo ho adej money for your bride price
Amponsah gyae aware,e Amponsah get a divorce
Amponsah gyae aware Amponsah get a divorce

Cbaa Amponsah Lady Amponsah
tesj tete ²amonsin is like olden days under ware

Nso Amponsah gyae aware but Amponsah has got a divorce

Cdc yewu Amponsah My love Amponsah

² I found two meanings for the term amonsin. 1st meaning: sanitary pad. 2nd meaning: an under garment used for keeping money by market women.

Amponsah

Sika ntesj mpo ano anwea

anka ma ma wo bi

Sika ntesj mpo ano awia

Cdc yewu me de sika

bjma wo ayj ade

Cbaa Amponsah ma

gyae aware?

Ama wo aware gyae

Ayj me yaw dodo

Cdc yewu anka me

dc wc djm yi

Amponsah na wo ndc ma

Ame me dc wc

na wo ndc ma

Amponsah gyae aware, eee

Cdc yewu

Yaa Amponsah aware

aware yi

Ma gyae aware

ma gyae aware

dze aware yi a

Gyae aware

Amponsah

Money is not like sand of the sea

or else I would have given you some

money is not like sea shore sand

My love I would give you money

to you, to do things

lady Amponsah have

you gotten a divorce?

You've let your divorce

has caused me too much pain

My love, but I

really love you

Amponsah, don't you love me

As for me, I love you

don't you love me

Amponsah get a divorce

My love

Yaa Amponsah this marriage

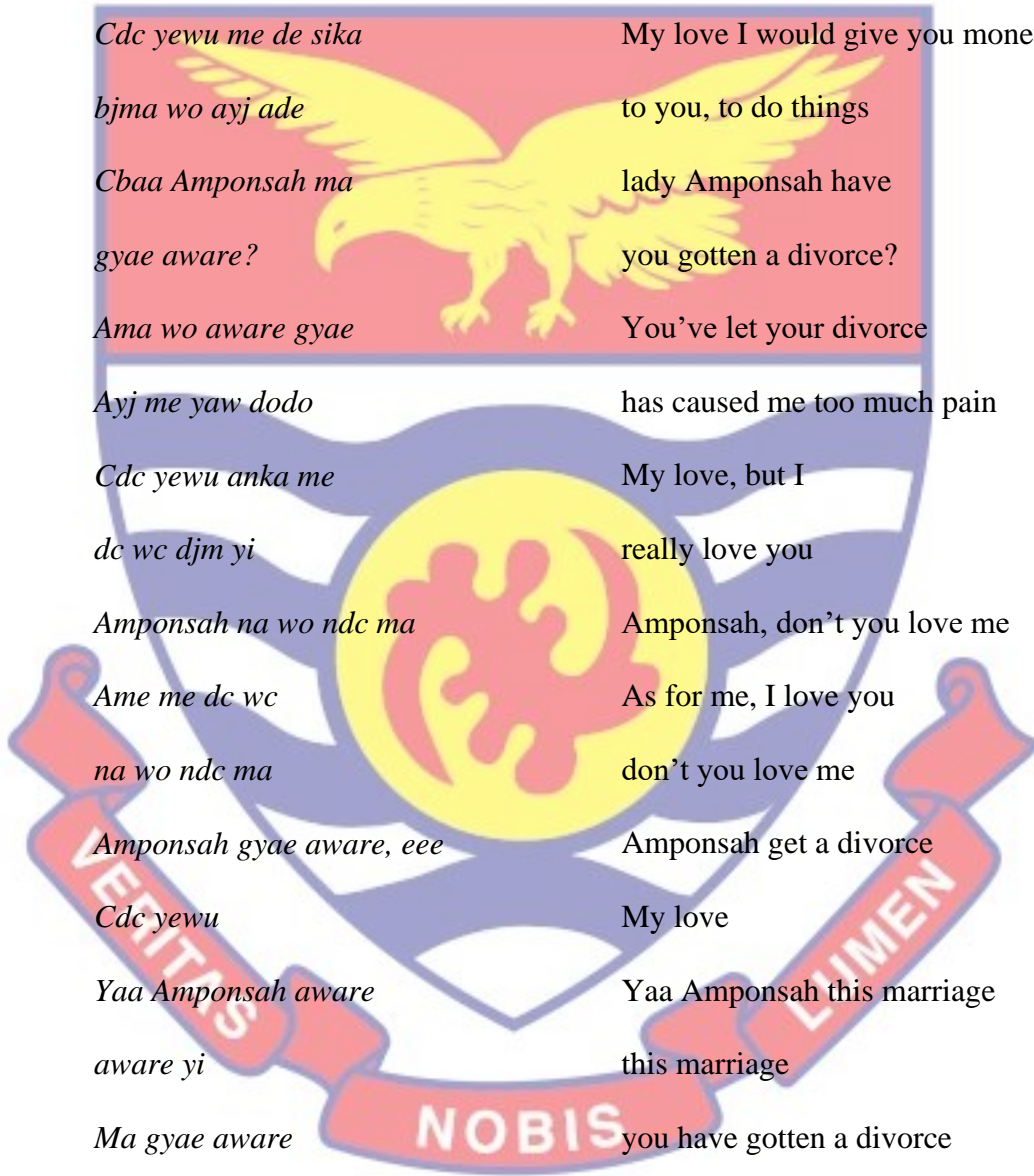
this marriage

you have gotten a divorce

a divorce

if you have gotten a divorce

get a divorce



na yjn twi mpena and let us be lovers

Yaa Amponsah Yaa Amponsah

ma gyae aware a I got a divorce

Gyae aware get a divorce

na yjn twe mpena and let us get married

Amponsah ma gyae aware Amponsah, I have gotten a divorce

Wc na nti ti moko your mother should pick pepper

mbj sam Give me an enema with it

we gya noa your father should boil hot water

nsu shi mbj sam Give me an enema

Obaa Amponsah Lady Amponsah

ma gyae aware I have gotten a divorce

Obaa Amponsah Lady Amponsah

ma gyae aware I have gotten a divorce

Obaa tumtum tesj ahoma A black lady like a thread

Obaa tumtum tesj bronni A black lady like a white lady

Obaa besia tesj bankyi black lady like cassava

Amponsah gyae aware Amponsah get a divorce

Gyae aware, Get a divorce

Yaa Amposah , gyae aware oo Yaa Amponsah, get a divorce.

Table two (below) contains the original lyrics and the corresponding translation of the Ogyatanaa version recorded under the Yerefrefre album released in 1974.

Table two: Song Lyrics by Ogyatanaa show band

Twi	English
jko, jnc, jsa ... ogya!	One, two, three fire
cnono oo	there she is
Cbaa Yaa Amponsah	lady Yaa Amponsah
Cbaa aa ne ho jfj	the beautiful lady
Cbaa aa amanfoc bc ne din	the lady whose name is on many lips
Amanfoc mo mpene no jj...	People give her a shout
yeeeeeee	yeeeeeee
pene tenten... eeeeeeee	a long shout.,eeeeeee
pene tiawa... jjn... jwej!	A short shout . eee,ok
Amanfoc momma yjnkc jj!	People let's go
Yaa yaa yaaa yaa ya	Yaa yaa yaaa yaa ya
Yaa Amponsah ee gyae aware 2x	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
Gyae aware o, gyae aware ooo	Get a divorced, get a divorce
Yaa Amponsah ee gyae aware 2x	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
Cbaa Amponsah ee gyae aware yi a	Lady Amponsah get a divorce
Yaa Amponsah ee gyae aware	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
Wokcn fjjfj tesj adenkum yi a	your beautiful neck like ³ adenkum

³ Gourd calabash

Yaa Amponsah ee gyae aware	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
Wotiri nwin tesj sirikiyi ahoma yi a	Your hair like silk thread
Yaa Amponsah ee gyae aware	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
Wo honam a jgyegyete tesj ayerjmo yi	Your skin glows like lightning

Yaa Amponsah ee gyae aware	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
Wohocfj tesj abrcnoma yi a	you are beautiful like a dove
Yaa Amponsah ee gyae aware	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
Wode begya yjnhc akcware ampara?	Are you truly leaving us to go and marry?

Yaa Amponsah ee gyae aware	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
wei dej yjnmpene oo	As for this one, we will not agree
yjnmpene koraa koraa o	we will not agree at all

Yaa Amponsah ee gyae aware	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
Cbaa Amponsah ee gyae aware yi a	Lady Amponsah get a divorce

Yaa Amponsah ee gyae aware	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
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Yaa Amponsah ee gyae aware yi a	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
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Yaa Amponsah ee gyae aware	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
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Gyae aware o, gyae aware ooo	Get a divorce
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Yaa Amponsah ee gyae aware	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
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Yaa ee yj'frjfrj wo oo	Yaa we are calling you
------------------------	------------------------

Cbaa Yaa ee gye yjnso oo	lady Yaa respond
--------------------------	------------------

ndwom aa yjrjto yi yjreto frj wo oo	We are singing this song to call you
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Cbaa Yaa ee gye yjnso oo	lady Yaa respond
--------------------------	------------------

Cbaa yaa yjrefrjfrj wo daa	Yaa we are calling you
Cbaa Yaa ee	lady Yaa ee
Y'abc wodin fri tete	Your name has been mentioned since
Gold Coast	Gold coast
Cbaa Yaa ee	lady Yaa
nipa mpempem	thousands of people
yjdaso bc wo din daa	we still mention your name
Cbaa Yaa ee... Cbaa Yaa ee 2x	lady Yaa
Yaa Amponsah ee... Cbaa Yaa ee 2x	Yaa Amponsah, lady Yaa

Table three (below) contains the original lyrics and the corresponding translation of Yaa Amponsah song composed by Nana Ampadu from his Evergreen volume V released in 1975.

Table three: Song lyrics by Nana Kwame Ampadu

Twi	English
<i>Gyae aware o, gyae aware</i>	Get a divorce, get a divorce
<i>gyae aware</i>	get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
<i>Gyae aware o, gyae aware</i>	Get a divorce, get a divorce,
<i>gyae aware</i>	get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
<i>Eyii mene wo bj twe mpena wai</i>	I would be lovers with you

Eyii mene wo bj twe mpena wai. I would be lovers with you

Eyii mene wo bj twe mpena I would be lovers with you

Yaa Amponsah Yaa Amponsah song

ho nwom a yjreto yi, we are singing

Yj rebjkyerj mo se we are about

nea jyj a to show you how

Amponsah yi Amponsah

baa wiase mu ha came into the world

ba wiase mo ha came to this world

Enkane tete back then

mmerj mu hc no in the olden days

Barima bi tena A man lived

Cman yi mu a in the country

na yj frj no Sam by the name of Sam

Sam yi a mere ka yi This Sam I am speaking of

a onim senku bc yie Sam was a gifted musician

Oye obia cto nnwom He knew how to sing

cto nwom sj me ara sing like me

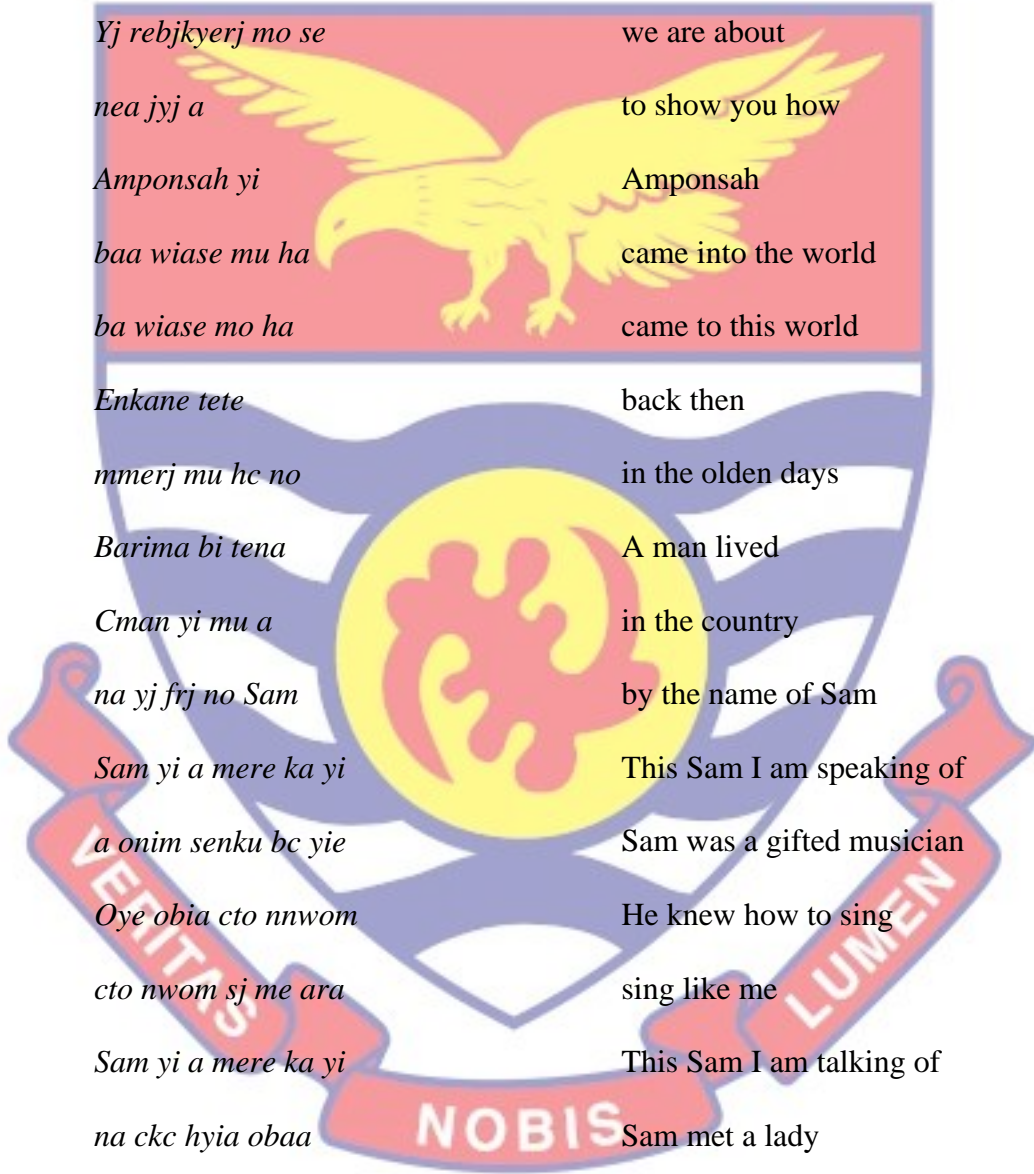
Sam yi a mere ka yi This Sam I am talking of

na ckc hyia obaa Sam met a lady

bi a na yj frj no by the name

Yaa Amponsah Yaa Amponsah

nso mere ka yi I am talking about



<i>na ne ho yi fj yie paa,</i>	She was beautiful
<i>ne ho yj fj yie</i>	was a very beautiful lady
<i>Ne tiri hwii tesj sirikiyi</i>	her hair like silk
<i>Ahoma, sirikiyi ahoma...</i>	thread, like silk thread
<i>Afei, nea jbaa yj ne</i>	Now what happened
<i>sj Amponsah a mere kayi</i>	Amponsah I am talking about
<i>opreman ni baa</i>	high class lady
<i>oyj opreman ni baa</i>	high class lady
<i>opreman ni baa</i>	high class lady
<i>Nej mfantifoc frj no</i>	what the Fantes call
<i>sj bagyiribayin</i>	“ ⁴ bagyiribayin”
<i>bagyiribayin, bagyiribayin</i>	bagyiribayin, bagyiribayin
<i>Sam ne Amponsah yi</i>	Sam and Amponsah
<i>Wcmo wc hc a</i>	lived, and suddenly
<i>jna Yaa Amponsah yi</i>	Yaa Amponsah said
<i>ose ogyae ware</i>	she is getting a divorce
<i>cnaware oo</i>	she won't stay married
<i>Sam yi, yjj ho bia</i>	Sam did everything possible
<i>Amponsah si cn cnware</i>	Amponsah said she doesn't care
<i>se cnware</i>	she doesn't care
<i>Yaa Amponsah</i>	When Yaa Amponsah
<i>gyae aware no</i>	got divorced

⁴ Someone who likes to go to parties and have fun

jjj Sam yi ya Sam was hurt
Cno nso yj obi a cto nwom he was a composer
nti osaa nwom So he composed
osaa nwom wo aware yi ho a song about the marriage

Afei owura Sam Now Mr. Sam
cne na go foc ma and his instrumentalist
si fa bcc nsenkuo played the instruments
fa too asjm yi ho nwom played the Yaa Amponsah song
Eno na yjre bj to that is how

akyerj mo yi sing for you
obiaa nyj aso na cntie everybody should listen

Cbaa Amponsah Lady Amponsah
wa gyae aware has gotten a divorce

Yaa Amponsah Yaa Amponsah
wa gyae aware has gotten a divorce

Wa gyae aware oo She has gotten a divorce

Yaa Amponsah Yaa Amponsah
gyae aware got a divorce

Cna nware oo o She is no more married

Yaa Amponsah Yaa Amponsah
gyae aware got a divorce

Wa gyae aware o o She is no more married

Yaa Amponsah Yaa Amponsah

<i>gyae aware</i>	has gotten a divorce
<i>Sika ntesj mpo ano awia</i>	Money is not like sand at the sea shore
<i>Yaa Amponsah</i>	Yaa Amponsah
<i>gyae aware</i>	got a divorce
<i>Nka mj ma wo bi o o</i>	I would have given you some
<i>Nka mj ma wo bi o o</i>	I would have given you some
<i>Yaa Amponsah</i>	Yaa Amponsah
<i>gyae aware</i>	got a divorce
<i>Ni tiri hwii tesj</i>	Her hair like
<i>sirikiyi ahoma</i>	silk thread
<i>Yaa Amponsah</i>	Yaa Amponsah
<i>gyae aware</i>	has gotten a divorce
<i>Wa gyae aware o</i>	She is no more married
<i>Yaa Amponsah</i>	Yaa Amponsah
<i>gyae aware</i>	has gotten a divorce
<i>Sj nea Owura Sam</i>	That is how Mr. Sam
<i>Cne na ngofomma</i>	and his instrumentalist
<i>Esi fa tc Amponsah</i>	sang about Amponsah
<i>ho nwom no jna ya</i>	and that is what
<i>to akyerj mo yi</i>	we have played for you
<i>Afei ansa na yjnso</i>	Now is the time we would also
<i>Yj bj bc yj Amponsah</i>	play Amponsah
<i>Se nea ya hyehyj noc no</i>	how we have arranged it

Obiaa nyj aso na cntie Everyone should pay attention and listen

Amponsah e, Amponsah e Amponsah e, Amponsah e

Amponsah e magyae aware oo Amponsah has gotten divorce

Gyae aware o, gyae aware get divorced

gyae aware get divorced, get divorced

Yaa Amponsah gyae aware Yaa Amponsah got a divorce

Gyae aware o, gyae aware Get divorced, get divorced

gyae aware get divorced

Yaa Amponsah gyae aware Yaa Amponsah got a divorce

Gyae aware o, gyae Get divorced, get divorced

aware, gyae aware get divorced

Yaa Amponsah gyae aware Yaa Amponsah got a divorce

Eyii mene wo bj twe mpena wai I would be lovers with you

Eyii mene wo bj twe mpena wai I would be lovers with you

Mpena na yj bj twe awuo we would be lovers to death

Eyii meni wo bj twi mpena I would be lovers with you

Eyii mepj wasjm o I like you

Eyii mene wo bj twe mpena wai I would be lovers with you

Eyii mene wo bj twe mpena wai I would be lovers with you

Eyii mene wo bj wo mpena ba I would be lovers with you

Eyii mene wo bj twe mpena wai I would be lovers with you

Eyii mene wo bj twe mpena wai I would be lovers with you

<i>Eyii meni wo bj twi mpena</i>	I would be lovers with you
<i>Cbaa Amponsah wa gyae aware</i>	Lady Amponsah has gotten a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah wa gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah has gotten a divorce
<i>Enaa yjre kc oo</i>	and we are moving
<i>Mpena nayj bj twe awuo</i>	we would be lovers till death
<i>Yaa Amponsah gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah has gotten a divorce
<i>Yj na ware oo</i>	We are not married anymore
<i>Yaa Amponsah gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah is has gotten a divorce
<i>Wa gyae aware oo</i>	She has gotten a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah got a divorce

Table four (below) contains the original lyric and the corresponding translation of Ebo Taylor’s Yaa Amponsah from the Appia Kwa bridge album released in 2012.

Table four: Song lyrics by Ebo Taylor

Twi	English
<i>Me di dckono</i>	I’ll eat kenkey
<i>Mese gyae aware</i>	I am saying get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
<i>Mese gyae aware</i>	I am saying get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
<i>Mese gyae aware</i>	I am saying get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce

<i>Mese gyae aware</i>	I am saying get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
<i>Wo tiri nwii sirikiyi ahoma</i>	Your hair like a silk thread
<i>Wa nantu dj adenikum</i>	your calves like adenikum
<i>Cbaa Amponsah</i>	Lady Yaa Amponsah
<i>gyae aware na yjntwe mpena</i>	get divorce and be lovers
<i>Wc tiri nwii sirikiyi ahoma</i>	Your hair like a silk thread
<i>Wanantu dj adenikum</i>	Your calves like adenikum
<i>Cbaa Amponsah gyae aware</i>	Lady Yaa Amponsah
<i>na yentwe mpena</i>	get divorce and be lovers
<i>Mese gyae aware</i>	I am saying get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
<i>Mese gyae aware</i>	I am saying get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
<i>Mese gyae aware</i>	I am saying get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
<i>Mese gyae aware</i>	I am saying get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
<i>Wa niwama tesj nhwiren</i>	your eyes like flowers
<i>Cre sc ancpa bc</i>	in the morning
<i>Yaa Amponah eee</i>	Yaa Amponsah
<i>Wa nniwa ma tesj nhwiren</i>	your eyes like flowers
<i>Wa fonomu ntokuro ntokuro</i>	your dimples

<i>Wc kwan, kwan kyi ma</i>	the cuts across your neck
<i>Gyae aware ma yjn twe mpena</i>	get divorced and let us ne lovers
<i>Wa nniwa ma tesj nshiren</i>	your eyes like flowers
<i>Wa nantu tesj adenkum</i>	your calves like adenkum
<i>Cbaa Amponsah</i>	lady Yaa Amponsah
<i>gyae aware ma yjn twe mpena</i>	get divorced and let us be lovers
<i>gyae aware ma yjn twe mpena</i>	get a divorce and let us be lovers
<i>gyae aware ma yjn twe mpena</i>	get a divorce and let us be lovers
<i>Mese gyae aware</i>	I am saying get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
<i>Mese gyae aware</i>	I am saying get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
<i>Mese gyae aware</i>	I am saying get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
<i>Mese gyae aware</i>	I am saying get a divorce
<i>Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware</i>	Yaa Amponsah get a divorce
<i>Wa niwa ma tesj nhwiren</i>	your eyes like morning sun rise
<i>Cri shren ancpa bc</i>	in the morning
<i>Wo kcn kcn akyima</i>	the cuts across your neck
<i>Wa fono mu ntokuro ntokuro</i>	your dimples
<i>Cbaa Amponsah</i>	Lady Amponsah
<i>gyae aware ma yjn twe mpena</i>	get divorced and let's be lovers
<i>gyae aware ma yjn twe mpena</i>	get a divorce and let's be lovers

gyae aware ma yjn twe mpena get a divorce and let's be lovers

Wa niwa ma tesj nhwiren your eyes like flowers

Cri shren ancpa bc lighting up in the morning

Wo kwam mo kwam kyi ma the cuts across your neck

Wa nantu tesj adenkum your calves like adenkum

Cbaa Amponsah gyae Lady Amponsah

aware ma yen twi mpena get a divorce and let's be lovers

Mese gyae aware I am saying get a divorce

Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware Yaa Amponsah get a divorce

Mese gyae aware I am saying get a divorce

Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware Yaa Amponsah get a divorce

Mese gyae aware I am saying get a divorce

Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware Yaa Amponsah get a divorce

Mese gyae aware I am saying get a divorce

Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware Yaa Amponsah get a divorce

Mese gyae aware I am saying get a divorce

Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware Yaa Amponsah get a divorce

Mese gyae aware I am saying get a divorce

Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware Yaa Amponsah get a divorce

Mese gyae aware I am saying get a divorce

Yaa Amponsah e gyae aware Yaa Amponsah get a divorce



Analysis of lyrics

Kwame Asare's Yaa Amponsah was recorded in 1928. The song is in the Fante dialect, but this type of Fante is found in Elmina. The song is made up of literary devices like similes, metaphors and innuendos. Example of similes in the song is where Yaa Amponsah's hair is likened to a silk thread. An example of innuendo in the song is where the singer tells Yaa Amponsah that her pubic hair would let her be in debt. Examples of metaphor is when the singer says Yaa Amponsah is as black as a thread, is as black as a fair lady, and a lady like cassava

Broken heart theme is evident in the song. Example of this theme is when the singer tells Yaa Amponsah that, the divorce has caused him pain.

The theme of praise singing can be seen in the song. An example of this is when the singer tells Yaa Amponsah that her hair is like a silk thread.

The song starts by Yaa Amponsah saying that she has gotten a divorce. And even if Sam's mother gives her an enema with pepper, even if it is hot water that is given her as enema, she would still not marry him. Now the focus shifts from Yaa Amponsah to Sam. Sam tells Yaa Amponsah that her pubic hairs would be a source of debt to her (in context, this is a wise saying that her love for sex would be the cause of her downfall). The following line is a simile that compares the hair of Yaa Amponsah to that of a silk thread. Sam continues with another simile, telling Yaa Amponsah that she is like a white lady. Perhaps, Sam likens Yaa Amponsah to a white lady insinuating that Yaa Amponsah deserves the best money can buy. I say this because, during the colonial period, the white ladies

lived posh lives as compared to the local women. He says he loves Amponsah but does not have the financial muscle to ask for her hand in marriage. The following line he uses says Yaa Amponsah get a divorce, which becomes a central repeating motif in the song. In the following line, he compares Amponsah to *tete amonsin* (in my research I gathered two meanings for the word *amonsin*. The first one was a sanitary pad used in the olden days, and the second was an under garment used by market women to keep money. The under garment was noted for its quality and that it does not make noise or show when there is money in it, in the context of the Yaa Amponsah song, I chose the second meaning because its meaning fits better than the second one.) Sam says even though, Yaa Amponsah is like *tete amonsin* she has asked for a divorce. He tells Yaa Amponsah that money is not like the sand on the seashore because if that were the case, he would have given her money. He goes on to say that he would give Amponsah money to buy something and after all the sacrifices he has made, she still went ahead and got a divorce, and he has been broken hearted by Yaa Amponsah's decision. He asks Amponsah if the love is not mutual, looking at how he loves her. Yaa Amponsah interjects and tells Sam that she has gotten a divorce. Sam tells Amponsah that if she has gotten a divorce, then they should be lovers. The song goes back to Amponsah saying she has gotten a divorce and even if Sam's mother were to give her an enema with pepper, even if it is hot water that is given her as enema, she would still not marry him. Amponsah reiterates the fact that she has gotten a divorce. Sam says Yaa Amponsah is as black as a thread, a black lady as a white, a lady like a cassava. For the first two metaphors, it seems Sam is praising the

complexion of Yaa Amponsah, perhaps saying she is dark like a thread, and that her black complexion is unique as that of the whites. The last metaphor used could stand for the versatility of Amponsah. This is because cassava can be used for a food like *fufu* and *ampesi*, thereby showing that Amponsah is versatile. He repeats the motif, and the song ends.

A closer look at the song text reveals a conversation between two people, namely Yaa Amponsah and Sam. Yaa Amponsah starts the conversation and says that she has gotten a divorce, and no matter what Sam's parents do to her, she does not plan to be married anymore. Sam tries to woo her love back by advising her that her love for sex would eventually cause her downfall. He compares Amponsah to a white lady, *tete amonsin*, and a silk thread, all in an attempt to get her to change her decision once again. Yaa Amponsah interjects and tells Sam that she has gotten a divorce. Sam responds to that by saying even if Yaa Amponsah says that she has gotten a divorce, they should be lovers because he is traumatized by Amponsah leaving him and wants her in his life.

Another striking observation is the nature of metaphor Sam uses to describe Amponsah. Cassava is a staple crop found in the Southern part of Ghana known for its versatility. The crop can be used for *gari*, *ampesi*, *fufu*, *banku*, used to enable blood cloths on fresh wounds and for starch. The use of the cassava metaphor by Sam to describe Amponsah could paint the picture that for Sam, Amponsah is the starch that holds all parts of his life together, and that she plays different roles in his life, so Amponsah leaving him would mean that his life would crush down.

Comparing Amponsah to *tete amonsin* brings out a lot of questions. As indicated earlier, *tete amonsin* has two different meanings. So, which one was Sam alluding to with his comparison of Amponsah? Is it the sanitary pad or the under garment used by the market women? Mr. Peter Alexander Hope, a senior lecturer at the Ghanaian language department at the University of Cape Coast told me that, even though *tete amonsin* has to inherent meanings, in the Fante language, the one spoken by the people of Elmina, *tete amonsin* is likely to be the under garment used to keep money by market women. He points out that the *amonsin* was noted for its quality and its ability to keep money without it making noise. Perhaps, Sam meant that even though Yaa Amponsah was not proud, meek and humble she has gotten a divorce, which he does not understand.

Sam compares Amponsah to a white lady, and says that even though he does not have money for Yaa Amponsah, he admits he deserves the luxuries the white ladies have, and goes on further to admit that he does not have money, and money is not like the sand at the sea shore, and if it were so, he would have given Yaa Amponsah money.

He also compares Yaa Amponsah to a black thread and says that Yaa Amponsah is black like the whites. This could be a way by which Sam praised the black complexion of Yaa Amponsah by alluding her to the whites.

He questions Yaa Amponsah's decision to get a divorce after laying bare the realities of his life, after even promising her that he would get her money to buy something. He tells Yaa Amponsah that he is hurt by her decision to divorce and asks her to be a lover.

Ogyatanaa show bands Yaa Amponsah was from the Yerefrefre album that was released in 1974. This song is in Asante Twi. Praise singing theme can be seen in the song when it eulogises Yaa Amponsah when the song starts.

The song starts with the singer praising Yaa Amponsah. After that Yaa Amponsah says she has gotten a divorce. Just after that the singer advises Yaa Amponsah to get a divorce. He says Amponsah's neck is as beautiful as an ⁵adenkum. He compares her glowing skin to lightning. Finally, the singer tells Yaa Amponsah that she is as beautiful as a dove. The singer questions Amponsah's reason to go and marry. He tells Amponsah that her name has been mentioned from the Gold Coast era; her name is being mentioned.

Nana Ampadu's version of Yaa Amponsah is on the evergreen album that was released in 1975.

The song starts with the singer telling Yaa Amponsah to get a divorce, and after the divorce he (the singer) would be in a relationship with Amponsah after she has gotten the divorce. After that Nana Ampadu tells the audience that he is about to tell the story of Yaa Amponsah. According to Nana, there lived an instrumentalist and composer by the name of Sam. Sam met a lady named Yaa Amponsah who was beautiful by all standards, with her hair like a silk thread. Nana Ampadu uses the term *bagyiribayin* (a term used by the Fante's to describe a person, male or female, who likes to party and have fun) to describe Yaa Amponsah. According to Nana Ampadu, there came a time when Yaa Amponsah asked for a divorce from Sam. Sam tried everything within his power to persuade Amponsah, but Yaa

⁵ Gourd calabash

Amponsah did not care. So, after the divorce, Sam, who was also a composer, decided to compose a song about the failed marriage. Nana Ampadu sung what he claimed was the original composition sung by Sam. In the original rendition as sung by Sam and performed by Nana Ampadu, he says Yaa Amponsah has gotten a divorce. He reiterates what he said and confirms what he said in the beginning that yes, Yaa Amponsah had gotten a divorce, in case you didn't hear what I said. Ampadu (Sam) laments that Yaa Amponsah has gotten a divorce and is no longer married. He laments his inability to provide money for Yaa Amponsah. He alludes to the fact that if money were like the sand at the seashore, he would have given Amponsah lots of it.

Even though her hair is like a silk thread, she has gotten a divorce.

Nana Ampadu now renders his version of Yaa Amponsah. In his rendition, he assumes the personality of Yaa Amponsah and says I have gotten a divorce.

The song ends by going back to the beginning, where the singer advises Yaa Amponsah to get a divorce, and after that, they would have a child out of wedlock.

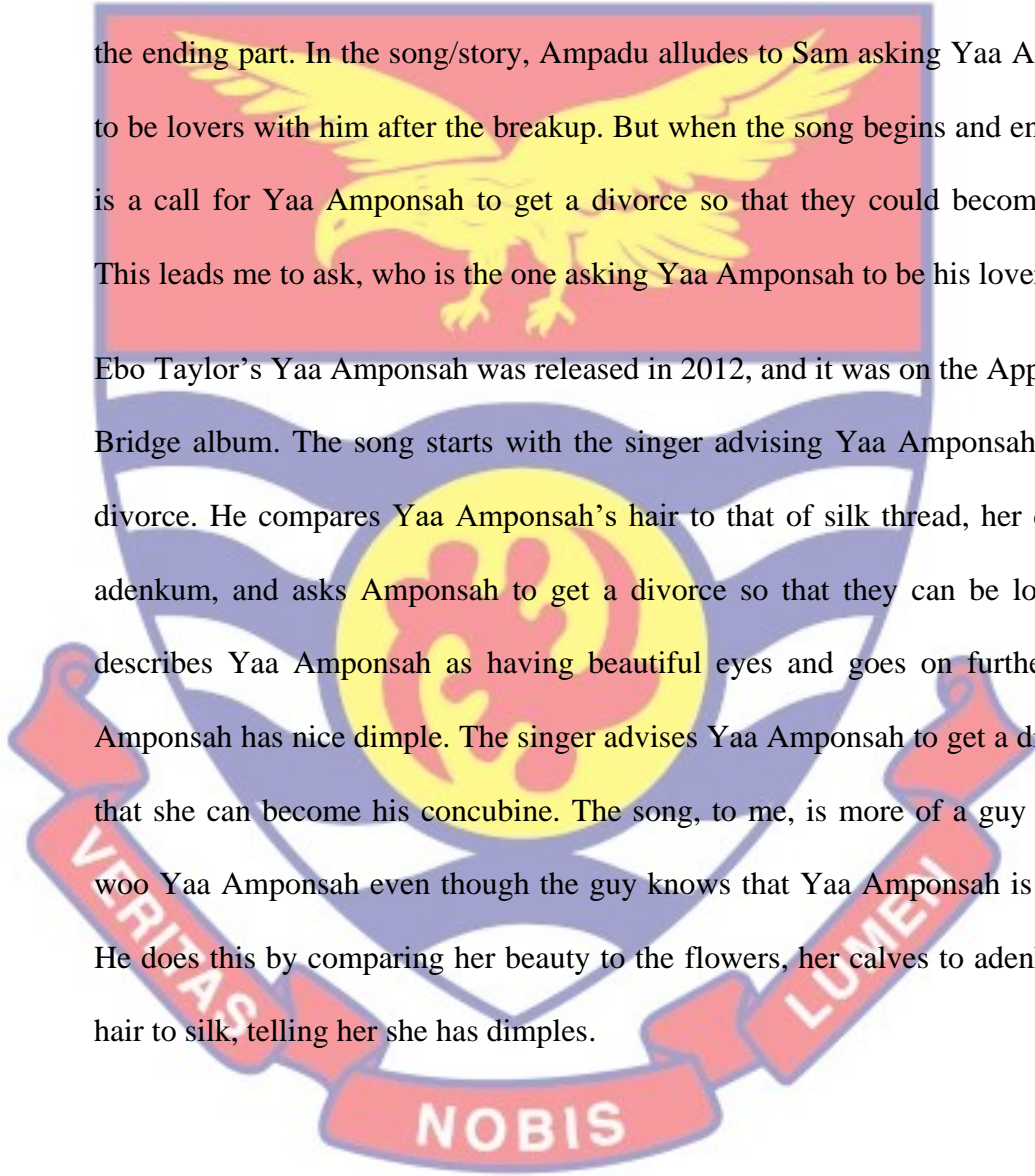
This song provides a brief history as to the genesis of the Yaa Amponsah song. Weaving through a careful thought process, the composer blends the original composition as he might have heard it with his rendition and remarkable storytelling abilities, which gives a complete story about Yaa Amponsah.

Analysing the song text points out that Sam knew the type of woman he was getting into a relationship with, as Yaa Amponsah was described as a lady who

liked to party (*bagyiribayin*). It makes me wonder that, if Sam knew Yaa Amponsah was a high time lady, and he did not have the financial resources to provide her what she wants, then why did he decide to marry her?

Another puzzling issue I found after analysing the song text was in beginning and the ending part. In the song/story, Ampadu alludes to Sam asking Yaa Amponsah to be lovers with him after the breakup. But when the song begins and ends, there is a call for Yaa Amponsah to get a divorce so that they could become lovers. This leads me to ask, who is the one asking Yaa Amponsah to be his lover?

Ebo Taylor's Yaa Amponsah was released in 2012, and it was on the Appiah Kwa Bridge album. The song starts with the singer advising Yaa Amponsah to get a divorce. He compares Yaa Amponsah's hair to that of silk thread, her calves to adenkum, and asks Amponsah to get a divorce so that they can be lovers. He describes Yaa Amponsah as having beautiful eyes and goes on further to say Amponsah has nice dimple. The singer advises Yaa Amponsah to get a divorce so that she can become his concubine. The song, to me, is more of a guy trying to woo Yaa Amponsah even though the guy knows that Yaa Amponsah is married. He does this by comparing her beauty to the flowers, her calves to adenkum, her hair to silk, telling her she has dimples.



The Yaa Amponsah story: a synthesis

In this session, I tease out the consolidated ideas that run through the various narratives of Yaa Amponsah. I do so by closely looking at the lyrics of the four versions of the song presented in this work as well as an analysis of an in-depth interview I had with the legendary Daniel Amponsah (Agya Koo Nimo).

According to Nana Ampadu, there was a composer by the name Sam, a talented composer and instrumentalist. He saw a lady by the name of Yaa Amponsah, who was very beautiful, because, across all the compositions, she is described as having hair like silk thread (Kwame Asare, Ogyatanaa, Nana Ampadu, Ebo Taylor), a black woman who is like a white lady, a black woman like a fair lady, has a neck like adenkum, calves like adenkum, as beautiful like a dove and woman like cassava. Even though there was no mention of Sam and Amponsah getting married in any of the compositions, Nana Ampadu states that a time came where Yaa Amponsah wanted a divorce.

Inferring from the first recorded version by Kwame Asare and the Kumasi Trio and Nana Ampadu's versions, their Yaa Amponsah song is a conversation between Sam and Yaa Amponsah. The conversation starts with Yaa Amponsah telling Sam that she has gotten a divorce and that Sam cannot do anything to change her mind. Sam advises Yaa Amponsah that her love for sex would eventually become her downfall. Even after rebuking her, he makes an attempt to woo Yaa Amponsah. Sam describes Yaa Amponsah as being meek when he likens her to *tete amonsin*, Sam does not understand why Yaa Amponsah got a divorce because he thought it is in her nature to accept things as they are, because

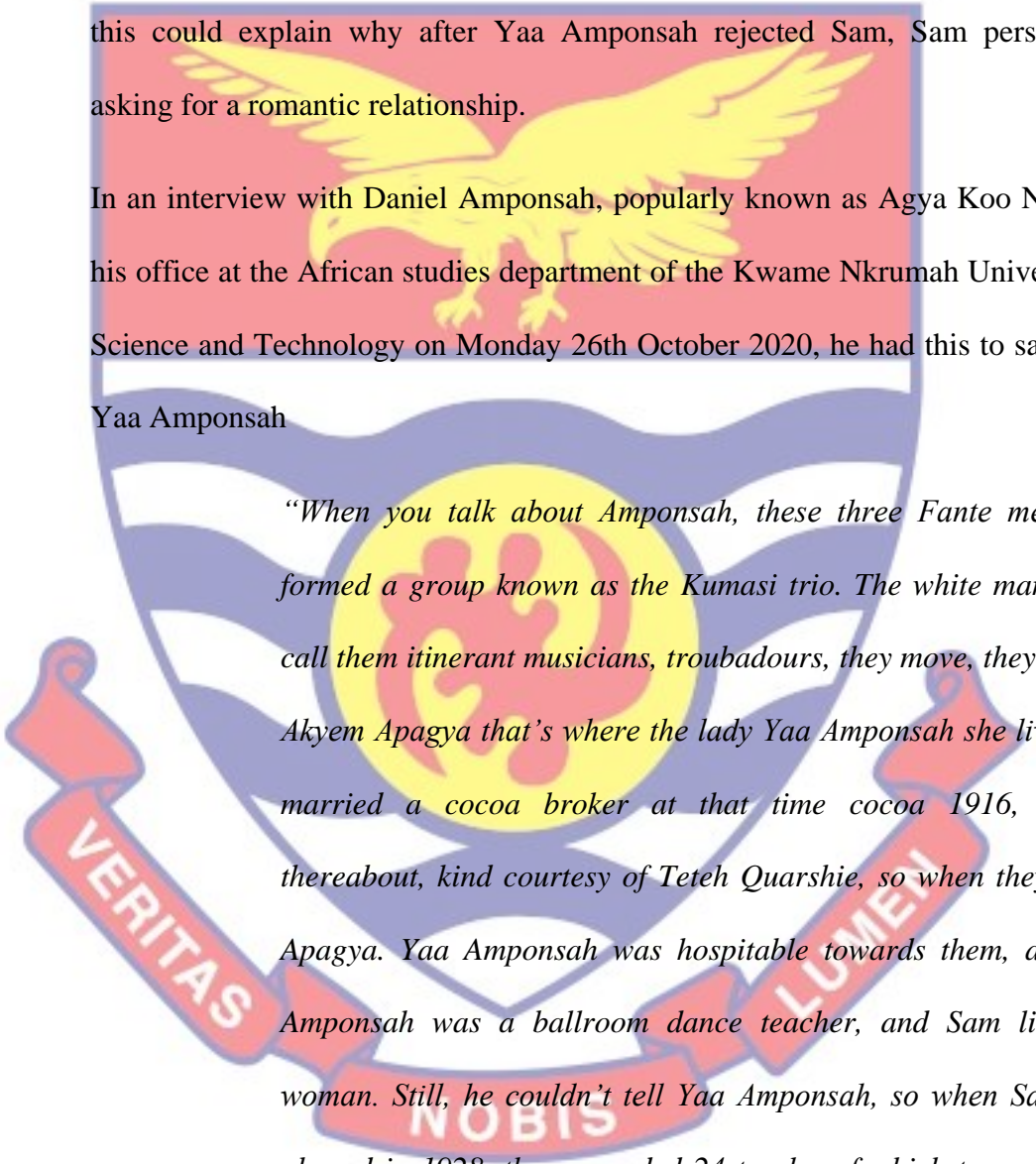
she is meek. He tells Amponsah that he doesn't have the money to seek her hand in marriage. Immediately after that, the mediator interjects, advising Yaa Amponsah to get a divorce. Sam tells Amponsah that if money were like the sand at the seashore, he would have given her money, but money is not like the sand at the seashore; hence, he cannot provide for Yaa Amponsah but promises her that he would give her money for something. Sam begs Yaa Amponsah to reconsider her decision, because he is broken hearted with the news of the divorce. Amponsah reaffirms her decision and puts Sam off. In a last-ditch attempt to get Yaa Amponsah to change her mind he tells Amponsah that if she has gotten a divorce, she should be his concubine. Sam tries singing praises for Amponsah, but Amponsah is not moved by Sam's gesture as she affirms her decision.

After synthesizing the four songs I found out that Yaa Amponsah did not give a clear reason as to why she sought for the break up. The closest reason from the divorce can be found in Kwame Asare and Nana Ampadu's version as being money. I also found out that Yaa Amponsah was very beautiful, because all through the four recorded versions they likened her beauty to something unique. It is possible that, the song came about as a result of what happens to the brain when it is in love according to Fisher (2008).

Fisher (2008) posits that romantic love is an obsession that gets worse when rejected. According to Fisher, after putting people who have been dumped from a romantic relationship into an M.R.I., she found out that the brains reward system for wanting, motivation, desire, and focus becomes more active when you can't get what you want (in this case, a lost lover). Fisher concluded that when people

are rejected in love, not only are they flooded with feelings of romantic love, but they feel a deep attachment to the person who rejected them. Due to the reason that the brains reward system is in hyper drive, these individuals are willing to risk everything to achieve their goal (in this case get their lost lover back). Thus, this could explain why after Yaa Amponsah rejected Sam, Sam persisted in asking for a romantic relationship.

In an interview with Daniel Amponsah, popularly known as Agya Koo Nimo, in his office at the African studies department of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology on Monday 26th October 2020, he had this to say about Yaa Amponsah



“When you talk about Amponsah, these three Fante men, who formed a group known as the Kumasi trio. The white man would call them itinerant musicians, troubadours, they move, they went to Akyem Apagya that’s where the lady Yaa Amponsah she lived, she married a cocoa broker at that time cocoa 1916, 17, 18 thereabout, kind courtesy of Tete Quarshie, so when they got to Apagya. Yaa Amponsah was hospitable towards them, and Yaa Amponsah was a ballroom dance teacher, and Sam liked the woman. Still, he couldn’t tell Yaa Amponsah, so when Sam went abroad in 1928, they recorded 24 tracks, of which two were Yaa Amponsah. They recorded Yaa Amponsah, “gyae aware na yen twe mpena” divorce your husband and be my concubine.”

Agya Koo's brings a different perspective to the Yaa Amponsah story. Agya Koo's story portrays Sam as someone who holds in high esteem the institution of marriage, hence his inability to tell Yaa Amponsah how he felt about her. From Agya Koo's story, it could also be that Sam was afraid of being rejected by Yaa Amponsah since he did not have money as compared to the cocoa broker. The song Yaa Amponsah, thus, was a means of Sam admitting that he lacked the financial muscle to take care of Yaa Amponsah, even though he loved her, and the best offer Sam could give Yaa Amponsah, was for her to be his concubine. Perhaps, Sam employed the defensive mechanism known as sublimation which has been defined by Meng & Freud (1963) as psychological strategies brought into play by the unconscious mind to manipulate, deny or distort reality to maintain a socially acceptable self-image when our ego cannot meet the demands of reality. For Meng and Freud, sublimation is a defence mechanism based on the foundation that socially unacceptable wishes or urges provide the energy to be harnessed for productive or creative ends. The indecent desires could also be worked out or transmogrified into art. Sam accepting it as socially unacceptable to propose to a married woman, channelled his energies into creating a song.

Music analysis

Kwame Asare and the Kumasi Trio, was a musical group made up of Kwame Asare, H.E. Biney, and Kwah Kanta. The song was recorded in June 1928 at the Kingsway Hall in London. The instruments used in the song are two lead guitars and a set of clappers. The song lasts for two minutes fifty-seven seconds. The song is in the key of C major and has the 4/4-time signature. The song was sent to

me via email from John Collins on the 19th of May 2021. The song was listened to at the studio of the Music and Dance Department, University of Cape Coast. The dominant material at the studio was wood. The speaker used for listening was Behringer Truth B2030A High-Resolution, Active 2-Way Reference Studio Monitor Speakers. At the time of this study, it was not possible to get other metadata from which more information could be deduced.

The song starts with a set of clappers and the lead guitars. Two guitars are playing two distinct ostinato melodies, with one playing passing note in-between melodies. There is an established guitar riff, as seen below.

The image shows a musical score for a guitar riff. The title is "YAA AMPONSAH PART 1" and the composer is "Kwame Asare and the Kumasi Trio". The score is written in 4/4 time and consists of two staves. The first staff begins with a rest for one measure, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, including several triplet markings. The second staff continues the melody with similar rhythmic patterns and triplet markings. The background of the score image features a watermark of the University of Cape Coast logo, which includes a yellow eagle on a red shield and a banner at the bottom with the word "NOBIS".

Figure 15: Scored guitar riff in Yaa Amponsah by Kwame Asare and the Kumasi Trio

The resultant melodies from the guitar make it challenging to tell which guitar is playing what. The image is a graphical representation of the resultant melody. In mixing the sound, the only instrument placed in the centre is the voice, and other

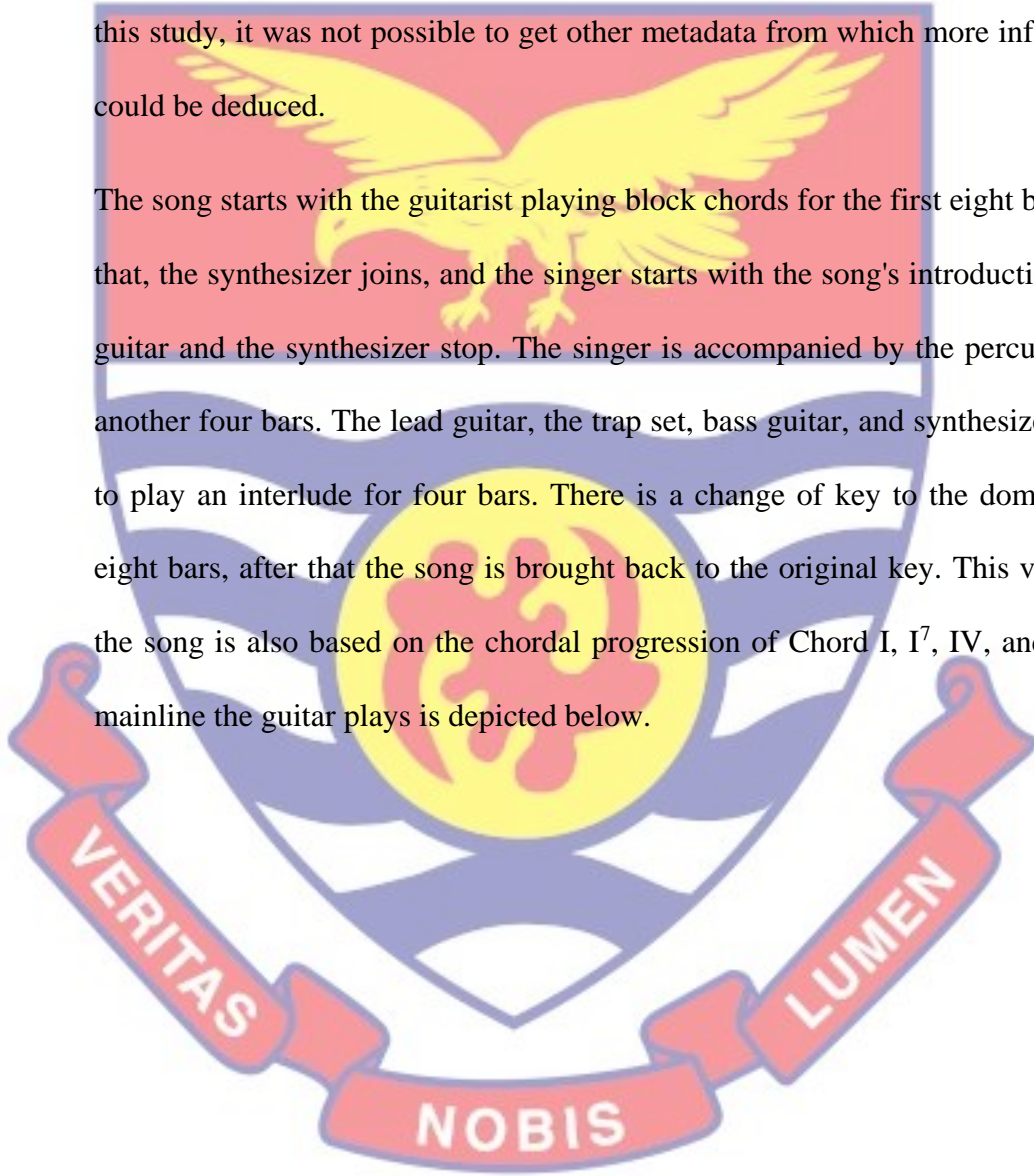
instruments like the guitar are either panned left or right. With that in mind, the guitar or guitars in a particular sound can be heard as one. With this song the guitar acts as an accompaniment to the voice. The musical progression is based on chordal progression of I I⁷ IV V. The artist chose to make the texture of the song light per the instruments used in the song. The clapper, which serves as the timekeeper, plays the rhythm below, consistently throughout the song.

Figure 16: Scored clapper rhythm in the Kwame Asare and Kumasi Trio Yaa Amponsah

Ogyatanaa show band was made up of Kwadwo Donkoh, Nana Ofori, Ocloo Johnson, Kobina Gardiner, Ofori Frimpong, Kwaku Dua, Pa Owiredu and Nakai Nettey. The band was formed by Kwadwo Donkoh in 1971. Their Yaa Amponsah song was originally released in 1975, and it was on their *Yerefrefre* album, but it debuted at the first ever National Dance band competition in 1972. The instruments used in the song include the trap set, two lead guitars, Synthesizer, Percussion, Bass guitar, and traditional drums. The song last for five minutes. The song is in the key of D major and the time signature for the song is 4/4. The source of the song was the J.H.K Nketia archive, under the folder name: J.C BAPMAF RECORDS+ COVERS X 92 / SUBFOLDER: OGYATANAA/

YEREFREFRE. The song was listened to at the studio of the Music and Dance Department, University of Cape Coast. The dominant material at the studio was wood. The speaker used for listening was Behringer Truth B2030A High-Resolution, Active 2-Way Reference Studio Monitor Speakers. At the time of this study, it was not possible to get other metadata from which more information could be deduced.

The song starts with the guitarist playing block chords for the first eight bars, after that, the synthesizer joins, and the singer starts with the song's introduction as the guitar and the synthesizer stop. The singer is accompanied by the percussion for another four bars. The lead guitar, the trap set, bass guitar, and synthesizer join in to play an interlude for four bars. There is a change of key to the dominant for eight bars, after that the song is brought back to the original key. This version of the song is also based on the chordal progression of Chord I, I⁷, IV, and V. The mainline the guitar plays is depicted below.



YAA AMPONSAH

Ogyatanaa

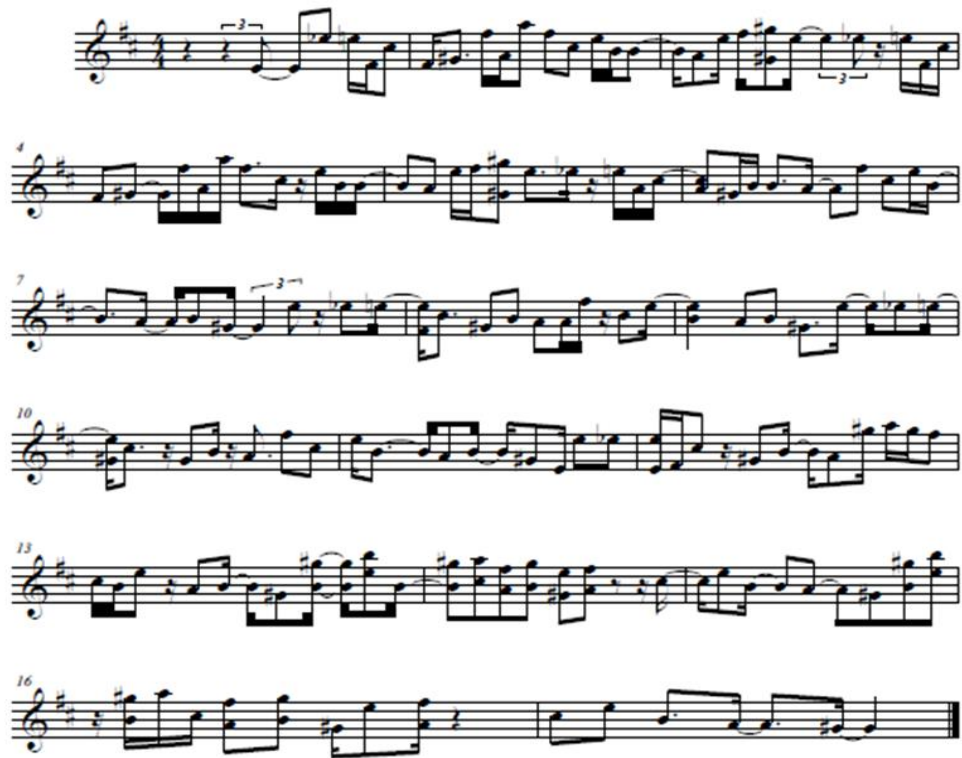


Figure 17: Scored guitar riff in Yaa Amponsah by Ogyatanaa show band

The time keeper of the song is the cow bell which plays the rhythmic pattern depicted below



Figure 18: Scored clapper rhythm in Yaa Amponsah by Ogyatanaa

The guitar accompanies the voice following a laid down template concerning the chord progression with a conscious effort to play the fundamentals of the earliest

version by the Kumasi Trio but adds something different to the original guitar riff. The song's arrangement depicts a strong connection between the past and the present, paying particular attention to the instrument played during various parts of the song. An example is where the percussion and voice are playing before the song starts right after the introduction by the guitars.

Nana Ampadu and the African brothers band version of Yaa Amponsah was released in 1975, it was on their evergreen album volume V. The African brother's band was formed in 1963 and was renamed African brother's band International. The name of the members of the band were as follows: Ancient Awua, Dan Owusu, E. K. Antwi, Eddie Donkor, Ellis Anane, Frank Hiango, Guy Opah, Jacob Osae, Joe Appiah, John Quarshie, Kofi Amo, Kofi Oppong Kyekyeku, Lawyer Boateng, Len Fillis Asiama, Mac Ofori, Mum Bea, Nanaba Amoako, Okyes, Osei Kofi, P.K. Asare, Paa Donkor, Rover Amo, Seth Asiedu, Teacher Boateng and it was led by Nana Kwame Ampadu

Instruments used for the song include the trap set, two lead guitars, synthesizer, percussion, bass guitar, and traditional drums. The duration of the song is eight minutes. The song is in the key of E major and its time signature is 4/4. The song was downloaded from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNVygGFP6Y>. The song was listened to at the studio of the Music and Dance Department, University of Cape Coast. The dominant material at the studio was wood. The speaker used for listening was Behringer Truth B2030A High-Resolution, Active 2-Way Reference Studio Monitor Speakers. At the time of this study, it was not possible to get other metadata from which more information could be deduced.

The guitar and trap set starts the song and plays together for the first forty bars. The singer narrates the story for two hundred bars. After the narration the song goes on for forty bars and ends. The song is divided into three major parts. A history of Yaa Amponsah, how Sam played Yaa Amponsah according to Nana Ampadu, and their rendition of the song, interspersed with instrumental interludes. The cowbell plays the following rhythm with slight variations.

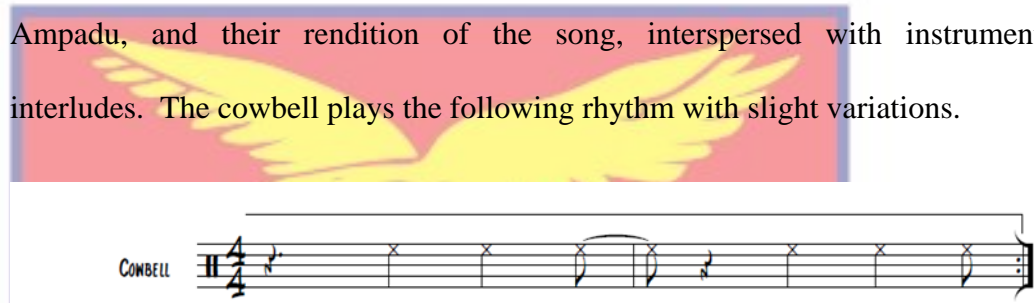
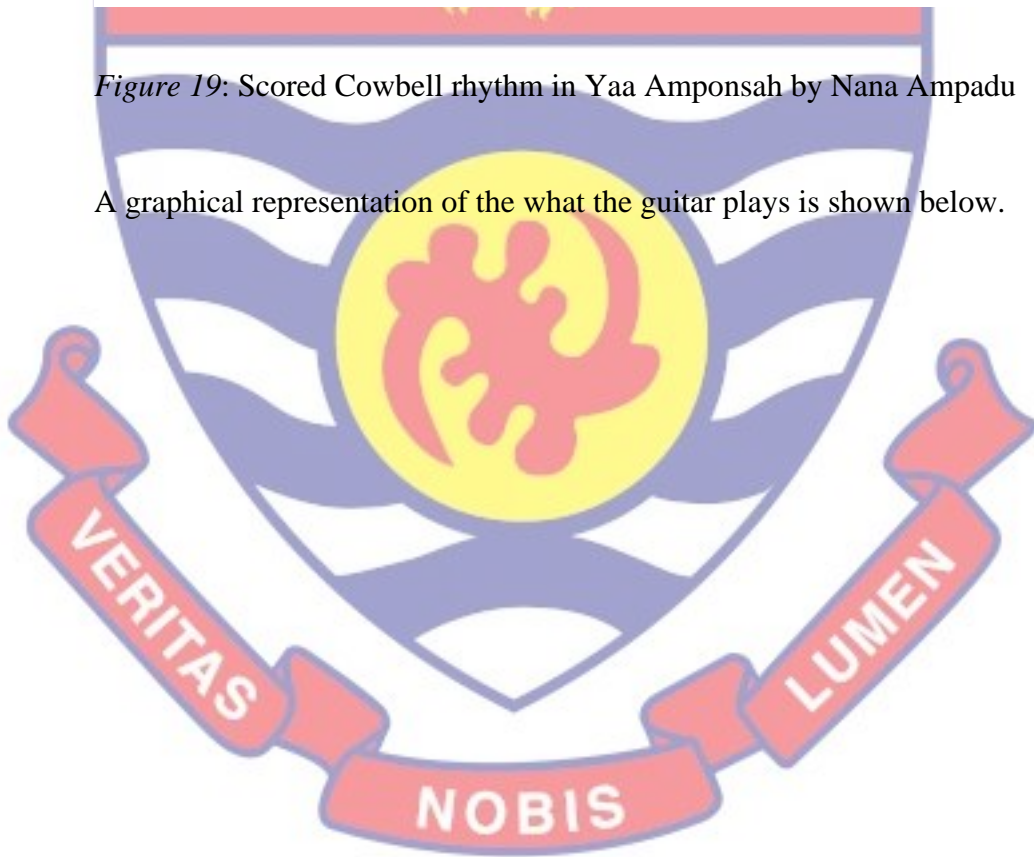


Figure 19: Scored Cowbell rhythm in Yaa Amponsah by Nana Ampadu

A graphical representation of the what the guitar plays is shown below.



Yaa Amponsah

Nana Ampadu

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of eight staves of music. The first staff begins with a triplet of eighth notes. The second staff contains a triplet of eighth notes followed by a pair of eighth notes. The third staff features a triplet of eighth notes. The fourth staff continues with a triplet of eighth notes. The fifth staff has a triplet of eighth notes. The sixth staff has a triplet of eighth notes. The seventh staff has a triplet of eighth notes. The eighth staff has a triplet of eighth notes. A large red watermark is visible on the left side of the page.

3

Figure 20: Scored guitar riff in Yaa Amponsah by Nana Ampadu

Paying attention to the song's arrangement, starting from where Nana Ampadu claims is the original rendition of the song, the texture of that portion is light made up of guitars, a talking drum, cowbell, and voice. When the band plays its own version of Yaa Amponsah, it uses the cowbell, atumpan, synthesizer, guitars, and trap set. The guitar riff was built on the I, I⁷, IV and V. Listening closely to the other parts of the song, except for their rendition of the original version, there seems to be a conscious effort to vary the structure even though there is change to its fundamental structure.

Ebo Taylor's version of Yaa Amponsah was released in 2012, it was on his Appia Kwa Bridge album. Two guitars were used in for the song. The song lasts for four minutes, twenty-eight seconds. The time signature of the song is 4/4 and it is in the key of C major. The source of the song is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmuwrg6ip1A>. The song was listened to at the studio of the Music and Dance Department, University of Cape Coast. The dominant material at the studio was wood. The speaker used for listening was Behringer Truth B2030A High-Resolution, Active 2-Way Reference Studio Monitor Speakers.. At the time of this study, it was not possible to get other metadata from which more information could be deduced. The song starts with the singer's voice, and the two guitars are introduced. After that, the singer sings with eventual pauses in between the music accompanied by the guitar till the end of the song. This version is built on the chord I, I⁷, IV, and V. The timbre of the guitars is different, which makes it easier to tell the number of instruments used in

the song. Below is a graphical representation of the basic melodic pattern in the song.



Figure 21: Scored guitar riff in Yaa Amponсах by Ebo Taylor

Agya Koo Nimo's Yaa Amponсах was posted on YouTube on the 19th of January 2013. More than one guitar was used in the second as well as a castanet. The song is in C major and its time signature is 4/4. The duration of the song is two minutes forty-eight seconds. The song can be found via this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8yWfjD-kTA>. The song was listened to at the Music and Dance department of the University of Cape Coast's studio. The dominant material at the studio was wood. The speaker for listening was Behringer Truth B2030A High-Resolution, Active 2-Way Reference Studio Monitor Speakers. At the time of this study, it was not possible to get other metadata from which more information could be deduced. The song is an

instrumental version of Yaa Amponsah, based on the chords I, IV, and V. A graphical representation of the basic melodic pattern is shown below:

Yaa Amponsah Instrumental

Agya Koo Nimo




Figure 22: Scored guitar riff in Yaa Amponsah by Agya Koo Nimo

Similarities and differences between the five versions

Timeline

All the compositions except Ebo Taylor's version have an instrument that plays a timeline, and Nana Ampadu plays the same timeline with slight variations in the song. The timeline is depicted below



Figure 23: Scored Clapper rhythm in Amponsah by Ogyatanaa

This is consistent with the rhythmic analysis made by Sprigge (1961), when he compared the triple beat of Yaa Amponsah sikyi music and the kete apenten rhythm.

Guitar riff as an accompaniment

In all the songs, the guitar riff was used as an accompaniment to the lyrics. The melodic riff was picked out of the chord I, IV, and V progression, which served as a template for subsequent versions.

The resultant melody to an individual melody cycle

When two individual melodies are played together, a resultant melody is created, which is, in turn, heard as a single melody, and this cycle is in a constant loop. These things stood out when listening to the guitar riff from the 1928 version to the 2012 version by Ebo Taylor. As said by Agya Koo Nimo, the three Fante men were “itinerant musicians, troubadours.” Hence, it would be possible to say that when these artist (Kwame Asare, Ogyatanaa, Ebo Taylor, and Nana Ampadu) heard the original version, they heard a resultant melody of two guitars. They then composed their own version of Yaa Amponsah with the resultant melody in mind.

The seperewa and its influence on the Yaa Amponsah guitar riff.

Baffour Kyei Kyeremanteng, a seperewa instructor at the school of Performing Arts, University Legon had this to say when it comes to the seperewa and its influence on Yaa Amponsah.

He claimed that the seperewa became popular with the Ashanti Kings because of the philosophy associated with the instrument. And to him, the seperewa stands for praises, condemnation, eulogizing, solemnization and entertainment. He traces the love for the seperewa by the Ashanti Kings to Nana Opoku Ware I and Nana Osei Tutu I. According to him, Nana Osei Tutu I's love for the instrument led to him commissioning a goldsmith to make a seperewa that was gold plated, which was called sika seperewa. He mentions Nana Kweku Fri from Fiema Ahafo in the Ashanti Region as one of the most significant pillars to have established the seperewa. He traces the root of the seperewa to the Mandinka's. He states that even though the seperewa is identical to the Kora and the ngoni, it belongs to different cultures and ideologies. According to him, the ngoni was initially made up of six or seven strings and later developed into ten strings. According to him, seperewa started as an instrument for the griots.

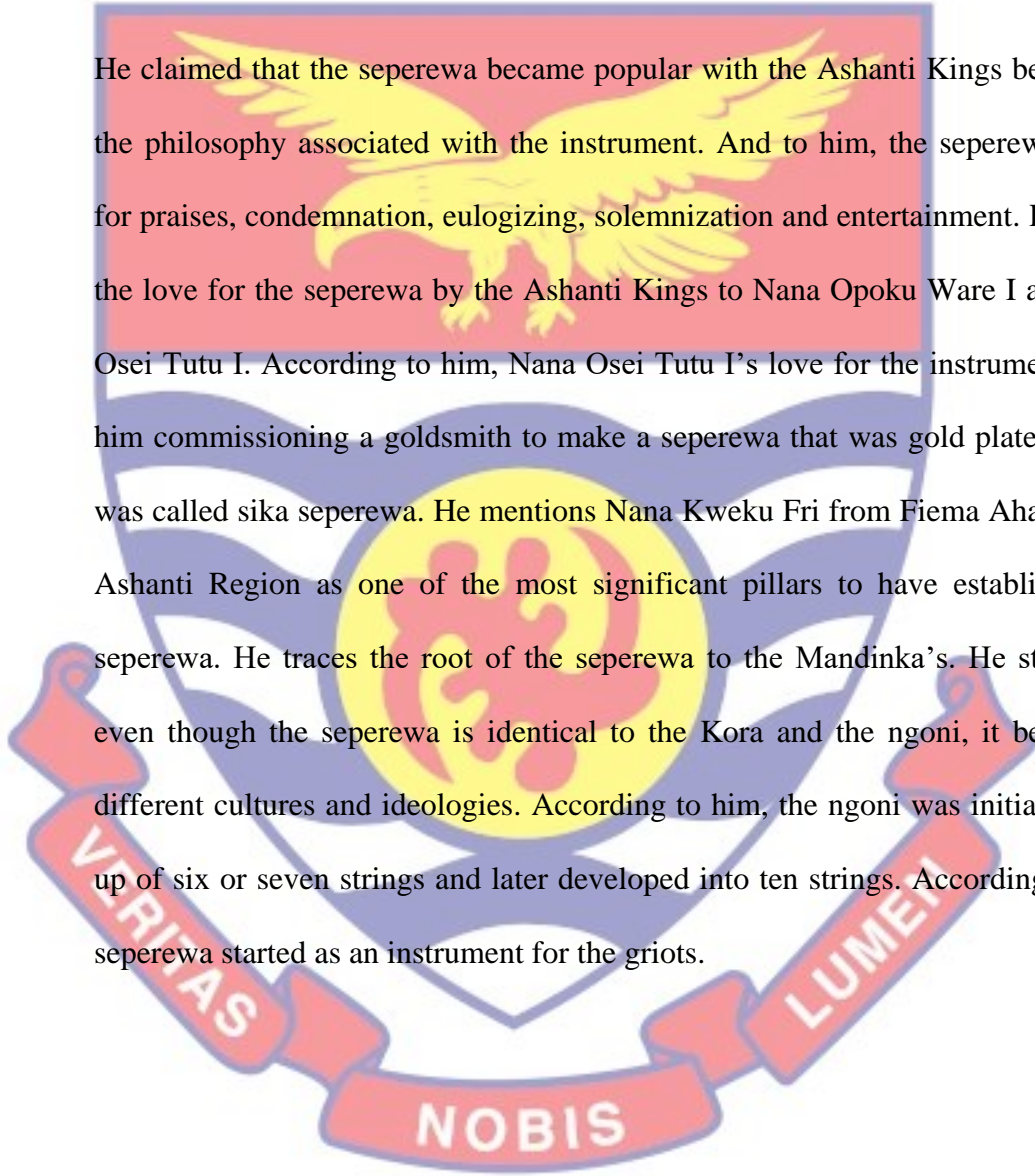




Figure 24.: ngoni instrument

Source: <https://www.spurlock.illinois.edu/blog/p/featured-object-west/110>.

He said that the seperewa has three phrases embedded in the name: *se*, which means “to say”, *pre*, which means “to pluck”, and *wa*, a short version of *tiawa*, an Akan word for short. He mentions the term language tuning, which he defined as using a set of words to tune a melodic instrument, the seperewa. The language tuning, he used for the seperewa is as follows in table five below;

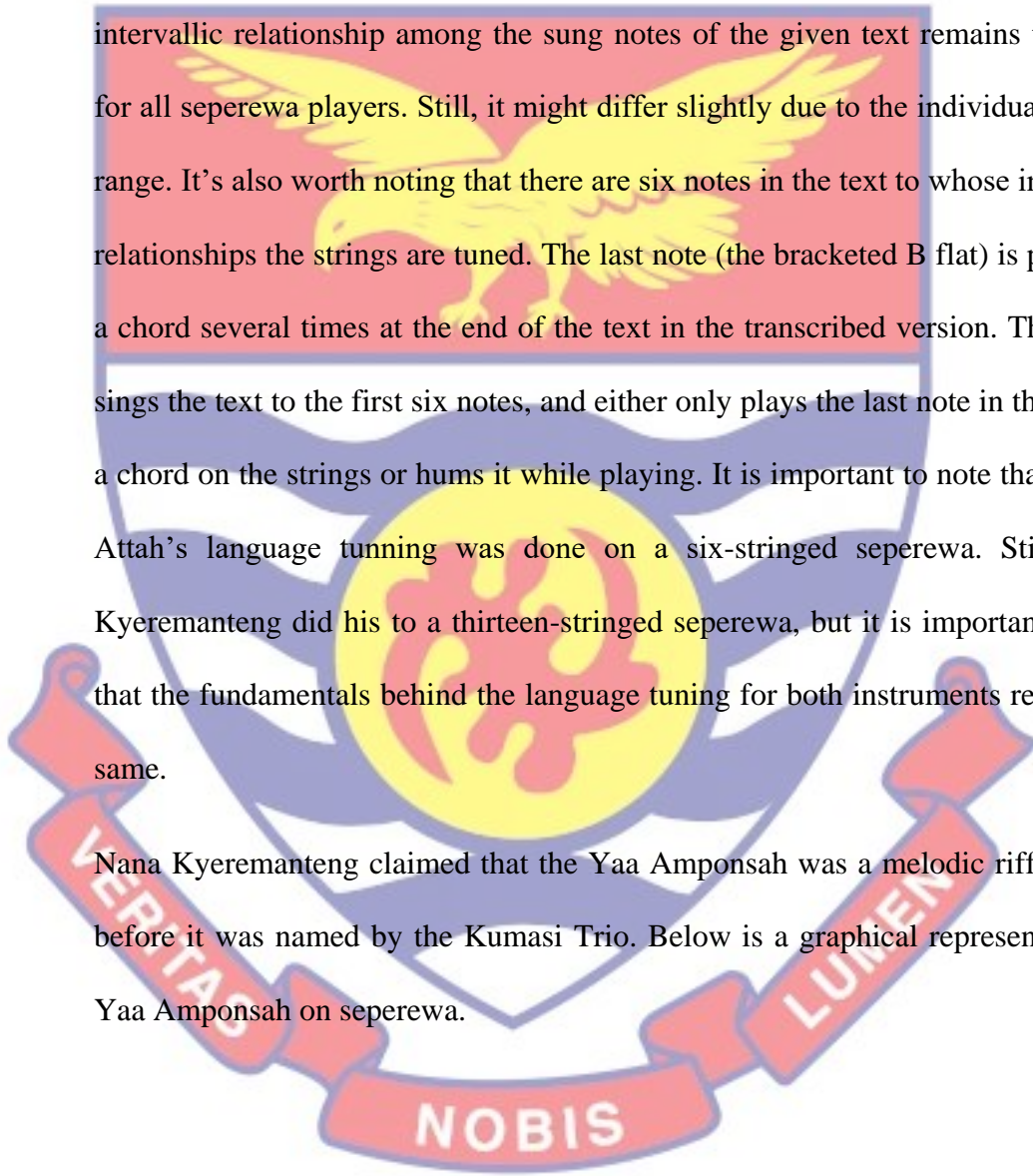
Table five: Words used in language tuning

Twi	English
<i>Fa papa yj nnipa</i>	Do good to man
<i>Fa papa yj nnipa</i>	Do good to a man
<i>Fa papa yj nnipa</i>	Do good to a man
<i>Fa papa yj nnipa</i>	Do good to a man
<i>Na nnipa nfa bcne nyj wo</i>	and let man treat you badly
<i>Edusi Poku e</i>	Edusi Poku
<i>Edusi Poku e</i>	Edusi Poku
<i>Suro nea cbjn wo</i>	Fear the one who is close to you
<i>Opuro nka ntam</i>	The squirrel does not swear
<i>Opuro nka ntam na nya amane sjn ni</i>	The squirrel does not swear so how does it get into trouble
<i>Cbrj anya anni a yj si bc oo mo</i>	if toiling doesn't get it we pity it
<i>Nanso na wa wu agya wa gyapadej</i>	but you would have left your properties
<i>Menkc nsuo menkc enyina</i>	I would not go fetch water, nor firewood
<i>Menkc nsuo menkc enyina</i>	I would not go fetch water, nor firewood

According to him, the texts used for tuning the seperewa has not changed over the years but noted that the player uses this method to tune to suit his particular voice.

He asserts that other phrases are used in a speech that could adjust the seperewa, but he uses the one above. The tuning is based on the intervallic strings between the seperewa, which is thirds apart. Another example of text used for tuning is the verbal text, “*ekoo nni nse nka ntam,*” (Adum-Attah 1997). He says that the intervallic relationship among the sung notes of the given text remains the same for all seperewa players. Still, it might differ slightly due to the individual’s vocal range. It’s also worth noting that there are six notes in the text to whose intervallic relationships the strings are tuned. The last note (the bracketed B flat) is played as a chord several times at the end of the text in the transcribed version. The player sings the text to the first six notes, and either only plays the last note in the way of a chord on the strings or hums it while playing. It is important to note that Adum-Attah’s language tuning was done on a six-stringed seperewa. Still, Nana Kyeremanteng did his to a thirteen-stringed seperewa, but it is important to note that the fundamentals behind the language tuning for both instruments remain the same.

Nana Kyeremanteng claimed that the Yaa Amponsah was a melodic riff existing before it was named by the Kumasi Trio. Below is a graphical representation of Yaa Amponsah on seperewa.



YAA AMPONSAH ON SEPEREWA

Nana kyeremanteng



Figure 25: Scored Amponsah riff on the seperewa by Nana Kyeremanteng

He makes mention of the fact that most of the riffs that had been popularized by the guitar originally migrated from the seperewa, he stated that if these riffs had originated via the guitar, Ghanaians would not have been popular for playing the guitar.

Nana pointed out that, there are a lot of melodic riffs that started from the seperewa with an example being Yaa Amponsah. He posited that riffs like *atine*, *odonson* and Yaa Amponsah existed before they became popularized on the guitar. He said because the older generation of musicians, failed to name these riffs or popularize the names of these melodic riffs, it became impossible to clearly pin point when it was introduced to the music scene in the country. I agree with this statement made by Nana because in my literature review I found out that Boateng (2016), Collins (2006), and Schmidt (1994) all made references to the point that what the local musicians played on the guitar had its basis from the

seperewa. This is evident from what Nana said. Having listened to Nana Kyeremanteng play Yaa Amponsah on the seperewa, it was evident that the fundamentals of the seperewa as played on the guitar has the same foundations.

Reasons for the Variations and the popularity of the Amponsah riff

In this section, I will give reasons why the Yaa Amponsah riff became popular and reasons for the differences among the variations.

Firstly, the individual to the resultant melody cycle. This is where two melodies are heard as a single resultant melody. The earliest recorded version of Yaa Amponsah guitar riff was light; this can be seen from the scored version of the Kumasi Trio below

Figure 26: Scored guitar riff in Yaa Amponsah by Kwame Asare and the Kumasi Trio

The picture below is a graphical depiction of what W.E. Ward claims to have heard at Apedwa, which he scored in 1927.

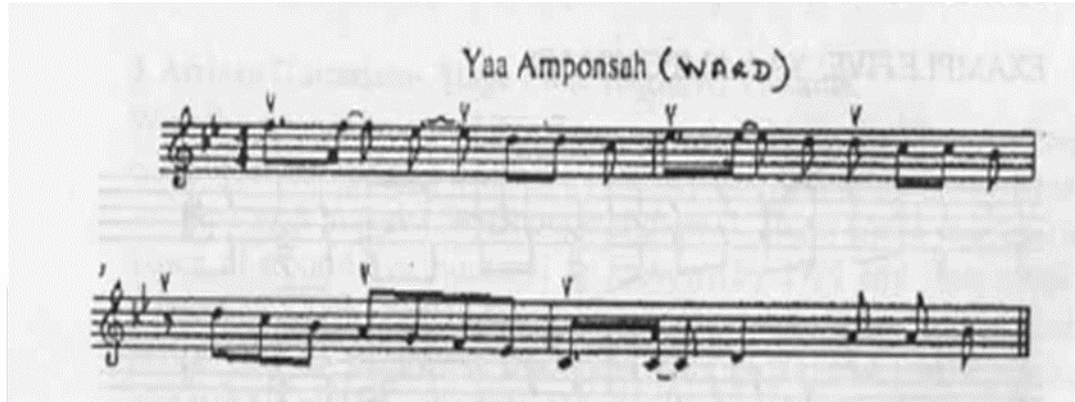


Figure 16: Scored Amponsah riff by Ward.

Source: (Collins, 2006)

The texture of these version is light and simple as compared to other versions. During this time, the popular music scene of Ghana was in its infant stages compared to the era of the big boom of highlife. Upon hearing single melodies, musicians made the riffs more expansive and added more melodies and instruments by going through a creative process. According to Adum-Attah (1997) mentions Mensah (1972) mentions two types of creative processes that led to the compositions of highlife music. He first accounts for the sub-conscious level at which these musicians were exposed to both African and Western music at an early age, and the second one being how they applied Western concepts at conscious level in the creation of their music. Growing up within two different music cultures, local musicians I think in an attempt to make their music global, applied Western concepts like four-part harmonies into their music for it to appeal to a larger audience while holding on to the fundamentals of their music culture. Darkwa (1980) points out, the music of the first hybridization has more traditional ingredients and less Euro-American styles and instruments, which can be seen in

guitar styles that evolved out of Akan musical types like Ashiko, Ntan, Osibi, Osoode, Adaha, Odonson, Opemn Adesim, and Adowa.

Mednick (1962) posits that for individual's creative thinking process to be achieved there are three associative bases through which individuals attain creative solutions: serendipity, similarity, and mediation. Mednick defines creative thinking process as the formation of associative elements into new combinations which either meet specific requirements or are useful in a way. For Mednick, any organism will tend to bring the requisite associative elements into ideational contiguity to increase an innovative solution's probability and speed. With serendipity, Mednick states that it is brought about contiguously by the contiguous environmental appearance (usually accidental contiguity) of stimuli that elicit these associative elements of creativity. With similarity, Mednick says that the requisite associative elements may be evoked in contiguity due to the similarity of the associative elements or the familiarity of the stimuli eliciting these associative elements. This mode of creativity may be encountered in creative writing that exploits homonymity, rhyme, and similarities in the structure and rhythm of words or the objects they designate. Mediation may be evoked in contiguity through the mediation of common elements. This means of bringing the associative elements into contiguity with each other is of great importance in those areas of endeavour where the use of symbols is important. The factors above provide room for individual differences on how creative solutions may be deduced. It is also important to note that an individual without the requisite elements in his response arsenal will not combine them to arrive at a creative

solution. It is plausible that Mednick's three associative basis can account for the reason for variations in the Yaa Amponsah melodic riff. Through serendipity, musicians recording the guitar riff might play something unexpected or something knowingly, which might sound good, and when what he plays falls in the confines of the I, IV, V progression it forms part of Yaa Amponsah for that particular musician. With similarity, a musician might want to play a particular style of Yaa Amponsah he has heard but due to individual differences and differences with respect to mastery of the musical instrument, the musician might not be able to play exactly as heard on the instrument, but might play something similar to what he heard which in turn causes a variation from the original. Mediation can also be reason for variation, when a musician listens to two or different versions of Yaa Amponsah and tries to create a similar riff by listening to the two. By doing so the musicians creates a new riff from the different riffs, which would also cause a variation.

The Yaa Amponsah melodic riff became popular as a result of the national dance band competition in 1972 organized by the Arts council of Ghana. Adum-Attah (1997) states that the Arts Council of Ghana organized a national dance band competition in 1972 during which dance bands were expected to play their original compositions based on the Yaa Amponsah guitar riff. This competition inspired Ogyatanaa's version of Yaa Amponsah as well as Nana Ampadu's version. Nana Ampadu picked up the first position whiles Ogyatanaa show band picked up the second position. Adum-Attah estimates that over two hundred

compositions were made from the Yaa Amponsah guitar riff during the life cycle of this competition.

In addition to the already stated points, another reason for the popularity of the Yaa Amponsah riff is conventional harmony. Four-part harmony was introduced into the country when Europeans arrived in the country. The indigenous Ghanaian musicians learnt conventional harmony from the churches and assimilated it with their own musical practices. This popularized the I, IV, V utilitarian chord progression. Because the I, IV, V progression can be used for Amponsah, it became a go-to chord progression for anyone composing highlife songs. Adum-Attah refers to it as a prototype for highlife music.

The Amponsah guitar riff in Ghana and Across the world.

The Yaa Amponsah guitar riff, according to Adum-Attah, became a prototype for the highlife music genre, and since then, it has been used in over a hundred songs. Due to its history as one of the earliest recorded songs of the highlife genre, it became synonymous with what one can describe as Ghanaian. Yaa Amponsah guitar riff, although started in Ghana, has travelled from Ghana into other countries.

With the growth of technology, YouTube has become one of the go sites to learn and listen to various music genres. When it comes to Yaa Amponsah, one of the most popular artists/teachers of the riff is a man known as Mr. George Ankomah Mensah, who is widely known as G Spratz. Even though there are other things he

teaches, he has made more videos of the Yaa Amponsah riff than any other guitar riff.

For example, his video entitled ‘Amponsah Unlimited’ (posted on March 03, 2011 at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hB_f5ViHz4E) has 76,000 views at the time of this research. Another video of his entitled ‘Yaa Amponsah’ (posted on August 08, 2019 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7g-inxJOIpY>) at the time of this research had 18,000 views.

In ‘Yaa Amponsah: The result when “the masters” met’ (video that Spratz uploaded at, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNmpOkjkDmg> on September 25, 2013) the song ‘aburokyire abrabo’(arranged for the orchestra by Dr. Zabana Congo), was rehearsed with both the National Symphony Orchestra and The Police Band and featured Koo Nimo and George Ankomah Mensah.

There are foreign variations of Yaa Amponsah that I have come across. The first variation I would like to talk about features in the song titled ‘Mami water’ by the ⁶Bembeya Jazz National which was, released in 1996 on the homage à Demba Camara album. The song is in Dyula, Jula or Dioula language and Twi. Dyula is part of the Mande language family which is spoken in Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, and Mali. The fundamental guitar riff is seen below

⁶ [Bembeya Jazz National - Mami Wata](#)

Mami water

Bembeya Jazz National

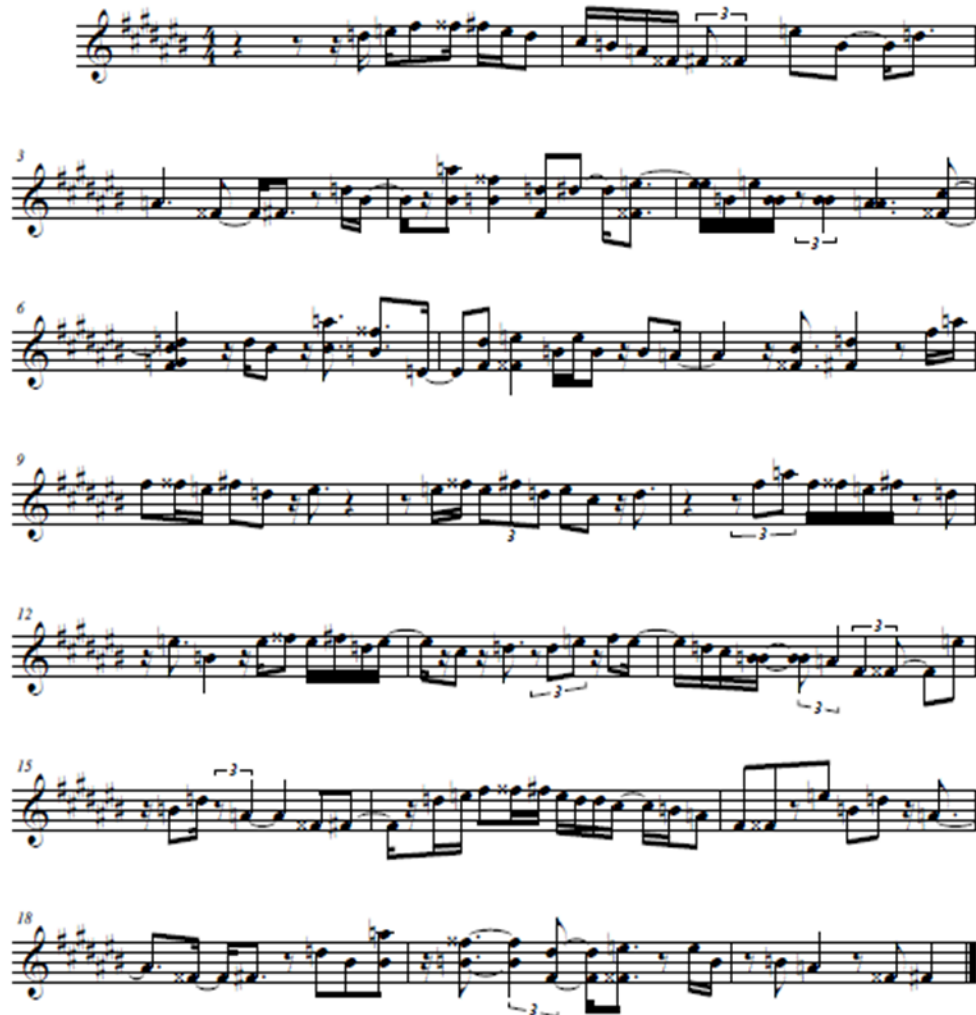


Figure 28: Scored guitar riff in mami water by Bembeyaa Jazz National

This variation of Yaa Amponsah has elements similar to the ones from Ghana. According to the person who interpreted the song for me, the song praises Yaa Amponsah, a sea mermaid.

Another variation of Yaa Amponsah which deserves mention is from the Jollyboys orchestra from Nigeria. The basic guitar riff is depicted below:



Figure 29: Scored guitar riff in Yaa Amponsah by Jollyboys Orchestra

The song by Jollyboys Orchestra was sent to me privately by John Collins. Below is a link to listen to the song.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HRqw6A2ByKxRW2dtxp9ar18R5kPDndMg/view?usp=sharing>

Another version of the Yaa Amponsah guitar riff is Paul Simon's 'The Rhythm of the Saints' song on the spirit voices cd album released in 1990.



Figure 30: Scored guitar riff in Rhythm of the saint by Elster

Source: (Collins, 1994)

How guitar riffs are named

In this research, I also found out that although the names of guitar riffs may come from different sources and stem from different reasons, names of Ghanaian guitar riffs are informed by two major considerations:

1. The song in which the guitar riff was first used. Example: The guitar riff used in the Yaa Amponsah song automatically was named after Yaa Amponsah. Other examples include 'fireman' and 'odonson.'
2. It can be named after the person who popularized the riff. Example: Kwao guitar riff is named after Kwao Mensah.

Summary of key findings

This study analysed the Yaa Amponsah guitar riff, gave an account for the reasons why there are variations of guitar riffs and also sought out to tell a narrative of the Yaa Amponsah song.

With respect to my research question 1: what accounts for the variations of the Yaa Amponsah guitar riff. I found out that the reasons for the variations include the individual melody to resultant melody cycle. This is where musicians try to reproduce resultant melodies, single-handedly. By doing so, they go through a creative process to create a hybrid riff, based on what Mednick (1962), refers to as the associative basis of the creative process. Where through serendipity, similarity and mediation different variations of the original riff is created. Another reason for the variations of the Yaa Amponsah riff is the chord I IV V progression. Acting as a template for musicians, the musicians in an attempt to reach a larger audience adapted the I IV V progression to suit their needs.

With respect to my research question 2: what is a narrative for the Yaa Amponsah story, I formed a narrative based on a synthesis of four indigenous composed songs titled Yaa Amponsah and an interview with Agya Koo Nimo.

The first narrative of the Yaa Amponsah song is that, Sam a musician and instrumentalist got married to Yaa Amponsah a beautiful lady, but because he did not have money to carter for the needs of Amponsah. Amponsah got divorced. Sam was so broken hearted that, he proposed to Yaa Amponsah that she should be his concubine, if she has gotten a divorce, which Yaa Amponsah refused.

The second narrative, as per the interview with Agya Koo Nimo is that Sam an itinerant musician, encountered a beautiful lady by name Yaa Amponsah. Sam fell in love with Amponsah even though she was married. Sam knowing that it is socially frowned upon to court a married woman did not act on his impulses. But when he had the chance to record music in London, he was able to finally talk about his feelings in a song title “*gyae aware ma yen twe mpena*”.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The aim of this study was to analyse the Yaa Amponsah guitar riff and also tell a narrative surrounding the song. To this end, this study explored the concept of African guitarism and the link between the Akan traditional harp (seperewa) and the guitar. A total of five songs titled Yaa Amponsah was sampled and analysed. The research concluded by hypothesizing two narratives for the Yaa Amponsah story and gave plausible reasons to the differences between the recorded guitar riffs and plausible reasons why the Yaa Amponsah riff became dominant.

Summary of key findings

Although Yaa Amponsah had already become established as the lingua franca of highlife by the time of Ghana's independence, the popularity of the Yaa Amponsah guitar riff can be attributed to the National dance band competition held in 1972. During this competition dance bands across the country had to create an original composition based on the Yaa Amponsah guitar riff. It was hard to find the exact song the 1972 competition was based on, and it was also difficult to get all the songs at the competition, because of lack of documentation.

Traditional melodic riffs played on instruments like the seperewa, was played on the guitar after its introduction to the Ghanaian music scene. The Yaa Amponsah guitar riff was based on the chord I, IV, V progression. The guitar riff has

rhythmic similarities to the Akan ensembles like *sikiyi* and *kete apente* as posited by Sprigge, (1961).

Plausible narratives for the Yaa Amponsah story are as follows:

Sam, a musician and instrumentalist got married to Yaa Amponsah a beautiful lady, but because he did not have money to cater for the needs of Amponsah. Amponsah got divorced. Sam was so broken hearted that, he proposed to Yaa Amponsah that she should be his concubine, if she has gotten a divorce, which Yaa Amponsah refused.

Secondly, Sam, an itinerant musician, uncourt a beautiful lady by the name of Yaa Amponsah. Sam fell in love with Amponsah even though she was married. Sam knowing that, it is socially frowned upon to court a married woman did not act on his impulses. But when he had the chance to record music in London, he was able to finally talk about his feelings in a song title “*gyae aware ma yen twe mpena*”.

Through the individual to resultant melody cycle, musicians adapted the creative process as described by Mednick (1962), created different version of the Yaa Amponsah guitar riff while holding on to its fundamentals.

Conclusions

I found that there are inconsistencies in the narrative of the recorded versions I analysed. I conclude that from the available evidence, the inconsistencies could have arisen from the fact that the underpinning motives of the original and the subsequent ones were not identical. It stands to reason that whereas Sam’s

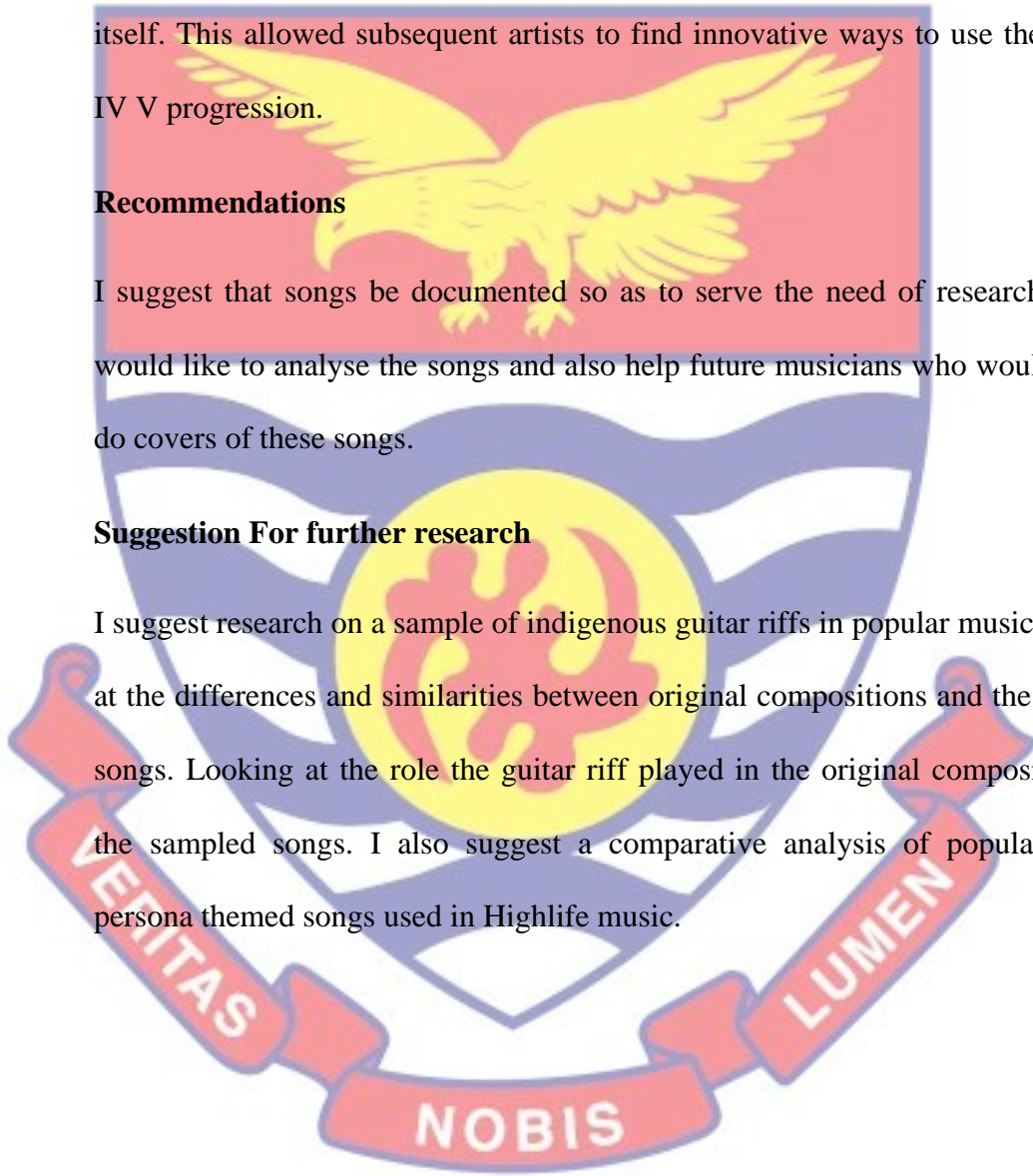
version was targeted at winning a loved one back, the subsequent artists who recorded intended it to serve a more hedonic and aesthetic function. Therefore, the emphasis was more on the instrumentation (considering that more instruments were available) than on a true representation of the didactic message in the song itself. This allowed subsequent artists to find innovative ways to use the chord I IV V progression.

Recommendations

I suggest that songs be documented so as to serve the need of researchers who would like to analyse the songs and also help future musicians who would like to do covers of these songs.

Suggestion For further research

I suggest research on a sample of indigenous guitar riffs in popular music, looking at the differences and similarities between original compositions and the sampled songs. Looking at the role the guitar riff played in the original composition and the sampled songs. I also suggest a comparative analysis of popular female persona themed songs used in Highlife music.



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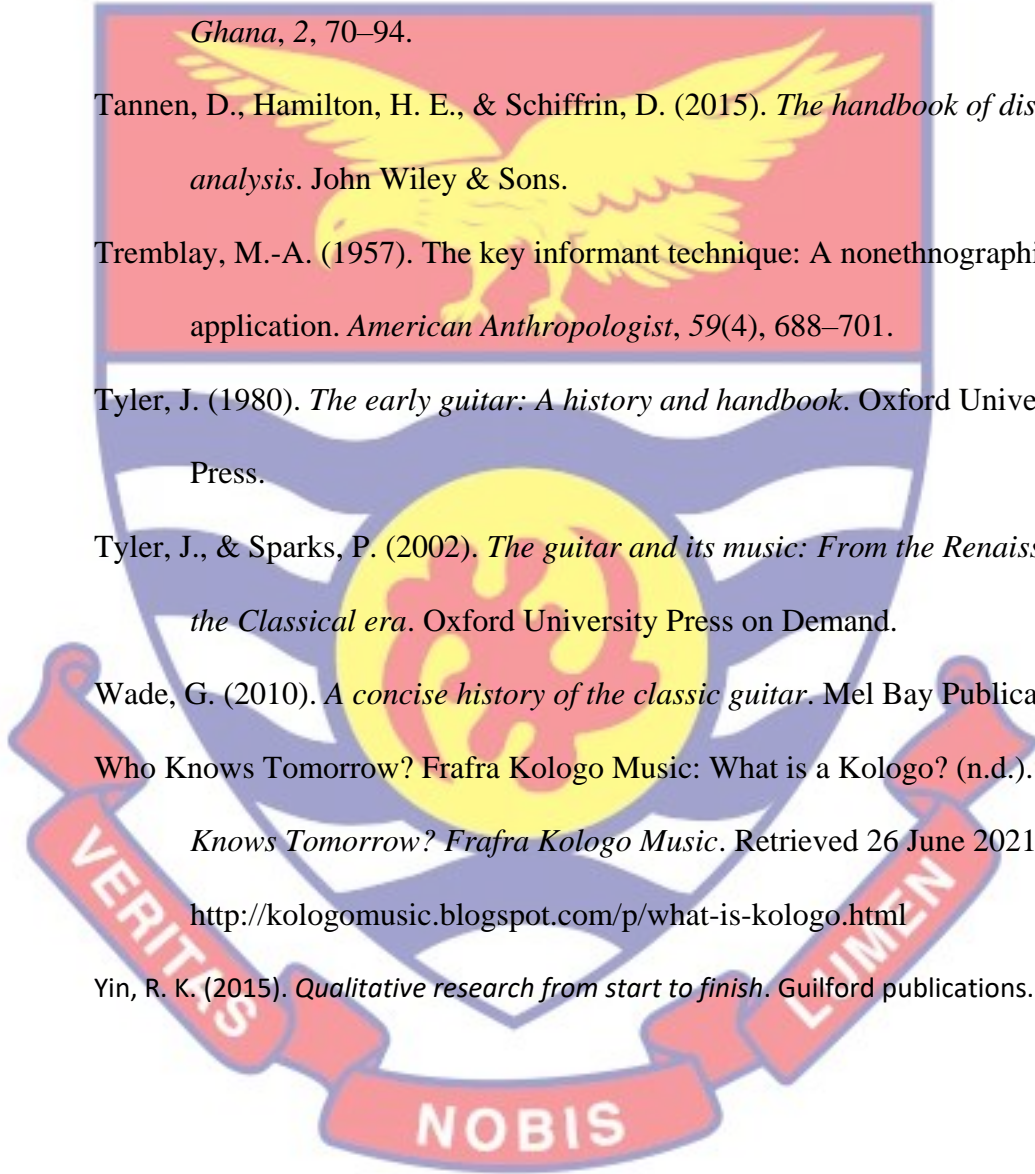
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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Introductory letter

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11th May, 2021

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Mr. Jehoshaphat Philip Sarbah

We wish to introduce to you Mr. Jehoshaphat Philip Sarbah, MPhil student in Music Education at the Department of Music and Dance, University of Cape Coast.

Mr. Sarbah would like to copy to music from your archive for his MPhil thesis titled "Yaa Amponsah: An Analytical Study of an Indigenous Ghanaian Guitar Riff".

We would be grateful if you will give him the assistance needed. For any clarification or confirmation, do not hesitate to contact the Head of Department of Music and Dance, University of Cape Coast on +233 507 262 957.

Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Eric Debrah-Otchere

Head