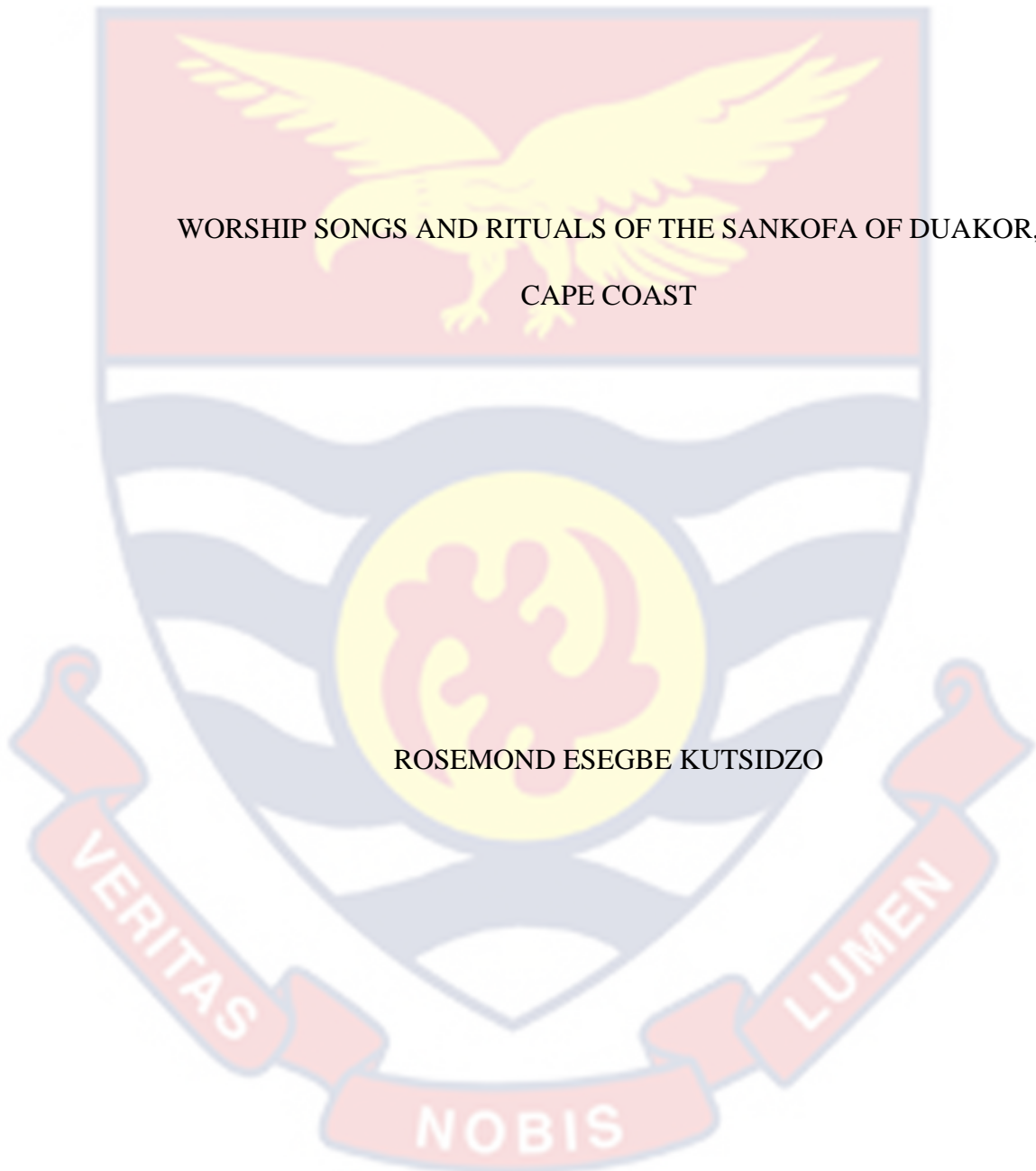


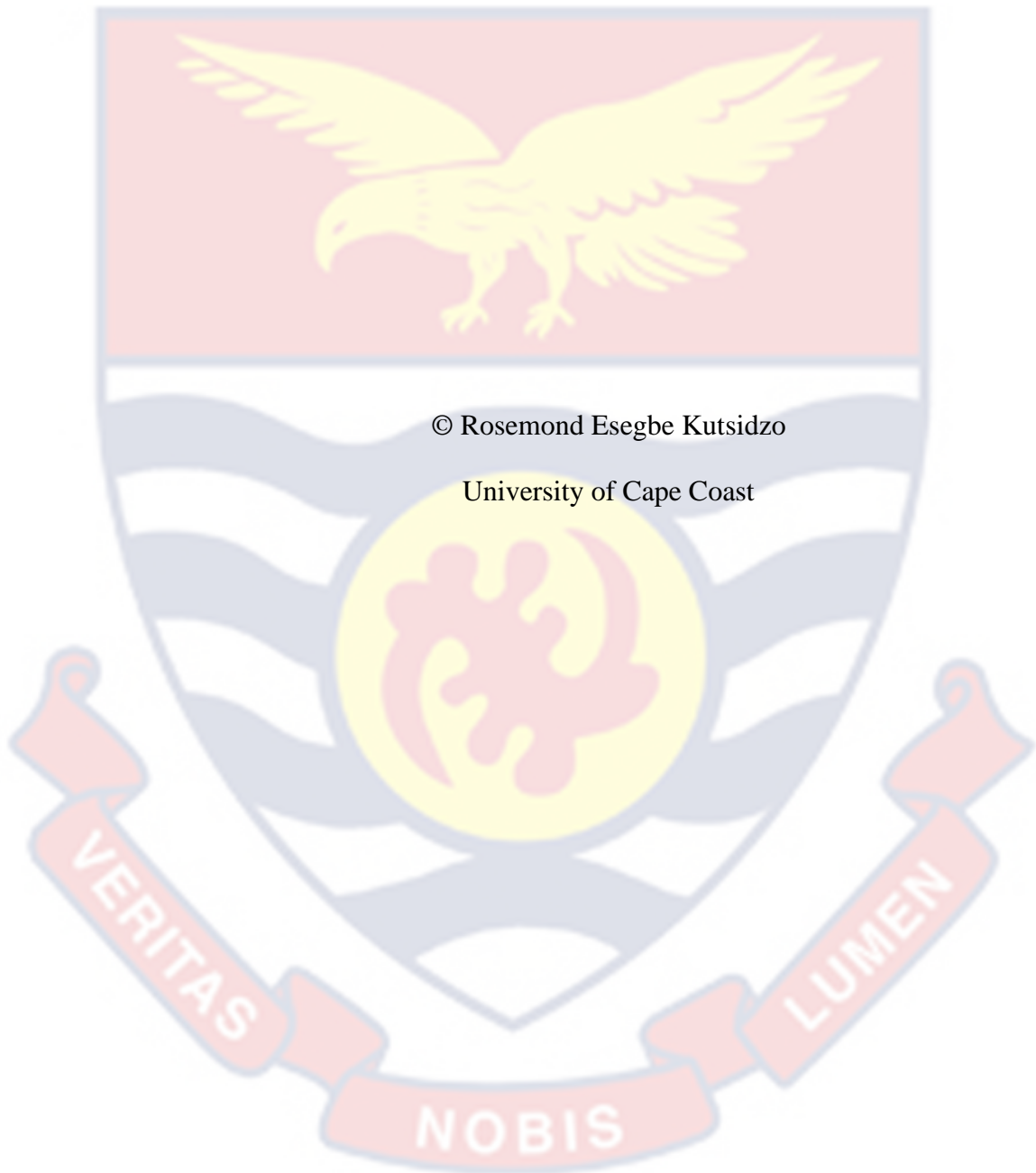
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WORSHIP SONGS AND RITUALS OF THE SANKOFA OF DUAKOR,  
CAPE COAST

ROSEMOND ESEGBE KUTSIDZO

2022



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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

WORSHIP SONGS AND RITUALS OF THE SANKOFA OF DUAKOR,  
CAPE COAST

BY

ROSEMOND ESEGBE KUTSIDZO

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 Ethnomusicology

AUGUST 2022

**DECLARATION**

**Candidate's Declaration**

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

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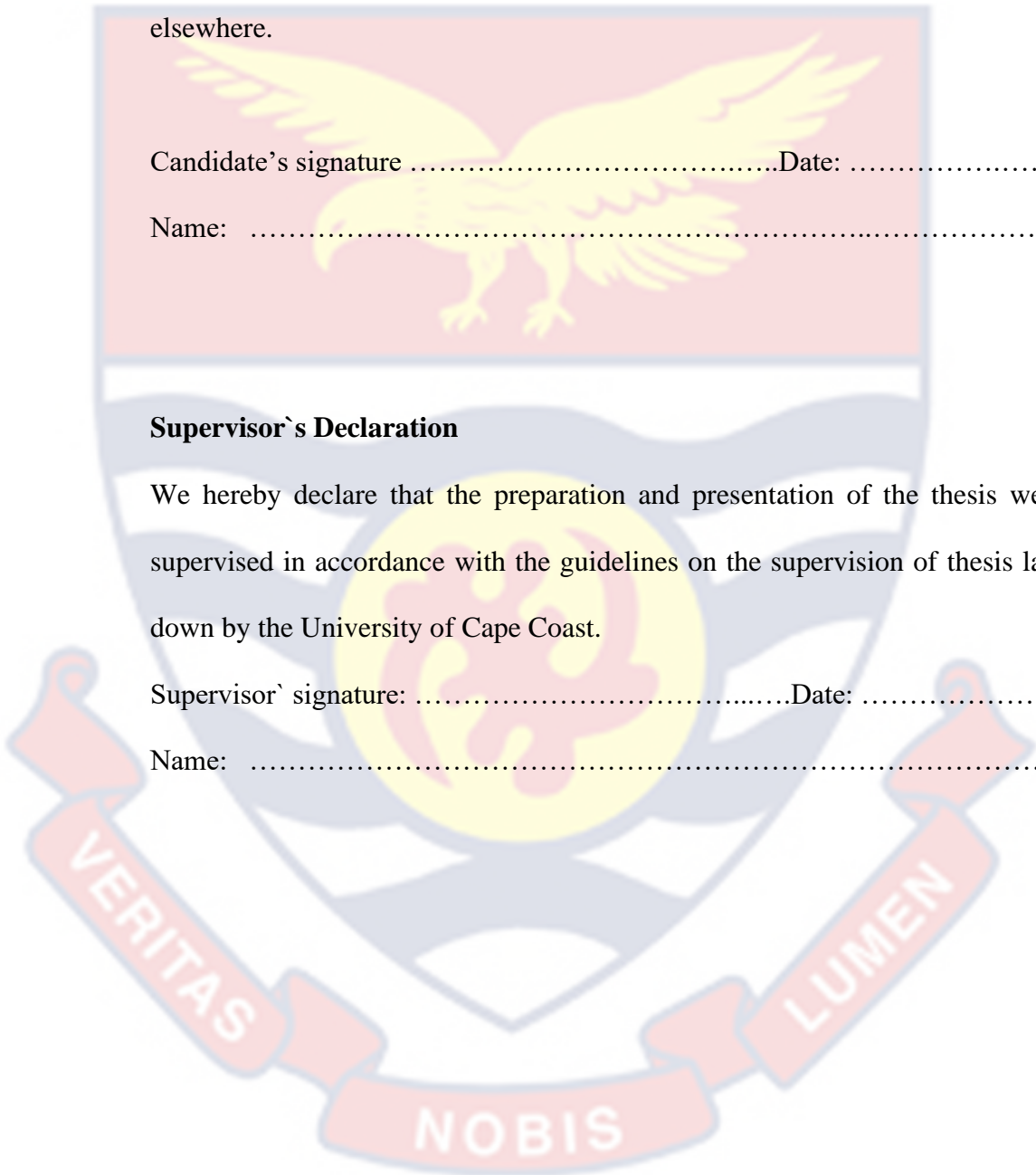
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## ABSTRACT

*Sankofa* in Duakor, is a derivative of the Afrikania Mission (AM); a reformed traditional movement established in 1982 by an ex-catholic priest—Osofo Okomfo Kwabena Damuah who was convinced that the African cosmology and philosophy of a supreme creator is superior to that of the West. In the face of missionary activities, defamation, and globalization against indigenous religious practices within Ghana and Africa, as well as social pressures, the *Sankofa* continually thrives on the premise of their music and spiritual practices (rituals). This study is an investigation of how the group has thrived in a Christian-dominated community. Using the ethnographic procedure, primarily, through oral interviews and observation, a possibly consequence of their music making to the case is examined. The study reveals a substantial connection between *Sankofa* music's function -ritual, worship, social, and a preservation of oral knowledge transmission of their indigenous cultural organism, notwithstanding the enormity of the seeming break-up of indigenous communities in Ghana. The study concludes that *Sankofa*'s spiritual, cultural, and philosophical values are revealed in the broader concepts of Ewe knowledge systems through the elucidation of songs and song texts. Also, there is an indication that *Sankofa* draws on indigenous knowledge systems as well as modern trends to create a 'religio-socio-cultural' identity that may be sustainable in an ever-changing global world.

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**DEDICATION**

To my family



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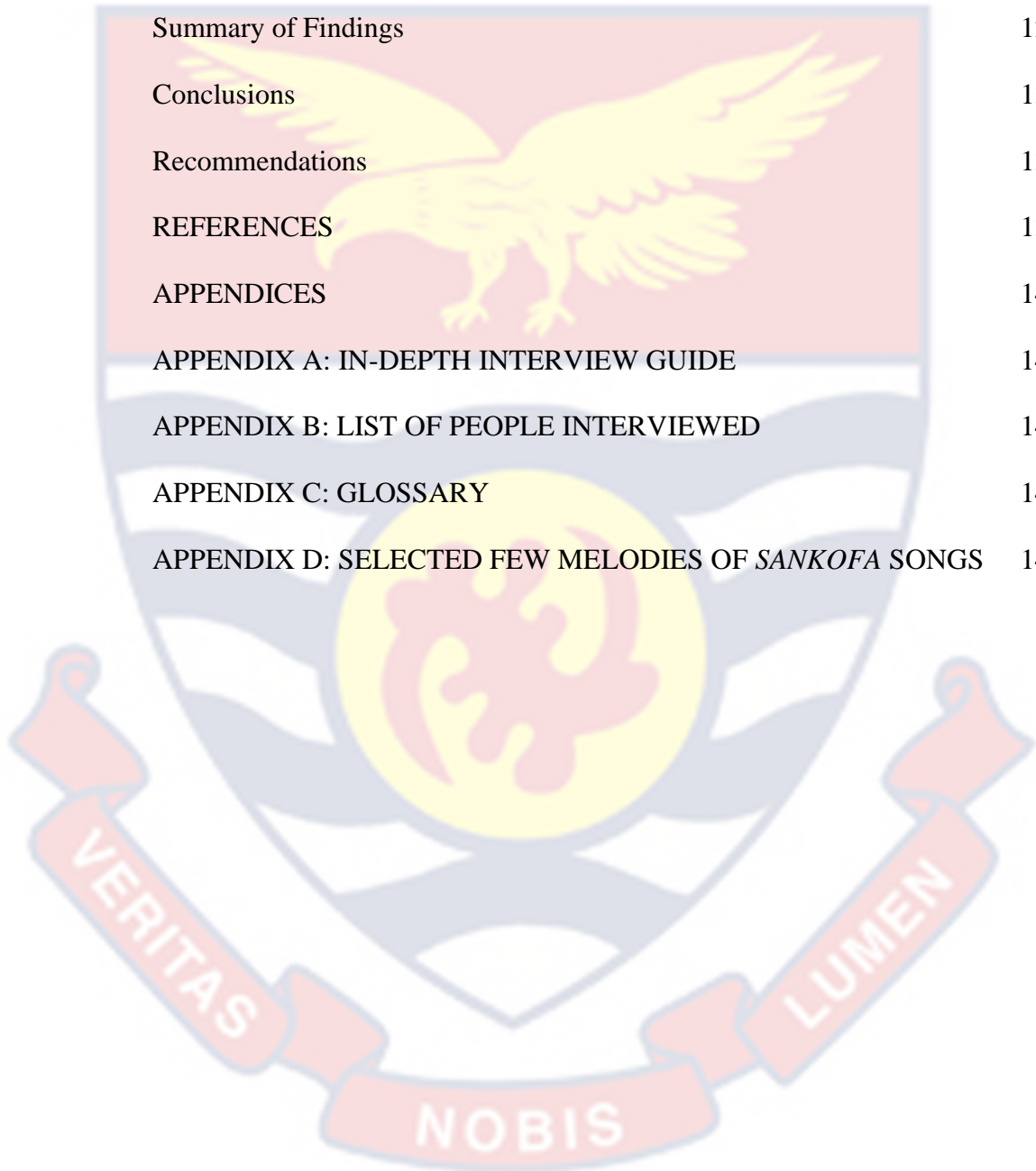
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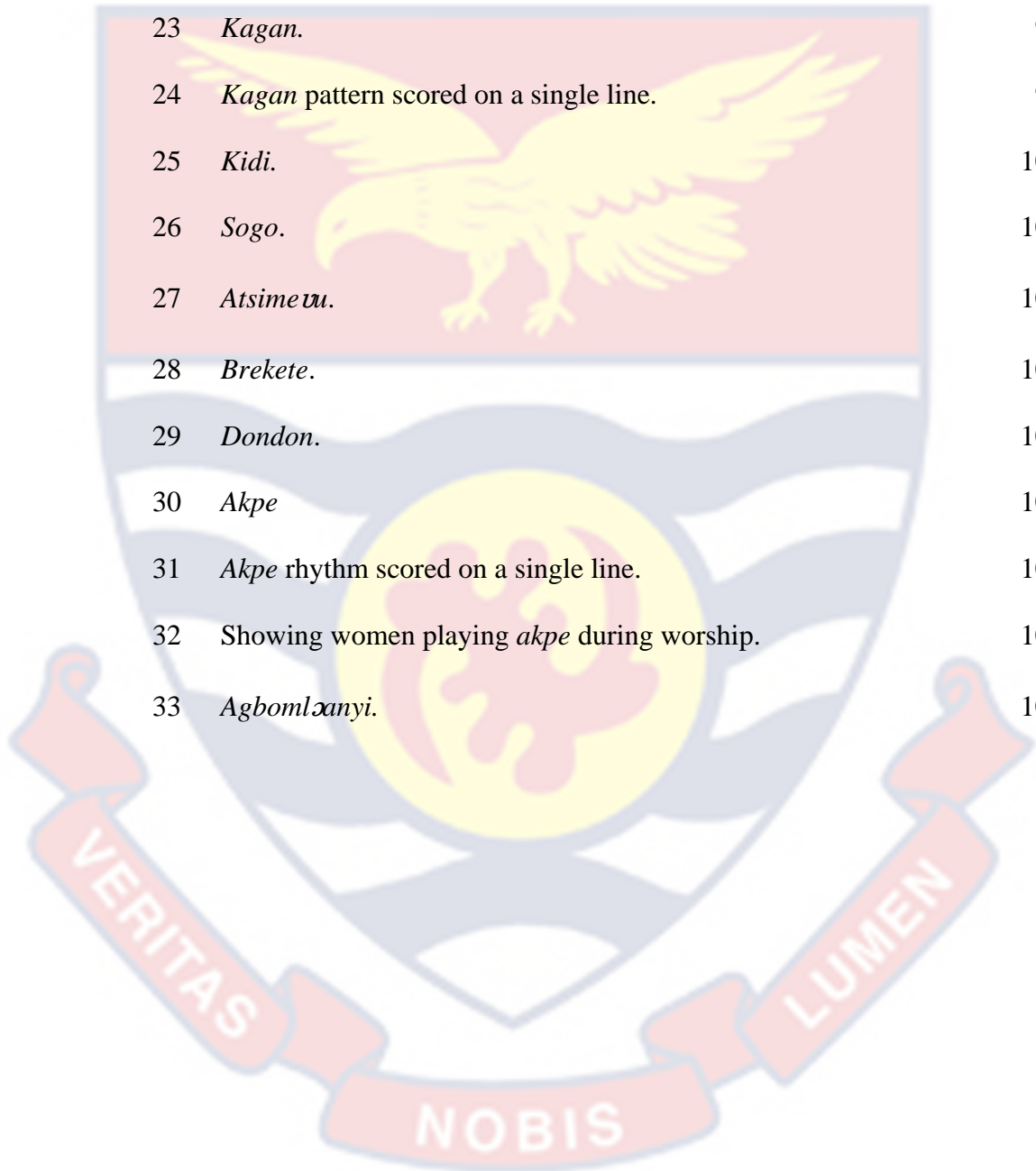
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### LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS

AICs	African Initiated Church's
AM	Afrikania Mission
ATR	African Traditional Religion
ICC	Independent Charismatic Churches
ICGC	International Central Gospel Church
PNDC	Provisional National Defense Council
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
WEC	World Evangelical Crusade



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of the background of the study, taking into consideration the relevance of music in spiritual practices. Subsequent to this is the statement of the problem. Afterwards, the purpose of the study is presented, the objectives are itemized, and research questions stipulated. The chapter also presents the methodology and delimitation of the study, it further addresses the significance of the study and closes with the organization of the study.

#### **Background of the Study**

The phenomenon of music and religious practices has received increased scholarly attention from ethnomusicologist and other researchers who study culture and various art forms of human expression (Atran, 2002; Becker, 2001; Rouget, 1985). In African communities, indigenous religious practices are mostly hinged on music; from cradle to the grave, music is pivotal in the African social life journey (Chitando, 2002:21).

Regarding musical experience and healing, Asare (2015) in his comparative study of the Twelve Apostles and Shaman of Ghana and Finland respectively, articulates that music bridges the gap between indigenous worship, healing, and wellbeing. He argues that without music indigenous healing process is ineffective. Thus, the ritual is the music and the music, the ritual. Similarly, Friedson (1996) posits, “music is the structural nexus where healer, patient, and the spirit meet”. He describes music as the “energizing heat” that drives the process of trance among the Tumbuka healers of Malawi. Friedson establishes that the sound of drum, clapping of the choir, ‘call and response’

singing are the essential elements that accompany a sacred ritual activity. Often, the historical, social, and political structure of a community are restructured as a result of the documented, preserved, and transmitted repository of knowledge and artistic traditions via music. Gbolonyo (2009) in his study of indigenous knowledge and cultural values in Ewe musical praxis observed that Ewe musical text possessed documentary value-historically, socially, and politically.

During my preliminary investigation in 2019, I realized that through songs, dancing, and drumming employed in the worship of the *Sankofa* of Duakor, Cape Coast, a real sense of identity is created, sustained, and passed on from generation to generation. In the context of *Sankofa* music (singing, drumming, and dancing) serves as a didactic tool by the community to impart elements of their culture which they consider significant in the survival of the individual in particular, the survival of the group, as well as the continual survival of the wider community in general.

Before colonial contact, and continuing into today's post-colonial Ghana, traditional religion was and has been perceived by many as a religion that could not advance in the face of modernity. Meyer (1999) recounts his personal experience living among the Ewe and he describes how the Christians portray traditional rituals as heathen. Most customary rites and indigenous drumming, singing, and dancing were vilified as barbaric and those who participated in these practices were undoubtedly considered as pagans. As a result, most indigenous practices have been relegated to the background. In spite of these 'threats', the followers of traditional religion who practice in the communities they find themselves have challenged this perception and thrived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With the negative attitude of the European encounter



(missionary activity, defamation, globalization) against indigenous religious practices within Ghana and Africa, I argue that traditional religion has continually survived on the premise of music and ritual practices that unify its followers. The place of music, the role it plays, especially in the African context cannot be overemphasized. It is present in most events connected with rituals and religious ceremonies.

Through the participation of ethnography, the study sought to inquire into the musical repertoire of the *Sankofa* worship in Duakor, Cape Coast, alongside identifying the role of music in maintaining the visibility of the *Sankofa* group in Duakor. Furthermore, the study seeks to show how the *Sankofa* has thrived as a socio-religious group within a dominant Christian community. The study outlines the historical development of the Afrikania Mission (AM) in Ghana, specifically the *Sankofa* of Duakor. By examining the *Sankofa* music texts, ritual and worship, the study contributes to the discourse on music and religion.

*Sankofa* is a derivative of the Afrikania Mission Ghana; a religious group distinguished by their indigenous worship and practices. The Afrikania Mission is a reformed traditional movement established by Damuah, a former Catholic priest, in 1982. It has survived continuously since the demise of its founder in spite of the dominant Christian representation in the Ghanaian religious sphere. Damuah's main reason for breaking away from the Catholic church to champion indigenous worship and practices is to break away from missionary control and Christian influences (Gyanfosu, 1995). According to Gifford (2004), the Afrikania Mission Ghana have been compelled to change their approach to worship to suit the current religious trend within the religious

landscape in order to advocate for indigenous worship, thereby adopting Christian features in their worship patterns, religious practices, and encouraging the use of media and technology.

In this study, I present an overview of the *Sankofa* worship, rituals, songs, and everyday life in Duakor. Although it had been my desire to conduct a study that focuses on a religious community, their life and songs, this interest was immensely rekindled by the incomparable performance I witnessed by the *Sankofa* on my first visit to the community in 2010. The selection of *Sankofa* for this study was based on two reasons: the fact that within the Duakor community, this religious group is the name readily mentioned in relation to indigenous worship, rituals, beliefs, and practices. Also, the *Sankofa* is unique in the sense that its members are fairly representatives of the major characteristics of indigenous worship back home where they migrated from. Nonetheless, I find this congregation most appropriate for the purpose of preserving indigenous religious worship in Ghana.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The concept of resilience runs throughout this thesis, particularly the function sacred music plays in shaping and reifying the identity of a traditional religious practitioner. When an individual develops an identity, they gain a better sense of self-confidence and self-worth. When a group of said persons, all share this cultural identity and the self-confidence it provides, it improves the will and resilience against any external cultural threats. In this situation, belonging to a community of indigenous spiritual practitioners provides the foundation for this courage, resolve, and pride. Indigenous spirituality, language, activities (including music and dance), and healing are "protective

factors" that support cultural resilience, according to recent studies in this area. The worship of *Sankofa* includes all of these.

In a pluralistic society, several studies have examined the significance of creative practice in engendering identities and navigating their boundaries. It's vital to emphasize Eisenstadt's concept of "multiple modernities" in relation to the traditional/modern divide as well as Charles Piot's work, which combines and expands ideas of tradition and modernity on a rural West African level. Why should it be assumed that traditional practices—like religion or music, for instance—cannot coexist with those seen as the advantages and ways of the modern? Who determines where one begins and the other finishes, as well as how the boundaries between the two are drawn? Regardless of what we choose to call it, Eisenstadt (2000) demonstrates that communities like Duakor and the *Sankofa* shrine can coexist rather nicely. The community of Duakor and the shrine of *Sankofa* serve as examples of how the seemingly antiquated (i.e., *vodu*) and modern (technologies, use of Fleming and Ledogar (2008), Stokes (1994), Reed (2003 & 2005), Eisenstadt (2000) media, sanitation...however we want to characterize it) can co-exist. This is especially true in the context of the colonial encounter and all that it brought to West Africa. According to Piot, what we might view as stereotypical symbols of "traditional Africa" in the present day (such as thatch roofs, spirit worship, and subsistence farming) are actually responses to the modernizing effects of "the long encounter with Europe over the last three hundred years" and thus owe more to that encounter than to anything "indigenous"; they are "modernity's" very own. In light of the modernization, colonial, and international influences that surround and have an influence on its members, the shrine of *Sankofa* can and does exist as it does

now. This is not to argue that the shrine exhibits syncretism or features aspects from other cultures. Instead, it is because of the hegemonic pressures that modernity is associated with that the community and the shrine have made purposeful judgments about how to survive and flourish by focusing inward on the traditions that have supported their forebears.

This study is prompted by the need to reach understanding of the music and dance repertoire of the *Sankofa* of Duakor, Cape Coast. In the face of denigration, defamation, and Christian dominance in the social, religious, and political systems of Ghana I want to find out how the *Sankofa*, a traditional religious group has thrived to date. The arrival of European missionaries during the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the then Gold Coast (Ghana), brought significant changes into the religious sphere in Ghana. Although the primary aim of these missionaries is to spread Christianity across Ghana, the mainline churches (i.e., Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, and the Methodist Church) did not meet the spiritual needs of most Ghanaians at the time. This is due to the fact that their practices did not address the traditional worldview of Ghanaians, embedded in their belief in spirits.

According to the 2010 government census, (the most recent available), approximately, 72 percent of the population are Christians, 18 percent are Muslims, 5 percent belongs to indigenous beliefs, and 6 percent belongs to no religious group. These statistics show clearly the limited number of Ghanaians who practice indigenous religion. The influence of Christianity is seen at all levels of the society in Ghana-villages, cities, media, as well as the political domain. The proposed construction of an interdenominational Christian cathedral in Accra, by the current president, Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo,

to improve upon Christian activities in Ghana evidently alludes to this fact. Again, in the face of social pressures against indigenous religious practices, the *Sankofa* still thrives, ensuring the growth, continuity, and development of traditional religion in Ghana.

A great amount of ethnomusicological research on the Ewes of Ghana has been the subject of discussion since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Existing studies on music in Ewe have dwelt on Ewe musical processes (Jones, 1959; Agordoh, 2002), Ewe songs, song texts, rhythms, scales, melodies, and dance drumming performances (Fiagbedzi, 1966; Nyamuame, 2013; Lock, 2010; Gbolonyo, 2005), Ewe rhythms or drumming from different perspectives (Agawu, 1995 & 2003; Lock, 2010; Dor, 2001). Others focused on songs but more specifically song texts, language and speech production (Nketia, 1963 & 1974), as well as Ewe ritual life across the praxis of a northern medicine shrine (Friedson, 1996).

Although the body of literature on music and religion has been rapidly growing over the past decades, in-depth studies of songs and rituals of the *Sankofa* have been relatively scarce. Current studies in religion have dwelt on the developments within Afrikania Mission and have stressed the history and doctrines (Gyanfosu, 1995), the ideology and teachings (Gyanfosu, 2002), the use of media (De Witte, 2012 & 2008). Other researchers have confined themselves in drawing a link between Afrikania and Christianity (De Witte, 2012 & 2004). Little research has been undertaken on *Sankofa* (a derivative of the Afrikania Mission Ghana) music, worship, and ritual. The study sought to fill the *lacuna* in scholarly literature on *Sankofa* music and dance.

The central question is, how has this religious group survived in the Duakor community? This study will chronicle the creative ritual practices

connected with the *Sankofa* worship, examining the role music plays in maintaining the proper functioning and its effectiveness of attracting and sustaining members of the *Sankofa*.

This study sought to fill the lacuna in scholarly literature on *Sankofa* music and dance repertoire. By adopting an ethnographic approach, I provided a meaningful description of rituals, worship songs, and the relevance of it in maintaining the visibility of the group in Duakor.

### **Delimitation**

This study would chronicle the creative ritual practices connected with the *Sankofa* worship, examining the role music plays in maintaining the proper functioning and its effectiveness of attracting and sustaining members of the *Sankofa*. I would describe the repertoire of songs used in the in the ritual activities performed by the *Sankofa* as well as songs used in their worship.

This ethnographic study is not going to exhaust the characteristics of Ewe musical traditions but it would describe the songs in rituals and worship of the *Sankofa* in Duakor. Again, it would explore the music and dance repertoire of the *Sankofa* worship, and show how the *Sankofa* has thrived in a Christian dominated sphere.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary aim of the study was to establish how the *Sankofa* has thrived as a socio-religious group in a Christian influenced community, documenting the music and dance repertoire of their worship and ritual.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To find out the music and dance repertoire of *Sankofa* in Duakor, Cape Coast.
2. To examine how the *Sankofa* has thrived and still striving as a socio-religious group in a Christian influenced society.

### Research Questions

This study sought to find answers to the following questions.

1. What is the music and dance repertoire of the *Sankofa* in Duakor, Cape Coast?
2. How has the *Sankofa* thrived as a socio-religious group in a Christian influenced society?

### Methodology

This research used ethnographic research design under the qualitative mode of inquiry. The field in this research context was Duakor, Cape Coast, with the participants being the *Sankofa* of the Afrikania Mission. I have interacted with a cross-section of *Sankofa* members who are elderly members of the group. They included; the chief priest (*hunɔ*), priests, drummers, singers, and many more. I employed semi-structured and unstructured interview methods to gather data from key informants. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, some interviews were conducted via phone calls. The interactions with the category of people mentioned above enabled me to know the perspectives and experiences of the priests as they relate to being a traditional practitioner in modern Ghana. At the beginning of every interview session with a participant, I explained the research objectives and the process of the interview session.

Questions for the interviews were based on observed events as well as research objectives.

Through participant observation technique, I explored aspects of their worship and their worship behaviour. I had the chance to interact, participate in and observe their Sunday services to know their music and dance repertoire and also witnessed other programmes like funeral ceremonies for members who have passed on. I also did a video documentation of musical performances during the *Sankofa* service and other recreational and social activities. This helped me capture some aspects of the participants' social and cultural behaviour as well as interactions.

On issues of reflexivity, my position within this ethnographic setting is that even though I am not a traditionalist, I am an Ewe and I have observed music and dance performances at the *Tigari* shrine at *Akotokyire*, a suburb of the University of Cape Coast campus, and *Bakaano* in the Cape Coast township.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study was relevant for the following reasons. It presented a historical and ethnographic details of Duakor and showed the ritual practices of the *Sankofa*. The study documented the music and dance repertoire of the *Sankofa* in Duakor, Cape Coast. Finally, this research would complement existing research works, to expand the knowledge on the ongoing discussions on the growth and continuity of Afrikania Mission Ghana, and indigenous religious worship to a large extent.

### **Organization of the Study**

The research report comprised five (5) chapters as follows: chapter 1 presented the introduction of the work, presenting a brief background to the



study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the objective of the study, significance of the study, the delimitation of the study, as well as presenting the organization of the study.

Chapter two (2) provided a historical context of religion in Ghana and the Afrikania Mission. The chapter surveyed the resurgence of religion and gives special attention to the founder of the Afrikania Mission - Kwabena Damuah, beliefs, and practices of the Afrikania. A review of literature was presented on Ewe musical traditions in Ghana.

Chapter three (3) introduced the basic ethnographic details about the *Sankofa* people and the Duakor community. The chapter describes the Duakor community, the site of research itself, introduced the *Sankofa* worship, and the liturgical order of the *Sankofa* worship. It discussed my data gathering processes in the field and finally, my data analyses.

Chapter four (4) begun with the music and dance repertoire of the *Sankofa*. It discussed the instrumentation of the *Sankofa* worship and ritual, and the role of songs in maintaining the relevance of the *Sankofa* congregation in a Christian dominated community. This chapter presented and analyses discussions on how the *Sankofa* has thrived as a socio-religious group in a Christian dominated sphere. Furthermore, it discussed the song text and contextual use. This chapter drew special attention to data from the field of study, with presentation and discussion of major findings made.

Chapter five (5) is a conclusion that summarized the main findings of the thesis regarding, its ethnographic data, methods, as well as gaps identified in my own study. The chapter included recommendations and suggested areas for further studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

In this chapter I trace the history of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches from their early beginnings to the emergence of African Initiated Churches (AIC's), and also the formation of the Afrikania Mission (AM) in Ghana. I reviewed literature on the Afrikania Mission Ghana and the *Sankofa* of Duakor. Also, I review literature on Ewe musical traditions of Ghana.

#### Religion in Ghana: An overview

Over the previous three decades, Ghana's religious ethos has seen a growth in numbers of all religious forms. In Ghana's public realm, there has been a significant revival of religion. Western missionary-established churches, Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, indigenous religious groups, African Initiated Churches (AIC'S) known as *sunsum sɔre*, Islamic religious groups, Hindu and Buddhist traditions are currently the religions practiced in Ghana. All religious groups compete for membership and social exposure on the religious landscape as a result of varied religious traditions. Ghana's predominant religious tradition is Christianity. Around 71 percent of Ghana's population are Christians, 18 percent Muslims, 5 percent traditional religion, and 6 percent belong to other religions or have no religious affiliation (2010 population census).

Portuguese voyages to West Africa started in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. However, it appears that these missionaries had little lasting impact (Amanor, 2009), and the Christianization phase would not begin for another three centuries. Amanor

(2009), on the other hand follows the spread of Christianity through the efforts of several mission organizations that arrived in the region during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. The Moravian missionaries arrived in 1730, followed by the Church of England Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in 1754, the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society from 1828, the Wesleyan Missionary Society from 1835, the German Lutheran Bremen mission from 1847, the Roman Catholic Society of African Missions (SMA) from 1880, and later the independent Pentecostal missionaries from the Apostolic Church of Bradford (1937), and the American Assemblies of God (1931).

Initially, these missions were mostly focused on the southern states. The north and south of what is now Ghana are culturally, geographically, and distinct; the south, which includes the three main cities, is green, fertile, and highly populated, whilst the north is impoverished, with a hot, dry climate and sparse vegetation. The south has cultural ties to its neighbours in Southern Togo and Cote d'Ivoire, as well as Burkina Faso and Mali. The earliest missions were established as Europeans began to explore West Africa from the south, with the north remaining mostly un-evangelized until the twentieth century, neighbors in southern Togo and Côte d'Ivoire, whereas the north is more culturally related to ethnic groups in the north of those countries along with Burkina Faso and Mali. As Europeans started to explore West Africa from the south, this is where the first missions were based, the north remaining to a large extent un-evangelized until the twentieth century. As a result, the missionary stance in modern-day Ghana has shifted. Christian missions are currently mostly targeting northern Ghana where Islam and traditional faiths predominate

because Christianity has been deeply established in the society of much of southern Ghana.

The African response to the missions was varied, and even where it was not hostile it took a range of forms. Scholars have identified several main African-led movements (Amanor, 2009; Sackey, 2001). These include Ethiopianism, from the second half of the nineteenth century, which looked to the one 'truly African' church that was not initiated and had never been controlled by white missionaries. The movement had political overtones. Isichei (1997), a leading scholar in History has provided thoughtful insights into African religion and the dialogue between indigenous thought and Christianity. They listed the origins of the political overtones in West and South Africa as "white discrimination against black mission agents, disputes over resources, a general missionary was associated with settlers and colonists, and no longer seen as authoritative in matters relating to Christianity. The resulting secessions from mainline and mission churches ushered the birth of some of the 'AICs', known as the African Indigenous, Independent or Initiated Churches.

Other types of AIC's, which have been there since the 1920s, are more common in Ghana. These AICs are also known as Zionist 'Aladura' churches or '*sunsum sɔre*' or 'spiritual' churches (Sackey, 2001; Amanor, 2009). These were less political in nature, with the goal of withdrawing from authority and forming counter-societies rather than openly opposing the mission churches (Ranger, 1986, p. 3). This category includes a wide range of organizations with the focus on the spiritual, prayer (Aladura means 'praying people'), faith-healing, dreams and visions. While there was a general and anti-traditional religion mood in these churches, which included the burning of religious idols

and artefacts, there were also attempts to reconcile Christianity and African culture. Some groups, for example, accepted polygamy, identified witches, and placed a high value on the visions and the revelations of their leaders. Hastings uses the example of the leaders of the Faith Tabernacle in Nigeria, who were unable to accept Josiah Oshitelu's permission of polygamy, witches' hunts, and the use of 'holy names' derived through his own divine revelation, resulting in Oshitelu founding his own Church of the Lord (Aladura) (Hastings, 1994, pp. 516-7).

'Prophets' or individual preachers, were also influential in the early part of the twentieth century, generally clad in a flowing gown and carrying a wooden cross, a Bible and a calabash of baptismal water. These men and (on rare occasions) women did not necessarily found their own congregations. Prophet William Wade Harris, the most famous, is said to have converted 120,000 people to Christianity between 1913 and 1915 across Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana, encouraging them to join existing Methodist or Roman Catholic churches, although where no church already existed (and sometimes also where they did) they often formed their own (Amanor, 2009; Hastings, 1994).

The popularity of the AICs grew as independence approached, peaking in the 1960s and early 1970s. By the 1980s, however, new charismatic or neo-Pentecostal churches had surpassed them in terms of growth rates. Gifford (2004), citing surveys conducted by the Ghana Evangelism Committee in 1986-7 and 1991-2, notes that some of the AICs lost as many as 20% of their members during these five years, whereas mission churches remained relatively stable (7% increase, although compared to a 17% increase in the country's

population), and some charismatic churches increased by up to 100%. Mostly found in the urban areas, some of the latter now attract tens of thousands of people to multiple services each Sunday.

Scholars have recently focused their attention on these new churches, attempting to explain their rise and their role in forming present and future Ghanaian society. Some of these authors (Gifford, 2004) distinguished between new charismatic churches and the older, 'classical Pentecostal' churches. Others although acknowledging this as a new wave of Pentecostalism (Meyer, 1998 & 2004, for example), do not discriminate between distinct types in their analysis. The expansion and popularity of these churches can be attributed to a number of things. Amanor (2004) claims that the charismatic movement arose from mainline churches adopting elements of Pentecostalism after witnessing "transformed lives and the sense of nearness and reality of God" in the classical Pentecostal churches, whereas Gifford (2004) claims that the external influence of American evangelical churches and preachers, as well as socio-economic factors within Ghana, created an environment conducive to the doctrine's popularity.

Gifford categorizes Ghanaian churches into four main strands in 1980 (Gifford, 2004). The Catholic church remained the largest single denomination; the mainline Protestant churches included the Methodists, the Bremen and Basel Presbyterians and the Anglicans; the established Pentecostals (Apostolic Church, Church of Pentecost, Christ Apostolic Church and Assemblies of God) and the AICs, which were on the point of decline. In a 2004 article, he adds a new group, charismatic churches which he sees as important newcomers appearing in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

Foli (2001) developed a typology that categorizes Ghanaian churches into five distinct types. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the A.M.E. Zion Church, the Seventh Day Adventist Church and the Anglican Church are among the ‘mainline’, ‘mission’, ‘orthodox’ or ‘established’ churches. These churches are also known for their extensive coverage of the country, their orthodox (Western) traditions, and their lengthy history in Ghana, with the majority of them dating back to the nineteenth century.

The second category, ‘Other Mission-Related Churches’ (p.14), includes those that dates from the second half of the twentieth century, such as the Evangelical Churches of Ghana (World Evangelization Crusade (WEC) Mission), the Good News Churches (Sudan Interior Mission), the Evangelical Lutheran Churches (Evangelical Lutheran Mission) and the Churches of Christ (Churches of Christ Mission). These missions, according to Foli, have focused on ethnic groups native to northern Ghana, as well as northerners living in the South on temporary or permanent basis. Finally, Foli refers to the Assemblies of God, the Apostolic Church, the Christ Apostolic Church, and the Church of as ‘Pentecostal Churches’ (p.19), which include the Apostolic Church, the Christ Apostolic Church, and the Church of Pentecost.

In Ghana, several of these churches have become well-established and well organized in Ghana. The new charismatic or neo-Pentecostal churches described above, such as the Christian Action Faith Ministry, the Redemption Hour Faith Ministry, and the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC), fall into Foli’s fourth category, Independent Charismatic Churches (ICC). “The Charismatics choose what is cultural or indigenous, and are fascinated with the

production of miracles, and preaching the ‘prosperity gospel’ at the expense of salvation evangelism-exactly what the Pentecostals frown upon,” says Foli of these groups (p.31). Foli’s final classification is the ‘Independent ‘Spiritual’ Churches’, which roughly correlates to the AICs. Foli’s use of Baeta’s term ‘spiritual churches’ (Baeta as cited in Foli, 2001) highlights their engagement “in activities that are either meant to invoke the Spirit of God or are meant to be signs of His descent upon the worshippers” (p.45). The Twelve Apostles Church, the West African Water Healing Society, the Musama Disco Christo Church, and the African Faith Tabernacle are among the 600 congregations that fall under this category, according to Foli (2001). Each denomination has its own organizational structure, with some forming part of larger multinational churches and others existing on their own.

The Christian Council of Ghana, (main Protestant) the Bishops’ Conference of the Catholic Church in Ghana, the Ghana Pentecostal Council, the Association of Spiritual Churches, and the recently formed National Association of Charismatic and Christian Churches are all umbrella bodies that connect churches on a national level. Gifford’s and Foli’s typologies are nearly identical, with the exception that Foli classifies the Catholic church alongside Gifford’s mainline protestant churches, rather than designating ‘Other Mission-Related Churches’ as a separate group. Attempting to characterize such diversity is, of course, difficult, and several of the aforementioned categories and traits do not do justice to variance within groupings or the indistinct lines that exist between them. and characteristics given above do not do justice either to variation within groups or to the blurred boundaries between them. For example, not all new charismatic churches encourage indigenous culture



(Gifford, 2004), and some, such as the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC), are more modernist in nature.

Pentecostal churches also mention God's spirit, and AIC's employ liturgy and ritual in ways that are akin to some of the 'historic' churches. It is worth noting that much of the literature reviewed here focusses on urban experiences; for example, while Gifford (2004) claims that AICs were declining in 1980 and charismatic churches have mushroomed since then, the AICs are still two of the largest churches in the village studied in this thesis twenty-six years later, while the charismatics have no institutional presence. Part of the goal of this thesis is to investigate how important such divides and groupings are to Ghanaians' understanding of, interaction with, and experience of religion.

Despite academic acknowledgement of the difficulties in discussing 'types' of churches such as AICs or Pentecostals, both because of the blurred boundaries between them and the variety within them (Gifford, 2004; Meyer, 2004), the tendency, even among the same authors, is to continue doing so, thus upholding the reification of categories that some of them seek to deconstruct (Gifford, 2004; Meyer, 2004). As a result, the focus of discussion stays on denominational discourses, leaving no room for the understanding of fluidity within church and non-church organizations, as well as the creative and often eclectic ways in which people interpret and negotiate these discourses.

In today's Ghana, religious freedom is protected by the democratic system. This is in stark contrast to the situation in Ghana in the 1980s, when state law (PNDC Law 211, 1989) under the leadership of Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings severely curtailed religious activities. During the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) era, the government reaffirmed *Sankofa's*

ideology with an African identity based on indigenous cultural history (De Witte, 2010). Due to Christian supremacy in Ghana's religious domain at the time, the government promoted traditional religion, which spread a negative view of indigenous religions and their agents. Many Pastors and supporters of the prevailing religion (Christian) propagated diabolical, outdated, and retrogressive views of indigenous activities (Meyer, 2004, p. 276; De Witte, 2010, p. 89). From the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Christian missionary discourses stem from a 'dualism' that pits traditional religion against Christianity.

In more recent periods, Christians have used this duality to persuade followers to disregard indigenous rituals as obsolete. Kwabena Damuah, an ex-Catholic priest, founded the Afrikania Mission in 1982 with the goal of decolonizing the "African mind" and making indigenous religion visible. The major goal of the Afrikania Mission (also known as the Reformed Traditional Religion or *Sankofa*) is to revive and adapt traditional religion to current situations (Gifford, 2004; De Witte, 2010). Indigenous religions, according to Damuah and his followers, are as 'morally good' as other world religions. The Afrikania Mission adopted the Pentecostal pattern by modelling its Sunday service, its organization, liturgy, and beliefs after Christian ideals.

The Afrikania Mission is classified as neo-traditional religion by De Witte (2010) because its liturgy incorporates both Christian and traditional elements. Afrikania despises western religions and prides itself on revitalizing indigenous religion to make it relevant in today's world. A neo-traditional religion, according to De Witte (2012), is a battle to rehabilitate indigenous religious traditions in new forms that are relevant to the present and the future.

Neo-traditional faiths, in this view, want public recognition for ‘traditional religion’ in order to combat global and localized Christian stereotypes that portray it as a ‘fetish’. De Witte goes on to say that one of the most prevalent characteristics of African neo-traditional religious movements is their rejection of Christianity, which they claim is foreign, oppressive of African traditions, mentally enslaving, morally corrupt, and deceiving. This statement by De Witte is characteristic of the *Sankofa* of Duakor, as they see Christianity as alien to their way of life.

In an interview with Dr Assanful (January 15, 2020), a lecturer at the University of Cape Coast Department of Religion and Human Values, he maintains that a neo-traditional religion is one that attempts to depart from traditional religion while maintaining some of the old practices that are relevant in our time. The concept behind neo-traditional religion is that it combines ancient and new Africa for the benefit of Africans.

Afrikania’s goal is to reconstruct and represent “African Traditional Religion” (ATR) as a modern Pan-African religion to serve as a source of African pride and strength, as well as a religious foundation for political nationalism and Pan-Africanism, in response to (charismatic) Christian dominance in the public sphere (Assanful, 2016; Gyanfosu, 1995, Asare, 1993). Despite its avowed non-Christian attitude, ATR’s reformation and public representation included the appropriation of Christian forms such as preaching, prayer, offertory prayers, and benediction from Catholic liturgy in order to make them visible within the religious terrain. However, as the movement’s 30-year history has progressed, the specific forms and representational tactics used have evolved in response to broader theological and political trends.

### **Afrikania Mission Ghana**

When compared to other syncretic religious movements in Ghana, such as the 12 Apostles' Church, the Afrikania Mission (AM) is a neo-traditional religion or movement with a particular quality (Schirripa, 2000). During the political era in Ghana under the leadership of Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, it was established in 1982 by an ex-catholic priest named Osofo Okomfo Damuah. Damuah attributes his religious transformation to his father and grandfather, who were both traditionalist and herbalist.

Despite its experience with modern religious influence, Schirripa (2000) remarked, AM has evolved its ideology and consciously presents itself as wholly African. It is worth noting that AM pushed and backed the Jerry Rawlings' 1981 military takeover for Cultural Revolution and *Sankofa* ideology, a return to the nation's cultural roots for significant cultural expressions like music and dance, when it was founded (Asare, 1993; Damuah, 1982 & 1984).

Damuah's principal goal was to reform and modernize African traditional religion in order to make it relevant in our day. As a result, Afrikania groups traditional shrines and healers into associations in order to unify and give them a stronger voice in the religious sphere. According to Gyanfosu (2002) the Mission holds annual conventions for traditional leaders (priests), traditional herbalists, and birth attendants, where they are taught how to heal people with herbal medicines and spread African traditional religion.

However, according to De Witte (2012), Damuah's attempt to combine all cults and shrines in the country, and eventually, the continent was not only unsuccessful but difficult. This was due to the conflict between different deities

and cults in Ghana as well as ethnic divisions. Damuah built branches of the mission in all areas of Ghana and on five continents in seven months following the movements inception in 1982, according to Gyanfosu (1995). After a few years of existence, these branches collapsed leaving a few of them.

De Witte (2008) emphasizes that the Mission encourages Ghanaians to return to indigenous religious practices and beliefs through seminars, press conferences, lectures, publications, and radio and television broadcast in order to reform and update it in order to champion nationalism and Pan-Africanism. African Traditional Religion, in the eyes of orthodox Westerners, is primitive, backward religion that stands as a barrier to Africa's civilization and development. These ideas can be found in the writings of explorers, missionaries, and colonial officials from the early 1800s. On the other side, Osofo Okomfo Damuah thought that African Traditional Religion is superior to Christian religion and that it is the mother of all religions in the world (Gyanfosu, 2002). In order to restore respect to the "religion of Africa" Afrikania promotes cultural rebirth and black in dependence (De Witte, 2012).

#### **Founder: Vincent Kwabena Damuah**

Vincent Kwabena Damuah, the founder of Afrikania Mission was born in April, 1930 at Asankragua, Ghana's Western Region in the Wassa Amanfi District (Gyanfosu, 1995 & 2002; De Witte, 2008). Damuah began his official education as a kid in the Local Government Primary and Middle Schools before enrolling in St. Theresa's Seminary at Amisano, near Elmina, in 1947 to study for priesthood. Damuah was a dedicated Seminary student who was appreciated by both professors and fellow students, according to Gyanfosu (2002). He graduated from the Seminary with honors and was, and was ordained a Catholic

Priest in Cape Coast in 1957. He was assigned to Archbishop John Kwodwo Amissah and Father Poul Lewis in Agona Swedru, his first station in the Central Region (Gyanfosu, 1995 & 2002). Damuah carried out his parish duties and tasks admirably during his time in Agona Swedru, including organizing literacy programs, youth movements, and community self-help groups among other things. At the time, one of his accomplishments was to resurrect the Catholic Youth Organization (Gyanfosu, 2002).

Damuah was funded by the Catholic Church to study at the Claver House Institute in London for advance studies in Social Action, Community development, Economics and Lay Apostolate. Damuah returned to Ghana a year later and was assigned to Saltpond as a Rector of St. Theresa's Preparatory Minor Seminary and the Archdiocese of Cape Coast's Moderator of Lay Apostolate and Catholic Action. Damuah received a scholarship to Canisius College in New York State, USA in 1964. Damuah earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Howard University in 1971 and his Doctoral thesis focusing on the traditional religion of the Wassa Amenfi of Western Ghana's traditional religion. His argument was that the best way for Africa to find its identity is to its traditional roots (Gyanfosu, 1995).

He began writing essays for the 'Catholic Standard' as well-educated and learned priest, addressing subject such as youth movements, credit unions, and social difficulties. Some of Damuah's essays at according to Gyanfosu (1995), challenged the Nkrumah government on the issue of the Ghana Young Pioneer Movement (a youth structure of the government formed for ideological indoctrination). Because of his constant critiques, he was arrested and jailed by the Nkrumah regime at Saltpond police station on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1963. Damuah

was later released on the orders of the then Archbishop Amissah and as Gyanfosu (1995) points out, a significant number of people demonstrated outside the police station, forcing the authorities to release Damuah. He also wrote a number of Christian publications as well as books about the history and culture of African and the Afrikania Mission. He also wrote extensively about Afrikania Mission, with Afrocentrism and Pan-Afrikanism influencing some of his writings.

During his priesthood, Damuah fought the Catholic Church's ministerial hierarchy because he believed it was uninterested in traditional cultural displays like instilling indigenous drumming and dancing during the Catholic service (De Witte, 2004; Gyanfosu, 1995). Despite this, he believed that traditional religion and customs were more powerful and superior to that of Christian religion. With his Afrocentric idea to salvage aspects of indigenous African cultural beliefs and practices, he resigned from the Catholic Church on his 25<sup>th</sup> ordination anniversary, took on his traditional priesthood title, Osofo Okomfo Kwabena Damuah, and inaugurated the AM at the Arts Centre (now Centre for National Culture) in Accra (Gyanfosu, 1995, 2002; De Witte 2008; Schirripa, 2000).

Afrikania Mission is to promote African traditional religion in methods that give it a public voice. Damuah claimed branches in all the ten regions of Ghana, four African nations, two European countries, and two European countries and two branches in the United States according to De Witte (2008). Many of these branches, according to De Witte, collapsed after his death, while others sprouted new branches. In its congregational worship, it has also included some indigenous music and dancing, among other things. In January 1982,

Damuah was to the (PNDC), but he resigned some few months later to focus on the mission (Asare, 1993). After a brief illness he died in August 1992 at the age of sixty-two (62) years. After Damuah's death, the organization split into two factions. Differences in attitudes and beliefs prompted this schism. The African Renaissance Mission was directed Osofo Ameve, while the Afrikania Mission was led by Osofo Kwasi Dankama Quarm, a former Acting Deputy Director for Co-ordination of Herbal Medicine at the Ministry of Health. The African Renaissance Mission led by Osofo Ameve, had the bigger following of the two factions and adopted the name Afrikania Misiion in the year 2000. It is worth noting that Ameve's Ewe identification had a significant impact on the ethnic composition of the movement, with Ewe's accounting for roughly 80% of membership (Gyanfosu, 2002). Ameve also died in 2003, and Osofo Atsu Kove took over as the Afrikania Mission's leader in 2004, and has remained so to this day (De Witte, 2012; Gyanfosu, 2002).

### **Administrative Structure of the Afrikania Mission**

The AM's administrative structure consists of a leader, Osofo Ameve, who lives at the Mission's headquarters at *Sakaman*, a suburb of Accra. Damuah ordained Ameve as one of the first nine priests in 1982. Priests reports directly to the leader and are in charge of the AM's many branches in the other parts of Ghana. The priest in the various branches acts intermediaries between the leader and members, as well as preaching the Afrikania faith. Under the direction of Osofo Atsu Kove, the priests of the many branches work together. Okomfo Bessebrow Bray, the Secretary, and Osofo Yaw Baokye, the national organizer, are also there. The priests keep the Secretary up to date on what is going on at the local branches. From the top to the bottom, information is spread. on the



activities that go on at the local branches. Branches of the Mission can be found at Asankragua, Accra, Sekondi Takoradi, Wassa Akropong, Cape Coast, Ho, Keta, Anloga, Ejisu, Kumasi, Tamale, and Dormaa-Ahenkro, to name a few. Traditional priests, birth attendants, and herbalists, women and children make up the membership of AM.

### **Beliefs and Practices of the Afrikania Mission**

The Afrikania Mission believes in the Creator with several names, including ‘Amen-Ra’. ‘Amen-Ra’ is an ancient Egyptian name for God that means ‘focused on God’. Because they think the mini-gods (*legbawo*) and dwarfs (*azizãwo*) are God’s messengers, individual members serve God through intermediaries known as mini-gods (*legbawo*) and dwarfs (*azizãwo*). They hold religious freedom in high regard. This is reflected in libation prayers, in which deserving ancestors’ exemplary behavior is remembered. They, like the Catholic faith, believe in the use of Holy water. They communicate directly with the God through ancestors, gods, and other spirits. The pouring of libation is the climax of AM’s worship and is a kind of prayer that involves the pouring of a liquid, such as water, wine, other beverages, or mashed yam, and invocation of the Supreme Being. They believe that prayer essentially entails living a morally upright life for the sake of society. It is a way of life that includes meditation and constructive optimistic thinking.

### **‘Sankofa’ as a symbol and its Origin**

A symbol is a non-self-representing object. Ghana’s flag, for example, represents the country's personality. In every religion, symbols are used. Christians employ crosses and statues, while Moslems use the emblem of the

'sacred stones' at Mecca and Afrikania Mission uses the '*Sankofa*,' '*Gye Nyame*,' and other sculptures as visual aids in their human approach to God. Rather than being worshipped, these symbols are regarded as holy items. *Sankofa* is an Akan word that roughly translates to "return and get it". The word is made up of the words *san* (return), *kɔ* (go), and *fa* (look, seek, take). The Asante people utilize the Adinkra sign *Sankofa*. A bird with its head turned backwards, removing an egg from its back, and a stylized are two images that make up this insignia. *Sankofa* is a Ghanaian phrase that refers to a philosophy that prioritizes Ghana's indigenous heritage over foreign influences. The sign is associated with the Akan proverb "*sɛ wo werɛ firi na wosan kɔ faa yenkyi*". According to the devotees of the faith, *Sankofa* means "go back in time and take or retrieve the excellent things of the past,". Among the Ewes, this symbol is known as *kaxoxo*, which means 'old thread.' *Sankofa* is a critical response to globalization that foresees "authentic" African modes of being and knowing, as well as projected historical and cultural projections. The Afrikania Mission has decided that returning to gather not just "something," but also the precious historical items that their forebears left behind before the coming of the Whiteman, is worthwhile. In other words, the *Sankofa* faith is a condensed form of traditional religion. Members of the *Sankofa* are expected to go back and examine the critical items they were misled to overlook.

### **Priesthood in *Sankofa***

The story of *Sankofa* religion would be incomplete without a mention of priests, priestesses (*amegāshie*), and the chief priest (*hunɔgāwo*). In simple terms, *amegāshie* means "servants of the gods". A person must go through a

sequence of process in order to become an *amegāshie*. Individuals who are taken captive and consecrated to specific gods through illness. When a person becomes a god's servant, he or she is elevating to the status of priest and is bound by the god's rules. of that deity and is obliged to abide by the rules of the deity. The individual priest wearing the colors of the god to whom he has vowed to worship. The second category of *amegāshie* is made up of those who have been chosen by ancestral spirits. Chief priest train anyone who desires to become one voluntarily at the Afrikania headquarters at *Sakaman*, Accra. They learn how to use local herbs in concoctions to cure diseases including cancer, hepatitis, and others.

When you enter a *Sankofa* house of worship, you will observe the priest and priestesses (*amegā/ amegāshie*) are dressed in colorful beads representing the numerous gods (red, white and black). According to my informant, Kosiwo Akakpo, each god has its own song. The priestesses are required to scarf their hair, tie cloth around their bust, and wear beads around the neck and legs even when they are at home. This acts as a form of identification for a priest. A priest, priestess, or chief priest may not wear beads to a relative or anyone else's burial. This is an object belonging to a deity cannot be sent to a deceased person, but when a priest dies in service, all the beads will be worn in his or her honor and the priest will be buried with it. Priest who come into contact with human blood on a regular base are not allowed to wear beads on their necks, wrists, knees, or legs. In the case of my informant, you might not recognize her as a priest at first glance because she is a Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) and does not always wear the beads. She helps pregnant mothers in the neighborhood deliver their babies and have their babies circumcised.

### Ordination of a Priest in *Sankofa*

In *Sankofa*, one must search out the gods' goods before being ordained as a priest or priestess. This area includes beading, cloth, and other divine adornments. The person is then housed for two or three weeks, depending on how many days the gods have granted him. The person is kept hidden from the public eye and consigned to isolation throughout this time, with only the Chief priest permitted to visit him. Until the final day of the ceremonial bath, no one sees him or her. This bathing includes herbs grown under guidance of the gods. After the ritual bath, the chief priests wrap the new priest's neck, wrist, ankles, and legs in the god's beads. Following that, in a ritual known as "*hehedego*" (outdoring), the new priest is presented to the entire community. The new priest is given the name of the deity by the main priest, allowing the entire society to refer to him by that name or associate him with the god he worships. The devotee is reminded of all the rules by song and speech on this day, and the initiate is sent home amid jubilation, drumming, singing, and dancing. The performance of that god's ritual music and dance is part of the outdoor celebration. Then it is just a matter of having a wonderful time until it is time to leave. A priest and a priestess are in charge of teaching followers about the *Sankofa* faith as well as the *vodu* they worship. They occasionally offer advice and assistance to their members. The making of libation and performance of sacrifices are also the priests' and priestesses' responsibilities. Priests and priestesses also have the job of preparing medicines to fend off evil, protect members from harm such as car accidents, and bring good success in their trade or fishing business. Charms are a term used to describe such "medicines". Priests also play leadership roles among the communities they live. According

to my source, being a priest or priestess in the Sankofa faith has numerous advantages. Priest and priestesses who are ordained study a lot about the spiritual realm. Furthermore, because they serve as middlemen, a great deal of knowledge from the gods is conveyed to the common people through them.

When they are cured of illnesses or other calamities, people from both within and outside the faith offer them gifts as a form of thanksgiving. Every year, the chief priest in charge of the various branches throws a feast for all priest and priestesses.

### ***Sankofa Belief and Worship of Vodun***

*Mawu* (Supreme being) is known by almost everyone in the *Sankofa* congregation, yet they worship, sacrifice, and pray through *vodunwo* (deities).

*Vodun* has a personality, a history, laws, like and dislikes. As physical objects *vodun* can be sculpture, stones, feathers, wood, herbs, iron, teeth, and other naturally occurring physical matter to resemble human form, an animal, or some abstract design. Some are physically fixed at a location while others reside in calabashes and in pots as portable objects. *Vodunwo* serve as mediators between

*Mawu* and *amegbetowo* (humans). *Sankofa* adherents believe in and worship a pantheon of gods known as *vodunwo*, according to my informant Kosiwo Akakpo. Through these deities, each member worships *Mawu*. Individual deities reside among members, and each deity has its own rules and regulations.

Feeding the *vodun*, this is known as offerings giving to the *vodun* (invoking the *vodun* as a human behaviour) is critical for its survival. The *vodun* can be talked to, plead with, or admonished sometimes, most a times its efficacy can rise and fall. If the *vodun* is deemed by its followers to be ineffective, it can be neglected.



**Figure 1: Showing the abode of vodu in a devotee's compound**

The *Sankofa*, think that *vodu* has certain useful aspects for society such as explaining disasters and encouraging morally upright behavior. *Amegã* (priest) is the name for a man who is married to a deity, and *amegãshie* (priestess) is the name for a woman who is married to a deity. *Sankofa* members frequently engage in divination (*afakaka*). Invocatory prayers are frequently offered on behalf of clients who wants protection from evil powers as well as success in business. The customer is informed about his request from the gods by *amegã/ amegãshie* through songs and recital of some words.

Damuah promoted the usage of African instruments like *atsimevu*, *petia*, *dondon*, *afrikyiwa*, as well as songs written in Ghanaian dialects. All (structure elements) in the service, according to De Witte (2012), are carefully picked and ordered in the manner that follows the Catholic mass such as prayer, greetings,

creed, Seven Acts reading, preaching, communion, offertory, and benediction. This style of worship differs from that of most traditional Ghanaian shrines, but all of them are imbued with 'African Traditional' content and symbolism, including the usage of clay, herbs, and holy water, as well implements like whisks.

De Witte claims that neo-traditional religious movements are movements that have revert to indigenous religious beliefs and practices in a recent book chapter on neo-traditional religions. These indigenous beliefs include the belief in smaller gods, the making of libation, and other indigenous beliefs are examples of these beliefs. De Witte (2012), on the other hand, classifies the AM as a neo-traditional religion and discusses some of its characteristics. The emphasis on restoring indigenous religion and customs, as well as the integration of traditional symbolism (local dialect) with Christian elements are all characteristics of a neo-traditional religion (like congregational worship). These movements are usually limited to a single ethnic group and geographical area.

De Witte brought up the relationship between Afrikania Mission and the state, national politics, Christianity, the media, and indigenous shrines in Ghana during subsequent conversations on AM. Because the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), led by Rawlings, was a strong supporter of Afrikania in its early years, the movements' ties to the state and national politics were described as "closely linked". The government reportedly provided the formation. Mention has been made that the government supported the Mission with a car, a public address system, and airtime on state radio so that it could disseminate its religious beliefs with Ghanaians (Gyanfosu, 2002; De Witte,

2004). In 1981, Rawlings implemented a *Sankofa*, a governmental ideology and cultural program that paralleled Damuah's vision of forming the AM. On the radio and throughout Ghana, the Rawlings government collaborated with the AM to promote an image of African authenticity. Traditional religion was represented by Damuah and the Afrikania Mission, which was often admonishing the nation to return to its cultural roots. Damuah's plan was so inspiring that Rawlings invited him to join his PNDC-Revolutionist government in 1982.

The link between Afrikania and Christianity is portrayed in opposition to Christianity (De Witte, 2012). The organization of traditional religion, beliefs, symbols and commandments in Afrikania, on the other hand, implied a Christian notion of religion (De Witte, 2004), making the relationship between Afrikania and Christianity a clashing argument of resistance and shared influence. Afrikania's access to media has been increasingly difficult in recent times. Afrikania had its own publishing firm and a newspaper, the *Afrikania voice*. The mission was able to reach a huge audience across the country by using these media to spread its goal and ideals.

Currently, Afrikania like other religious organizations, pays for radio and television airtime and relies on journalists and media outlets to cover some of the movement's major events (De Witte, 2005). It is extremely difficult for AM to pay for media operations while also controlling the media's depiction of African Traditional Religion in the Ghana's religious sphere. De Witte's interpretation of the relationship between AM and Ghana's shrine priests (devotees) is perplexing. This is due to the fact that the majority of AM's leaders are "converted" Christians. To become a priest, is a ritual process initiated by a



deity generally through illness or other crises. Afrikania stresses on Sunday service for communal worship in a specific order, as opposed to traditional religious practice communication with the spirit world in Ghana's different shrines. The pomp and spectacle displayed by Afrikania Mission, as well as the eradication of "ugly" traditions like animal sacrifices and frenzied spirit possessions, are distinct from the attributions of spiritual powers and the significance placed on animal sacrifices in shrines.

The Afrikania Mission, according to Schirripa (2000), is unique from any other religious movements in Ghana. This is reflected in their Sunday services where they debate current events and Pan-African issues. In the religious arena, where diverse traditions are facing and contending, Schirripa believes that different religious movements use their practices and discourses to distinguish themselves from other religious groups. He goes on to explain the Afrikania Mission's views, stating that they believe in the presence of one Supreme God and that there are no other gods that function as intermediaries between the Supreme God and man. Afrikania adheres to an Afrocentric doctrine and Schirripa refers to as the "creation of tradition", or a fight against Western cultural dominance. According to the movement, civilization began in Africa and evolved without contact with the Western world. Afrikania's position and speech cannot be understood without reference to Christianity, he claims, because Afrikania's religious worldview is based on Christian rejection.

It is clear that Osofo Okomfo Damuah was dissatisfied with the Catholic faith's practices. He hoped to forge a new route in the indigenous religious circles, while keeping some Christian religious rituals, and he portrayed African Traditional Religious practices a superior to those of the West. Damuah's

original idea of a united front for all traditional religious shrines in terms of practices and ideology has not fully materialized to date, it has had a significant impact on particular traditions as we know them now.



## Literature Review on Ewe Musical Traditions

There have been significant contributions to the field of research on religious events and ritual practices among the Ewe people of Ghana but there is little information on the *Sankofa* of Duakor's music and dance repertoires.

The critical scholarship that I discuss below exemplifies some of the ways in which intellectuals have analyzed music in relation to indigenous religion among Ghana's Ewe people.

Jones (1959) discusses the social history, relevance, and method of performing play songs among children and fishing songs among adults of Ghana's Ewe people. His research focuses on *agbadza*, *adzida*, *nyayito* and the instruments that make up the Ewe Drum Orchestra as well as other *Yeve* cult social drumming. He also characterizes *Yeve* as "a secret organization" in which "those who join must go through a period of training in which they acquire specific cult language, cult songs and dances, and cults customs". He refers to the *Yeve* cult's succeeding dances as *husago*, *sovu*, *sogba*, *adavu*, *afavu*, *gagovu*, and *avlevu* (1959).

Fiagbedzi (1966) delves into the *Yeve* cult music. He found a lot of *Yeve* songs, song texts, scales, melodies, and dance-drumming performances of the cult in *Dzelukɔfe* just like Jones. In his master's thesis entitled *Sogbadzi Songs*, he explores the history and origins of the *Yeve* cult in *Dzelukɔfe* as well as the various dance-drumming genres, such as songs that honor certain deities and spirits, as well as songs that serve as a bridge between initiates and non-initiated audience. He then goes on to talk about musical scales, dynamics, and timbre qualities which are all present in the song performance. His master's thesis

discloses that he researched songs and other vocal qualities found in the *Yeve* cult's song performance.

The detailed study on the *Yeve* cult, also known as *Xebieso*, by Avorgbedor's (1987), provided a historical backdrop of the cult and stated that *Xebieso* is a thunder God from Yoruba Shango and Dahomean *Xevioso*. He described the cult as one of the most powerful and secretive of all the Anlo-Ewe cults. Unlike Jones (1959) and Fiagbedzi (1966), however, Avorgbedor extensively examined the structure of only two *Yeve* cult dance-drumming forms, known as *adauu* and *sovu*. According to his research, *adauu* is the most serious dance-drumming type in the cult and it serves as a vehicle for heightened spiritual experiences. The study by Avorgbedor is problematic because the research setting is unknown.

*Yeve* and its instrumental ensemble are examined in Locke's (2010) paper "*Yevevu in the Matric Matrix*". *Husago*, *adauu*, *sogba/sohu*, and *afauu* are the five dance-drumming styles of the cult, according to the publication. He provided a thorough analysis of these styles and transcribed each instrument used in their performance.

Nyamume (2013) investigated the Anlo Ewes of *Avedakpa's Yeve* music and dance performance. He also defined *Yeve* as a religious cult linked with the god of thunder and with a religious connection to the Yoruba Shango. He researched, the songs, dance and the varied drumming techniques involved with rituals and performance in general as part of his studies. His research looked into seven different movements that make up the *Yeve* cult's musical performance.

Agawu (1995), described Northern Ewe language and music using aesthetics vocabulary. He spoke on folk music in Ghana's Volta Region, critiques Ewe folk song history, and musical meter and rhythm, among other topics. He defined rhythms of language, drumming and dancing, songs and lastly, musical preference in the classification of rhythms into rhythms of society. Agawu uses *Zigi*, *Gabada*, *Adabatram*, *Gbolo*, *Borborbor*, *Adevu*, *Dzovu*, and *Asafo* ensembles from the Northern Ewe to depict these rhythms. Because the *Yeve* cult is a religious activity exclusive to the Anlo Ewes of Ghana, Agawu did not address its music in this study.

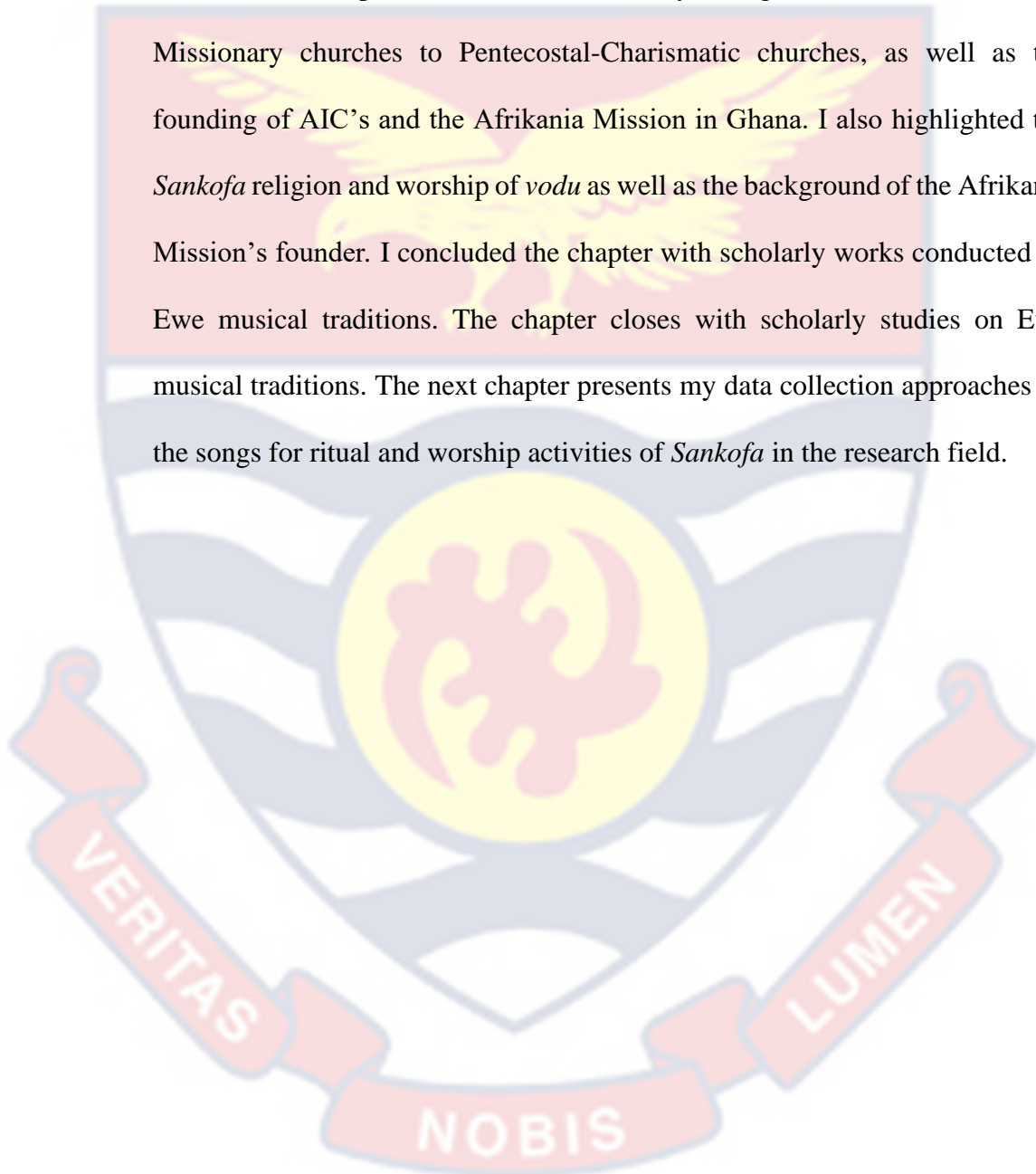
Friedson's (1996) extensive ethnography *Remains of Ritual* draws on his fieldwork on music in its totality—singing, drumming, and dancing as key elements in health care experiences among the *Brekete/Gorovodu* religion of the Ewe people. Working within a historical framework, Friedson investigates the practices of one of the most influential ritual sites on the southern coast of Ghana. Friedson observes that music is inextricably linked to *Brekete* rituals such as dance, possession, chanted call to prayer, animal sacrifice, and many more.

Agordoh's (2005) research on the Anlo-Tongu musical tradition describes the musical tradition, melodic organization, instrumental resources, dance movements, and singing styles of the Anlo-Tongu of Ghana. He identified two types of diatonic scales used in the vocal music of the Ewes. According to Agordoh, the Northern Ewe specializes in the heptatonic scale, the Anlo-Tongu use the pentatonic scale to sing in unison with fourth in pitch combination. Furthermore, he describes the instrumental resources of the Ewe musical tradition and also the recreational ensembles of the Anlo-Tongu Ewe

of Ghana. All these studies did not mention the Afrikania Mission or describe the ritual and worship songs of the *Sankofa* of Duakor, Cape Coast Ghana.

### Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I focused on the history, evangelism, and conversions of Missionary churches to Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, as well as the founding of AIC's and the Afrikania Mission in Ghana. I also highlighted the *Sankofa* religion and worship of *vodu* as well as the background of the Afrikania Mission's founder. I concluded the chapter with scholarly works conducted on Ewe musical traditions. The chapter closes with scholarly studies on Ewe musical traditions. The next chapter presents my data collection approaches on the songs for ritual and worship activities of *Sankofa* in the research field.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODS

#### Overview

In this chapter, I present my fieldwork journey by describing the research community, Duakor where my study was situated, I also describe my methods of data collection as an ethnographer in the study site. I provided a full account of the systematic procedures I used to get the field data. I also discuss the general ritual activities among the *Sankofa* as well as the relevance of the songs used in these rituals.

#### Research Approach

The primary goal of this study was to explore the music and dance repertoire of the *Sankofa* of Duakor, Cape Coast and also show how they have thrived in a Christian dominated community. The process of gathering, evaluating, and interpreting data in order to comprehend a phenomenon is known as research (Creswell, 2017). This method is systematic in that it defines the objective, manages data, and communicates the findings within established framework and in accordance to existing guidelines. The qualitative technique was used in this study because it is useful in determining the significance that people assign to situations they encounter (Merriam, 1998).

#### Research Design

The research design used was ethnography, a systematic description of culture within a social group (Titon, 2021; Atkison, 2014; Schwandt, 2014; Creswell, 1998). In this study I aim to understand the social meanings and behaviors of the *Sankofa* people in Duakor. Ethnography as a design enabled

me build a strong relationship with the people in their immediate environment, as well as participating in their daily activities. Ethnography, according to Geertz (1973), is detailed depiction of completed concepts and actions. These complex procedures must be simplified so that others who were not on the field can understand them. As a result, in order for the ethnographer to properly communicate these intricate activities of the people being researched, he or she must have a similar deeper understanding and meaning of the studied people and their culture. This is the basis of culture's 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973). I chose an ethnographic design for my study because I will be doing a systematic description of the culture within a social group called *Sankofa*. Using this design will help provide a rich, in-depth description of people's daily experiences and way of life in their natural environment.

### **The Research Locale**

Fieldwork was a critical component of this investigation. The study objective was to gather information about the *songs* of the *Sankofa* congregation. I was particularly curious in their repertoire, the role of music in maintaining their relevance, and how the *Sankofa* congregation has thrived despite the Christian dominance in Duakor. From September, 2020 to September, 2021. I worked in the field; I gathered information on the study's above -mentioned aims through interviews and observation.

The study took place in Duakor, a migrant fishing community in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Geographically, it is situated between the ancient towns of Cape Coast and Elmina on Ghana's Southern coast, and its population are largely descendants of migrants from the Volta area in Southern Ghana. The Duakor people migrated from Anlo Keta area to their present location between



1958 and 1962, according to Otchere (2017). Duakor has a population of 1,439 (GSS, 2010) and is classified as a village due to its size and level of infrastructural development. Residents of the community also mechanical solidarity (Ritzer, 2008), as defined by prominent sociologist Emile Durkheim, in that they engage in similar economic activities and similar lifestyles. Even though they have lived in a foreign linguistic environment for many years, Ewe is the primary language spoken in this community. They only speak Fante when it is absolutely necessary, for trade, or to non-Ewe speakers.

### **Occupation**

The majority of Duakor's residents make a living through small-scale production and distribution. Duakor's economy revolves around fishing, with the majority of the men employed in fishing-related jobs. Every day except Tuesdays, the men depart early in the morning to fish in the Atlantic Ocean. Fishermen use this day to repair and prepare their fishing nets. Despite the fact that residents of Duakor village are known for fishing, the majority of them are staff of the University of Cape Coast. Along the roadside of the Cape-Coast Elmina high way, several of the young men also run a coconut business. women, on the other hand, work as fish-mongers and coconut oil producers, while others prepare cassava into gari (cassava dough, cassava cake).

### **Navigation**

A stroll around this small community along the coast of Cape Coast's beachfront reveals a variety of religious communities living nearby. Visitors to the Assemblies of God church, The Lord's Pentecostal church International, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Church, Deeper Life Church, and many Christian chapels are welcomed by a variety of signboards positioned

at the entrance of the community. Drumming, handclapping, and singing can be heard from the various Christian chapels in the community on a typical Sunday morning. Women and children will be dressed in beautiful braided hairstyles and colorful dresses; while men will be dressed in European style suits and African clothes as they make their way to these churches. Some churches are also found in classrooms that are rented by these Christian churches. Getting to midday, the hot Sunday air is filled with loud music, drumming, and shouting 'Jesus!' 'Jesus!' through speakers. Aside the signboards of numerous churches in Duakor, there are flamboyant ones at the crossroads welcoming visitors to different traditional priest in the town, with their contact numbers and business hours shown. The variety and density of churches in Duakor reflects the state of religious mosaic in Ghana's Christian dominated sphere. In contrast to settlements in the Southeastern part of Volta Region, Duakor has relatively few shrines and is dominated by Christian churches.

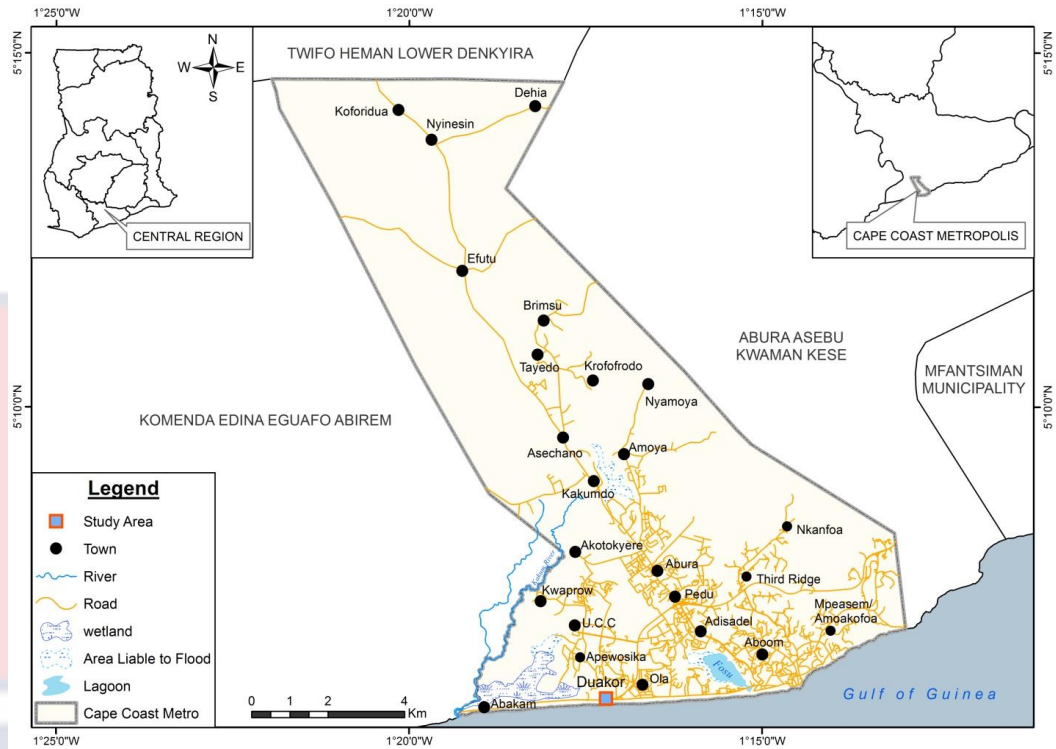
*Sankofa* of Duakor is where this ethnographic study was conducted. Members of this religion are community activists, advocate, and spokespersons for indigenous worship and practice. As they "attempt to adapt Christian principles into an African worldview", this religious group proposes a new version of indigenous worship in Ghana (Amanor, 2009). In the community, there are elementary schools, a few modest stores, and kiosks; selling various items and provisions. One could also observe a number of specialized drinking "spots" within the neighbourhood. There are numerous tables along the side of the high way; these tables are used in selling gari, tapioca, and biscuits, as well as other cassava-based products. The Gulf of Guinea which is separated from Duakor by the highway provides a source of income for the inhabitants- this is

where all the fishing activities happens. The beachfront is a sight to behold; it is scattered with numerous rest stops where travelers could sit, relax, eat and drink while enjoying the sea breeze.

### Demographic Information

21 residents of Duakor are primarily shop owners, 23 are professionals, and 7 of them are technicians and associated professionals. In addition, 16 of them work as clerical staff at the University of Cape Coast, and 144 of them are service and sales workers. In addition to this, 106 of them work in the fishing industry, while 243 of them are crafts and related trade workers. There is also a population of about 591 inhabitants who are seeking job for the first time. This suggests that these people do not find themselves in any occupation in this very community. In other words, they are unemployed. There are approximately 8 people that are followers of the Islamic faith and 262 of them, traditionalists. It is worth noting that, there are about 280 inhabitants of Duakor out of the population who do not belong to any religious organizations. The Duakor community or township shares boundary with the University of Cape Coast and it's about two hundred meters from the West gate of the University (see figure 2 for the map of Duakor).

According to a local historian, Kodzo Alorwoyi, Duakor was in existence many years ago before the University of Cape Coast was established in October, 1962. The community is named after a single tree that was at the settlement before the arrival of the first occupants in the 50's. Hence the name '*dua*' '*kor*', a Fante word meaning "one tree". Migration to Duakor by the *Anlo*'s has continued persistently till date (interview with Kodzo Alorwoyi, Duakor, 30.11.2020).



**Figure 2: Map of Cape Coast showing the location of Duakor**

Source: Department of Geography and Regional Planning, UCC, 2020

### Data Collection Instruments

The study's main goal was to determine how the *Sankofa* has thrived as a socio-religious group in a Christian dominated community by documenting the music and dance repertoire, with the focus on the songs used in their ritual and worship. In order to acquire a good understanding of the *Sankofa* songs I selected priests, priestesses, musicians, as informants from the study area. The group of persons I chose as my informants was influenced by the nature of ethnographic study and the availability of time. I did a purposive sampling because I had in mind the group of people, I can solicit information for concerning my study. A good ethnographic study necessitates a careful examination of every minute detail and experience, as well as staying and studying participants behaviours and inactions (Nettl, 2010).

For a meaningful contribution to be made in the study, care should be taken for the data collected to have a rich basis. As a result, in order to achieve data saturation, I used a combination of in-depth interviews and observation. These tools will allow me get firsthand information on the study group. Interviews according to Briggs (2007), are frequently depicted as meticulously organized interactions and maximize their usefulness for public discourse. The facial expression and body language of the person being observed should all inform the researcher to provide answers to a given question. Knowledge gained to understand a phenomenon does not always require huge numbers. Sometimes, good and tactful skills and personal contact with just a few people can do the work.

Concerning my interview sessions with the group of participants mentioned earlier, my fluency in the Ewe language offered me the opportunity to participate in conversations with *Sankofa* members and non-members living in the Duakor community. As a result, I was very qualified to understand the context and culture of Duakor people. The chief priest upon knowing I was an Ewe, welcomed me into his house anytime am on the field. To seek answers to things I have observed during worship. I was allowed to participate in all their worship activities but not all the rituals.

I was warmly welcome to most homes and the *Sankofa* worship place where I began making contacts one of which was my association with Kwami Vitasi, my principal informant in this study who happens to occupy the position of the linguist in *Sankofa*. He accepted me as one of his own and through him I made other contacts with most elderly people in Duakor. Kwami Vitasi is a nephew of the Chief priest; he has been my music teacher in the field. He was

born and raised in the shrine, educated by his uncle Soworlo Ahiador, who happens to be a priest and a musician. Beyond that, his knowledge in ritual and musical perspective is a profoundly rare combination. Kwami Vitasi has grown up with a wide network of friends, and worshipers from other shrines. From a comparative point of view, he has an immense body of material and experience to draw from, which I continue to make great use of. These contacts with the *Sankofa* members and the opinion leaders in the community gave me greater depth into developing my interview guide and observational schedule.

My ethnic background as an Ewe has oriented me on the historical and cultural background which enabled me to design my questions into indigenous categories for easier understanding for my interviewees. I had an upper hand to navigate my questions through my data collection because I can speak the Ewe language well. My positionality as an Ewe and a drum instructor in the department of Music and Dance, UCC, shaped my observation and engagement with the *Sankofa* people. My association with Kwami Vitasi my principal informant, had great influence on the information I collected during my interviews with participants. All interviews were conducted in Ewe language, except only on few occasions when some participants wanted to prove to me that they can speak English did they answer some of the questions I posed to them in English to my amazement. At times there is lack of proficiency in the English language and they lose context of the discussions. Rabinow (2007) stated that “good fieldwork should be done in a group’s primary language” and I think this statement resolute with the language I used to interview my participants. I usually draw the attention of my interviewees who try to answer in English language to speak ewe Language. Except for a few instances where

participants unintentionally interrupt with Fante. I conducted all my interviews in Ewe. My presence as an outsider during interviews may have influenced my data collection. Before every interview session, Kwami Vitasi would introduce me as a graduate student in the University of Cape Coast.

Interviews were used in this study to gain a better knowledge of the participants' lives and experiences during rituals and worship. During my research, I scheduled individual meetings with priests and priestesses at their homes, where I listened to their stories about *Sankofa*, occupation, and beliefs. Most interview sessions took about 45 minutes to an hour and I did follow-up interviews at least three times to ensure data consistency and reliability. I explained my research objectives and the process of the interview session to each participant before each interview session. The interview questions were mostly based on what was observed at the *Sankofa* worship place and shrine. The majority of my interviews lasted little more than 45 minutes because most of my participants were already tired from the day's activities, I was careful not to overstretch such discussions. When participants, on the other hand, tended to give too much information, our sessions could be last longer than 45 minutes. The majority of the participant interview sessions required patience. Sometimes the answers offered to questions posed had nothing to do with what we were talking about. When this happened, I had to wait patiently for them to tell me what they wanted me to know while also showing interest in it. Later, I reframed the question in order to elicit the appropriate response from the participants. I had to do it strategically to show that the stories they have shared were important and appreciated by me. When participants were busy, I postponed the session to another day and discussed normal life chats with them.

In this study, I set out on my research journey with the goal of getting to know the members and learning about their rituals as well as their music and dance repertoire. There had been no prior interaction with any of the participants prior to the start of my fieldwork. Each participant group was selected based on personal contact made through Kwami Vitasi who happened to be my principal informant during the field work.

But, as a good ethnographer, I had to figure out how things said in interviews related to the contexts in which they were said. Anthropologists are frequently called to account by colleagues from other disciplines, who want to know if what people say in interviews can be used as generalized knowledge about a culture. Briggs (2007) condemns such scientists and recommends that ethnologists make their aims and beliefs clear to other researchers. To minimise misconceptions of approaches taken, colleagues should be made aware of the aims of ethnologist activities from the start. This should be given to the reader in a clear and concise manner. The perspectives of the participants in this study does not represent the experiences of all people in the study area, but rather cases unique to this study.

### **Participant-Observation**

Anthropologists in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries who were convinced that armchair ideas of older social philosophers were inadequate for understanding the way real people lived, so they moved to the people to study them. It was suggested that going to the field was necessary for this purpose. Radcliffe Brown, Bronislaw Malinowski, Franz Boaz are among the most prominent early anthropologists (who trained a whole generation of American scholars like Alfred Kroeber, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead and Robert Lowe).



Malinowski and Boas were two of the first anthropologists to push for field-based research and what is now known as participant-observation (Angrosino, 2007).

Participant-observation is a type of data collection in which one stays among the people to learn about their ways of life, values and beliefs fundamentally through observation (Creswell, 2014). From the outside, participant observation appears to be an easy task for any researcher, but as Spradley (2016) points out, a researcher must be cautious about how cultural interpretations are derived from people's actions, words, and artefacts. Such cultural assumptions based on what people say, do, and use as artefacts are merely a guess at what they know. Working with what people say and do, or basing interpretations on art, alone, does not provide complete proof of a people's culture. the people's culture but when combined, they can lead to a sufficient cultural description (Spradley, 2016).

Participant observation according to Rabinow (2007) allows the anthropologist to move from "Not-Otherness" but the context is still ultimately observation and externality. In this case one is still an outsider and an observer at the same time. In my case, my accent immediately identified me as an outsider. I am an Ewe but I do not speak *Anlo* dialect, I speak *Evedome*. My cultural immersion started the first day I visited the Duakor community in 2019. In the beginning of my data collection, I just sat quietly and observed proceedings but at the final stage of my fieldwork I moved from being an "outsider" to a "participant" fully participating in worship and invited to play some of the instruments during worship.

As a result, participant observation was critical for me to fully immerse myself in the lives of the people I was interacting with during my fieldwork. In order to do participant observation, I needed to retain objectivity by knowing when to get close and when to keep a safe distance from the individuals. This was to aid me in acquiring an impartial perspective on topics and discussions, as well as gaining the participants' attention and trust. My primary goal in adopting participant observation was to gain better understanding of the participants' experiences by participating in their ritual and worship. I was curious as to how much time they spent performing music and worshipping. Ethnography produces empirical facts on people's lives in specific situations, according to Spradley (2016).

According to Spradley (2016), observation can play three roles. To begin with, a researcher can choose to be a non-participant and observe outside of the research environment. Second, the researcher can adjust to be a passive observer, in which he or she observes but does not participate in the activities within the setting being researched, and finally, as a moderate participant, in which the researcher observes but also participates in the culture of the people. During my data collection process, I played these three roles as defined by Spradley. On my first visit to the research site, I was a non-participant, I observed events as they unfolded without questioning anyone. As time passed, I was moderately involved in the worship, I participated in the singing, drumming, and dancing. I became a full participant after spending three months in the community. As much as I desired a rich, thorough account of events, I had to be cautious about my level of involvement. I was allowed to observe the rituals at the shrine but not allowed to participate. At some point I was an

observer, at another point I was both a participant and an observer, and at other times a passive observer.

I had no trouble fitting in to the research environment because I was already familiar with the subject. I gradually developed a rapport and maintained confidentiality with each participant. As a researcher, a good human relation is a useful tool for getting to people's heart. As a result, it was vital to establish a good relationship with the participants in order for them to open up and share their experiences with me. As a result, I felt compelled to respond in any manner I could. This was my way of appreciating them for sharing their life with me and accepting me. At the *Sankofa* worship place, members' houses and members' funeral rites as well as funeral ceremonies of members' death rites, critical observation, and time were devoted. I visited the *hunɔ* at his home on a regular basis, conversed with his wives and children, and occasionally assisted them with house chores.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

After collecting data on the field, I transcribed the data from the original local languages of the research areas (Ewe and Fanti), which I am familiar with. Using repeated phrases or words to generate patterns, I discovered emergent themes from the data and categorized the fundamental categories into activities, relationships, and processes, using manual coding. In this study, a more interpretive approach was used to bring the researcher's first-hand experiences and encounters with the culture of the studied to bear. This allowed me to understand and interpret the participant's world based on their responses, my opinions about their responses, and what I experienced, while with them. I gave

a detailed account of my findings, accounting for every minute activity last detailed acquired from the field.

It was a little difficult to get clear recordings of the music used in the *Sankofa* worship. Because of its proximity to the Cape Coast-Elmina highway, the place of worship, which is a shed made from bamboo trees with a thatched roof, posed some recording issues. This is due to the fact that the majority of the interactions were held under the shed, a preference of the people themselves. This brought about great methodological challenges and so I adopted Gunderson's (2010) approach of "two-way, intersubjective research process". This method of research allows the researcher to expose the descriptive and evaluative words to follow-up interviews for clarification, verification, and validation. I had to play back the recorded songs to various *henɔwo* (singers) in order for them to repeat the lyrics and explain to me the words in each song, one by one, in order to gain a better understanding. I conducted interviews with the twenty (20) singers (*henɔwo*), who are among the congregation's oldest members. Individual interviews with singers helped me gain the text for all the songs used in the *Sankofa* worship.

### **The *Sankofa* of Duakor**

The *Sankofa* under study at Duakor was founded in 2004 by *hunɔgã* (Chief priest) Soworlor Kamassah who was born a devout traditionalist from Dzita Agbledome in the Volta region of Ghana in the year 1918. He is the Chief priest (*hunɔgã*) of the *Sankofa* faith in Duakor and he reports directly to the mission's leader at the Headquarters in Sakaman, Accra. In an interaction with him, he stated that he had to start a branch of Afrikania Mission (*Sankofa*) in

Duakor because there was no recognized place of worship for him and his family when he settled in Duakor in the 80's to continue his priesthood roles in the Duakor community. Furthermore, he perceives the necessity to carry on the legacy of his forefathers. The *Sankofa* place of worship was originally in *Shama*, Ghana's Western Region, where he was a fisherman, but later relocated to Duakor, where he founded the *Sankofa*. Later, other group of individuals joined the faith and became full-fledged members. Some were already members in their hometowns before migrating to Cape Coast to seek greener pastures.

The current leader of the faith in Ghana is called *Osɔfo* Atsu Kove and he resides at the Afrikania headquarters, *Sakaman*, in Greater Accra Region. The faith has a population of 250 people consisting women, men, and children who become automatic members immediately they are born. During their annual program of welcoming the gods into Duakor community, some members travel from nearby communities such as Abakam, Abena, Bantoma, Shama, and Elmina to worship at Duakor. Priests and priestesses named *amegãshie* work under the *hunɔgã* (chief priest). The *Sankofa* organizes their weekly service on Sundays.



*Figure 3: Midawo Soworlo Ahiador after his initiation in 1956; adorned in his priestly regalia.*

Source: Fieldwork, June, 2021

### ***Sankofa* place of worship and shrine**

Before entering the worship center, one is required to remove his or her footwear. Everyone is expected to dip his or her finger into ‘*aflatsi*’ (water with herbs) which is also known as the “holy water”. This water is placed at the entrance of the worship center in a pot or calabash and individuals dip a finger in it and make a sign of the cross on the forehead. *Afla* according to my

informant Kosiwo Akakpo is a local plant which has so many functions. This plant can be put in water for the purpose of healing. It is also believed that this solution can be used for purification to drive away evil spirits and to protect the individual from demons.

The place of worship is a shed made of a particular tree called *afla*. This tree is used to make fence wall among the Ewes of Southern Ghana. According to my informant the leaves of this tree prevents evil spirits from entering the worship center. Among the Southern Ewes the consecrated water (a mixture of water and *afla*) is used for the purification of one's eye and body after seeing a dead or corpse at a funeral. It is used for cleansing the hands when one visits the cemetery to witness the burial of the corpse of a loved one. These trees serve as pillars upon which bamboo trees are laid and straws used as roof. This is common in the Duakor community (See Figure 4).

The *Sankofa* shed has long wooden benches arranged in a square formation where members sit in groups facing one another. Upon entering, you immediately encounter the leaders of the *Sankofa* congregation on your right and on your left, you see the drummers and drums lined up in front. Beneath the thatched roof supported by *afla* (herbs) trees as pillars is a table covered with a white cloth, in which the *Sankofa adinkra* symbol is boldly printed. This is where the *hunuawo* (priests) sits during worship. There are no walls surrounding the shed but an expansive space is left at the center where members sing and dance during worship. It is important to know that there is no designated 'idol' at the place of worship. These features show how accessible the *Sankofa* worship place is to everyone in the community. During worship, members are required to remove their footwear's before entering the place of worship. They

do so because the place of worship must be kept clean and no footwear is allowed there. I was told the gods like clean places.

Upon entering the place of worship for the first time, every member must lay prostrate before the *hunuawo*, this is a very common socio-cultural-spiritual gesture that signifies respect, honor, humility, and pleading for benevolence to a higher power. This action is very common in most shrines in Southern Ghana but in the *Sankofa* place of worship, it follows a specific order: the individual goes on his knees, touches his forehead on the ground, followed by touching his tongue with his fingers before rising to take his seat. This process which is mandatory for every member was further explained to me by Kosiwo Akakpo as this. When you lie prostrate, and touch your forehead on the ground, you are showing total respect to a person. If you use your tongue to touch the ground, it means the earth belongs to someone who has a higher authority than us humans, so by touching the ground you are worshiping him by subduing yourself to the earth. So, when members connect these parts of the body through this gesture, it's a form of total submission to a higher power.

In a typical *Sankofa* worship you will find men, women, and children as well. No one is allowed to wear dress or trousers to the place of worship. Every woman is expected to cover their hair in beautiful scarfs and wrap two pieces of cloth around their upper torso and around the waist. They adorn themselves with tiny beads in red, black, and white colors across their body. The men in their loose shorts tie piece of cloth around their waist leaving their chest area bare.

When members are seated, one can see a rectangular bare earth, a contrast to cemented and tiled floors in most churches within the community.



This is where the *Sankofa* worship occurs every other Sunday of the week. The *Sankofa* place of worship functions as ritual spaces that reinforce the spiritual and performative nature of indigenous worship. At the worship center there is a public display of spiritual activities, using music, dance, drumming, and ritual performance. The worship center is a place of congregation, ritual, healing, and conflict resolution; like a hospital, church, and an ordained court for its members. There are no designated 'idol' present at the worship center. All the *vodu* and the deities are confined in a room in the house of the founder of *Sankofa* in Duakor, *Midawo* Soworlo Ahiador whose house is behind the place of worship. The house of the leader is where the shrine is located and the worship center is the temple where members gather for worship. The shrine refers to a specific place where an idol is installed and most ritual activities rituals. Among the *Sankofa*, there is no word in Ewe called shrine, it has been given a wide semantic field. It can be called *trɔ̃fe*, or *vodufe*. *Trɔ̃fe* refers to a place or room where the idol is installed and *vodufe* is a house where one can find the idol or deity being worshiped. Each of these words may be used interchangeably; their use is dependent on the specific *vodu/trɔ̃*. However, in all my fieldwork, I have never been told the name use to represent the idea of shrine in Ewe as I have discussed above.

The priest in charge calls members to order in a form of greeting saying *Amen-Rah* (something similar to praise the Lord among Christians). Below are the words he recites to greet the congregation.

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English**

Call:

*Amen Rah!*

*Amen Rah*

Response:

*Amen!*

*Amen!*

Call:

*Sankofa!*

*Sankofa!*

Response:

*Bribi wo ho!*

*Something is there*

*Naneli trɔ na va tsæ !*

*Something is there, return for it*

*Etsiɔvi me dɔ alɔ dɛ goɖii fe o !*

*An orphan doesn't sleep outside*

*Enyo nam, edzɔdzi nam le nutifafa me! It is good for me in peace*

*Le dɛkawɔwɔ me!*

*In unity*

My source Kwami Vitasi explained to the above greetings to me as follows: *Sankofa* is the name of the congregation, 'Amen rah' is the name of the pantheon god in Egypt. There is something in *Sankofa*, let us go and get it, an orphan does not sleep outside, it is well with me, it is makes me happy, in peace and in unity. After exchanging pleasantries, the priest repeats the sprinkling of Holy water followed by a congregational prayer. In that prayer the priest prays these words:

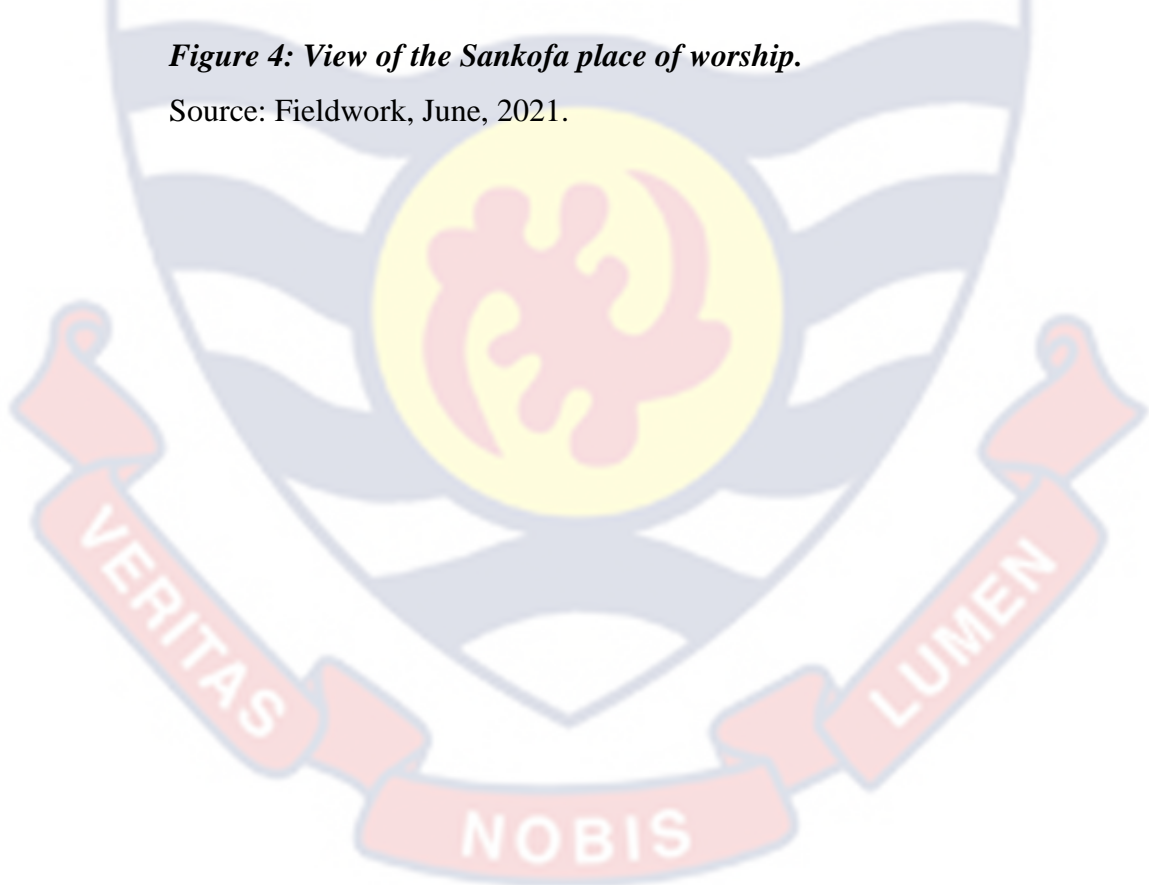
*In the name of Rah, our Supreme Creator and Father. I call you all to attention, and hereby charge you to unite with me in mind and spirit, committing your whole personality and with a united mind, body and soul, let us pray and glorify our God and Maker. Amen Rah!*

The first music, known as *afa* is performed after the making of libation. This is a two-part piece of music. The first section has a slow rhythmic pattern, followed by a fast rhythmic pattern that is divided into three categories in the second section. The *Osofo* sprinkles holy water once more, followed by another collective prayer. In this prayer, members plead for the forgiveness of sins and call on the divinities and spirits to join them in worship and guide them through every activity. Again, they call upon the departed souls of their worthy ancestors by name whom they believe are still united to them. The purpose of gathering is stated after the collective prayer and the Afrikania Anthem is sung (*Yen Ara Asaasi ni*). Singing, drumming, and dancing quickly follow, and the sprinkling of ancestral food to the *vodu* is done. Their spirits are called upon to take part in the service. Afterward, there is another round of singing, drumming, and dancing, followed by a brief “sermon” exhorting member to observe the Divine Acts Laws and commandments of the Afrikania Mission. Following that, a bowl is placed in the center of the congregation, and members drop money into it amidst singing, drumming, and dancing till the end of the service. At this time of the worship, any individual who wants to perform sacrifice or make a donation to the *vodu* can move to the shrine to perform it. The priest in charge welcomes visitors and the *klatsi* (secretary) reads the announcements for the week. It is important to note that new members are welcomed after the announcements as it is done in most Christian churches.



*Figure 4: View of the Sankofa place of worship.*

Source: Fieldwork, June, 2021.





*Figure 5: View of the place of worship looking at the main entrance from the location of the hunuawogba.*

Source: Fieldwork, September, 2021

### Caretakers of the worship place and shrine

A minimum of eight chief priests (*hunɔgãwo*) are required to run the Sankofa worship. These are the following:

- *Hafofo*: someone who prays to the *vodu/ voduwo* directly. This is *Sankofa's* highest position; the one who understands the *vodu's* ritual and rules.
- *Agbadada*: the shrine's financial secretary and general overseer, ensuring that particular rituals and songs are carried out.
- *Amadala*: the herbalist in charge of medicine preparation and administration for patients who come to the *hafofo* for treatment of various illness.
- *Tsiami*: the linguist who receives and conveys all verbal requests and interactions from supplicants to the group's members and other *hunuawo*.
- *Klatsiwo*: the *klatsi* is the group's secretary. She collects monthly dues from members and writes everything in a notebook. When one wishes to join *Sankofa*, the *klatsi* enrolls the person in *Sankofa*.
- *Henɔwo*: the *hen4* is the lead singer in *Sankofa*. This could either be a man or a woman. *Sankofa* of Duakor has six *henɔ*. These lead singers call for songs during worship and other *Sankofa* rituals.
- *Azagunɔ*: he is in charge of keeping the and drums in good condition and handling them during worship. He ensures that all of the instruments are in good condition at all times so that they can be used for worship.
- *Hameviwo*: members of the *Sankofa* are referred to as *hameviwo*. If your parents are already members, you will automatically become a member.

There are other “*amegashie*” role without titles that could be elevated to one of these positions if the necessity arose. It is important to remember that eight representatives from the positions described above are required for *Sankofa* worship to function and any other ritual.

### **The *Sankofa* Shrine**

The *Sankofa* shrine is located behind the worship place in the house of the founder, Midawo Soworlo Ahiador. It serves as a ritual space that reinforces the spiritual and performative nature of indigenous worship. A public display of music, drumming, and dancing, and other spiritual activities take place here, and any member who needs divination may visit the shrine to do so. It is therefore mandatory for all members to be at the shrine during the *Sankofa* ritual activities in the year. In the shrine, one may find all the *vodu* and deities of the *Sankofa*.

The shrine refers to a specific place where an idol is installed and most ritual activities take place amidst singing, drumming, and dancing. Also, a direct communication of the priest and deities take place through sacrifices and rituals at the shrine. There is no word in Ewe for shrine, it has been given a wide semantic field. It can be called *trɔ̃fɛ*, or *vodufɛ*. *Trɔ̃fɛ* refers to a place or room where the idol is installed and *vodufɛ* is a house where one can find the idol or deity being worshiped. Each of those words may be used interchangeably; their use is dependent on the specific *vodu/trɔ̃*. However, in all my fieldwork, I have never been told the name use to represent the idea of shrine in Ewe as I have discussed above.

### *Sankofa* Rituals and Songs

Among the *Sankofa* people, it is a belief that the *vodu* they worship have a place called *amedzɔfe* (home). These gods return home every year on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of May. The return of these gods to their homeland is thought to mark the start of the year for every *Sankofa* member. These gods return to Duakor after a month with goodwill messages from *amedzɔfe*. When the gods arrive in the sixth (June) month, specific days are set aside for feeding and welcoming them. This ceremony is crowned on a Sunday, at the *Sankofa* worship place and shrine, where majority of ritual activities take place. The gods return to the place of worship on Sunday. Members travel from other community's travel from nearby villages and towns to take part in the rituals. Members of these rituals socialize, and reaffirm their connection and dedication to their spiritual traditions and each other on this important day. The day in this study and the ritual space it enlivens provides for the performance of specific music and dance associated with the *Sankofa* worship. I have tried to paint a realistic image of the activities that take place in the shrine.

The master drummer (*azagunɔ*) opens the day by drumming to summon all members of the *Sankofa* early Friday morning. *Voduyɔɔ* (incantation) is the name for this activity. At his own choice, he performs free rhythms and repetitions. When the sound of drums is heard, every member of the *Sankofa* knows what is about to happen, and everyone is expected to be present at the worship place. When you hear the drum but do not appear at the worship place, according to *Midawo* Soworlo Ahiador, it is a crime and one could be punished. You will be required to pay a fee or provide any animal of your choice to the *hafofo*.



The *hafofo* conducts preparatory prayers to the gods before the entrance of members at dawn, while the drum is being played. The first purification is performed at this time, and prayers are said on behalf of all members of the community, as well as the entire country. After everyone has assembled at the worship place, everyone joins a float through the principal roads in Duakor, which includes drumming, singing, and dancing. According to my informant Kosiwo Akakpo, this float is highly important in the celebration since it creates awareness about *Sankofa*'s annual celebration of welcoming the gods from the homeland.

Members return to their respective homes after the float to recuperate and prepare for the wake on Saturday night. There is preparation of a special food called *akpledze* that is distributed to the gods in the shrine. It is a sacred food for the gods, made of palm oil and corn flour. Before the gods can “work”, they require this nourishment. The *vodu* in the shrine is sprinkled with the blood of animals like sheep, goat, and occasionally cock. The song text below is sung as the *hunɔ* sprinkles the *akpledze*.

**Text in Ewe***Ele kɔme loo**Dalosu ele kɔme**Do baɖa kplim**Dae zɔ minyaa minyaa**Ele kɔme**Do baɖa kplim***Translation in English**

It is in the anthill

*Dalosu* is in the anthill

He has destroyed things for me

A snake walks recklessly

It is in the anthill

He has destroyed things for me

The ritual activity is directly referenced in the song's meaning. The context and behavior are relevant to the meaning. It is sung as the *hunɔgã* (chief priest) is performs sacrifices to the *vodu* (deities) by pouring animal blood on them while dancing. The *vodu* is described as a person hidden in an anthill (*kɔme*), yet it is willing to 'spoil' things. The activity of the *vodu* is ready to 'work' is described in the text "*do baɖa*". The *henɔ* dances while sprinkling blood on the animal. These songs are performed in a specific order and have a similar melody and text, with slight changes in the phrasing depending on the pronoun used to address the person at the time.

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English***Ne kpɔ Fofui a*

When you see Fofui

*Na dzene la*

Give him way

*To li to*

To li to

*Na dzene na dzene*

Give way, give way

*To li to*

To li to

*Na dzene na dzene la*

Give way, give way

*To li to*

To li to

All these songs, according to my informant Kodzo Vitasi, are direct warnings to the *Sankofa* leadership and members. Leaders, must live a pure life, which includes not hating, killing, or fighting one another. They must live a pure heart and be at peace with everyone. The *amegã/ amegãshie*'s take turns dancing to the above tunes, which are sung continually. All these rituals at the *Sankofa* shrine. Some *kɔku* deity worshippers dance with knives in their hands, slicing their own stomach but there is no blood gushing through the stomach.

The performative nature of this ritual in the *Sankofa* shrine strikes the observer as both startling and frightening, as well as intriguing to the researcher. The master drummer (*azagunɔ*) queues each round of dance with a rolling phrase that serves as an entry point to the dancer. The *hunɔgã* put up solo performances with a lot of intensity and a diversity of dancing moves. songs and dances are performed at the end of the ritual.

Every *Sankofa* member must bring an animal to be sacrificed to the *vodu* on Saturday morning. Depending on the person, the animal may be a goat, a sheep, or a cock. According to my informant, *akpedada* (thanksgiving) is the term for animal presentation because these animals are slaughtered and their blood is used to purify the shrine, this rite is very important. It is important to note that any member who is unable to present an animal for this rite must give a token of money. This ritual demands complete silence, as devotees congregate before the entrance of the shrine in solemn moods and serious faces, focusing on the thanksgiving ritual being performed on their behalf by the *hafofɔ*. Drumming is slow at this time because the *gakogui* is playing consistent yet varying beats, adding to the ritual's solemn and spiritual nature.

The songs used in *akpedada* are highly restricted, and can only be sung during this ritual. However, in some situations, several of these songs can be sung by a member who visits the shrine to show appreciation to the *vodu*. As a result, they are considered to be spiritually potent and should not to be sung absolutely required. After the singing of the *akpedada* songs there will be silence in the shrine as the *amadala* finishes short prayers to the *vodu* to the accompaniment of the *hafofɔ*, which reverberates throughout the shrine. Following these prayers, *akpeteshie* (gin) will be poured on the *vodu* in the

shrine. At this point, the *amagashie* can request a different type of thanksgiving song related to the ritual from the corpus of *Sankofa* or from other *vodu*-related contexts, such as *Papakri* or *Efa*.

### General ritual activity among the *Sankofa* People

The *vodu* is ready for its major task for the remainder of the day after the obligatory performance of *voduyɔyɔ* and *akpedada* on Friday morning and early Saturday morning. A group of members gather at the shrine from the afternoon to 7p.m. on Saturday for a variety of rituals, including *lāwuwu*, *ɔgbewɔwɔ*, and *akpedada*. All of these rituals require animal sacrifice. Due to their differences, these rituals are performed separately.

*Lāwuwu* (animal killing/sacrifice) is a yearly thanksgiving sacrifice that every *Sankofa* member is required to do, ideally during the annual ceremony of *mawuxɔɔ* (receiving the gods). It serves to acknowledge all the benefits one may have received throughout the year and give thanks to the *vodu* for taking care of them. Further, it is a public means of checking one's moral and spiritual purity before the *vodu* and the rest of the membership. Below is one of the songs sung during *lāwuwu* ritual.

#### Text in Ewe

*Dzraku Dzakupata*

*Xɔ miafe nunana wo*

*Mie tsɔ nuɖiɖi ve na mi*

*Dzraku Dzakupata*

*Xɔ miafe nunana wo*

*Mie ɖe kuku na mi*

#### Translation in English

*Dzraku Dzakupata*

Receive our gifts

We brought you food

*Dzraku Dzakupata*

Please take our gift

We are pleading with you

*Mie de kuku na mi*

We are pleading with you

The next ritual that takes place is *dagbewawo* (presentation of gifts). It is a type of gift to the shrine that one can offer annually for protection and guidance all year round. This sacrifice is done to clear the spiritual path of the individual of any negative afflictions and enable more positive results in his or her future. Below is one of the songs sung during *dagbewawo* ritual.

**Text in Ewe**

**Translation in English**

*Mi kpɔ da loo ale mezu loo*

Everyone see how I have become

*Mi kpɔMi kpɔda ee ale mezu ee*

Just look at how I have become

*da eee ale mezu loo*

Everyone see how I have become

*Ma nɔala nuya nawɔm loo*

How can this evil befall me

*Ma nɔala nuya nawɔm loo*

How can such evil befall me

The song describes the predicament of a supplicant who is sick or going through some difficult moments in his or her life time. By the singing of this song, he is drawing the *vodu's* attention to his or her predicament asking the *vodu* to see the situation in which he found himself and heal him from this predicament.

**Text in Ewe**

**Translation in English**

*Woe nam loo*

Do it for me

*Woe nam loo*

Do it for me

*Ne woe nam*

When you do it for me

*Manyi woba nawo*

I will serve/worship/praise you

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English***Me do gbe na vodua*I greet you *vodu**Gbe me do*

I greet you

*Gbe le to me na vodua*The words are in the ears of *vodu**Nya ya me gblɔa*

Whatever word I have spoken

*Ele tome na vodua*It is in the year of the *vodu**Vodua la wɛ kokoko*The *vodu* will surely deliver

The above songs reference the *ɔgbewɔwɔ* ritual and all that the supplicant has asked the *vodu* to do for him through the *hũnɔ*. The supplicant is asking the *vodu* to deliver all that he has put before him so that he will worship him. In this song, the *vodu* is characterized as human who has the ability to provide all that one asks for.

*Akpedada* (thanksgiving) is the sacrifice performed as a result of a positive outcome related to what one specifically requested from the *anyigbatɔ* (deity). Thus, a prerequisite of *akpedada*: a pledge or promise made to *anyigbatɔ* (deity) at a previous date. In doing so the individual supplicant will tell the *anyigba* things he needs for instance, a child, success in business, bumper harvest in fishing, obtaining a visa or job among many other things. If the *anyigba* delivers on that promise, he will receive commodities and money that the supplicant feels appropriate. The presentation of animals such as cock, duck, dog, goat, sheep, and many among others can be done. Also, food items such as corn, rice, yam, flour and many more can be giving at the shrine for *akpedada*. The text below is a transcription of one of the *akpedada* songs sung by the *Sankofa* members.

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English***Mawuawo mixɔ akpe*

Gods receive our thanksgiving

*Mieda akpe na mi*

We thank you

*Mikpɔ miata le fe siame*

You have protected us through the year

*Akpe akpe akpe*

Thanks, thanks, thanks

*Mawuawo akpe na me*

Thank you our deities

The *akpedada* ritual is alluded to in the song. The singer is showing his appreciation to the “gods” for his protection and guidance throughout the year. The singer in this song expresses his joy because her request has been granted.

The following ritual to welcome the gods back into the shrine is *Nudɔdɔ* (wake-keeping). Certain songs are associated with this ritual and is a requirement for all *Sankofa* members; everyone participates in this one. For the preparation of food for the gods, everyone brings their own animal. Initially, all supplicants form a semi-circle to present their animals to the *hafofo*, who is assisted by other *amegashie* in the shrine. While presenting their animal to the *hafofo*, they form a semicircle facing the *vodu*. The *hafofo* picks the animal and brushes it against the supplicant’s head while pointing it towards the *vodu*.

After that, each animal is handed over to its owner, who must now stand and hold in it in a particular manner facing the *vodu*. Now the *hafofo* with the help of the other *amegashie*’s will cut the throat of each animal leaving it to bleed over the *vodu* that requires blood. During this time, the *hafofo* digs up a whole in the centre of the worship place, fills it with animal blood and covers it with a bamboo basket. The *henɔ* sings the first song for this ritual. Some animals may be rejected if the devotee who presented it has a grievance against someone in the community or has malicious intentions. When an animal is when the

animal lies on its side after its throat has been cut. When the animal lies on its side after having the neck cut, my informant Kwami Vitasi indicated to me that this is a sign of rejection. When the animal lies on its back or stomach, it implies the *vodu* has accepted the sacrifice. The following is a transcription of the songs that is sung when a sacrifice is rejected.

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English***Alewo le eee*

This is how they are

*Alewo le wuame*

This is how they are and they kill

*Alewo le looo*

This is how they are

*Alewole wuame*

This is how they are and they kill

*Tɔvie gblɛ megbe*

My siblings said it I did not listen

*Nɔ vie gblɛ megbe*

My siblings said it I did not listen

*Dawo nye Alewo le eee*

My mother this is how they are

*Alawo le ee*

This is how they are

The first four lines of the above song is about someone who does not listen to advice from others in the society. It depicts how some people in today's society show disrespect for the elderly or refuse to listen to their advice. The singer notes how this condition is frequent among siblings in lines 5 and 6. So, in lines 7 and 8, the singer concludes that this is what is prevalent in our societies: disrespect is everywhere. It also refers to the process in which a devotee's animal is rejected due to whatever he or she has done wrong.



**Text in Ewe****Translation in English***Wo yɔne*

They call him

*Klatsogbe woyɔna ne**Klatsogbe* they call him*Wo yɔne*

They call him

*Wo yɔne gbee*

They call him

*Klatsogbe wo yɔne ne**Klatsogbe* they call him*Wo ɖi kekple*

They have offended him

*Klatsogbe wo ɖi kekple**Klatsogbe* they have offended*fo asi ɖe agovuvuame*

Put their hand in his torn

*Le ketɔwo yodzene*

What impudence is that

*Wo yɔna ne*

They call him

*Klatsogbe wo yɔnee**Klatsogbe* they call him

This means that the devotees offering to the *vodu* has been rejected because it is not from a pure heart anytime this happens the *henɔ* (lead singer) calls for a song to be performed on behalf of the devotee in question. The supplicant will be requested to bring a bottle of *akpeteshie* (gin), flour, cock, and a sum of money to appease the *vodu*, and the *hafofo* will perform intercessory prayers on his or her behalf. The songs sung during this ritual are purely functional, and their potency is directed at the deity rather than the person who is performing it. These songs are used as vehicles to deliver animal offerings to the *vodu* and not for enjoyment. The songs performed at this time by the *henɔ* is similar in rhythm. The first three songs are compulsory and must

follow the same order. Most of these songs are direct in meaning and do not need further clarification beyond their surface text.

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English***Xɔlu menye amev- ee**Xɔlu* isn't an evil person*Oo miyɔ Xɔlu ne va*Call *Xɔlu* to come*Nyavɔ dzɔgbe miyɔ Xɔlu ne va*On the day of evil, call *Xɔlu* to come*Xɔlu menye amevɔ ɔke oo**Xɔlu* isn't a bad person*Oo miyɔ Xɔlu ne va*Call *Xɔlu* to come

The first two lines are referring to the deity *Xɔlu*. It literally implies that *Xɔlu* is not an evil person, and that anyone can call on him on a day of evil and he will respond. This power of *vodu* is affirmed in this song, as are the *Sankofa* members' beliefs in the deities they worship. You need not look elsewhere for help the *vodu* (*Xɔlu*) is very powerful to provide any protection in times of trouble. After the singing of the compulsory songs the *henɔ* may decide to sing the following songs. At this point, the singer is invoking the *vodu* to come and perform his work through the singing of the above songs as they praise him as powerful, fearful, and strong to deliver all they ask him. The *vodu* manifest through the *hunuawo* to solve the problems of the devotees.

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English***Fe mele Kpɔ si o*

The cheetah has no finger

*Kpɔ le nu kple fe*

The cheetah has killed with its finger

*Ho minyaa eee*

In a dangerous manner

*Ho minyaa ooo*

In a dangerous way

The *vodu* is personified as the animal cheetah in the proceeding song; as is well known, the cheetah is a very powerful and fast animal in the animal kingdom. So, the singer is describing to us the strength and power of the *vodu* as an all-powerful and skilful animal hunting its prey.

Text in Ewe	Translation in English
<i>Hɔtakla do gbe vɔ</i>	<i>Hɔtakla</i> has finish greeting
<i>Le mia wɛ ee</i>	What shall we do
<i>Ze nu baɖa dogbe vɔ</i>	The wicked pot has finished greeting
<i>Le mia wɛ</i>	What shall we do
<i>Hɔtakla do gbe vɔ</i>	<i>Hɔtakla</i> has finish greeting
<i>Ze nu baɖa gbe vɔ</i>	The wicked pot has finish greeting
<i>Le mia wɛ ee</i>	What shall we do

The song above references the ritual of *lãwuwu* where the deity *Hɔtakla* is personified as a human greeting the supplicants. The deity is being described as a wicked pot. The wicked in this sense shows the power of the *vodu*. The song also praises *Hɔtakla*.

As the performance of these songs is ongoing the shrine attendants who are *amegashie*'s will take the animals and prepare them for the ritual food preparation. This food according to my informant, will be eaten by the gods as well as every *Sankofa* member. It is very dangerous to eat it if you are not in good terms with someone, you can die after eating. The meat is then prepared in a dedicated kitchen where ritual food is prepared. The meat is use to prepare *dzekplẽ* a stable food made with corn flour and palm soup among the *Anlo*'s of southern Ghana. This food is shared among every one present, remember it can

only be eaten by people who have good intentions towards other people. Part of the ritual food is poured in a hole dug at the worship place covered with a cane basket where the *Sankofa* believe the deities dwell. Some members eat the ritual food from the hole a way of feasting with the gods.



**Figure 6: Some Sankofa members eating the ritual food with the gods**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

The final ritual, *akpedada*, on Sunday is fully participated by every *Sankofa* member and non-members in the community as well. At the *Sankofa* place of worship, you will see women dressed in two-yard piece of cloth preferably white in colour with white scarf covering their hair and make up for the occasion. They adorn themselves with beautiful beads in red, white, and black colours. Some ladies leave their shaved hair on and other young ladies braid their hair with mesh. The men are not left out as they leave their chest bare and tie pieces of cloth around their waist and towel around their neck. They also adorn themselves with beautiful beads around the neck and across the body. Children are not left out; they also participate fully in the celebration on Sunday. Some use spray and white powder around their neck to signify victory as they have seen another year. I was told by my informant Kodzo Vitasi that the white

powder used in the face of the devotee allows them to see clearly and hear the message that the individual spirit wants to communicate to members. He also told me that as a servant to the deities you always have to smell good that is why they use *amitsi* (spray) and powder on the body.



*Figure 7: Sankofa women dressed for the final rites on Sunday.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.



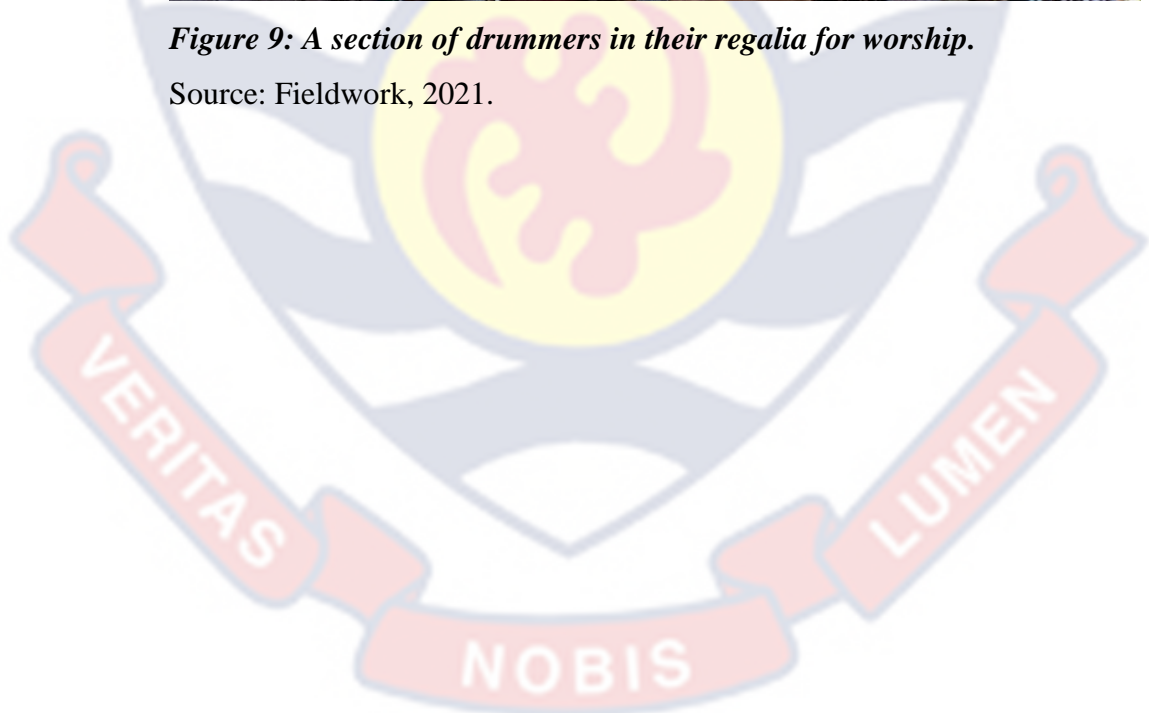
*Figure 8: A picture showing how the men dress for worship.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.



*Figure 9: A section of drummers in their regalia for worship.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.





**Figure 10: Showing children participating in dancing.**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

At this point, the *tsiami* (linguist) goes round with *konkə* (cup) and a bottle of palm wine or *akpeteshie* (gin), administering it to everybody who wishes to participate. After drinking, they form a line to the far end of the worship place, where a pot of water mixed with herbs is set for spiritual bath. As a symbol of welcoming the new yea, the *amadala* sprinkles this holy water on every member. The *henə* sings songs that reflect the activities as this ritual is performed a members line up and wait patiently for their time in the spiritual bath. The text that follows is a transcription of a song sung to encourage members to renew their connection and commitment to their spiritual traditions.

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English***Mile me d̄asi*

Let us uphold it

*Dek̄nuviwo*

Children of tradition

*Mile me d̄asi ee*

Let us uphold it

*Ha ya va fia*

This religion is not new

*Ha xoxo wonye*

It is the old tradition

*Mia fofowo t̄æ*

It belongs to our grandfathers

*Mia dadawo t̄æ*

It belongs to our grandmothers

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English***Awudzi de aɔa metsia a o**Awudzi* goes to war can never die*Na aɔa gbl̄e*

When the war is bad

*Awudzi n'ava afe**Awudzi* must return alive*Mi le me d̄asi*

Let us uphold it

*Dek̄nuviwo*

Children of tradition

*Mile me d̄asi*

Let us uphold it

The above song emphasizes the importance of preserving indigenous worship and rituals. Even in the midst of Christian influences on indigenous rituals, we must pay attention to the indigenous practices of our forefathers. The singer goes on to say that when we practice them, we will not die, but rather be guided to live well.

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English***Vodu nu ya mie w̄na*The practice of *vodu**Se na mie w̄na*

It is destiny that gives it to a person



<i>Ame vɔdɔ me wɔna oo</i>	A wicked person cannot practice it
<i>Amenyuie wɔna</i>	A good person practice it
<i>Ame vɔdɔ me wɔna oo</i>	A wicked person does not practice it
<i>Amenyuie wɔna e</i>	A good person practices it
<i>Se na mie wɔna</i>	It is destiny that gives it to us

*Vodu* worship, according to the members, must be performed by honest individuals. The wicked despise, kill, and are envious of others. The song is saying that only a good person with a clean “heart” can practice *vodu* worship since *vodu* prefers to engage with individuals with good “heart” and so have good intentions towards other people. Lines 2 and 7 *se na mie wɔne* (destiny gives such qualities to human) relate to innate qualities in a good person’s character.

This activity at the worship place is accompanied by a song, as has been the case with previous rituals. This song is performed until everyone takes turn to fully participate in the process. When the spiritual bathing is completed, the *henɔ* in collaboration with the *azagunɔ* begins performing ritual songs in preparation for the arrival of the gods. starts performing ritual songs for the arrival of the gods. According to my informant Kosiwo Akakpo, *trɔdzedze* (spirit possession) will indicate that the gods have arrived safely in the community. The person who has been possessed by the spirit will burst into the shrine where all their garments are kept in order to change into the appropriate regalia the specific spirit desires to appear in. their faces and bodies are adorned with *agatawui* (white bentonite clay), *blu*, and charcoal powder decorations. The individual will then rush back to the worship place moving from one end

to the other. You will notice that at one point, they are dancing, at another, they are eating, and at another, they are shaking hands with members.

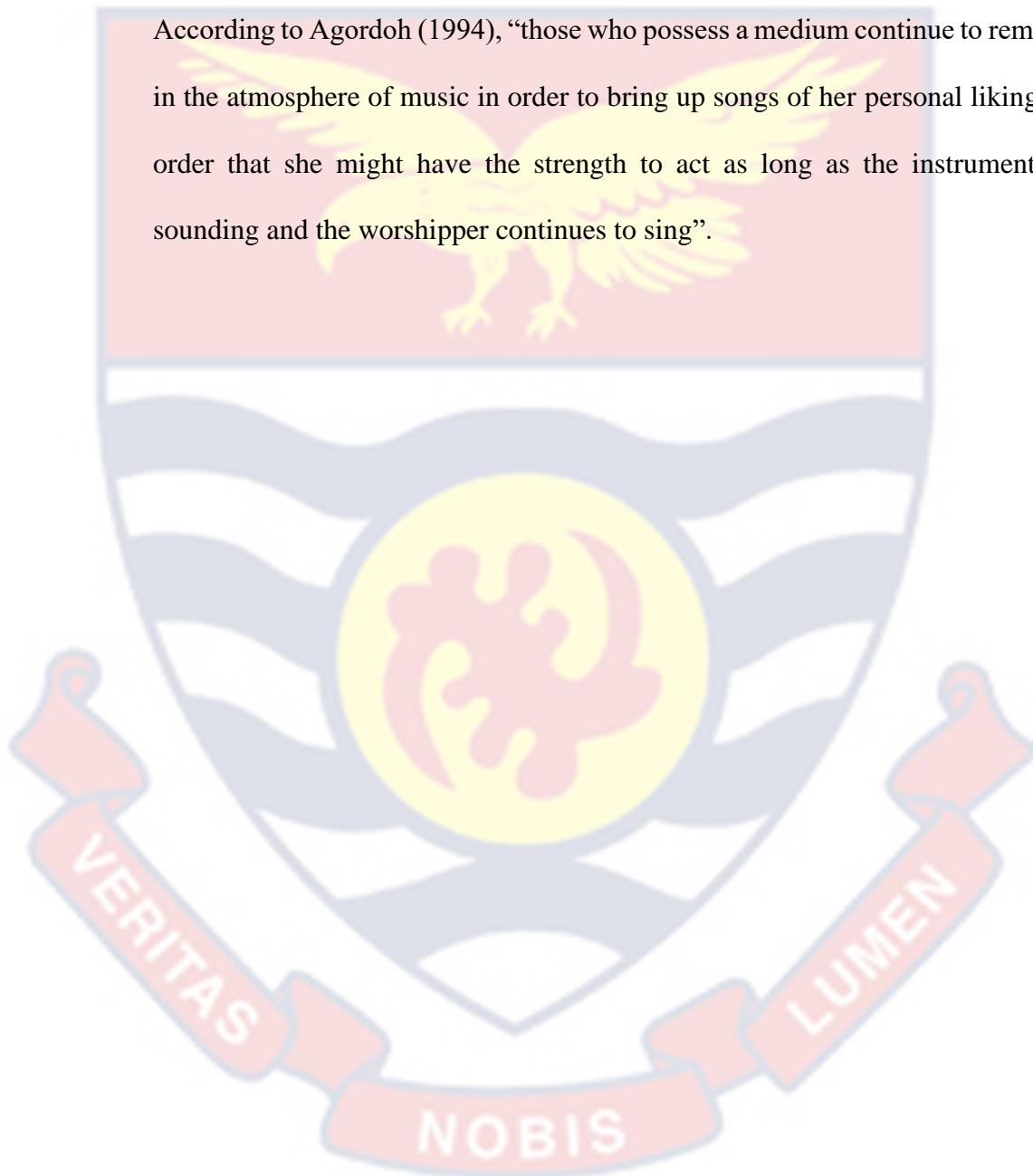
At other times, they give advice, share kola nuts or food and distribute to its members; some fall to the ground, but they are intended to be held tightly by *Selikpawo*, who keeps them from falling. Singing is done regularly, both by individuals and by the congregation, and their voices occasionally break into exquisite harmonies. This observation is supported by Friedson's (2009) statement that "their hold on this world depended on song, depended on dance". This is evident in *Sankofa* worship, where we see the gods manifesting through members in an act called *trɔdzɛdɛ* (spirit possession) when the ritual song is being performed. My source, Kodzo Vitasi, indicated to me that when this occurs during worship time, it is a good sign that the gods have accepted their individual sacrifices and have returned to the community from the homeland. As a result, members will greet them with *miawoezɔ la*, *miawoezɔ*, *miawoezɔ*. At this time, the *agbadada* goes around to distribute gin and kola nuts to members who want to eat.

In summary, I discovered from the observations and interviews conducted on the ritual activities and worship that the *Sankofa* membership is made up of individuals who worship a specific god, coming together to form an association, and are bound together simply by their common belief, dedication, and participation in music. This observation finds justification in Agordoh (2005) assertion that the community of worshipers may be a single cult group or a member of cult groups to which particular roles may be assigned. Members of the *Sankofa* worship belong to both single cult groups but have come together

to establish an association through their common belief and the participation in music.

When the spirit takes on the form of an individual, the spirit may halt the music and dance being performed and intone one that the spirit enjoys.

According to Agordoh (1994), “those who possess a medium continue to remain in the atmosphere of music in order to bring up songs of her personal liking in order that she might have the strength to act as long as the instrument is sounding and the worshipper continues to sing”.





*Figure 11: Showing a woman who is possessed being guarded by Selikpa.*

Source: Fieldwork, September, 2021.



*Figure 12: Showing the act of spirit possession.*

Source: Fieldwork, September, 2021.



*Figure 13: Showing the act of spirit possession among the Sankofa.*

Source: Fieldwork, September, 2021.



*Figure 14: Showing the act of possession.*

Source: Fieldwork, September, 2021.



*Figure 15: Showing a man who is possessed.*

Source: Fieldwork, September, 2021.

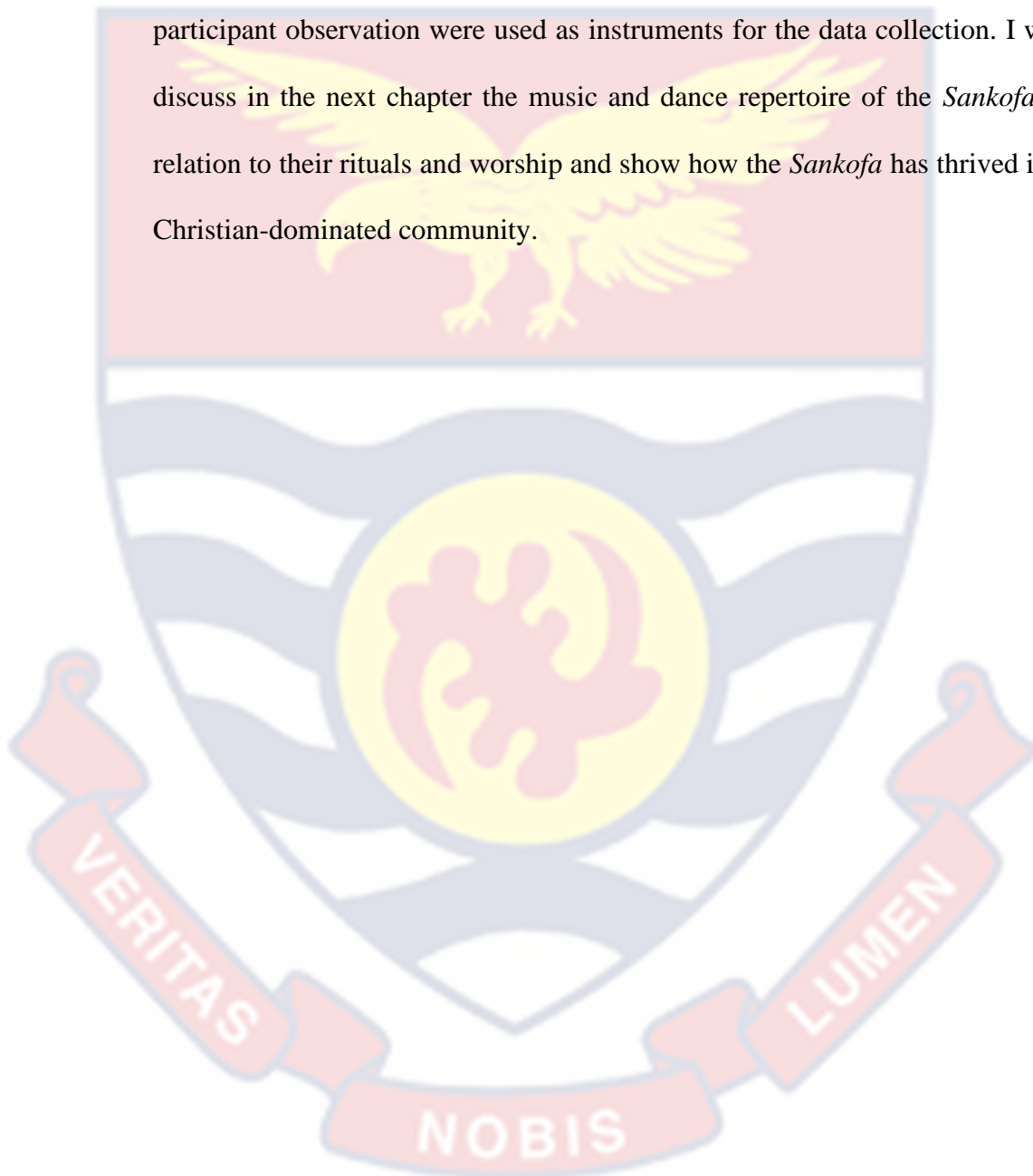


*Figure 16: Showing the act of possession.*

Source: Fieldwork, September, 2021.

### Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed my research site, Duakor, as well as ethnographic details about the *Sankofa*. I concentrated on the specific approaches and based on a qualitative mode of inquiry. Interviews and participant observation were used as instruments for the data collection. I will discuss in the next chapter the music and dance repertoire of the *Sankofa* in relation to their rituals and worship and show how the *Sankofa* has thrived in a Christian-dominated community.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### *SANKOFAUU: THE MUSIC AND DANCE REPERTOIRE*

#### Introduction

As a researcher and member of the Ewe ethnic group, I am well aware that there is no single word that comprehensively captures the notion of music in the ethnic group. This knowledge was affirmed by the *Sankofa* musicians. As a matter of fact, many scholars have demonstrated to a considerable extent the deficiencies in finding a word/s that sufficiently and semantically capture the Greek *mousike*. Keil (1979) posits that, the word could be a ‘hopeless conjecture’ or a ‘sweeping generalization’ thus not convincing in conceptualizing and deliberating on performing arts in Africa. He argues that the concept of music in most African context is a triad of song/dance/instrumental accompaniment, where the reference of one ignites the other.

It is important to note that, while there may be lack of a comprehensive term for music or elements in music such as rhythm in some African languages, many scholars argue that the situation does not establish a deficit in African thought and dialect, but rather an insufficiency in European languages to have a word that cover a plethora of meanings these concepts embrace. According to Agawu (2016), there is ‘a coming together rather than a separating, an across-the-dimension instead of a within-the-dimensions phenomenon’.

Because a large portion of scholarly works on African music are still produced in Western languages, it will engage theories that describe their musical backgrounds. According to Nzewi (1997), modern study into African



music necessitates the use of terminologies that do not limit perception. He suggests:

*That a term or meaning is highly connotative, sensitive. It shapes a perceiver's mental attitude of a perceiver towards the object of attention. As a result, a phrase should not mislead, misguide, misinform or prejudice perceptual perspectives.*

My thesis is clearly written in English an intended for English readers. Yet, as I have learned more about *Sankofa* music and culture, it has become clear that the means of analyzing music and performance encompass an eclectic semantic domain, vis-a-vis the isolationism and reductionism of Western concepts and jargons.

A combination of colonial and native semiotics may be difficult to understand because it requires the reader to learn new vocabulary, pronunciations, and ideas, but on the bright side, it utilizes the reader to understand the intentions of another. This implies that, ethnomusicological field should be devoid of cultural intolerance, juxtaposed with the promotion of the 'other' voice and strengthened within decisively proven philology, propensities, and philosophies of academia. In doing so, the factual understanding of African mental-cultural systems will be realized by both Africans and Westerners.

The *Sankofa*, like other Ewe cultures, refer to singing, drumming, and dancing as *hadzidzi*, *ufofo*, and *Ʒedudu*, respectively. However, an all-encompassing view of music as a 'name'- noun or making music – verb is expressed as *uu* (drum) from the indigenous point of view. In this context, 'music' – generally, the art of arranging sound in time via the elements of melody, harmony, rhythm, and tone. Scholars like Agawu from the scrutiny of

Keil et al, equally averred that “what the absence of a word for ‘music’ suggests is not that there is a significant discontinuity between semantic fields, or even that abstractions are missing from African talk about music; rather (Agawu, 2016).

With the preceding discussion on the appropriateness of a phrase for ‘music’ in Ewe linguistics, I thus invite the reader to interpret the word *uu* as a comprehension of ‘music’ to them, as it applies to the context. I shall also use the term music and *3u* interchangeably when applicable. Although the Ewe repertory is grouped under the umbrella of *uu* (Burns, 2009; Lock, 2010; Kuwor, 2017), associated songs of specific *uu*, such as occupational and conditional songs are known as *hawo*. As a result, when talking about, referring to, or mentioning music, one would say *hawo* (songs). Consequently, when discussing, referring to, and naming songs, one would say *hawo*, (songs). In like manner, songs of the *Sankofa* would be referred to as *Sankofahawo*.

### Discussion of the Findings

#### ***Sankofa uu* (music): appeal and impressions—musicians, singers, adherents**

A great deal of reasons was relayed to me when I inquired from *Sankofaviwo* their thought on the music of the shrine, in addition to what was appealing regarding this music. My informant who happens to be the master drummer of the group told me how ineffable the feeling in describing their music was to him as a drummer, he articulated that *Sankofa uu*/ music is usually unpredictable since it is the deities that are ‘behind it’. “*ekpɔ ɣeaɖewo ɣi la akpɔ be uua le yiyim blewu eye ɣeaɖewo ɣi la uua tsɔna? Eya gblɛm mele*”. He said, when *efa* manifest, its music is *blewu* (slow/measured/study), whereas

*vodu kaku* may be relatively aggressive upon its invocation and possession. He added, (you observed that; sometimes the tempo is slow but will suddenly turn quick the next moment? That's what I am talking about). (Interview with Kwami Vitasi, December 10, 2019).

Other drummers claim that unlike music from other cults like *tigari* which is relatively demanding to dance and play (instrumentation) for long periods of time, they are never exhausted with singing, playing, and dancing to *Sankofa* music. “*miafe voduwo sugbo eye wole vovovo, vodu deɔsia de kple efe vu, eyata vua trɔna edziedzi*” the lead singer narrated (which translates as, ours is a pantheon of gods thus their songs don't stay on ‘one level – on and off rejuvenating). One member recounted, “*Sankofa vu nana ame gli na mie yɔne be trɔdzedze ne trɔdze amea voduawo de na nu to ameadzi wogblɔna na hameviwo ela nye nyuie alo vɔ*” (*Sankofa* music brings spirit possession and through that, the gods reveal to us whatever is going to happen in the future – good or bad so we accordingly take caution or with the former prepare for a celebration). “This does not happen in other cult” she added. “They only engage the music for entertainment purposes” – the likes of *Kinka*, *agbadza*, and *adzogbo*, among others (interview with Kwami Adzokpa, December 12, 2019).

Even though *Sankofa* is regarded as a ‘mother’ (who loves his children she also, like any loving mother, does not hesitate to reprimand his children. In this regard devotees of this cult although enjoy the grace of these *vodu* must also be conscious not to incur the wrath of them as the ramifications may be dire). “*Amesiame vana miagbɔfaã wonya be ɲusẽ le miafe voduwo si woate ɲu agblɛnu eye woate ɲu ana nu nanyo na ame nusiata mime fena fefe le voduawo*

*nu o''*. (This is the reason why people come here. They know that we engage with 'dangerous' that is more powerful; spirits and therefore we are a conscious people), the chief priest detailed (interview with *hunɔ* Soworlo Kamassa, December 15, 2021). This assertion by the chief priest cannot be over emphasized in that recalling my initial encounter with spirit possession among the *Sankofa* evokes a feeling of awe. More compelling was my witness of a man who at one moment was all-calm but suddenly becomes burst out like a volcanic eruption tearing apart chickens and swallowing up uncooked eggs coupled an incessant slashing of his belly-yet draws no blood. In as much as I believe in a supernatural, some of these happenings were new to me. Thus, throughout my journey as a researcher I have learned to accept these occurrences that my rational mind cannot comprehend.

As already remarked by my informant and per my observation, I would say the shrine music has tempo variations—some being unusually fast especially those with *awagã*. Musicians as I have observed were always focused on synchronizing their beats to the rhythmic dictates of the possessed who will mostly be directing them to what the *vodu* desire. A *Sankofa* musician is always required to maintain a steady composure even when the tempo is light-fast in order to continually 'fire' up the atmosphere so the intensity of (*u*) will be sustained. Distractions are not condoned during this ritual singing and drumming! At this point, as opposed to Rouget (2016) I aver that there could be a probable connection between tempo of the music and trance/possession since the later was mostly triggered by the rapidity of the former.

### Representation – the sound

In terms of visually representing the music of these instruments, I agree with Agawu (2003), that using staff notation (mainly with alterations) to communicate the sound of African music remains the best option, be it to support analysis, pedagogy or conservation, staff notation is somewhat ineffective in describing expressive time and pitches since they are not always equally in African music. It is vital to emphasize that my research will not be concerned with the time-consuming nature of encoding expressive time and pitch- a substantial amount of scholarship has been devoted to this concept by researchers. All staff notation employed in my work where I deem it fit will be for description purposes only.

### Instruments

The instrumentation of the *Sankofa* worship is the same drums used in the majority of Southern Ewe musical ensembles: *atsimevu*, *sogo*, *kidi*, *kagan*, *gakogui*, and *axatse* (see figure 17 for these instruments). On these instruments are inscriptions of *Sankofa* boldly in oil paint. Among these instruments, the bell which is known as *gakogui* is the most important among the *Sankofa* instruments. *Gakogui* is made of iron and according to my informant, Kwami Vitasi, who doubles as the master drummer in *Sankofa*, *gakogui* is usually played by somebody who has a good ear. Upon further inquiry into the important function of the bell to the ensemble he averred that it is the instrument that coordinates the complex polyrhythmic strands of their music. “*Ne vu nye lɔri la ma gblɔbe gakogui anye vu kula*”, he said (which translates as, if the music was a car the bell would be the driver). Again, it guides all musicians,

dancers, as well as singers, regarding communication (rhythmically) among themselves. It directs and give them entry point during worship. For a detailed description of the instruments mentioned above, Gbolonyo (2009) has given an in-depth description of these drums of both Northern and Southern Ewe.



*Figure 17: The instruments of Sankofa from right to left: kagan, kidi, sogo, axatse, brekete, and dondon.*

Source: Fieldwork, May, 2021.



*Figure 18: A section of instrumentalists playing during worship.*

Source: Fieldwork, May, 2021.

### *Gakogui*

*Gakogui* is often forged from iron by master blacksmiths from Anlo-ewes of Ghana. It is worth noting that, as a result of cultural exchange, there are expert makers of this instrument, also found in Togo and her neighbor Benin.

The instrument is made of two bells a larger one (mother) and its (baby); the smaller one, welded to it. It is played by holding the elongated handle in either your right or left hand (whatever is your active hand) and striking the bell with a wooden stick held in the other. The *gakogui* serves far more than a musical function for the *Sankofa* group. I noticed how the *gakogui* was used as a stimulant to their uttered invocation during the divination and healing operations. There were no measured rhythms here; merely note successions in ‘tempo rubato’ either on the low or high pitch bell. The intensity of this incoherent rhythm experience energizes the worshippers, propelling them to an ineffable climax-possession and healing.



**Figure 19: *Gakogui*.**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.



*Figure 20: Gakogui pattern scored on a single line – notes above and below the line shows the high and low pitch bell respectively.*

### *Axatse*

The *axatse* is a hollow gourd covered in a beaded net with a long handle which the musician holds while playing during worship. It is a very important instrument that is used in tandem with the bell during the *Sankofa* worship service. When one listens to the rhythm it generates, one could think it is playing the same pattern as the *gakogui*, but it fills rhythmic gaps during worship. The *axatse* musician holds the instrument in one hand and uses the other hand with the help of the thigh while sitting. To make the sound, the *axatse* player hits the side of the *axatse* on his or her thigh downwards and hit it up with the other arm upwards. During worship, a number of *axatse* can be played at the same time to add to the performance, making the rhythm rich.



*Figure 21: Axatse.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.



*Figure 22: Axatse pattern scored on a single line.*



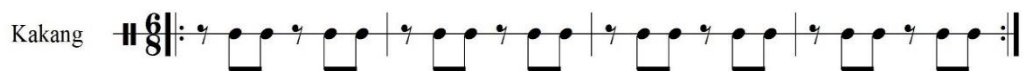
### *Kagan*

The *kagan* is an important instrument in the *Sankofa* worship. It is short and narrow in size stature and it creates it to a high- pitched tone unlike the other drums used in the *Sankofa* worship. Apart from the *atsimevu*: the master drum in the *Sankofa* worship, the tone of the *kagan* can be heard above all the other instruments during worship. The musician who plays this drum sits and with the drum in between his thighs plays a repetitive pattern in relation to the *gakogui* and the *axatse*. The *kagan* plays an ‘offbeat’ rhythm to which the *Sankofa* members danced to during worship.



**Figure 23: Kagan.**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.



**Figure 24: Kagan pattern scored on a single line.**

### *Kidi and Sogo*

The *kidi* and the *sogo* are supporting drums among the *Sankofa* people. Both are played with two sticks. The *kidi* and *sogo* are identical in feature but they differ in size. The *kidi* is smaller in size than the *sogo*. The *kidi* has a smaller playing

circumference than the *sogo* which has a large playing circumference. During worship, two drummers of these drums play in tandem and their rhythm is a response chorus to the master drum. On rare occasions, the *sogo* can substitute for the master drum. The playing technique is deceptively simple when using two sticks. There are only two strokes: an open stroke in the center of the skin and a closed stroke in the same spot. The *sogo* serves as the lead drum in most religious drumming during worship. It follows the same methods and strokes as the *atsimevu*, using two stick or hands. Its voice is the lowest in the ensemble as a lead drum, but it sings beautifully.



**Figure 25: Kidi.**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.



**Figure 26: Sogo.**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

### *Atsimevu*

The *atsimevu* is the largest and most powerful of the *Sankofa* ensemble. It is 4-6 feet tall. It is single-skinned, as are all Ewe drums, and is always installed in a stand that allows the drum to be put in a position where the player may stand and play it. In the *Sankofa* ensemble, the *atsimevu* has the lowest and loudest voice. Depending on the master drummer, the *atsimevu* is played with two heavy and relatively long sticks or with a stick and a hand technique. The *atsimevu* and the *sogo* are used to communicate with musicians, dancers and singers respectively. The rhythms played on these two drums are incomprehensible to the average person; these expressive rhythms necessitate careful explanations.



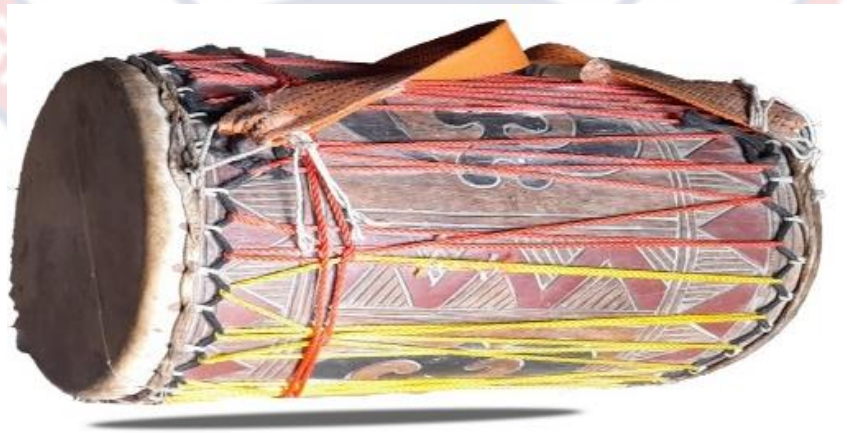
**Figure 27:** *Atsimevu*.

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

## Complementary Instruments

This chapter is devoted to my research questions: the music and dance repertoire of the *Sankofa* worship. Apart from the drums used by the Anlo's of Southern Ewe, I decided to list other significant instruments employed in their worship. Other spiritual dances are performed at certain rituals by the *Sankofa* congregation. *Brekete*, *dondo*, and *agbomlɔanyi* are religious identity markers. According to Montgomery & Vannier (2017), *brekete* is a drum that travelled with the northern deities to the south and is used to summon the gods to descend and dance. It is linked to the *Gorovodu/Brekete* shrines among the Anlo's of Southern Ewe, as documented by Friedson (2009).

*Brekete* drum is made from a double-shaped barrel that is double skinned with a very low pitch. The drummer hangs it over his shoulders and plays it with a curved stick using a hand and stick technique. It must be clear the manner in which the drum is hanged around the shoulders to be played indicates its “northern-ness”. Similarly, the *dondo*, also known as the hourglass-shaped armpit tension drum, is characteristic of northern Ghana's *Gorovodu/Brekete* shrines.



**Figure 28: Brekete.**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.



**Figure 29: Dondon.**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

### **Akpe**

This is another important instrument in the *Sankofa* worship. It is never seen but extremely important in maintaining the time-line for both *azagunɔ* (master drummer) and dancers. It is not a musical instrument, but it is made of wood in rectangular shapes. To make the sound, it is gripped in both hands and slammed together. The name, which translates as “clap”, comes from the sound it makes during worship to accompany singing, drumming, and dancing. These clappers are used by members as and when they see fit, though the *azagunɔ* informed me that these *akpe* are part of the instrumental set-up. As I watched the members perform, I noticed that it played a key role in supplemented the time-line for the majority of the dances they performed.



**Figure 30: Akpe**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021



*Figure 31: Akpe rhythm scored on a single line.*



*Figure 32: Showing women playing akpe during worship.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

### *Agbomlanyi*

Most *yeve* cults found in Anlo-Ewe communities use this instrument as their principal instrument or drum. Its design is distinct from other Ewe drums. The design of *atsimetu* is based on the concept of *agbomlanyi* which means ‘the sheep is sleeping’ and reflects how the instrument is positioned while being played.



**Figure 33: Agbomlanyi.**

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

### ***Sankofahawo*/Music/ *u*: Denotations**

Researchers investigating Ewe music have placed more importance on drums and drumming in recent decades. This makes sense, giving that rhythmic instruments (ideophones and membranophones) clearly dominate the Ewe musical landscape. In most *Sankofahawo* (*Sankofa* songs), like in other Ewe musical contexts, there are a substantial number of denotations and communications, as I explained. It has received very little attention than it deserves. Songs are frequently used to transmit cultural, historical, and emotional information. “There is, then, something of a dissonance between the overwhelming emphasis in the popular imagination on ‘African drumming’ as the place of ‘complex rhythms and the considered statements by specialists that the song holds the key to understanding these musical cultures” writes Agawu (2016). Merriam (1964:187) asserts “song texts are one of the most obvious sources for understanding human behavior in connection with music”. He goes on to say that song texts “are language behavior rather than musical sound, but they are fundamental aspect of music, and there is clear-cut evidence that the language used in connection with music differs from that of ordinary discourse”.

Song texts are extremely powerful in *Sankofa*'s ritual and worship, and they may include hidden words and messages that are beyond regular explanations or individual understanding. This backs up Amegago's (2011) claim that, "language is the bedrock of African music". In this debate, I agree with the school of thought that; the deeper foundations of Ewe values and identity; historical records and events; mystical philosophy and cosmology are conveyed through songs (Gbolonyo, 2009).

In this section, I have attempted to list *Sankofahawo* (*Sankofa* songs) and explain each text for the reader to understand the spiritual connections and references they contain as it had been narrated to me by some of the competent elders among the adherents, and also per my own observation and interrogation. My primary focus will be on the meanings of the songs. Melody, harmony, and structure, among other musical elements would be seldom discussed, as it is already given extensive scholarly attention from (Nyamuame (2013), Lock (2010), Fiagbedzi (1966), Agordoh (1991), Agawu (1995), Jones (1959), among others. I transcribed from Ewe to English a corpus of songs linked with *Sankofa* worship. In this chapter, I also explore the literal and deep meanings of the *hawo* (songs) and their expressions - powerful nature of deities, advice, and rebuke for both members and non-members. I mentioned the numerous ritual contexts that have their own songs earlier in Chapter three. These songs can only be performed or sung in the context of these ritual activities. Apart from the songs *Sankofa*'s five ritual activities, there are about 100 songs that make the *Sankofa* repertoire.

The study reveals that the corpus of songs performed by the *Sankofa* are sacred and spiritual based on my fieldwork at the *Sankofa* place of worship,



shrine, and spending time with the members as an ethnographer. The sacred songs I identified are those that are performed in the context of ritual activities outlined in chapter three (3). Some of the songs are sacred because they cannot be performed outside their ritual context. These include songs for

- *Voduyɔɔ* – ritual for incantation of the deities.
- *Lãwuwu* – ritual for animal sacrifice to signify thanksgiving by members.
- *Dagbewɔwɔ* – ritual for goodwill in the supplicant's life.
- *Nudɔɔ* – ritual for wake keeping to welcome the gods.
- *Akpedada* – ritual for thanksgiving on behalf of members.

Songs that worship and glorify deities are examples of spiritual songs. These songs might praise or describe the deity's behavior during worship. According to my informant, most of the songs heard during worship and ritual energizes devotees and help to reify their conception and relationship with their deities. Kwami Vitasi also told me that some of the songs serve as warnings to members about offending or disrespecting the *vodu* (deities). These songs are not connected to any single ritual activity but can serve as reference to the individual's relationship with the supernatural being (deity). These are the songs I categorize as *spiritual* songs since they are connected to various deities *husago, anyigbatɔ, fofui, kpakpakri, gago, agba, kaku, efa, dzozikpe, and akpoka.*

In terms of worship and ritual activities, the *Sankofa* worship roughly fifteen (15) repertoire items. These repertoires are collectively known as *SankofaƵu* (the music and dance of *Sankofa*). Five (5) drumming styles (*voduyɔyɔ*, *lāwuwu*, *dɔgbewɔwɔ*, *nudɔɔ*, and *akpedada*) are unique to the *Sankofa* rituals, whereas the remaining ten (10) are mostly found in other Ewe religious contexts. These ten (10) drumming styles are derived from other sacred contexts, such as the *Yeve* religious order. According to my informant the names of these drumming styles were inspired by the deities that the *Sankofa* members worship, and when these drumming styles are performed, the deities manifest themselves, an act known as *trɔdzedze* (spirit possession). The music that accompanies a ritual can also be used to identify it.

As indicated before in the introduction section of this chapter, the music and dance repertory are considered *Ƶu* (drums) among the *Sankofa* congregation. Drums are part of a larger spectrum such as *afafu*, *anyibatɔu*, *fofuiuu*, *kpakpakriƵu*, *agbaƵu*, *dzodzikpe*, *kokuƵu*, *gagofu*, and *akpokafu*. As an ethnographer on the field, I was overwhelmed with the songs sung during the *Sankofa* worship. I was faced with the challenge of which song to include and which to exclude from the thesis. My initial goal was to find songs that had specific ritual function in the *Sankofa* worship.

I was able to identify and explain the meanings of the songs in this chapter with the help of my informant Kwami Vitasi and various enquires during these rituals. The songs I included or listed in this chapter were chosen as a result of my own experiences during the ritual activities at the *Sankofa* shrine, as well as songs utilizes at various points that would be of interest to the

research. Some of the songs I chose were attracted to me because of their unique musical content and emotional toll on me as an individual.

Spiritual songs such as *kəkuhawo*, *adahawo*, and *kpakpakrihawo* performed during worship, according to my source, serve as a form of reinforcement of spiritual strength, potency, and authority demonstrated by the deities the individual member's worships. The power of the deities is reinforced and revealed through these songs by healing, protecting, and empowering the supplicant. *Sankofa* songs are a "potent medium for connecting with and accessing the effective power of spirits" (De Witte 2008:692).

Some *Sankofahawo* (songs) are about the protection of the *Sankofa* members. Protection in all aspect of their lives, including business, marriage, travel, and protection against evil persons in their midst. The message of protection is affirmed through praising the deities during the *dągbewəwə* ritual. Individual members express their beliefs and faith through the singing of these songs to invoke the power and protection of the *vodu* over their lives.

Another important theme in *Sankofahawo* sung during worship is unity. The content of these songs admonishes members to love one another and be each other's keeper in life, and it communicates to members the benefit of unity to the individual, community, and nation as a whole. Furthermore, there are spiritual songs known as *dzodzikipewo* (songs of *dzodzikipé*) that communicate disobedience on the part of the supplicant. These songs serve as warning to anyone who violates the *vodu*'s rules and regulations. These messages in the songs are frequently expressed through metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and in plain words. When the repertoire and tone of the music are combined with the specific themes that these songs convey, the immediate effects and appeal

to the membership are very powerful. One member stated that hearing these songs makes her “feel pleased and enthusiastically dance because they remind her of the protection that the *vodu* has provided her in the past” (interview with Kpokuse Amudzi August 15, 2020).

Another claims that when she hears these songs, she is compelled to “jump, dance, and sing, even if she is alone, because of the emotions they evoke and the significance they represent for her”. This sentiment given by my informant clearly verifies the statements of researchers such as Agordoh (2005 & 1994) and Nketia (1974) that songs and singing are very important in boosting the morale of performers and go a long way to sustain the dance-drumming event in Africa (interview with Adzoba Aya December 10, 2020).

Others say the songs make them feel “that they find peace when they are alone and depressed as a result of financial troubles, or that they use music to relax when their “temperature tries to go high” (interview with Kwami Vitasi December 12, 2020). Kivy (1989), Davies (1994), and Carl and kutsidzo (2016) suggest that music has the ability to affect people’s emotions, intellect, and psychology. They also claim that music can take away or alleviate loneliness and arouse passion. I share this view with Plato (1955) who asserts that music has a direct effect on the soul of people.

The repertory of *kəkuhawo* (*kəku* songs) communicates the power of the deities in *Sankofa* worship. This is demonstrated during worship when the gods manifest through members. Only *Kəkusiwo* (devotees of *kəkusi* takes part in songs that demonstrate the might and skill of deities. These songs contain spiritual invocations and incantations that empower the performer. The *kəkusiwo* express their heightened spiritual status in an unusual way, using

knives and cutlasses. The text and translation of one of songs conveying the power of the deities are provided below.

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English**

*Dalosu kɔm de dzo me*

*Dalosu* put me in fire

*Dalosu kɔm de t4me*

*Dalosu* put me in the river

*Afika ma nɔ*

Where will I be

*Woa fa nam*

For the pain to go

*Ne e kɔm de dzome hã*

If you put me in fire

*Fikee manɔ woafa nam*

where will I be for the pain to go

The song's text describes *vodu's Dalosu* power and vigor. Its surface meaning describes how powerful the deity *Dalosu* is and how it can withstand any other force that believes is powerful than him. The song's deeper message is a warning to any limited powers that will contend with *Dalosu*. These limited powers must be careful because when *Dalosu* battles them, he will win and the limited forces will suffer greatly.

This song communicates the power of *vodu* (deities) to members, family, and community as a whole. It also affirms that the gods are powerful and that nobody can doubt its ability to make things happen for members, and that they do not need to look elsewhere. According to Movi Agbeli:

*Formerly, most Sankofa members leave the faith to join Christianity because they are brainwashed by the things they hear and watch on the media, and also the benefits Christians get from politicians of our time. At the end when they go and they realize that the deities give instant justice something they don't see in Christianity they return. To me, I believe strongly that the deities we worship the Supreme God through are very, very powerful I say this with*

confidence. So, this song by way tells the members to have belief in the gods because they are powerful.

The spiritual context of the song transports it to the realm of the *vodu Dalosu*, where it demonstrates his power and strength for members to know and understand what they have. The text below references the power of the *vodu kelesi*.

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English**

*Adzewotɔ mitso va midzo*

Witches get up let's go

*Vodu Kelesi*

The deity *Kelesi*

*Wu lã ɖe gbe dzi*

Has killed an animal on the field

*Anatɔwo mitso va mi dzo*

All witches get up let's go

*Vodu Kelesi*

The deity *Kelesi*

*Wu lã ɖe gbe dzi*

Has killed an animal on the field

*Anyibatɔhawo* (songs of *anyibatɔ*) is another category of *Sankofahawo* (*Sankofa* songs) that is used to criticize vices in the community. *Sankofa* songs are used to maintain and control social vices like stealing, murder, incest, and many evil deeds in the community. These songs promote the right behavioral attitude in members in order to have a peaceful society. Through the singing of songs members learn social and moral responsibilities. The text below shows one of the songs that criticizes vices in the society.

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English**

*Efe mele Kpɔ si oo*

The cheetah does not have fingers

*Ye wobɛ ya le nu kple fe*

But wants to catch with his fingers

*Ho minya*

Ho minya

*Efe mele asi wo*

The cheetah does not have fingers

*Ebe ya le nu kple fe*

But wants to catch with his fingers

“Following what people do without having the means is a dangerous thing on earth”, says my informant, Kpuitor Laklevi. What my informant said means that young people today desire to amass wealth within the shortest possible time. They indulge in all sorts of vices like robbery, human sacrifices, the sale of human parts at the expense of another person. When youngsters see the wealthy people driving vehicles, they are envious and aspire to be like them. This is what I call greediness. The cheetah is personified as a human without fingers but wants to catch with his finger. The youth today lack the ability to acquire wealth, so they engage in all manner of social vices to get rich quick. How can you catch without a finger?

Among the *Sankofa* the two repertoires of songs (sacred and spiritual) communicate advice to members and the society as a whole. These songs are sung through proverbial means and not in plain language, when one listens to these songs the person needs to think deep to understand the message it is conveying. Below is a text of a song that conveys advice.

**Text in Ewe**

**Translation in English**

*Da yi ke nya zɔɔ*

The snake that walks well

*fe flii ee keke na*

Gets the broader line

*Da yi ke nya zɔɔ*

The snake that walks well

*fe flii ee keke na*

Gets the broader line

The preceding text depicts a proverb being used in a spiritual song. A snake that knows how to walk will demonstrate knowledge and achieve bigger advises members to tread cautiously so that they do not get into difficulty. If

you want to go far in life, you must tread carefully. *Hunɔ* Soworlo Ahiador explains it as advice to both leaders and members:

I can tell you that if one keeps the rules and regulations in the *Sankofa* book known as the *Divine Acts* effectively, you will find rest in everything you do on this earth. I can say that the snake is a metaphor. The song is not referring to a snake in the bush but human beings, if you disobey the rules and regulations of any *vodu* you will face the punishment that will be meted out to you (interview with *hūnɔ* Soworlo Ahiaor, May 12, 2021).

**Text in Ewe****Translation in English***Ale ɣuti wo le*

The way your skin looks

*Wo dɔme hã nekɔnene ma*

Let your stomach be good

*Ame ko wo yɔ ne*

This is how we call humans

*Dagã, daɖi wohã*

My big auntie, my small auntie

*Ame ko wo yɔ ne*

This is how we call humans

*Tasi vi, nyuire vi*

My big auntie, my small auntie

*Ale ɣuti wo le*

The way your skin looks

*Wo dɔme ne kɔ*

Let your stomach be good

The song above is telling the *Sankofa* members that they must be of good behavior. To the stomach, according to *Sankofa*, members, is a hiding place where people conceal their emotions and secrets. The singer uses a metaphor to compare the skin (*ɣuti*) to the stomach (*dɔme*), admonishing members to be true in whatever they do, have the appropriate heart and when interacting with people, just like your skin (*ɣuti*) looks. As a *Sankofa* member, you must have a pure heart and not harbor hatred, envy, greed, or bitterness in your “stomach”.



This is the true character that every human being must demonstrate in their interactions with others. As a result, only someone with a clean “stomach” can engage the *vodu*. From my observations and interactions with the *Sankofa*, I see and feel a demonstration of true character of love and good heart.

### **Our Music is the Reason**

*Mia fe tu enye nusianu, ame aɔ malɔ wo o gake aɔ wɔ ɔ wo ha dzi*

(our music is the reason, someone may hate you, but not your music—Ewe proverb). The *Sankofa*, like many practitioners of the West African *vodu*, are still relevant today due to their singing, drumming, and dancing. Through these forms, a concrete sense of identity, is shaped, reserved and handed on to successive generations. During one of my visits to the *Sankofa* ritual, I was amazed to see non-congregants who lived closer to the shrine dancing to their music. When I asked, they said, “We hear them (*Sankofa* music) all the time – we enjoy the rhythms. I probed further by asking why he was not part (member) of something he considered enjoyable. ‘I would have wanted to be part of them, but the power of these people’s god is very potent, he explained. If I misbehave, I will drop dead the next minutes. I am a Methodist, after all you know! And I can always ask God for forgiveness of sins when I offend him’ (interview with Komla Agadzi March, 2021). This implies to that, despite erroneous notions and constant denigration as a result of the dominance of Christianity, their music is ‘powerfully’ giving them a representation.

**A note: gestures in the dance**

Dance movements are a crucial component in the *Sankofa* ritual ceremony that deserves unpacking. This is because *Sankofa* (*Sankofa* music), like most African musical contexts, is a trio of songs, dance, and drumming—dependently interlaced. As a result, *gagou* (*gago* music) for instance is interwoven with its dance and drumming. As a result, I hope to transmit to my reader some of the movements/gestures in the dances as I had observed. Similarly, I will attempt to summarize the meanings of these gestures as narrated to me by my informant.

In almost all instances, a possessed person will engage in a certain movement that indicates the type of the *vodu* that has manifested. I must admit that these gestures occasionally made me feel awed. Intermittently, you could see individuals who were nice one moment and creeping like snakes the next moment on the floor of the shrine. When I inquired from my informant what these meant. He detailed to me that; the gods do not only have their peculiar music but dance as well. The following are my observations and the interpretation provided by my informant.

***Kaku***

When *vodu kaku* is invoked, it manifests as a wild animal. 'You could see one guy was tearing apart a fowl and eating it' raw' while he moved like a cat preying on a mouse. You saw him pounding on a chicken and devouring it as the drumming became intense. It signifies how powerful this deity is, and the extent to which he will go to protect his devotees.

### *Adau*

When invoked, *vodu Ada* emerges as an electrocuted victim. The possessed shakes violently and uncontrollably as he or she moves from one end to the other, rubbing her flesh thoroughly as if bathing or washing her body with sponge. My informant explained to me that the *vodu* usually manifest to cleanse, heal, and purify, hence these gestures signified the cleansing process.

### *Agbau*

When the *vodu agba* manifests, he carries *agba* (load) on his head and wanders erratically, smiling, and touching the palms of members as if he had a gift to give. He will occasionally burst out laughing while repeating these words “*ɔ̄gbe neva, lāmesē neva, miafe mome nefa*” (goodwill come, good health come, let your ways be peaceful).

### *Akpokau*

When invoked, he manifests by moving in a whirlwind-like cycle blowing the whistle ceaselessly. While I thought it to be probably exhausting, the possess showed no sign of fatigue. The whirling movement was accelerated by the *vu*'s (music) intensity. My informant added that these movements imply that the *vodu* is in contention with other evil spirits which is why the possessed perform such dance movements.

Again, it is worth mentioning that these dancers/ possessed frequently changed into a preferred costume immediately they were possessed. This corresponds to how the *vodu* wishes to be represented. For example, when I asked from my informant why some ladies suddenly change into white wrappers midway during the ritual ceremony, he recounted that the *vodu* of fertility was

present and needed to see something ‘pure’ - as represented by the white *kaliko* (wrapper). Others, I have noticed, use white clay and charcoal on their faces, as well as wet clay to mark their bodies in unique patterns. There is also the use of *lādze* (*rafia* skirt) as the *vodu* may require for it and in some cases the carrying of props such as *buta* (water jug).

Towards the second objective of my study, *what has made the Sankofa thrive and in a Christian dominated sphere?* Based on the responses from my principal informant and adherents, my observations, and critical reflexivity (Wong, 2008), I provide the following account. The narration is based on the following themes: the music’s power, sustained antecedents and *vodu* connection, religio–social impact, and moral values.

### **The Music’s Power**

Despite living in a Christian-dominated community, and despite social pressures against indigenous religious practices such as *vodu*, even among descendants of these *vodu* custodians, *Sankofa* individuals confidently say “this is who we are” resulting in significant growth and good representation in the community. The salient question I avidly sought answers for was, ‘how have they come this far?’ It is worth noting that according to my principal informant, this feat could be attributed mostly to the availability of their music and dance. Kwami Vitasi recounted that “*futadɔwolawo mienye gake mie tsɔ miafe ɔfofo tso miade va Duakor*”. (Although they are voyagers, they have brought their beliefs and music with them). This, he claims, has enabled them to thrive amidst all forms of opposition.

During one of my visits to the chief priest's residence, he also told me that music brings them together socially. "*Mie tso Aḡḡ du vovovowo me gake miekpe na ḡ Sankofa vu ta kḡsiḡ ḡesiḡḡ he doa viviḡ mianḡnoewo nu tsḡ ḡna modzaka*". (We come from different parts of the Volta region, but we gather here to engage in our music - even those who do not worship with us join because we come from the same town). You remember how crowded the place was on the last Sunday of the month when you visited? It was because we mostly engaged in a lot of recreational songs like *agbadza*, *kinka*, coupled with feasting.

**Researcher:** are Christians also welcomed to this feast?

**Chief priest:** *le Duakor dua me Kristotḡwo fe nḡfe li eye miawo vodusiwo hḡ miḡfe te fe li. Le nyatefemea wovana kaanu le miḡḡḡ ḡesia ḡi* (The Christians here in Duakor have their place and we have our place. As a matter of fact, most of them come here to consult the gods).

*“Ele eme be wo gblḡna ḡḡa be miḡḡḡ voduwo me nyo o mielḡ ḡḡ edzi nenema elabe midi nutifafa le duame. Voduwawo di be mianḡ nutifafa me kple amesiame”*. (Even though they have their reservations about us we only regard it as uninformed stance. There is peaceful coexistence. That is what our *vodu* requires from us). *“Miexḡ na amesiame fḡḡa nenyē be wo va be yewoa ka nu”* (We therefore welcome both devotees and non-devotees as they come to connect to their roots through the music and the feast).

These responses support scholarly assertions made by Carl and Kutsidzo (2016) that music serves not just a religious but also a social function. These narratives demonstrate that *Sankofa* through their accessible music and dance have a strong relevance in the community where they are located. when I asked

the adherents if they ever feared *Sankofa* could possibly go extinct, one response was more telling. Ayoba one of the lead singers vehemently retorted, “*Sankofa me bubu ge gbede oo Sankofa u me bubu ge o de uua ta*” (*Sankofa* will not extinct, it will never go ‘extinct’ because of the music, it will never go “extinct”). These narratives clearly demonstrate why the *Sankofa* are still resilient to external forces—Christian influenced communities. The music in the ritual and worship of the *Sankofa* of Duakor is a “powerful medium for connecting to and assessing the effective power of the spirits” (De Witte, 2008: 692). Ohadike (2007:10) argues that “it is hard for Africans to go into spiritual possession without the help of instrumental or vocal music. This is evident in the *Sankofa* worship as devotees become possessed during the performance of some particular music which the individual *vodu*’s enjoy.

### **Family Antecedents and *Vodu* Connection**

As they testified to me, the sense of belonging and the new family ties created through religion and culture also plays a role in their (*Sankofa*) sustenance. “*Mie zu fome deka, Sankofa enye mia dzilawo, navi adeke me le Duakor nam oo, Sankofahameviwoe nye nye fome tɔ*”. (We are one big family and *Sankofa* is my parent. I don’t have any biological brother or sister here. These people are the only ones I call my family), *Davi* said. This assertion strongly supports the significance of this group as a strand that unite adherents and other members of the community. Every family has its own *vodu* that is worshiped by every single member in the family. This practice is common back home where we migrated from. So, if you are born into a family, you must to worship your family *vodu*.

**Researcher:** with spate the world is evolving, do you think you can get touch bearers of *Sankofa* in the near future?

**Kwoshivi:** “*mie vi dzim gbesiagbe, miakpɔ gbɔ be miede wo Sankofaha me. Dodo sia ana be miakɔ habɔɔ la ade dzidzime yeyewo si be mabu oo*”.

(We are giving birth to new ones and we will initiate them so there will never be a time where we will lack adherents we will hand over to our children and they also, to their children). “*fifia, miatɔwo gedɛ ɛ Fantiawo kple du bubume tɔwo eye miede wokata trɔsubɔsubɔ me*”. (Even now we are married to Fantes and other tribes. We have initiated most of them in our traditions). “*Mia5e amadala gã ɛ Fante nyɔnu*”. (Even our chief herbalist is an Ewe but he is married to a Fante). “*fome ɛsiadɛ kple efe vodu si wosubɔna. fome nye nuvevi le Sankofa me nusiata Sankofa me bubuge le anyigba dzi gbedɛ o. Vodun subɔsubɔ me la na be miezu fome ɛka*”. (Most families here are custodians of the various *vodu* we serve and will always have a successor.... that is why I say *Sankofa* will forever thrive—we are connected through the coming together of our various *vodu*). (Moreover, there will always be somebody to take over when one is gone. I took over from my father as a drummer and my son will succeed me). The individual’s story clearly reveals a succession plan that is rooted in family ties. Thus, projecting a sustainable future for the *Sankofa*.

### **Religio - social impact**

Amudzi told me, “*nyatefe wonye be Kristotɔ wo sɔgbɔfɔu ɛ du ya me gake le ke miewɔna ɛ miafe se kple ɔɔwo dzi na be miafe nu dzena wo nu*”.

(It is true that we may be the minority as far as religion in this community is

concerned, but because of how organized the members of this group are they find us attractive and worth emulating)). “*Le kpɔɖe ɲu me mie dzɔ na ga kpe na ɖe miatɔ futadelawo ɲu wo tsɔ fle na tɔ dzi de nuwo, kple agbeli tu mɔwo. Kristotɔwo hã dzɔ na ga la elabena wokpɔ na vi ɖe le me*”. (For instance, we pay dues which goes into supporting our individual endeavors-outboard motors, canoes for fishing, gari processing machines/equipment. As we speak, we have a good number of non-adherents who joined in this venture). Other devotees recounted the benefits they have accrued as members over the years.

*Amavi*: “*hafi me ge ɖe Sankofa me la dɔwɔna ɖeke me nɔ asinye o, gake fifa to Sankofa tɔwo dzia nye hã me ɖɔ kplɔ le mɔgã dzi le gali dzram*”. (Prior to joining this group, I was jobless. Currently through the support of members and our visionary leader, I own a gari processing unit. You see the penultimate table with gari displayed on) by the road side on the U.C.C. – Elmina–Takoradi highway? those are my consignments. Countless accounts about the social impact of *Sankofa* on devotees as well as non-devotees were relayed to me by my informant. He went on to say that the chief priest is a compelling source of help for both members and non-members. When I probed further, he revealed that their father (chief priest) has special concoctions and medicines for people who desire to travel abroad, and that he can boast of many members who have accessed these facilities and have succeed in their dreams. My sister, he smiled, “*ne ebe yia yi fugodoa mia fofo wɔne na ame geɖe*”. (If you want to travel abroad it is very easy, our father will do it). One stated his story,

*Kokuvi*: “*me da akpe na Sankofa habɔɔkple mia fofo gã Papa Soworlo Ahiador ne menye woawoeo la nye menya aleke me le fofo nye ɖe ge o*”. (I am



highly indebted to *Sankofa*. But for *Sankofa* I don't know how I would have buried my father. Our father moved the entire congregation all the way to *Srongbe* to give my father a befitting burial. *Sankofa*, indeed, deeds not words)! This interview revealed that the *Sankofa* is not only satisfying the spiritual needs of its members but it goes a long way to solve their social needs as well.

Another participant said "before I joined *Sankofa* I was regarded as a cursed individual among my friends and the community because of my childlessness. Now am a happy person and my friends have accepted me. Thanks to the special potent concoctions that were given to me by *hunɔgã* (chief priest)". These testimonies clearly indicate *Sankofa's* position as not only a religious entity but also a socially powerful entity. Again, it confirms the findings of scholars that most African religions are full institutions that serve both spiritual and non-spiritual needs of their adherents. According to Idang (2015), "African religious values seem to pervade every part of the African's life, and the African believes that everything can be imbued with spiritual significance". The *Sankofa* shrine is primarily a worship place that makes extensive use of music in its worship. Apart from this there are many instances that necessitate the making of music. When someone fulfils a vow, music can be made. When a person wishes to join *Sankofa*, music is made. When someone request music, it can be made. Again, music is made when an individual wish to express gratitude for whatever the *vodu* has done for him. Furthermore, extensive music is performed in the event of a member's death.

It is important to emphasize that the performance of music and dance among the *Sankofa* music and dance allows for social interactions. The *amega/amegashie* owe their allegiance to the *hunɔ* and everyone who becomes

an initiated member. Intimate secrets are shared with leaders and where the performance of rituals is needed other members may come in to help financially.

### **Moral Values**

Values are important component of a people's culture. A well-behaved person benefits not just from his immediate family but also the entire community and vice versa. Culture, by definition encompasses a people's values and identity. These values are what distinguishes a people from another. A secured moral thought is rooted in *Sankofa* religion. Everyone is expected to follow this set of beliefs in order to avoid curses and live a long life. Stealing, adultery, as well as other immoral activity is highly forbidden, not only among members but also throughout the community. My informant explained that there is a high moral standard in the community because, for example, when a charge is brought against an offender and he or she denies the allegation, the *vodu* will prove their innocence or otherwise by oath. "I promise you, my dear sister, you do not want to incur the wrath of the gods!". He explained further that devotees and the entire community are grateful that *Sankofa* remain the gate keepers of moral codes. One member had told me "I remember an instance when a thief who boldly took an oath before the *vodu* stripped naked and was moving around the community because he denied his crime, I was dumbfounded and I purposed to be a good devotee in the community". I am afraid to go through such an ordeal.

From my interactions with other members in the community, I realised that *Sankofa* culture has infiltrated the moral fibres of the Duakor community. The fear of being brought to the *Sankofa* shrine to swear an oath of proof of innocence in relation to crimes and other social vices keeps the community

members morally vigilant. My data seems to support this finding that African religious, moral, and political values are usually intertwined (Mbiti: 1990). From the discussions I have seen that *Sankofa*'s spiritual, cultural, and philosophical values are revealed in the broader concepts of Ewe knowledge systems through the elucidation of songs and song texts.

### Chapter summary

This chapter reported the findings of participants' interviews as well as my own observations, and critical reflexivity of the *Sankofa* of Duakor, Cape Coast. Findings were presented in two sections that corresponded to the primary objectives of the research and they were further categorized into several other sections that corresponded to the primary themes that emerged from the data.

Participants in the study revealed that the *Sankofa* worship is made up of sacred and spiritual songs. My informants also detailed that the sacred songs are songs performed within the context of ritual activities like *voduyɔɔ*, *lāwuwu*, *ɔgbewɔwɔ*, *nudɔɔ*, and *akpedada*. The study also reveals that the spiritual songs are songs that praise the *vodu* (character or describe its behavior during worship). The spiritual songs are connected to various *vodu* (deities) *husago*, *anyigbatɔ*, *fofui*, *kpakpakri*, *gago*, *agba*, *kaku*, *efa*, *dzodzikpe*, and *akpoka*. Some participants revealed that the spiritual songs are unrelated to any single ritual activity but can serve as a reference to the individual's relationship between him and the supernatural being (deity). According to the findings of the study, the *Sankofa* song repertoire communicates the following: deity's power and strength; disobedience; warnings; protection of members; reinforcement of spiritual strength and unity.

This chapter also presented findings on how the *Sankofa* has thrived to date. The study revealed that the *Sankofa* has thrived in a Christian dominated community, based on the following reasons; the music's power, sustained antecedents and *vodu* connection, religio-social impact, and moral values.

Chapter five discusses the overview of the purpose of the study, summary and findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future research.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

#### Introduction

This chapter summarizes and reports on the findings of an ethnographic study design to explore the music and dance repertoire of the *Sankofa* of Duakor, and also show how they have thrived till date in a Christian dominated community. The summary provides a concise review of the entire study, from background to findings. Similarly, the study's results, as well as detailed recommendations and suggestions for further studies are presented in this chapter.

#### Summary of Findings

Two objectives were set for this study: Explore the music and dance repertoire of the *Sankofa* of Duakor, and to show how the *Sankofa* has thrived in a Christian dominated community. With the above stated objectives, the study seeks to find answers to these questions: What is the music and dance repertoire of the *Sankofa*? How has the *Sankofa* thrived as a socio-religious group in a Christian influenced community?

Literature relevant to the study were reviewed to help form the themes for semi-structured interview guide and observational guide. Interview and observation were the research tools used in gathering data for this study. The qualitative approach was employed and the research design was an ethnography which helped to obtain an in-depth understanding of participants' perception on the songs performed during worship and rituals of the *Sankofa*. The semi-structured interview guide was used to get the empirical data. Findings were derived from the transcribed data. Thematic analysis was adopted to analyze the

data derived. The transcribed data and the findings were compared to the literature review to ascertain whether the findings validate what existing literature reports. The summary of findings derived from the analysis are as follows.

This study reveals that *Sankofa* as the name suggests and their practices is not a return to a perceived primitive (*trokosi*) FGC (Female Genital Mutilation) engagement of indigenous tradition but to an African conception of society, as well as philosophy, and cosmology of a supreme being and her relationship with her adherents. *Sankofa* is a rediscovery of who we are (a people who belong to an ethnic group) a formidable tradition even in the face of the so-called modernity. Even though society is moving away from oral tradition and culture and seeking knowledge in other forms (globalization), *Sankofa* stands, to draw on indigenous knowledge systems together with modern trends to establish a cultural identity that is sustainable in the ever-changing global world.

The study shows that there is much knowledge embedded in various aspects of traditional African life which could be tapped or is untapped. The society will surely improve if one will tap into some of the tenets and beliefs (of the *Sankofa*) so that the younger generation will follow. Tapping into the indigenous belief of *Sankofa* offers one a great opportunity to connect to his roots.

The study also highlights that *Sankofa* in a way is serving as an agent of preservation of our indigenous culture despite the enormity of the break-up of indigenous communities.

Again, the study reveals that the (*vodu*) deities in the *Sankofa* shrine serve as intermediaries and guardians to the devotees. The *Sankofa* do not worship God directly, they do so through various *vodu* who play the role as intermediaries in a variety of rituals such as *voduyɔɔ*, *lãwuwu*, *ɔgbewɔwɔ*, *nudɔɔ*, and *akpedada* among others that have been discussed in the study. Through these rituals, members communicate to the supreme being, the living and the non-living and ancestors as well. Also, when these rituals are performed prayers, sacrifices are believed to transcend from the physical realm to the spiritual realms of the *vodu* with the appropriate music and dance accompaniment.

In relation with the first objective of the study: to explore the music and dance repertoire of *Sankofa* of Duakor, Cape Coast, the study revealed that the *Sankofa* songs can be categorized into sacred and spiritual. The sacred songs are connected to a particular ritual among the *Sankofa*. These sacred songs are performed during *voduyɔɔ*, *lãwuwu*, *ɔgbewɔwɔ*, *nudɔɔ*, and *akpedada*. These music and dance type cannot be performed outside the context of these rituals. The study also revealed that the sacred songs performed during this ritual is purely functional and their efficacy is directed to the *vodu* (deity) rather than the person presenting it.

In addition, the study revealed that the spiritual songs are connected to various *vodu* (deities) *husago*, *anyigbat4*, *fofui*, *kpakpakri*, *gago*, *agba*, *kaku*, *efa*, *dzodzikpe*, and *akpoka*. These are the names of supernatural beings. The spiritual songs praise the *vodu* (deities) and also serve as reference to the individual's relationship between him and the supernatural being (deity). Also, the study revealed that the spiritual songs performed during worship

communicates the following: power and strength of deities; disobedience; warnings; protection of members; reinforcement of spiritual strength and unity among devotees.

Considering the second objective: To explore how the *Sankofa* has thrived as a socio-religious group in a Christian influenced community. It was discovered that the *Sankofa* of Duakor has thrived based on the music's power, family antecedent and *vodu* connection, religio-social impact, and moral values embedded in their songs.

### **Conclusions**

My objective in conducting this research was to learn about the *Sankofa*'s music and dance repertoire, as well as to explore the reasons for their survival in the face of denigration in a Christian-dominated community. My work is an attempt to document *Sankofa* beliefs and practices, with particular attention to the role of songs in their worship and rituals. At the same time, this study discussed how they have maintained their religion in the face of industrialization, globalization, and vilification. Although my work cannot claim to have exhausted all knowledge about this group, I can certainly state that what *Sankofa* stands for "a return to our own religious and spiritual practices", has been adequately conveyed. Let me add that due to my personal ethical concerns, I have deliberately omitted some sensitive ritual information offered to me, but was cautioned about including a thorough discussion of it in my work.

Chapter 3 presents a review of literature on religion in Ghana. from the literature on religion in Ghana, Christianity is the most dominant religion and traditional religion is in the minority so far as the religious sphere in Ghana is



concerned. Another inference made in this chapter is that Afrikania mission represents the voice for traditional religion in Ghana, again, their main goal is to reform and modernize traditional religion in order to make it relevant in our time. The music (songs) as performed during worship and rituals is also examined in the preceding chapter- four (4). Special attention is given to the concepts and constructs relevant to the categorization of their repertoire within the broad concepts of Ewe traditional music; sacred and ritual music. The vital role of music in sustaining their existence and practices is also underscored.

After painstakingly conducting this study, one question that keeps ringing in my thought is that which was constantly reiterated in my research class by my lecturer (Akosua Addo)—and so what? What would one do with all the data accumulated? In fact, my principal informant occasionally inquired where all of this information I was gathering was heading? As someone who wanted a deeper appreciation of (philosophies and practices - *vodu* worship) of this group, particularly their resilience in the face of modernism and more specifically, a comprehension of their music through the exegesis of its repertoire and song text, it stands to reason that these findings offer me a great deal of benefits as an emerging scholar. For my informant, I told him that while *Sankofa* appears to be robust and has a sizable following, one never knows what the future holds-internal and external pressures, and thus an attempt to document some of their practices could be beneficial for future generations.

*Sankofa*'s spiritual values; the belief in deity or *vodu*, the making of libation, cultural values; belief in lesser gods (*trɔwo*), and philosophical values; the use of proverbs, their origin are revealed in the broader concepts of Ewe knowledge systems through the elucidation of songs and song texts in this study.

Despite the enormity of the seeming break-up of indigenous communities in Ghana, the study demonstrates that *Sankofa* is serving as an agent of preservation (oral knowledge transmission) of ‘our’ indigenous cultural organism.

*Sankofa* and its practices, as the name implies, are not a return to the hitherto perceived “primitive”-*trokosi*. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) engagement of some indigenous traditional societies and religion-but rather to an African conception of society, philosophy and cosmology of a supreme being; her relationship with her followers; and additionally, a rediscovery of our identity (a people with a unique and formidable tradition and history. How the *Sankofa* has thrived to date has been satisfactorily explored and highlighted in the study. As already discussed, chiefly, one could conceivably deduce that their beliefs and practices juxtaposed with their commitment to family antecedents - competent elders who function as gate keepers of the Ewe indigenous culture even in a foreign land. This is exemplified in their music and dance-spiritual, social, which is an integral part of their being and character, and also their responsive communal coexistence.

In conclusion, the *Sankofa* of Duakor have demonstrated that without music the efficacy of the member’s worship is reduced to nothing. The significance of their music, drumming, and dancing in their ritual and worship cannot be underestimated. These elements in their ritual and worship cannot be replaced by anything. Humans were created to worship the Supreme Being and this worship cannot be done without music, drumming, and dancing.

## Recommendations

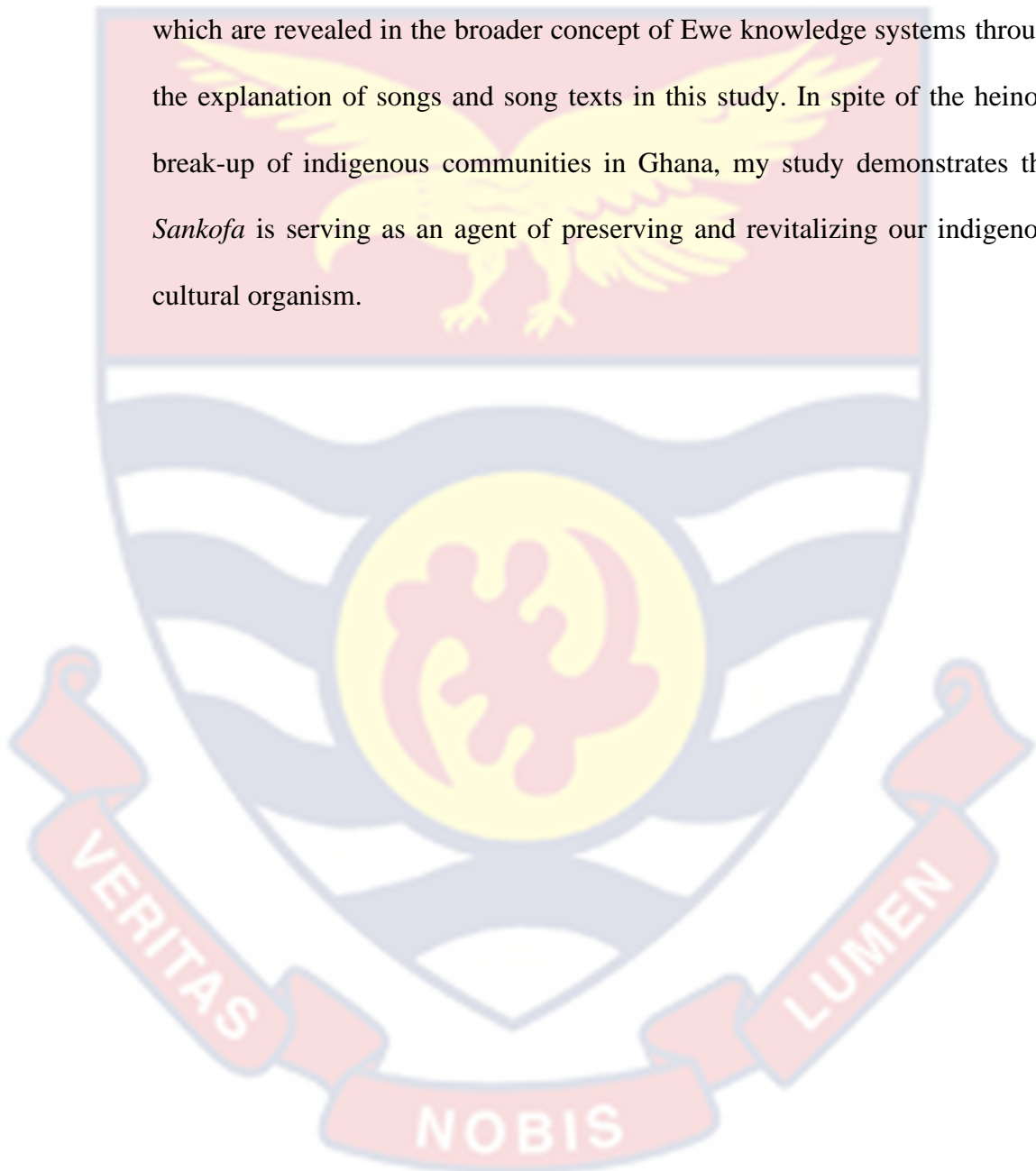
As an emerging musicologist, I appreciate having a comprehensive understanding of the people who make the music we study, as well as devoted inquiries into its impact on society and its future. With that in mind, I believe my study will make a modest contribution to the discipline while also serving as starting point for other researchers.

Concerning the future, I suggest that one germane avenue for investigation is the immense corpus of songs peculiar to each *vodu* among the pantheon. A master's thesis we all know has limits and therefore I could not exhaust all these areas. I believe there is a great deal of information to be elicited in that direction (a comprehensive unpacking of *Sankofa* repertoire via the broader notion of Ewe traditional music and practice).

Studies and promotion of *vodu* music, and to a large extent, indigenous religious groups like *Sankofa* should be given prompt attention by scholars. Findings must be promulgated in the school curriculums (especially in Ghanaian schools' religious and moral studies (R.M.E.) program which is mostly dominated with literature on Christianity and Islam) so that students and the society in general can be adequately informed about their tenets and practices. I believe this will go a long way in helping us in being objective about our opinions regarding 'people' who do not share the same beliefs with us, and thereupon, significantly curtail the vilification and bastardization that typically fraught these groups and their music.

In conclusion, this study has given a broad overview of one *Sankofa* group whose follower's belief in the worship of *vodu* in a small community in Ghana. This work is by no means detailed, and it is an attempt to document and

understand the known history and practices of *Sankofa*, with special attention to the role music and dance play in worship, ritual, and their sustenance to date. The *Sankofa* through their spiritual, cultural, and philosophical values such as belief in the worship of *vodu*, making of libation, consistent ritual activities which are revealed in the broader concept of Ewe knowledge systems through the explanation of songs and song texts in this study. In spite of the heinous break-up of indigenous communities in Ghana, my study demonstrates that *Sankofa* is serving as an agent of preserving and revitalizing our indigenous cultural organism.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AND DANCE

INDEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEADERS OF SANKOFA ON  
RITUAL AND WORSHIP SONGS OF THE SANKOFA OF DUAKOR,  
CAPE COAST.

Interview no. \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview (DD/MM/YY):

Time of interview:

**Section A: Respondent's background characteristics**

1. Name of interviewee
2. Age (completed years)
3. Sex:
4. Level of education
5. Position in the group
6. Years spent in the group

**Section B: What is the music and Dance repertoire of the *Sankofa* of Duakor?**

7. Can you please mention the music and dance repertoire of the *Sankofa* worship? (Probe: why that repertoire, how do you get the repertoire, is it through inspiration? How long have they been in existence, is it peculiar to all *Sankofa* groups in Ghana?)

8. What are some of the music and dance types that constitute the repertoire?
9. Which part of the worship do you perform these repertoires?
10. Can you tell me the aspects of your musical repertoire? (Probe.....)

**Section C: How does the *Sankofa* position itself in the religious setting of Ghana?**

11. As far as their rituals are concerned.
12. As far as their worship is concerned.
13. As far as their songs are concerned.
14. What constitutes (informs or directs) the cultural and moral significances of music in their religious worship?

**Section D: What role has music and ritual played in maintaining the relevance of *Sankofa* in modern Ghana?**

15. Can you tell me how music and ritual have made the *Sankofa* relevant in Duakor?

**Section E: What are the things that have made *Sankofa* thrived in a Christian dominated community? (Probe.....)**

16. Can you tell me the reason why the *Sankofa* has thrived in this community despite them being in the minority?
17. Can you state some benefits you have receive from *Sankofa* ever since you became a member?

**APPENDIX B: LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED**

Adzokpa Kwami

Adzoba Aya

Sowolor Ahiador

Amudzi Kpokuse

Amavi Dunu

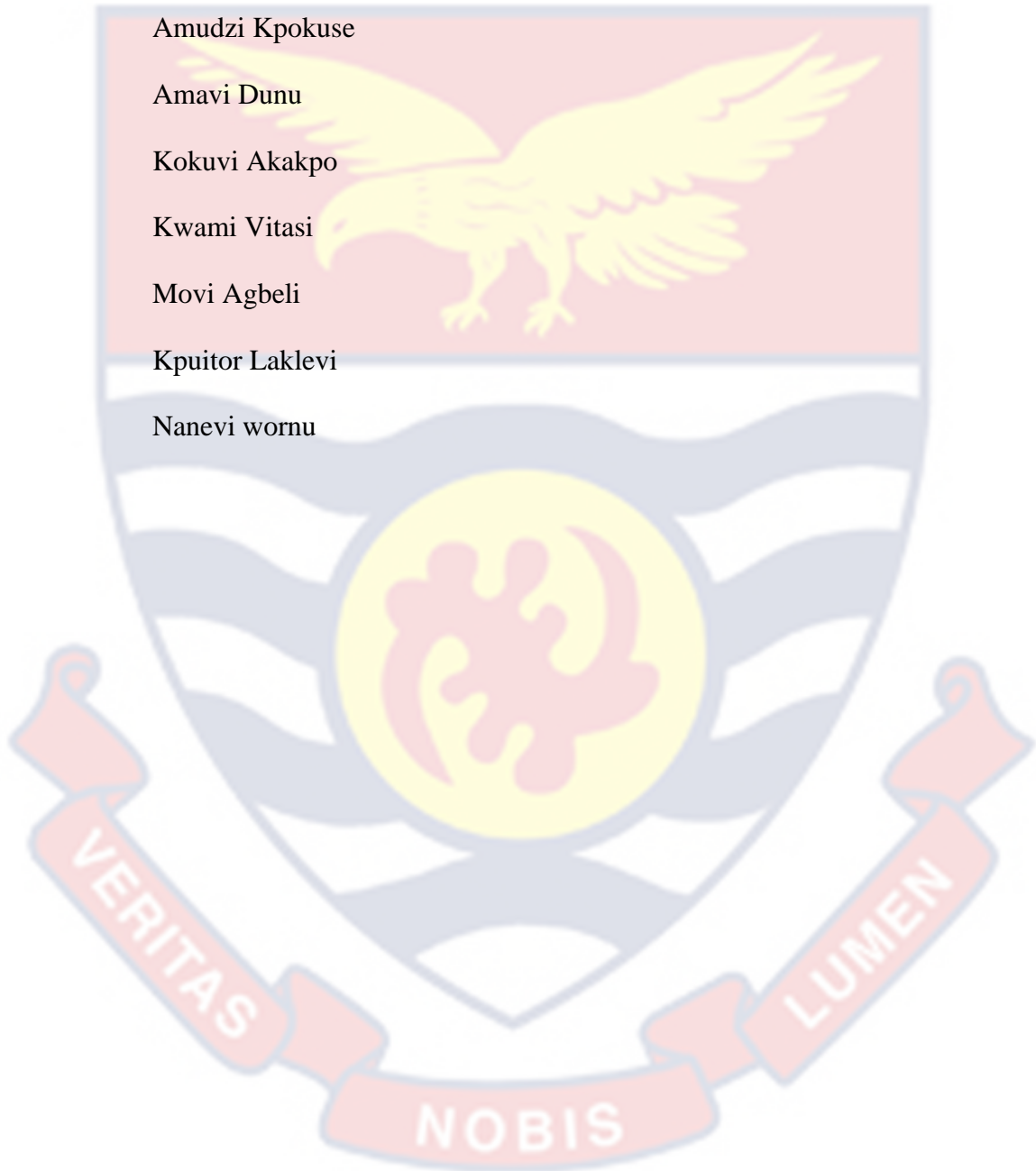
Kokuvi Akakpo

Kwami Vitasi

Movi Agbeli

Kpuitor Laklevi

Nanevi wornu



## APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY

*Afakaka* - Divination

*Afla* Herbs – Herbs

*Aflatsi* –Herbs with water

*Agbomlɔanyi* –An instrument

*Akpe* - clappers

*Akpledze* – A staple food among the Anlo-Ewe made from corn flour and palm soup

*Amadala* –Priest in charge of herbs

*Amegã* – Priest

*Amegãshie* - Priest

*Amitsi* - Spray

*Anyigba* - Earth

*Anyibatɔ* – Owner of the earth

*Atsimeɯ* – The biggest drum in the Sankofa instruments

*Axatse* – Maracas

*Azagunɔ* –Master Drummer

*Azizãwo*- Dwarfs

*Gakogui* – Double bell

*Hadada* –Mother of the group

*Hafofɔ* – Father of the group

*Heheɖego* - Outdooring

*Hameviwo* – Group members

*Henɔ* - Singer



*Henɔwo* - Singers

*Hunɔ* - Chief priest

*Kaga* - Supporting drum

*Kaxoxo* - Old thread

*Kidi* - Supporting drum

*Klatsiwo* - Secretaries

*Lãwuwu* – Animal killing

*Legbawo* - gods

*Sankofa* – Return and pick it

*Sentrewa* -guards

*Sogo* – supporting drum

*Tsiami* - Linguist

*Trɔwo* - Shrine

*Trɔwo* - gods

*Sunsum sɔre* – Spiritual church

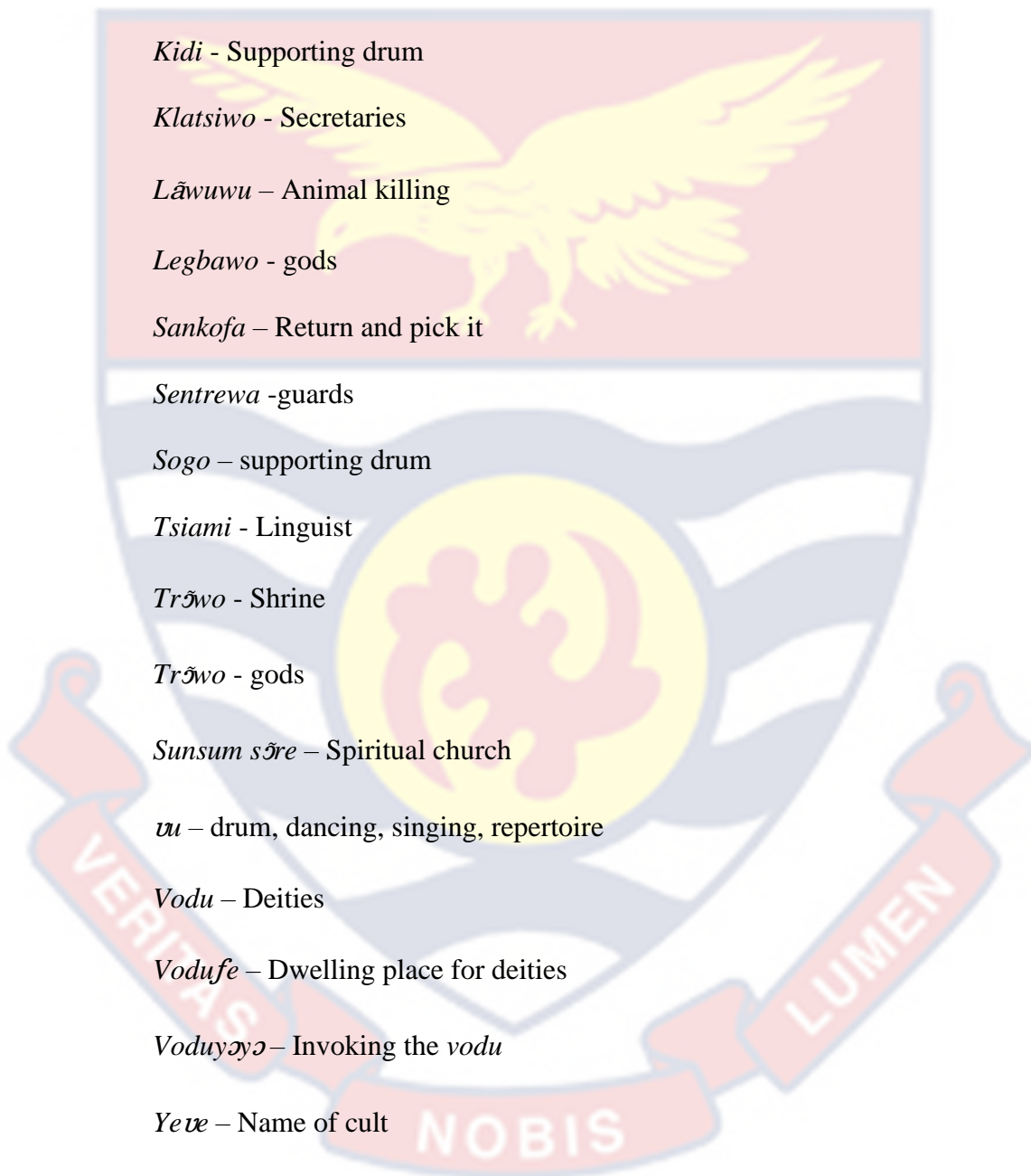
*u* – drum, dancing, singing, repertoire

*Vodu* – Deities

*Vodufe* – Dwelling place for deities

*Voduyɔɔ* – Invoking the *vodu*

*Yeve* – Name of cult



APPENDIX D: SELECTED FEW MELODIES OF SANKOFA SONGS

Mi do gbe da

Lead Singer

No vi nye wo mi va mia do gbe a a me noo

Chorus

L. S.

no vi nye wo mi va mia do gbe da a a me noo

Cho.

Dalo su

Lead Singer

E le ko me lo da lo su le ko me do

Chorus

e le ko me lo

L. S.

ba da kpli wo da zo mi nya mi nya

Cho.

e le ko me lo da lo su le

L. S.

le ko me do ba da zo mi nya da zo mi nya mi

Cho.

do ba da ba da zo mi nya mi nya ba da kplim ba da kplim ba da kpli

### Akpa yi zu loo

Voice 1

A kpa yi zu lo ta a gbo lo me yia godo dzoc

Voice 2

Akpa yi

5 Akpa yi zu e ta gbo lna me

zu ce ta gbo lo me yia go do dzoc

11 yia go do dzoc

Akpa yi zu ce ta gho lo me yia gu do dzoc wo va wu

17 dzo e a wu no wo va wo dzoo wo va wo dzo e a wu no wo va

23 dzo e a kpa yi zu lo ta gbo lo me yia go do dzoc a kpa yi

29 a kpa yi

yi zic ta gbo lo me yia gbo do zoo

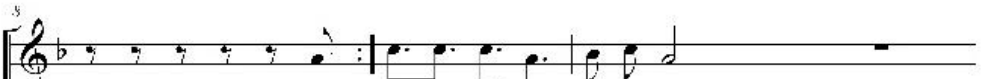
### Gbe ko mi la do

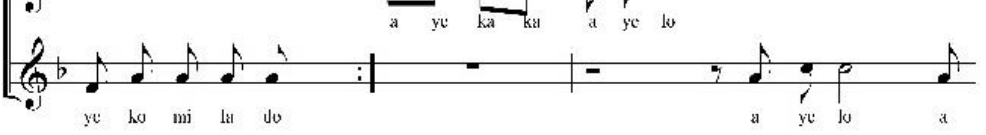
Lead Singer   
A ku ta fo lu gbe be ye ko mi la do

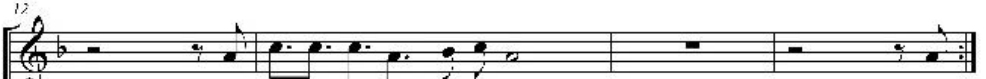
Chorus   
aa ye a ye a

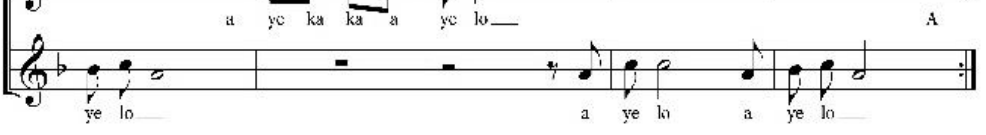
L. S.   
ku ta fo lu gbe be ye ko mi la do

Cho.   
ye ko mi va do a ye a ye a

L. S.   
a ye ka ku a ye lo

Cho.   
ye ko mi la do a ye lo a

L. S.   
a ye ka ka a ye lo A

Cho.   
ye lo a ye lo a ye lo



# Anago Boko

Lead Singer

Me dza wa lo me vo e a na go bo ko me dza wa lo ko

Chorus

L. S

lia go me dze zoc c me tsia wa a na go bo ko me tsi a wa ko lia go me de zo c

Cho

L. S

Tsa mi na yi tsa mi na

Cho

Me dza wa lo me vo e a na go bo ko me tsia wa lo

L. S

Cho

ko lia go me de zo e me tsia wa lo tsa mi na yi tsa mi na

L. S

me dza wo lo

Cho

me dza wa lo tsa mi na