

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Ghanaian Palmwine Music: Revitalizing a Tradition and Maintaining a Community

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College of Humanities, School of Arts (Discipline of Music)

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A dissertation submitted to the College of Humanities, School of Arts (Discipline of Music) in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Applied Ethnomusicology)

Howard College, Durban – South Africa

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December 2020

Declaration

I Eric Sunu Doe declare that

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Dedication

To the blessed memory of Ralph Karikari and all who continue to keep the palmwine
music tradition alive

Abstract

This doctoral thesis examines the tradition of Ghanaian palmwine music, exploring strategies for its revitalization and sustenance. Framed within the context of applied ethnomusicology and through the theoretical lens of adaptive management (Titon, 2015), music revitalization (Levine, 1993), and recontextualization (Mundundu, 2005), the study investigates how revitalizing palmwine music can enhance its sustenance within contemporary contexts amid societal changes. Since the 1980s, the preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage has attracted the attention of policymakers, cultural workers, and scholars because of the rapid rate at which cultural practices and traditions are being lost, abandoned, or radically transformed. UNESCO's policies on safeguarding cultural heritage – the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) and the Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) - are recent strategies established to protect and safeguard Intangible Cultural Heritage. In Ghana, one such tradition is palmwine music (*nsadwase nnwom*), which emerged along the coast of West Africa in the early 20th century as a result of a fusion of guitar traditions and indigenous musical resources. A unique and rich musical tradition, which in recent years has been facing a decline in practice, and as a result, has been less studied. The methodology embraced was action research, introducing curated performance circles and festival events as part of a local intervention to document the performance praxis of the palmwine music tradition in Accra, Ghana, and investigate how the music currently resonates with this community. The study further explored how these recent events form the basis of a contemporary local music rooted in local experiences and histories. The study brings new perspectives on ways in which applied ethnomusicology facilitates the revitalization and sustenance of hybrid tradition in an African context.

Table of Content

DECLARATION	III
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	IV
DEDICATION	VII
ABSTRACT	VIII
TABLE OF CONTENT	IX
LIST OF FIGURES	XIII
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES	XV
GLOSSARY/SELECTED TERMS	XVI
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Research Problems and Objectives	5
1.3 Theoretical Orientation	7
1.4 Review of Literature	14
1.4.1 Palmwine Music	14
1.4.2 Intangible Cultural Heritage, Preservation and Music Sustainability	18
1.4.3 Globalization, Cultural Change, and Revival	22
1.4.4 Applied Ethnomusicology	24
1.5 Research Methods	27
1.5.1 Location and Research Population	28
1.5.2 Research Participants	29
1.5.3 Data Collection, Presentation, and Analysis	32
1.5.4 Reflexivity	38
1.6 Conclusion	41
CHAPTER TWO	42
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PALMWINE MUSIC IN GHANA	42
2.1 Introduction	42
2.2 Contexts of Origin	42
2.3 Early Development	48
2.4 Guitar Bands and Palmwine Music	53

2.5 The Politics of the Name	57
2.6 Cultural Revivals and Palmwine Music	58
2.7 The Decline	62
2.8 Conclusion	64
CHAPTER THREE	65
MUSICAL REPERTOIRE AND PERFORMANCE PRACTICE OF GHANAIAN PALMWINE MUSIC	65
3.1 Introduction	65
3.2 Instrumental Resources	67
3.2.1 Guitar and <i>Seperewa</i>	69
3.2.2 <i>Premprensiwa</i> and <i>Adakem</i>	72
3.2.3 Bells and Rattles	75
3.2.4 Drums	78
3.2.5 Vocals	79
3.3 <i>Sadwa Ase</i> Style	80
3.3.1 <i>Osibisaaba</i> Styles	82
i. Dagomba	83
ii. Mainline	83
iii. Fireman	85
iv. Amponsah	85
3.3.2 <i>Odonson</i> and <i>Kwaw</i>	86
3.3.3 Meter in <i>Sadwa Ase</i> Styles	87
3.3.4 <i>Anansesem</i> and Palmwine music	89
3.3.5 <i>Anansesem</i> Storytelling as a metaphor of Narrative in Palmwine music	93
3.4 Ensemble and Performance Organization	96
3.4.1 <i>Adadam</i> Ensembles	97
3.4.2 <i>Ahomansia</i> Ensembles	98
3.5 Conclusion	102
CHAPTER FOUR	103
THE ECOLOGY OF PALMWINE MUSIC TRADITION IN GHANA	103
4.1 Introduction	103
4.2 The Legon Palmwine Band	104

4.3 The Kwan Pa Band	107
4.4 Systems of Learning Palmwine Music	109
4.4.1 Understanding the Palmwine Concept	110
4.4.2 Training the Musicians	111
4.5 Palmwine Musicians and their Communities	114
4.5.1 The Palmwine Musicians-Community Relationship	116
4.6 The Context and Constructs of Palmwine Music	121
4.6.1 Socio-cultural Context of Palmwine music	121
4.6.2 The Construct of Palmwine Music Performances	122
4.6.2a Repertoire	122
4.7 Material Culture and Costumes of Palmwine Ensembles	130
4.8 Infrastructure and Regulations	134
4.8.1 The Infrastructure of Palmwine Music-Making in Ghana	134
4.8.2 Laws, Regulation, and Funding	137
4.9 The Media and the Music Industry	139
4.9.1 The Media Engagement with Palmwine Music	139
4.9.2 Palmwine Music presence in the Ghanaian Music Industry	141
4.10 Issues for Sustainability	142
4.11 Conclusion	144
CHAPTER FIVE	145
<i>NSADWASE NKOMƆ</i> AS AN INTERVENTION TO REVITALIZE PALMWINE MUSIC IN GHANA	145
5.1 Introduction	145
5.2 Conceptualizing <i>Nsadwase Nkɔmɔ</i> Performance Circle	146
5.3 Setting up the <i>Nsadwase Nkɔmɔ</i> Performance Circle	148
5.3.1 Planning Phase	148
5.3.2 Facilitation Stage	152
5.4 Characteristic Features of the <i>Nsadwase Nkɔmɔ</i>	157
5.4.1 The Participants	157
5.4.2 “You don’t need an invitation:” The Venue and Settings	159
5.4.3 Instrumental Resources	163

5.4.4 “ <i>Kwε! ólaa éko?</i> (Hey! won’t you sing some?):” Engaging the Repertoire	167
5.4.5 The Talking-Circles: Conversation within a Conversation	172
5.5 “ <i>We drink palmwine and laugh it off:</i> ” The Dynamics of Sessions	173
5.5.1 “ <i>Things just happen spontaneously:</i> ” Poetry, Palm-wine, and Creativity at Sessions	174
5.6 Conclusion	177
CHAPTER SIX	179
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION	179
6.1 Summary	179
6.2 Conclusions	182
6.3 Recommendations	185
BIBLIOGRAPHY	187
APPENDIX	198
A: Discography	198
B: Ethical Clearance Letter	201
C: Interview Schedule	202
D: Pictography [Performance Circle]	203

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Map of Ghana with arrows indicating Kumasi and Accra. Picture courtesy Ghana Statistical Service	29
Figure 3.1 Two types of seperewa - the traditional one without tuning pegs and the other with tuning pegs. Picture by Grace Takyi Donkor, March 2019. Department of Music, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra	71
Figure 3.2 Premprensiwa. Picture by Eric Sunu Doe. December 2017, Kumasi	73
Figure 3.3 Adakem demonstration by Eric Sunu Doe. Picture by Seth Kpodo, November 2017, Kumasi	74
Figure 3.4 An electronic premprensiwa demonstration. Picture by Seth Kpodo, March 2019, Kumasi	75
Figure 3.5 Ralph Karikari in a performance playing the premprensiwa, frikiyiwa, and the rattle tied to his right leg. Picture by Scratch Studios at +233 Jazz Bar & Grill, Kanda, Accra.	77
Figure 3.6 Drums palmwine ensembles play	79
Figure 3.7 Agya Koo Nimo and Adadam Agofomma [SPA, Legon]	99
Figure 3.8 Kwan Pa Band in a performance at the Presbyterian Church, Korle bu	101
Figure 4.1 Initial members of the Legon Palmwine Band. L-R: Sitting – Gotlieb Dogbey, Alexander Obuobi, the author; Standing – Albert Kwame Owusu-Brown. Picture by Isaac Odamtey, 2015, Legon Accra	106
Figure 4.2 Kwan Pa Band performing at the Nsadwase Music Festival in October 2017. L-R: Bismarck Kwabena Safo, Frederick Kwame Agbexoasi Minamor, Kwaku Mensah, Andrew Asa Nkansah, Isaac Kwadwo Baah. Picture by Eric Sunu Doe, Accra	108
Figure 4.3 Legon Palmwine Band in their uniformed kente ntama. L-R: Albert Kwame Owusu-Brown, Samuel Agyeman Boahen, Seth Kpodo, Edwin Nii Akwei Brown. Picture by Grace Takyi Donkor, October 2019	132
Figure 4.4 Kwan Pa in their uniformed ntama. L-R: Isaac Kwadwo Baah, Andrew Asa Nkansah, Bismarck, Frederick Minamor. Picture by courtesy Kwan Pa Band	133
Figure 5.1 Poster of first Performance Circle Workshop. Picture by Eric Sunu Doe 6th June 2017	154

Figure 5.2 A picture of the circle at the forecourt of the Department of Music, UG-Legon.

Picture by Eric Sunu Doe, 2017

161

Figure 5.3 Picture of second location of the Performance Circle within the compound of the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra. Picture by Seth

Kpodo, August 2019

162

Figure 5.4 Instrumental Resources available during Performance Circles. Picture by Grace Takyi Donkor, Department of Music, Legon, Accra, September 2018

165

List of Musical Examples

Music Ex. 1 Excerpt of dagomba main theme	83
Music Ex. 2 Excerpt of mainline theme	84
Music Ex. 3 Excerpt of mainline theme (2)	84
Music Ex. 4 Excerpt of fireman main theme	85
Music Ex. 5 <i>Odonson</i> theme	87
Music Ex. 6 Excerpt of kwaw theme	87
Music Ex. 7 Excerpt of amponsah main theme with variations	88

Glossary/Selected Terms

<i>Adadam Agofomma</i>	Koo Nimo's ensemble
<i>Adaha</i>	Earlier type of brass band
<i>Adakem</i>	Box, early bass instrument for palmwine music
<i>Ahumansia</i>	Six strings; a type of palmwine guitar
<i>Ananse</i>	The spider; mythical hero
<i>Anansekrom</i>	The spider's town; name of an Arts festival
<i>Anansesem</i>	Ananse's stories
<i>Anansesem asi si oo</i>	<i>Anansesem</i> do happen/take place
<i>Ase</i>	Beneath
<i>Asem</i>	Word/statement/news
<i>[pl. nsem]</i>	
<i>Ashiwa Nwomkoro</i>	Akan female singing group
<i>Atenteben</i>	Ghanaian bamboo flute
<i>Atini</i>	It is straightened
<i>Dagomba</i>	Palmwine music type
<i>Enta</i>	A type of tree
<i>Fireman</i>	Palmwine music type
<i>Frikyiwa</i>	Metal castanet
<i>Gome (Gombey)</i>	Frame drum
<i>Gyase</i>	Various homebuilt sections forming a compound house
<i>Jùjú</i>	Nigerian music style
<i>Kasahare</i>	Fast speech (rap)
<i>Kolomashi</i>	Recreational Ga dance-music
<i>Konkoma</i>	A vocal type of brass band
<i>Kontomire</i>	Spinach
<i>Koobi Aware</i>	Salted fish marriage
<i>Kpanlogo</i>	Dance type among the Ga
<i>Krummu</i>	Early recreational music type
<i>Krunku</i>	Early recreational music type
<i>Kwe olaa eko</i>	Won't you also sing?

<i>Maba</i>	I'm here
<i>Mainline</i>	Palmwine guitar type
<i>Medɔfo</i>	My lover
<i>Mmoguo/mboguo</i>	Put it aside
<i>Nana Asaase</i>	King of the Earth
<i>Nkwankwaa</i>	Akan word for youth
<i>Nkwankwaahene</i>	Youth chief
<i>Nkwankwaannuase</i>	Meeting space for <i>nkwankwaa</i>
<i>Nsadwa ase</i> [Pron. <i>sàdwá àse</i> ; <i>nsadwase</i>]	Gathering where alcoholic beverage is served
<i>Nsadwase nkɔmɔ</i>	Conversations at <i>Nsadwa ase</i>
<i>Nsadwase nwom</i>	Palmwine songs
<i>Ntama</i>	Cloth
<i>Obaa</i>	Female
<i>Obetwani</i>	Palmwine tapper
<i>Odonson</i>	A palmwine music style
<i>Ohugua</i>	Recreational Ghanaian music type
<i>Okomfo</i>	Priest
<i>Opim</i>	Early type of recreational music type
<i>Osibisaaba</i>	Early type of highlife music
<i>Osoode</i>	Recreational music type of the Akan
<i>Palm-wine</i>	A natural sap from palm trees
<i>Pɔnkɔ abɔdam</i>	Mad horse (the horse is mad)
<i>Premprensiwa</i>	Lamellophone; box instrument
<i>Seperewa</i>	Akan harp lute
<i>Sikyi</i>	Akan recreational music type
<i>Sweetie</i>	Sweetheart
<i>Toa</i>	A bottle
<i>Tu wo ho fu</i>	Advice yourself
<i>Wulomei</i>	Ga priests
<i>Yaa amponsah</i>	Palmwine guitar type

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the early 20th century, West Africa experienced the emergence of many hybrid music styles, attributed to the constant interactions with European traders along the coast. According to Dampney (1981), from the late 1800s onwards, there was an emergence of urban popular music styles that developed particularly along the coast of West Africa. He argues that as a result of missionary and trading activities and later, colonial rule, these new musical expressions became ubiquitous in many Anglophone areas of West Africa. Music styles such as *asiko*, *agidigbo*, and *jùjú* emerged in Nigeria, *maringa* and *gumbey* in Sierra Leone as well as *adaha*, *konkoma*, *osibisaaba*, *ashiko*, and palmwine music emerging in Ghana (Emielu, 2010: 5). Many of these music styles became popular in the growing towns, and urban centers as Waterman (1988) contends that in Lagos, for example, these new music styles contributed to enacting a particular pattern of urban African identity in the 1920s. Therefore, these styles' popularity served as a platform that led to the creation of a culturally diverse environment in West Africa (Schmidt, 1994: 10-12). In Ghana, there was a burgeoning developmental activity in the early 1900s, which was spurred on by "phenomenal economic expansion and massive urban immigration" (Akyeampong, 1996: 222). This new development meant that many young people moved into the peri-urban and urban areas as well as towns in search of new employment opportunities. Akyeampong further notes that this led to "an emerging, 'modern,' élite lifestyle, which provided grounds for social experimentation among rural immigrants" in the towns and cities (ibid).

Thus, the emergence of palmwine music could be situated within this context of social experimentation. The music tradition explored a fusion of indigenous musical resources such as rhythm, instruments, performance approaches, and imported guitar traditions (Schmidt, 1994). Up until the early 1900s, a spontaneous recreational musical activity loosely organized at palm-wine drinking spaces came to characterize a typical description of the palmwine music tradition. Among the Akan, however, palmwine music reflected a blend of rhythmic influences drawn from indigenous dance-music forms such as *osibi*

and *nuyentoku* and played in various finger-picking patterns on the guitar with harmonies drawn from the west. Coplan (1978: 106) points out that palmwine music "characteristically feature rapt audience attention to narrations" in the proverbial Akan *anansesem* storytelling heritage, which is "full of philosophical and social observations on everyday life and values." These songs were often performed by ensembles based on either a trio or a quartet of acoustic guitars, an *adaka* (wooden box drum), *prempresiwa* (rumba box), and *asratoa*¹ (pellet bells strung), with vocal accompaniment at *nsadwase* (communal gatherings) when members of the community meet to drink palm-wine.

Between the 1930s and 1960s, a thriving record industry and music scene appeared to have enhanced the palmwine music tradition's popularity. Collins (2006: 184) observes that "the style of guitar playing became immensely popular with Ghanaians during the 1930s and 40s and was popularized on 'native' recordings by artists." By this time, two variants of music tradition had emerged: common amongst the Fante on the coast and the other, which developed amongst the Ashanti and Akyem inland. These two variants thus became the characteristic feature of the palmwine music sound. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, a period in the country marked by political instability affected music performances. Constant curfews, which had been occasioned by many military interventions, meant that nightlife, and for that matter, musical activities in the country were controlled (Agovi, 1989). The situation had a lasting effect on music performances, especially in urban areas and towns. The period witnessed many vibrant music groups, which included palmwine music ensembles fold up. However, there were occasional performances of the palmwine style within some communities in the Akan areas, mostly in Kwahu, Bono, Asante, and Akyem regions (Sunu Doe, 2011). The ensuing lack of live performances during the curfew period, especially in the cities and towns, created space for what came to be known as "Afro" fusion and disco music to flourish. Earlier musical traditions that had emerged and dominated the country's performance scene, such as palmwine music in the youth's eyes, were old-fashioned. Hence, since the 1990s to date the performances of the palmwine music tradition has rapidly declined.

¹ It is made from miniature gourds with seeds or stones inside and played as a pair of musical instruments (Kaye, 1999)

Growing up in the 1990s in Accra, the author recalls only seeing a few recorded performances of palmwine music on television. There were hardly any venues where one could see the music tradition's performance, although other forms of music were quite ubiquitous. In certain parts of the country, however, trends had emerged within the context of cultural revitalization, which led some musicians to revive specific early music styles. For instance, some Ga² musicians in Accra successfully created palmwine music-like acoustic ensembles that mostly focused on Ga music. Over the last two decades, significant concerts have been organized annually in the country to rekindle interest in and celebrate the music of Ghanaian origin by media and event management companies such as Citi FM, Joy FM, and Charterhouse Ghana Limited.³ However, these concerts are organized yearly and involve a wide range of musical traditions that sometimes include palmwine music. The last few years have seen culture bearers such as Daniel Amponsah (Agya Koo Nimo), Ralph Karikari, among others in their senior years, carrying on a music tradition that seems to be disappearing in its performance.

During my undergraduate studies at the University of Ghana, my interest in the palmwine music tradition was stimulated when he signed up for a Ghanaian folk guitar and ensemble course. I was introduced to palmwine guitar by my instructor. I was immediately drawn to the musical tradition's characteristic features, reflecting the country's indigenous musical nuances. The intricate fingerpicking style and proverbial vocal performance were unique to the music I heard on the radio. My instructor, Ebo Taylor, whom I had become close to, occasionally invited me to some of his private performances where I observed and experienced a fusion of palmwine guitar with other music styles. I particularly noticed how he relied on some aspects of the music tradition as he navigated his performances.

² Ga is one of the ethnic groups in Ghana and are largely found in the Greater Accra. See Marshall (2014) for detailed discussion on the Ga people.

³ These concerts take place in addition to a biannual National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC), a platform created to celebrate the culture and heritage of the different regions of the country. Although the concept may be the same, the framework for the two events, i.e., NAFAC and the concerts I reference, are different. The framework for the NAFAC event is broader than the concerts as it includes other sectors of the arts, including culinary and indigenous dance performances. In contrast, the other events mostly focus on popular musical styles.

Similarly, in ensemble classes, I noticed that their repertoire never included palmwine music but centered on styles largely drawn from foreign music traditions. My knowledge of palmwine music thus was limited to the guitar playing leaving me to yearn for more. I associated myself with the Local Dimension Palmwine Guitar Band (now Local Dimension Band), a band based at my department, to broaden my knowledge and experience of the music tradition. Whilst with the band, I observed that the band mainly led demonstrations of the palmwine music tradition in the department. Although their name suggested that their performance practice would characterize the music tradition, their repertoire reflected tunes drawn from Ghana's northern part. Their performances were primarily limited to performance spaces within the university community, and their performance practice reflected a new hybrid sound (Labayili, 2012).

I kept trying to understand the difficulty that led to either finding a band or a venue that performed palmwine music within the contexts described. My further studies at the graduate level also revealed how scanty and generalized information on the music tradition was. The only reference to an active palmwine musician was Agya Koo Nimo, and his performances were either few or far. In 2015, I formed a palmwine band with some friends, and our performances revealed an appreciation and interest in the music tradition. Over the period, the band's activities raised essential questions as to how the band could serve as a pivot to revitalize the palmwine music tradition. How could a music tradition with that much appreciation and interest be revived? How could this revival be framed within a communal context beyond occasional performance events? Also, who would take up this role? In the quest to find answers to these questions, it became clear that the band's performances had in itself initiated a process of intervention. The understanding was that a revitalization of the palmwine music tradition would go beyond the band's activities as this would require a "sense of purpose and a strategy" (Sheehy, 1992: 324). Thus, this study initiates and foregrounds an understanding of the palmwine music tradition and the issues that influence its sustenance.

1.2 Research Problems and Objectives

Since the 1980s, the attention of policymakers, cultural workers, and scholars has been drawn to preserving intangible cultural heritage because of the rapid rate at which cultural practices and traditions are being lost, abandoned, or radically transformed. According to Schippers (2016: 1), many musical traditions and practices in the 21st century appear to thrive; however, thousands of others struggle to cope with the extent and rate of change. He maintains that for many of these musical cultures, they "stand the risk of disappearing at a rate, which is well beyond their 'evolutionary' processes that govern the world's musical diversity" (ibid). Current strategies aimed at redressing these challenges and protecting expressive cultural heritage includes policies initiatives undertaken by UNESCO; the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001), the Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003), and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005).

Although many music cultures have adapted to changing environments, these policy initiatives have contributed to raising awareness in acknowledging a reality that others find themselves at the crossroads with only a few culture bearers surviving (Schippers, 2016: 2). In Ghana, one such music tradition on the brink of disappearing is palmwine music. Over the last couple of years, the music tradition has seen a gradual decline in its performance practices, with a few surviving culture bearers in their advanced age holding on to the tradition. The transmission process from one generation to the other of palmwine music appears to have blurred or broken down entirely with time. This situation thus provides a basis to intervene before the music tradition was lost forever.

Therefore, this study explored how palmwine music's revitalization developed in communal musical expressions enhances its sustenance amid societal changes within contemporary contexts. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Examine and document the repertoire and performance practices of palmwine music in Ghana.

- Investigate ways in which community engagement facilitates revitalization and sustenance of the palmwine music tradition
- Analyze the impact of the socio-cultural framework of palmwine music on its sustenance.

Key questions that guided the research included

- In what ways has *anansesem* and the fingerpicking modes of palmwine music developed since the 1990s to date
- How do community performances of palmwine music facilitate its revitalization, and what are the possible outcomes of this communal engagement?
- What strategies can be employed to mobilize communal interest in revitalizing a fading musical tradition?
- How does the socio-cultural context of palmwine music impact its sustenance?

The study contributes to scholarship on Ghanaian music significantly, especially in studying indigenous hybrid music forms in the country. The central theme of understanding the revitalization and sustenance of the palmwine music tradition's performance practices forms a sound knowledge base that should serve as a point of departure for other scholarly studies. Besides known cultural institutions such as chieftaincy that seems to safeguard indigenous music cultures in the country, there appear to be no designed systems that assist in harnessing and safeguarding such musical traditions, especially those of a hybrid nature (neo-traditional music). Although a few archival materials exist on these musical traditions, either the materials are housed outside the country, making accessibility difficult, or have not been sufficiently engaged to harness, safeguard, and preserve its performance practices. The approach to preserve and safeguard the palmwine music tradition through the performance circle adopted in this research will contribute to rekindling interest in its performances and presenting an opportunity for new creations rooted in local music experiences and histories.

1.3 Theoretical Orientation

In this section, I discuss the theoretical orientation that underpins this research project. I frame the study within the theoretical lens of music revitalization propounded by Levine (1993), adaptive management, as outlined by Titon (2015), and Mundundu's (2005) notion of recontextualization.

They embrace the conceptual notion of music revitalization as put forward by Levine (1993). She first posits music revitalization as constituting a special kind of musical change and a strategy used by oppressed people to perpetuate their musical cultures in situations where there exists an imbalance of social power. Levine goes on to suggest that music revitalization originates from an "individual's beliefs, which offers an opportunity for music traditions that are near extinction to be "reshaped, reinterpreted and redefined" (392). This construct she proposes serves as "s strategy for preserving cultural continuity" within societies that continue to evolve. Levine's conceptualization of music revitalization agrees with Livingston's (1999) notion of music revivals, which he argues is a social movement that aims to restore and preserve musical traditions believed to be disappearing or completely relegated to the past (68). He observes that such movements often position themselves as a cultural opposite and an alternative to cultures in the mainstream, and through historical and authentic values, improve existing cultures (ibid). Like Levine, Livingston develops a set of distinguishing features that characterize music revivals

- An individual or small group of "core revivalists."
- Revival informants and/or original sources (e.g., historical sound recordings)
- A revivalist ideology and discourse
- A group of followers forming the basis of a revivalist community
- Revivalist activities (organizations, festivals, competitions)
- Nonprofit and/or commercial enterprises catering to what revivalist market (Livingston, 1999: 69)

These compelling notions of music revitalization owe its thinking to the early theoretical constructs of Ralph Linton and Anthony Wallace, who incidentally are anthropologists. Levine (1990: 11) observes that Linton conceptualized the idea of a parallel cultural

phenomenon as nativism, which he notes as a "conscious, organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture" (Linton, 1943: 230 cited in Levine, 1990). On the other hand, Wallace (1965) underscores the fact that a deliberate intent by members of a society "to construct a more satisfying culture" leads to what he described as "cultural revitalization" (256). These constructs have in common the notion of a commitment to renewing interests in cultural values dear to societies and are deemed to be on the brink of fading away or may have been extinct. In such a case, the activities of music revivalists or "revivalists" become invaluable to the cause of sustaining their cultures. These theoretical underpinnings help to situate the revitalization project of palmwine music in Ghana in a process that hinges on a deliberate intervention to bring vitality to the music tradition. Since the inception of the revitalization project involved the process of acting on instead of analyzing the works already conducted, it became essential that it was guided by the notion and principles of music revitalization and revival. As Levine suggests, revitalizations primarily begin with an individual's belief and conviction to intervene in halting the near extinction of its music tradition, one that offers them the chance to re-engage with the music. Being a member of the palmwine music community and observing that the gradual decline of the music tradition's performance practices, it became critical that I initiated a process that brings vitality and its sustenance. The methods engaged reshaping, reinterpreting, and redefining the music tradition's very essence to resonate with its current environment.

The revitalization process engaged for this research project further posed hybridity questions, which lay at the core of musical revitalization orientation. Kapchan and Strong (199) posit that hybridity presents "a unique analytical perspective on the politics of culture by recognizing the intricate and complex weave of any heterodox and heteroglossic community." Thus, it reveals a concern with how something new emerges. Reading the complex processes of how two music traditions find commonalities to create a new style, thence became an analytical frame to examine such a music culture's sustenance. The palmwine music tradition situated within an Afro-European fusion context offers an appropriate site of interrogation into identity questions and how these influence its revitalization and sustenance. Indeed, its neo-traditional characteristics laid

the foundation that attracted participants to engage with the music tradition. The theoretical orientation therefore aided in understanding and explaining the nuances of how community engagement in the revitalization and sustenance of palmwine music further suggests an emergence of an even newer form that expresses the new realities of its performers today.⁴

In the discussion on revitalization, Livingston identifies salient characteristics, which contextualizes revivals as communally conceived notions. These six features of revivals attest that revival work is situated within the broader context of a community. The notion of community has broadly been the subject of debates in ethnomusicology as researchers, particularly in an attempt to frame their studies of communities defined by them variously. Several notions have been put forth, particularly when considering the term 'community' as, because of its widely used nature, it has assumed a rather meaningfully essence. I needed to frame my study on a notion of community that best characterized the group of people I was studying and working with. Shelemey (2011) provides a historical account of how the term 'community' has been approached in the field. She observes how fluid its meaning has shifted over the years. She examines community first from the dictionary contest, pointing out that the Oxford English Dictionary defines it in two contexts. She writes that it defines community as "a body of people or things viewed collectively" and "a body of people who live in the same place, usually share a common cultural or ethnic identity; so, a place where a particular body of people lives" (356). Observing that whereas early researchers particularly framed their studies on the second definition, thus examining the structural basis of music and music-making within the context of a defined geographical location, she argues that this position has rather evolved with time. In essence, the term appears to be not strictly confined to the structural and geographical description.

Indeed, as highlighted in Cohen's (1985) work, a community moves away from a static descriptor's confines to a more fluid one. He argues community to be "a matter of feeling,

⁴ See Chapter Five for further elaboration and discussion of communal engagement that characterizes the notion of this Afro-European fusion.

a matter which resides in the minds of the members themselves" (19-20) and "based on sharing particular symbols, such as ritual orders or, for our purpose musical performance" (Shelemey, 2011: 358). He notes that a community is "that entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediately than the abstraction we call 'society.' it is an arena in which people acquire their most significant and valuable experience of social life outside the confines of the home" (15).

Although I highlight the palmwine music tradition in Ghana to be largely practiced within the context of an ethnic grouping, in practice, because of its essence as a neo-traditional and hybrid musical style, its community of practitioners falls in line with Cohen's description. Wright (2016) observes that several alternatives to the notion of "community" have been introduced since the 1980s, a development Shelemey attributes to the changing discourse and the introduction into academia such subfields as popular music studies. Wright identifies Turino (2008) 'cultural cohorts,' Hebdige (1979) and Slobin (1993) 'subcultures,' Finnegan (2007) 'pathways' and Straw (1991) 'music scene' (26). These new alternatives and their constructions do not ideally conceptualize the community this research project seeks to maintain. For instance, Finnegan's notion of community delineates a group of people who are "bound by numerous ties, know each other, and have some consciousness of personal involvement in the locality of which they feel part" (299). The community of palmwine musicians does not relate with this descriptor because although many may know each other and are bound by ties (the music-making process), the music tradition is not centrally located within a specific geographical site would be a conscious personal involvement in that locality. What they share is the process of making palmwine music together, either in a spatial or live context whose construction may not be entirely a "locality." It is also easy to argue that the notion of 'locality' she describes could be a fluid one and could assume the music style itself. However, this particularly is counted when one examines the context of her proposition, local music-making in and around Milton Keynes in England. It identifies a physical local, which conceptualizes her framing of such a community.

The notion of community I embraced for this study is one that agrees with Cohen's description, as Shelemey (ibid) puts it, a community that is not fixed in time and place. The palmwine music community, to put it in Cohen's terms, is a mode of experience that has meaning to people who consider themselves to be part of it. In facilitating the revitalization of the palmwine music tradition, I embraced Higgins' (2012) notion of community music. He posits it within a "community's local identity aspirations and social interactions which are embedded in their musical expressions as well as the intentional interventions to facilitate group music-making experiences in settings with no formal structures" (4). I concur with this notion, especially within the contexts of Livingston's identified notions, to argue that the processes that were involved in revitalizing the palmwine music tradition were hinged on a deliberate intervention by we the members of the community.

I also engaged Jeff Todd Titon's conceptualization of adaptive management as a theoretical lens to frame the study. According to Titon (2015; 159), adaptive management successfully strengthens resilience and reduces exposure to undesirable change social groups and individuals face. In conceptualizing adaptive management, he explains that it works hand in hand with the idea of resilience, which he opines is the ability of a system to return toward a previous state in the face of disturbance. As he points out, he borrows the resilience concept from a branch in the field of physics (mechanics). Still, he conceptualizes it within social contexts to describe a culture's ability to retain its cohesion whilst it recovers from a period of disturbance (Titon, 2016: 494). It reflects this system's ability to preserve its identity, integrity, and stability after such experiences (Titon, 2015: ibid). In his estimation, resilience, thence, becomes a strategy within the social context that should be adopted to help social structures regain their former strength. He traces the use of resilience to early ethnomusicologists' intervention strategies in their works on music cultures. He observes that early ethnomusicologists whilst documenting and preserving musical cultures and sometimes intervening in saving cultures they deem to be at risk of extinction, often employed preservation and conservation orientations. In engaging these paradigms, the thinking entails halting musical cultures' extinction (Titon, 2015: 161). Whereas conservationists emphasize the restorative aspects, preservationists

underscore the idea of keeping as it is. For instance, a conservationist ethnomusicologist working on saving a music tradition will employ strategies that ensure that the tradition becomes not only an archival material but one that sits well with the community's current experiences.

Since resilience strategies exhibit resilience themselves, managing them means living with a degree of uncertainty. Thus, Titon argues that effectively employing resilience strategies is essential to work hand in hand with adaptive management that adapts management techniques to learn from successes and failures. Music cultures are vulnerable and resilient primarily to change, as would be expected of any expressive culture. Hence, Titon (*ibid*: 193) acknowledges the need to identify these factors to reduce its vulnerability and strengthen its resilience. This theoretical orientation contributes to framing my understanding of how the palmwine music tradition exhibits resilience and adapting strategic ways to manage its sustainability through a collaborative effort. Titon further encourages applied ethnomusicologists to engage with this analytical model, emphasizing cultural management that centers on a partnership between the culture worker, community leaders, and tradition-bearers, with the culture worker acting as collaborators, consults in achieving sustainability goals (2015: 192). The model does not acknowledge this research project's particular case when the culture workers are themselves part of this community.

Nonetheless, it aided in shaping how I approached and framed the study. Closely related to adaptive management is the musical ecosystem as advanced by Schippers (2015). The concept, which is grounded on an ecological model, offers a reading of musical cultures' sustenance to understand the ecosystems they operate. Citing Tansley (1935: 298), Schippers (2015) argues that musical ecosystems are complete systems that include more than specific music styles. They involve multifaceted factors that define the beginnings, growth, and sustainability of the musical cultures that surround them. These include "the role of individuals, communities, values, and attitudes, learning process, the context of making music, infrastructure and organizations, rights and regulations, diaspora and travel, media and the music industry" (*ibid*: 137). This theory provided a framework on

which the study reflected on the broader musical ecosystem in Ghana within which palmwine music finds itself and how this environment plays a part in influencing its decline, revitalization, and sustenance.

The theoretical construct of recontextualization has been used to explain many phenomena, but for this study, I embraced the notion as argued by Mundundu (2005). He posits recontextualization to reposition an idea or phenomenon from an original context into a new one or transform or ascribing new meanings to it within a different context (16). For Hanninen (2003: 61), recontextualization suggests a remarkable alteration of repetition stimulated by a change in context. Both writers acknowledge a changing context as signifying or invoking the notion of recontextualization. For Mundundu, recontextualization to occur, there should be a context one Nketia (1990: 18) observes as involving a setting where units of experience are seen to describe its identity and its relation in comparison to other units. Contexts thus assume the position of originality, although that in itself is debatable. For instance, it is not enough to conclude that because an activity takes place in a specific context, it stands to reason that it would be its origins. The context of origins of the palmwine music tradition suggests two narratives, each with a shared practice of drinking. However, concluding that the music associated with the activities emanated from these contexts continues to be debated. Thus, the notion of recontextualization suggests removing or changing contexts create a new experience as in Nketia's position. This theoretical position helps explain how the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* circle is "reshaped, reinterpreted and redefined" (Levine, 1993) from their performance contexts at *nsadwase*.

The study also draws on the postcolonial theoretical notion of hybridity. Kapchan and Strong (1999) observes that hybridity present "a unique analytical perspective on the politics of culture by recognizing the intricate and complex weave of any heterodox and heteroglossic community" (242). Thus, it reveals a preoccupation with how something new emerges (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha's contention of "new" Kapchan and Strong opines is grounded in resistance. This position is not whether the new creation contributes to challenging the polemic dichotomy of a pitch against each other, for example, the old and

the new, or an articulation of difference. In essence, it should not be the case that a phenomenon that is new or attains a new status is directly motioned relevant than that of the old. In any case, there may be certain nuances which are either inherent in the creative process or in the end-product.

These postcolonial conceptions of hybridity question such notions as articulations, thus instantiating its identity and simultaneously challenged (Kapchan and Strong, *ibid*). Terpenning (2016) has posited that hybrid cultural expressions have inherent ambiguities. Citing Taylor (2007), Terpenning observes that these inherent ambiguities in musical hybridity often disguise the power imbalance integral in creating international commercial music, thus illustrating how the concept replaces the notion of 'authenticity' as a market strategy in the world music genre. He further elaborates that hybridity thence becomes a marketing term that identifies, commodifies, and sells a new form of difference on the surface. However, it reproduces old biases and hegemonies (142). The nuances of how community engagement revitalizes and sustains the palmwine music tradition suggests an emergence of a newer form of the music tradition, which expresses new realities of its performers. In Chapter Five, where I elaborate on the creation of a performance circle, it imperative to acknowledge that although the “old biases and hegemonies” of the palmwine music tradition are evident in the curated performance event, it nonetheless does not control the creations of new performative sensibilities that characterizes how the music is engaged with today.

1.4 Review of Literature

1.4.1 Palmwine Music

The palmwine music tradition has contributed to developing many of the homegrown popular musical traditions that emerged in Ghana (Schmidt, 2009). Whilst discussing the early history of highlife music generally in the West African sub-region, Collins (1976) underscores the fact that whilst highlife music may be too broad to suggest one point of origin and influence. However, he acknowledges and concurs with the argument that the palmwine music tradition heavily influenced the guitar band highlife stream of highlife music. The expectation would be to have a substantial body of work on the music

tradition, but generally, a considerable body of literature exists that examines palmwine music in West Africa. In addition to Collins' contribution to the socio-historical discourse on Ghanaian highlife music evident in his extensive research works, other writers have mentioned palmwine music in one way or the other. In this section, I review as many of these seminal writings as related to my research. Collins's most significant contribution to the body of palmwine literature is his discussion of African guitarism. In this paper, Collins (2006) examines how the guitar over one hundred years has been Africanized. Rethinking Nketia's notion of a tenacious re-modeling of traditional genres in West Africa, Collins (2005) takes the reader through several examples of how the guitar within the different continent regions has been localized (Nketia, 1973). He zones in on the historical development of Ghanaian guitar styles tracing its origins, particularly Kru sailors' activities on the Fante coastline, particularly what he refers to as “progressive indigenization”⁵ (131). Whereas the paper introduces the reader to the early guitar styles, it does not particularly reference its nuances to the palmwine music tradition. It is worth appreciating that whereas he mentions the contexts where these guitar styles were performed, he leaves the reader wanting more of what the palmwine music tradition entails. His musical analysis of these early guitars provides context to further probe the musical tradition and not only from the guitar's angle.

Other readings of Collins' body of works about palmwine provide a socio-history analysis of the musical tradition, which positions its emergence to the discourse on guitar band highlife music. For instance, his writings on Ghanaian concert party (Collins, 1976, 1994, 2018) and the history of West African highlife (Collins, 1976, 1977, 1989, 1992, 1994, 2006, 2018) all account amid brief reference to palmwine music and its coastal historical antecedents. In his 2018 publication of *Highlife Time 3*, Collins reproduces interviews with Kwaa Mensah and Agya Koo Nimo, and other guitar band highlife musicians, which offer new insights into the music tradition. For instance, we learn from reading the interviews of Kwaa Mensah how the palmwine music tradition was gradually evolving

⁵ According to Collins, progressive indigenization characterize the process where coastal styles, including music and drama, are adapted and recontextualize for the more rural and less westernized paying audience (ibid)

into guitar bands and how it affected its performance practices. We also learn how Kwaa developed his unique interpretation of *odonson*, which today characterize one of the stylistic features of Ghanaian palmwine. The interview with Agya Koo Nimo offers insights to probably a first step at safeguarding the music tradition as it exists today.

Apart from Collins, various writers and researchers have also contributed to the existing literature on the music tradition. Most of these contributions have instead referenced palmwine music more broadly and within the West African region. These include student thesis that often references Collins' analysis. Whilst discussing the formative stage of *jùjú* music, Alaja-Browne (1985: 14) contests palmwine music's influence on *jùjú*, arguing that to hold such a view is to "ignore the generally accepted view of the origins of *jùjú* music in Lagos as held by its pioneers." Waterman (1988; 1986), on the other hand, provides a compelling narrative of palmwine music in the 1930s in Lagos. He concurs with Collins (1976) to summarize that the diverse techniques and stylistic elements that embody the palmwine music rubric make it difficult to delimit the style with any precision. However, he points out the characteristic feature of the "two-fingered style of playing" (Waterman, 1986: 130). He provides a brief historical narrative of how the music tradition emerged in Lagos as one of the many syncretic musical traditions and examined how palmwine music like *asikò* and *sákàrà* contributed to the socio-cultural development of the city. Waterman's essays contextualize and provide some historical commentary on Ghana's palmwine music tradition, mostly as his discussions reference events in Ghana.

In the special issue of the *World of Music* journal titled "The Guitar in Africa: the 1950s-1990s, Cynthia Schmidt serving as the guest editor, put together a series of essays that examines the changing role of guitars in the continent, particularly between the period. In her introductory essay titled "The Guitar in Africa: Issues and Research," Schmidt (1994) underscores how the instrument has evolved on the continent and how it continues to influence the musicking of many indigenous musical traditions itself, creating new ones. She explores previous research on the instrument noting that it was popular, particularly in the West African region in its early years than the rest of the sub-Saharan areas. Like

other writers, Schmidt underscores Kru sailors' role in developing what came to characterize the palmwine music tradition's stylistic foundation. She particularly points to how the tradition catalyzed promoting a socio-cultural environment of an emergent working class in the growing cities of West Africa. Detailing the Kru sailors' contributions to the West African coast's musical culture, Schmidt (2009) provides another compelling argument on the sailors' historical survey, which positions the emergence of the palmwine music tradition again on the coast. Her analysis further confirms Collins' view that positions the palmwine music tradition in the coastal areas. What her studies paid less attention to was the other contexts of its emergence. Nonetheless, her analysis provided a foundation for exploring the other context of palmwine music, particularly in Ghana.

Andrew Kaye's contribution to palmwine music knowledge collected thus far can be contextualized in two phases. His seminal ethnomusicological work on Agya Koo Nimo and his contributions on the guitar in Africa to the Garland Encyclopedia of African music and the World of Music Journal's special issue. In the essay titled "The Guitar in Africa," Kaye (2009) examines the guitar instrument's historical trajectory on the continent showing its influences on creating new musical styles. Particularly, in this paper is how he discusses the kind of music-making processes the instrument underwent. He confirms Alaja-Browne's (1985) and Waterman's (1990) emergence of new guitar music, particularly on Yoruba culture. Like Collins's argument on the emergence of the palmwine music tradition in Ghana, Kaye's analysis elucidates providing musical evidence in support. His research, however, leaves a gap concerning the performance practice of the village context, particularly when his musical examples are drawn from commercially recorded palmwine songs. His seminal dissertation on Agya Koo Nimo mainly draws attention, among other things, to the compositional and creative processes involved in his creation of performances in general, of which he also examines his palmwine set (Kaye, 1992). Kaye (1999) offers a lucid analysis of Agya Koo Nimo's palmwine music performance practices, exploring how he contextualizes his songs in his environment. Including the extra-musical activities provides my study with a solid

foundation on which I investigated, in general, the stylistic nuances of the music tradition and its gradual decline.

1.4.2 Intangible Cultural Heritage, Preservation and Music Sustainability

To engage with the processes towards realizing a palmwine music tradition that has regained its vitality and sustenance, it became essential to properly situate my study within discourses of intangible cultural heritage's revitalization, sustenance, and cultural revival. As I have earlier mentioned, those who deal with the creative and cultural industry have been drawn to paying attention to the fast rate at which cultural practices and traditions are radically being transformed or lost. Indeed Schippers' (2016: 1) observation on the extent of this change is alarming. Although he acknowledges "evolutionary processes that govern the world's musical diversity," he argues that the rate at which these cultural expressions are disappearing should be of concern to all. Several strategies aimed at redressing these challenges and protecting these cultural heritages have been taken by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Some policy initiatives including the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001), the Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003), and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005). Although many music cultures have adapted to the changing environments, these policy initiatives have raised awareness that others find themselves at the crossroads with only a few culture bearers surviving (Schippers, *ibid*: 2).

Despite the good initiatives on the governmental level, there are some concerns about these policies' essence in meeting their goals. For instance, Titon (2009) critiques how these policies are framed to tackle the issues. He observes that framing invention policies with words such as 'masterpieces,' 'safeguarding,' 'preservation' in themselves creates unintended problems to the ones they intend to solve. For example, identifying and classifying an expressive culture as a masterpiece suggests discrimination against other cultures, primarily when awarded such statuses. Who do we differentiate cultures by suggesting one might be a masterpiece than the other, and what will it mean to the

different culture deemed as not a masterpiece? Also, positioning to safeguard a culture is like suggesting the culture is static, stagnant, unexpressive, and needs to be protected not to lose it. The sustenance of expressive culture from the preceding discussion indicates the process should be handled more cautiously to avoid causing more harm than initially intended.

My study presents a Ghanaian example of musical heritage in dire need of reinvigoration, having in mind UNESCO's policies, the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), and the Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). The overarching aim of these policies is to protect cultural heritage by safeguarding these cultural productions. For instance, article seven of the 2001 declaration advocates for the preservation and transmission of the generation heritage as records of human experience and acknowledges, for example, the rate at which the world continues to change and the dangers such transformation presents for the future. It suggests that policies and strategies be developed to preserve and enhance such cultural products as intangible heritage. The 2003 declaration also identifies the threats that globalization and social transformation to intangible cultural heritage. It recognizes that fostering scientific, technical, and artistic studies and research methodologies, with a view to the practical safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in danger, remains an invaluable measure. Whereas these policies had been in existence since the early 2000s, it was not until January 2016 was ratified in Ghana. The structures proposed in the declaration will take some time for the state to implement. This study finds resonance with Article 13(c) of the 2003 declaration as it examined the palmwine music tradition and explored strategies that lead to its revitalization and sustenance. It also raised the question of how ethnomusicologist engages with sustainability issues.

According to Bendrups et al. (2013: 154), sustainability has since the early 2000s emerged as an essential topic in musical research. They note it has been expressed variously depending on the scholarly and musical contexts but commonly located within broader environmental, economic, and cultural issues. It is invoked mostly in discussions on the relationships between music and nature; its essence today hinges that many

expressive cultures and traditions are endangered. As Bendrups et al. (2013: 154) again points out, its focus in ethnomusicology "is not only concerned with matters of nature and the environment but moreover with the very survival, continuity, and adaptation of culture." The notion of sustainability in applied ethnomusicological discourses borrows the concept from developmental economy and ecology. Titon (2015) observes that its emphasis within applied ethnomusicology is one of reference, although its direct use sometimes becomes necessary. He notes that the purpose of sustainability in an ethnomusicological context refers to a music culture's capacity to maintain and develop its music now and in the foreseeable future" (156). Titon appears to suggest that the main preoccupation of applied ethnomusicologists should be in assisting the sustenance of music cultures within communities through collaborative efforts with its members and culture bearers. Two examples of such collaboration exemplify the argument Titon makes. Reed (2005) examines how a masquerade festival in Nigeria presents an occasion to interrogate a revitalized culture's nuances, explaining how an indigenous culture remains relevant in contemporary times. In Lagos's masquerade festival, organizers emphasize its relevance to modern exigencies without destroying indigenous art's meaning within the community. He notes that with the governor and culture bearers' collaboration, they have succeeded in revitalizing a neglected festival to a few communities and serving as a tourist attraction to the area, thus providing a livelihood source for the indigenes.

Schippers (2016), on the other hand, examines sound futures by exploring the ecology of music sustainability around the world. He proposes five (5) domains - systems of learning, the musician and community, context and constructs, infrastructure and regulations, media, and the music industry, which he argues, influences music's sustainability across the world. Reflecting on case studies of musical tradition worldwide, He maintains that the five domains' notion agrees with Titon (2009) stewardship concepts as proposed, where culture workers are collaboratively repositioned. They thence become both students of community scholars and practitioners of music and act as teachers, who share their skills and networking abilities to help maintain and improve the conditions under which their musical community's expressive culture may flourish (120). In the

forward to the book titled "Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures: An Ecological Perspective," Seeger (2016) concurs with Schippers' thoughts, noting that understanding a music culture's sustenance goes beyond the sonic sound's structural interpretations. He argues that it is situated in how the traditions are a part of a more extensive conceptual, physical, and mediated environment of actions and values, resources and regulations, individuals and communities, power and hegemony, and the markets and media (ix). These research projects provide a unique starting point, where I situate my readings and analysis of palmwine music's revitalization. For instance, the five-domain framework offered me a model with which I examined palmwine music's ecology within the context of young ensembles, thus providing a basis for its revitalization.

In exploring strategies and interventions that can be employed towards music sustainability, Schippers and Grant (2016) survey various approaches. However, he places more emphasis on the five-domain framework, as proposed by Schippers (2015). She notes that besides the framework, documentation and archiving are of practical essence to music sustainability. This position appears to have foregrounded an earlier study that archived the Shona *mbira dzaVadzimu*. Matuire (2013) explored how the archiving of the *mbira dzaVadzimu* has led to preserving the Shona's cultural legacy on Zimbabwe, which otherwise was fading. Besides collecting these mbiras as tangible cultural heritage, he also employs an approach that safeguards its repertoire, playing techniques, and manufacturing of the instrument and the indigenous knowledge preserved in living people through performances in matandaro ceremonies and workshops. Grant contends that although various practical efforts support music's sustainability, many of these are framed within theoretical readings of "change and revival, globalization and cultural diversity" (ibid: 37). These studies present a point of reflection on palmwine music's sustainability with introspection on efforts that supports its revitalization.

My study examined how the music tradition's sustenance is positioned beyond traditional notions of music preservations. In this situation, the music tradition is actively engaged with and not placed on shelves as artifacts in storage facilities but as expressive or performing arts. It is premised on an active engagement with the musical tradition, which

enhances its sustenance. Sheehy (1992: 330) suggests that whilst we work to safeguard endangered music traditions that we "develop new 'frames' for musical performances and provide community members access to strategic models and conservation techniques as a response to safeguarding endangered music tradition." Doing so creates a platform for the community to experience and reinterpret their music culture to reflect their current practice. The creation of such musical performance frames varies. As I will discuss in chapter five, I facilitated a monthly performance circle in the shape of recontextualization of the performance practice of palmwine music. Harrison (2012) writes that Sheehy's notion of frames draws on Goffman's concept of culturally determined frames whose meaning changes between situations and views. In this study, I positioned the palmwine music tradition's performance practice as the frame I explored and examined how its reinterpretation reflects new experiences and local identities.

1.4.3 Globalization, Cultural Change, and Revival

My study broadly correlates with discussions on cultural change due to globalization. The works of Lomax (1980), and Seeger (1991), represent the view that globalization brings cultural homogenization and thus the rapid disappearance of local forms. In such situations, there presents the need to safeguard these cultural forms. for instance, Lomax notes the implications that an "over-centralized electronic communication system" (22) has on today's culture. he argues, "imposes a standardized, mass-produced and cheapened cultures everywhere." He appears to suggest that music-making seems to assume a character that is fixed within a specific standard parameter; hence some music tradition seems to suffer as they may not fit in the context. He observes that although "folklorists and musicologists [continue to] study the varied traditions of the peoples of the earth, their rate of disappearance [has] accelerated" (ibid). in furthering the discourse, Schippers (2015: 2) cites Seeger (2008), who remarks that indeed "it is not as though these are just disappearing, they are 'being disappeared.'" Seeger's remark paints vividly a picture of the risk many cultural traditions face. For example, by not consciously making efforts to engage with a performance tradition, the tradition slowly fades away. Many hybrid styles from earlier years in Ghana, for instance, struggles to find its self-expression even within the local market industry as it appears not to fit these idealized notions of musicking.

Hence one hardly hears them being played on the radio or has a regular performance spot. The nuances of change also affect a community's control of songs' authorship (Seeger, 1996). Its stead is the global repercussions where individualism assumes the sole authority to such communally produced creative works. He argues that "individualized, popular-music-fueled concepts of music ownership on the rest of the world through international conventions" should not be imposed on indigenous music communities without some amendments (ibid: 91). He points out that it challenges the continuous existence of many indigenous traditions, such as the palmwine music tradition.

On the other hand, Collins (2006) argues that globalization does not necessarily result in these music traditions' homogenization because local cultures indigenize global forms differently. He emphasizes, for instance, that in Africa, the guitar has gone through a process of Africanization. He cites examples of Zulu maskanda guitar, which draws from numerous Nguni bow tradition, Shona guitar playing styles, the "focho" guitar style of the Sotho, and the West African palmwine guitar styles. Collins further articulates the significance of emphasizing indigenous musical practices that embodies palmwine music. He maintains that applying African principles on the guitar was a conscious effort to instill cultural knowledge and nuances in this hybrid music tradition. This thesis takes Collins' view as palmwine music's emergence lends to this global-local interaction and goes further to raise questions on its sustenance. It builds on his focus on the Africanization of the guitar to examine how the sustenance of the palmwine music tradition and its performance practices.

Webb (2011) and Labayili (2012) examine the impact of a post-independence cultural revival in Ghana that emphasizes a return to music-making roots. Situating his study on the Wulomei Ga folk group within the context of urban ethnomusicology, Webb examines the contributions of the Wulomei in reviving a Ga cultural identity among a people whose environment appears to have been lost to a cosmopolitan effect of a nation's city. He notes that in the 1970s, there was a revival of Ga music with the creation of Ga folk groups, which were primarily fashioned along with palmwine group models. Labayili (ibid), on the other hand, examines trends the emerged in Ghanaian popular

music in the 1990s, which emphasized the essence of new music-making in cultural contexts. He focuses his study on the Local Dimension Band, a palmwine-like group exploring diverse ethnic groups' musical ideas. He notes that although the band comprised individuals with different ethnic backgrounds, the band's creative ideas mainly drew on palmwine music. The two studies situate revival attempts of a sort since the late 1970s to 1990s and highlight movements in reviving Ghana's musical tradition. However, as mentioned earlier, they focus on how these groups experimented with ideas that created new sounds within a post-independence Ghanaian context. However, this study examines an old tradition on the brink of fading and explores ways to sustain its performance practice.

1.4.4 Applied Ethnomusicology

In an ethnomusicological research that engages a component of applied work, it was essential to frame the study's orientation within applied ethnomusicological notions. Applied ethnomusicology provided a useful approach for the study as it serves to connect scholarly work with my interest to serve the community of musicians I work with. Since the emergence of the field in the 1990s, several definitions have described applied ethnomusicology and what its practitioners do. The Society for Ethnomusicology's section of Applied Ethnomusicology describes applied ethnomusicology as "work in ethnomusicology that puts music to use in a variety of contexts, academic and otherwise, including education, cultural policy, conflict resolution, medicine, arts programming, and community music."⁶ On the other hand, International Council for Traditional Music's Study Group for Applied Ethnomusicology (ICTM-SGAE) describes the field as the "approach guided by principles of social responsibility, which extends the usual academic goal of broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding toward solving concrete problems and towards working both inside and beyond typical academic contexts" (Harrison, Mackinlay, Pettan, 2010). What runs through these descriptions is the idea that applied ethnomusicologist brings to bear their knowledge to the benefits of the people they study. Jeff Titon captures the very essence of what the field encapsulates when he

⁶ https://www.ethnomusicology.org/page/Groups_SectionsAE

notes that "applied ethnomusicology puts ethnomusicological scholarship, knowledge, and understanding to practical use" (Titon, 2015: 4). Indeed, he does acknowledge the broadness such a definition presents, mainly its practitioners are engaged in a wide range of research activities, pointing out that the field is not a single one but "an ever-emergent movement, responding differently at various times and places, by means of music-centered interventions, to different cultures, histories, needs and conditions" (ibid: 3).

Although applied ethnomusicology's essence has existed since the late 19th century and practiced differently around the world, LaFevers (2012) observes that various sources referenced the topic in passing until the *Ethnomusicology* journal's 1992 publication themed "Music and the Public Interest." He argues that it characterized an attempt to conceptualize the field as a specialized approach to ethnomusicology. He notes further that the publication did not offer a clear definition of the field, although several of the essays discuss ethnomusicological activities in the public sector. Indeed, the journal provides insight into the notion of applied ethnomusicology and how earlier works by researchers. However, it agrees with the new framing and was not captured or discussed within its applied work contexts. For instance, in offering some notions about philosophy and strategy in applied ethnomusicology, Daniel Sheehy recounts how earlier researchers' guiding philosophies and applied works are hardly discussed within such terms (Sheehy, 1992). He mentions Alan Merriam's prediction of what the future holds for applied ethnomusicology, the works of Benjamin Botkin, Charles Seeger, Alan Lomax, Zora Hurston, Vance Randolph, Bess Lomax Hawes, and Ralph Rinzler as characterizing applied work in ethnomusicology. Whereas the publication highlighted what signified the coming into being of applied ethnomusicology, critics have argued that its description as of the field only applied to the public sector works. LaFevers (2012) argues that such an orientation only establishes applied ethnomusicology as occurring outside of academic and close association with folklore when academics can also be described as engaging in applied works.

Since the SEM publication, several activities, including new publications and conference has firmly established applied ethnomusicology not only as a field within

ethnomusicology but a study worth pursuing. These activities are what Harrison (2014) describes as the second wave of applied ethnomusicology. In this paper, she explores how from the 2000s, applied ethnomusicological thinking began to theorize the field and its methodological essence. In 2003, a conference was organized at Brown University themed "Invested in Community: Ethnomusicology and Musical Advocacy," where presentations, besides discuss theoretical approaches to applied ethnomusicologists' activities, primarily examined the works of ethnomusicologists engaged in musical advocacy. In the same year, Folklore forum dedicated its volume 34 issues 1/2 to applied ethnomusicology. There was a continuation of applied ethnomusicologists' work and obvious attempts at defining and contextualizing the field in this issue. For example, building on the philosophical notions by Sheehy (1992), Alviso (2003) discusses the essence of why ethnomusicologists should be concerned with applied work as it exemplifies an impulse to contribute to making a difference in the society. He cites numerous examples of the impulse that led him into the field and continued to characterize his work. In the same issue, Lucy Long contextualizes the purpose and sites of applied ethnomusicology, eventually offering a working definition of the field that she mentions, which exemplifies her work. She notes that applied ethnomusicology "applies scholarly concepts and ethnographically based knowledge of specific traditions to musical presentations for the general public" (Long, 2003: 100).

Other vital publications that contextualize the growing field of applied ethnomusicology include "Applied Ethnomusicology: Historical and Contemporary Approaches" edited by Klisala Harrison, Elizabeth Mackinlay and Svanibor Pettan (2010), "The Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology" as edited by Svanibor Pettan and Jeff Todd Titon (2015), "Applied Ethnomusicology in Institutional Policy and Practice" edited by Klisala Harrison (2016). These books highlight the different applied work engaged by ethnomusicologists around the world. In addition to these textbooks, there been a growing unpublished dissertation on applied ethnomusicology that speaks of the increasing interest in the field by students who starts their intervention project quite early. Many student works have either advocated for music cultures, including LaFevers' critical reflections on applied ethnomusicology and activist scholarship (2012), Maureen

Loughran's work on the various modes of musical activism in the Mount Pleasant area contextualized in how community members engage music and become activists for music (2008). Also, Ana Flávia Miguel's work on *Skopeofonia* where she examines two contexts of shared construction of knowledge in indigenous musical cultures (2016), Perminus Matiere's project that archived the cultural legacy of *mbira dzavadzimu* (2013), Klisala Harrison's work on the music of community change in a section of Vancouver (2008), and José Albèrto Chemane's work on *Ngalanga* among migrants in the Township of Clermont in Durban all attest to the growing nature of the field (2018).

As the discussions have shown, applied ethnomusicology continues to lead diverse research foci, including education, advocacy, peace and conflict resolution, medicine, repatriation, environmental sound activism, cultural policy interventions, sustainability, and heritage preservation (Titon, 2015: 6). Schippers (2016) underscores and foregrounds the need to pay particular attention to endangered music tradition within the context of ecological thoughts, as I mentioned in Section 1.4. Huib Schippers' project, "Sustainable Futures for music cultures: Towards an Ecology of Musical Diversity," underscores the need for a vibrant musical future (Schippers, 2016). In the project, he examines several musical cultures framed in the five-domain framework discussed above. Larue (2016) also presents work done on an endangered *Gĩkũyũ* flute in Kenya, where she argues that deliberate efforts should be taken to vitalize the musical instrument. It was after she collaborated with local partners to revive the performance of the musical instrument.

1.5 Research Methods

The research approach for this study employed qualitative modes of inquiry, which included fieldwork for collecting primary data, library search for secondary data, and data analysis and interpretation. The research also used autoethnography as an investigative tool with some aspects of the data. As a member of the palmwine music community and with significant experience in curating performances and the transmission of knowledge of the music tradition, my experiences enhanced the data collection process. I draw on my diaries and reflect on my experiences as a palmwine musician and work with Legon

Palmwine Band. The research further involved observations and participatory field approaches in the collection of data.

1.5.1 Location and Research Population

Fieldwork for the study was conducted in two different locations in Ghana: Accra in the Greater Accra Region and Kumasi in the Ashanti region. Accra, the country's capital, is located on the coast, and Kumasi, which happens to be the capital of the Ashanti region, is in the central belt of the southern half of Ghana. Kumasi is about 248.3 (two hundred and forty-eight) kilometers from Accra, and together the cities have a population of over 6 (six) million people whose occupation primarily involves trade and farming. Because of their geographic location, the type of farming differs. Although Accra is the capital city of the country, the native people are mainly fishermen. On the other hand, Kumasi is mostly a forest area; hence the natives are either hunters or cash croppers. Both Accra and Kumasi are known for their active cultural activities and represent artistic spaces for music performances. Kumasi was essential to the study because the city offered proximity in reaching a community of culture bearers and some old palmwine musicians who are still alive. After all, the music tradition once thrived in the city. On the other hand, Accra represents a cosmopolitan site where many musicians in the country today earn a living. The city also houses the headquarters of the Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA). The study taps into the palmwine music knowledge and experiences from a pool of musicians who are members of the union. The research also involved young musicians who showed interest in participating in the project.

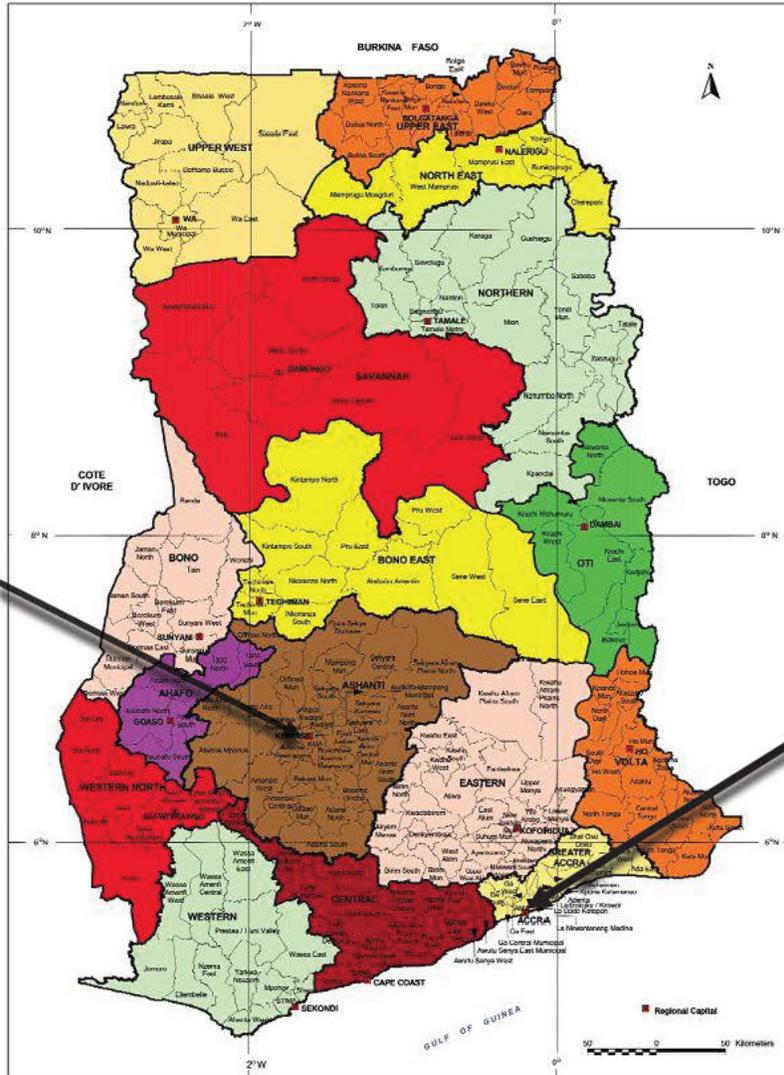


Figure 1.1 Map of Ghana with arrows indicating Kumasi and Accra.
 Picture courtesy Ghana Statistical Service

1.5.2 Research Participants

Fieldwork for the research project was conducted for a period of 10 (ten) months. After initial research was conducted mainly in Kumasi in the early part of 2016, formal field research commenced in late March until December 2017. The study selected participants from a population of culture bearers, scholars, and young musicians using the purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. These techniques became useful to the research because locating participants meant that the study depended on a few contacts made who were in a position to lead on to others. A total sample size of twenty (20) participants,

including Daniel Amponsah (Agya Koo Nimo), John Collins, and Ralph Karikari, were the key participants. These key participants introduced other musicians for subsequent interviews. Other significant participants included Osei Kwame Korankye, Eugene Oppong Ampadu (Kyekyeku), Philip Boakye Dua Oyinka (Nana Asaase), the Legon Palmwine Band, and the Kwan Pa Band. The participants who actively participated in the research were either members of MUSIGA or about to join the union. Below is a brief introduction of the key participants.

- Daniel Amponsah (Agya Koo Nimo) is one of the prominent living exponents of palmwine and Ashanti musical traditions. Formerly the president of MUSIGA, Agya Koo Nimo, as he is affectionately called within the performance circuit, has over 60 (sixty) years of experience in performance and advocacy of the music tradition and his culture. Now in his late 80s (eighties), Agya Koo Nimo continuously gives performances with his group *Adadam Agofomma* as well as leads workshop demonstrations on Akan indigenous music traditions occasionally. Although professionally trained as a lab technician and has worked within the university, he is mostly known as the bearer of the palmwine music tradition and Asante culture. In 1992, he was awarded a doctor of letters degree for his role in popularizing Ghanaian traditional music (Dadson 1992). Agya Koo Nimo is currently an artist-in-residence at the Centre for Culture and African Studies (CeCAST), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, where he lives. [see appendix D for picture]
- John Edmund Collins is a professor of music at the Department of Music - University of Ghana. Collins' primary research area focuses on African popular music with an emphasis on highlife music and accredited with many scholarly publications on Ghanaian as well as African popular music. A British by birth, he had lived in Ghana since the late 1950s and learned the nuances of the music tradition as well as performed with many of the older generations of palmwine and guitar band highlife musicians when he was still a student at the University of Ghana. He is a patron of the MUSIGA and an exponent of the music tradition because of his in-depth knowledge

of the music tradition based on his research works and performances. Although retired from active teaching, he continues to give lectures on a part-time basis and serves as an adjunct professor in some of the private universities in the country. Collins occasionally performs with the Local Dimension Band, which he co-founded with Aaron Bebe Sukura to play palmwine music. [see appendix D for picture]

- Ralph Karikari is a renowned bass guitarist known for developing an innovative technique for playing *sikyi* highlife's bass guitar.⁷ His deep insight and understanding of the palmwine music tradition resulting from his background in the music tradition have benefited many groups and ensembles. As many calls, him in the performance circuit, Uncle Ralph is known to have led the recording of one of the most popular palmwine music tunes, *Koobi Aware* (salted fish marriage), with the duo singers of the *Ashiwa Nnwomkoro* group, Kwaku Anim and Akwasi Attah, in the 1990s. He occasionally leads workshops as well as demonstrates some elements of the music tradition to interested students at home and abroad. [see figure 3.6]
- Osei Kwame Korankye is renowned for his skills on *seperewa* and based at the University of Ghana, where he is a member of the Ghana Dance Ensemble. Besides leading demonstrations and teaching the instrument, he enjoys an active career as a virtuoso and an ambassador for the instrument he performs. Although he lives and works in Accra, Osei Korankye is a regular member of Agya Koo Nimo's *Adadam Agofomma* ensemble. [see appendix D for picture]
- Eugene Oppong Ampadu (Kyekyeku) is one of Ghana's young enterprising musicians who have created a niche by merging palmwine music with highlife music and Afrobeat. He studied under Agya Koo Nimo, and until recently, he was a regular member of his *Adadam Agofomma* ensemble. Kyekyeku currently lives in France, where he manages his band, the Ghanalogue Highlife. [see appendix D for picture]

⁷ *Sikyi* highlife emerged in the 1970s as a type of Ghanaian highlife that incorporate *sikyi* dance into the genre. *Sikyi* dance is an indigenous dance popular found among the Brong Ahafo region in the northern part of Ghana. Dr K Gyasi pioneered this style of highlife.

- Philip Boakye Dua Oyinka (Nana Asaase) is a young poet based in Koforidua in Ghana's Eastern region. His performance style blends palmwine music and other indigenous musical forms with spoken-word often in the local languages and English. Nana Asaase is a graduate in English at the University of Ghana with a specialty in creative writing. He is a member of the National Folkloric Board of Ghana. [see appendix D for picture]
- The Legon Palmwine Band comprises Samuel Boahen Agyeman, Edwin Nii Akwei Brown, Albert Kwame Owusu-Brown, Seth Kpodo, and Eric Sunu Doe (the author). The group came together during their studies at the Department of Music, School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana, Legon. As members of the Legon Highlife ensemble, they experimented on the side with the music tradition, which led to its formation in 2015. The band has since led many demonstrations of the music tradition and performed on many available platforms in Ghana. In 2016, they participated in the 11th Annual African Cultural Calabash Festival in Durban - South Africa. In 2020, the band released its maiden album. Refer to Chapter Four for further discussion on the ensemble.
- The Kwan Pa Band was established on July 31, 2017, under the leadership of Andrew Asah. As a palmwine ensemble, the band explores ancillary indigenous performances and comprises Fred Minamor, Isaac Kojo Baah, Bismarck Osafo, Michael Asare, and Andrew Asah. Since their formation, they have received several awards for their active role in the music tradition's performance. Refer to Chapter Four for further discussion on the ensemble.

1.5.3 Data Collection, Presentation, and Analysis

An applied research project such as the one this study embarked on required data collection in two phases. The first phase entailed conducting interviews with culture bearers and young musicians, which served as the platform for the second phase that mainly consisted of instituting and facilitating an applied project. Davis (1992: 361) highlights the activities ethnomusicologists generally engage in as a response to musical

cultures "considered in danger of extinction or of undergoing significant change." She maintains that besides "conservation through documentation, study change as a dimension of musical evolution, or retarding change by engendering respect, what remains another activity they embark on is undertaking practical 'applied' projects within the communities of studies for the conservation of the living tradition *in situ*" (ibid). Davis recognizes that although the primary domain of ethnomusicological research offers instances of preservation through various modes. An essential aspect of such research endeavors is to undertake practical projects that ensured that community members collaborated with the researchers to safeguard such musical traditions. Therefore, this research project found expression in the context of establishing an applied project that would ensure that the palmwine music tradition becomes reinvigorated within the community. Thus, the study facilitated a monthly performance circle.

To better understand the historical context within which palmwine music emerged and how the music tradition developed, and the factors that underlay its endangerment, I collected comprehensive data for the study from the key participants identified in section 1.3.2 primarily through face-to-face interviews. Semi-structured in-depth, and informal interviews, as well as recorded conversations between participants, remained the most appropriate method of data collection I employed. A set of prepared questions might have provided answers that I may have been expecting. Still, encouraging conversations with guided questions stimulated the participants to freely express themselves, sometimes with anecdotes or song interludes to emphasize a point or assist in their narrations. All the key informants also demonstrated their understanding of the music tradition's essential elements on the guitar. These interviews helped in laying a foundation for the performance circle.

I traveled to the city of Kumasi on several occasions to interview Agya Koo Nimo as he lived and worked in the city. The interviews with him and our conversations span almost the entire time he was in the field. Key dates on the visits with Agya Koo Nimo were April 4 and 5, 2017, July 12 and 13, 2017, September 11-15, 2017, October 10-13, 2017. Because of his age, we paced our conversations to not take a toll on him, thus giving him

that freedom to express himself. The author also took the opportunity to visit possible spaces that organized palmwine gatherings. Agya Koo Nimo introduced the author to some influential musicians whose insights became invaluable to the study. Through Agya Koo Nimo, the author learned of Ralph Karikari, who had been a resident artist at the CeCAST had relocated to Accra. Ralph Karikari's name had come up in several informal conversations I had held with John Collins as one of the exponents who was still actively performing.

Whilst in Accra, I interviewed John Collins at his residence in Taifa on August 4, 2017, and held numerous discussions in his office at the Department of Music at the University of Ghana in Legon. Based on his vast research output and personal experience on the palmwine music tradition, John Collins was able to breakdown the historical antecedent as well as the unique musical element that embodied the music tradition. He further connected me with other key players in the Ghanaian music industry, like Panji Annof, who introduced me to another guitarist, Anthony Ackah-Blay. My interview with Ackah-Blay took place at Pidgin Music Studios owned by Panji Annof on November 11, 2017. The interview with Ralph Karikari almost did not happen, but for the timely intervention of my mother. In one of our conversations, I mentioned his name, and she informed him that Ralph was part of their extended family. Through her contacts back in our hometown Kyebi in the Eastern region, we were able to reach Ralph Karikari, who had relocated to Takoradi in the Western part of Ghana. We negotiated a favorable time to meet for an interview, and he agreed to inform me any time he returned to Accra. I eventually met Ralph Karikari on December 6, 2017, at a residence in the neighborhoods of Mr. Adjei in Taifa-Burkina to conduct the interview. He was also kind enough to narrate the historical trajectory of the music tradition as he experienced often juxtaposing with numerous demonstrations of the critical elements of the palmwine music tradition.

Besides the interviews with the key participants of the study, I also interviewed some young musicians. The intention was first to understand whether or how the palmwine music tradition resonated with them. Even to understand how participation in a performance circle-shaped their understanding of the music tradition and their musical

practice. I interviewed Eugene Oppong Ampadu (Kyekyeku) on May 25, 2017, at the Alliance Française in Accra and Phillip Dua Oyinka (Nana Asaase) on October 4, 2017, at the Department of Music in Legon. I also interviewed my friends and members of the Legon Palmwine Band on several occasions, both at the Sawnd Factory Studio in Abeka-Lapaz, Accra and the Department of Music in Legon, and the Kwan Pa Band also at the Department of Music in Legon.

The second phase of the data collection involved facilitating an intervention that contributes to the revitalization and sustenance of the palmwine music tradition. Titon (2015: 6) has noted that as ethnomusicologists, we often act to promote endangered cultural expressions to the benefit of artists, traditions, and communities, which we consider to be in danger of extinction. In order to foster an appreciation and stimulate an environment that encourages palmwine music performances, especially among musicians within this community, I played a role in the establishment of a monthly performance circle, which was titled "*Nsawase Nkɔmɔ*" (Conversations with palmwine music). The goal for the performance circle was to create a platform where, besides creating an avenue for the exchange of musical ideas, there is a continuous promotion of the repertoire and performance praxis of the palmwine music tradition. In order to accomplish this task, I collaborated with a network of people, what Harrison (2012: 506) calls an 'epistemic community,' which included my key participants in setting up the performance circle. Harrison suggests this community as a "network of people with expertise and ability in a particular domain and an authoritative or working claim to knowledge within that domain or area" (521-522). She further points out that although the community may consist of engaged participants from varying backgrounds, "a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, causal beliefs, notions of analysis for action and a collective enterprise ground their activities" (ibid). Harrison notes that an epistemic community refers to a collective of people, including ethnomusicologists, musicians, community members, and people from other disciplines working together to analyze and solve particular problems or issues (ibid). The experience, knowledge, and insights of this epistemic community helped shape the structure of the performance circle. This notion

also finds expression in discourses that advance sustainability interventions that target music cultures (Titon, 2009).

In all, 7 (seven) *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* events took place in an open space secured within the compound of the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana in Legon during the time of my fieldwork. Since completing my extensive fieldwork returning to my writing desk in Durban, I have been in continuous touch with the circle visiting them at least once every year. This space has become the venue for the performance circle, which occurs every last Thursday of the month. The structure of the performance circle was in such a way that there was a practical workshop that explored different modes of palmwine guitar fingerpicking, composition, *anansesem*, and performance. These workshops, which were led at different times by Osei Kwame Korankye, Nana Asaase, and the Legon Palmwine Band often, preceded the performance circles. The workshop and circle in its entirety served as a way to examine whether the music related with this community. The circle also contributed to understanding how it forms the basis of contemporary local music, which is rooted in the local experiences and histories of the participants. The performance circle event followed immediately after the workshops, with the workshop section sometimes incorporated with the circle event. The initial thinking was that the workshops would become an integral part of the circles, but after a few sessions, it was incorporated into the performances that took place. The performance circle is participatory and involves all participants singing, clapping, or playing musical instruments to popular or new palmwine music tunes. The last section of the performance circle event engages a conversation on topical issues in the Ghanaian music industry. The moderators of the performance circle prior to the event usually propose these topics, which are used as a base for discussions and exchange of ideas on the music tradition's sustenance. These topics varied from sustenance approaches to indigenous musical cultures and the challenges young musicians face in the music industry.

Even though I acted as a facilitator for these activities whilst in the field, I was also a participant-observer; I observed the nuances of the interactions between culture bearers and participants; how the young musicians incorporated the musical ideas, which had

been introduced to them at the workshops during the performance circles. In addition, I observed how the participants collectively create new songs and performed them during performance circles. Also, I observed how the performance circle structure evolved each month and how it embraced new ideas such as spontaneous poetry recitals and rap introduced by the young participants. I employed both audio and video recordings and still photos to document these events. These modes of documentation assisted in my analysis of the performance circle events. They offered me the opportunity to probe further responses from participants on their participation and how it served as a source of revitalizing the music tradition. Much as this study employed a methodological paradigm that embraces a form of Participatory Action Research (PAR), its thought process can be said to throw light on current notions particularly, in the field of Arts-Based Research (ABR) and Arts-Led Research (ALR) paradigms. For instance, whilst I engaged and sought the participation of an epistemic community right from the beginning to establish a performance circle, as discussed in Chapter Five, the process can also be viewed within the context of ABR. Barone (2008: 29) opines that ABR “employs premise, procedures and principles of arts in both the inquiry process and research text.” Similarly, Knowles and Cole (2008: 32) have observed that in ALR or Arts-Informed Research (AIR), “the researcher is inspired by an art form, an artist, or a body of artistic work to create innovative research processes, or the research processes draw from artistic processes characteristic of how an artist.” The creation of performance circle event was influenced by earlier music-making contexts within the music tradition as elaborated on in Chapter Two. Here, the art of music-making context of *nsadwase* was recontextualized to resonated with our construction of performance.

To ensure validity and reliability, the purposive and snowball sampling techniques were employed to select respondents who were in a position to share their knowledge of the palmwine music tradition and how the music tradition could be revitalized and sustained. For instance, as elaborated on in the preceding paragraphs, my contact with Agya Koo Nimo facilitated my contact with K. Gyasi. Similarly, John Collins connected me with Panji Anoff, who also facilitated my meeting with Anthony Ackah-Blay. I also ensured that my interviewing schedules with culture bearers were repeated with several visits and

communications. My several trips to communicate with Agya Koo Nimo and John Collins ensured the reliability of the answers they provided. My facilitation of the performance circle was kept at sharing ideas with the organizers and observing from afar. Also, it was because of the continuity of the circles when I was away. It also allowed me to observe and pay attention to how the participants responded to and engaged with the music-making process.

The theoretical framework employed in the study also positioned the research in its epistemological essence, hence ensuring rigor. Additionally, to ensure that conclusions drawn from the study reflected an objective process, the findings obtained from the interviews as well as my observations as a participant-observer were compared and critically analyzed. My field observations were written in my notebook and compared with several videotape recordings of the performance circle during and post my fieldwork in 2017. It remained a challenge to reflect and critically analyze observation in the field objectively. Most patterns noted were difficult to attribute to specific reasons; however, these were juxtaposed with readings and conversations with culture bearers. These limitations minimally influenced the conclusions drawn. The study's findings were triangulated with responses from culture bearers, observations from the performance circle, and readings of related literature on the music tradition. My experience as a performer of palmwine music and working in various performance projects of the music tradition, which created rapport with members of this music community, was beneficial to the study. It also contributed to achieving validity, reliability, and rigor.

1.5.4 Reflexivity

In conducting such action research, the researcher should be conscious of their positionality during the data collection stage and indeed in the entire research process. As noted earlier, my involvement with palmwine music started just when I enrolled at the university for my undergraduate studies. I took a few classes on palmwine guitar and interestingly engaged in the performance activities of palmwine music performances, first of my guitar tutor and then with some culture bearers I encountered. At this point, I started taking palmwine lessons with Agya Koo Nimo and became involved with the

palmwine music community. My meeting with Koo Nimo laid the foundation for my interest, particularly with the performance nuances of the music tradition. I joined the Local Dimension Band at some point as a manager. Throughout this process, I observed the nuances of how the band engaged and fused different musical traditions with palmwine music. I curated many performances for the band within the university environment and its neighboring communities.

When I joined the faculty of the Department of Music, University of Ghana, Legon, I began curating palmwine music performances where I introduced students into the performance practice of the music tradition. At this stage, it dawned on me how many of the students I engaged with had little knowledge of the music tradition juxtapose with the fact that the active participants within the palmwine music community were aging. I facilitate workshops with Koo Nimo on several occasions as part of my ensemble classes, often visiting him at his home in Kumasi. At this point, I formed the Legon Palmwine Band⁸ with my friends and students on campus.

My engagement with the palmwine music community foregrounds this study; thus, I became a reference point for palmwine music. For instance, when one needed to contact any living musicians, I would often be in contact to facilitate the process. Thus, while collecting data for the study, there was going to be some form of hegemony, particularly when I interviewed young musicians about the music tradition. They could not understand why I would seek answers to questions they often thought I knew. Although we would have had prior conversations about the study's objectives, we would still be apprehensive in answering some questions. For instance, when interviewing Ohene Djan, one of my respondents on the performance circles, he passed the comment when answering a question that “but Papa Sunu, you already know the answer to this one.” To Ohene Djan, my position as an active participant and researcher on the music tradition meant that I already had answers to the questions I asked. In such instances, I had to reassure him and others like him that I spoke of my position within the study and how the

⁸ See Chapter Four for detailed discussion on the band

study goes beyond my subjective views. In many cases, I rephrased questions with scenarios and examples to draw answers from these young respondents.

Over the years, I kept a personal diary of my activities within the community mainly because I was always looking out for research ideas I could develop since there was a paucity of literature on the music tradition. This diary became invaluable to the study in various ways. For instance, an entry in my diary on the 19th of September 2015 reflected my new understanding of the emergence of palmwine music and its salient features when I took my students to visit Agya Koo Nimo in Kumasi the previous day. These reflections later formed the basis on which, for instance, I framed the research objective one for this study. In essence, I wanted to understand and document the repertoire of the music tradition, particularly when it started witnessing some form of decline.

Similarly, an entry on the 17th of March 2016 reflected an occasional lunch hour performance within the School of Performing Arts environs, Legon. In this entry, I paid particular attention to the nuances of the performance practice of the music tradition and how it could have been performed in the earlier years. These questions also came to bear when framing how to establish the performance circle.

Another point of reflexivity, as discussed in detail in Chapter Five, was how I manage my position as facilitating the performance circle and objectively analyzing the process. My team initially looked up to me for every aspect of how the circles shaped up. I took the position and explained to them that they needed to own the project as when I directly involved myself, it could have some influence on my analysis. One way I dealt with the issue as it kept coming up was throwing back the question to them to find out how they were thinking of solving them, and I asked them to implement those ideas they had. I understood that my position was problematic, and I tried as much as possible to minimize my interference in the organization and funding of the event.

1.6 Conclusion

As a young Ghanaian scholar and a member of the palmwine music community, having studied with Agya Koo Nimo, my interest is in contributing to the revitalization and promotion of the style as it represents a unique and rich musical tradition that continued to decline in its practice. Interestingly, this musical tradition appears to have drawn less attention to scholars and researchers hence has been less studied. Therefore, this research project examines palmwine music comprehensively and explores strategies to support its revitalization and sustenance. The study is situated within the field of applied ethnomusicology and framed in the context of recent discussions that answer salient questions on preservation and sustenance of otherwise dying music cultures.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PALMWINE MUSIC IN GHANA

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the historical trajectory of the palmwine music tradition in Ghana, situating its revitalization and sustenance within a broader socio-cultural context. The available literature on palmwine music contextualizes its emergence as neo-traditional, a social experimentation explored through a synthesis of indigenous musical resources and the guitar's imported music traditions. Palmwine music until the early 20th century was generally a loosely organized and sometimes spontaneous recreational musical activity within palm-wine drinking spaces. With time, it evolved into a unique musical tradition rooted in the local people's cultural expressions. Thus, the chapter first examines the socio-cultural and historical milieu as a basis to foreground an understanding of how the music tradition emerged and developed. Then it explores the factors that surround its gradual decline since the 1990s. The chapter's discussions limit this historical survey's scope to cover the late 19th century to date. However, the music tradition's history could be traced much further into the distant past. Available written accounts on the emergence of the palmwine music tradition often date as far back as that period. Also, living culture bearers who shared their insights for this research framed their perspectives by narratives and events around the 20th century. Their perspectives became invaluable to the historical discussion because, in as much as they complement existing written accounts, they contribute to constructing a comprehensive historical narrative of the music tradition in Ghana.

2.2 Contexts of Origin

Generally, two broad narratives characterize the context within which palmwine music emerged in Ghana. These narratives are often framed and discussed under the general rubric of the emergence of highlife music. It suggests that palmwine music is one of the highlife's forerunners, thus in tracing the possible origins of highlife music in Ghana, Collins (2018) submits that it developed from various sources primarily influenced by people's social status and taste. Indeed, Plageman (2013) acknowledges that between the 1890s and the 1970s, highlife music contributed to the country's urban life. Both authors

agree that three broad categories of highlife music and socio-cultural influence could be identified. These were the swing dance orchestras/band highlife, which was patronized by the African elite, regimental brass band highlife, and guitar band highlife, which were patronized by the rural folks. Indeed, Collins further argument that the guitar band highlife tradition connections with palmwine music stems from the position that these guitar bands, with time, gradually evolved out of the palmwine music groups.

Written accounts of the palmwine music tradition trace its origins to maritime activities on the West African coastal areas where Liberian Kru sailor pioneered an African way of guitar playing in the late 19th century (Collins, 2006; Kaye, 2009). Eventually, it formed the music tradition's foundation, which found roots in many West African coastal trade posts. In Ghana, commercial activities on the Fante coastal areas between European traders, missionaries, and indigenes by the late 1800s led to early forms of palmwine music. According to Schmidt (2009), Kru sailors, who are known to have had early encounters with Europeans because of their vast knowledge of the West African coastal line, led the introduction of new musical instruments such as guitars, harmonicas, mandolins, concertinas, accordions, harmoniums and its playing techniques to the local people. Collins (1989) suggests that these sailors have a history of embarking on long fishing expeditions along the coast of West Africa, sometimes traveling as far as the Central African Coast. Hence, their maritime knowledge became invaluable to the European traders and missionaries when they arrived on the coast. Brooks (1972, cited in Collins, 2006) notes that between the late 1780s and 1850s, the Kru sailors work on such British ships as the 'Men-of-war' and the United States African Squadrons. This contact and subsequent interaction and exchanges between these workers and their European counterparts on board the ships resulted in new musical ideas and styles. The introduction of new musical instruments led to a meeting of their musical cultures, which reflected a hybrid essence.

Although other musical instruments found space in this new music-making experience, the guitar was preferred to the others. The guitar shares similar features as the harp-lute instruments, mostly among many indigenous communities in West Africa (Bebey, 1975;

Stone, 2005). Thus, one could argue that this shared similarities between the guitar and the harp-lute instrument could have led to this inclination. The music-making experience appears to have similar characteristics. Instead of taking as a model the guitar's playing technique, the Kru developed an approach that conforms with the cross-rhythmic playing techniques characteristic of these harp-lute instruments. As a result, a 'two-fingerpicking' style of plucking the guitar emerged (Collins, 2006; Schmidt, 2002, 2009; Kaye, 1992, 1999, 2009). An interchange between the bass and the high strings of the guitar characterizes this style. This fingerpicking style spread across the coastal ports, especially in areas where the Kru docked and settled. Therefore, by the early 1900s, basic patterns of this new guitar playing style had emerged (Collins, 1976). Styles such as the *mainline*, *dagomba*, and *fireman* became popular in their numerous settlements and portside drinking taverns. In Ghana, Fante musicians synthesized these new guitar styles with their indigenous recreational musical elements, which resulted in the first documented style of Ghanaian palmwine music, *osibisaaba*. Coplan (1978) argues that these prospects were possible because of the many similarities between Akan folk styles and the many foreign styles that acted upon them. For instance, Collins observes that the famous *yaa amponsah* guitar rhythm, which had become a prominent mode in *osibisaaba*, was created from the gaps that existed in the *mainline* rhythm as was introduced by the Kru.⁹ At local drinking spaces in the Cape Coast and Takoradi areas along the Fante coast, where the seamen and sailors and the indigenes congregated, these new styles became the popular music type that was performed.

Schmidt (2002) acknowledges the musical phenomenon's widespread nature, especially within coastal communities besides the Ghanaian context. For instance, she describes how Kru residents in Elegbata (*Olowogbowo*) area in Lagos, Nigeria performed these styles on numerous occasions during their weekend gatherings. She further points out that in Monrovia, the style was played with a guitar and accompanied by a bamboo slit-drum referred to as '*sea breeze*'.¹⁰ By the early 1920s, these new guitar forms, or *osibisaaba* in

⁹ Collins, J. (2017) (personal communication, April 3)

¹⁰ Alaja-Browne (1985) and Waterman (1986) provides an in-depth discussion on the activities of Kru mariners and their fingerpicking guitar style which influence *jùjù* in the early 1920s in Lagos.

Ghana, had begun to spread inland into the country's forest areas. According to Collins (2006), a variation rooted in the Akan musical tradition was created, which employed indigenous polyrhythm rather than the syncopated rhythms of earlier styles popular along the coast. For example, a little further inland into the Fante areas, Collins suggests that *ohugua or opim* were quite popular whilst much further in the middle belt amongst the Ashanti and Akyem, *odonson* was the popular style. Thus, these early popular forms of palmwine music became the primary source of music performances at the communities' palm-wine centers. Hence, with time these styles became subsumed within the contexts where their performances took place. They, therefore, assumed the generic name of the social space.

The account thus far has been primarily focused on how the coastal palmwine music styles emerged. The discussion has mostly been framed around the guitar's appearance along the Fante coast and how it influenced new ways of music-making. Although the guitar assumed prominence, other musical instruments such as the concertina and harmonium were sometimes used as accompaniments for the music-making. It is worth noting from the narrative that the guitar assumed this importance as may have been suggested, because of the smooth transfer of their harp-lute knowledge on the instrument. It attests the concept of the 'two-fingerpicking' technique that characterized the palmwine music tradition.

Although there is a general conception within the written accounts to situate palmwine music's origins in a coastal context as discussed from the preceding paragraphs, several oral reports suggest otherwise. This account predates the trade encounters with the Europeans and traces the origins of the music tradition to *nsadwa ase* (pronounced '*sàdwá àse*'), drinking spaces or palm-wine spots, an environment where the music was regularly performed with other indigenous musical types such as *krunku and osoode*. According to Akyeampong (1996), the palm-wine bar in the pre-colonial Gold Coast was one of the liveliest places in the village, as men will gather after their daily chores to refresh and update themselves on the news. *Nsadowase* characterizes a kind of music-making context and experience prevalent in many indigenous African communities

(Nketia, 1974). In Ghana, a long-held tradition within the Akan communities is where elderly community members often gathered at *nsadwase*. *Nsadwase* represented a space where mostly elderly male members of the community often met to have drinks. Indeed, there was also a youthful counter space called *nkwankwaannuase*, mainly for the *nkwankwaa* (young male). Ansu-Kyeremeh (1998) indicates that the *nkwankwaa* in the village had their chief, the *nkwankwaahene*, who represented their voices at village council meetings. Both *nsadwase* and *nkwankwaannuase* were spaces where one was likely to find only males. These meetings were characteristically informal and served as a space for social interaction among the community members (Nketia, *ibid*). Drinks were at the center of these communal gatherings, as Akyeampong (*ibid*) further notes that palm-wine has always been a vital part of the Akan socialization from pre-colonial times, as is in the case with other Ghanaian communities.

The accompaniment to musical performances at *nsadwase* was primarily by handclapping, or often when there was a *seperewa*, it led performance.¹¹ The *seperewa* became the preferred instrumental accompaniment at these venues with time because; it complimented a performer's vocal delivery much better than other musical instruments found in these communities. It was a delicately soft-sounding instrument; hence audience to its performance required silence and attention to its narratives. One could argue that the capabilities of the *seperewa* in supporting the musical performances in these contexts could be attributed mainly to the fact that the instrument played a similar role when used as the preserve instrument of the Asantehene after its capture from war (Matczynski, 2011; Collins, 2006; Nketia, 1962). Eventually, the instrument moved out of the chief's court and became known for its *odonson* performances at funerals in the communities. It stands to reason, therefore, that at *nsadwase*, the performance mode would be *odonson*.

With time, the guitar gradually replaced the *seperewa* when the instrument found an audience with many folks inland. There is a general understanding amongst culture bearers that the gradual change from the *seperewa* to the guitar was because the guitar

¹¹ Interview with Agya Koo Nimo, 11th September 2017

offered new possibilities to the musicians. For instance, Agya Koo Nimo suggests that, because there were no amplification systems in those times and the guitar had a louder volume, many musicians opted for the guitar. He further emphasized that the guitar now presented the musicians an option to accompany themselves in keys without straining their vocal chords.¹² This notion is contestable because when one listens to early recordings of palmwine music, they will likely hear these straining high male vocal pitches. Although the guitar had gradually replaced the *seperewa* in the *nsadwase* context, the *seperewa* influenced the guitar's playing techniques (Collins, 2006). The compositional practice *odonson* and its playing techniques now assumed a new essence on the guitar.

The two accounts of the origins of the music tradition seem to meet at a point in their respective narratives. However, the contention here has to do with the account that best establishes its emergence point. We learn from the coastal accounts that the coastal styles or *osibisaaba* forms eventually spread inland into many of the Akan communities where for the first time, the guitar directly came into contact with the *seperewa* (Collins, 2018; 2006). Likewise, the *nsadwase* account accepts the notion of a gradual transfer to the guitar from their preferred *seperewa*. However, it is not clear whether the *osibisaaba* style widespread in the coastal area was adopted inland. Alternatively, whether the *nsadwase* musicians accepted the guitar and only transferred the knowledge and playing techniques of the *odonson* style onto it without embracing the coastal styles that would have accompanied them, understandably, the *nsadwase* guitarist developed new styles out of their new experience with the guitar. These newly developed *nsadwase* styles were later incorporated in the numerous forms associated with palmwine music. What is evident from the readings on these accounts is that the palmwine music tradition emerged as a loosely organized spontaneous musical activity within spaces designated as drinking spots, either within the coastal port context or the inland *nsadwase* context.

¹² Agya Koo Nimo (2017) (personal communication, September 11)

2.3 Early Development

In the early 1900s, there appeared to be a consolidation of all the diverse variations of the music tradition performed at palm-wine centers due to the new exchange of musical ideas between palmwine musicians from the coastal areas and those performed in the hinterland context of *nsadwase*. Therefore, the main palmwine styles or forms were *mainline*, *dagomba*, *fireman*, *yaa amponsah*, *ohugua*, *opim*, and *odonson*, which included *krunku* and *krummu*. These forms were significant to the early development of the palmwine music tradition as these new consolidated styles formed the basis to explore it commercially. As discussed in Section 2.2, the performance practice was recreational as performances occurred during social or communal gatherings. In such cases, the only benefit the musician enjoyed was free drinks. For instance, Ralph Karikari cites a personal example where he noted that when he had mastered playing the guitar, the palm-wine joints in Kyebi were the places he will always perform. He points out that he was always served palm-wine after his performance without any monetary gains.¹³

By mid-1900, many palmwine groups had emerged who maintained the guitar as their primary instrument for their performances. These groups moved out of the traditional setting in palm-wine bars and formed trios that often comprised of either one or two guitars, an *adakam* (box drum), or a clave with every group member on vocals. There was a lead singer with the other two serving as the vocal chorus accompaniment. One of the pioneering bands to have emerged within this period was the Kumasi Trio led by Kwame Asare (Jacob Sam). Writing for the Sunday Mirror newspaper, Amon Okoe notes that

In the early 20th century, the popular rendition of our native airs was born of a need, probably, for an idea modern instrument to accompany our folk songs. Its cradle was the palm-wine bar, for there could be heard groups of guitarists and singers content to play and sing and go on doing so as long as they could bear to drink. Then came a guitarist named Kwame Asare. He discovered the commercial possibilities of

¹³ Karikari Ralph (interview). He described a setting in the 1960s in Kyebi where he comes from and where he developed his early music abilities.

the music. He got to work with it and was sponsored by some firms on a recording trip to England (Sunday Mirror, 21st December 1958, p.13)

The anecdote from Amon Okoe appears to attribute the commercialization of the music tradition to Kwame Asare upon his recording trip to England. The narrative does not include the itinerant nature of the musicians who performed the style and the fact that Kwame Asare had formed the Kumasi Trio, that embarked on this recording trip with him. The Kumasi Trio was initially an itinerant group that came from the Fante coastal area but met in Kumasi (Collins, 1985). During the cocoa seasons, like the other groups, the Kumasi Trio traveled to the cocoa towns, including Apedwa and Kyebi, to perform when the wealthy cocoa farmers would have harvested and sold their crops. According to Collins (1994: 7), on this record, Kwame Asare and H.E. Biney played the guitar, with Kwah Kantah playing the adakam. It was recorded for the EZ 1001 series of the Zonophone Gramophone Company in June 1928 at the Kingsway Hall in London (Collins, 2018: 91).

After this period, the Kumasi Trio band structure became a prototype of a palmwine group. Many groups emerged within this structural frame, and according to Arlt (2004), they became known as the trios. Some of the popular groups included the Fante *Opim* Trio from Cape Coast, the Nzima Trio from Essiama, Essikuma Trio, and the Samampom Band from Kokusu. From an analysis of the group names, one can easily conclude that majority of these groups were of Fante descent. It could lead to an agreement with the argument that the music tradition originated from the coast. As evidence to support the argument, this may not be strong enough to support the position because other groups whose names did not resonate with a Fante origin.

On the other hand, other groups assumed the names of their bandleaders or founders. These included Kwesi Pephrah, Bentill, Yaw Ofori, E.K. Owusu, Kwesi Manu, Kweku Biibi, Kweku Kwarteng, Mireku, and Kojo Seidu (Collins, 1989). The band names reference groups that emanate from the inland areas as these are predominantly names of Asante, Akyem, or Bono. The naming practice of the groups that emerged could also suggest the distinct type of palmwine music they would play. As already noted, there

were palmwine styles commonly found along the coast, such as those introduced by the Kru, whereas the inland groups were performers of the *seperewa* tradition. For instance, Agya Koo Nimo points out that Kweku Kwarteng and Akwesi Manu were popularly noted for their *krunku* and *krummu* styles' performance.¹⁴

Between the 1900s and 1930s, we learn how the trio groups flourished in the country as Collins (1985: 15) notes, that "by the 1930s, palmwine music had become so popular that it created a market of its own." He further points out that about two hundred thousand copies of 78-rpm records were sold within West Africa alone. The records were marketed as 'native records' or vernacular guitar songs, and their profitability created a local music industry (Collins, 2006: 192). The music tradition is often discussed with the emergence of the Concert Party tradition that evolved around the same period.¹⁵ For instance, Dampety (1981) suggests that a discussion of the early growth of palmwine music should be situated within the context of the popular comic drama with which some bands were closely associated. Historically these bands developed out from the forms which were created by comedians such as the "Three Bobs" and the "Axim Trio" (Nketia, 1965: 42). However, this cannot be the case as from the discussion thus far, the trio concept of the Kumasi Trio structure was different from those that emerged within the concert parties, although they all went by the same title. Collins notes that

...they sometimes hired a *konkoma* group for the publicity for the shows. However, basically, within the actual play, they used harmonium and trap drums to play foxtrots, quicksteps, ragtime, and so on with very little highlife (palmwine music). The concert parties started in the cities, and the very earliest concert parties were for the rich and modeled on European musical or vaudevilles, blackface minstrel...¹⁶

¹⁴ Agya Koo Nimo (personal communication, September 11, 2017)

¹⁵ The Concert Party tradition emerged just around the same time as the commercialization of palmwine music was taking place. These were theatrical shows that fused drama, with music and dance and were performed within European musicals or vaudevilles, blackface minstrels and tap dancing. The earliest ones were performed in English. Also, see Collins (1994b), Bame (1985), for a detailed discussion of the tradition.

¹⁶ John Collins (interview August 8, 2017)

The point of convergence for the two trio groups – palmwine and concert parties could be placed within the context of the concert party tradition's indigenization. Early concert parties were purely modeled on western-style-like forms, as understood from the anecdote. However, Collins (1994b) observes that in the 1930s, Bob Johnson and the Axim Trio hijacked and localized the theatrical form for the rural folk. They switched from the English language to the indigenous language, mainly Akan. They also integrated the *Ananse* character within the context of a personified human, Bob, the comic stage character, the gentleman, and a lady impersonator typical of the concert party tradition. The understanding, that arises from the discussion, concludes that these two forms emerged within different contexts, although they merged with time because of their popularities.

These early musical activities in the country also transpired in the other Anglophone West African counties, which, according to Schmidt (1994), contributed to creating a culturally diverse environment in the early 20th century. For instance, there was a similar situation in Nigeria. The palmwine musical styles from the coast, which the Kru pioneered, moved inland into the rural and provincial areas. It led to what was known as the 'native blues,' an indigenous form than those styles found along the coast as they sang in various dialects such as Ibo, Efik, Yoruba. One of the most popular of such groups was the Jolly Boys Orchestra, which featured some Kru.¹⁷ Waterman (1988: 229) notes that the music tradition played a crucial role in enacting specific urban African identity patterns in Lagos' the 1920s.

By the late 1930s, a new popular style emerged from what the palmwine groups had been doing. Gradually, many musicians performing palmwine music started to move away from its performance practice and introduced what became known as Guitar band highlife. Substantially, they expanded the instrumental resource section of the palmwine music group and moved away from the practice of close listening, which was characteristic of palmwine music groups, to a more dancing type. Discussing the origins

¹⁷ John Collins (interview April 3, 2017)

and development of *jùjú* music in Nigeria, Roberts' conclusions (as cited in Alaja-Browne, 1989: 55) suggest that traditional African popular music can be categorized into two, each with its socio-cultural origins. One characterizes the notion of music-making should be created for group or communal participation, essentially for dancing whereas, the other should be created for listening purposes. Alaja-Browne argues that *jùjú* embraces both. However, with palmwine music, the focus was preferably on the listening type; hence guitar band highlife music meant moving away from palmwine music. The earliest guitar band was Appiah Agyekum's, which was formed in 1930. One would have assumed that since Appiah operated around the time palmwine music was at its peak, he would have been considered a palmwine musician. However, Agya Koo Nimo points out that he was not a palmwine musician. Agya Koo Nimo appears to assert that Appiah Agyekum separates the essential guitar practice of palmwine, which is the two-fingerpicking technique, assigning these roles to the different instrumental resources. He incorporated the *konkoma* drum in this band and later the bongos and jazz drums and standing bass. With the Swing dance-band highlife also taking shape, it is not far-fetched to argue that he draws his influence from the dance-band highlife style, which also emerged around the same period.

A significant development around this period was the appearance of 'highlife music,' a hybridized form of homegrown Ghanaian popular dance music style. Large dance orchestra initially performed this style as Christianized elites who had spent time studying abroad had returned home with a new taste in music. Their preference was the foxtrots, quicksteps, and waltzes, which were often played by these orchestras—the large orchestra comprised of musicians who had been trained by missionaries or with a regimental background. Besides playing the European type of music as noted above, they started to orchestrate and incorporate many indigenous tunes in their repertoire. As these performances were designed to suit the elite class in society, not everyone in the communities could attend. Participating in such performances would require one to dress in a certain way and pay a high entrance fee. However, it was uncommon for an ordinary community member to participate in the musical activities outside the main auditoriums because these centers were open-air and located within the communities in the big towns

and cities. Coplan (1978: 100) points out that these onlookers collaborated with the musicians themselves, coined the term 'highlife' music in envy and derision. Thus, highlife music was the music performed for those who lived the 'high life.' The term would eventually become a generic one, which would refer to the other styles that emerged around the time.

2.4 Guitar Bands and Palmwine Music

In the early 1940s, the country gained a steady momentum with electricity supply, which began to reach many big emerging towns and cities. For the first time, many communities had access to electricity, and this development presented new opportunities for musicians and music promoters in the country. The musicians began to explore how the new power supply could enhance their performance practice. They incorporated new ways of enhancing their performances, such as using amplifiers and sound systems to play for a broader audience. As earlier noted, guitar bands had emerged as an extended type of a palmwine group; but compositions and performance practices changed with new musical resources. Appiah Agyekum's band, which led this new transformation, recorded several songs, which were very different from the palmwine tunes in existence. Subsequently, many bands emerged following the structure of Appiah Agyekum's band. Among these bands were E.K. Nyame's, Otoo Lartey's, Obiba T. K's, Onyina's, Kwaa Mensah's. E.K. Nyame became popularly known for this music style. In 1952, his Akan Trio group successfully incorporated the guitar band style with the concert party tradition and dedicated exclusive performances in the Akan language. According to Collins (2018: 100), he further increased guitar bands' size to include bongos, jazz drums, double bass, and several singers and actors. In essence, he transformed the concert party trios into a troupe and successfully composed new songs for their plays. These songs incidentally also became instant hits upon their releases. Thus, guitar bands from the early 1950s modeled their performances along the lines of the Akan Trio.

The guitar bands like the palmwine group toured the country, moving into villages with their performances compared to the dance-band highlife groups whose primary audience were the elite in the cities. The guitar band performances were by this period enhanced by

the addition of plays. When one patronized these concerts, they were billed to witness a play in addition to the live music performances. These bands grew in popularity because by the late 1940s and early 1950s; they became the leading bands serving the people in the rural and hinterlands with live music besides their indigenous recreational music. Dampsey also attributes the popularity of these guitar bands in the country to the easy accessibility to gramophone system (Dampsey, 1981). The gramophone system was no longer the preserve of the wealthy in the community. According to Collins (2018: 532) there was an increase in economic wealth by cash-crop farmers which enabled them to buy wind-up gramophones to enjoy local and imported music records. Thus, this atmosphere fostered a growing taste of the music for people in the cities and the villages. These guitar band musicians became popular particularly in the rural and hinterlands because now their music was easily accessible.

All this whilst, Ghana was under British colonial rule, and a sense of independence was building. This independence ethos of the period also increased the popularity of guitar bands as the local political figures used them to champion the fight. Because the guitar bands could reach many people in the country, they contributed to sending independence messages via their songs, and live performances were invaluable to future campaigns for independence. For instance, the Ghana Trio and the Akan Trio supported the Convention People's Party, which eventually won the first elections in Ghana. Upon attaining independence by 1957, the music industry became much more vibrant, and the guitar bands led this. Dampsey (1981: 22) notes that by 1962, there were about sixty-eight guitar bands that operated in the country which included the Ahanta Trio, The Ghana Trio, Isaac Evans Maison's Band, King Onyina's Royal Trio, the Builders Brigade Band, Kwaa Mensah's Band, Kakaiku's Band, and the Jaguar Jokers.

There was yet again another innovation to the guitar band highlife tradition from the early 1960s onwards. This time, there was a move away from the early guitar bands' acoustic nature to purely an electric sound. When the electric guitars had gained some popularity in the country, many bands moved toward this new performance practice. The earlier guitar band, which was modeled after Appiah Agyekum's band, had a relatively more

significant number of performers than the palmwine groups with three or sometimes four. Then there was an extension of the number of performers from Appiah Agyekum's band by E.K. Nyame into a much larger group. However, all the instrumental resources within these early guitar bands were acoustic, although they used microphones to amplify their sounds. What was characteristic of the earlier guitar bands was their use of only one guitar in their performances. It was also different from the palmwine groups, which would often use two guitars, although there was a single guitar most of the time. We could attribute this change to the fact that the early guitar bands now included many musical instruments to accompany their performances, which the palmwine groups did not. The palmwine-like bands still resonated with the trio format or, at most, were a quartet.

The new guitar bands from the 1960s started using sophisticated musical equipment. They employed electric guitar and amplifiers and only used the microphone to project their vocals compared to the acoustic guitar bands. Acquiring such sophisticated musical equipment required huge funding, which the new socio-economic standing post-independence heavily supported. There was an investment in the music sector, which was led by the state. In 1965, the state officially established the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) as well as the Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC) to support the entertainment industry (Collins, 2008; Dampney, 1981). The GFIC was a two track-recording studio where many musicians recorded their songs (Collins, *ibid*). Several foreign and local companies encouraged local musicians to record and wax their records in the country besides the state's investment. For instance, by the late 1960s, two recording pressing plants were set up by private businesses in the country. These were the Ambassador Records built in 1965 and owned by A. K. Badu, and the Record Manufacturers of Ghana limited, which was owned jointly by Polygram and local record producer D. Essilfie-Bondzie (Collins, *ibid*: 533).

One characteristic difference of the new electric guitar bands was the number of guitars included in their performances. For the first time, more than two guitars were included in one performance, with each guitar playing an inter-locking role to the other. This

practice, John Collins terms "African guitarism," suggests that by these guitars playing interlocking rhythms to each other, they were able to explore the polyrhythmic possibilities, which is quite characteristic to the idea of African drumming.¹⁸ Guitar bands that emerged in this context included the African Brothers, the Parrot Band, the Royal Brothers, the *Okukuseku* Band, the Afrikana Band, and the *Asiko* Internationals Band.

It is essential to reflect on the nuanced differences that existed between these guitar bands of the period. The question that comes to mind is the stylistic differences, as we may have identified besides its historical narrative. The guitar band's initial performance frame essentially was the palmwine style. However, they assumed a different sound and character altogether with time because of the many guitars present in one performance event. For example, they moved away from the characteristic two-fingerpicking style inherited and developed by the Kru into what became known as the 'walking bass' in either a fast or slow motion, with guitar strumming. Essentially, they were now referencing the guitar performance practice the Kru had moved from. There was also a sense of calypso feel in many of their songs, although this was quite predominant with the early guitar bands of Appiah Agyekum and E. K. Nyame. Akyeampong (1996) notes that, despite this new sense of growth, the guitar bands were quite renowned for their palmwine music performance, which he points out was a highlife music style that highlighted life's trails lyrics.

One can agree to the extent that these guitar bands still practiced some aspects of the palmwine music tradition, such as the storytelling and some basic guitar patterns as their framework to compose new songs. Nana Kwame Ampadu and the Ashanti Brothers International Band is quite known for its storytelling narratives in their songs. Despite their new setting, which may have influenced their compositional practice, these bands essentially maintained the palmwine music tradition's grooves. In addition to attaching themselves to the concert party, the drama troupes' stories influenced their compositions. Alaja-Browne notes that like *jùjú* music earlier, the guitar bands found a way of

¹⁸ John Collins (interview April 3, 2017)

incorporating these two styles of African popular music into one. Thus, the bands were now making music entirely for dancing and music for listening in some cases.

2.5 The Politics of the Name

There is general disagreement about how and when the name 'palmwine' came to be associated with the music and the music tradition's representation as a palmwine style. It became evident during my fieldwork in Kumasi when some of the participants I interacted with were initially lost when asked about 'palmwine' music. For instance, Mr. Kwame Gyasi Jnr did not understand what I meant by palmwine music when I asked for his views on the music tradition. In the course of our interaction, he pointed out that the term palmwine was foreign to him and within Kumasi and its surrounding areas. They were more accustomed to what they called *nsadwase nwom*¹⁹ (palmwine music).²⁰ In my interactions with culture bearers, I understood that the musical tradition was differently referenced within the different areas. For instance, from the previous discussion on the origins of the palmwine music tradition, we learned that the music tradition emerged with different stylistic modes. The *osibisaaba* forms included all the coastal style, and then there were the *odonson* forms, which also included the styles from the inland areas. Thus far, I am yet to come across the name "palmwine music" as the music tradition in any literature before the independence period. Indeed, the music tradition was rather known by its various stylistic forms that were performed. Collins observes that

It is mysterious when the word palmwine came to be associated with the music. I know definitely that in Ghana, there is no reference to the word palm-wine before the 1950s. Even the people drinking palm-wine never called it palm-wine. It was never called palm-wine, as far as I know in any of those early recordings.²¹

Collins' assertion is backed either by the fact that in the early recordings made by Kwame Asare and his contemporaries, in the available record brochures, the music was marketed

¹⁹ In other areas, particularly the cocoa farming communities, the music tradition was referred to as 'cocoa-ase' (underneath the cocoa-tree) type of music.

²⁰ Interview with Kwame Gyasi Jnr 6th July 2017.

²¹ John Collins (personal communication April 3, 2017).

as “Native Records” or by their specific names – *odonson*, *atini*, *osibisaaba*, or as was the case in most situations, they were known as the Akan blues.

The first reference I came across in literature discusses the music tradition as palmwine music; instead, situate it within the West African phenomenon that swept across the region. These were in the early research reports of such scholars as John Collins, David Coplan, Afolabi Alaja-Browne, Christopher Waterman, Cynthia Schmidt, Andrew Kaye on the African popular musical genres that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. Besides Collins' pioneering works on highlife music, Waterman (1986, 1988) and Alaja-Browne (1989) briefly point out that palmwine music was one of the main styles that influenced *jùjú* music in Nigeria although Alaja-Browne further argues that, solely suggesting the palmwine influence on *jùjú* does not consider the narratives of the practitioners of the music tradition. Collins examines the palmwine music tradition broadly within a West African context, and from where he posits "palmwine highlife" to be one of the forerunners of the highlife music tradition. The deduction from the preceding of these scholars' analysis was based on their understanding of these styles' context. In Ghana's case, 'palmwine' music, the English equivalent of *nsadwase nwom*, seems the best fit; a description given to the music performed at these drinking spaces and contexts. However, this did not reference how the performers at these spaces saw and experience the music as Alaja-Browne argues in the case of *jùjú* music.

2.6 Cultural Revivals and Palmwine Music

By the early 1970s, electric guitar bands had overshadowed both palmwine and acoustic guitar bands in the country. Aided by the increasing electrification of many rural areas, these guitar bands trekked the country's length and breadth, bringing what Collins (1994) terms city life into these rural communities and villages. He suggests that just as the early acoustic guitar bands had supported political parties with the independence campaign by spreading their political messages, these new guitar bands became a conduit for the spread of modernism into the distant villages and towns through their plays and lifestyles when they reached these communities. These touring bands mainly brought the exigencies of life in the city, reflected in their concert plays. Musically, this also meant

that there was a shift from primarily indigenous influenced music styles. Besides the popular highlife music, they performed, the bands also included music styles that had crossed over from the Americas. There was now an introduction of newer musical instruments such as the tabletop keyboards with its many synthesizer sounds into their performance practices. It primarily meant that purely palmwine music's performance was now pushed into the background, mostly into the villages and smaller towns and more likely back to its roots as a recreational music-making activity at the palm-wine joint. Musically, the new dependence on foreign musical materials brings awareness and the thinking among some musicians that they were gradually losing touch with their musical roots.

Although palmwine music was now primarily limited to the rural and hinterlands with the popularity of electric guitar bands, by the mid-1970s, there was a renaissance of the early indigenized forms of music that emerged. This phenomenon created an atmosphere and attempt at a cultural revival where some musicians felt the need to refocus their sounds back to their roots. Hence, some of the electric guitar bands started looking inward into their traditional musical elements. It was more of these bands going back to re-experiment with the earlier styles for a new sound. Collins (2018: 299) observes that the popular Takoradi based musician C.K. Mann and his Carousel Seven introduced *osoode*²² rhythms into his highlife style, giving birth to *osoode* highlife. Likewise, Webb (2011) notes that in Accra, some like-minded Ga musicians and dancers led by Nii Ashitey formed the *Wulomei* group. The band reintroduced indigenous *kolomashi* instruments such as *gome*, *atenteben*, *kpanlogo* drums, calabashes, bells, clips, and the guitar to form this new Ga-folk music. The *Wulomei* band setup inspired the emergence of other bands such as the *Blemabii*, *Dzadzelo*, and *Abladei*. According to Coplan (1978: 11), the music of the *Wulomei* was derived from “traditional Ga indigenous melodies, guitar band music, and *gombey* as well as *kpanlogo* music of the Ga young-people's association.” For Coplan, this creation was in the guise of Ga cultural revitalization, which contributed to the resolution of conflicts between traditional cultural identities and contemporary

²² *Osoode* is one of the recreational musical styles found mainly along the coastal areas. See Ohene-Okantah (2013) for detail discussion

nationalist ideologies; something he notes had proven to be the characteristics of the politics of many young states within the period. In Coplan's analysis, he did not particularly see the stylistic difference of these new Ga-folk music in relation to the palmwine music tradition. He argues that groups such as the *Wulomei* and *Abladei* were palmwine-like in nature but had wrote and sung their songs in the Ga language. Even when they wrote songs in the Akan language, they were performed with Ga inflections.

Similarly, the period also saw the emergence of a new crop of palmwine musicians who had played in electric guitar bands but decided to go unplugged (Collins, 2018: 299). A typical example was Agya Koo Nimo, who rose to prominence in the early 1970s. Agya Koo Nimo had initially played with some guitar bands which were popular around this time like, I.E., Mason's band, before deciding to re-popularize the very early palmwine music styles of the 1920s; what Collins terms as the "rootsy folk guitar music" (ibid: 299). Agya Koo Nimo based his group on the early guitar bands' trio concept, although he replaced the *adakam* with the *prempresiwa* and now engaged a few more singers. Likewise, Kwaa Mensah, referred to as the 'grand old man' of palmwine guitar and who had been popular in the 1950s, made a return on to the scene in 1975 when he recorded an LP for Ambassadors Records (ibid: 84). This record led to his USA tour with the *Wulomei* in the same year.

Building on the palmwine music tradition's 1970s resurgence, the *ahumansia* (six strings) style also emerged in the 1980s. The groups that performed this style were most popular in the Brong and Ahafo area of the northern part of the country, a few kilometers from Kumasi. Unlike Agya Koo Nimo and Kwaa Mensah, the *ahumansia* bands had setups similar to the early palmwine groups. Although this time, these *ahumansia* bands maintained the *prempresiwa*, which Agya Koo Nimo and Kwaa Mensah had embraced. There were often three members in an *ahumansia* band, each playing the guitar, *prempresiwa*, and claves. The main characteristic feature of the *ahumansia* bands was the length of their songs. Their compositions were written in the medley format and could last as long as between fifteen and twenty minutes. One can argue that this compositional style resonated with Dr K Gyasi's *Sikyi* highlife which he introduced in the 1970s.

Between the late 1960s and late 1970s, despite the musical innovations the country was experiencing, the country was plagued with constant military interventions. By the early 1980s, it had experienced the last of its kind. The persistent military interferences had led to constant economic challenges, which eventually had an effect on the music industry. Hence, from the late 1970s, many musicians left the country. Those who could not leave made their way into the church. Those who left the country's shores created the new 'burger highlife music,' style which was a fusion of guitar band highlife and the nuances of disco, funk, and reggae music (Sunu Doe, 2011). The guitar band highlife element of burger highlife was predominantly the palmwine styles adapted by the guitar bands. In essence, the soul of burger highlife was palmwine music with other embellishment from disco, funk, and reggae music. The musicians who moved into the churches also created gospel highlife music, which also maintained influences from the guitar band tradition (Takyi Donkor, 2013; Collins, 2004; Emielu and Takyi Donkor, 2019). Like the burger highlife scenario, the conclusion could be drawn that gospel highlife music's foundation was palmwine music. The performance context changed, and the songs' lyrics became the only difference, as the church was the new space for performance. Their texts were characteristically biblical and motivationally inclined as their context was now the church. It was because the musicians who were championing gospel highlife music were initially guitar band musicians.

Nonetheless, the performance practice of the palmwine music tradition experienced a gradual decline particularly from the 1990s. However, as has been discussed in the preceding paragraphs, there were variants of the tradition within the new contexts I have described. The performances and recordings of the music tradition also dipped considerably, with many relying on old recordings. Radio airplay of the music tradition also reduced drastically. These conditions are highlighted in later chapters when young musicians who now pioneer its revitalization all note that, whilst growing up in the 1990s, the performances and media play of palmwine music were difficult to come by and for many, they experienced the music tradition by chance. Although the economy was slowly picking up by this decade, mainly since a new dispensation of a

democratically elected government of the early 1990s, the music industry's response was relatively slow. The period also generally saw many bands of the previous decades folding up. These bands included the now recent popular electric guitar bands. Although newly created platforms such as *Anansekrom* in Kumasi and Key Soap Concert Party at the National Theatre in Accra, where these bands and concert groups were provided the opportunity to perform, were introduced, these were not adequate for the number of bands that existed (Cole, 1996). As a result of the cost of running these bands, many of them folded up. Besides these two more prominent platforms, *Anansekrom* and Key Soap Concert Party, which were known and more publicized in the 1990s, there were other smaller stages to find guitar bands performing. Their patronage was and continue to be mostly at funerals or annual festivals in the villages and smaller towns.

2.7 The Decline

The performance of the palmwine music tradition and many other older forms of hybrid popular or neo-traditional musical styles in the late 1990s had gradually declined in the country. New imported musical forms, especially from America, became the favorite of young up-and-coming musicians eventually resulting in the emergence of hip-life music in the late 1990s. The style fused American rap and the hip-hop music culture with highlife music. Young musicians performed rap in the local languages over synthesized beats produced by incorporating indigenous musical resources with imported ones. By the turn of the 21st century, a new musical culture had emerged, leaving the older forms like the palmwine music tradition to fade out.

The concert party tradition, which had become the last remnant of a somewhat palmwine music tradition's performances, also died. It has primarily been attributed to the fact that television stations introduced local TV drama series and a steadily growing movie industry. Entertainment in Ghana thence moved onto the screens, and people preferred to stay at home and watch TV than to go out. Many music groups, including those that revived the palmwine music tradition in the late 1970s, folded up or hardly found spaces to perform. In the late 1980s, a further continuation and improvement of the rural electrification, which had reached many villages and towns by this time also meant that

many homes in these rural areas could now afford television sets and other modern electronic systems. Hence, attendance to live performances which would have been their preferred mode of entertainment suffered. The bands whose main markets were the rural areas also experienced a dip in patronage as electricity had more than before opened up other entertainment sources for them.

Thus, the performance spaces for palmwine musicians and other hybridized styles have been limited to certain organized functions such as annual festivals, state durbars, national cultural festivals, and funerals. *Nsadowase* or gatherings where palmwine music performances took place even in the rural areas are today almost non-existent. These spaces have been taken over by what is now known as '*beer bars*' where recorded music is mostly aired. In the urban areas and towns, some notable guitar band musicians established some of these drinking bars and, in the process, opened up spaces for performances for their bands as well as others. However, these performance contexts are few, and the cost of running some of these bands may have discouraged the continuation of running the bands eventually.

The palmwine music sound nonetheless found its way into hip-life music. This new experimentation can be explored from two streams. In the first scenario, the new music resulted either through collaboration with old guitar band musicians or there were compositions based on the music tradition's essence. At the turn of the 21st century, some hip-life artists collaborated with well-known guitar band musicians to re-release some of their popular hit songs within the new hip-life music context. For instance, Omanhene Pozo, who was a hip-life artist, collaborated with Ewurama Badu, a guitar band musician, to re-release her hit song *medɔfo adadaa me* (my love has deceived me) in 2001. Also, Shipley (2012: 49) observes that Ex-Doe, a hip-life artist, had a hit song; titled '*Comfort*' from his album titled '*maba*' (I have returned), in which he collaborated with celebrated highlife musician Dr. Paa Bobo. One can push the argument that, this new re-recorded song became a hit song due to the popularity of the highlife music and also the popularity of the original recording itself. Some hip-life music compositions also reflected the palmwine music tradition's essence, although the domain was purely hip-life. In 2002,

'Vision in Progress' (VIP), a hip-life trio, released a song entitled *obaa sweetie* (sweet lady), which heavily drew inspiration from within the palmwine music tradition. However, the song was laden with rap. Interestingly, this group is noted to write songs in a similar manner. *Okomfo* Kwaadee, also a hip-life artist, is known for his unique rap style, steeped in the Ghanaian storytelling form of *Anansesem*. Osumare (2012) observes that many hip-life musicians inherited highlife music structures that were internalized because of their socialization as Ghanaians. His sound can also be argued to resonate with the palmwine music tradition but within a new context.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the emergence and development of the palmwine music tradition in Ghana from the early 20th century to date, situating its revitalization and sustenance within a broader historical context. It has explored palmwine music's origins from a loosely organized musical activity at palm-wine bars in the villages and towns prior to the early 20th century's turn up to its gradual decline in the 1990s. From the historical survey, we understand that palmwine music was transformed from its initial stylistic traits into various other styles. The argument then would be whether this is not the natural process of such music traditions as Schippers (2016) and Seeger (2016) argues within the context of music cultures sustainability. However, it is essential to note that these other styles, influenced by palmwine music, assumed stylistic traditions and performance practices different from palmwine music. Thus, the move from the performance practice into new influenced traditions could have also contributed to the decline of the palmwine music tradition.

CHAPTER THREE
MUSICAL REPERTOIRE AND PERFORMANCE PRACTICE OF GHANAIAN
PALMWINE MUSIC

3.1 Introduction

Palmwine music is understandably a regional musical genre as it has variants in different Anglophone West African countries such as Nigeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.²³ Although these areas may share some traits or similarities, the music tradition in each of these countries assumes their unique styles, which forms an essential performance idiom practiced in each locality (Schmidt, 1994). This situation could be a result of the musical nuances in each of the countries, although the performance idioms are often characterized by a fusion of indigenous musical elements as well as ideas borrowed from some western musical traditions. This chapter focuses on the musical repertoire and performance practice of the Ghanaian palmwine music tradition from the 1990s to date. The salient features of palmwine music exemplify the music tradition within the Ghanaian context, and how these characteristics have developed over the period are examined. Occasionally, the chapter includes reflections of earlier performance practice of the music tradition with the hope of presenting a complete picture of palmwine music performance practices in Ghana. The chapter embraces the notions on performance practice as suggested by Omojola (2012), which he posits covers the context and settings of performances, how ensembles are organized, participant's roles, the form and structure of the music, and how the music is communicated and mediated in discussing the Ghanaian palmwine music tradition. As much as all these ideas assist our understanding of performances, especially within indigenous African contexts, my interest in this chapter is how these notions assist in describing the palmwine music tradition practices in Ghana.

In a discussion of the musical performance of Ghanaian palmwine musician Agya Koo Nimo²⁴ in his dissertation, Kaye (1992) reminds us of verbal limitations that hinder our

²³ See Schmidt (2000, 1994), Waterman (1988), Alaja-Brown (1989) for further discussions on these regional variations

²⁴ Agya Koo Nimo is one of the surviving culture bearers of palmwine music in Ghana. See Chapter 1.4

musical performance description. Paul Berliner, in his commentary on Shona music, identifies that there is

...something unique about the quality and effect of a live performance of *mbira* music that defies description. The *mbira*'s sound has a special presence, one feels the music as much as one hears it (Berliner, 1993: 52).

The essence of this statement appears to have informed the analytical approach Kaye employs in his discussion of the music performance of Agya Koo Nimo. He submits that his analysis of the music of Agya Koo Nimo does not represent a comprehensive examination but as an attempt to balance his understanding of the key elements in his music within a musicological context with a broader view of how listeners appreciate the music. I consider the verbal limitation by both Kaye and Berliner in this current study to suggest that the analysis will extend past these approaches to understand the nuances of the palmwine music tradition's performance in Ghana. Because of my position as an insider, I could relate to these non-verbal resources used within the performance context of the music tradition. I focused on the nuances of the non-verbal resources, mainly related to the palmwine music community, and juxtaposes them with the broader Akan and Ghanaian community in general. For instance, my understanding of costuming and the particular fabrics the ensembles may use often contributes to the meaning of palmwine music performances. These non-verbal contexts are mostly an extension of how society, in general, appreciates and communicates. My position as an insider provides a better phenomenological appreciation of these resources that leads to a better understanding of how integral these are in constructing a palmwine music performance. My lived experiences juxtaposed with the performance conventions of the music tradition became invaluable as I linked them to my understanding of the broader Akan cultural nuances since I am an Akan.

Whereas Andrew Kaye's seminal work on Agya Koo Nimo, one of the music tradition's cultural bearers, presents some insight into the palmwine music tradition, his analysis confines itself to the corpus of his work that also includes traditional Akan musical

performances. However, the analysis in this chapter expands on the case study on Agya Koo Nimo to critically engage with the palmwine music tradition in Ghana in general since the 1990s. I organize the chapter in three broad sections - instrumental resources, *sadwa ase* style, and ensemble organization.

3.2 Instrumental Resources

Palmwine music instrumental resources consist primarily of soft-sounding instruments. In Ghana, these resources consist of a variety of indigenous and foreign musical instruments due to its hybrid nature. Our attention is drawn to the hybridization process that ensued in West Africa in the late 19th century, which points to sailors' early activities along the coast who introduced foreign instruments such as guitar, harmonica, and concertina. These new instruments were then fused with indigenous ones that mostly became associated with some communities' performance traditions. Instruments from ensembles such as the *adakem*, *adenkum*, *osibi*, and *osoode* were fused with these imported musical instruments (Collins, 1976). Thus, it is not surprising that the palmwine music tradition's essence lies in the combination of these musical instruments. However, there are examples within many cultures in Africa of fusing musical instruments from different indigenous music traditions to form new ensembles. For instance, Agawu (2016) cites the Pan-African Orchestra²⁵, which comprises of several indigenous musical instruments from Ghana, as an example. In-land, instrumental accompaniment at rural palm-wine centers in the formative years of the music tradition comprised only indigenous instruments compared to the coastal areas.

In the palmwine ensembles since the 1900s, however, four groupings of these instrumental resources appear to stand out – vocals, guitars, claves, and percussions. As discussed in Chapter 2.3, instrumental resources that accompanied palmwine music performances included – vocals, guitars, *adakem* (box), and claves, whereas the period that characterized the late 1960s typically included vocals, guitars, claves, *premprensiwa*,

²⁵ The Pan-African Orchestra was founded by Nana Danso Abiam in 1988 in Ghana as a musical response to the notion of Pan-Africanism. See Osei-Owusu (2014) for a detailed discussion on the Pan-African Orchestra.

and drums. According to Kaye (1992: 291), Agya Koo Nimo's palmwine ensemble consists of the voice, accompanying vocals, the guitar, and a "special" selection of idiophones as well as drums. The selection of instruments as Kaye identifies in Agya Koo Nimo's performances represent the instrumental resources palmwine musicians use today, although there are occasions where these vary. The composition of instrumental resources in a given palmwine performance today depends on numerous factors. In most cases, performances determined the type and number of required instruments because of issues related to compensation or sometimes the availability of performers. In addition, there are cases where solo instruments have often been used in performances, as discussed in Section 3.4.1, a point which stresses different types of ensemble performances of the music tradition.

In examining the instruments Agya Koo Nimo uses in his ensemble, Kaye organologically organizes them in terms of vocals, chordophones, idiophones, membranophones, and electronic instruments. These categorizations, except for the voice and electronic instruments, resonate with the popular and most influential classification scheme developed by Hornbostel-Sachs to describe African musical instruments. The electronic instruments can, however, fall under an adaptation of the scheme. In their scheme, African instruments are classified into chordophones, idiophones, aerophones, and membranophones. Recent discourse situated within the context of representing African musical instruments appears to challenge the scheme's essence in describing the numerous musical instruments found on the continent. Agawu (2016) notes that this classifying scheme does not resonate with the "realities" of the diverse instrumental resources of Africa, pointing out that the scheme was broadly developed to "accommodate virtually all known musical instruments" (79). He nonetheless acknowledges the fact that although the Hornbostel-Sachs classification system makes room for further sub-descriptions, these descriptions have hardly been engaged with by scholars. Therefore, he suggests the need to replace this well-known classification scheme with one that considers the specific needs of instrumental resources found on the continent. It appears to raise questions regarding how African musical instruments are forced into classification systems that do not best describe them. As evident in Kaye's

work, although he embraces Hornbostel-Sachs' scheme, he introduces new categories, which allows him room to explain better the instrumental resources in Agya Koo Nimo's ensemble. For the discussion in this section, I embrace these new ideas to describe the musical instruments found in the palmwine music tradition in Ghana. In heeding to Agawu, the specific music instruments I identified in the music tradition are examined and, as much as possible, grouped in simple terms in order to understand how they are engaged in a performance.

3.2.1 Guitar and *Seperewa*

The principal musical instrument of the palmwine music tradition is the guitar, with the six-string acoustic guitar being the preference of many musicians. In the early years of palmwine music, the steel-string acoustic guitar was mostly used, attributed mainly to the fact that these guitars retained good sound acoustics because it had a big resonator box were commonly marketed on the continent (Kaye, 1992, Rycroft, 1961: 81). However, palmwine musicians today prefer the nylon-string guitars, which offers a subtler sound with modern amplification systems, as observed among participants in this study. The guitar is tuned to the standard tuning system of [E-A-D-G-B-E'] and has no unusual tunings, although, on rare occasions, the low E is sometimes tuned either a semitone lower or higher when playing the *dagomba* style (discussed in Section 3.3).

Even though the two-finger technique of playing the guitar in palmwine music, as mentioned in Chapter 2.2, remains the mode of performance approach, this technique has evolved since the early 20th century. This development is attributed mainly to the change in the types of acoustic guitar which has been employed. Whereas with steel-strings, attention was focused more on loud sound production. The nylon-strings' performance technique embraces a manipulation of an interchange between the nails and flesh of the fingers to vary the sound. For this reason, many palmwine guitarists today grow their fingernails to achieve this essence. The difference in approach on these two types of guitars is observed in the nuances of the sound. For instance, in comparing the playing

techniques of Kwabena Nyama²⁶ and Agya Koo Nimo, Eugene Oppong Ampadu (Kyekyeku) notes that

Whilst I watched and compared the styles [of the two], I noticed many variations to [each of their] playing. You know some of them [older palmwine musicians] were very crude in their approach to playing. Like Kwabena Nyama, he was very crude when he played, and [we] could say Agya Koo Nimo was crude but refined in his playing approach.²⁷

Kyekyeku highlights the fact that the technique and sound production of Kwabena Nyama on the guitar appear rough and harsh compared to Agya Koo Nimo, who explores the nuances of the nylon-string with both the fingernails and the flesh. As noted earlier, the preoccupation of many of these early palmwine musicians in performance was how their sound was audible to their audience. As common with many African guitar players, palmwine guitarist employed the use of the capotasto (Kaye, 1992: 300). Kaye further notes that the use of the capotasto (capo) allows the guitarist to play at high pitches without having to barre so as to be able to use the standard first position chord fingerings. Despite the capotasto's use, however, it is instructive to note that most palmwine songs are mostly performed in the guitar's middle register (ibid, 301). Many young palmwine musicians hardly use the capotasto, although they often use them when playing some of the music tradition's early tunes.

Even though they identify the guitar as a vital instrument in the performance practice of the palmwine music tradition in Ghana, the *seperewa* is used from time to time. Whereas its performance role in the music tradition, especially in the inland areas, decreased, following in the steps of Agya Koo Nimo, who frequently include the *seperewa* in his performances, young palmwine musicians seem to have embraced it in their performances as well. A typical example of one young ensemble that makes use of the

²⁶ Kwabena Nyama, leading exponent and a culture bearer of the *odonson* style of palmwine music in the late 1990s and 2000s. He lived in New *Asonomanse* which is close to the Kumasi in the Ashanti region.

²⁷ Eugene Oppong Ampadu, interview by author, May 17, 2017, Alliance Française, Accra

seperewa is the Kwan Pa Band. The *seperewa*, according to Nketia (1994), is the harp-lute of the Akan.



Figure 3.1 Two types of *seperewa* - the traditional one without tuning pegs and the other with tuning pegs. Picture by Grace Takyi Donkor, March 2019. Department of Music, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra

He notes that the instrument can act as a speech surrogate to communicate feelings when its strings are plucked (118). Generally, the *seperewa* has eight-strings, although there are accounts of six or seven-string *seperewa* being heard in early performances. The eight-string *seperewa* is, however, often the preferred choice in palmwine music. Traditionally the instrument is tuned according to one's vocal inflections; however, within palmwine ensembles, they are often tuned to correspond with the guitar. They are mostly played together in performances.²⁸ These tuning systems have been made possible as a result of modifications to the instrument, as found in figure 4.1. For instance, the *seperewa* found

²⁸ Kwame Osei Korankye, (Personal communication, November 4, 2017), Legon, Accra. See Chapter 1.3.2a

in palmwine ensembles are likely to have tuning pegs attached to them. Earlier versions of the instruments did not have pegs attached to them in any form. Likewise, nylon strings are used on the instruments these days compared to strings made from the runners of a tree called *enta*.²⁹ They played by plucking the strings with mainly the “forefingers of the right and left hands and sometimes with the thumb” (Kaye, *ibid*: 303).

3.2.2 *Premprensiwa* and *Adakem*

The bass rhythms in the palmwine music tradition are assigned to the *premprensiva*, a bass lamellaphone with three or sometimes four metal prongs (Kaye, 1992: 304, Edmonds, 2016: 73). The instrument's sound is produced by plucking three metal lamellae, which are attached in a row, in the middle of a sound hole of a small rectangular wooden box made of plywood (Kaye, *ibid*). The instrument is tuned to a hi-mid-low frequency, and the performer is expected to sit on the top of the box in order to play it. Before the introduction of the *premprensiva*, the *adakem* (wooden box) was used in its stead. The Trio ensembles used the *adakem*, which was the principal instrument used in such dance ensembles like the *osoode* and the *adakem* popular along the Fanti coast.

The *adakem* was bigger than the *premprensiva* in size, and the technique of playing was different. It is rectangular and constructed just like the *premprensiva*, although the *adakem* does not use metal lamellae as illustrated in figures 3.2 and 3.3 respectively. There is, however, a sound hole that releases the sound. It is played by hitting any of the sides of the box with a fist, and because of its large size produces a very low deep percussive sound. In order to play, one would have to slouch the box in between the legs. These characteristics, nonetheless, the *adakem* and *premprensiva* share a common trait in that they both have sound holes, and they both produce low sounding frequencies.

²⁹ Bowdich (1819) as cited in Nketia (1994: 120)’s description of the *seperewa*



Figure 3.2 *Premprensiwa*. Picture by Eric Sunu Doe. December 2017, Kumasi

The *premprensiwa* appear to have become more prominent in palmwine music from the 1980s. However, Nanabanyin Dadson reports a growth in the popularity of *ahomansia* music in the Brong and Ahafo region around the same period the *premprensiwa* featured prominently. *Ahomansia* music is another name for palmwine music popular in the Brong Ahafo areas. Among the Akan, *ahoma* literally translates as strings, whereas *nsia* is six, hence its association with the guitar. *Ahomansia*, therefore, references the type of music the guitar play.



Figure 3.3 Adakem demonstration by Eric Sunu Doe. Picture by Seth Kpodo, November 2017, Kumasi

Particular attention to its repertoire suggests it is a palmwine music but under another name. By this time, *ahomansia* gained popularity; however, other palmwine ensembles such as Agya Koo Nimo's had been using the *premprensiwa* in his ensemble already. It eventually replaced the *adakem*, which although out of use, Agya Koo Nimo sometimes finds space for it in his performances for demonstration purposes. The *premprensiwa* has been developed with new concepts applied to the instrument. In Kumasi, the author witnessed instances where instead of the box, musicians had designed the instrument like a small bass guitar with electric pickups as in figure 3.4. I observed that even though the playing technique remained the same, the *premprensiwa* was now placed on the laps in order to play. There is no resonator box, and the sound is connected to an electronic system to be amplified.

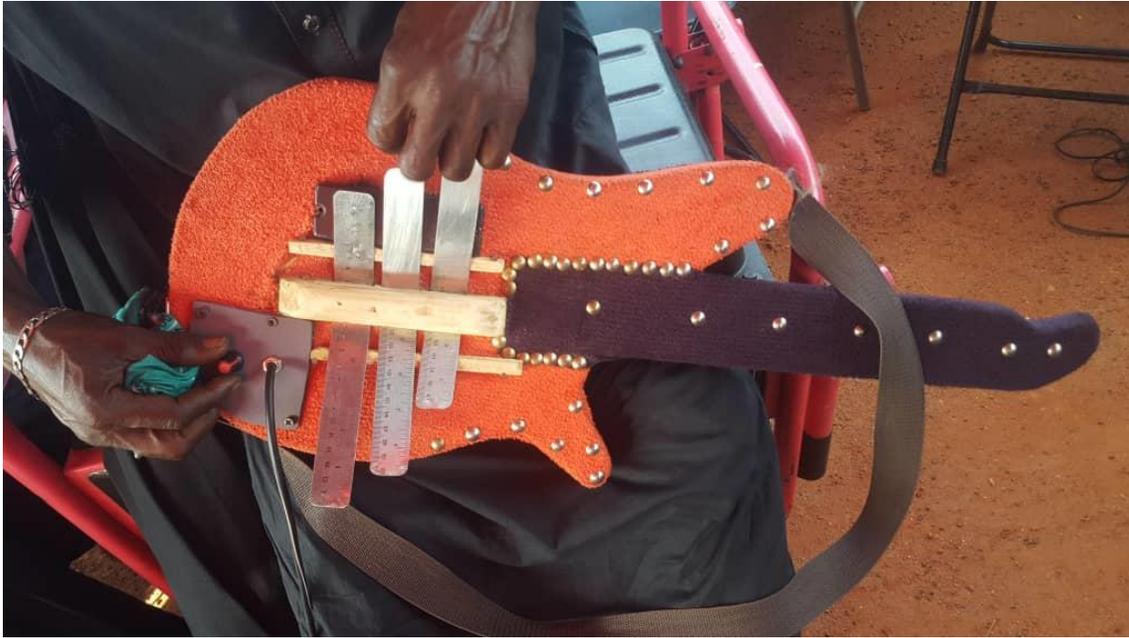


Figure 3.4 An electronic premprensiwa demonstration. Picture by Seth Kpodo, March 2019, Kumasi

The young ensembles seem to have a more relaxed approach to their experimentation with the music tradition's bass rhythm. I cite an example with the Kwan Pa Band³⁰, which includes the *gome* as one of their primary instrumental resource instead of the *premprensiwa*. It seems to resonate with the Ga-folk music type, which Coplan (1978) suggests to be a Ga palmwine ensemble. These ensembles use the *gome* family instruments, and Kwan Pa seems to have borrowed this idea from them.

3.2.3 Bells and Rattles

Although they play a critical role in the palmwine music performances, the bells and rattles are easy to ignore in such descriptions and discussions. They serve to keep all the musical instruments of an ensemble in a common time. The most commonly used bells include the *frikyiwa* (metal-framed castanet) even though in some instances substitutes like sticks, cans, *toa* (bottle) do assume the function the bells play in palmwine performances (Agawu, 2016). Among palmwine groups in Accra, the *frikyiwa* is the most

³⁰ The Kwan Pa Band is discussed in detail in Chapter Four

preferred because, in performances, its size and playing techniques allow performers to play other instruments. Unlike other bell-like instruments like the *dawuro* (boat-shaped iron bells), *nawuta* (double-bell), whose sound is relatively louder, the *frikiyiwa* retains a soft but penetrating sound. However, the author came across skillful players of the *dawuro* and *nawuta* who performed these instruments carefully, adjusting them to produce a soft sound. For example, Agya Koo Nimo's ensemble uses different bells skillfully dampened to produce sounds that complement their performances.

In addition to the bells, rattles are also played in palmwine music performances to enhance the total sound aesthetics. They are usually assigned specific rhythmic patterns, which like the bells, remain constant, often playing off each other's rhythms. Agawu (ibid: 97) notes different varieties of rattles, which he mentions come in different shapes, sizes, and designs. He further notes that these rattles are made with calabash gourds, which contains beads either in them or are laced in a net around them. The most commonly used rattles in the palmwine music tradition are relatively small ones and played by shaking the gourds in the palms. Although this is the standard technique of playing the rattles, there are sometimes unconventional techniques employed during palmwine music performances as illustrated in figure 3.5. A case in point is Ralph Karikari's description of his unique technique

Sometimes when I perform [alone] because I play the guitar and sing as well, it becomes too raw, so I find ways of including the rattle in my performance. I tie the rattle around my right leg and tap my feet to produce the sound.³¹

³¹ Ralph Karikari, Interview by author, December 6, 2017, Mr. Adjei, Taifa, Accra

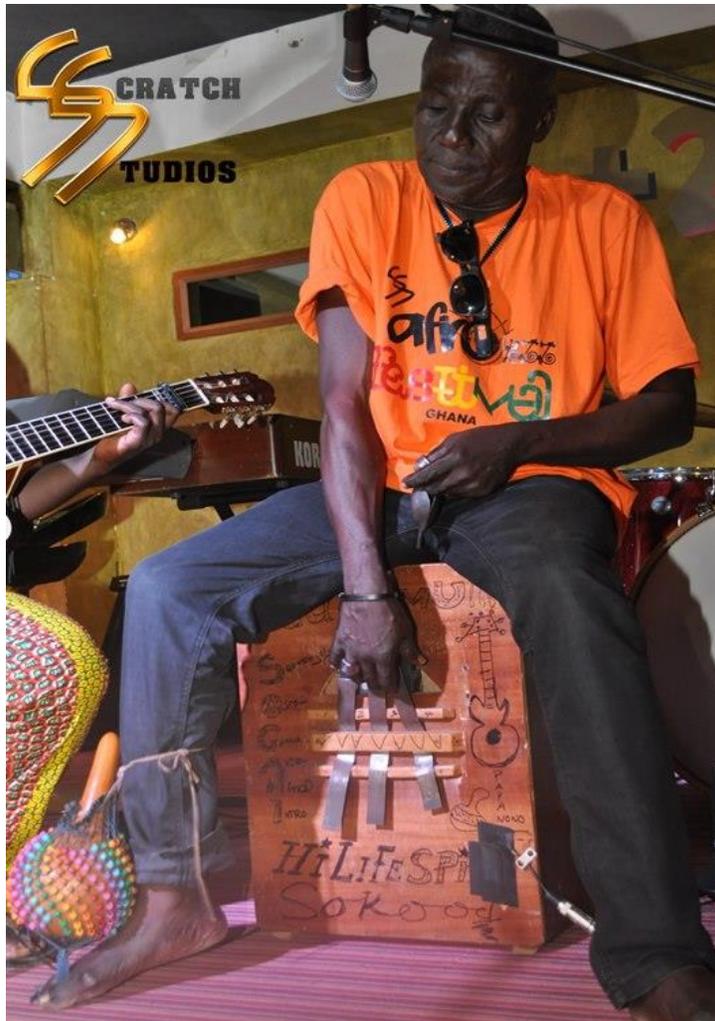


Figure 3.5 Ralph Karikari in a performance playing the premprensiwa, frikyiwa, and the rattle tied to his right leg. Picture by Scratch Studios at +233 Jazz Bar & Grill, Kanda, Accra.

Ralph Karikari's approach emphasizes the extent to which palmwine musicians go to enhance their performance. They are conscious of their characterization of the music tradition. He seems to agree with the fact that the inclusion of these smaller instruments enhances the aesthetic appeal of palmwine music. However, in the olden days, one would hardly find rattles being used in palmwine music performances as they often used the clips.³²

³² An observation the culture bearers who participated in the research made.

3.2.4 Drums

Drums are a recent addition to the palmwine music tradition in Ghana. Unlike many traditional ensembles, which are often characterized by their drum, the music tradition is not known to have had them but borrows from these other ensembles. The inclusion of drums into the performance vocabulary of palmwine music has been attributed to Agya Koo Nimo. Before the introduction of the drums in palmwine music, Agya Koo Nimo performed in a trio. As he notes, “until this moment, we only played guitar, *premprensiwa*, *toa*, *frikyiwa*, and *dawuro*” (Edmond, 2016: 66). By the early 1980s, his ensemble had embraced the *seperewa* on some occasions, rattles, and drums (Kaye, 1992: 315). The drums' introduction thus relegated the *adakem*, which was the closest drum instrument to the background. Together with the *premprensiwa*, the drums are used as a rhythmic accompaniment, which characterizes the percussion section of palmwine music ensembles. Drums that are commonly found in palmwine ensembles include the *apentemma*, *petia*, *ogyamma*, and the *kpanlogo*, as shown in figure 3.6 below.

According to Anku (2009: 41), the *apentemma*, *petia*, and *ogyamma* are part of popular Akan traditional drum and dance ensembles. For instance, he notes that the *apentemma* is a typical instrument found in both *adowa* and *kete* ensembles, whereas *petia* is mostly found in *kete* ensembles. Likewise, the *ogyamma* is a standard instrument in the *adakem* and *kurunku* ensembles. Except for the *ogyamma*, which is a double-headed drum, the other drums are single-headed open barrel drums and semi-cylindrical in shape. The use of these drums is dependent on the part of the country the ensemble is based. For instance, many palmwine ensembles in Accra use the *kpanlogo* drum, whereas those found in the Kumasi area use either the *apentemma*, *ogyamma*, or the *petia*, or both in performances. There are occasions when the popular *djembe* drums, especially among palmwine musicians in Accra, is sometimes included in performances. The challenge that comes with its inclusion in performance is that drummers continuously struggle with balancing their sonorities with that of the total palmwine performance. Agya Koo Nimo has observed that

If you start a [palmwine] song with the acoustic guitar, the congas [drums] will have to play soft. I cannot stand the congas; sometimes, I

have to turn or mention in the song, *bokoora* [slow down]. We need the congas at a time; the strings are not at play; the voices are not at play.³³

Agya Koo Nimo's observation highlights the essential role each instrument is expected to play in a palmwine music performance. For him, the drums act as a support system to the other instruments by complementing the groove. Hence their sound should ground the entire performance. The argument can then be made to support why palmwine musicians prefer to use soft percussions in their performances.



Figure 3.6 Picture showing drums palmwine ensembles play. Left is *apentemma*, Middle is *petia*; Right is *kpanlogo*. Picture by Grace Takyi Donkor, May 2019, Legon, Accra

3.2.5 Vocals

The voice appears to be the essential instrument in a palmwine performance. It is because it serves as the vocal channel through which the messages in palmwine songs are communicated. Kaye (1992) observes that in Agya Koo Nimo's musical resources, the most prominent instrument is the voice as it is essential to narrating stories, a characteristic feature of palmwine music. The male voice is preferred as it has been epitomized in many recordings as well as performances. It is instructive to state here that

³³ Agya Koo Nimo, interview by author, September 15, 2017, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi

there is yet to be a female lead vocal in any palmwine ensemble yet. Nonetheless, there are recent female backing singers in performances, especially as members of Agya Koo Nimo's ensemble. The vocal inflections of the music tradition in the recent past have reflected a high-pitched tenor voice. However, in many active ensembles today, a mellow baritone vocal sonority is preferred to lead performances. One reason for the high-pitched voices can be attributed to singers singing out loud in order to be heard by their audience. The range of these lead vocals is often dependent on the particular musician and his vocal inflections.

Lead vocals are often accompanied by other vocals that sing chorus refrain or responses to their calls. Between the 1930s and 1960, the role of singing the chorus refrain in palmwine performances was assigned to other members of the ensemble besides the lead vocal. In essence, every member in the ensemble performed on the vocals, either as the lead singer or as accompanying vocals. This vocal performance tradition seems to have changed as ensembles today assign this task to specific members. The conclusion one draws from this practice is that within many young palmwine music ensembles, they had the luxury of assigning these vocal roles to others because of their size. For instance, in many of the ensembles today, the percussionists restrict themselves to their percussive role, hardly joining in on the chorus refrains. In other cases, because of the increasing attention focused on the group's harmonic projection, members with good vocal abilities are assigned with this task. In Agya Koo Nimo's ensemble, for example, it was observed that some of the performers do not participate in chorus refrains as they focused on their dance and drumming role in the traditional setup. Nonetheless, they joined the palmwine setup in performance, often playing other percussive instruments. An exception to this recent tradition is the Kwan Pa Band, which still resonates with the earlier vocal practice. In their performances, every member sings the chorus refrains besides their primary role in the group.

3.3 *Sadwa Ase* Style

The musical resources that characterize the palmwine music tradition in Ghana are conceptualized within a style known as "*sadwa ase*." Agya Koo Nimo describes his style

as well as that of his contemporaries as the *sadwa ase* style. Generally, the *sadwa ase* style encompasses a singing tradition that is steeped within typical Akan vocal traditions and an instrumental accompaniment. The approach to singing resonates with the narrative style of the *anansesem* storytelling tradition in Ghana. At the core of the *anansesem* storytelling narration in *sadwa ase* is a balance between singing and a speech-like performance. According to Edmonds (2016: 76), the style comes from the Akan words “*nsa*” (drink) and “*edwaase*” (gathering), a conceptualization of drinking spaces in Akan communities. Hence the music-making at these gatherings is what characterizes this style. The suggestion that these styles embody the music at these contexts points to a collection of various music styles. Therefore, what is defined as the *sadwa ase* style is a pool of musical styles that share a typical conceptual element palmwine musician refer to as “*po sa*” (to rub).

“*Po sa*” in itself references a motion of what Collins (2006) has described as the “two-finger oppositional and cross-fingering technique” (177). It embraces a fingerpicking technique on the guitar, which is characterized by a rhythmic interplay between the thumb and the forefinger in plucking the strings. According to Kaye (2000: 77), this technique involves the thumb picking out a bass figure on the lower three strings and the forefinger playing an inter-locking rhythmic pattern on the other three strings. A repeated “melodo-rhythmic riff or passage” is thus created due to this action (Collins, *ibid*: 175). As a result, the fingers move steadily with attention being paid to the roundness of guitar sound. It is essential to emphasize the point that palmwine guitarists play at the nut-position,³⁴ a feature that also characterizes the music tradition. In accommodating high-pitched singers yet maintaining this essential feature, guitar players use a capotasto to achieve this. The beauty of palmwine guitar and, for that matter, the music lies not in the constant movement of chords on the fingerboard of the guitar but in the simplicity that accompanies the vocal performance at the nut position.³⁵ For instance, Agya Koo Nimo observes that palmwine musicians' interest is not in the complex chords and harmonies

³⁴ Playing at the nut-position on the guitar is when guitarists play tunes on the opened string close to the nut of the guitar.

³⁵ This is view is generally accepted by the practitioners of the music tradition.

but in how they employ the “*po sa*” concept on simple chords.³⁶ It is no wonder that the nut-position chords exemplify the musical qualities of palmwine music. According to Edmonds (2016), palmwine guitar music style embodies a two-finger picking style, “with a series of chords assembled into simple melodies” (76) as discussed in Section 3.3.1.

In this section, the styles that form the basic vocabulary of *sadwa ase* as expressed on the guitar and an understanding of how their basic components form the foundation on which palmwine songs are created are described. Thus, six styles are discussed under the broad headings *osibisaaba* and *odonson*. In addition, *anansesem* storytelling tradition and its use as a metaphor of narrative in palmwine music are examined in order to explore how the musicians use this art of storytelling as a metaphor to express their sentiments in palmwine songs.

3.3.1 *Osibisaaba* Styles

Guitar styles that emerged along the coastal areas of Ghana in the early 20th century are referred to as *osibisaaba*. They included those styles introduced by the Kru sailors, including the *mainline*, *dagomba*, and the *fireman*, and the *amponsah*, which was developed by the Fanti musicians.³⁷ We are told in Collins (2018: 5) that the *amponsah* was developed out of the gaps or spaces created as a result of the performance of the *mainline*. The *osibisaaba* styles assumed a unique identity that was different from what was introduced to the Fanti musicians on the coast. Although Kru in creation and nature, the local musicians further incorporated nuances of musical elements of their recreational dance, the *osibi*, to these new guitar styles. The styles, therefore, became known as *osibisaaba* in reference to this change in its performance practices. In this section, the salient features of these coastal styles are identified and discussed.

³⁶ Agya Koo Nimo, interview by author, September 13, 2017, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi

³⁷ See Chapter 2.2 for Kru sailor’s activities along the West African coast.



Music Ex. 2 Excerpt of mainline theme. Transcription by Jose Alberto Chemane, August 2018, Durban



Music Ex. 3 Excerpt of mainline theme (2). Transcription by Jose Alberto Chemane, August 2018, Durban

The *mainline* in musical example 2 version is what Collins has suggested being often taught and played by musicians. A number of the participants confirmed that their first palmwine guitar lesson was this *mainline*. For instance, Kyekyeku noted that the *mainline* was the first palmwine guitar rhythm he was taught, then he was introduced to the other styles upon mastery.³⁹ The second *mainline* in musical example 3 above has a little rhythmic complexity as compared to the first one. Nonetheless, in performance, these two variations could be engaged in a complimenting nature. Palmwine musicians in Accra are accustomed to the illustration in musical example 2, whereas their counterparts in Kumasi relate to musical example 3. For instance, Ralph Karikari and Agya Koo Nimo, based in Accra and Kumasi, respectfully demonstrated the two different *mainline* styles in our interview sessions.⁴⁰ Whereas Ralph performed the example in illustration like other young palmwine musicians in Accra, Agya Koo Nimo, although he could play the Accra version, immediately performed the version in musical example 3 above as with the many young palmwine musicians in Kumasi. It stands to reason that these young palmwine

³⁹ Eugene Oppong Ampadu (Kyekyeku), interview by author, May 25, 2017, Alliance Française, Accra

⁴⁰ These demonstrations took place separately during interview sessions by author.

musicians received their training from these culture bearers found in their regions hence their respective regional styles.

iii. Fireman

The fireman is the least performed of all the *osibisaaba* styles today. According to Collins (2006: 177), *fireman* was a song created to resonate with the many Kru sailors who worked on board steamships. The style like the *dagomba* also revolves around the chord progression [I-V], although the rhythmic interpretation and placement, as well as their length, differ. As already illustrated, the *dagomba* repeats itself after every measure, which means; the chord is evenly distributed within the measure; however, in the *fireman*, it repeats itself after every two measures; thus, a chord lasts for each measure as illustrated in musical example 4 below.



Music Ex. 4 Excerpt of fireman main theme. Transcription by Eric Sunu Doe, 2018, Durban

iv. Amponsah

The *amponsah* is the most popular *osibisaaba* style performed in Ghana today. It is created out of the spaces or gaps that exist in the rhythm's progression of the *mainline*. Whereas the *mainline* revolves around the chord progression [I-I⁷-IV-V⁷], the chord progression for *amponsah* is [I-IV⁶-V⁷], with a passing seventh note after chord I [I-I⁷-IV⁶-V⁷]. As we can see from the two, the slight variation lies in the introduction of a sixth on the fourth chord. This slight variation is sometimes expressed in terms of an ii⁷ chord which resolves to the [V⁷] chord. There are currently many variations of the *amponsah* guitar rhythm style as it formed the foundation for guitar band highlife music in the 1930s and 40s in Ghana.⁴¹ However, it must be pointed out that the development of these

⁴¹ See Chapter 2.4 discussion on palmwine music and guitar bands

thematic ideas of the *amponsah* is dependent mainly on individual stylistic preferences and performance styles. Nonetheless, in a performance of two different guitars in the ensemble, each guitarist plays a different variation to the other.⁴² These are in many cases improvisatory and come to define other variations that emerge of the style.

3.3.2 *Odonson and Kwaw*

The *odonson* style mainly emerged in the inland Akan areas compared to the *osibisaaba* styles, which emerged along the coast. In a seminal paper on the generative processes in *seperewa* music, Nketia (1994) suggests *odonson* to be a typical repertoire model that was developed and performed by *seperewa* players. A tradition he acknowledges is popular among the inland Akan; he argues that the “cognitive models and the generative processes” of the music of the *seperewa* have been transmitted over from one generation to the other. Collins (2006) has submitted that the guitar appears to have replaced the *seperewa* in the areas where the *seperewa* was the main instrument. However, the *seperewa* he points out, “in turn affected guitar playing techniques” (183), thereby consolidating the *odonson* style into a new stylistic essence. The argument Collins raises appear to resonate with Nketia’s (1994) assertion of the sound perception and thinking around *odonson* that was handed over to the guitar generation. Although *odonson* as a style was entirely grounded in the music traditions of the *seperewa* and was associated with the palmwine music tradition, however, the nuances of the music tradition also reference other Akan indigenous musical types such as the *kurunku* and *adakem*.

Titi-Lartey (1965) noted *kurunku* to be a musical type created in Akan mining areas to mourn their departed. It is characterized by the *kurum* [to hum], which assists in their wailing process and percussion [*ogyamma* (double-headed drum), *ampaa* (single-headed drum), *aponsa* (gong), *akasa* (rattle)]. Gyapong (1972) also mentions that *adakem*, like *kurunku*, is an Akan musical type created on the Fanti coast to mourn the departed and serve as a recreational music type. It is characterized by its key instrument, the *adakem* of which the music's name is derived. Gyapong further notes that both the *adakem* and

⁴² The performance practice and variations are analyzed in three examples in Chapters 6 and 7.

kurunku share the same instrumental resources. There are two known forms of the *odonson* style, the *odonson* [proper] and a variant known as the *kwaw*, which was created by Kwaa Mensah as illustrated in music examples 5 and 6 below (Collins, 2006).



Music Ex. 5 *odonson* theme. Transcription by Jose Alberto Chemane, 2018



Music Ex. 6 Excerpt of *kwaw* theme. Transcription by Jose Alberto Chemane, 2018

Odonson and *kwaw*, most often than not, resolves around two chord progressions [iii-V]. The striking difference in the performance of the inland styles lies in its chorus refrain. Whereas in *odonson*, it is likely to resonate with the nuances of the *kurum*, *kwaw* often has a sung chorus refrain. Nonetheless, they are both performed interchangeably, with one likely to find a *kurum* in the *kwaw*.

3.3.3 Meter in *Sadwa Ase* Styles

One unique characteristic feature of the *sadwa ase* styles is their meter's nuances, which defines the rhythmic themes of these styles. *Osibisaaba* styles are characterized mainly by a 4_4 time or common time with their main rhythmic themes often repeatedly lasting about two measures. Apart from the *fireman*, *dagomba*, and the *mainline* last for one measure as illustrated in music examples 4, 1, and 2-3, respectively. Although *amponsah*, as is performed in a typical *sadwa ase* common time signature, Collins (2006: 182) points to instances where there had been performances of the style in a 6_8 time. On the first recording of palmwine music, as discussed in Chapter 2.3, Collins (2018) suggests an

example of a $\frac{6}{8}$ time heard in one of the recording songs. Chord progressions are evenly spread across the rhythmic themes of the *Osibisaaba* styles as illustrated in musical examples 1-4, whereas in *dagomba*, a chord lasts for a minim beat per measure. Each chord lasts for the entire measure in the fireman, suggesting a semibreve beat for each chord illustrated in musical examples 3 and 4 above.

The defining characteristic of *amponsah* is how it effectively fills in the gaps in the mainline. It is the only *osibisaaba* style that has an identical interlude that lasts for two measures. Likewise, the main thematic feature also lasts two measures with a minor variation identical to the main theme that also lasts two measures, as illustrated in the music example 7 below.

Guitar

The image shows four staves of musical notation for guitar. The first staff is in common time (C) and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The second staff is in 3/4 time and features a similar pattern. The third and fourth staves are in 5/4 time and feature a similar pattern. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and repeat signs.

Music Ex. 7 Excerpt of *amponsah* main theme with variations. Transcriptions taken from Collins (2006)

The time signature for the *odonson* style is $\frac{6}{8}$, whereas *kwaw* is performed in $\frac{4}{4}$ time as illustrated in music examples 5 and 6. Although Agya Koo Nimo, John Collins, and Ralph Karikari are all in agreement that *kwaw* is Kwaa Mensah's interpretation of the *odonson* style, they disagree with the time signature the rhythm is performed. Whereas Agya Koo Nimo and Ralph Karikari agree that *kwaw* is performed in a $\frac{4}{4}$ time, John

Collins suggests otherwise. He argues that *kwaw* is also played in a 6_8 time. However, when you juxtapose and analyze these two variations with the fact that Kwaa Mensah is a Fanti and was raised on the Fanti coast, one leans towards the position taken by both Agya Koo Nimo and Ralph Karikari. In addition, Collins' suggestion put forward that there is no difference between the two when *kwaw* is played in a 4_4 time signature. Both *odonson* styles, like the *osibisaaba* styles, are characterized by a repeating theme that lasts for two measures, as illustrated in music example 7 above. The *sadwa ase* style rhythmic themes are repeated with variations depending on the performer and, or the number of guitars used in a particular performance.

The discussion of the *sadwa ase* style has highlighted the fact that the essence of the music tradition lies in the guitar rhythms, which were created first as a result of the interaction with the Kru. The desire to experiment with the musical traditions that were being introduced to the local musicians in the early part of the 20th century contributed to the performance nuances of the palmwine music tradition. An important feature that characterizes the *sadwa ase* styles is how the first created songs of these guitar rhythms embodied or defined the frame in which other songs were created. As in the case of the *amponsah* guitar rhythm, a composition which has been attributed to Kwame Asare (Jacob Sam) was the first song written in the *amponsah* style it embodies (Collins, 2006). Likewise, as confirmed with the *dagomba* case, it exemplifies the first composition using the common Kru expression. These individual styles come together to form the framework for what is mostly described in the palmwine music tradition as the *sadwa ase*.

3.3.4 Anansesem and Palmwine music

Storytelling plays an essential role in the socio-cultural dynamics of many communities in Ghana. According to Ukaegbu (2010), besides its entertainment value, it serves to “interrogate socio-cultural subjects and themes, and expose misdemeanors as well as encourage community cohesion” (246). Among the Akan, the art of storytelling and the collection of stories that are told are characterized by a tradition known as *anansesem* (Sutherland, 1975). In essence, *anansesem* combines two Akan words *Ananse* (the spider)

and *nsem* [sing. *asem*] (word/statement/news), literally meaning tales or stories of *Ananse*, or *Ananse*'s words, in achieving its aim (Asante & Edu, 2018).

The character *Ananse* is vital to the *anansesem* as he is personified to serve as a social critique in the Akan community. He assumes the name “Kwaku,” which is given to males born on a Wednesday amongst the Akan. Sutherland (1975) suggests that the Kwaku *Ananse* character

.... represents a kind of everyday man whose stories serve as a medium where society self-examines itself through artistic exaggeration and creative distortions. He is made to mirror fundamental human passions, ambitions, and follies in his behavior as revealed in contemporary situations. (v)

Anansesem entails a prose narrative and an *mboguo* [kicking aside] or *mmoguo* [from *bo* – to hit; *guo* – fall] (Vecsey, 1981: 162). The prose's narration, which is often laced with proverbs, is characterized by a storyteller or narrator who positions themselves as if they are part of the story. It is because the storyteller's narrations of *anansesem* are not rigid; thus, it offers some form of artistic interpretation and presentation. The setting for *anansesem* is usually an open area within a compound house where an audience sits around a storyteller, often an older adult. The art form is a domestic affair, and as Kaye (1992) observes, in his youthful days, Agya Koo Nimo enjoyed listening to *anansesem* told by the elders in his village. The storyteller begins the narration with a declaration “*anansesem asi si oo*” (*anansesem* do happen), to which the audience responds, “*ese se woa ara*” (it is up to you). This declaration serves as a disclaimer in case the story correlates with someone else's. The narrator then skillfully presents the story, which is occasionally interspersed with the *mmoguo/mboguo*. According to Brempong (2009: 22), *mmoguo* serves as an interruption, as a form of a break to the narration. It functions to unsettle the storyteller's authorial identity and authoritative knowledge (Donkor, 2007: 44). This state of unsettlement mostly occurs when the audience contributes a song, a question, or a mimed action to the performance.

Donkor (ibid: 38) describes an *anansesem* session in the village of Ekumfi Atwia, where the basic structure of the storytelling tradition becomes evident.⁴³ He mentions that the session was held in a community space (*Kodzidan*)⁴⁴ where such events are regularly occurring. He narrates that a storyteller was “located in the stepped-down arena of this community theatre space, paced[ing] about as she told stories surrounded by an audience seated on enclosing platforms” (39). He notes two instances of *mmoguo* during the performance. In the first instance, he describes a little girl walking across the stage leisurely ignoring signals for her to leave, eventually leaving in her own time. In the second instance, he narrates again how a young man from the audience enters the storytelling arena, thus disrupting the storytelling process, which he points out was choreographed and involved singing and acting. However, in a natural setting, this will not have been the case. Donkor concludes that these two examples of *mmoguo* demonstrate its essence within *anansesem*, for. In contrast, the little girl's scenario was unplanned; the one by the young men was planned to show *mmoguo* as an integral part of the tradition.

Whereas the *mmoguo* with its musical characteristics could be said to have influenced the performance framework of the palmwine music tradition, we can also draw inferences of the structure of an *anansesem* art itself with that of palmwine performance tradition. In general, the music tradition shares similar traits with the *anansesem* tradition in many aspects, although it is difficult to establish which of these traditions emerged first. The form that has come to represent what the palmwine music tradition is, as discussed in chapter three, was created out of an integration of two musical traditions. Nonetheless, we are able to draw similarities in the performance frames of these two Akan artistic traditions.

⁴³ According to Donkor, this was a special event which was organized for a visiting African American group.

⁴⁴ Donkor notes that *Kodzidan* is a multi-purpose center where the Ekumfi Atwia community come together for communal events (39)

In juxtaposing the palmwine music tradition to that of *anansesem*, one is immediately drawn to the nuances of both in general as well as the specific trait that is said to have influenced palmwine music - the narrative prose. Like in the *anansesem* tradition as described above, its performance frame resonates with palmwine music performances. The palmwine ensemble, in this case, takes the place of the storyteller, who is encircled by an attentive audience (Coplan 1978). As Agya Koo Nimo describes

.....When the people waited for the *obetwani*, the palmwine tapper, to bring his pot, they would often gather in some of the quiet areas in towns and villages. The popular meeting point was under the big shade of the tree branches. People who sat here weren't pretentious, and the men who had come with their guitar had to speak their language... Whilst the men took long sips from their calabash, they listened carefully to every word, and the meanings in songs influenced every moment of their lives (Edmonds, 2016: 75).

In this scenario, Agya Koo Nimo paints a picture where the palmwine musicians become the center of attraction besides the fact that the palmwine drink is what brings them to the venue. What pertains to *anansesem* in relation to audience participation resonates directly with the audience of palmwine music as they are said to pay attention to the performance. *Mmoguo* actions in the context of palmwine performance occur when any member of the audience seizes an opportunity and, in an extemporized manner, contributes a song to the ongoing performance. K. Gyasi Jnr observed that his father was a regular visitor at these venues and that many of his highlife compositions were collected from tunes he recorded or heard at these gatherings, or they served as the base for many of his original compositions.⁴⁵ Whereas Brempong and Donkor argue that *mmoguo* serves to disrupt the storyteller's performance in *anansesem*, in the palmwine music tradition as indicated by Gyasi, these served as an avenue for the creation of new songs.

⁴⁵ K. Gyasi Jnr, interview with author, September 15, 2017, Bantama, Kumasi

3.3.5 *Anansesem* Storytelling as a metaphor of Narrative in Palmwine music

Besides the structural framework of *anansesem* that has resonance with palmwine music, the fundamental approach to narration, how the storytellers present their stories has also influenced how palmwine musicians composed and performed their songs. At the heart of *anansesem* is the character *Ananse* and how stories are weaved around him. As mentioned above, this body of stories serves to critique society as the character is a personification of man. Stories told in *anansesem* touch on common issues in the communities, such as trust, deceit, and pride. Although personified as man *Ananse* in narrations is often situated within the context of the animal kingdom with other animal characters and, in most cases, an interplay between his human nature and animal character. The stories can therefore be said to retain indirection as innuendos directed at people are censored with the *Ananse* character (Appiah et al. 2007: v). Some stories deal with his original animal nature, where all other characters are also presented within the frame of the animal kingdom. In palmwine narrations, this conception is embraced, and songs are written with a sense of indirection. Sometimes animals are used as a personification to drum home a sense of social critique. Songs in the palmwine music tradition are written mainly to reflect the struggles as faced by ordinary men in their everyday life activities. For instance, in his 1988 “King of Up-Up-Up” recording, Agya Koo Nimo in the song “*Kwaku don suro*” (too much pride brings trouble), using Kwaku *Ananse* as a personification speaks of the troubles associated with pride. He narrates a case where the pride of *Ananse* leaves him with nowhere to lay his head. The song serves as a caution for people to humble as proudness could get them into trouble.

A typical example is a performance that embraces the performance aesthetics of *Anansesem* is one which took place at the E.T.S. Drama Studio of School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana, Legon. In one of the performances of his *Kwaku don suro* song, he first introduces his audience to the song by first speaking of who *Ananse* is and how his actions often relate to activities in society. He narrates

Who is Kwaku Ananse? And why should so many stories be told about him? Then I will quote – according to Efua Sutherland in the play the marriage of *Anansewaa*, Ananse represents the kind of everyman

artistically exaggerated and distorted to serve society as a medium for self-examination. He has a penetrating sense of the psychology and nature of men and animals. Legends have it that *Ananse* decided to collect aspects of wisdom and placed them in a pot to climb a tree. He positioned the pot in front of him, which made climbing difficult. So, his son *Ntikuma* drew his father's attention to this obvious error, saying, 'papa, I think there has been a serious omission in your thinking, please place the pot behind you instead of in order to be able to climb the tree. *Ananse* realized all he had done was in vain; his own son even had an iota of wisdom. So, in anger and frustration, he dropped the pot. It hit the ground, splashing into bits, consequently spreading the wisdom all over the world. So, no nation, no group of people can claim a monopoly of wisdom.⁴⁶

Upon completing the narration, the guitar calls in the other instruments (discussed in Section 3.2) with a short melodic passage of the main call refrain. The instrumental accompaniment then runs through the entire song once, thus creating a background for *Agya Koo Nimo*, who joins in by repeatedly singing the refrain, "*Kwaku don suro oo, Kwaku don suro oo, Kwaku ee Kwaku ee, Kwaku ee Kwaku ee*" (Kwaku says he is fearless) to which the chorus responds "hmm." He continues by singing, "*enyɛ wo ne ɛse dɛɛ biribia ara nkɛ tim wo, Kwaku na da brɛ ɛhia wo yi*" (are you not the one who claimed to be fearless? Kwaku is now in need of a to rest); the chorus then respond "*ɛnnea Kwaku ee, okyena aa, Kwaku ee, aow na dabre ɛhia wo yi*" (today Kwaku, tomorrow Kwaku, now you need a place to rest). *Agya Koo Nimo* often intersperses his performance with dancing as a member of the ensemble moves to the open area in front of them to perform a dance routine, after which he joins the band. A member of the audience moves to the stage to also dance. This action by the audience member draws the member of the ensemble back to join this dancer until they leave the stage. *Agya Koo Nimo* then signals for the song to be ended.

Ralph Karikari provides yet another description of a performance event at *nsadwase* in his village he once led. This description was of a popular palmwine spot he would regularly perform.

⁴⁶ *Agya Koo Nimo* live performance

There was no defined stage as we find these days in the big towns and cities. Together with a friend, we go in with a guitar and the *frikyiwa*, and usually, only a few people will already have gathered there. We position ourselves on any of the long wooden benches which were often provided, and we start my performance. My friend will be on the *frikyiwa* as I play the guitar and sing. He occasionally joins in a chorus refrain, or as always, the case, those already gathered join us in singing. After a whilst, the crowd grows, and the performance becomes intense. I am often interrupted in my performance as someone might raise a tune to the rhythm I am playing, thus becoming the center of attraction, or they raise popular tunes, and in this case, many people join in the singing. In most cases, these songs are created from their personal experiences or observations they make in the community. The singing is not structured in these spaces, and our performance goes on until we are tired and take a break. There were occasions when someone else would pick the guitar whilst we were on break and provide the music. People dance intermittently as and when they wish whilst are singing.⁴⁷

These performance events present scenarios where we are able to compare how palmwine music draws performance inferences from the *anansesem* tradition. Like in *anansesem*, there is a narrator in this performance. In the case of Agya Koo Nimo's performance, the role of the narrator can be examined from two levels. On one level, which is relatively short, involves the role of the guitar in the introduction section. It invites the other instruments and leads them in running through the song once. This invitation, as noted, is what creates a setting for the lead vocals to perform. We are then drawn to an instance of *mmoguo* –, which calls for participation from others besides the lead, vocals who by this time is the center of attraction. In one instance, a dancer from the ensemble becomes the focus of attention by stepping forward and improving from a familiar dance routine. Upon exiting, attention is refocused on the ensemble only for another interruption, this time by a member of the audience, and joined later by the previous dancer. In the event, as described by Ralph Karikari, he assumes the role of the narrator as he sings and plays the guitar. The point of interruption is when someone introduces a song to the guitar rhythm he would be playing.

⁴⁷ Ralph Karikari, interview by author, December 6, 2017, Mr. Adjei-Taifa, Accra

We are able to draw parallels in both performance traditions from these examples. Although the *mmoguo* in both performance traditions serve to engage audience participation, their inherent function may differ. Whereas in *anansesem*, the notion of *mmoguo* questions the authoritative knowledge of the storyteller (Donkor, 2007), within the palmwine music tradition, this does not necessarily question the narrator's knowledge. As in the example of the Agya Koo Nimo example, the interruption in the form of a dance from the audience suggests satisfaction and or an acceptance of the performance, whereas, in the Ralph Karikari example, we are introduced to a notion of new compositions as mentioned in Section 3.3.4. Thus, these new creations become the foundation of which a song is developed as in the context of the performance; these creations would be done in an extemporized manner.

From the preceding, we understand how palmwine musician in Ghana uses the nuances of the *anansesem* storytelling tradition in performance to express social sentiments. Either by the total performance frame or by how they borrow and use the medium of narration from *anansesem*, it is easy to conclude that Akan performance arts resonate with each other. And that is the sense of a shared commitment use these traditions as a medium of reflection and a critique of their society.

3.4 Ensemble and Performance Organization

Generally, palmwine ensembles are smaller in number, as the foregoing discussion in this chapter has pointed out. The historical narrative of the music tradition identifies palmwine ensembles into either trio or later developments of quartets and quintets. Agya Koo Nimo notes that although the earlier ensembles were primarily Trios, the ensembles beginning with his contemporaries embraced the inclusion of new musical instruments into the music tradition.⁴⁸ His suggestion immediately draws our attention to the numerical essence of the music tradition and how the instrumental resources may have played a role in the size of the ensemble. From the historical analysis of the palmwine music tradition in Chapter Three, we understand two distinct types of ensembles that

⁴⁸ John Collins, interview by author, August 4, 2017, Taifa, Accra

perform palmwine music. These are the Trio which I term *Adadam*⁴⁹ and the current group type which I also term *Ahomansia*. The categorization as *adadam* and *ahomansia* offers me an analytical framework to examine the palmwine bands and its organization. In this section, these groups are examined to understand their performance organization.

3.4.1 *Adadam* Ensembles

The *Adadam* ensembles characterize the early ensemble types that existed in the palmwine music tradition. It comprised the individual or solo type performance and the trio ensembles. At the onset of the music, tradition is the solo palmwine musicians whose ensemble comprises himself and his guitar. Characteristic of this type as it exists in the tradition is the fact that they were itinerant musicians and would often form instant groups wherever they held their performances. These usually consisted of their audience acting as the other members of their ensembles. The trio, however, resonated with the idea of an ensemble in this context. It comprises three members in which each member, besides playing a musical instrument, sing in addition. The trio originally consisted of three members with two guitar players and an *adakem* player who sometimes doubled as the clip's player. There appeared to be some form of strictness to the composition of the ensembles in those days. One can support this premise by arguing that the instrumental composition, as well as the itinerant nature of these palmwine musicians, could have inherently created this impression. For instance, although the Kumasi Trio were based in Kumasi, they often traveled to perform in the country's cocoa-growing areas (Collins, 2018: 91). Agya Koo Nimo concurs, pointing out that there were wealthy cocoa farmers in these areas who were in a position to patronize their performances.⁵⁰ The Kumasi Trio became the archetype of which other palmwine groups were modeled.

There are no historical notes on their performance styles as Collins has indicated that there were hardly specific venues where their performances were held beside the palmwine centers where the music was patronized in the early years. One can therefore

⁴⁹ *Adadam* is an Akan word which means olden or archaic

⁵⁰ Agya Koo Nimo, interview by author, September 15, 2017, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi

conclude that their performances were not that structured and were spontaneous. Today, however, the *adadam* ensemble type is not popular, although there are cases where individuals hold demonstrations. For instance, Ralph Karikari comments that there are occasions where he performs alone. As illustrated in the instrumental resource section, he finds ways of including other instruments in his solo performance.⁵¹ No known trio performs palmwine music, although there are instances where certain occurrences push performers to organize in trios.

3.4.2 Ahomansia Ensembles

Although there are hardly *adadam* ensembles that perform today, the music tradition is sustained by the performance of ensembles classified here as the *ahomansia*. As already mentioned, the description of *ahomansia* ensembles fits into that of the music style itself. By the 1980s, an extended type of palmwine ensembles emerged, which eventually characterized the organization of ensembles found in the music tradition today. This ensemble organization has mostly been attributed to the appearance of the Agya Koo Nimo led *Adadam Agofomma*. This quintet comprises two guitars, a *premprensiwa*, an indigenous drum, and the bells and rattles as the picture in figure 3.7 shows.

⁵¹ Ralph Karikari, interview by author, December 6, 2017, Mr. Adjei-Taifa, Accra



Figure 3.7 Agya Koo Nimo and his Adadam Agofomma in a performance at the ETS Drama Studio, University of Ghana, Legon-Accra. Picture by Eric Sunu Doe, April 2017

The ensemble, however, is sometimes composed of about ten people for performance these days. Although the *premprensiwa* was used in other ensembles, the instrument was first introduced within the palmwine music tradition to replace the *adakem* by Agya Koo Nimo. Likewise, he also introduced the indigenous drums in this setup; however, the *Adadam Agofomma* occasionally use the *adakem* in some of their performances, as discussed in Section 3.2.4.

The introduction of these new instrumental resources in the palmwine ensemble could be attributed to the fact that the *Adadam Agofomma*, with time, incorporated traditional dances into their performance repertory (Kaye, 1992). For instance, in a performance by the ensemble, there would often be two sets, the palmwine set and then the traditional dance set, whose instrumental resources are different from those of the palmwine set.⁵²

⁵² In the traditional dance set of *Adadam Agofomma*, Kaye (1992) notes that it consists of the *kete* and the *adowa* dance sets with each have their own instrumental resources. Their instrumental resources are built around the membranophones includes for the *adowa* – *atumpan*, *donno*, etc. and for the *kete* – the *petia*, etc.

Some of the softer sounding drums will eventually be incorporated into the palmwine set which came to stay. As I elaborate in Section 3.2.4, the incorporation of the drums, for instance, has become possible because of the amplification systems which are available for performances and which allow for every instrument to be heard.⁵³ This argument thus suggests that the earlier palmwine ensembles' performance circle was smaller than what exists today. As pointed out, their performance spaces were limited to those spaces earmarked for palmwine gatherings and, occasionally, patrons' compound houses (Collins, 1994). Palmwine ensembles formed recently appear to embrace the *Adadam Agofomma* format. For example, the Legon Palmwine Band, which is also a quintet, consists of a guitar, bells and rattle, *premprensiwa*, and the *kpanlogo* drums, whereas the Kwan Pa Band is a quartet the consists of a guitar, bells and rattle, *kpanlogo* drums and a *gome* drum as shown in figure 3.8 below.

A characteristic feature that has remained prominent in each of these types of ensembles is the vocals. No matter how each of the palmwine ensemble types has developed, the vocals have been constant in their role. In palmwine ensembles, there is always a lead vocal that leads the songs and their accompanying backing vocals. In the trio, two vocals backed the lead vocals in choruses, often in thirds, fifths, or even unison.

⁵³ This idea of amplification extends to other musical traditions which were popular around the time. For instance, in the early 1970s, other popular musical forms such as the Ga-cultural folk groups, guitar bands in Ghana and 'jujú' in Nigeria employed amplification when their percussion sections increased (Webb, 2011; Waterman, 1990).



Figure 3.8 Kwan Pa Band in a performance at the Presbyterian Church, Korle bu. Picture by courtesy Kwan Pa Band

In the *Adadam* ensembles, however, often not every member accompanies the lead vocals. Because of the larger composition, as already mentioned, they assign specific voices to complement the lead vocal as backing vocals. The Legon Palmwine Band, for instance, assigns three backing vocals to support the lead vocals, though they are a quintet. This designation is, however, not so with the Kwan Pa Band who practices the Trio style. Every member of the band supports the lead vocals as well as performs on their assigned instruments.

Palmwine music performance migrated from the rural context where one can argue for the music tradition's recreational nature. It is now mostly performed at organized events, although there are still scattered instances within specific rural communities where the palmwine music tradition still resonates with the earlier performance forms. This scenario leads us to examine the performance organization today. Unlike the earlier periods where performances were held in open spaces and for which the audience would most often than not surround the ensemble, there is now a demarcation between the performers and the audience. The ensemble is now set aside from the audience. Their performances are

sometimes organized in theatres or defined spaces where these demarcations are indicated. This demarcation brings to the fore Collin's argument on amplification. In this setting, the instrumental resources are amplified for the audience to hear the performances. Attention is given to setting up and tuning the instruments to have a unified sound in such performances. In addition, because of its attributes as a listening type of tradition, these spaces create that enabling room for the audience to listen audibly to the performance. It is often not about seeing the performer on stage but about what they are saying, although it makes complete sense when the ensemble is clearly visible on stage for the audience. On stage, the ensembles either sit in a horseshoe-like manner or in a linear way. There is no specific requirement for such stage organizations.

3.5 Conclusion

The chapter has examined and discussed how the palmwine music tradition's performance practice and how it has evolved since the 1990s. It explored the different instrumental resources, the musical resources as well as their ensembles, and their performance organization that continue to characterize the music tradition. It was identified that the instrumental resources include the guitar, the *premprensiwa*, the drums, the vocals as well as the bells and rattles. The *sadwa ase* style, with its numerous accompanying guitar styles, was highlighted as the most defining form from where palmwine musicians creatively find their voice. Likewise, their performances resonate with the *anansesem* storytelling tradition as palmwine music performance structure is an embodiment of this storytelling tradition. In the ensemble's organization, the conclusion is drawn that the availability of instruments for performances often determines the size of the ensemble, although as indicated in Agya Koo Nimo's ensemble, his broader musical repertory allows for the engagement of more musicians. The characteristic features as has been enumerated of the music tradition continue to evolve due to the constant development of the socio-cultural contexts of its performance practices. It stands to understand that specific socio-cultural structures continue to influence the performance practices of the palmwine music tradition in Ghana.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ECOLOGY OF PALMWINE MUSIC TRADITION IN GHANA

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the socio-cultural framework of the Palmwine music tradition and analyze how it influences its sustenance by examining activities of palmwine ensembles that emerged as an outcome of the project. It is premised on the notion that palmwine music ensembles like the performance practice of the music tradition has gradually experienced a decline and slowly fading away. The most notable surviving ensemble before the emergence of current groups is the *Adadam Agofomma* led by Agya Koo Nimo. A critical look at the membership of the ensemble today reveals that the core members of the group, including Agya Koo Nimo himself, are in their senior years. However, there is the presence of a few young members. Similarly, the few musicians who often engage in palmwine music performances are also in their senior years. It may have affected how rare their performance engagements have been over the last few decades and a reflection of the current state of the music tradition in general. Thus, as this study aims to achieve for a revitalization project, it became essential that it facilitated the establishment of palmwine ensembles to continue from where the predecessors are about leaving off. Two ensembles that have characterized this research project's efforts have been the Legon Palmwine Band and the Kwan Pa Band.

In order to understand how the socio-cultural elements of the palmwine music tradition influence its sustenance, I situate these two ensembles within the broader context of how their performance practice and activities have resonated with the social and cultural dynamics of the setting within which they find themselves. In a seminal work on a sustainable future for the world's music, Schippers (2016) identifies five-main-domains of musical sustainability in a contemporary context. He proposes assists in understanding how the forces that act on the sustenance of endangered music cultures. The domain positions learning systems, musicians and communities, context and constructs, infrastructure and regulations, media, and the music industry as key to understand the issues that influence music cultures. I embrace this framework to discuss how the socio-cultural dynamics of the palmwine music tradition influences its sustenance. The chapter

focuses mainly on how both the Legon Palmwine and Kwan Pa ensembles function within this context. The ensembles are first introduced before their activities are conceptualized within the frames of the domains.

4.2 The Legon Palmwine Band

In early 2015 whilst serving as the director of the Legon Highlife Ensemble,⁵⁴ the main popular music ensemble of the Department of Music of the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana, I observed among other issues an underlining misinterpretation of the different Ghanaian popular musical styles and its socio-historical contexts. It was noted how often discourses around such styles as palmwine music and guitar band highlife were categorized within the same bracket because the latter emerged from the former. According to Nyame in Collins (1996: 13), "Appiah Agyekum is the originator of these modern (guitar) bands. As for Sam (Kwame Asare), I can say it was folk music but not on the line of modernization." The distinction as drawn by E.K. Nyame espouses the argument made on the misinterpretation as noted. He appears to suggest that the folk music as Kwame Asare performed was palmwine music in the sense as discussed in chapter two and that there was a new interpretation of that which had resulted in the "modern" guitar bands.

Thus, on the side of the Legon Highlife Ensemble activities, I formed the Legon Palmwine Band with some selected students from the ensemble. The students initially included Alexander Obuobi, who was on percussion, Gotlieb Dogbey was on guitar, and Albert Kwame Owusu-Brown was on vocals and claves/shakers, as well as Seth Kpodo show in figure 4.1 below. The latter was on vocals and *frikyiwa* with me on the *premprensiwa*. A few months into the ensemble formation, both Alexander Obuobi and Gotlieb Dogbey requested to be exempted from the activities of the ensemble because of a heavy school workload and other commitments they were engaged in. Thus, Samuel Agyeman Boahen, who was then a Teaching Assistant, replaced the guitarist, and Edwin Nii Akwei Brown replaced the percussion. Thus, the instrumental lineup of the ensemble

⁵⁴ The ensemble was formerly named as the "Pop Ensemble"

consists of guitar, *kpanlogo* drums (percussion), *frikyiwa*, claves, shakers, *premprensiwa*, and vocals. This instrumental lineup was a direct copy of the palmwine lineup of the *Adadam Agofomma* except for the type of percussion, which varied as the Legon Palmwine ensemble mostly used the *kpanlogo* drums. In contrast, *Adadam Agofomma* uses *apentemma* and *petia*.

The ensemble concept was to experiment with performances of the music tradition within a contemporary context to gauge how it resonated with the university community, from the context of how a similar ensemble, the Local Dimension Band⁵⁵, whose performances satisfied the university community with folk music, has experienced a decline, thus the need to fill the space created. Consequently, the Legon Palmwine ensemble hosted a regular lunch hour concert, dubbed *nkwan kwaannuase*, in the School of Performing Arts on the Legon campus. The concerts, as much as serving as a platform to harness and develop the ensemble's performance capabilities within the tradition, also became useful in building their repertoire. Before joining the ensemble, almost all the members had little to no knowledge of the nuances of the palmwine music tradition and its performance practice. Kpodo (2020) observes that "most of us had no experience playing palmwine music at all. For example, I had no special experience with the music tradition, although I had heard a few palmwine songs when I was young." Similarly, Owusu-Brown (2017) acknowledges that although he had heard many of the songs that the ensemble performed, he had paid little attention to them; hence, they were not aware they were from the palmwine tradition and required certain performance idioms. In essence, their performances with the ensemble with time shaped their understanding of the performance practices of the music tradition.

⁵⁵ The Local Dimension Band initially named (Local Dimension Palmwine Guitar Band) was formed in 1998 by Aaron Bebe Sukura and John Collins at the then Music Department (now Department of Music) of the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana (Kudonu, 2012). Its instrumental resources included indigenous percussion (*Ga gome* drum, *premprensiwa*, *kpanlogo* drums), guitar, *seperewa*, and the local northern Ghanaian *gyil* (xylophone). The band has at various points included well-known Ghanaian highlife musicians and guitarists T.O. Jazz and C.K. Oppong.



Figure 4.1 Initial members of the Legon Palmwine Band. L-R: Sitting – Gotlieb Dogbey, Alexander Obuobi, the author; Standing – Albert Kwame Owusu-Brown. Picture by Isaac Odamtey, 2015, Legon Accra

The performances of the ensemble extended beyond the university environment with constant collaboration with Nana Asaase, who fused his poetry with palmwine music. This collaboration drew some attention to the ensemble, thus leading to performances on different platforms, including university congregations, theatrical shows, local and international conferences, local pubs, and specialized curated events. Thus far, the highlight for the ensemble's activities was their participation in 2016 in the 10th edition of the annual African Cultural Calabash festival hosted by the African Music and Dance Project of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa. Also, the ensemble has since 2017 been hosting an annual palmwine music festival dubbed *Nsadwase* Music Festival. The repertoire ensemble includes a variety of classic palmwine and popular tunes as well as their compositions, as is discussed later. Their maiden album titled *Legon Abrabɔ* was released in June in 2020.

4.3 The Kwan Pa Band

The Kwan Pa ensemble is relatively younger as compared to the Legon Palmwine ensemble. The ensemble was formed in 2017 by Andrew Asah Nkansah, who had long held the wish to set up his palmwine ensemble. Together with some church musical group members, Asah Nkansah was able to put together a five-member palmwine ensemble. According to Kotei (2019), the ensemble consists of instrumentalists from the Ebenezer Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in the Mamprobi suburb of Accra. Nkansah (2020) emphasizes that all the indicators were in place to form the ensemble at the time he did. He notes that "I just knew it was the right time to form the band because the human resource was there, the knowledge was also there." (Nkansah, *ibid*) Although he had developed an interest in the palmwine music tradition and experienced performances at a young age, his knowledge base and appreciation of the nuances of the music tradition came when he enrolled for a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Ghana. He then decided to form the Kwan Pa ensemble. He notes that

..... at the School of Performing Arts, I watched performances of the Legon Palmwine Band and took lessons in *seperewa* with Osei Kwame Korankye as well as our several conversations (with the author) gave me a better appreciation of the palmwine music tradition (Nkansah, *ibid*).

After unsuccessful attempts at convincing some of his course mates to form the ensemble, he decided to fall on the instrumentalist he performed within the church. Thus, upon speaking to some members of the church's music team, they decided to experiment, which led to the formation of the ensemble. Asah Nkansah notes that before their first meeting on the 31st of July 2017, none of the other members had any prior knowledge of the music tradition. Initially, the ensemble consisted of five-member including Andrew Asah Nkansah, who was on guitar. Frederick Kwame Agbexoasi Minamor was on percussion, Bismarck Kwabena Safo was on *gome*, Isaac Kwadwo Baah was on rattles/*nawuta*, and Kwaku Mensah was on *frikyiwa* as shown in figure 4.2 below. However, a few months later, with the group, Kwaku Mensah left because of his tight job schedules.



Figure 4.2 Kwan Pa Band performing at the Nsawase Music Festival in October 2017. L-R: Bismarck Kwabena Safo, Frederick Kwame Agbexoasi Minamor, Kwaku Mensah, Andrew Asa Nkansah, Isaac Kwadwo Baah. Picture by Eric Sunu Doe, Accra

The ensemble decided thus to maintain their number and have since been performing as a four-member ensemble. The ensemble's instrumental lineup was unique in the sense that it did not directly reflect the typical lineup of what most palmwine ensembles maintained. As pointed out, it included guitar, percussion which, like the Legon Palmwine ensemble, also had the *kpanlogo* but also included a *djembe*, *gome*, and rattles/*nawuta*. What makes their instrumental lineup stand out is the introduction of the *djembe* and *gome*, with the latter replacing the *premprensiwa* as in the case of the Legon Palmwine ensemble.

The ensemble, although established within the context of the church, was not necessarily a church group; however, because the members were instrumentalists who performed continuously in church, they were perceived as a church group even when performing as Kwan Pa. Nonetheless, initial performances were held within the church context as besides performing their church, they also performed at other Christian organized events. Their first significant performance was at the *Nsawase* Music Festival, where they

performed for an audience outside a church context for the first time. It was followed by paid gigs around the country. The ensemble has since secured regular gigs at hotels and restaurants. They participated in other more significant events such as the Music of Ghanaian Origin (MOGO) Festival in Accra in 2019 and the Vodacom Ghana Music Award (VGMA) also in 2019, where they were awarded as the Best Traditional Music Group in Ghana for 2018. The band won the Highlife Music Award (HMA) for the Best Palmwine Highlife Band award for 2019, as well as the Ghana Arts & Culture Awards (GACA) for the Traditional Music Group also for the year 2019. The ensemble's repertoire primarily focuses on their compositions and, like the Legon Palmwine ensemble, often including some of the classic palmwine tunes as is discussed later. The ensemble has more than forty compositions, of which they released their maiden album titled "*tu wo ho fo*" (advice yourself) in 2019.

4.4 Systems of Learning Palmwine Music

One of the critical elements in any music culture's sustenance is the transmission of musical knowledge from one generation to the other. According to Grant (2016: 19), the main aim of many initiatives that seek to foster the sustenance of music genres has mainly focused on improving this transmission process to the younger generations. In many musical cultures in Africa, the transmission of its musical knowledge, whether conducted within the context of either active or passive modes, have been mainly oral. Although this mode of knowledge transmission within African contexts remains oral, the teaching and training were direct (Nketia, 1964: 39; Smith, 1962: 7; Kwamena-Poh, 1975: 272; Gbolonyo, 2005: 23; Kuwor, 2013: 9; Pond, 2014: 181). In essence, the learning took place within a space of direct instructions or through conversations. This section focuses on how the palmwine ensembles have generally acquired knowledge on the music tradition. In particular, how the musical knowledge has been accessible and what the principal mode of transmission of the Legon Palmwine and Kwan Pa ensembles is examined. It is premised because for many of the members of the ensembles. However, they may have been familiar with some tunes of the music tradition. The nuances of the music tradition's performance practice were oblivious to them, coupled with the fact that knowledge of the music tradition became to the leaders by chance.

4.4.1 Understanding the Palmwine Concept

Palmwine music in Ghana fuses several musical elements in the production of its style, as discussed in Chapter Three. Thus, understanding the nuances of the music tradition, in general, becomes a challenge for learners. It is mostly tied to the fact that the musicians come to learn the palmwine music tradition with foreknowledge of how the instrument resource works. In situations where there is no such foreknowledge, Agya Koo Nimo suggests they are first exposed to learning new rhythms (Hark-Weber, 2015: 56). In the instance of both the Legon Palmwine and the Kwan Pa ensembles, although the members had fore musical knowledge and some experience with the common instrumental resources of their ensembles, they needed to be oriented on the nuances of how these musical instruments functioned within the music tradition. Kpodo (2020) asserts that for most of the Legon Palmwine ensemble members, before becoming members of the ensemble, they had no foreknowledge or experience in the palmwine music tradition. However, he admits that he had, on several occasions, heard a few songs that he now recognizes as palmwine tunes when he was young.

Additionally, Nkansah (2020) points out that although the members of the Kwan Pa were church instrumentalists, their first exposure to the music tradition was when they were introduced to the idea of forming the ensemble. Thus, both ensembles had to go through a process of orientation in the music tradition. In turn, it raises the question of how the facilitators of the ensembles themselves acquired knowledge of the music tradition.

My introduction to the music tradition was through different sources prior to forming and working with the Legon Palmwine ensemble. During my pre-tertiary education, I was often drawn to elderly folks who played the guitar, later understanding that what they played was palmwine music. However, whilst in the second year of my undergraduate studies, I took lessons in Ghanaian popular music and highlife guitar. My interest in the guitar-led me to seek further lessons, especially on the palmwine guitar styles from Agya Koo Nimo in Kumasi, where he was based. Essentially, my knowledge of the music tradition, which initially started informally, started to take shape when I entered the university and was enhanced with infrequent performance attendance of Agya Koo Nimo

in Accra. In essence, these experiences framed my understanding of the music tradition on which the Legon Palmwine ensemble was established.

On the contrary, Asah Nkansah notes that he has been attracted to the music tradition unknowingly since his childhood. The performances of Agya Koo Nimo on television always caught his attention to the extent of patronizing his live performances in such situations where they were closer to his home. He acknowledges that his understanding of the music tradition was enhanced when whilst studying at the University of Ghana, he patronized the Legon Palmwine ensemble performances during their *nkwankwaannuase* lunch hour concerts. He cites the instances of when he studied *seperewa* with Agya Osei Korankye whilst still a student at the University of Ghana, and his frequent conversations with the author on the palmwine music tradition in particular and on the general Ghanaian music industry in general.

From the discussion thus far, one concludes that through their learning processes, even though there were constant exchanges on the music tradition, leading their respective ensembles to understand the nuances of the music tradition's performance practice was shaped by their individual experience and understanding of the music tradition. These formed the knowledge base on which both ensembles have been shaped. The understanding of the concept of the palmwine music tradition by both ensembles, therefore, is embedded in the training approaches which was employed.

4.4.2 Training the Musicians

Historically there are no particular instructional approaches to teaching palmwine music in Ghana. As already indicated above, the transmission mode of the music tradition has reflected one which is oral. Documentary evidence of the learning process of the pioneers of the music tradition has pointed to learning by association or through apprenticeship (Collins, 2018: 85). Burns (2016) has pointed out that for many traditional societies in Ghana, musical knowledge has been passed on informally from one generation to the other, citing the case of the Anlo Ewe to back his position. Similarly, Karikari (2017) notes that his knowledge of the palmwine music tradition was by listening to palmwine

songs and imitating what he heard. Likewise, for Agya Koo Nimo, although he took some lessons with his friends in school, the lessons were supplemented with listening to records of pioneers of the music tradition in addition to his association with the elders of his community (Kaye, 1999). His significant exposure to the performance practice of the music tradition was his practical experience as a member of a palmwine ensemble, which was commissioned by the radio section of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation to perform. Consequently, and related to the current ensembles, what has characterized the training of the members of the Legon Palmwine and Kwan Pa ensembles.

The typical approach that runs through the mode both ensembles employ in training their members has mostly been close listening to songs and then experimenting during both rehearsals and performance contexts. For instance, the primary mode of learning the *nsadwase* styles of the music tradition for the Legon Palmwine ensemble has been by listening and watching "audiovisuals and guided performances" (Kpodo, 2020). He points out that initially, when the ensemble started, the members were guided in terms of what to pay attention to when learning from selected repertoire by their leader. It was because of the experience he had gained in the music tradition. In addition to each member was to mainly focus their attention on how their specific instruments functioned in as much as they paid close attention to the nuances of performances in their totality. Thus, in rehearsals, these nuances are replicated and adjusted to reflect the ensemble's character directly.

The foreknowledge of their primary instruments also eased the learning process. For instance, Edwin Nii Akwei Brown had majored in percussion for his undergraduate studies; hence his learning process was smooth. In most instances, the guitarist needed to understand the stylistic framework of the palmwine tune being played, and then he improvised as Agya Koo Nimo points out, "personal idiosyncrasies" is an essential fact in the learning process of the guitar styles (Hark-Weber, 2015: 56). In the Kwan Pa case, besides the percussionist whose role did not change from the role performed outside the ensemble, the other members had to select the instruments that suited or were close to the primary instrument they played outside of the group. The *gome* player in the ensemble

was naturally drawn to the instrument as its function was similar to the bass guitar he plays, with the only difference being the dynamics of play as whereas the bass guitar was plucked, the *gome* was drummed (Nkansah, 2020). The Kwan Pa ensemble spent a more extended period in the learning process as compared to the Legon Palmwine ensemble because its members were new to the music tradition as earlier noted before their public engagement.

The ensembles connected themselves with culture bearers of the music tradition by listening to records and watching earlier ensembles' performances. It contextualizes the idea of self-learning by these ensembles. In this instance, Agya Koo Nimo became the source of contact for the ensembles. The Legon Palmwine ensemble has visited with him for guidance and advice on the performance of the music tradition on several occasions. Similarly, Kwan Pa in 2018 visited him also to learn directly from him. For instance, this close relationship led to Agya Koo Nimo serving as the special guest when the ensemble launched its maiden album in 2019. From the preceding, although historically the transmission of the music tradition has reflected one of oral, how the knowledge has been transmitted today differs.

Whereas in the case of earlier musicians of the tradition, the learning process was framed within the context of direct contact in most cases through apprenticeship, today the transmission is mainly through close listening and observing video performances in addition to participating in occasional performance events by the older generation. Furthermore, the ensembles today seem to have embraced learning by apprenticeship but in a rare and infrequent form. Often a member goes through the learning process and then share the knowledge with the other members.

It is essential to point out that palmwine musical knowledge is not easily accessible, as the case of the ensembles has demonstrated. Learning spaces are non-existent unless individuals create these spaces; hence, establishing these ensembles had to be premised on the sole knowledge of individuals and their experiences. In the case of the Legon Palmwine ensemble, although the group was established within the university

environment where the expectation would have been easy access to knowledge of the music tradition, this was hardly the situation. Indeed, the status of the guitar instrument which is directly linked to the palmwine music tradition has historically been low (Collins, 2007; Takyi Donkor, 2013). Collins points out that long after the independence of the country in 1957, the status of the instrument was regarded low amongst local academics because of its association with drunkenness and an itinerant life-style which contributed it not being formally taught at the university level.⁵⁶ However, from the late 1980s the guitar and palmwine styles were introduced to the universities by Kwaa Mensah at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in the 1980s, John Collins at the University of Ghana (UG) in the late 1990s and Koo Nimo at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in the early 2000s.

4.5 Palmwine Musicians and their Communities

Palmwine musicians have historically maintained separate careers in addition to playing in ensembles in order to earn a regular income, as is familiar with many traditional musicians in Ghana. For instance, Burns (2016) acknowledges that although Ewe musicians enjoy a respectable stature in their communities, they maintain regular jobs to earn a consistent source of income. For the best part of his performing career, Agya Koo Nimo held a position as a lab technician at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi (Kaye, 1999). The musicians of the Legon Palmwine and the Kwan Pa ensembles have varying jobs. Besides playing with the ensemble, the members of the Legon Palmwine ensemble maintain other jobs. Initially, when the group started, with the exception of the author who held a position as an Assistant Lecturer at the University of Ghana, the other members of the ensemble were either students or Teaching Assistant in the same institution. Thus, they could focus on the activities of the ensemble as well as their other assignments.

Today, however, the ensemble has become a part-time group. Upon their completion from the university, they have been engaged in other activities, although these activities

⁵⁶ Personal communication with John Collins, 24th May 2021

are within the music industry in order in addition to performing with the ensemble. For example, both Seth Kpodo and Albert Kwame Owusu-Brown regularly perform with a pop group in Accra whilst Samuel Agyeman Boahen operates a recording studio, and Edwin Nii Akwei Brown is employed as a drum instructor at the Department of Dance Studies of the University of Ghana. Kwan Pa similarly started in the Legon Palmwine ensemble lines as its members were engaged in other activities. Besides receiving allowances when they play in church, the members of the ensemble also held other jobs to earn an income. For instance, Andrew Asah Nkansah confirms that Isaac Kwadwo Baah was initially a footballer, whereas Bismarck Kwabena Safo was a photographer/videographer and Frederick Kwame Agbexoasi Minamor was a sale assistant in a shop at the Makola market in Accra (Nkansah, 2020). However, they are all now solely focused on the Kwan Pa project on a full-time basis, thus becoming their primary livelihood source.

Palmwine musicians did not particularly command any social status, although, with time, a few musicians have gained some prestige within the society. A typical example has Agya Koo Nimo, who is revered by his colleagues to the extent of rising to become president of the Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA) at a time the union was unstable (Kaye, 1992). This reputation could be attributed to the fact that his performance contexts and settings were quite different from the others. As I suggest in Chapter Two, the different contexts of emergence and performance of the music tradition may have contributed to the status issues in addition to the level of formal education some of the musicians attained. As Agya Koo Nimo observes, palmwine musicians have been considered as drunkards and of no use to their communities. This tag is devoid of the vital role these musicians played within the context of *nsadwase* where he notes that whilst people

...took sips from their calabash they listened carefully to every word and their meanings in the songs influenced every movement of their lives...those who sat here were not pretentious, and the men who had come with their guitar had to

speak their languages. The songs were about their life through the eyes of the common man (Edmunds, 2016).

Although the palmwine musicians at the *nsadwase* were not considered highly within the community, the crucial roles they played within these contexts often resonated with the kind of social discourse that emerged. I posit that the move into commercializing the music tradition I discussed in Chapter Two also contributed to its acceptance within the community. Because the music tradition was now removed from the local *nsadwase* contexts into a space where the music could be accessed nationally, juxtaposed with the growing attention popular music at the university level gained, many scholars began to pay attention to the musical traditions of the guitar. Collins (2005) also observed that the guitar was primarily accepted when guitar bands emerged in worship at local churches in the late 1980s. He points out that the new context of how and where the guitar was used contributed to its recognition. Today, however, these two ensembles assume a relatively different status. We could attribute this to the educational background and or the changing socio-cultural environment.

4.5.1 The Palmwine Musicians-Community Relationship

The significance of palmwine music in the community lies within the part it plays. On the one hand, palmwine music serves as a source of entertainment during *nsadwase* gatherings and in another as a repository of Akan musical heritage. The music tradition is, however, considered old-fashioned, especially within today's contexts. Thus, in what ways do these current ensembles relate to the community, and what are the challenges the musician's encounter. The perception of the music tradition as old-fashioned seems to have characterized how the members of both the Legon Palmwine and Kwan Pa ensembles are perceived. For instance, Seth Kpodo notes that there have been several occasions when his friends have referred to him as an older adult, although young.

Similarly, the kind of reception the ensemble receives when invited to perform confirms this perception. The ensembles are often seen as an old group whose music does not resonate with the current trend. However, when performances start, their expressions depict one of surprise. This expression of surprise can be attributed to the fact that there

has been less exposure to the music tradition by the general public, especially those of the younger generation. The scenario is different from a few decades ago when Agya Koo Nimo notes that his ensemble has been booed off the stage several times. He narrated two incidents when he had been invited to perform in Kumasi

When I came to this university (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology) to perform with my ensemble, and I played the *premprensiwa* and other things. The students immediately started leaving the hall. Again, I once played at the Cultural Centre (Centre for National Culture, Kumasi), and they hooted at me. They claimed that what I was doing was ‘*tete*’ (archaic), it is ‘*colo*’ (colonial), and this is what I have realized (Nimo, 2017).

In another incident, he narrates what he thought was a candid opinion of the kind of music he practiced. He notes that

The brother of one Dr. Ntiful, who was a biophysicist, heard me play, and he noted that this person singing is 1) not educated, has never been to school before, 2) is either a driver’s mate (a bus conductor) or he is an older man somewhere in a village who is frustrated in life, he is philosophizing, you know.

These scenarios do not reflect how the ensembles today are perceived as performances often attract large audiences and suggest the music tradition is gradually finding resonance with the community, especially among the youth.

The recreational nature of the music tradition, especially which resonated with the *nsadwase*, appears to have gradually been pushed into extinction. This recreational nature of the music tradition was confirmed when it was challenging to find a spot during fieldwork. Although a few spots could be located, these sites were rather palmwine selling joint devoid of the descriptions in books and from interviews conducted; in many of the spaces where I was directed to, there was obvious estate development. However, I had interactions with a few sellers who have been consigned to the roadside. The result of the vacuum being created by the extinction of these spaces is the emergence of the

current commercial spaces, which are occupied by these ensembles. Over the few years of their existence, both ensembles have built a community of followers that continue to grow. This community following has also been aided by regular performances where these patrons come to participate in their performances. Kwan Pa, for instance, performs weekly at the Zen Gardens in Accra, the Royal Senchi Hotel at Akosombo in the Eastern Region, and Volta Serene Hotel in Ho in the Volta Region whilst the Legon Palmwine ensemble hosts the monthly performance circles sessions titled *Nsadvase Nkɔmɔ* which was instituted, as a result, this study. Whereas the weekly performances of the Kwan Pa are financially rewarding, the Legon Palmwine ensembles depend on infrequent performances they are commissioned to play outside of the performance circles.

4.5.2 Being a Palmwine Musician

Unlike previously, when the palmwine musicians dedicated most of their time at *nsadvase* or sometimes at funeral grounds when commissioned to perform. The palmwine ensembles today spend their performance time at the specific venues. Here they schedule special rehearsals to learn and create new materials. In addition, much of their time is spent recording their materials for commercial purposes. These recording periods are made possible because of these recording facilities' ubiquitous nature today. The Kwan Pa ensemble has, for instance, already released an album, and the Legon Palmwine ensemble is also working on releasing one. The participation of women in palmwine music has, over the years, been very minimal. There is hardly any documented record of a female palmwine music ensemble to have existed, although there has been some form of participation in male ensembles. Nkansah (2020) acknowledges that gender was not particularly influential in his decision making during the period the Kwan Pa ensemble was established. In a similar situation, the idea was mooted for the formation of the Legon Palmwine ensemble focused mainly on interested and committed students who would contribute to the goal of the ensemble. However, on several occasions, some female students requested to join the ensemble when public performances were frequent. Despite the low presence of females in the music tradition over the years, the *Adadam Agofomma* maintains a female presence in their ensemble. Similarly, in its early days, the

Local Dimension Band also included female members who were either vocalists or percussionist (Kudonu, 2012).

In Chapter Three, the argument pushed forth is that the music tradition is Akan nature hence is often considered among one of the Akan musical traditions. This conclusion is based on the origins and general stylistic characteristics of the music tradition. For instance, the *Adadam Agofomma*, which is based in Kumasi, the heart of the Ashanti region, maintains many of the musical characteristics of the Ashanti. In addition, all the members are Akan, although Agya Koo Nimo mentioned to me one time that there was once a Ga lady who was a member of the ensemble. The membership of the Legon Palmwine and Kwan Pa ensembles reflects one of diversity as the members come from different ethnic backgrounds, although they all are based in Accra. Kudonu (2012: 25-26) has observed this to be one of the current trends within Ghana's popular musical practice today. In the case of the Legon Palmwine ensemble, for instance, Seth Kpodo is an Akyem from Akyem Oda. Samuel Agyeman Boahen has both Akyem and Asante lineage, with the author is also an Akyem from Kyebi. All these Akyem towns are situated in the Eastern region of Ghana. Edwin Nii Akwei Brown, on the other hand, has a Ga and Ewe ancestry. The members of the Kwan Pa ensemble are more diverse as compared to the Legon Palmwine ensemble. Andrew Asah Nkansah is an Akuapem who hails from Akropong. Kwabena Safo is an Akyem from Akyem Sekyere all in the Eastern region, and Kwame Minamor is Ewe from the Volta region with Kwadwo Baah hailing from Gomoa Fetteh in the Central region.

Although the majority of the members of both ensembles have an Akan lineage, this does not take away from the fact that the inclusion and performance heritage brought on board from these other lineages influences the nuances of the performance practice of the music tradition. However, there some occasions where the performance event embraces these influences. For instance, Edwin Nii Akwei Brown is always advocating for the inclusion of Ga songs in the repertoire of the Legon Palmwine ensemble. In addition, cultural inclusion could be argued to reflect on the material culture of the ensembles. For

example, in the Legon Palmwine ensemble, there is an inclusion of the *kpanlogo* drums in their lineup, an instrument that is mainly common among some Ga musical traditions.

Similarly, the Kwan Pan ensemble employs the *gome*, the *kpanlogo* drums, as well as the *djembe* on some occasions. The *gome*, although reasonably popular with some Akan communities, especially among the Fante along the coast, is predominantly commonly used mainly by Ga (Collins, 2018: 238-241). The nuances of the material culture in some way influence the sonic sound as well as the performance aesthetics.

Palmwine musicians have had some diasporic exposure. Historically, some musicians have either had the opportunity to perform for audiences outside of the country or have taught in some schools outside. For instance, Agya Koo Nimo, besides having performed at numerous musical festivals outside of the country, has had the opportunity to teach at some universities in America. Similarly, Ralph Karikari and Kwabena Nyama have led workshops on the music tradition in Europe, especially in the early 2000s (Karikari, 2017). This exposure has led to collaborations with other international musicians. For instance, in 1988, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) commissioned a documentary project in which Agya Koo Nimo and Lancelot Layne, a Calypso musician from Trinidad and Tobago, engaged in cultural exchanged involving their respective musical cultures (Crossing Over, 1989). Today, between the two ensembles, the Legon Palmwine ensemble has participated in the African Cultural Calabash Festival in Durban, South Africa, as noted above, as well as performed at several international conferences. In 2018, for instance, the ensemble performed at the 2nd Symposium of the Study Group on African Musics of the International Council of Traditional Music (ICTM) in Accra. In addition, I have had the privilege to tutor some students of the African Music and Dance (AMD) Project of the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the performance practice of the music tradition. He has also engaged in performances in and around Durban. In essence, these international appearances and activities have contributed to the promotion of the music tradition.

4.6 The Context and Constructs of Palmwine Music

Palmwine music-making has historically been associated with *nsadwase* settings besides the fact that some musicians moved into the commercial spaces over time, as discussed in Chapter Two. There are also recorded instances where performances did take place during festivals organized occasionally, as well as funerals and life cycles events or curated events. In a description of the *nsadwase* above, Agya Koo Nimo highlights the significance of the music-making within these contexts as these spaces were designated areas where public discourse which centered on issues that affected the community often in song most of the time influenced some form of social change. Today, however, these spaces appear to have disappeared as a result of the current spate of urbanization taking place in many of these communities. The resultant end to this development is that the music-making process within the context may have shifted into other contexts, which are today mainly within the ensembles. The ensembles have become the generator of such discourses in the context of the songs they create. The communal essence of the music-making process of contributing to the discourse is lost.

4.6.1 Socio-cultural Context of Palmwine music

Both the Legon Palmwine and Kwan Pa ensembles have been set up in a way such that their music-making process aims to satisfy a certain kind of audience. They mainly satisfy commercial entities, and thus their survival has depended mainly on the remunerations they receive from such performances. The context of music-making of these ensembles is premised on the notion of capitalizing on the re-presenting of an old music tradition in a new context as a result of the state music tradition. For instance, most of their performances have been constructed within curated contexts such as musical events, including academic conferences, television shows, music festivals as well as performance circles. For the Legon Palmwine ensemble, for instance, many of its performance within these curated events have been at the conference settings where there is a diverse audience.

Similarly, the Kwan Pa ensemble has positioned as a commercial palmwine group; thus, their performances have often been constructed in such spaces as restaurants and hotels,

which have attracted an audience from much more significant events and festivals. For instance, in 2019, besides performing at the Vodacom Ghana Music Awards, where they also received the award for the Best Traditional Music Artist of the year 2018. For them to have been recognized by this prestigious music award in Ghana suggests how influential the music-making and performances of the music tradition continue to shape the musical landscape, especially for a musical tradition that was in a state of decline.

4.6.2 The Construct of Palmwine Music Performances

Palmwine music-making today requires some form of financial commitment in most cases for the production of a performance event. It has been observed that spaces that are not commodified besides the recreational pleasure of an individual have been a monthly performance circle. Music-making, in this context, is generally opened to everyone, requires participants to participate in the process of making the music. Other performance constructs often model on pop music formats assumes different music-making arrangement. In the discussion that follows, the performance approaches by the ensembles as situated within these constructs are examined. The repertoire, material culture, and costumes are highlighted as they exemplify the current revitalization process of the music tradition.

4.6.2a Repertoire

In a given performance, one observes that the repertoire is constructed according to the timeline of the songs which are performed. According to Nkansah (2020), the Kwan Pa ensemble's performance usually starts with $\frac{6}{8}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ time and gradually moves into the $\frac{4}{4}$ time signature. In Chapter Three, it is noted that there are specific stylistic trends of the *nsadwase* style are associated with specific timelines. However, the frame of the performances constructed by these ensembles today can be categorized into conventional palmwine, palmwine highlife, palmwine 'pop' songs, and palmwine *jama*.

Conventional Palmwine Performance

The conventional palmwine music performance framework is directly situated within *nsadwase* styles or on the classic songs of the pioneers of the music tradition. The

performances of the Kwan Pa ensemble mostly entail performing a couple of songs from the repertoire of Agya Koo Nimo as well as early palmwine musicians that includes including the Kumasi Trio and Kakaiku. Similarly, besides observing the Legon Palmwine ensemble perform many of the songs of these early pioneers of the music tradition, the author participated in the creative process where original compositions were directly modeled on some of the stylistic traits of these early musicians. Elaborating on the creative process, Kpodo (2020) admits that "when writing songs, members of the ensemble take cues from what has been done by predecessors of the music tradition but put in a blend of contemporary materials." Whilst admitting to creating new compositions within the frame of palmwine musicians before them, he further points out that they bring onboard into the process their own contemporary interpretations, which are often premised on other musical styles influencing them. This creative process is evident in, for instance, the '*ɔtonkorowa*' song, one of the popular songs of the ensemble.

Originally the song is a folk cradlesong; however, the ensemble re-contextualized the song by writing new lyrics to reflect the new theme and situating the song within one of the stylistic traits of the palmwine music tradition. The song talks about love within the context of meeting a soul mate who loves you regardless of any material gains. The lyrics read

ɔtonkorowa agyina me,
 me ne wo be ko apintin,
 me ne wo be ko agyaama
 ako nkran ako ton,
 ako pe sika aba fie,
 abe hwe se fie be ye yie a
 yee yee Awura Pokua ey,
 ɔtonkorowa agyina me

Kwadwo mea me te he ho yi,
 ma dwene ne se
 obaa obe do me paa dee,
 nka menya bi da
 fise nne mmaa aba yi,
 ope adane sika oo, na odo adane ahoofe,
 se wo nni bi a yen do wo,

sɛ wo nni bi a yɛn mpe wo, Akua ey

ɛnso m'ahyia Awurama Ama,
ɔde ne to nkorowa yi agyina me
me de too na nim sɛ, Ama ey me dɔ wo paa
ɔno nso see me sɛ, ɔbɛ kyere me ɔdɔ kaan
ɔne me bɛ kɔ apintin, na ɔne me aa bɛ kɔ agyaama
akɔ nkran akɔ tɔn, de akɔ pɛ sika aba fie
abɛ hwɛ sɛ fie bɛ yɛ yie a
yee yee yee Awura Pokua ey,
ɔtonkorowa agyina me

The song is in the *odonson* style of the *nsadwase* style and played in a 6_8 time. It revolves around a two chordal progression of ||iii – IV||. The melody resonates with one which is couched in both a strophic and non-strophic form were in-between the singing, the lead vocals are heard speaking although not very prominent (Nketia 1994). Although the melody sings the verse, there are several two-part harmonies in sections of the melody. The two-part harmony is a 5th apart, similar to how the chorus is harmonized. This harmonic process can be attributed to the fact that; the chorus is built on a two-part harmony as well. This type of harmony resonates with the traditional Akan singing style, which is constructed on the heptatonic scale with a flattened seventh. The song is performed in the key of D-major with the guitar playing the harmonic accompaniment often to embellishing the song with licks.

Palmwine Highlife Performance

The palmwine highlife section of the performance frame of the two ensembles is mainly constructed to resonate with the *osibisaaba* forms of the *nsadwase* style. Again, as noted in Chapter Three, the form is characterized mainly by the 4_4 timeline within the *amponsah* rhythm. Although the style is palmwine in nature, the ensembles would mostly cover highlife songs which are composed within this stylistic format. Hence such popular highlife songs by artists such as Nana Ampadu, CK Mann, and Abrantie Amakye Dede are covered. It is often during this section of the performance that the Kwan Pa ensemble performs classic highlife songs. According to Nkansah (2020), these classic highlife songs are superimposed on palmwine rhythms. In essence, these songs are framed within

the *nsadwase* style of the *amponsah* rhythm. In addition to covering the classic highlife songs, the ensembles write their own songs within this rhythmical framework. This new creative process is characterized in "*Tu wo ho fo*" (advice yourself), one of the songs of their maiden album.

The song admonishes potential brides to be respectful of the traditional customs associated with the marriage institution by following the prescribed procedure as the consequences might be unpleasant if disobeyed. It narrates a guy who attempts to catch the attention of his girlfriend by whistling from outside the window of her home. It warns of the consequences should the father of the lady responds to the call.

A

1 nti nea wo ye yi, ye kye woa wo be de

[so what will you do when you are caught doing what you are doing]

2 obi mpuma ekyi na wo gyina de siisii

[you are behind someone's window whistling]

3 ne papa kye woa, m'adamfo woa so be ye shi see

[you will be in hot waters when her father catches you]

4 ema nu nya ansa oo,

[do not let it happen before;]

5 woa nkasa tu wo ho fo, with immediate effect

[you should advice yourself with immediate effect]

6 ok, ya ka na se won tie, enea tie e

[ok, when we say and you won't listen, then you should listen]

B

7 yen fa nu see ne papa akye wo,

[let us assume you have been caught by her father]

8 woa bisa wo asem wo hu akyere wo

[he has questioned you and you are in hot waters]

9 woa ma ne ba nu agye nsem ashe nu

[you have let his daughter go astray]

10 papa yi nso na kuma ben no, hwe
[her father is also quick tempered, see]

11 etuo na eda ho nu enye decoration
[he has a gun, it is not for decoration]

12 papa yi wo black belt woa to nu Kaneshie
[the man has a black belt, he bought it at Kaneshie]

13 wo di agoro aa asaase a gye wo taataa
[if you joke, the ground/floor will welcome you]

14 bra to wo hu fo with immediate effect
[my brother, advice yourself with immediate effect]

Although performed within this highlife context, the song embraces a section of *kasahare* (to speak fast), a notion that is situated in the hip-life tradition in Ghana (Osumare, 2014; Shipley, 2016). The form of the song can be likened to the binary form with several repetitions of the A before moving to B as illustrated below

||A-A¹-A²|B|A- A¹|B|A- A¹||

Section A is sung with the repetition not directly varying from the main. However, there are extensions at the end with such exclamation as "her!" and the name Kwadwo. These extensions then lead to a short-spoken bridge in line 6 that leads into the B section with the *kasahare*. The mood of the song changes within this section as the groove draws the attention of the listener with its rhythmic punches. This section is accompanied by the percussion and the *gome* with an intermittent vocal response by the other vocals, especially in lines 8, 10, 12, and 14. It can be said to resonate with the call-and-response, which characterizes much African singing practice. A break characterizes the transition back to the A section.

As it is typical of the *amponsah* form, the chordal progression of the song resolves around ||I-I₇-IV₆-V₇||. Although the song begins on Chord I, the accompaniment,

however, begins on the IV₆ with the entry of line 1. Once the song is in motion, the cycle returns to the framework of the harmonic progression. This harmonic framework is significantly more pronounced on the guitar accompaniment because of its role within the music tradition - the song is characterized by several harmonization points, which deviates from the verse-chorus format of the highlife music form. For instance, from the second part of line 3 up to line 5, we hear a three-part harmony, a third and fifth above what the melody, which is sung with a baritone voice. Although we hear the harmonic extensions as characterized in the guitar accompaniment, the vocals resonate with the simple harmonic structure. Palmwine musicians are not interested in harmonies and difficult chords; instead, they emphasize simple chords over intricate rhythmic fingerpicking, as pointed out in Chapter Three. This song clearly exemplifies this notion.

Palmwine 'pop' Songs

During this section of the performances, the ensembles perform songs that are primarily selected from a pool of current pop songs and perform them within the framework of palmwine rhythms as characterized in the *nsadwase* styles. These current pop styles include afro-pop, hip-life, and Ghanaian dancehall music. During fieldwork, there were on some occasions that I experienced the ensemble's performances of songs from outside the country but within the stylistic nuances of the palmwine music tradition. One example that became popular among audiences was Kwan Pa's rendition of Frederic Austin's "Twelve Days of Christmas" during the Christmas festivities of the 2018 season. This song appears to have become a popular carol used to celebrate Christmas every year since. The song titled "Five Days of Christmas" was re-contextualized to resonate with local sensitivities of the season. It was reframed within the *dagomba* form of the *nsadwase* style in call-and-response and highlights how the Ghanaian child interprets and celebrates Christmas. The lyrics read

On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me
A partridge in a pear tree

On the second day of Christmas, my true love gave to me
Paya ne angwa mu
And a partridge in a pear tree

On the third day of Christmas, my true love gave to me
Fanta ne nkatie
Paya ne angwa mu
And a partridge in a pear tree

On the fourth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me
Kɔtɔ ne abɛ nkwan
Fanta ne nkatie
Paya ne angwa mu
And a partridge in a pear tree

On the fifth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me
Kontomire
Kyingom ne alewa,
nkatie ne kɔtɔ a ya tu tu
And a partridge in a pear tree

Although the song embraces the melodic nuances of the original song adapts it within the context of the music tradition. In the first place, the style in which it is arranged is the *dagomba* form, and the gift items are different besides "a partridge in a pear tree." The other gifts are crafted in edibles. For instance, *paya ne angwa mu* (pear and oiled riced) is one of the delicacies particularly common in the rural areas in the country. The gifts, which are food items, are everyday items that characterize the season for the rural folk. For many of the city dwellers, today could resonate with the descriptions painted as in Ghana, people travel back into their villages for the season, and these items characterize the meals they have. One is also quickly drawn with the codeswitching employed in the song. Quarcoo et al. (2014: 5) have noted that the Ghanaian youth who live in many of the cities in the country have a multilingual and multicultural orientation.

This multilingual and multicultural orientation can be attributed to the fact that these cities have become cosmopolitan in nature, with many migrating for greener pastures. They note that they are likely to have an obligatory language in school for the average Ghanaian student, which is English, and then a home language which often is directly their mother tongue. In addition to these two-basic languages, there are other ancillary

languages that are spoken around them. For instance, in their schools, besides the official languages, most students speak pidgin English amongst themselves, and then in the local communities, depending on which ethnic grouping dominates the area, they are likely to learn those languages as well besides their mother tongue. As we learn from the membership composition of the Kwan Pa ensemble, they are all from different areas, thus coming together as a group reflects a convergence of different languages. However, they are all fluent in the Twi language; thus, switching from the different languages becomes relatively fluid.

The original counts twelve days; however, in Kwan Pa's rendition, they limit the days to five, and within these days, we are introduced to a combination of different meals. For instance, we are introduced to *paya ne angwa mu* (pear with oiled rice), *fanta ne nkatie* (fanta with peanuts or groundnut), *kɔtɔ ne abɛ nkwan* (crab with palm-nut soup), *kotomire* (spinach), *kyingom ne alewa* (chewing gum with homemade toffee), *nkatie ne kɔtɔ a ya tu tu* (peanut/groundnut with a grilled crab). These meal combinations are directly reflective of how the writer tries to capture the gift items that characterize the different age groups. For instance, chewing gum and homemade toffee are the kinds that children are drawn to. Similarly, meals like the crab with palm-nut soup are what will be served in homes.

Palmwine *jama*

This section of the performance frame is often when the ensembles would have reached the climax of their performance events; thus, songs will often be a fast tempo as characterized in the traditional *jama* style. The *jama* is a musical style that is particularly common among Ga in Accra and characterized by a fast tempo meant to facilitate dancing. Although there is vocal accompaniment, they are often sung in either union or in a third or fifth part. Both ensembles employ this section in their performance practice. For instance, Kwan Pa has instituted this approach that climaxes their performances as at this stage of their performances, and they invite their patrons to join in the performance. The Legon Palmwine ensemble a kind that is particularly suited to the palmwine tradition but the situation in the highlife genre. However, their strict adherence to the essence of

the music tradition positions their approach to this performance section. The Kwan Pa is, however, more embracive of the *jama* because, again, their material culture has instruments standard in both traditions.

4.7 Material Culture and Costumes of Palmwine Ensembles

In his paper on the musical repertory of Koo Nimo, Kaye (1999) highlights the essence of both instrumental resources and costumes to the palmwine music tradition. He notes that these, besides further enhancing the performances, situate the music tradition within its Akan culture aesthetically. The instrumental resources of both ensembles, although it resonates with the musical tradition they differ. Kwan Pa, for instance, introduces musical instruments that otherwise do not characterize the music tradition. The instrumental resources of the music tradition have evolved over time as there have been additions and exclusion in the lineup, despite the fact that at *nsadwase*, the instrumental resources that accompanied the music-making did not necessarily influence the required lineup of the instruments that comprise the palmwine music tradition. The instrumental resources of the pioneering Kumasi Trio can be read in the lineup that has characterized the music tradition. This lineup thus assumed the instrumental lineup that succeeding ensembles employed in performances. In the lineup of the Kumasi Trio were the guitars and percussions that comprised of the *adaka* and claves as well as cigarette tin. The *premprensiwa* replaced the *adaka* with time, but the essential instrumental resources remained unchanged.

In addition, these change drums were introduced to the instrumental lineup by Agya Koo Nimo to complement the *premprensiwa*. Today, both ensembles use the essential instrumental lineup with the exception of the Kwan Pa, who has introduced the *gome* to its lineup. The use of the *gome* is particularly curious as in the late 1970s, Ga-folk music employed the instrument in what has been described as the Ga version of palmwine music (Coplan, 1978: 112).⁵⁷ The use of the *gome* by Kwan Pa Band should be situated within the broader picture of how the music tradition is being reinterpreted by these

⁵⁷ Refer also to Chapter Two

young ensembles. The issue of location plays a factor in the adoption of the instrument by the Kwan Pa ensemble. As already pointed out, the ensemble was formed in an area known as Mamprobi, a traditional suburb of Accra. Asah Nkansah has noted that

For the instrument like the *gome*, of course, we did not have the *premprensiwa* at the time the ensemble was starting. I can tell you that by the time the band was starting, if we had the *premprensiwa*, we would have used it but thank God we did not have the *premprensiwa* because currently, we seem to love the *gome* for the low frequencies. That is not to say we will never use the *premprensiwa* because I have actually placed an order for one. But the *gome* seem to work for us, so yes, the *gome* we placed it with the *premprensiwa* (Nkansah, 2020)

Although Asah Nkansah admits that at the time of the formation of the ensemble, they would have used the *premprensiwa* should the instrument have been available. Their use of the *gome* as a replacement was also as a result of the easy accessibility to the instrument. The inclusion of the *djembe*, although out of place within the lineup, seems to have added a new aesthetic appeal to their instrumental resources. However, the instrument becomes essential in their performances as it enhances the percussion section of the ensemble.

The ensembles put on *ntama* (cloths) during their performances. This mode of putting on *ntama* contributes to the fact that they are modeled on the costuming style of the *Adadam Agofomma* ensemble. Their costumes depict the Asante culture, although the notion of wearing cloth is prevalent in many of the ethnic groupings of the southern part of the country (Ventura, 2012: 7; Dogbe, 2003: 383). The Legon Palmwine ensemble also put on the *ntama* for most of their performances, although there are instances where they wear branded T-shirts. The Kwan Pa ensemble, however, is always in the *ntama* for performances. Although both ensembles, like the *Adadam Agofomma*, wear the *ntama*, their interpretation of the style of wearing them differs.



Figure 4.3 Legon Palmwine Band in their uniformed kente ntama. L-R: Albert Kwame Owusu-Brown, Samuel Agyeman Boahen, Seth Kpodo, Edwin Nii Akwei Brown. Picture by Grace Takyi Donkor, October 2019

The Legon Palmwine ensemble is noted for wearing a uniformed printed kente, whereas the Kwan Pa ensemble maintains one which is not in uniform. Besides the guitarist, who often wears a handwoven kente *ntama*, the other members wear *ntama* with varying colors and prints. Another distinguishing aspect of the costume of the ensemble is how these *ntama* are worn. The Legon Palmwine ensemble maintains the traditional mode of wearing the *ntama* with the exception of the drummer, who sometimes ties the *ntama* around his neck, as illustrated in figure 4.3 above. It makes it easy for the drummer to play his instruments, especially during lengthy performance events. The members of Kwan Pa, on the other hand, wear the *ntama* around their neck, as shown in figure 4.4 below.



Figure 4.4 Kwan Pa in their uniformed *ntama*. L-R: Isaac Kwadwo Baah, Andrew Asa Nkansah, Bismarck, Frederick Minamor. Picture by courtesy Kwan Pa Band

This mode of appearance by the Kwan Pa draws attention to the cultural nuances of the music tradition. The *ntama* tied around the neck depicts how children within the community and how they put on the *ntama* when they play. A reading of the picture reveals respect as the primary guitarist appropriately wears his *ntama* as would be worn by the elderly. At the same time, the other members have tied the *ntama* around their necks, depicting how a child wears the *ntama*. In essence, the guitarist who happens to be the founder and leader of the ensemble, as well as the lead vocalist, appears to command the respect of the other members. It also suggests the roles these instruments play within the performance practice of the palmwine music tradition. Waterman (1990: 373) opines that there is some form of social distinction between leaders and members of bands, which are "encoded in apparel and spatial relationships." In essence, the costumes and stage setup resonate with the values and customs as are embodied within the community.

The stage setup exemplifies this role, and besides a few occasions where the setting did not permit, the setup always had the guitarist as the central focus of which the other instruments revolve around. The percussion and the *gome*, however, sit opposite each other, as illustrated in figure 4.4 above. The Legon Palmwine ensemble is like Kwan Pa

has the drums and *premprensiwa* always sitting opposite each other with the guitar and the two vocals in between them. The position of the drums and *premprensiwa* in the Legon Palmwine ensemble as well as the *gome* and the drums in the case of the Kwan Pa ensemble are not necessarily fixed roles but have become permanent as a result of how mics are attached to them for performances. The position of the vocalists and the guitarist in the case of the Legon Palmwine ensemble serves as a point of communication during performances, although in a performance event, all members of the ensemble keep eye contact as a form of communication.

4.8 Infrastructure and Regulations

The palmwine music performances and music-making positions the music tradition within two contexts of recreational music-making; thus, it requires some financial commitment. Thus, lines of copyrights are blurred to some extent. Although, there are certain aspects of music-making, which is mostly in the public domain, over the years, there has been a situation where new creations are copyrighted - the infrastructure within which palmwine music tradition finds expressions dependent on the music makers themselves.

4.8.1 The Infrastructure of Palmwine Music-Making in Ghana

Palmwine music performances are held outside the contexts of its original setting at *nsadwase* as emphasized. However, today, the performance spaces lay within hotel spaces as well as bars and restaurants in the cities and big towns. In addition, sites of performances have included conference centers and most theatre spaces in the country. Accessibilities to these spaces are as a result of invitation or the ensembles going out of their way to find these spaces. For instance, Asah Nkansah mentions that when they started, they had to scout places to perform. He notes that

So, when we started, we decided after staying indoors for three months learning songs and all that. Most of the time, it was our own songs. We decided to now go out and look for gigs. So, I went to a majority of hotels in Accra and then to some eateries. So many of them - I went to Osu, East Legon, Labone, I even remember I went to

Madina area, I went to Dansoman to surf for spaces and all that. That was because we needed a space to perform (Nkansah, 2020).

In Ghana, music spaces such as bars and restaurants do not often have or provide platforms where live music or, in the case of these ensembles to play regularly. Most of the time, musicians scout for these spaces and proposes to perform in their establishments. It stands to reason that at these places of the public, the other aspects of these experiences are often not budgeted for or in the cost of operations. However, there are some establishments that hold regular live music performances in the venues. The *Nsadwase Nkɔmɔ* platform has come in to reinvigorate the earlier mode of palmwine music-making. When it started, issues of space for this event were initially tricky, which highlights the state of performance spaces for such ensembles. The forecourt of the Department of Music within the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana has hosted the event. However, there have been several occasions where the event was hosted in other locations.

Rehearsal spaces for music groups have evolved over the years, and these groups have found new ways of coming together to rehearse their repertoire. Rehearsal spaces for palmwine ensembles are today held in recording studio facilities. These spaces are equipped with musical instruments; hence the musicians only bring in their instrumental resources, which are unavailable. The Legon Palmwine ensemble rehearses at the Sawnd Factory Studios, a space owned by one of their members at Abeka-Lapaz, a suburb in Accra. On the other hand, Kwan Pa initially met within the church premises because of their close relationship with the church. However, like the Legon Palmwine ensemble, they rent a studio space where they rehearse. Individually, the musicians take time to practice their instrument within the context of the repertoire. However, for some of the members of the ensemble, since they do not own a particular instrument, they play the only opportunity is when they meet as a group. However, my observations during fieldwork revealed that such personal rehearsals are often taken more severe by the lead vocalists as their role is essential to the performance event. Accompanying instruments and the harmony of choruses are worked on during group rehearsals. The Legon Palmwine ensemble, for instance, harmonies are often left to the vocalist hence spend less

time to work on these during rehearsals as the two work together prior to their meet-up with the entire ensemble. Thus, this could lead to an understanding of a few rehearsals as a group is organized.

The instrumental resources of the ensembles, although it differs, resonate with the material essence of the palmwine music tradition. Instruments are owned collectively by the ensembles; hence individuals do not own their personal instruments. The guitarists are often the exception as they own their personal guitars. The cost for these instruments often is an impediment for the individual members to own their personal instruments. For instance, the cost of a good *premprensiwa* and/or a *gome* ranges between five hundred and eight hundred Ghana cedis. The high cost of these instruments is because they are not readily available on the market; hence outstanding carpenters are commissioned to build the instrument. In a similar situation, the drums which are available on the market cost between two hundred and fifty and five hundred Ghana cedis depending on the quality of materials used.

In most cases, the funds of the ensemble are invested in the group instrumental resources thus are protective of its usage outside the activities of the ensemble. At the initial formation stages of the ensemble's instruments were borrowed for performances, which influenced how infrequent rehearsals for these ensembles were. Kwan Pa made use of the instruments of the church when they started, whereas the Legon Palmwine ensemble used the instrumental resources of the Department of Music until they purchased their own musical instruments.

In addition to the instrumental resources which contribute to the realization of a palmwine music event, there are other ancillary equipment used by the ensembles to enhance the sound output of their performances. The Public Address (PA) system thus becomes influential in how performances are constructed as for many of the musical instruments, and their sound output is soft hence often need these systems to boost its huge output auditoriums. Both ensembles acknowledge that this drains their finances as they rent such systems.

4.8.2 Laws, Regulation, and Funding

In Ghana, it is common knowledge that although there are laws and regulations that protect the creative arts, their implementation remains a challenge. Until recently, these laws fairly covered traditional music genres, mainly when engaged for communal purposes (Burns, 2006). However, the amendment of the Copyright Act 2005 in Ghana offers protection on the commercial use of folkloric materials. Section 4(1) of the Copyright Act 2005 states that

An expression of folklore is protected under this Act against

- a. reproduction
- b. communication to the public by performance, broadcasting, distribution by cable or other means, and
- c. adaptation, translation, and other information

The Act enshrines power to the National Folklore Board (NFB) to oversee the law's implementation. The National Folklore Board in Section 63 of the same law established its functions to include:

- a. administer, monitor, and register an expression of folklore on behalf of the Republic
- b. maintain a register of expressions of folklore at the Copyright Office,
- c. preserve and monitor the use of expressions of folklore in the Republic
- d. provide members of the public with information and advice on matters relating to folklore
- e. promote the activities which will increase public awareness on the activities of the Board, and
- f. promote activities for the dissemination of expression of folklore within the Republic and abroad

It suggests that no one can use folkloric items commercially, whether in their original form or with any new reformulations. Thus, any person, devoid of nationality intending to use a folkloric material will need to apply to the Board for permission in the prescribed form. The person shall pay a fee that the Board may determine failure, which could lead to imprisonment. Thus, a Ghanaian who wishes to tap into their cultural heritage for recreation will be required to seek permission from the NFB in writing. This law stands to stifle creation and recreation, mainly where composers rely on their folkloric material for commercial purposes. According to Collins (2006b), such rethinking and reworking of such materials contribute to "staying alive in the global village," arguing "that in the modern world, cultural recycling also includes commercial recycling" (166)." It is instructive to note that although these laws are binding, there appear to be challenges with its implementation thus musicians and artistic creator hardly apply for these permissions. For instance, Asah Nkansah noted that Kwan Pa had reinterpreted and recorded many folkloric materials but not sort for permission.⁵⁸

Although palmwine music has been described in some literature as folk music tradition, there are commercial regulations that are covered by copyright laws. Many of these musicians who have recorded songs have often registered with the copyright office in the country's regional capitals. Nonetheless, it does not prevent their music from being pirated. Today, for example, the music is easily accessible as files are transferred electronically. This easy electronic transfer raises issues of how the creation of music-making that occurs in contexts of *nsadwase* are protected. Materials at these settings are not protected in the same way as traditional music is. For instance, Burns (2016) notes that Ewe musicians assert that there is no governmental protection associated with their kind of music. This situation can be generalized to reflect music made within such communal contexts that leaves it for exploitation. According to Gyasi (2017), for instance, he observed his father often patronizing *nsadwase* where besides participating in the music-making process, he will record the songs that formed the basis for many of his compositions.

⁵⁸ Nkansah (ibid)

Both Legon Palmwine and Kwan Pa ensembles take the copyright issues of their original creations seriously. For instance, the recently released Kwan Pa album has been registered with the copyright's office in Accra. Whilst they have their copyrights protects, other rights such as mechanical rights are often paid for at the spaces and venues where they perform. However, it is not clear whether the owners of these public spaces pay the copyrights of the music of other songs the ensembles cover during performances at their venues. This aspect of the laws and regulations in Ghana are actually not enforced as much as the copyright issues are neglected. Although there is a Ghana Music Rights Organization (GHAMRO), musicians continue to complain about how ineffective the organization has been over the years. In addition, governmental funding of the creative industry in Ghana is generally non-existent. This non-existent governmental funding thus affects the operations of these ensembles to a large extension. For instance, there is no facility in which musicians can tap into to develop their art. Financial remunerations are, however, dependent on the performances which take place for their ensembles.

4.9 The Media and the Music Industry

This study was premised on the notion of the decline in the performance practice of the palmwine music tradition. Over the last three years, the music tradition appears to have gradually gained some prominence within the Ghanaian music industry as well as the community as a result of the activities of the ensembles. This prominence in the Ghanaian music industry, in part, can be attributed to their performances and promotions of their music tradition within the community.

4.9.1 The Media Engagement with Palmwine Music

Palmwine music promotion today has benefited from the emergence and availability of numerous media platforms. The primary medium for the promotion of both the Legon Palmwine and Kwan Pa ensembles has been the social media as both Asah Nkansah and Seth Kpodo acknowledges that their presence on the numerous social media networks has aided in their presence in the community. Although the other popular music genre in the country dominates the general media landscape, these palmwine ensembles have leveraged the decline of the music tradition to reintroduce a now-sounding ensemble to

compete with them, leading to many media appearances, especially in Accra. The two ensembles have in addition performed live in the studios of the state-owned media broadcasting house, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), as well as on numerous privately-owned media broadcasting houses including Despite Media, Multimedia, Metropolitan Television (Metro TV). They have also appeared on entertainment music shows organized live for television, including Saturday live on Citi TV as well as talk shows including morning shows.

Social media platforms have provided the opportunity for the ensembles to upload their contents, which are characterized by a clip of video performances and invitational promos. They do not necessarily have to promote their content on the traditional media houses but directly upload these contents on platforms such as YouTube, where they operate their channels. These platforms and channels reach far more audience than traditional media platforms. In addition, the ensembles can easily assess the reach of their promotion by the number of views. In many cases, now the traditional media houses take content directly from these social media platforms for their broadcasts. These, in turn, raises copyright issues as the ensembles do not benefit from their copyright on these platforms. The new wave of radio broadcasting in Ghana has also opened up in such a way that they have embraced the social media platforms for the dissemination of their content. Hence whilst they perform live on the radio, their performances are broadcasted on Facebook and YouTube, where channels are also owned by these media houses.

In addition to their media engagement via radio and television broadcasts, these media houses also do host events of which the ensembles are regularly invited to perform. For instance, Citi FM and TV hosts an annual music festival titled the Music of Ghanaian Origins (MOGO) Festival. As a result of their engagement with these ensembles, the Kwan Pa was invited to participate in the 2019 edition of the festival where they were decided two slots perform. Similarly, Joy FM's annual Bridal Fair has hosted the Legon Palmwine ensemble for the 2019 edition of the fair. The music tradition has directly benefited from the media engagement as the presence on these media has significantly boosted its vitality. It is significant to add that besides the local media presence, the music

tradition has been featured on international media houses as well. The Legon Palmwine ensemble, for instance, was featured on a magazine show of the Cable News Network (CNN) Inside Africa on the 9th of March 2018, a show dedicated to the continent on the music tradition in particular and on Ghanaian popular musical evolution in general. Similarly, the Kwan Pa ensemble has featured in a news item of the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) focus on Africa show titled Kwan Pa – Ghana Palmwine Band Are Bring Back the Love, which was aired on the 24th of March 2019. These activities highlight the presence of the music tradition on the media platform today.

4.9.2 Palmwine Music presence in the Ghanaian Music Industry

The palmwine music tradition appears to have gradually re-entered the music industry as a result of its promotion and presence on the numerous media networks in the country. This opportunity has led to collaborations with other artists and artistic genres. Two key examples include a 2017 collaboration between the Global Arts and Development Centre (GADEC) and the Legon Palmwine ensemble to produce two shows of a popular Ghanaian musical titled "I Told You So." A highlife band performed the musical, which comprises of palmwine tunes. However, the producer decided to explore the nuances of the songs in their original context performed by a palmwine ensemble, thus the involvement of the Legon Palmwine ensemble. The success of the first production, which was held on the 6th of August 2017 at the Accra International Centre, led to a re-run at the Efua T. Sutherland Drama Studio at the School of Performing Arts of the University of Ghana. In addition, the ensemble has always collaborated with Nana *Asaase*, a poet, in numerous performances. The Kwan Pa ensemble has also collaborated with hip-life artiste Okyeame Kwame on his Made in Ghana album.

The presence on the media networks has characterized how more light has been thrown on the music tradition. The performances by the ensembles have led to recognition from award shows. For instance, the Kwan Pa ensemble has won three awards over the last two years, including the Vodacom Ghana Music Awards (VGMA) Best Traditional Artiste in Ghana for the year 2018, the Ghana Arts and Culture Awards for the Traditional Highlife Group of the year 2018 and Highlife Music Awards for the Best Palmwine Highlife Band

also for 2018. In essence, the music tradition from 2018 and increasingly gained attention by critics and reviewers of the creative arts in Ghana. In addition to these songs by these ensembles has become popular and sung on the streets. The "Five Days of Christmas" remains the most popular in the country today.

4.10 Issues for Sustainability

The socio-cultural dynamics of the music tradition raises issues for its sustenance. For example, the learning systems of the music tradition, as discussed, is framed within the essence of personal efforts to learn. The lack and availability of learning spaces and opportunities remain a problem because, for now, and there are a few bearers of the culture who are positioned to teach. Even within that context, the locations of these learning spaces pose a disincentive to prospective learning. In addition, there is no clear-cut pedagogical approach to teaching the music tradition. This challenge leaves the learning to the individual methods of the culture bearers.

Nonetheless, there have been recent attempts at dealing with the pedagogical approach. George Ankomah Mensah in 2016 release a self-teaching tutorial on DVD titled "Palmwine Guitar Styles." However, this material is not easily accessible on the market. In addition, although the lessons attempt to encompass the music tradition in its entirety, it leaves less room in teaching specific styles in detail. The need for palmwine musicians to be able to sustain themselves and their families makes them find other jobs; thus, the music tradition becomes an infrequent recreation activity for them. In a global space that is mostly driven by capital, palmwine music is left with no option but to either abandon the music tradition or pay less attention to its performance. Those who continue to engage with performance practice are not well remunerated.

Although the palmwine music tradition does not necessarily high demands in terms of performing spaces, the spaces where performance events are held remain scares. With the media presence created by these ensembles, there are many venues that are yet to engage them. As it stands now, palmwine performances are regular at the Zen Gardens in Accra besides the monthly performance circles held in Legon. There are also sessions in

Akosombo and Ho, which cannot be enough. However, there are occasional events that demand the services of these ensembles to complement their regular performance. In addition, although physical spaces are not required in the creative process, it enhances the learning processes together as a team. In such instances, the current practice of rehearsing at recording studio facilities assists in space and ambiance these sites present. What remains a sustainability issue is the cost of renting such spaces and how sustainable they are. In the case of the Legon Palmwine ensemble, although one of its members own such a facility, they contribute to the funding the utilities used. The easy accessibility also remains one of the sustainability issues as rehearsal times and the detailed attention that would have been paid to the nuances of the music tradition would be enhanced should the musicians own their personal instruments. The cost of the instruments becomes a barrier in achieving this. These issues are primarily premised on the financial status of the musicians. At the moment, most of the members are not in positions where they can own their personal instruments because of the cost.

The regulation and protection of creative work also pose a sustainability issue. As highlighted, it becomes increasingly difficult when those tasked to implement these laws and regulations are mainly not working. Numerous laws protect the creative industry in its entirety, but no specific law to regulate the activities of such music traditions as palmwine music. This lack of protective laws notwithstanding, the palmwine ensembles today have found ways of protecting their creative works; besides the fact that the register with the traditional copyrights' offices, they find ways to leverage on the media platforms that exploit their creative works. Instead of requesting physical, financial remunerations, they leverage the publicity to promote themselves. In addition, the easy accessibility of social media platforms has contributed to the promotion of the music industry. However, to be able to mount the content of these platforms themselves involves some financial investments. This financial challenge could become an issue in the sustenance of these ensembles and thus the music tradition in general.

4.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined how the palmwine music tradition's socio-cultural framework influences its sustenance. I situated the discourse with the conceptual framework of the five domains of musical sustainability in a contemporary context as posited by Schippers (2016). I examined mainly how the activities of current palmwine ensembles are being influenced by the environment's social and cultural dynamics within which they find themselves. I focused on the Legon Palmwine and Kwan Pa ensembles and explored how they contribute to revitalizing the music tradition within a contemporary context.

CHAPTER FIVE

NSADWASE NKOMƆ AS AN INTERVENTION TO REVITALIZE PALMWINE MUSIC IN GHANA

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss performance circles as an intervention to revitalize the palmwine music tradition's performance practices in Ghana. I examine *nsadwase nkɔmɔ*, a monthly performance event, as an approach that explores how communal engagement does contribute to facilitating the revitalization of palmwine music in Ghana. I explore how this strategy mobilizes shared interest in and positions the performance circle as a critical approach that brings vitality to the palmwine music tradition. Although the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* circle started in mid-2017 and may be in its early stages, it provides essential details to understand how a continuous engagement with communal performances contributes to the palmwine music tradition's sustenance in the country. In Chapter Three, I discussed the historical development of the music tradition that foregrounds palmwine music's emergence within neo-traditional performance contexts - a communal recreational music-making and an out-of-context presentational form. It was observed that whereas palmwine music's performance practice within the collective music-making framework engages participatory participants, the out-of-context presentational forms were often curated for commercial purposes. Thus, whilst it is vital to appreciate the historical underpinnings of the performance contexts of palmwine music in Ghana, the very essence of this research project finds resonance with communal engagements that contribute to facilitating the revitalization of hybrid musical traditions of such nature.

In this chapter, I provide an ethnographic account of establishing the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* circles, examining my role in facilitating the process. As the palmwine music community still has living bearers and individuals, including Agya Koo Nimo, Ralph Karikari, Agya Osei Korankye, and John Collins, with an authoritative or working claim to knowledge of the music tradition, I solicited their guidance during the initial curatorial phase of the circles. They were part of an epistemic community that also included young musicians and music enthusiasts, mainly students whose participation and engagement with the music tradition underscore its revitalization. This community shared a common

understanding of holding on to a music tradition's performance practices on the verge of disappearing. I begin the chapter by conceptualizing performance circles as an extension of recreational musical performance practices in the rural areas in urban centers and then examine *nsadwase nkɔmɔ*. The chapter's core thus discusses the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* performance circle and how it positions itself in contributing to the revitalization of palmwine music performance practice, at the least from communal participation perspectives.

5.2 Conceptualizing *Nsadwase Nkɔmɔ* Performance Circle

To conceptualize the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* circle, it is essential to understand the notion of a performance circle within the broader context. It is not uncommon to find performance circles in cities and towns in many countries as these sites characterize a space group music-making and sharing experiences. The term "circle" within these contexts often speaks to such events' very physical setting; however, it can also draw from the notion a particular group of persons engaged in an activity. Thus, circle events are set up in the frame of a circular pattern where participants face the center. The physical formation suggests that everyone is expected to engage in the activity of the group. Damm (2015) notes, for instance, that there is no audience in drum circles as everyone in the circle is expected to participate by playing together and creating their rhythm that fits into the music created by the entire group. Despite this approach, however, setups do not resonate with the setting's physicality in some instances. However, the notion and essence of a circular engagement in the group music-making take the form of a circle.

The engagement in specific musical activity often describes the circle's sites. For instance, the drum, singing, and dance circles appear quite popular and involve participants with diverse performance experiences (Fidyk, 2009; Laurila and Willingham 2017). In a drum circle, the participants make music together by playing the drums and all its extra-musical activities. By embracing the notion of the circles as described, it is significant to point out that in Ghana, like in many indigenous African societies, music-making, mainly recreational musical activities, are often framed within such performance contexts. However, it embraces more than the specific musical activity. According to

Charry (2005: 14), in the past several decades, African-based hand drumming has separated from dance and taken its own life in the form of drum circles, which he observes is an American development with little precedence in Africa. For instance, it is common to find in an Akan village square performance by young people akin to the community. Although mostly led by groups, the mode of music-making resonates with the intentional music-making in the cities. It is instructive to observe that the 'drum circles' movement, popular in many North American cities today, is documented to have its roots in West Africa. It was pioneered by Nigerian drummer Babatunde Olatunji in his quest to relive his music-making experiences from home (Carter-Ényi et al. 2020). Olatunji's case highlights an ongoing example of settler music-making activities in many cities in Africa. In discussing the musical continuity of Ewe migrants in Accra, Avorgbedor (1986) points out that these migrants form associations often based on hometown relation to continuing their music-making experience from home. He notes that several of these associations are spread throughout the city.

The *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* circle extends the notions of the communal music-making experience as described by Avorgbedor and embraces Olatunji's format. For instance, in the case of the Ewe migrants, the music-making revolves around an idea of a group of people of shared ethnicity and ancestry deciding not to lose track of 'home.' Thus, this is expressed in the regular performance meetings which are run like clubs. On the other hand, the Olatunji concept speaks to an individual's quest to create a musical experience from home. In his case, participants are not drawn from a particular grouping. *Nsadwase nkɔmɔ* mainly draws on this concept as its establishment entails creating a group that will engage with the performance practice of palmwine music. The *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* circle extends the notions of the communal music-making experience as described by Avorgbedor and embraces Olatunji's format. For instance, in the case of the Ewe migrants, the music-making revolves around an idea of a group of people of shared ethnicity and ancestry deciding not to lose track of 'home.' Thus, this is expressed in the regular performance meetings which are run like clubs.

On the other hand, the Olatunji concept speaks to an individual's quest to create a musical experience from home. In his case, participants are not drawn from a particular grouping. *Nsadwase nkɔmɔ* mainly draws on this concept as its establishment entails creating a group that will engage with the performance practice of palmwine music. The concept of the name *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* as associated with the performance circles draws from a combination of the two ideas - the music tradition's Akan terms *nsadwase*, a gathering or a meeting, and *nkɔmɔ*, the Akan notion of conversation or news. Hence, when one attends a *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* session, one participates in a gathering or a meeting of conversation or news. The notion equally applies to having conversations with the palmwine music tradition. After one of the sessions, when I met the other team members, Kpodo pointed me to how the performance circle's name reflected the activities. He noted that "truly *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* highlights conversations with palmwine music."⁵⁹

5.3 Setting up the *Nsadwase Nkɔmɔ* Performance Circle

This section examines the process involved in setting up the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* performance circle. I explore the planning phase and the facilitation phase of the performance circle, thus conceptualizing and foregrounding the nuances of the performance event in relation to the process of revitalization and sustenance.

5.3.1 Planning Phase

Whilst developing the thesis proposal, it became apparent to set out a project in the form of an intervention to revitalize the music tradition right at the onset. The initial research to assess and understand the current state of the music tradition in Ghana revealed that the palmwine music tradition's performance practice was gradually fading away. As elaborated on in Chapters One and Two, besides Agya Koo Nimo and Ralph Karikari, who engage in performances, the music tradition's performance practice was gradually disappearing. However, some traces of its stylistic features are eminent in other emergent musical styles in the country, as discussed in Chapter Three. It meant that an approach that embraces the music's regular performances to enhance the music tradition's vitality

⁵⁹ Personal communication with Seth Kpodo in December 2017 at the forecourt of the Department of Music

became one of the main activities to consider. Thus, several consultations and discussions with Dr. Patricia Opondo (my supervisor) centered broadly on strategies that capture the project's essence, engaging the various facets of revitalizing the music tradition because of its extensive nature.

The idea was mooted to create a platform or a community that would regularly engage young people to converge, learn, and appreciate palmwine music tradition's performance practice's nuances. A search for similar platforms to orient and model the one proposed for the project led to various communities of performing circles. In such spaces, people with a shared interest and musical taste met in shared spaces either for music appreciation or music-making. Pyper (2014) highlights one such group in Mamelodi in South Africa, a jazz listening community that meets in patrons' homes to appreciate jazz music. He argues that such spaces create a listening culture that covers various socio-cultural, linguistic, and related boundaries, which constitutes an active feature of the local musical life. In the case of the Mamelodi jazz listening community, jazz patrons exchange records and participate in listening and dancing sessions, which contributes to the local jazz industry's sustenance. With my knowledge and understanding of this particular example, it was essential to frame my proposed project's activities to focus on ways that resonate with some of these societies' features.

My initial research on the emergence of the palmwine music tradition particularly highlighted a context of musical exchanges in the coastal areas and the hinterland. The performance practice resonates with the kind of contemporary music-making societies elaborates on above. As detailed in Chapter Four, the palm-wine center often attracted some form of music-making whilst patrons either waited for or had drinks (Akyeampong, 1996; Edmund, 2016). It is these conceptions of music-making that laid the foundation for the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* performance circle. The initial proposed framework comprised a communal workshop to dovetail into a participatory performance of palmwine music. The proposal was to establish two concurrent active sessions in the country: Accra and the other in Kumasi.

It was essential to seek the support of the culture bearer and gatekeepers of the music tradition to embark on such a project. Even though I remained an integral part of the palmwine music community, my role in this research endeavor was to act as a steward (Titon, 2009). Because whilst revitalizing a music culture usually emanates from an individual, he needs others' cooperation to succeed (Levine, 1993; Livingston, 1999). The process was necessary to satisfy the university's requirements for ethical clearance and the keepers of such musical traditions. The idea of gatekeeping cultural products and intangible heritage of Ghana resides with the National Folklore Board (NFB).⁶⁰ They are tasked by the state to protect its folkloric and indigenous expressive cultures. However, the duty of safeguarding the country's indigenous cultures often remains the sole responsibility of the various communities' chieftaincy institution. Since the palmwine music tradition, which is the focus of this study, is a hybrid or neo-traditional music culture, its gatekeeping did not reside with the traditional leaders. Challenges with securing written permission from the National Folkloric Board for the project led to an alternative in the Musician's Union of Ghana (MUSIGA). As discussed in Chapter 4.8.2, the National Folkloric Board's task is primarily in relation to when the folkloric material is being exploited for commercial purpose. In the case of this study, it was imperative to seek permission from the Musician's Union who have direct responsibilities on the welfare of its members.

The Union is a recognized body which, among other things, seek the welfare and preservation of the Ghanaian expressive culture.⁶¹ It stands to reason that safeguarding and protecting such neo-traditional music styles lay within such institutions' purview. Seeking support from the Union for the project was apt as the project primarily drew its participants from the community of palmwine musicians who were all members. My request also asked to use the Union's facilities in Accra and Kumasi for the performance circle besides engaging its members. These requests were granted with a letter of support to aid in the ethical clearance application in January 2017.⁶² Whilst the Union permitted

⁶⁰ See Chapter 4.8.2

⁶¹ See <https://musiga.org>

⁶² Find letter attached in appendix

the use of their facilities, I envisaged that there might be challenges; hence it was still essential to explore other alternative venues to host the circles. Between March and May 2017, the search for venues to host the circles had yet proven to yield any positive results.

Upon arrival for fieldwork in Accra, the first approach was to follow up on the music tradition stakeholders I had initially established contacts with as I envisage to serve as the core members of my epistemic community for the project. Since locating most of them would prove difficult as their inactivity on the performing circuit had pushed them into their hometowns and villages, the snowball technique became useful and vital in locating them. The first person I contacted was Agya Koo Nimo, as he was relatively easy to locate. Incidentally, he had been invited to Accra to participate in a conference at the University of Ghana. Upon meeting him at the Accra event, we spoke at length about my initiative and exchanged ideas on the best approach to use. There were plans already in motion to visit him in Kumasi, where he is based. However, this opportunity offered the chance to establish initial contact regarding the research project, pick a few stylistic ideas on the music tradition, and schedule interview sessions. Building on my initial readings on the palmwine music tradition, my meeting with Agya Koo Nimo highlighted palmwine music's firm roots in the hinterlands.

Agya Koo Nimo likened the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* idea to the context of gathering by elders, particularly in the villages.⁶³ It confirms a similar sentiment expressed by J.H.K. Nketia when I once engaged him in a general discussion of palmwine music. He observed that what I referred to as palmwine musical activity was a regular event where most elders in the local communities met to have drinks.⁶⁴ Both Agya Koo Nimo and Nketia observe that at *nsadwa ase*, the elders in the community would often sit to have drinks in the late afternoon in the village after the day's work, and whilst they waited for the drinks to be sold or served, they engaged in music-making. However, they remained silent on the particular stylistic expressions they were engaged in, although Agya Koo Nimo hints at

⁶³ Personal communication with Agya Koo Nimo 11th September 2017

⁶⁴ Personal communication with JHK Nketia in his office at the Institute of African Studies May 2015

the music tradition. In another conversation with Collins, he acknowledges the existence of *nsadwa ase*. However, he believed that these gatherings' activities did not directly resonate with palmwine music until the guitar moved into these areas.⁶⁵ These initial conversations thus provided a proper sense of how to model the performance circle.

5.3.2 Facilitation Stage

At the early stages of the realization of the first *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* session, I put together a team consisting of close friends and some former students mine to facilitate the process. As it emerged later, many participants who had initially expressed interest and accepted my invitation to assist in organizing the session showed little interest in the work required to get the event off the grounds. This example highlights Tamara Livingston's point that indeed for a revival project to succeed or as he puts it, one of the features that remain essential to music revivals, besides an individual, is a small group of "core revivalists" (2014: 61). As I point out, a team of committed individuals would be an instrument if the project was going to achieve its aims. Whereas, Livingston's analysis reflected activities of different revival groups and projects, in my case, I assumed the role of putting together the group. To constitute that team, I could rely on meant falling on my friends in my band.

Consequently, I invited the Legon Palmwine Band members on board in this new role of leading period's task. Thus, both Seth Kpodo, Albert Kwame Owusu Brown, and I constituted the core members of the organizing team that has since managed the running of the sessions. Indeed, we receive assistance from others occasionally. Several meetings as a team led to the development of a road map that guided the first session. We agreed to review and plan accordingly since we could not foretell how the session would be received. We planned to have a practical hands-on palmwine music songwriting workshop and dovetail the workshop into a performance circle. We identified Agya Osei Korankye to lead the workshop. Equipped with a plan, we assigned ourselves various tasks, including designing posters, creating a social media presence, and engaging

⁶⁵ Interview with John Collins at his residence in Taifa on the 4th August 2017.

multiple close friends to promote the session. We worked on a very tight budget since I was funding the project myself; hence, we took up many of the initial assignments. For instance, we were fortunate enough to have Kwame Owusu design the initial poster whereas Kpodo and I went on to complete the other promotion and logistics tasks.⁶⁶

Similarly, as a team, we identified and decided to use the forecourt of the Department of Music of the School of Performing Arts, the University of Ghana, as our venue since my grounds work had not yielded results. The Department's forecourt presented an excellent location for the session for many reasons. Significant amongst them was its openness and an area that could attract different classes of participants, predominantly students, both invited and uninvited, to join. However, for the initial session we worked on, the team advisedly agreed to get an indoor venue in the Department since we had no expectations. Also, because we paid attention to the nature of the workshop, we thought it was best to have the session indoors. Thus, I officially wrote a letter to the institution to request the use of their facility and to also support the initiative to which we were granted the permission. These activities characterize what laid the foundation for the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ circles* to take off on 22nd June 2017, in Accra. At best, our plan for this session was experimental in the sense that we were still finding out how best to position futures sessions.

The setting was the Department's seminar room, which had chairs and an upright piano. Although we planned to have an interactive, hands-on workshop, the first session's activities reflected a lecture where participants asked questions after the resource person had given a presentation. A relatively short performance circle followed the workshop, with several participants taking turns to perform. However, the seminar room was filled not to capacity, and although the workshop was not hands-on, it was interactive. Most participants' interests were in acquiring knowledge on how to write songs in the palmwine domain, which features the essence of *anansesem*. A key lesson we took from the first session was the formal nature of the event and how less attention was given to

⁶⁶ Figure 5.1 is a sample of the end product of the first poster for the performance circle event

the experiential music-making process. As noted, the resource person gave a lecture, although he made room for interaction, I observed that participants were more interested in listening to him. It was also apparent that the room would not be conducive to how we were envisaging the sessions.

PALMWINE MUSIC REVITALISATION PROJECT
in collaboration with
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
presents

**Palmwine music Workshop Series
&
Performance circle**

Topics
Songwriting & Storytelling (Anansesem)
Playing techniques & Performance practice

Resource Person
OSEI KORANKYE (Seperewa maestro)

DATE 22TH JUNE, 2017 | 10:03am

VENUE: SEMINAR ROOM (E9), Facilitator: Sunu Doe
Department of Music (SPA) 0244527895
University of Ghana sunudoe@gmail.com

Figure 5.1 Poster of first Performance Circle Workshop. Picture by Eric Sunu Doe 6th June 2017

After the first Accra session, we shifted our attention as a team to explore how to replicate the session in the city. Since I had already penned down a visit to the city, I informed the team to do feasibility before taking the next step. It was also an opportunity to conduct interviews with some of the culture bearers of the music tradition resident in the city. My first point call was Agya Koo Nimo, my principal participant for this study, who later introduced other participants. Agya Koo Nimo suggested that other persons with knowledge of the music tradition should talk to specific locations to visit. One such

person was Kwame Gyasi, whose father was the famous highlife musician, Dr. K. Gyasi. His insights on the music tradition, especially the contexts of performances, were instrumental in leading me to specific locations that once served as the beehive for the sale of palm-wine and its associated music-making. According to Kwame Gyasi, several factors, including estate developers' activities and ongoing modernization of the city, account for the push of such location away.⁶⁷ Besides conducting interviews and visiting old locations in Kumasi, it became clear the challenges I will have to overcome to establish a performance circle there. Key amongst them was time and funding factors. Implementing the project in Kumasi would have been daunting as establishing contact with relevant people interested in sustaining the event would require more time than anticipated. The perception of many young people I engaged with resonated with one that suggested the music tradition to be for an old generation. For instance, Dixon believed that palmwine music only resonated with people in their late 40s, suggesting that the youth have not been encouraged to pursue their own cultural practices. He notes

The people who can really relate to this style are the people in their late 40s. This is because we were not encouraged to pursue our own cultural practices. Modernization has eaten us up so much that we have forgotten our own cultural expressions. The people who saw and experienced this style most during their youthful days are the ones that continue to relate more to it.⁶⁸

Dixon's remarks highlight the amount of effort that needs to go into instituting an event like a performance circle in Kumasi. Underscoring the perception is the fact that Kumasi remains one of the most culturally active places in Ghana. Besides funeral activities, which occur weekly in the city and engages many culturally dominated expressive performance traditions, the chieftaincy institution is also very strong. His assertion that 'modernization has eaten us up so much that we have forgotten our own cultural expressions' points to the kinds of music young people, especially those I interacted with, actively engaged in. When I returned to Accra, I met the team to present my findings,

⁶⁷ Interview with Kwame Gyasi at his recording studios in Bantama in Kumasi, 14th September 2017.

⁶⁸ Interview with Dixon Danso Boakyee in Kumasi, 16th September 2017.

suggesting that we dedicate ourselves to making the Accra sessions effective, which will grow other areas in my estimation.

In Accra, I met the team to review the first session to explore ways to streamline the activities of the next sessions to resonate with the communal music-making experience that contextualizes the palmwine music tradition. We decided to categorize the organizational processes into publicity and set up the venue as critical to a successful event. Thus, publicity involved devising ways to draw participants to the session, whereas the setup included other preparatory activities besides publicity. The publicity process involves designing flyers and circulating them digitally. At the initial stages, the suggestion for the circles' invitation was by word of mouth as a follow-up from the June 2017 session, which characterized the beginning of the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* performance circle. Several arguments in favor of the conventional mode of invitation to similar events in the country appear to counter the initial suggestion. Kwame Owusu argued that, since the circles were new to many people, investing in the conventional mode of advertisement and promotion would reach many audiences. In my response, I highlighted the importance of growing the community organically for the risk of numbers and fatigue. Thus, we invited people who want to participate in the experience of communal music-making. We reach the agreement to incorporate both ways of communication moving forward.

After several unique designed flyers for the sessions, one of them seems to have become the proto-type design for the last two years, with the mode of circulation or publicizing remaining through online digital platforms.⁶⁹ It is also instructive to indicate that December's design resonates with the season with embellishments accordingly. We also agreed to create social media platforms for the performance circle to garner and build an online community and keep a database of participants and extend our communal relations and communication. Thus, I created a WhatsApp group in August 2017 and then the following month a Facebook group. Meetings and decision making of the organizing

⁶⁹ See appendix for flyers

team is fluid as there continue to be a constant sharing of ideas between the team members. For instance, although the other two members continue to see my role as facilitators, they always consult with me and consider my input before implementing decisions. Kpodo remarked to me one time that It is easy for them to share new ideas and concepts with me for thorough discussions before implementation.⁷⁰ However, because I am away, many decisions on-site are taken by them as they deem appropriate and inform me in due course.

5.4 Characteristic Features of the *Nsawase Nkɔmɔ*

In this section, I examine the salient features that characterize the *nsawase nkɔmɔ* circle. The discussion centers on the critical elements of the performance circle event – the participants, the venue, the material resources, and the repertoire and how they contribute to revitalizing the palmwine music tradition.

5.4.1 The Participants

An essential element of the *nsawase nkɔmɔ* circle is its participants. Most of the people who attend the performance circles are not musicians, although some are practicing musicians still studying. The musicians often play in local bands to earn some income whilst in school. For instance, several band members of the Nkyinkyim and the Adaha Dance Bands regularly participate in the session. Johnson Amezuke, Englebert Nana Kwame Akumiah, Joshua Opoku Brew, Awura-Ama Agyapong, and Prince Kwaku Boateng, for example, weekly perform highlife music at various pubs and clubs in Accra. Likewise, there are several young solo artists as well as poets who participate in the sessions. Dodzi Aveh, who performs with the alias *WhoIsDeydzi*, Enoch Adom Amaning Onwanwani, also performs with the alias *Amaze*, Kwame Owusu Afriyie Brenya known on stage as *Kwame Brenya*, and Phillip Boakye Dua Oyinka popularly called *Nana Asaase*, for example, are regular poets at the session. Besides the young musicians and poets who actively participate in the sessions, others are not active musicians. These mostly include researchers, lecturers, teachers, media consultants, public servants,

⁷⁰ Personal communication with Seth Kpodo via WhatsApp in January 2020.

hospitality personnel, and nurses. For instance, Kwesi Ohene-Gyan, although a full-time student at the time I was conducting fieldwork, also held a position as a production manager for a production house in Accra, Adrian Koranteng, who often participates in the sessions, is a public servant, and Eric Eyram Fiagbedzi, a researcher and a teacher.

The different groups of participants at the session suggest different levels of participation. In his seminal book, “The African Imagination in Music,” Agawu (2016: 90) highlights this notion in African music-making, noting, for instance, that clapping forms a vital part of the process and is often performed by community members who participate at minimum levels during group performances. He further opines that it provides a minimum accompaniment to singing; thus, it transforms a lived time into a musical time (89). Thus, within these contexts, all participants at the session actively engage with the musical activity, although their participation levels may differ. For example, the musicians' role at the session is different from those of the participants who are not musicians. Although music-making at the session involves everyone present, the musicians mostly accompany the musical activities with the instruments available because of their backgrounds and performance experiences. Simultaneously, the other participants join by singing or clapping to the performance of familiar songs. For instance, Vivian Dickson and Grace Takyi Donkor acknowledge that they often sit and nod their head to unfamiliar tunes and respond to familiar songs by singing and clapping along.⁷¹

Many of the participants at the sessions are between the age range of twenty and thirty years, with more male participants than females. The location circle accounts for one factor why a youthful populace dominates the sessions. Because of its setting within the university environment, young students are bound to be attracted. Another factor is the kind of people the organizers themselves draw. Because they are young, they invite often attend the circles with their friends of similar age. The male-female dynamics at the sessions come from a long tradition of the perception of women participating in such

⁷¹ Interview with Vivian Dickson via email in March 2020, and Grace Takyi Donkor also via email in April 2020.

contextual music-making processes. The historical context of the music tradition itself shows how women have participated less in the palmwine music tradition's music-making. When Agya Koo Nimo and Nketia reference *nsadwase* mentioned above, these elderly persons they speak about were predominantly men. According to Ansu-Kyeremeh (1998: 114), it was most unlikely to find women in such places *nkwanakwaannuase* and *nsadwase* as such gatherings were likely to be an all-male affair. Collins observes more generally that women's participation in popular entertainment has until recently been few because of the kind of stigma often associated with such women who engaged with such activities.

Similarly, Emielu and Takyi Donkor (2019) recounts how many women within the popular music scene in Ghana engage with highlife music without alcohol. It is instead welcoming to note that the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* performance circle draws the few females to its sessions. I argue that it is one of the significant contributions of the revitalization project as Awura-Ama Agyapong, an active participant and a musician, sums up, “this has exposed me to, or it has changed my ideology about what traditional (palmwine) music is.”⁷² Although majority of the participants are youthful, there are several occasions where some older adults participate. Most regular elderly patrons who have participated were either drawn to the session when they were passing by the Department or were invited. Also, there have been rare occasions when some culture bearers have actively participated in the sessions. For instance, when Agya Osei Korankye was invited to lead the songwriting workshop, as earlier stated. Other than that, their participation in the sessions has mostly been in the form of guidance, providing contexts, and engagement with their music.

5.4.2 “You don’t need an invitation:” The Venue and Settings

The venue is another element of the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* that is crucial to the activities of the sessions. Setup for *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* often includes securing the venue and ensuring chairs and instruments are available, in addition to securing the palm-wine drink. The

⁷² Interview with Awura-Ama Agyapong online via google forms in May 2020

venue for the session, as I previously mentioned, is on the Legon campus of the University of Ghana. Since its inception, the specific location remains the School of Performing Arts' open spaces, which houses the Departments of Music, Dance Studies, Theatre Arts Studies, the Efua T. Sutherland Drama Studio, and the Mawere Opoku Dance Hall. For over two years, the Department of Music's forecourt continues to host the circles' session; however, since late 2019, the location has shifted to the open area within the environment of the Efua T. Sutherland Drama Studio. The Department's forecourt provides a strikingly open-air setting reminiscent of the music tradition's past communal context. Agya Koo Nimo highlights the open-air context when he describes a typical palmwine setting. He notes that

In most of our villages, you will locate a big shady tree in a section of the village where the community elders meet to discuss the vicissitudes of their lives. In the olden days, they will usually sit to talk amongst themselves. You see, the elders usually had conversations under trees, and with regards to the palm-wine, still in the olden days, the *obetwani* (palm-wine tapper) at these gatherings will bring along his palm-wine. Therefore, palmwine music was played at the palm-wine joint. Even before the instruments came along, people at these gatherings sung.⁷³

The context Agya Koo Nimo describes resonates with what the circles try to achieve. In essence, we tried to create a setting that was close to the description he gave. The forecourt of the Department of Music presented the opportunity as Nketiah (2020) describes, it is easy to liken the complex's physicality, which houses these departments, to the traditional form of building among the Akan known as *gyase*. The *gyase* comprises of various home-built sections, corner to corner around a quadrangle courtyard. He notes that the *gyase* serves as a critical component in a home space organization and a site for communal activity, including performance events. Cole (1996: 211), for instance, points out that in the olden days, itinerant concert party troupes held their concerts in compound houses of towns and villages they were bound to perform. Because concert auditoriums

⁷³ Personal communication with Agya Koo Nimo in his office at the University of Ghana Guest House, Legon in April 2017

were mainly in the big cities when these parties went into the hinterlands and rural areas, they found open yard compound houses or, as Nketiah puts it, *gyase* to organize their shows. Drawing on similarities between the courtyard of the Department of Music and the *gyase*, Nketiah appears to conclude that this space serves as the hub for the social life of the Department. He notes how this space contextualizes an engagement of several activities, including hangout location for staff and students, rehearsal grounds for students, and sometimes concert grounds for the Department's activities as well as other bodies. Thus, this forecourt offered an excellent space to recontextualize *nsadwase* activities.



Figure 5.2 A picture of the circle at the forecourt of the Department of Music, UG-Legon. Picture by Eric Sunu Doe, 2017



Figure 5.3 Picture of second location of the Performance Circle within the compound of the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra. Picture by Seth Kpodo, August 2019

The sitting plan is circular, with the primary instruments incorporated within this circle-like arrangement, as illustrated in both figures 5.2 and 5.3 above. The sitting structure creates the space for participants to engage with each other and the natural exchange of musical instruments. Because the venue does not come with seats, plastic chairs are borrowed from the Efua Sutherland Drama Studio sessions, which are found within the complex. Also, key to the setup is the palm-wine beverage purchased after organizing the sitting arrangement. As Agya Koo Nimo describes in his memoir, the *obetwani* (the palm-wine tapper) is an essential personality at *nsadwase* (Edmond, 2016). His palm-wine is vital to the success of the *nsadwase* meeting. At the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* sessions, the palm-wine plays a similar role. Whereas in the traditional contexts of the music tradition, the provision of the drink is the responsibility of the *obetwani* and in all cases sells the drink, at the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* sessions, the drink is not sold but provided by the organizing team and act as the rallying point for participation. We bear the cost of the palm-wine, which purchase from an external party. In a sense, one can liken the system

of buying the drinks to the *nsadwase*. Since we also purchase the palm-wine from an *obetwani* at his location, it is not far-fetched to conclude that the process is also recontextualized. Again, paying attention to the descriptions provided by culture bearers, the palm-wine sold by the *obetwani* at *nsadwase* is carried in an earthenware pot and served in calabashes.

However, the drinks are brought to the venue in plastic gallons and served in plastic cups at the performance circles.⁷⁴ In Accra, although one is likely to find earthenware pots to be used for this role, it is easier for the organizing team to manage the post-event activities. The likelihood of regularly replacing these pots makes the plastic gallons essential. It is instructive to note that the focus of *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* is the music-making process and not necessarily the sale of the palm-wine or the aesthetics of the drink, as would have been the case with the *nsadwase*. Even with that line of thinking, it is probably to argue that these plastic gallons were uncommon in the golden era of *nsadwase* activities. Suffice it to say, during my trips to Kumasi, I observed palm-wine sold in plastic gallons in the small villages along the main highway. The music-making at *nsadwase* results from the meeting at a common location to have a drink.

5.4.3 Instrumental Resources

In Chapter Three, whilst discussing the musical resources and performance practice of palmwine music, I examined the instrumental resources that characterize the music tradition. I noted the vital musical instruments many palmwine ensembles employ, including the guitar, *premprensiwa* and *adakem*, the bells and rattles, drums, and vocals. Besides the *adakem*, all the other musical instruments are available at *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* circles. The musical instruments of the Legon Palmwine Band often are made available for the session. As a result of its members organizing and hosting the sessions, it becomes more comfortable that we provide the primary musical instruments as not everyone who attends comes with instruments. It is also observed that since many participants are new to the music tradition, they often came to the sessions without any instruments. However,

⁷⁴ See appendix for pictures

the flyers usually advertise for participants to carry along any musical instrument to the session.

Nevertheless, some participants carry along their musical instruments to join in the music-making process. The circle's primary musical instruments mainly include the palmwine music tradition's main instruments, the acoustic guitar, *prempresiwa*, and percussions, including *frikyiwa*, shakers, and *kpanlogo* drums. As the guitar is the main accompanying instrument, one which is quite common, some participants carry their guitars to the sessions more than any other musical instrument. I should also point out that the other musical instruments, such as the *prempresiwa*, are not very common; hence it is not easy to find instrumentalists who own these instruments. It could be suggested as the reason why the one from the band is mostly used. Seth Kpodo, the regular acoustic guitar player, and singer, incidentally, is the same person who moderates the session. He also sometimes plays various percussion instruments, especially when many experienced guitar players attend.

Besides the palmwine music tradition's primary musical instruments, which serve as the primary instrumental resources, finding some participants who come to the session with their instruments is not uncommon. These musical instruments have often included those outside the music tradition's domains. For instance, Seth Klutse, a trumpeter, always came to the session with his trumpet when he participates. Similarly, Stephen Aidoo and Harry Ballard, who both play the saxophone, also come along with his instrument. Other musical instruments that make frequent appearances at the sessions include the *seperewa* and the *atenteben*. Regular attendees, Kwame Brenya, who, besides poetry, is also a student of the *seperewa*, always attend the session with his instrument. Also, Papa Kow Agyefi, who plays the *atenteben*, participates with his instruments. The picture in figure 5.4 below shows the *atenteben*, saxophone, guitar, and *kpanlogo* drums at the performance circle.



Figure 5.4 Instrumental Resources available during Performance Circles. Picture by Grace Takyi Donkor, Department of Music, Legon, Accra, September 2018

When participants are encouraged to bring personal musical instruments to sessions, many of these instrumentalists would prefer to join the sessions instead, to sing or play some of the available handheld percussion instruments. A possible explanation for this is that since the palmwine music tradition's salient feature lies in storytelling, which is characteristically sung, sessions are often characterized by a lot of singing than playing the musical instruments. Another possible explanation might be that because some participants who carry along their guitars to the session are often not familiar with the songs being performed at a point in time since these songs are not notated, they often end up not playing their instrument but instead focus on learning how to sing these songs.

The circles provide an informal model for some participants who are new to some of these instruments to learn the basics of performance. For instance, Evans Bugbede acknowledges that although he is a student of the guitar, the performance circle serves as a platform where he practices some of the skills he acquires from his formal studies. He notes that

...the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* is accommodative of learners. In most cases, I can practice and pick up a few tricks from more advanced players of the instruments. My participation in the performance circle has enhanced my guitar playing skills and my performance techniques in general, as well as my knowledge of palmwine music performance practice.⁷⁵

This observation highlights how the circles create a platform to introduce young musicians to the palmwine music tradition and enhance performance skills they have acquired outside of the circles. This theme is recurrent in interviews I conducted with regular participants of the performance circles.

During performances at the circle's sessions, participants, especially the more experienced performers, take turns playing the accompaniment instruments in-between songs. Often, they move from one instrument to another when they see the tiredness in others' performance. There are occasions where the more experienced musicians among the participants are called upon to clarify challenges with the chord progressions or stylistic nuances of some of the songs performed at the circles. These musicians thus serve as a guide to a successful actualization of the performance of some of the challenging old tunes. In cases where there are melodic instruments in the circle, the day's moderator often creates space for these instruments to also participate by playing improvisations to the songs, thus becoming the center of attention. It is interesting to observe how players of such instruments find gaps between these palmwine songs to fill in with short melodic lines and phrases, more like filling in these gaps. *Nsadwase nkɔmɔ* sessions are quite intimate and require that the musicians amongst the participants play their instruments softly enough to create space for each of the musical instruments. It becomes necessary because, as discussed in Chapter Three, some of the musical instruments like the *prempresiwa* will require amplification should the other instruments like the drums are played loud. In one of the circle's sessions, amplification was brought on board to enhance the music-making process. The shared view among participants was that the gadgets took away the session's intimate and participatory nature, where

⁷⁵ Interview with Evans Bugbede via WhatsApp May 2020

everyone is encouraged to participate in one way or the other in the music-making process. In this instance, the session became a mini concert with the participants becoming the audience, defeating the circle's purpose. Eventually, the idea of amplification to enhance the sessions was discouraged.

5.4.4 “*Kwe! ólaa éko?* (Hey! won’t you sing some?):” Engaging the Repertoire

The repertoire performed at the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* sessions are mostly collected from old recorded palmwine tunes. Although there are several occasions where classic highlife tunes have been introduced, they have been performed within the vein of the palmwine structure. There is usually a moderator or leader who coordinates the songs' singing at the heart of the session. The role of the moderator at *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* is vital to the smooth running of a session. The person who performs the role should be conversant with palmwine songs in general and trendy songs making waves on the radio. Before the session, the moderator collects songs to be performed at the circles and goes through them in advance. Because the moderators perform double roles (organizing team), some of these songs are often discussed and learned before the sessions.

As these songs are learned aurally, performances of tunes are mostly not formally organized. Since the sessions' inception, the role has been directly played by Seth Kpodo and Albert Owusu Brown, although Brown's responsibility has primarily consisted of supporting Kpodo. Usually, he performs from memory, and the other participants join in. Often, he starts a tune by playing the guitar and singing through the song once before other participants who recognize the tunes join in. There are no prior arrangements regarding the form the song should take or be performed at the session. The performances are spontaneous, and participants learn songs as performances are still ongoing. Prior and collective knowledge of songs by participants helps build momentum during performances at the session as it becomes difficult for some tunes to get the attention it needs. There have been numerous occasions where the songs raised was not familiar to the participants. In such instances, the moderators stop the performance and sing through the song several times until they can sing.

Where it becomes difficult, I have observed that they quickly stop the song, break down, and teach the different components before resuming the performance. For instance, in the August 2018 edition of the session, after the moderator had introduced a tune, the participants' reception was not enthusiastic as is often the case, so he inquired if they did not know the song. Many of the participants confirmed they did not, so he stopped the performance and taught the song's essential sections. He recited the song's words, which the participants repeated, sang the melody repeated, and then everyone joined in the song's performance. This learning process resonates with Agya Koo Nimo's contextual description of *nsadwase* as already elaborated. He notes that at *nsadwase*, whilst they waited for the palmwine tapper to serve his drinks, attendees will carefully listen to the musician's song, occasionally joining in if they knew, or after several rounds of close listening, they eventually join in the music-making. This mode of learning also contextualizes *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* sessions today.

Mastery of the song is fully obtained through active participation in the music-making process. Songs performed in such cases are sung several times until another piece is introduced. Because of the songs' participatory nature, the songs' titles are not mentioned before the session ends. Sometimes the tunes are performed non-stop until such time the momentum naturally dies down. Participants seek knowledge of songs performed during intermission or within spaces where the moderator introduces new songs. Sometimes, it takes the momentum off as some participants are actively learning the meanings of the songs they would have just performed. For many of the performed songs, I observed that participants might have one way or the other heard them but might not have paid attention to the lyrics; thus, this avenue provides them with the opportunity to learn these. For instance, Obiri Tete confirms that he "hears more songs whose lyrics...he had not paid attention to during the sessions." Similarly, Matthew Eshun also confirms that "...explaining the music text and [the] communal nature of the performance" is what he looks forward to when attending the session. In these remarks, it can be concluded that the circles stimulate the essence of paying particular attention to the lyrics of songs, as Agya Koo Nimo points out.

Although Seth Kpodo and Kwame Owusu-Brown mostly lead and moderate songs at sessions, on several occasions, a song being performed can lead to other participants raising another song. In such a scenario, what happens is that the participant introduces the song, and then the moderators take over and lead the other participants into performing the song. Often songs are not allowed to end for new songs to be introduced. Whilst songs are being performed, moderators will already be preparing their next tunes. In some cases, several songs are sung concurrently because of the excitement these songs may have generated whereas the moderators would want to introduce new songs.

Although the sessions' repertoire is drawn mainly from a pool of palmwine repertoire, there are usually some points in the music-making process where there is an introduction of current pop tunes and the music tradition framework. As noted in Chapter Four, this appears to be a new trend for the palmwine music-making process as the two palmwine ensembles employ. I observed specific sections of their performance practices, where the ensembles introduced a similar thing. There would be no difficulty concluding that these captures and captivate its youthful participants' attention; it becomes a tool to draw the participants into the sessions. It is no wonder that for many who participate or experience the music-making process for the first time, they are excited at the prospect of listening to and participating in the sessions, which draws on modern music nuances into earlier musical frameworks as elaborated on by the following regular participants. Grace Takyi Donkor observes that "it [the performance circle] is interesting because it involves the younger generations who try to fuse in contemporary music forms as well as enjoy the 'old' classic palmwine tunes." Also, Matthew Eshun comments that "I previously thought, the music tradition did not include rap, or poetry, which was present as participants improvised." Ernest Owusu-Poku has been impressed at "how the instrumental organization of a pop song is presented in a limited palmwine musical texture, and the audience still appreciates it by dancing to it." Stephen Aidoo also observes that "the incorporation of the rap which attracts a lot of younger people to participate" is what makes the session interesting to him. These remarks characterize how *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* positions itself as a platform and space where local and individual musical identities are explored and displayed.

The repertoire at *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* mainly drawn from the palmwine music tradition, although there appears to be a thin line drawn between these songs and highlife songs. In Chapter Three, when discussing the musical resources and performance practice of the palmwine music tradition, I reiterated that and reading from the historical antecedents of the music tradition, many palmwine groups evolved into what became known as guitar bands. What this meant was that they carried the compositional practices of the palmwine music into these new styles. The performance conventions, I will argue, is what defines these two. Thus, the repertoire at *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* sessions reflects this occurrence. What is evident at the circle's sessions is that the performance conventions and practices are solely palmwine. The sessions' repertoire also does not necessarily reflect a particular theme, although many songs talk about the Ghanaian's everyday life experiences. Participants, however, own these songs and personalize them when singing. For instance, I observed during the third edition of the performance circle session since its establishment that participants were allowed to sing the melody of a song being performed but had to introduce their lyrics, one that had a personal experience. I will illustrate with two examples of participants who sang. The song that was performed is originally a guitar band highlife titled "*Nyame Bekyere*," [God will Indicate] written by Kobina Okai for E.K. Nyame's Band.

1. *wo adze ere ye yi*
2. *onua eh, me nkɛka hwee*
3. *Nyame be kyere aboa 'wan kum no oh*
4. *adze biara ɔɛɛbaw' mun' ka kyere me oh*
5. *pɔnkɔ abɔdam 'a no wuran'dze ɔmmɔ dam bi*

1. what you are engaged in
2. my brother, I will not comment
3. God will indicate which of the animals should be killed
4. tell me whatever comes within you
5. the horse may be mad, but the owner is not mad

The song is in two sections - A: lines 1, 2, and 3 and B: lines 4 and 5. The A section could be described as an exposition, where section B is a refrain. It is a refrain because it appears to be the hook of the song. The song's lyrics highlight the maltreatment people

often go through because they face inevitable misfortunes, they have no control over. The singer cautions against quickly judging such persons. In section A, the singer laments his maltreatment suggesting in line 3 that he leaves his fate in God's hands. In section B, the singer encourages others to look beyond the current predicament of such persons as line 5 says, "the horse may be mad, but the owner is not."

During the song's performance, after the participants had sung original the song several times, the moderator decided to encourage individuals to introduce their refrain within the song's same framework. Thus, the moderator sings section A, and selected participants come in with their section B [their refrain]. The entire group then sings this new section until the moderation comes in again with section A. I illustrate how three participants [P] A, and B expressed themselves on this song during the session.

PA.4 - *sika biara ebe ba won nsem nu fa kye me oh*

PA.5 - *pɔnkɔ abɔdam 'a no wuran'dze ɔmmbɔ dam bi*

PA.4 - give me any money that passes through your hands

PA.5 - the horse may be crazy/mad, but the owner is not mad

PB.4 - *asem biara ebe hawu nu ka kyere me oh*

PB.5 - *pɔnkɔ abɔdam 'a no wuran'dze ɔmmbɔ dam bi*

PB.4 - tell me whatever is bothering you

PB.5 - the horse may be crazy/mad, but the owner is not mad

Whereas participant A [PA] contextualizes the experience in terms of a financial manager, suggesting that he is good at managing money despite his current condition, participant B [PB] personifies a counselor despite her current predicament. This illustration demonstrates the interactiveness with repertoire at the circles. It also highlights that even though *Onyame Bekyere* was written and performed in the highlife style, contextualizing it within the palmwine music tradition's framework offered the participants the opportunity to engage with the song and creatively participate in it the music-making process.

5.4.5 The Talking-Circles: Conversation within a Conversation

Another characteristic feature of the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* session is the period dedicated to dialogue on selected topics. I borrowed the idea from the first meeting of the International Council for Traditional Music's Study Group for Applied Ethnomusicology (ICTM-SGAE), where according to Harrison and Pettan (2010: 4), a talking circles format was used for discussions. When I proposed this concept to be incorporated in the sessions, the team agreed and has since become a critical feature. During this section of the session, the music-making gives way to conversations. The organizing team often moderate the session by posing specific questions that will elicit responses and generate a conversation. Sometimes the moderator goes the extra length of directing questions to particular participants who, in their opinion, are knowledgeable on the specific topic. I recall in one of the sessions, a dialogue ensued with Nana Asaase, who was in attendance. On this occasion, the moderator leveraged his Akan folktale knowledge to pose specific questions on the storytelling traditions.

As I discuss in Chapter Three, the *anansesem* storytelling tradition provides a platform for education and speaking against some social ills among the Akan. In the ensuing discussion on this day, the moderator wanted to understand how it is employed in the palmwine music tradition and how young artists' creative processes could leverage this *anansesem* storytelling tradition. Nana Asaase's response opened the floor for the other participants to contribute and seek clarification posing their questions. There were some occasions where these dialogue sessions led to passionate debates on the music industry in Ghana. This platform focuses not only on the music-making process of the palmwine music tradition but also on creating a forum to listen to these young people's views. It appears this has started a conversation that continues to contribute to revitalizing the country's palmwine music tradition.

The *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* sessions appear it has recreated a platform where young people engage physically, public conversation on issues of concern to their locality either than on their phones. Ansu-Kyeremeh (1998) hints that these platforms resonate with how many indigenous communities among the Akan have used similar platforms created by

the youth to discuss their communities' issues. He observes that although moribund, *nkwanwaannuase* is an informal social platform where *nkwanwaa* (the youth) in the community meet to discuss issues affecting them (38). Their head, the *nkwanwaahene* (youth chief), then represents their views during community meetings. In the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* session, a platform appears to have been created where young people reenact and engage with their indigenous mode of artistic expression even within the context of the city.

5.5 “We drink palmwine and laugh it off:” The Dynamics of Sessions

Although digital flyers are circulated, and word of mouth is sent out before sessions occur, one does not need an invitation to participate in the performance circle. The sessions are held in an open area, which draws the attention of people moving around. Some participants have joined the sessions on certain occasions but had no prior idea of what the circle was. There have also been others who have participated in the performance circle's music-making processes by observing from afar. For instance, in the September 2017 session, I particularly paid attention to how several people passing by the venue either paused to observe or eventually join the gathering. On one occasion, Newlove Annan was drawn to the music-making process on his way to one of the Department of Music offices. He eventually joined the circle and played the guitar to some of the songs being performed. In a conversation with me, Newlove emphasized his intrigue with the music-making process taking place that convinced himself it was a group rehearsing. Upon drawing closer, he noted that "these were a group of young people who had gathered to make music together, and for me, it was beautiful and encouraging." I attribute his attitude to the performance circles to the location. The forecourt of the Department of Music at the University of Ghana, as Nketsiah (2020: 49) observes, serve as "a space for informal practice sessions and performances.....contribute to the life of the department to the extent they [patrons] feel impelled, stopping for example to witness a performance." It can be positioned as a community center that attracts a beehive of activities. Indeed, as Nketiah further elaborates, the forecourt is never left unengaged with activities that range from academic work to extra-curricular

activities during school terms. The *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* circles have thus added up to events hosted at the space.

5.5.1 “Things just happen spontaneously:” Poetry, Palm-wine, and Creativity at Sessions

The *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* circles do not follow any strict regulated order and time frame, although there is a broader conceptual framework within which they operate. For example, the session is scheduled to last an hour and a half; however, the sessions often exceed this time. Often the activities that occur during the session happen spontaneously. For instance, I observed that although there is often a stipulated time for the session's start, there appears to be some relaxation when the event begins. A few reasons could be attributed to this observation. It is easy to draw close connections to the original *nsadwase* context in the rural areas. As described, there is often no specific starting time for the gathering except that its vibrancy is premised on the palm-wine tapper's appearance (Edmond, 2016: 78). Also, participants often wait to see others come in first before they trickle in slowly. Sometimes, they will hang around the venue until there are enough participants to begin the session. The circles often start when the moderators commence performance, and the others are encouraged to join them. There is usually no set repertoire for the session, although the moderators select from the pool of palmwine songs as discussed in section 5.4. An element that characterizes the sessions is its spontaneous nature. In commenting on the kind of creative engagement that goes on during the circles, Awura-Ama Agyapong observes that "things just happen spontaneously." In her estimation, the sessions are organized so that there are no strict rules that hinder the creation of new songs extemporaneously out of existing songs or extend old songs' themes to resonate with their current sensitivities, as discussed in Section 5.4.

Even though a particular subtlety of spontaneity characterizes the sessions, some specific protocols or practices are observed. For instance, before participants start taking the palm-wine refreshment, there is often one person who sort of pours libation and first test the drink's efficacy. I made a striking observation of who performs this role. Often, a

male participant usually performs this role. On no occasion did I encounter a lady mount the center stage to perform this action during fieldwork. Brempong (2000) offers some insight into this subject. Brempong opines that libation pouring within the Ghanaian society has been the preserve of men as one is unlikely to find a woman/female perform this role. Today, however, the notion of pouring libation is connected with idolatry and fetishism, thus not appealing to many young people. In the context of the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* circles, the performance of the role is only symbolic as many participants appear interested in the aesthetics of the action to its essence. In a way, these young participants' attention, many of whom may have never experienced this reality, is drawn to the act of libation. During this brief period, he briefly becomes the center of attraction as everyone looks on for approval or what antics he displays. The session's libation pouring often ends up in a song with a theme that resonates with the notion of drinking. The most often sang song is "*hwan na ɔmpɛ nsa*" (who hates drinks), written by Bob Cole. This song, also composed in the guitar band highlife style, is rendered in a palmwine mode, drawing expressive reactions from participants.

The infusion of poetry has, with time, become an integral feature of the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* sessions. It is not uncommon to find young and experienced poets who often test their materials to the palmwine tunes at the performance session. Poets come prepared to test their materials at the least interval or pause in a singing session. They draw the attention of the moderator, who invites them into focus. In one session, I observed salient competitiveness among these poets, one performance after the other. The language of expression for these poets is often the Akan and English language, although, on some rare occasions, I sat through poetry performance in the Gonja language. Another interesting observation is how the new and inexperienced poets learn from the more experienced ones' performance delivery. Amaze, one of the regular young poets acknowledges that he saw his poetry performances improve remarkably since participating in the session. He notes that he now incorporates palmwine guitar styles in commissioned performance he gives.

The palm-wine drink plays a role during the session, as for some participants, it is what draws to *nsadwase nkɔmɔ*. The drink is visibly displayed in the middle of the circle for easy reach and access at the session. Before starting the session, the drinks are displayed as part of the setup. Incidentally, it acts as a pull to some participants who may not have been aware of the circles. There is no time specification for consuming the drinks except that libation is poured before taking turns to pour their drinks. As indicated earlier, pouring libation also presents an opportunity for the participant to observe that the drink is suitable for consumption. Also, it represents some form of prayer for the start of the event. However, at the performance circles, the session would often have been in progress before these enactments are engaged. This symbolic expression is also an enactment of cultural practices within public meetings where beverages are shared. The practice today is for a Christian prayer to be said before; there can be any consumption. As Awura-Ama Agyapong again observes, "you can pour your own palm-wine" as if to suggest that nobody is going to serve you if you do not pour your drink. The drinks positioned in the middle of the circle, I will argue, performs an essential role that induces participation. The fact that participants move from their seats to the center to pour a drink presents another participation level. The movement in-and-out of the inner circle calls for attention, and one approaches the center with some caution. It also serves gag to participants who consume too much palm-wine as others will remark or, in some extreme cases, prevent such persons from getting the drink. Although this self-service remains one of the session's features, there are occasions where the drinks are passed around for the participants to pour their drinks in the comfort of their seats, although these are rare occasions.

A correlation exists between taking the palm-wine beverage and the session's music-making process. It seems that energy and participation levels reach an intense peak; as I observed from several sessions, participants actively participated in the music-making process upon the commencement of palm-wine consumption. Whilst studying the *Dodo* performance in the context of women's associations amongst the Luo of Kenya, Opondo (1996: 67) observes how performances are heightened when some performers have drinks before events. Indeed, she reports high levels of excitement when people have consumed

some amount of alcohol. During the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* sessions, many participants are seen jumping on to the dancing floor or sharing personal stories through songs. For instance, Kwesi Ohene-Gyan comments on his experience at the circles that

participants share stories of their personal experiences, which are based on new compositions. Sharing my experience and listening to and engaging with those shared by others is often my hallmark for the session. The stories participants share is relatable, lending to a sense of community amongst us. We drink palmwine and laugh it off.

Like I discussed in Section 5.4, Ohene-Gyan's remark highlights how such stories are often creatively incorporated into songs. In these instances, how good the stories or how good the participant's vocals do not matter, but the stories they share.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* performance circle as an invention that contributes to bringing vitality to the palmwine music tradition in Ghana. It premises its establishment within the context of a re-engagement with its performance practices of communal music-making within a city setting. In examining modes of musical continuity among the urban Anlo communities in Accra, Avorgbedor (1986), amongst other things, present an example of an engagement with performance practices of musical tradition from home in the context of associations. In this case, indigenous Ewe musical performances are reenacted as links or bonding with their hometowns. I explored the different facilitation phases, coordinated the event's establishment, and discuss the sessions' structure and dynamics. As my analysis illustrates, the key to the circles' successful running was a dedicated team and enthusiastic young participants passionate to engage with the performance practice of the palmwine music tradition shape the sessions.

In her seminal contribution to music revivals and revitalization, Livingston's (1999: 69) observation of the characteristics of such activities including an individual or small group of 'core revivalist,' revival informants and/or original sources, a revivalist ideology and discourse, a group of followers forming the basis of a revivalist community, revivalist

activities, and nonprofit and/or commercial enterprises catering to the revivalist market broadly guided the process. Significantly, an individual or core revivalists, informants and original sources, a revivalist community, and activities were invaluable to ground the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* firmly. The *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* circles offer insights into the communal role of revitalizing its fading tradition. In itself, a music tradition that exemplifies a shared sense of music-making in contemporary context now finds a new mode of expression. A youthful participant engages with an older generation's music practices within how it resonates with its current socio-cultural environment. *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* performance circles highlight the sharing of ideas, both in musical and in dialogue, as well as new performance conventions. It has redirected how the palmwine musical tradition is perceived and rekindle a new sense of awareness to the music and its performance practice.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Summary

My interest in contributing to the revitalization and promotion of the palmwine musical tradition came from the fact that its performance practice had progressively declined. This music tradition, which represents a unique and rich cultural heritage, and whose community was gradually decreasing due to a break in the transmission process of its practices and conventions and old age, needed action to safeguard it. Being a young Ghanaian scholar and a member of the palmwine music community, having studied with Agya Koo Nimo, one of the few culture bearers still holding on to its performance practice's essence, I believed embarking on this applied project was timely. Interestingly, the musical tradition appears to have drawn less attention from scholars and researchers; hence it has been less studied. Thus, the research project examined the palmwine music tradition broadly and explored strategies to support its revitalization and sustenance. It explored how to bring vitality to the music tradition developed in communal musical expression and enhance its sustenance amid increasing societal changes within contemporary contexts. The study offers a thorough perspective on the socio-historical and cultural dimensions of palmwine music's emergence as a neo-traditional or hybrid musical tradition that has experienced different phases of its development. It has provided a contextual analysis of a musical tradition that has not had much research attention to cover its comprehensive stylistic nature systematically.

Nonetheless, initial studies on palmwine music within the West African region conducted by other scholars laid a solid foundation for my research to examine and contribute to the recent Ghanaian popular music history. My study particularly examined and documented the repertoire and performance practice of the palmwine music industry to recent Ghanaian music history in general. It also investigated how a communal engagement with the music tradition facilitates its revitalization and sustenance and the impact its socio-cultural environment has on its sustenance. The study was from the context of an applied ethnomusicological project framed in recent discussions on safeguarding, preservation, revitalization, and sustenance of otherwise endangered music cultures. I hope that this

study's findings and suggestions for future studies become invaluable for others to investigate other problems within the palmwine music tradition and Ghanaian music in general.

Chapter Two of this study presented a historical overview of the emergence and development of the palmwine music tradition in Ghana from the early 20th century to date, thus, situating its revitalization and sustenance within a broader historical context. It explored palmwine music's origins from a loosely organized recreational musical activity at palmwine bars and the village's squares before the early 20th century's turn up to its gradual decline in the early 1990s. We understand that the palmwine music tradition has experienced various transformations from its initial stylistic traits. These traits have gone on to form the foundation on which various other musical styles and traditions developed. The argument here was whether this is not the natural process of such music traditions, as many who do not support revivalist movements argue. However, it is essential to note that these other styles, influenced by palmwine music, assumed stylistic traditions and performance practices different from palmwine music, a position revivalists argue. Thus, moving away from the music tradition's performance practice into new influenced traditions also contributed to the decline of the palmwine music tradition.

In the third chapter, I examined and discussed how the palmwine music tradition's performance practice has evolved since the 1990s. I explored the different musical and instrumental resources and ensembles' performance structures that characterize the music tradition. I observed that the instrumental resources include the guitar, the *premprensiwa*, the drums, the vocals, and the bells and rattles. The *sadwa ase* style, with its numerous accompanying guitar styles, was highlighted as the most defining form from where palmwine musicians creatively find their voice. Likewise, these musicians' performances resonate with the *anansesem* storytelling tradition as palmwine music performance structure embodies this storytelling tradition. In ensembles organization, the conclusion I draw was that the availability of instruments for performances often determines the ensemble's size. As indicated in Agya Koo Nimo's ensemble, his more extensive musical repertory allows for more musicians' engagement. The characteristic features as has been

enumerated of the music tradition continue to evolve due to the constant development of its performance practices' socio-cultural contexts. I argued that some socio-cultural structures continue to influence the palmwine music tradition's performance practices in Ghana.

In Chapter Four, I examined how the palmwine music tradition's socio-cultural framework influences its sustenance. I situated the discourse with the conceptual framework of the five domains of musical sustainability in a contemporary context, as suggested by Schippers (2016). I examined particularly how current palmwine ensembles' activities continue to be influenced by the environment's social and cultural dynamics. They find themselves focusing on the Legon Palmwine and Kwan Pa ensembles to understand how they contribute to bringing vitality to the music tradition within contemporary contexts.

Chapter Six then examined the *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* performance circle as an invention that contributes to bringing vitality to the palmwine music tradition in Ghana. I premised its establishment within the context of a re-engagement with its performance practices of communal music-making in a city setting. I noted that in examining modes of musical continuity among the urban Anlo communities in Accra, Avorgbedor (1986), amongst other things, presents an example of an engagement with performance practices of musical tradition from home in the context of associations. In this case, he observes a re-enactment of indigenous Ewe musical performances are as links or bonding with their hometowns. I explored the different facilitation phases, coordinated the event's establishment, and discuss the sessions' structure and dynamics of *nsadwase nkɔmɔ*. As my analysis illustrates, the key to the circles' successful running was a dedicated team and enthusiastic young participants passionate to engage with the performance practice of the palmwine music tradition shape the sessions.

I note Livingston's (1999: 69) observation of the characteristics of such activities including "an individual or small group of 'core revivalist,' revival informants and/or original sources, a revivalist ideology and discourse, a group of followers forming the

basis of a revivalist community, revivalist activities, and nonprofit and/or commercial enterprises catering to the revivalist market broadly guided the process." Significantly, individuals or core revivalists, informants and original sources, a revivalist community, and activities were invaluable to build the foundations of *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* firmly. The *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* circles, I argue, offer insights into the communal role of revitalizing its fading tradition. In itself, a music tradition that exemplifies a shared sense of music-making in a contemporary context now finds a new expression mode. A youthful participant engages with an older generation's music practices to resonate with its current socio-cultural environment. *Nsadwase nkɔmɔ* performance circles, I further argue, highlight the sharing of ideas, both in musical and in dialogue, as well as new performance conventions and frames. It has redirected how the palmwine musical tradition is perceived and rekindle a new sense of awareness to the music and its performance practice.

A critical study of every aspect of the palmwine music tradition would have been beyond this project's scope. I am conscious of the gaps in this research due to the omission of many interesting names and groups or events that characterized the origins of palmwine music in Ghana. Also, further development of the music tradition, critical engagement with specific epoch's performance practices of the music tradition in Ghana, and instituting *nsadwase nkɔmɔ* in many other locations. I will attribute these factors to the scope I defined for the study, the ready availability of information, the time constriction, and the research's lack of funding. Nonetheless, this dissertation should serve as a springboard for other researcher projects to engage with other aspects of the palmwine music tradition.

6.2 Conclusions

The study reveals that the music tradition's stylistic essence continues to evolve, although the main ideas remain the foundation for these developments. The compositional and performance practice have slightly changed to resonate with the current soundscape in which the music finds itself. This change has primarily been attributed to technological advancement and a developing community. From the study, we learn that indeed the

socio-cultural environment of palmwine music contributes to its sustenance. Schipper's 5-domain framework for music sustainability contextualizes how the socio-cultural environment sustains palmwine music.

- a lack of proper systems of palmwine knowledge transmission,
- the perception of palmwine musicians in the community,
- the context and constructs of palmwine music performances,
- the infrastructure and regulations that supports the palmwine music tradition
- the role of the media and the music industry in promoting palmwine music.

The study observes these factors play a critical role in the sustainability of the palmwine music tradition. There were no proper systems to transmit palmwine music, either formally or informally, thus contributed to how its community was shrinking. The perception of palmwine musicians has not improved from the notion of being desperate people and low remuneration for their performances. Due to massive infrastructural development, which often does not consider some of the palmwine music tradition's performance spaces, the context and sometimes the constructs of its performances remain few. Besides the guitar and probably the drums, it is difficult to purchase instruments like the *premprensiwa* in music shops, except a carpenter is commissioned to construct one for you. Even the drums and guitar cost serve as one of the hindrances to palmwine music's music-making. Although there is a regulation that generally takes care of musicians in Ghana, implementation is often lacking, leaving musicians to their fate. Palmwine musicians become worse off as, in most cases, there is nobody to advocate for them. Until the liberalization of the media space with social media inclusion, the traditional media paid little attention to palmwine music. Palmwine musicians, in general, find it challenging to get recording opportunities, and there is less support from the music industry.

The research project, particularly its applied component, has brought renewed awareness to the music tradition, particularly with young people who continue to show interest and engage with its performance practices. In addition to Agya Koo Nimo's *Adadam*

Agofomma, the two young bands continue to engage in regular performances. As I highlighted in Chapter Four, Kwan Pa Band performs regularly at a popular Accra club and restaurant. The Legon Palmwine Band is also engaged continuously with International Conferences and commissioned shows, mainly by Foreign Embassies and Institutions. Two significant landmarks that highlight the growing vitality of the music tradition by these bands included the Legon Palmwine Band participating in the 10th annual African Cultural Calabash Festival organized by the African Music Project of the University of KwaZulu Natal. Kwan Pa in 2018 was crowned the best Traditional Music Group in Ghana by the prestigious Vodafone Ghana Music Awards (VGMA) as a host of other awards.

Another significant contribution of the study is the kind of media attention it has garnered since 2017. The activities of the two bands, Legon Palmwine and Kwan Pa Bands, continue to draw the media networks' attention in Ghana and overseas. When Kwan Pa released its Christmas single, "5 days of Christmas" (the *Kontomire* song), it went viral, and almost all the media houses hosted them in Accra. In 2016, Agya Koo Nimo released the Palm-wine music in the 21st century, a live re-recording of his old songs with interesting collaborations that seem to typify the music tradition's current essence. Building on Agya Koo Nimo's album, both Legon Palmwine and Kwan Pa Bands have also released albums that are receiving rave reviews. Another music engagement was my collaboration with Cable News Network (CNN) on a documentary on the music tradition aired in 2018. Besides my work with the international media, the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) Worldservice also runs a short documentary on the Kwan Pa Band and their promotion of the palmwine music tradition. These international media engagements also highlight the kind of vitality the music tradition continues to receive.

I have also contributed to the transmission of the music tradition away from Ghana. Whilst, I have been based at the University of KwaZulu Natal during my course of study, I have been privileged to share knowledge of the performance practice of the music tradition with the African Music and Dance students. Three cohorts of students are now knowledgeable in the performance conventions of palmwine music. I also teamed up with

some friends (José Albèrto Chemane and Michelle Mchunu) here in Durban to form *MoSAGh* Band that performed palmwine music amongst other styles in KwaZulu Natal and Mozambique.

The most significant contribution to the revitalization project was the communal engagement of the music tradition. *Nsawase nkɔmɔ* has created an environment where young and old meet to make music palmwine music. Participants seem to find new ways to engage with palmwine music – palmwine music meeting spoken word and rap and other musical instruments through this platform. This monthly performance circle has laid the foundation of an annual festival dubbed "*Nsawase* Music Festival," which takes place in October. The festival has since 2017 grown, building its audiences. Although still new, it promises to be one of the constant features of Ghana's music industry.

6.3 Recommendations

I believe there should be a conscious effort in general to support such unique musical traditions of Ghana. The institutions that cater to the culture and creative industry should be encouraged to find innovative ways to support these endangered musical traditions. There could be some support funding facilities where creative persons could apply to enhance and sustain their creative outputs. Besides the financial assistance, I believe we should be thinking of developing the infrastructure that supports performances. The focus of attention should be on creating community centers where musicians can host their performances. The different communities should focus attention on the sustenance of their musical practices and get involved in safeguarding them. One of the ways to enhance this is through knowledge sharing and transfer. The community leaders and elders should find innovative teaching methods and transmitting their wealth of knowledge to successive generations. This knowledge transmission mode could be a process where experienced practitioners and culture bearers make themselves available or reach out to the young ones. They could also collaborate on new projects with the younger popular musicians in the country or reinterpret their earlier works. I believe the traditional media also has a role to play in that they prioritize the promotion of our

indigenous music on air. They should curate this promotion as an everyday activity. That way, it enhances the production and the quality of music-making that takes place.

The formal educational institution continues to play a significant role in the sustenance of our musical cultures. I believe that these institutions should move beyond the notion of preservation where recording and shelving are enough but to engage with the musical archives. They should be encouraged to emphasize the practical nature of the music and promote performances more. There should be constant communal engagement with musicians who are not lettered. A critical aspect I would recommend they pay attention to is their curriculum where, for instance, they can liberalize the education. Like Ephraim Amu reminds us, *tete wo bi ka, tete wo bi kyere* (the past has something to say, the past has something to teach); indeed, we can learn something from the past mode of music education in the communities where they emphasized apprenticeship. The guitar and its associated indigenous Ghanaian musical traditions have had a checked history since the days it was considered as low class and not worthy of being in the curriculum particularly in the various tertiary educational institution. Today, however, with many of its culture bearer becoming respected members of their various communities. As Collins has observed that “by the 1980s and 1990s, palmwine music and the acoustic guitar band music had gained the ‘patina of age,’⁷⁶” it becomes essential that they often engaged to transmit the knowledge they have gained over the years to the younger generation.⁷⁷ If our institutions could rethink this model and incorporate it into their curricula, it would go a long way to enhance our musical traditions' sustenance.

⁷⁶ Personal communication with John Collins, April 3, 2017

⁷⁷ Collins for instance observes that when Kwaa Mensah was engaged to teach palmwine guitar at the University of Cape Coast, he was approaching his 70s. Similarly, Agya Koo Nimo and Collins himself were doctors (with the former being an honorary one) and experienced.

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Appendix

A: Discography

1.

Koo Nimo (2016) *Palmwine Music in the 21st Century*. [CD note] Zaria Music “Ghana” (Oriente Musik – DANZ 111)

- The Destiny of Man
- Time has its Boundaries
- Divorce is not the Answer
- Mummy where is my Daddy
- Life Overseas
- Sawmill Song
- Buy When Death Sells
- Naa Densua”

Koo Nimo (2012) *Highlife Roots Revival*. [CD note] World Music Network (Riverboat Records)

- *Sɛɛ wonom me,-* Tsetsefly you Suck my Blood
- Old Man Plants a Coconut Tree
- Integrity (The Cat and the Dog)
- Life Is What You Make It
- Medley: Nation Building/*Adampa*
- Medley: Ananse Song Story/ Bear What is The Matter with You/ Horn bill
- Praise Song for Otumfuo Osei Tutu II
- *Yareɛ Yeya* (To be Taken ill, How Painful)
- *Efie ne fie*
- Adowa/Palm Wine Set: You Will Be Overtaken by Events/Listen, Listen and Listen Again

Koo Nimo (2011) *Tete Wobi Ka: The Past has Something to Tell*. [CD note] (Human Songs Records)

- *Abena*
- *Ohia Yeya*
- *Enne Ye Anigye Da*

- *Boniaye kae Dabi*
- *Abube ne Atebe*
- Osei's praise song
- *Moma Yensom no*

Koo Nimo (1990) *Osabarima*. Distributed by Sterns Records (Adasa Records ADCD 102)

2.

Kwan Pa (2019) '*Tu wo ho fo* (Immediate Effect)'. [electronic download] Booknook Bookstore. Available through: <https://booknook.store/product/tu-wo-ho-fo-audio-cd/> [Accessed 24 May 2021]

- *Yen ara Y'asaase*
- *Gyato*
- Mr. Traveler
- *Tu wo ho fo* (Immediate Effect)
- *Aduane Nyinya*
- Palm wine Love
- *Dedeende Kwao ee/Nkete nkete nkete*

Kwan Pa (2019) '*Bronya* Christmas – EP'. [electronic download] Apple Music. Available through: <https://music.apple.com/za/album/bronya-christmas-ep/1491100270> [Accessed 24 May 2021]

- *Bronya Eba*
- Felix Cannot Dance
- *Me Ko Asore*
- *Pam Ooo*
- Pocket Situation

Kwan Pa (2021) '*Tafo Station*'. Kwan Pa Band. In: Single. [electronic download] Apple Music. Available through: <https://music.apple.com/za/album/tafo-station-single/1554854106> [Accessed 24 May 2021]

Kwan Pa (2019) '*5 Days of Christmas*'. Kwan Pa Band. In: Single. [electronic download] Soundcloud. Available through: <https://soundcloud.com/user-739539491/5-days-of-christmas> [Accessed 24 May 2021]

3.

Legon Palmwine Band (2020) 'Legon Abrabɔ'. [electronic download] Apple Music.
Available through: <https://music.apple.com/za/album/legon-abrab%C9%94-university-life/1518098138> [Accessed 24 May 2021]

- *Neɛ ɔbrɛ na ɔdie*
- *Ɔtonkrowa*
- *Me ne woaa*
- *Afia Foriwaa*
- *Legon abrabɔ*
- *Me nenam*
- *Hwan na ɔmpɛ nsa*
- *Yee ye yee*

4.

Nyame, E.K. (1963) 'Onyame Bekyere' from 7 – EP "E.K.'s Band – E.K.'s Favourites"
(Philips-West African Records Ghana - 420 012 PE (45 RPM))

B: Ethical Clearance Letter



13 March 2017

Mr Eric Sunu Doe 216073966
School of Arts
Howard College Campus

Dear Mr Sunu Doe

Protocol Reference Number: HSS/0188/017D

Project title: Ghanaian palm wine music: Revitalizing a tradition and maintaining a community

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 27 February 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc Supervisor: Dr Patricia Achieng Opondo
cc. Academic Leader Research: Professor JK Zeller
cc. School Administrator: Mr Christopher Eley

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

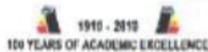
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X04001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: jsmbag@ukzn.ac.za / sozmacom@ukzn.ac.za / mohup@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Fourie's Gardens ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

C: Interview Schedule

Key informants interview guide

Name

Age

Sex

Pseudonym or interviewee code

Date

Time

Questions

1. Please describe your background
2. Describe your palmwine music experience
3. What's been the general perception of palmwine music over the years
4. Describe the changes in palmwine music over the years
5. Describe which aspects/musical elements from palmwine music tradition that is shaping contemporary music practice
6. Describe how palmwine music resonates with the community and how it engages with it
7. How will you describe palmwine music's relevance in today's society?
8. Comment on the significance of palmwine music in contemporary Ghanaian music

B. Key Performance circle interview guide

Name

Age

Sex

Pseudonym or interviewee code

Date

Time

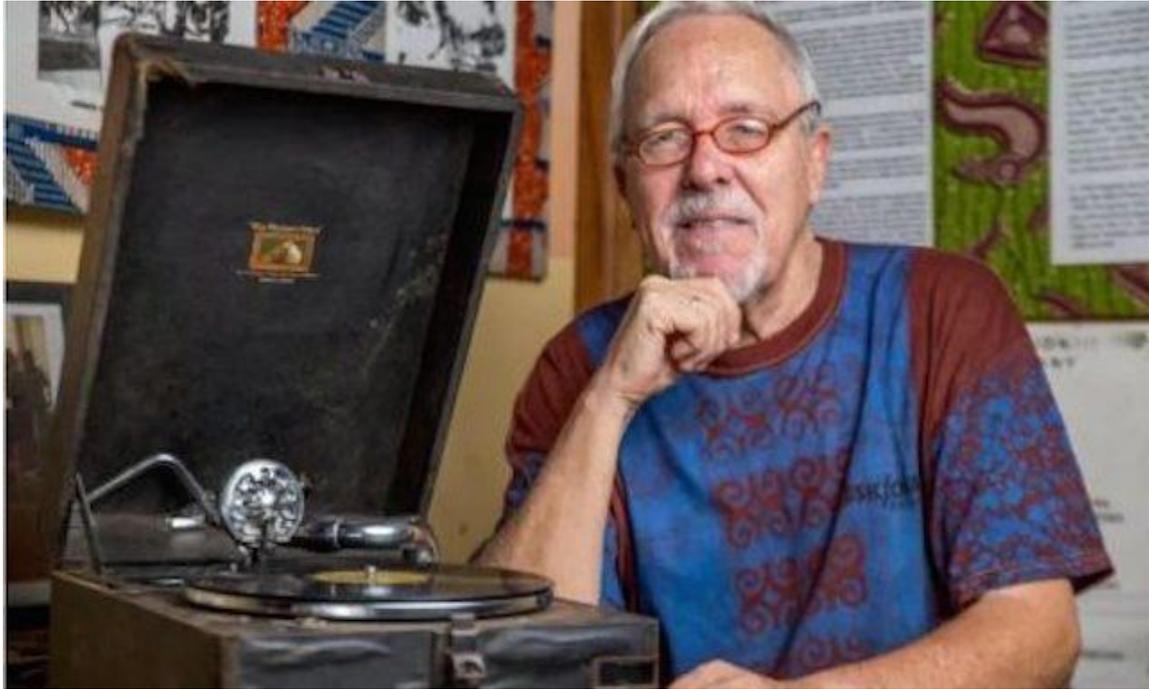
Questions

1. Kindly describe your occupation
2. Is this your first time participating in the session (nsadwase nkomo)
3. How often do you participate in the session?
4. How did you learn of this event?
5. Have you participated in or know of any event similar to nsadwase?
6. If "yes" to question 5, kindly describe this event
7. Kindly describe your participation in nsadwase nkomo (what activities/role do you play?)
8. Prior to your participation in nsadwase nkomo, what were your perception(s) about the palmwine music tradition?
9. What are your perceptions now?
10. What is/was/are most interesting part(s) of the nsadwase nkomo event to you?
11. Why is/are/was/were these interesting?
12. What have/did/do you learn from your participation in nsadwase nkomo?
13. In what ways has your participation in nsadwase nkomo drawn your attention to the palmwine music tradition?
14. Is/was this the first time you heard/saw a palmwine music performance
15. If "no" to question 14, kindly describe how you encountered this?
16. What are/were your opinions/perceptions about the nsadwase nkomo sessions?
17. Do you think nsadwase nkomo is relevant to the community?
18. Kindly elaborate on your answer to question 17
19. Do you believe there is a place for the music tradition and events such as nsadwase nkomo in the Ghanaian music industry?
20. Kindly elaborate on your answer to the previous question
21. What suggestions can you give to make the nsadwase nkomo sessions better
22. Will you attend the next session?

D: Pictography A [Key Respondents]



Daniel Amponsah [Agya Koo Nimo], Picture by Agya Koo Nimo's Library



John E. Collins. Picture from Bookor Audio-visual Library



Eugene Oppong Kyekyeku. Picture from Music in Africa



Philip Dua Oyinka [Nana Asaase] by Asaase Incriptions



Osei Kwame Korankye. Picture by author

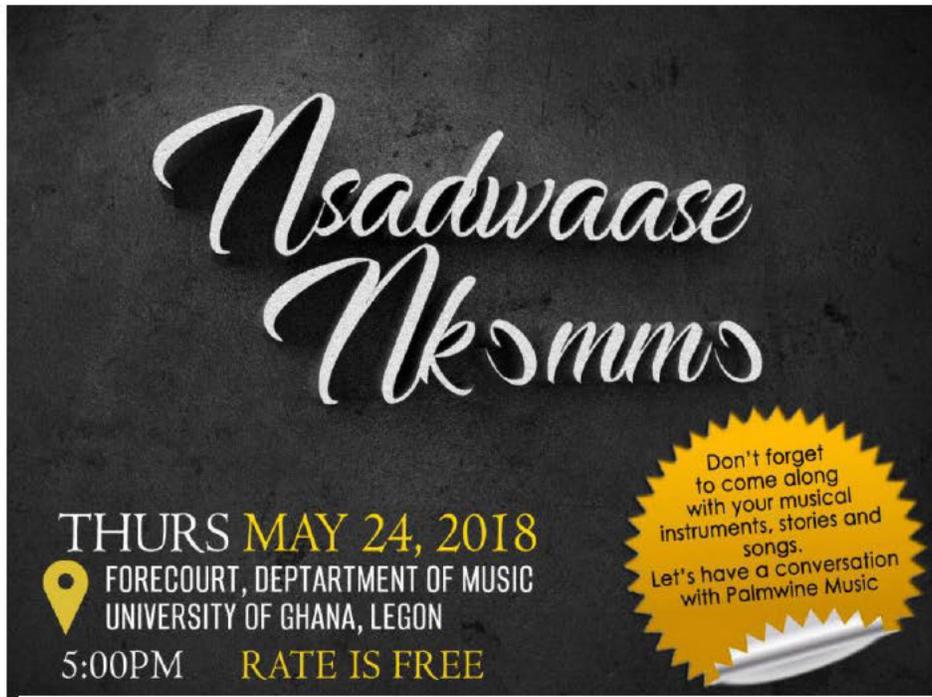
B. Performance Circle



First session organized at the seminar room, Department of Music, University of Ghana, Legon-Accra



The Start of a Performance circle, Department of Music, UG, Legon-Accra



Nsadvwaase poster



Advertising Nsadvwaase Music Festival

Nsadwaase Nkoms

PALMWINE PERFORMANCE CIRCLE - 2019 SCHEDULE 5:30PM EACH DAY | RATE IS FREE

DATE	VENUE
JANUARY, 24	Forecourt, Music Dept. UG
FEBRUARY, 21	Forecourt, Music Dept. UG
MARCH, 21	VENUE WILL BE COMMUNICATED
APRIL, 18	Forecourt, Music Dept. UG
MAY, 23	Forecourt, Music Dept. UG
JUNE, 20	Forecourt, Music Dept. UG
JULY, 18	Forecourt, Music Dept. UG
AUGUST, 22	VENUE WILL BE COMMUNICATED
SEPTEMBER, 19	Forecourt, Music Dept. UG
OCTOBER, 24/26	VENUE WILL BE COMMUNICATED
NOVEMBER, 21	Forecourt, Music Dept. UG
DECEMBER, 19	VENUE WILL BE COMMUNICATED

KEY SESSIONS

January – New Year edition
 March – Ghana @ 62 years edition
 August – Palmwine music seminar
 October – Palmwine music festival
 December – Nsadw'ase buronya

Side Attraction
PALMWINE

Nsadwaase Nkoms

Palmwine Performance Circle - 2019 Schedule 5:30pm each day | Rate is Free

DATE	VENUE
JANUARY, 24	FORECOURT, MUSIC DEPT. UG
FEBRUARY, 21	FORECOURT, MUSIC DEPT. UG
MARCH, 21	VENUE WILL BE COMMUNICATED
APRIL, 18	FORECOURT, MUSIC DEPT
MAY, 23	FORECOURT, MUSIC DEPT
JUNE, 20	FORECOURT, MUSIC DEPT
JULY, 18	FORECOURT, MUSIC DEPT
AUGUST, 22	VENUE WILL BE COMMUNICATED
SEPTEMBER, 19	FORECOURT, MUSIC DEPT. UG
OCTOBER, 24/26	VENUE WILL BE COMMUNICATED
NOVEMBER, 21	FORECOURT, MUSIC DEPT
DECEMBER, 19	VENUE WILL BE COMMUNICATED

KEY SESSIONS

January – New Year edition
 March – Ghana @ 62 years edition
 August – Palmwine music seminar
 October – Palmwine music festival
 December – Nsadw'ase buronya

Side Attraction
PALMWINE

Block schedule for the year's activities, 2018 and 2019

Nsadwaase Nkemma

Palmwine Performance Circle



THURS, 27TH DECEMBER

VENUE FORECOURT DEPT. OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

5:00PM | RATE IS ALWAYS FREE

Come along with your musical instruments,
stories and songs. Let's have a conversation with Palmwine Music

Christmas poster



libation pouring during a session



A dancing session during a circle event



A collage of a session's activities