

Akan Civilization and History: African Musicological Inquiry and Positions

Civilização e História Akan: Investigação e Posições Musicológicas Africanas

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Abstract: Like most African societies, there is ample evidence that the Akan in West Africa developed sophisticated methods in the visual and musical arts (or expressive arts) for recording and storing historical experience, to express religious worldview and philosophy, and created societies with unique social values. The historicized texts of ivory trumpets, flutes, drums, songs, poetry of Kwadwomfoɔ (Chronicle Singers), and referential poetry of Abrafoɔ (the Constabulary), and Adinkra pictographic writing bear ample testimony to the undeniable presence of expressive arts in Akan socio-political and economic sophistication. In this paper, I use one of the texts of Fontomfrom Akantam (Oath Swearing) dance suite as a launching pad to respond to Kwasi Konadu's (2015) disagreement with late nineteenth and twentieth century historians for not considering expressive arts as foundational to Akan civilization. To address the above questions and to complement the larger discourse in the socio-political and economic history of the Akan, I speculate on the formative processes of Akan musical development and the construction of sound producing as well as musical instruments, and the emergence of court music and verbal art forms, community-based vocal ensembles, drumming and dance genres from the Stone Age to the present. My assessment takes into account, the Stone Age from approximately 2000 BCE-500 BCE proposed by James Anquandah (1982), and Kenya Shujaa's (2015) three broad chronological phases of Akan historical and cultural development namely, the Early Iron Age from 500 BCE-500 CE; the Middle Iron Age from 500 CE-1500 CE; and the Late Iron Age from 1500-1900.

Keywords: Akan Civilization and History; Akan Culture; Sound Producing and Musical Instruments; Continuity.

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Resumo: Como a maioria das sociedades africanas, há evidências abundantes de que os Akan, na África Ocidental, desenvolveram métodos sofisticados nas artes visuais e musicais (ou artes expressivas) para registrar e preservar experiências históricas, expressar uma visão de mundo religiosa e filosófica e criar sociedades com valores sociais únicos. Os textos historicizados das trombetas de marfim, flautas, tambores, canções, poesias dos Kwadwomfoɔ (Cantores Cronistas), poesias referenciais dos Abrafoɔ (a Constabulária) e a escrita pictográfica Adinkra testemunham amplamente a presença inegável das artes expressivas na sofisticação sociopolítica e econômica dos Akan. Neste artigo, utilizo um dos textos da suíte de dança Fontomfrom Akantam (Juramento) como ponto de partida para responder à discordância de Kwasi Konadu (2015) com historiadores do final do século XIX e do século XX, que não consideraram as artes expressivas como fundamentais para a civilização Akan. Para abordar as questões levantadas e complementar o discurso mais amplo sobre a história sociopolítica e econômica dos Akan, especulo sobre os processos formativos do desenvolvimento musical Akan, a construção de instrumentos sonoros e musicais, bem como o surgimento da música de corte, das formas de arte verbal, dos conjuntos vocais comunitários e dos gêneros de percussão e dança, desde a Idade da Pedra até o presente. Minha análise considera a Idade da Pedra, de aproximadamente 2000 a.C. a 500 a.C., conforme proposto por James Anquandah (1982), e as três amplas fases cronológicas do desenvolvimento histórico e cultural Akan descritas por Kenya Shujaa (2015), a saber: a Idade do Ferro Inicial (500 a.C.–500 d.C.), a Idade do Ferro Média (500 d.C.–1500 d.C.) e a Idade do Ferro Tardia (1500–1900).

Palavras-chave: Civilização e História Akan; Cultura Akan; Produção Sonora e Instrumentos Musicais; Continuidade.



Nyamedua (God's Tree). Represents God's ever presence in human life and Akan belief in Ɔdomankoma Nyame (God, the Creator of the Universe). Akan Adinkra pictographic writing.

I would like to begin with the text of a popular dance instrumental piece, Akantam (oath swearing), performed by members of the Ɔntɔmfɔm drum ensemble at Manhyia Palace in Kumase. Ɔkwan Tware Asuo (The Path Crosses the River) is one of seventy-seven proverbs that constitutes Akantam dance suite that is performed in Akan royal courts. The variety of drums in the ensemble are one or two bɔmaa, a pair of atumpan, adukurogya (or adedemma), paso, brɛnko, appentemma, dɔnka, and two or three dawuro (large gongs). The Ɔntɔmfɔm drum ensemble represents heroic ideals in Akan and projects militancy in all performing situations. In the days of warfare and territorial expansion, Akantam was performed for war captains and members of the infantry to swear the oath of the land before they depart for war.

Example 1: Akantam. Ɔkwan Tware Asuo (The Path Crosses the River) by Manhyia Ɔntɔmfɔm Ensemble. Recorded and transcribed by the author.

Atumpan

1. Ɔkwan tware asuo
2. Asuo tware ɔkwan

Bɔmaa

3. Ɔpanin ne hwan?
4. Ɔkwan tware asuo
5. Asuo tware ɔkwan?

6. Ɔpanin ne hwan?

Atumpan and Bɔmaa

7. Yɛbɔ kwan no kɔtoɔ asuo no
8. Asuo no firi tete
9. Ɔdomankoma bɔɔ adeɛ
10. Kronkron Tano, Brefi Tano
11. Agya Kwaante e
12. Woama Bosom Pra adi afaseɛ
13. Ɔwea damirifa, damirifa, damirifa, damirima, damirifa

English Translation

Atumpan

1. The path crosses the river
2. The river crosses the path

Bɔmaa

3. Who is the elder?
4. The path crosses the river
5. The river crosses the path

Bɔmaa

6. Who is the elder?

Atumpan and Bɔmaa

7. We created the path and met the river
8. The river is from ancient times
9. The creator created things
10. Tano the holy one, Brefi Tano
11. Agya Kwaante e
12. You have compelled Pra to eat water yam
13. The tree bear condolences, condolences, condolences, condolences, condolences

The drum text in the above example encapsulates the historical experience of the Akan in the days of settlements and migrations, that eventually morphed into a religious worldview that recognizes the natural order in the environment. For those familiar with the Akan physical landscape, we are informed that the approximately 31,760 square miles of Akan physical environment is heterogeneous with dense forest and impenetrable vegetation with the height of trees ranging between 30 and 120 feet high. Beneath the tall trees are smaller trees, shrubs and bushes, saplings and varying degrees of ground flora. The Southwest corner is marked as tropical rainforest. Further, we are told that large rivers including Ankobra, Birim, Densu, Offin, Pra, Tano, and Volta traverse Akanland and finally empty into the Atlantic Ocean at different points (Figure 1 shows locations of major rivers listed above). There is abundance of streams in addition to the only known natural Lake, Bosomtwe, in the heartland. Rich soils and rocks not only provide the props for agricultural pursuits but also endowed the Akan topography with natural resources such as gold, iron ore,

diamond, bauxite, manganese, lithium and other natural resources (Shujaa, 2014)¹. Centuries of reflection by the Akan about the abundant resources of rivers led to the understanding that rivers are from Ɔdomankoma (God), the Creator of all things, and that in their search for food and shelter, human beings created the path and met the river. Essentially, the path is constructed by physical beings, but the river is one of the spiritual manifestations of God on earth. It is this existential experience that is artistically encoded and performed by members of the royal *fontomfom* drum ensemble as a dance suite that continues to be passed on, orally, from generation to generation. This original drum verse is featured in intertextual variations across genres in vocal as well as instrumental ensembles. For instance, chorus members in *adowa* and *nnwonkorɔ* groups perform versions of the above drum text as part of their repertoire. The first piece sounded by *ntahera* and *kɔkrɔanya* ivory trumpet groups at the beginning of every ceremony is Ɔkwan (the Path), their version of the same drum poetry. The result is the performance of The Path Crosses the River in present day Akanland is a constant reminder for the Akan to praise and thank God, the Supreme Being, for providing the living with rivers to sustain life on earth.

Despite the ever presence of the visual and musical arts in Akanland, it is fair to say that late nineteenth and twentieth century historians of Akan civilization cropped out cultural history and exclusively focused on political and economic history². It seems what is crucially missing in Akan historiography is clearly articulated by Kwasi Konadu's question: "what actually propelled Akan culture and society through their own history?" (Konadu, 2014, p. 2). To answer the above question in his edited volume, *The Akan People: A Documentary History*, Konadu created the space for Kenya Shujaa to provide an overview of "Akan Cultural History" (Shujaa, 2014, p. 29-88). Like most African societies, there is ample evidence that the Akan in West Africa developed sophisticated methods in the visual and musical arts for recording and storing historical experience, to express religious worldview and philosophy, and created societies with unique social values, as well as fundamental techniques for recalling and transmitting the complex artistic phenomena through time. The historicized texts of ivory trumpets, flutes, drums, songs, poetry of Kwadwomfoɔ (Chronicle Singers), and referential poetry of *Abrafoɔ* (the Constabulary), and visual symbols and

¹ Atlantic Lithium discovered lithium deposit in 2018 and moved on to established Ghana's first lithium mine, Ewoyaa, at Cape Coast.

² The Jamaican-born historian, Kwasi Konadu, describes it as the pervasive political narrative approach (Konadu, 2014, p. 2).

pictographic writing bear ample testimony to the undeniable presence of the arts in Akan socio-political and economic sophistication from the beginning of time.

The events leading to the above publication began in the 1960s when scholars at the University of Ghana began to combine oral, archaeological, linguistic, and to a limited extent, the visual and performing arts as vital sources for the reconstruction of Akan history. James Anquandah's *Rediscovering Ghana's Past* (1982a) is a prime indication of a shift in scholarly focus. In his chapter titled "The Akan-A Golden Civilization", Anquandah includes a brief discussion of expressive arts in the section, "Arts and Crafts of the Akan" (Anquandah, 1982, p. 100-112). Obviously, a major undertaking by an archaeologist, he was keenly aware of the inherent limitations of what he called "archaeo-musicology." He presented side-blown trumpets that came up in archaeological excavations at Nsòkò (Begho) and with the help of radiocarbon technology, he was able to establish the date in the sixteenth century. Additionally, he produced the artistic representations of sound producing instruments found in seventeenth century clay sculptures of court trumpeters and metal gongs found in a mausoleum at Adanse Ahinsan. With archaeological and ethnographic evidence, Anquandah concluded that the period between A.D. 1300 and 1800 were a major formative era in the arts of the Akan. Despite his own submission by way of invoking the musicological work of Kwabena Nketia that, no aspect of the Akan life cycle is devoid of musical expressions, he did not investigate the centuries preceeding 1300 to the remote past to identify musical instruments and or musical expressions. At any rate, we did not have to wait long for scholarship that will move us beyond the disciplinary confines of archaeology.

As if by coincidence, in 1982, the same year as Anquandah's publication, the Historical Society of Nigeria brought a handful of scholars from history, archaeology, politics, linguistics, ethnomusicology, and religion and philosophy for transdisciplinary dialogue on the Akan past and present. Published in the history journal, *Tarikh*, under the broad theme, *Akan History and Culture*, we have, for the first time, an ethnomusicologist, Kwabena Nketia, joining his colleagues to offer musicological perspectives on Akan historiography (Nketia, 1982, p. 47-59). For his chapter, Nketia, like Shujaa, relied mostly on eighteenth and nineteenth century documentary sources written by European traders and explorers to highlight the general characteristics that define Akan musical expressions. Taken as a whole, a panoramic assessment of musical expressions may be useful to distinguish Akan melodic and rhythmic procedures, or the construction and designs of musical

instruments that are different from their Gonja and Dagbon neighbors to the north or the Adangme and Anlo Ewe to the Southeast, however several lingering questions remain unanswered. For instance, what were the corresponding developments in musical expressions during the Akan Stone Age? What were the nature and the uses of sound producing and musical instruments? How were sound producing and musical instruments manufactured and the resources employed in their construction? Is there discernible evidence of continuity, musical or otherwise, with the remote past? Despite the noted variations, how did the various Akan groups arrive at a distinctive vocal style or the unique design of gongs, clapperless bells, drums, flutes, and ivory trumpets?

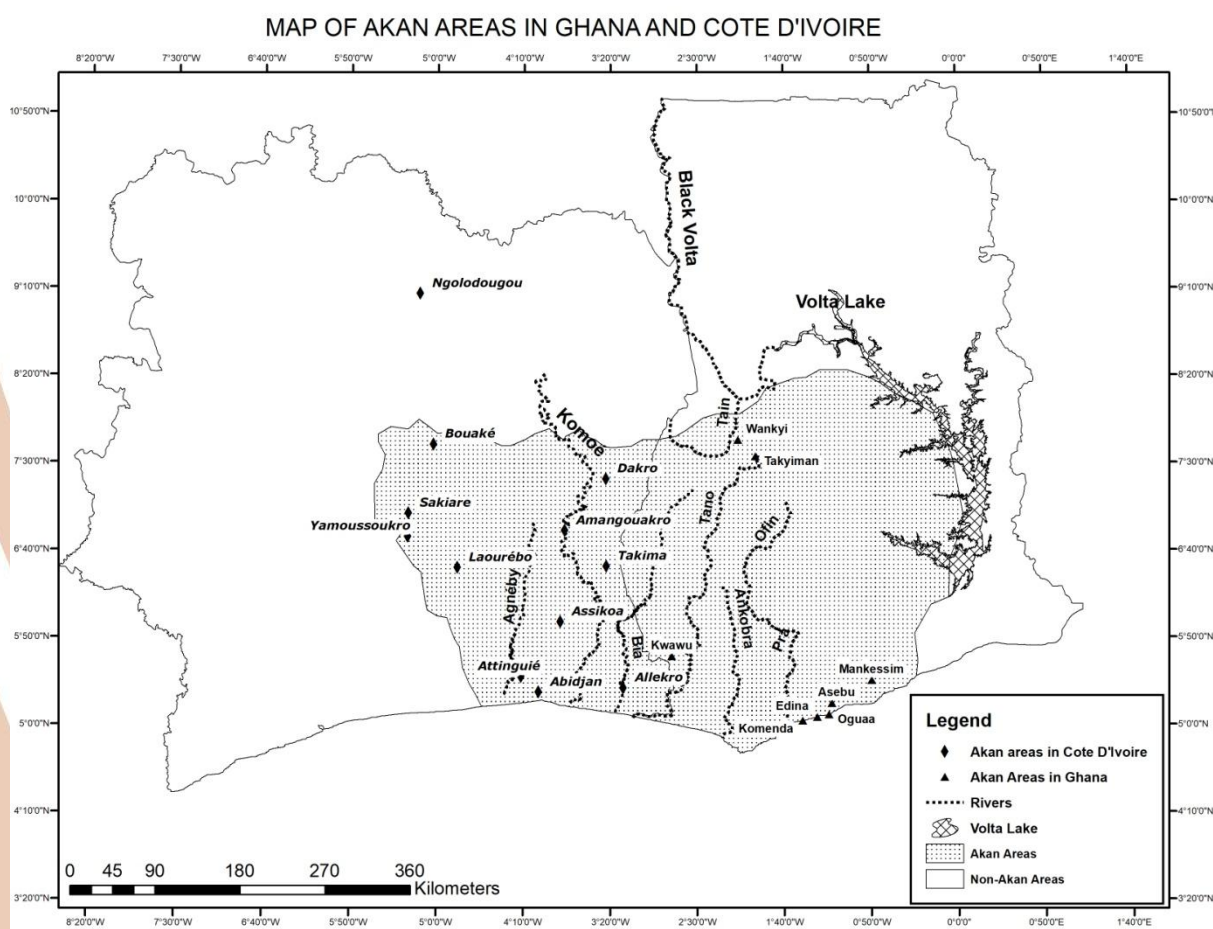
In order to address the above questions and to complement the larger discourse in the socio-political and economic history of the Akan, I speculate on the formative processes of Akan musical development and the construction of sound producing as well as musical instruments, and the emergence of court music and verbal art forms, community-based vocal ensembles, drumming and dance genres from the Stone Age to the present. My assessment takes into account, the Stone Age from approximately 2000 BCE-500 BCE proposed by James Anquandah, and Kenya Shujaa's three broad chronological phases of Akan historical and cultural development namely; the Early Iron Age from 500 BCE-500 CE; the Middle Iron Age from 500 CE-1500 CE; and the Late Iron Age from 1500-1900 (Shujaa, 2014, p. 33-88). Like all human life, Akan advancement throughout the ages is multi-directional and multifaceted and as a result, it is impossible to develop linear chronological sequence of musical resources especially if I am basing my discussions on expansive spatial frameworks noted above. As stated earlier, my goal here is to complement the historical, archaeological, political, and economic discourse with African musicological inquiry and positions. Prior to that, a brief overview of the Akan landscape and culture traits is in order.

Considering the massive volume of literature produced on the Akan as a group and individual kingdoms and states within this group, it is by now conventional knowledge that the Akan predominantly live in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and minimally in Togo³. With approximately 47.5 percent of the total population in Ghana and 32.1 percent of the overall population in Côte d'Ivoire, they are the largest ethnic group in both countries. In recent times, Akan enclaves in the African Diaspora in the Americas are included in such

³ Kwasi Konadu (2015, p. vii) lists over five thousand books and more than twice that same number of scholarly articles on the Akan.

considerations⁴. According to the map in Figure 1, the outer limits of Akan settlements in West Africa are bounded in the east by the Volta Lake in Ghana and in the west by the Komoé River in the Côte d'Ivoire while the northern and southern tips are demarcated by the Black Volta and the Atlantic Ocean respectively. Akan groups in Ghana include the Adanse, Bono, Assen, Twifo, Akwamu, Denkyira, Kwawu, Akyem, Akuapem, Sefwi, Aowin, Asante, Fante, Ahanta, and Nzema while the Abron, Baule, Anyi, and Nzema make up the groups in Côte d'Ivoire.

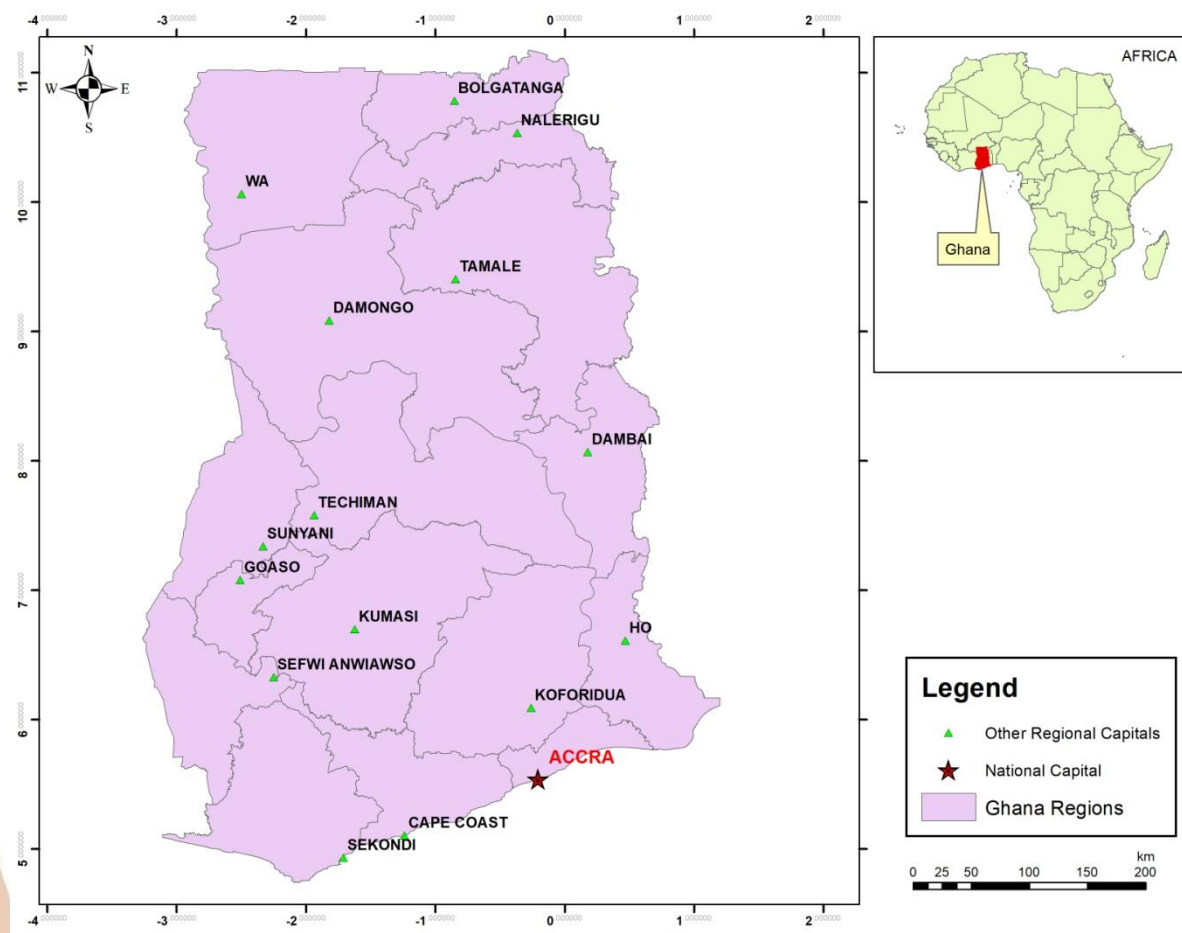
Figure 1: Map of Akan Areas in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire with major rivers and the Volta Lake.



Source: Ben Emunah Aikins, Department of Geography and Resource Development, University of Ghana.

⁴ The multi-authored volume, *Akan Peoples in Africa and the Diaspora*, edited by Kwasi Konadu (2015), gives equal attention to the origins of the Akan and Akan discourses in the Diaspora.

Figure 2: Regional Map of Ghana with an Insert of the Location of Ghana in Africa.



Source: Ben Emunah Aikins, Department of Geography and Resource Development, University of Ghana.

The ecosystem, described above, leads to heterogeneous settlements and we are able to identify three distinct Akan groups namely, the northern Bono Savanna (Wankyi, Takyiman, Bono Manso), the Adanse Forestlands (Adanse, Denkyera, Asante, Akyem, Kwawu), and the Etsi coastlands (Oguaa, Komenda, Edina, Asebu, Mankessim). It appears that some families within the first two groups later dispersed southwards and established settlements along the way to the coast. Kenya Shujaa describes movements and dispersals southwards that involves land acquisition through warfare or through purchases, mixing with or displacing indigenous populations including the Guan (Shujaa, 2014, p. 31)⁵. It is in this challenging terrain of dense and impenetrable forest with its intricate ecosystems that

⁵ For the origin and present distribution of the Guan in Ghana, see Kwame Ampene (2011).

Neolithic Akan evolved a unique civilization by the end of the first millennium CE. The distinctive political, social, and cultural institutions that are the hallmark of the Akan follow centuries of “mature reflections” not only on their immediate environment, but also on the larger universe including the earth, the heavens, and the solar system. The resultant ideas, according to Kofi Asare Opoku, crystalized “into a system of thought which was not static, but was passed down from generation to generation, not only orally, but also symbolically” in music, verbal art forms, the visual arts, and in the numerous rituals that the Akan observe (Opoku, 1982, p. 61). Here are a few cultural particulars and institutions that are widely shared, sometimes with slight variations, among all Akan groups.

The foundation of Akan social organization is based on a matrilineal system whereby one’s inheritance, succession to political office, land ownership, and property is validated through the maternal line (or blood line). Every Akan belongs to one of seven or eight matrilineal exogamous clans and participates in a complex monarchical system of government made up of kings, chiefs and corresponding ahemaa (erroneously translated as queens) who, as I have noted elsewhere, are not necessarily wives of chiefs⁶. Akan principles of complementarity are expressed through the dual male-female system of governance. Ohene (a king or chief) has their corresponding female counterpart, Ohemaa (erroneously translated as queen or queen mother) to ensure equilibrium and social balance. The dual leadership role has its functional equivalence in the organization of musical ensembles such as the male and female Atumpan drums. When two are used, the huge pair of bōmaa drums are similarly designated as male and female drums in fōmtōmfrōm ensembles. A week consists of seven days, and it is part of a forty-two-day calendar system, Asranaa, that is used in organizing agricultural undertakings, festivals, social and political activities⁷. The calendar also provides Akan citizens with names for the soul (kra din) based on seven days of the week and additional names beyond the seven days including Dapaa, Fofie, Fokuo, Fōdwoo and others. In Ghana, the Akan speak either the Twi-Fante cluster that is further divided into several dialects that are mutually intelligible including Nzema, Ahanta, Sefwi, Aowin, Fante, Asante, Agona, Akuapem, Brong and others. The dialects in Côte d’Ivoire are Baule, Anyi and Nzema. Joseph H. Greenberg’s 1963 classification that listed Twi as belonging to the Kwa

⁶ See Kwasi Ampene (2020).

⁷ Eight-day reckoning in some places stems from beginning from the day instead of the day after. For instance, seven days from Monday will ideally begin from Tuesday to Monday and not Monday to Monday. Osafo K. Osei (1997) is an in-depth discussion of the significance of the Akan calendar.

sub-family of the Niger-Congo has been re-classified by J. M. Stewart since 1966 as belonging to the Volta-Komoé group (Dolphyne, 1982, p. 35-45)⁸. The new classification takes into account the Volta River in eastern Ghana and River Komoé in eastern Côte d'Ivoire. From the fifth century CE, the Akan developed urban settlements that involved the coordination of family units into organized towns, states and kingdoms with central political authorities. They developed Agro-based industries that formed the foundation for trade in kola nuts to as far as Hausaland in Nigeria. The importance of trade and commerce to ancient Akan economy and urbanization is spelt out in J.J. Fynn's concise discussion on the subject (Fynn, 1982). According to Fynn, the Akan developed techniques of mining and traded gold to the northeast and northwest with Mande traders through the Trans-Saharan corridor. Northwestern route passed through Ejura, Kintampo, Nsokō (referred to as Begho by the Mande), Bonduku, Kong, Wagadugu, Jenne, Timbuktu and beyond. For the eastern corridor, the route began from the central forest to Ejura, Salaga, Yende, San Sanne Mango, Niamey further westward to Gao and eastward to Sokoto, Zaria, Kaduna, Katsina, Kano and beyond.

An enduring legacy of Akan sophistication is the Akan imagination in the visual and performing arts. As the site for expressing the most profound philosophical and religious thoughts, the Akan advanced religious and philosophical beliefs/reflections about the world around them that they encoded in the visual and performing arts. Artistic creations involving wooden carvings, ceramic pots, textiles such as the famous kente loom designs and adinkra stamped cloths, as well as sophisticated methods of inscribing historical events on objects including swords, guns, shields, royal spokespersons staffs, shields, and many more are part of an elaborate system of symbolic language and communications. Sometimes referred to as visual icons or rhetorical objects of communication, symbolic communications in visual epigrams are mirrored in musical expressions in a variety of combinations including sounded verses on ivory trumpets, flutes, and drums; verbal poetry, and non-verbal domains as in dance gestures⁹. Just as musical forms are sounded performance and are easily understood as such, visual epigrams and dance gestures constitute non-sounded aspects of performance that bear striking continuity with the Akan past. It appears that symbolic language and communications in the visual arts are fluidly transferred to the performing arts in the form of

⁸ See Joseph H. Greenberg, first published in 1963 and Second edition in 1966.

⁹ For Archaeological evidence, see James Anquandah (1982b). In relation to the Royal Spokespersons staff, Kwesi Yankah (1995, p. 31-39), referred to carved objects as rhetorical objects of communications; while Doran Ross (2002, p. 59-65), referred to similar symbols on swords as gold cast symbols.

proverbs and literary devices in songs, poetry of drums, ivory trumpets and flutes, verbal arts, and dance gestures. In terms of construction and design, Akan sound producing and musical instruments including the pair of Atumpan drums are quite distinct from those of their northern neighbors. There is overwhelming emphasis on single-headed drums in Akan while their northern neighbors including the Dagomba prefer close-ended and comparatively lightweight drums. As we shall see later, the variety of closed-ended drums are cultural adaptations from the Dagomba kingdom. The foregoing mapping of traits, by no means exhaustive, points to Akan civilization and history progressing from the remote past to the present times with the expressive arts as fundamental pillars of socio-political, religious, and economic sophistication. For Anquandah, the Akan socio-political, religious, philosophical, and economic sophistication reached its pinnacle in the Asante Kingdom, the last Akan state to come into prominence in the central forest region of the then Gold Coast in West Africa in the late seventeenth century (Anquandah, 1982b). By the late eighteenth century, the Kingdom had become a dominant force in that region. Asante rapidly expanded and by the early nineteenth century, it had become “indisputably the greatest and the rising power” in West Africa and covered an area larger than present-day Ghana (Fynn, 1982, p. 7). I shall now turn my attention to the broad spatial frameworks put forth by archaeologists and historians to speculate on parallel developments in the performing arts.

The Stone Age (2000 BCE-500 BCE)

One of the defining characteristics of early farming activities is the fashioning of stone axes and hoes. Relying on oral interpretations, the modern Akan refer to these stone implements as God’s Axe (Nyame Akuma). Confirming oral traditions, archaeological excavations have identified ruins of stone-using habitats in the northern Brong Savanna and the Adanse forestlands that are dated between 2000 BCE and 1000 CE (Anquandah, 1982a, p. 88-112) ¹⁰. My considered position is, if Neolithic Akan had the capacity to carve out

¹⁰ It appears that proto-Akan communities who used these implements might have named them differently and that the reference to *Nyame Akuma* (God’s Axe) was a later expression say 1,000 years later. It may well be that with the onset of early Iron Age (roughly 500 BCE), they abandoned ground stone axes and hoes and most of the stone implements were covered with topsoil or washed away during heavy rainfall. For centuries and generations upon generations when most ‘modern’ Akan did not recall the stone implements but they only saw ground stones after heavy torrential rain and thunderstorms, they generated the myth that the stones are from heavens and that they came down to earth exactly where lightning struck the ground. That is why they called it God’s Axe. Growing up at Asante Akyem Agogo in the Asante Region, my friends and I will occasionally pick

ground stone axes and hoes for cutting wood and for clearing the forest to engage in agricultural pursuits, then it is more than likely they had the capacity to express themselves musically. What were the corresponding developments in music during this period? What was the nature and uses of sound producing instruments and how were they constructed? What were the resources employed in their construction? An undeniable fact is human's predilection to engage in some form of musical activity and thus musical skills of various kinds were developed alongside sedentary hunter-gathering activities. For its biological configuration, we may consider the human body as the primary source for musical creativity, and we may do well to begin with the body.

It is more than likely that the Stone Age Akan did not live in silence and for whatever reasons he might have hummed for personal diversion, or to accompany work and farming activities with some form of musicality. It is possible that they made attempts to imitate their sonic environment in its manifold manifestations. For instance, bird cries, barking of animals, noises of the fox family, night sound of crickets, sound of streams and large water bodies, and several others. Perhaps imitation of the sonic environment led to the ability to whistle or use whistling as call signals where individuals used stylized formula to call neighbors or attract birds and larger game. Growing up, my friends and I used to whistle our names and even go as far as calling them to come out and play. For instance, we would go close to a friend's house, whistle his name and even use the medium of whistling to ask, "where are you?" He in turn whistles a response saying, "I am here." Still whistling, we will ask him to come out and play. It is worth pointing out that humming with the voice and whistling through the mouth are non-verbal activities while vocalizations are based on the voice.

Inevitably, primordial singing leads us to the age-old debate over language and song conundrum. I will submit that both language and song originate in the human voice and that there is no separation between the two during performance. We speak with our voice and we sing with the same. Given the above interpretation, we might conclude that just as language (the word) is critical in communication, the song or the act of singing (or the sounding word) expands on normal language communication in order for the Akan to express the most profound thoughts in song¹¹. Neolithic Akan had some understanding that there is always

up these types of polished stone axes from the ground after heavy rainfall. I also saw some mothers who will put polished stone axes in basins or buckets of water that they use to bath their babies for spiritual fortification and protection.

¹¹ Kofi Agawu (2016, p. 113-154) is a detailed discussion of the relationship between language and music.

something special about sung words. There is something strange, mysterious, about singing simple repeated words to a nursing baby and engaging the baby in interactive play. We are familiar with the accomplished goal, if not always but sometimes, the joy and laughter coming from an infant who is the recipient of various forms of lullaby. The Neolithic Akan mother also realized she could sing simple songs that will ease her baby to sleep.

The Stone Age is also the period of hunter gathering and it is likely the early Akan lived in little bands of say half a dozen or more and there are times when individuals may have wondered off to hunt for meat or in search of food and return to the group. In those instances, it is likely individuals may hum, whistle or sing to pass away time. Sooner or later, they figured it was exciting to sing when two or more individuals sing together. Even it is more exciting when an entire group sing together since the orientation of solo singing, we are told, is inward rather than outward (Agawu, 2016, p. 120). To ensure members of the group, children and adults, fully participate in musicking, they resorted to call and response play. An individual leading a song may sing a phrase for the others to respond at a set or agreed upon intervals. Although solo singing is inevitable in certain situations, Neolithic Akan looked forward to instances of collective musicking as they trigger shared emotional experience, social bonding, and ensures group cohesion to deal with the challenging environment and the unknown.

As much as Stone Age Akan enjoyed sung words, they felt the need for some kind of accompaniment. Corporeal accompaniment to vocalizations might have begun with tapping the thighs with both hands, or sometimes by clapping both hands, or perhaps snapping their fingers, or by beating the chest with both hands. The last corporeal activity is closer to hand drumming and might have established the foundation for drumming. It is worth noting that, corporeal accompaniment to the singing voice, especially hand clapping, continues to this day. Somewhere along the line, they realized a special timbre results when you strike two dry wooden branches together. Relying on stone axes, they could cut a fallen tree branch, chip away the bark, cut both ends to shorten it, and use both sticks as a substitute rhythm pattern for say tapping one's thighs with hands, or hand clapping. As members of the grass family, pockets of bamboo thrive in tropical environments and dried bamboo stems were fashioned and used as stick clappers. In fact, bamboo stick became a favorable choice since the naturally hollow stems produce a crisper and louder sound that mixes well during group singing situations. As time went by and Neolithic Akan went about sedentary hunter-

gathering activities, they occasionally came across dried fruits with seeds inside. They soon found out that shaking dried fruits with seeds produces a shivering mass of sound and this unique timbral quality can be added to stick clappers to accompany vocalization. Several decades down the road, adventurous individuals came across a fairly bigger fruit of the gourd family (*lagenaria siceraria*). Using stone axes, they were able to cut an opening on top of the gourd and then scraped the fruit from the inside and depending on the size, they were able to fetch and store water in the gourds as well as store food items such as grains. Very soon, someone came up with the idea that the smaller gourds with elongated necks could be used as rattles if they put pebbles or sometimes dried seeds in them. The point here is with stone technology and sedentary lifestyle, stick clappers and hard seed shells were readily obtained from the natural environment. They are organic and require little adjustment prior to their use. It appears that the basis for the Akan predilection for short repeated rhythmic patterns that accompany individuals or group singing began at this time. They later realized the spiritual potential in organic vegetable materials and never abandoned the use of gourd rattles or stick clappers to this day and thus establishing continuity with successive generations of Akan.

It is relatively easy for sedentary hunter-gatherers with stone axe tools to construct sound producing instruments from plants and animal horns with natural bore. Bamboo stems, tall grass, stems of papaya (or papaw) trees, horns of wild and domesticated animals are materials with natural bore that provide resources for the manufacture of sound producing instruments. The Akan were exposed to animal horns as early as the period of sedentary hunter-gathering activities. Animal horns were always discarded until an individual used a sharpened stone to cut a small hole near the narrow tip. After several attempts at blowing air into it, they succeeded in obtaining a sound from the horn. The resultant sound, a single sound that is sounded by blowing air and sustaining it for as long as the lungs are able to supply the needed air was an extraordinary feat with far-reaching consequences. Essentially, construction of the side-blown horn was not by coincidence as it is more of a practical decision. It is comparatively less difficult to cut a hole near the narrow tip with a sharpened stone than on the actual tip. By 1000 BCE, discarded horns from domesticated goats and cattle added to the sporadic soundscape and somehow were used like the human voice to communicate with members within or between units. Voice signals such as uuuuuuuuuuuuuuh were transferred to the horns as puuuuuuuuuuh. If for any reason

members of a group disperse during the day, they will sound the horn as calling signals to reassemble and thereby locate all members. Horns soon gained reputation as signal instruments, and it is possible they did not play horns to accompany singing. Sometimes they were able to sound the horns in a call and response signal across large distances until they were able to meet other groups in the dense forest. Sometimes they were able to locate other groups by responding or imitating a sounded horn. Like whistling, they realized the potential of substituting the sounding horns for the human voice and it might as well be the beginning of exploring the tonal patterns in Akan language to develop text-based communications with sound producing instruments. To this day, I vividly remember when, as a child, we traveled from Asante Akyem Agogo to my father's village, *Dɔkrɔkyewa*, in a remote forest location near Besease in the Central Region. One evening my senior brother, Osafo Afari, made a loud sound by blowing air across a discarded bottle. After trying a couple of times, we heard a similar sound in the far-off distance in the forest. That confirmed for my brother and us, his younger siblings, that there is another settlement like ours somewhere in the forest.

Dance, affective response, and bodily-based gestures as forms of symbolic communication were perhaps known to Neolithic Akan in his or her daily interactions. It is likely that remnants of body-based motions that are still used in Akan areas are from antiquity. For instance, nodding the head up and down for affirmation and shaking the head from left to right for denial or implying no. There are facial expressions that convey happy or sad moods and raising the eyebrow to express shock or surprise. Additional gestures include folding all four fingers, from the index to the pinky in and out of the palm to beckon individuals or groups to come. It appears that Neolithic Akan responded, affectively, to musicking with relatively simple body movements. There will be the usual neck movements, or some form of movements associated with the head, moving the upper torso while sitting or standing. Like the sounded horns and trumpets that were primarily sounded to send signals, the Akan begun early to experiment with normal gestures in daily routine in order to create dances that could communicate moods or collective and lived experience. Bodily-based gestures as affective response to music will increase exponentially in the proceeding periods.

Early Iron Age (500 BCE-500 CE) in antiquity

We are informed by scholars in the allied disciplines that this period is marked by the discovery and minning of *atwetweboɔ* (iron ore), population increase that steadily drifted away from hunter gathering and living in bands to permanent settlements. As its name implies, in the Early Iron Age, iron extractive technology and casting methods gradually replaced stone implements and paved the way for the manufacture of relatively advanced farming tools including machetes and hoes that aided the cultivation of large tracts of lands. Hunting tools were improved when they replaced stone arrowheads with metal heads. The observation by the Ghanaian archaeologist, James Anquandah, that “[T]here is little doubt that the full conquest of Akan woodlands and forest was a victory achieved by iron technology” is far from the truth (Anquandah, 1982b, p. 11). Obviously transitioning to settler communities came with several challenges not the least is locating a suitable site, apportioning farmlands, finding materials to erect a shelter, making decisions about family life, dealing with tragedies, natural and manmade disasters, and many more. As I demonstrated with the royal *fɔntɔmfɔm* drum text in the opening paragraph, the search for rational solutions to the challenging landscape led to the fundamental understanding for neolithic Akan to construct harmonious relationships with their immediate environments, including, but not limited to, the sky, eath, oceans and rivers, and the forest. Navigating the complex environment also demanded some form of leadership that was initially provided by head of families and later by heads of lineages comprising several families. I move on to examine the corresponding developments in the musical arts in the Early Iron Age.

Metal Gongs

It is obvious that parallel developments in musical expressions include the manufacture of metal gongs and clapperless bells, drums, cane flutes, and ivory trumpets. There is no question that the ubiquitous metal gongs, clapperless bells, and the variety of iron clappers that are now foundational in Akan (and for that matter, West and Central Africa) performing ensembles, began sometime during the Early Iron Age¹². It was not long before some individuals began to strike the metal side of hoes and machetes to accompany solo or

¹² See for instance, Francis Bebey (1975), Kwabena Nketia (1974).

group singing events. In addition to handclaps, stick clappers, dried fruits and gourd rattles, we now have iron tools providing distinct metallic sound accompaniment to singing. With an ever-expanding sound palette and a variety of timbres, it is likely the Early Iron Age Akan experimented with contrasting rhythm patterns to accompany singing. It is also likely any metal or farm tool may have been used as sound producing instruments to provide short and recurring rhythm patterns. This trend of using farm implements as sound producing instruments continues to present times where we occasionally come across members of farming villages who use hoes, axes, machetes and other metallic tools in sporadic music settings. Presently, glass bottles and discarded metal containers are used for the same purpose in villages, towns, and urban centers. It is likely that the ubiquitous clapperless bell which they called *dawuro* was constructed around this time to accompany vocalizations. The bell could be used to scare a flock of birds who feed off grains from farms, as an attention grabber, or like animal horns, it could be used to send signals across long distances on the farms or between settlements.

Drums

Unlike plants with natural bore like small bamboo stems, grass, or the animal horn, the technique of drum making (at least Akan drums), is much more complex than we could possibly imagine. From the wooden shell to the leather membrane, the Akan drum is made up of several materials and even by today's standards it requires extraordinary skill on the part of a drum carver to create a single drum. In *Drumming in Akan Communities of Ghana*, Nketia spent twelve pages to describe the process of making Akan drums (Nketia, 1963). First, one must identify the appropriate tree for the shell, perform rituals to pacify the spirit of the tree, cut the preferred size and length, peel the log and hollow the inside of the shell. There is a separate tree branch for the drum pegs, animal skin for the struck membrane, another material to attach the membrane to the drum shell, cut sticks to strike the membrane, and when the construction is complete, perform another ritual to placate all the spirits of the organic materials used in constructing the drum. Considering the amount of labor involved to accomplish the above, it is likely there were several, if not thousands, of tries and errors by the Early Iron Age Akan to construct the proto-typical Akan drums as we know them today. It might have taken several centuries to settle on conventional materials and designs for the

variety of drums. Several centuries down the road, they perhaps discovered durable skins including *esono aso* (the elephant ear), and *ɔtwe nwoma* (the duyker skin) that also resulted in a fuller sonority of sound. In modern times, the elephant ear and duyker skins are scarce and most drum makers have settled on less durable skins of the cow, goat, or sheep. Given all the challenges listed above, it appears that early drums were the smaller, semi-cylindrical types known in Akan as *nkukua* as in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Nkukua Mmedie. Early type of small Akan drums that are still in use in Akanland.



Source: The picture above was taken by the author during a royal funerary rites at Manhyia palace in Kumase. December 2017.

With noted continuity with the past, these drums are still used in Akan areas with a variety of names and functions such as *Etwie* (friction drums), *Sikakua* (Gold Drum), *Nkukuadwe* (or Nkukuadwo), and *Nkukua Mmedie*. As its name implies, the drum shell of

Sikakua is covered with gold leaf (the Akan word for gold is sika), and this drum is part of the regalia of the Gold Stool (Sikadwa Kofi) of the Asante¹³.

Figure 4: Sikakua is part of the regalia of the Gold Stool (Sikadwa Kofi) of the Asante Kingdom in present day Ghana.



Source: Picture by author.

Like most inventions, creating a drum might have been an individual pursuit that in due course spread to other Akan settlements. What is not clear is whether that individual began with seemingly fragile materials for the drum shell, the drumhead and other materials but gradually settled on wood and animal skin as durable alternatives. Whatever its trajectory, it was more than likely that the drum developed as an individual invention that functioned primarily as a communicative device. Like the horns, the small-sized, barrel-shaped drums

¹³ See A.A.Y. Kyerematen (1966), for a description of the regalia of the Gold Stool. For oral history and pictures of *nkukua* types of drums, see Kwasi Ampene and Nana Nyantakyi III (2016, p. 200-23, and 232-233).

were sounded as signals for inter-group communications. It is likely the initial call signals were not based on texts but like whistling and horns, they began imitating short phrases of spoken words on the drum. Like all innovative inventions, the new sound producing device might have been copied by others who might have been thrilled by a new sound that emanates from a vibrating membrane when struck with the hands, or pieces of sticks or a combination of hand and stick. As I stated before, a single drum is made up of several parts and materials and as a result, improvements in materials and sound production might have taken several centuries before they arrived at the ‘modern’ drum that we are familiar with. It is worth noting that drums functioned primarily as communicative tools for sending non-lexical and text-based signals and sending messages within and between settlements. The *Nkukua Mmedie* in Figure 3 are used to play only text not danceable music. In that sense, they can be referred to as sound producing instruments instead of musical instruments.

Ivory Trumpets

Although the elephant teeth have natural bore, the construction of a sound producing instrument from ivory requires special tools and skills in the period under consideration. Unlike the comparatively smaller fauna that Stone Age Akan could hunt, overpowering large creatures like the elephant did not come easily even in the Early Iron Age. Understandably, not only was ivory rare, but it also required a special metal tool to drill a hole near the narrow tip and through the tip itself for the thumb. Since ivory trumpets were not readily available compared with animal horns, the former acquired special significance, and it became associated with the evolving centralized political systems. Ivory trumpets soon gained reputation as royal instruments. Unlike goat and cow horns, ivory are long elephant teeth that continue to grow during the lifetime of the animal. Although the Akan term, *aben*, refers to wind instruments including varieties of flutes, horns, and trumpets, I use the English term, trumpet, to distinguish the elephant teeth from regular horns that grow on the head of animals¹⁴. Similar to horns, ivory trumpets were deployed primarily as communication tools. Centuries of practicing and imitating human speech on horns made it possible for the Akan to build stock expressions that they could readily play on ivory trumpets. Eventually, the sounds

¹⁴ For further reading, see Peter Kwasi Sarpong (1990), Joseph S. Kaminski (2012), and William G. Carter (1984).

of a variety of ivory trumpets were associated with the cries of a little bird known in Akan as *Asɔkwa* (pied horn bill) and as a result, all ivory trumpeters, including *mmentiafoɔ* (short trumpeters) came to be known as *Asɔkwafoɔ*. Remarkably and until recently, most of the ivory trumpeters at the court of the Asante king were settled in the suburb of Kumase known by the same name, *Asɔkwa*. Iron technology also made it possible for the Akan to fashion a flute from the cane by removing the soft tissue from inside the cane and carving finger holes on one side and an embouchure at one end. Like all the sound producing instruments, the final choice of the cane, known in Akan as *demire*, is based on centuries of experimentation with several materials and techniques of sound production especially, imitation of Akan speech and the technique of instrumental surrogacy. Our modern *durugya* flute is linked to the Akan cane flute from antiquity.

Figure 5: Nkrawoben is one of two ivory trumpet groups (the other is Amoakwa) that is part of the Tipre ne Amoakwa Ensemble at the Asantehemaa's court in Manhyia Palace.



Source: Picture by author.

Figure 6: Kotononko (lit Go and Fight Him/Her) is a type of *abentia* (short ivory trumpet) at the court of the Asante King in Kumase-Ghana.



Source: Picture by author.

Figure 7: Durugyra, a type of cane flute at the court of the Asante King in Kumase-Ghana.



Source: Picture by author.

It appears that for some kind of unexplained accident, the Early Iron Age Akan realized that the thin string of the hunting bow, usually made from the cane family, that is tied to both ends of the bow could vibrate when struck with the fingers and later with a short stick. They kept playing with this new sound resulting from the vibrating string on the hunting bow, until they realized that they could amplify the sound if they placed the end of the bow where the string is tied in the mouth while striking the string. By the Middle Iron Age, the hunting bow became known as *benta* (a musical bow). It seems *benta* went out of use in the twentieth century and personally, I never saw it played but growing up in the Akan areas, my friends and I used to construct a similar bowed instrument but instead of using our mouths as resonators, we passed the wood through a discarded can. When playing, we place it on the ground and sit on a lower stool or simply sit on the ground with the can near our right foot while the end of the wood is on our lefthand side. We used a short stick that is held between our righthand thumb and the index finger and as we strike the string, we use the back of our left hand to gently push the inner end of the wood for a higher pitch and the back of the wood for a lower pitch. We use it to accompany our play songs as in the *mmoguo* (song interlude) in Anansesem (Ananse Story) below.

Example 2: Nkete Nkete Nkete (Little by little). Children's Play Song and Song Interlude in Anansesem (Ananse Story).

1. Nkete nkete nkete	Little by little
2. Nkete nkete nkete	Little by little
3. Nkete nkete nkete	Little by little
4. Okyena meko ntem o nkete	I will depart early tomorrow morning
5. Okyena meko ntem o nketeeee	I will depart early tomorrow morning

Population

Population increases and settlements in the Early Iron Age inevitably led to further development of social institutions including family and lineage affiliations and some form of centralized system of political leadership. Several groups of families would normally occupy a settlement area with the larger implication for increasing participation in group musical activities. Essentially, population increase will exponentially lead to increase in attendance and participation in life-cycle events as more and more households will be involved with

birth rituals particularly, naming and outdooring of a new child. Puberty was an exciting milestone for both sexes but due to emphasis on the matriline, rituals for females were more elaborate than for males. In time, the former became institutionalized and referred to as *bragorɔ* (nubility rites) with the onset of the first menses of a female child. Musical performances organized around *bragorɔ* initially comprised a chorus of women with stick clappers and gourd rattles. They later added the *donno* (armpit drum) perhaps in the late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century when there is evidence of increase interaction between the Akan and their northern neighbors¹⁵. Although Akan marriage may last for several hours and may include a limited form of musical performance, it is not as elaborate as other places in Africa. On the other hand, death was by far the most recognized event in Akanland. Settling into villages meant the larger community became aware each time death occurred in the village. Death generated profound reflections about the life of the deceased and critical questions about the unknown afterlife that are channeled through a of combination cries, verbal utterances mixed with songs that are mostly performed by women. The only accompaniment were hand claps and occasionally wooden clappers, rattles, and sometimes metal gongs. In addition to themes of death, they perform topical songs such as songs of insults or insinuations (*akutiatene*) that made indirect references to individuals in the community. This practice went on for several centuries and somewhere along the line, most likely in the Middle Iron Age, the practice associated with singing songs during pre-burial mourning became known as *mpere* and that was how funeral music were performed – spontaneous with women leading most of the songs. The cries or wailing by women eventually came to be known in Akan as *nsui* (literary, cries). Due to the critical role of women in birth and death rituals, it is not by accident that women led the songs.

Middle Iron Age (500 CE-1500 CE)

The evidence from archaeology and history suggest that the Middle Iron Age was a defining period in Akan sophistication on several fronts. Anquandah advances his view of the emergence of the earliest towns and principalities with centralized political authority, social institutions, food as well as industrial specializations and the production of material culture

¹⁵ For further reading, see Peter Kwasi Sarpong (1990), Joseph S. Kaminski (2012), and William G. Carter (1984).

(Anquandah, 1982a, p. 85-112). Towns have been identified in the Nsòkò area since the Second Millennium CE. Bono Manso is cited as one of the earliest Akan state capitals by the Fifth Millennium CE. Iron specialization in the Hani-Nsòkò area is also dated around the second century CE, Bono Manso between the eighth and tenth centuries, and Bonoso (Wankyi) between eighth and ninth centuries. In the central forest area, farming towns in Adanse such as Edubiase, Dompouse, Akorofuom, Bòdwesèanwo, and Akrokyerè erected iron furnaces and used iron ore (*atwetwebow*) to manufacture agricultural tools, iron shields, and weapons (Anquandah, 1982a, p. 68). Further south in the Fante coastlands, the Etsi (Abrambo), Equafo, Fetu, and Asebu developed a vibrant industry in salt that was one of the main items of trade to as far as the Niger belt. Gold mining and trade in gold expedited growth as well as state formation. Gyengyene, Wamfie, and towns in the Takyiman area produced gold in the northern savanna fringes while Adanse villages and towns including Kenyase were known for gold production. Permanent settlements and houses, according to Shujaa, are complemented with accumulation of material culture such as ceramics, ornamental jewelry, and decorative art (Shujaa, 2014, p. 53-56). No doubt the above developments will inspire further artistic expressions, but the crucial question is what were the underlying factors that propelled the Akan to develop centralized governments and structures of statehood? Right from the beginning, pioneering heads of families, lineages, and towns as well as chiefs and ahemaa of larger towns were confronted with the search for cogent solutions to socio-political development on three levels: the political, judicial, and spiritual. Firstly, Political leadership ensures the rule of law and protection against external invasion and to ensure that citizens are able to go about farming and trading activities peacefully. They provided leadership and direction in times of crisis such as bush fires, natural or man-made disasters, or grief resulting from death. Further, leadership negotiated treaties on behalf of the people, made decisions to migrate or go to war in a similar manner. In the discharge of their assigned duties, some leadership paid the ultimate prize protecting their states. Secondly, judicial functions of leadership involve resolving intra-family and inter-family feuds, land disputes, inheritance or succession disagreements, and pronouncing judgement on criminal behavior. Thirdly, spiritual life and periodic rituals were also entrusted in the hands of leadership who perform rituals periodically on behalf of the citizenry, lead communal celebrations of harvest as well as end of year festivals (Busia, 1951).

The search for rational solutions included development of the expressive arts, broadly defined. The need to communicate within a large territory and surrounding villages led to the adaption of sound producing and musical instruments early by emerging central leadership. Horns, ivory trumpets, metal gongs, and drums could be sounded to assemble people, to send non-lexical signals or text-based messages. Sound producing instruments announced the onset of rituals, punctuated rituals, and proclaimed the movement of political leaders (chiefs and ahemaa). Over time, the citizenry observed and acknowledged the work of leadership in a variety of situations and to show appreciation as well as encourage them, some individuals began to verbally intone stylized texts to praise their leaders. Eventually, verbally intoned texts assumed referential character that formed the basis of *Amoma* and *Apa* by those who came to be known as *Abrafo* (the constabulary). *Kwadowom* (historicized poetry) were performed by skillful court attendants while songs and dances expressed lived experience in addition to communicating social values. Similarly, ivory trumpeters, flutists, and drummers began to compose commemorative texts about leadership, as well as positive and negative incidents in the life of the people. Eventually, sound producing instruments and some types of instrumental and choral singing became institutionalized and were identified with the four-tier settlement hierarchy described by Shujaa (2014, p. 51-52). The basic political unit, the *Ɔman* (the State), and the *Ɔmanhene* (territorial chief), had the largest collection of sound producing instruments including *mmentia* (short ivory trumpets), a collection of large ivory trumpets commonly known as *ntahera*, different varieties of drums, and flutes and pipes. Next in line are Ahemfo (chiefs) of *nkuro kɛsɛɛ* (larger towns) (who in all likelihood will have lesser ensembles than the former while the *Ɔhene* (chief) of *nkuro* (towns) will possess fairly modest number of instruments - one or two sound producing instruments. Since the position of *Odikro* (village head) is not technically a chief, he had no instruments or ensembles apart from possibly a metal gong that the town crier may use as attention grabber on his usual rounds making announcements. The ensembles, sound producing instruments became part of the *agyapadeɛ* (the heirloom), and together with visual objects, body adornments of chiefs and *ahemaa*, they became state property that were passed on from generation to generation.

Drums

Out of all the sound producing instruments that I examined in the previous periods, the drum was by far subjected to rigorous transformations during this period. For its lightweight, soft tissue, durability, and high resistance to fungal and insect attack, Middle Iron Age Akan might have finally settled on the *tweneboa* or *tweneduro* tree (*cordia platythyrsa*) for constructing drum shells. They called it *twene*, the first two syllables from *tweneboa* tree. It is possible that the Akan word for the drum, *twene*, came into use around this time and that will mean that the earlier drums were only referred to as *nkukua* as I alluded to in the previous timeframe. For the drum pegs, they chose branches of the *ɔfema* tree while the vines used as ropes to attach the leather membrane to the drum shell came from the *obua* or *obofunu* tree. Sometimes a type of cane known as *eyee* were used for the same purpose. For durable drumsticks, they settled on *ɔfema* tree as the ultimate choice. Figure 8 shows the various parts of a prototypical Akan drum.

Figure 8: Apiredre Drums at Manhyia Palace are covered with *nsaa* (carmel blanket) showing various parts of typical Akan drums and curved playing sticks.



Source: Picture by author.

At any rate, a variety of barrel-shaped *nkukua* drums appeared on the scene. Depending on where the Akan may find themselves, individuals created localized versions of *nkukua* with corresponding names such as *aburukuwa* (or *aburukua*) and *petia*. Adventurous individuals began experimenting with carving relatively larger barrel-shaped drums that came to be known as *twenesin* (literary, short drums). Some examples of short drums are *mpebi ne nkrawiri*, *kwadum*, *twenenini* and *twenebedeε* or *kusukurum* in *Apirede* ensembles, *adukurogya*, and several varieties of Asafo drums.

Figure 9: Mpebi ne Nkrawiri drums, a pair of *twenesin* drums at the Asante King's court in Manhyia Palace-Kumase.



Source: Picture by author.

Since it took centuries for the Akan to finally identify the *tweneboa* tree as the ideal material for the drum shell, they remained indebted to this singular tree as exemplified by the following invocations to the spirit of the tree as an expression of gratitude in the drum text. The text is from Nketia's *Drumming in Akan Communities of Ghana* (1963, p. 6)¹⁶.

¹⁶ Nketia (1974, p. 41) item number 32, is another version of this drum text.

Example 3: Tweneboa Kodua. Invocations performed by Ɔdomankoma Kyerɛma (The Creator's Drummer) to the spirit of the tree.

Tweneboa Akwa	Wood of the drum, Tweneboa Akwa
Tweneboa Kodua	Wood of the drum, Tweneboa Kodua
Kodua Tweneduro	Wood of the drum, Kodua Tweneduro
Tweneduro, wokɔ baabi a	Cedar wood, if you have been away
Merefre wo; yese bra	I am calling you; they say come
Meresua, momma menhu	I am learning, let me succeed

The constant search for innovative designs led to a bottle-shaped drum that through the years came to be known as *apentema* and its variants *brenko* and *ɔprenten*. Unlike *nkukua* drums that they use sticks to play, they use both hands to play the *apentema* drum. However, when some individuals constructed bigger versions of the *apentema*, they realized the difficulty in playing with the hands, so they resorted to using *nkonta* (curved sticks) as in Figure 10. Several decades down the road, an individual created a pair of the larger *apentema* drums to embody the Akan dual male-female leadership role. He created two sonorities, a low pitch representing the male voice and a high pitch representing the female voice. The resultant pair of drums came to be known as the *atumpan*. In no time, they figured out that it is relatively easy to imitate the low-high pitches in spoken Twi, the Akan language, on the pair of *atumpan* drums. Unlike existing sound producing instruments, *atumpan* drummers could easily play short as well as long texts. Another advantage of the *atumpan* drums is that the sound could travel longer distances than the earlier *nkukua* drums. It may well be that leaders in various principalities began to assign more responsibilities to the *atumpan* drummers whose role became even more visible. With increased responsibilities for *atumpan* drummers, they became central to socio-political structures and the position of *atumpan* drummers became institutionalized. They became communication functionaries who could send messages by way of drum language from royal courts to Akan communities both near and far. They became known as Ɔkyerɛma-specifically, Ɔdomankoma Kyerɛma (the Creator's Drummer) for it is believed the knowledge and skills in imitating the tonal patterns of Twi, the Akan language, on the *atumpan* drums are divinely inspired by a higher power – Ɔdomankoma (God, the Creator of the universe). See Figure 10.

Figure 10: Evolution of bottled-shaped, open-ended drums from *Apentema* (Left) to *Atumpan* drums (Right). A pair of *Atumpan* with white cloths wrapped around the wooden shell. Bigger versions of *Apentema* drums with *ɔdomankoma Kyerema* (the Creator's Drummer) playing *Ayan*, drum poetry with *Nkonta* (two curved sticks).



Source: Pictures by author.

The drummers composed texts to commemorate incidents and events, they could play poetic verses to welcome individuals and the public to festivals, they could play eulogies, offer condolences, and praise chiefs, kings, *ahemaa* and the general public. In short, *atumpan* drummers became repositories of oral lore. *Atumpan* drummers known as *Akyerema* (plural) came to represent knowledge and are said to be one of the three animate objects that God created at the beginning of creation. According to the Akan creation story, in the beginning God created *Esɛn* (the Court Crier), he then created the *ɔkyerema*, and thirdly, the *ɔbrafoɔ* (the Executioner or the Constabulary). I recorded the *Ayan* (drum poetry) in Example at Manhyia Palace.

Example 4: Ayan (Drum Poetry) performed by *Okyerema Atta Pong* at Manhyia Palace, Kumase-Ghana.

1. Akyampɔn tenten, tenten, tenten	Akyampɔn the tall one
2. Korɔntɔ, korɔntɔ, korɔntɔ, Kurɔntɔ	Korɔntɔ, korɔntɔ, korɔntɔ, Kurɔntɔ
3. Yɛnntɔ ɔhene kwa?	Are you prepared to meet the King?
4. Tete, tete, tete, tete, tete, tete	From the ancient time
5. Yɛbeto ɔhene kwa?	Do we just meet the king?
6. ɔhene ne hwan?	Who is the king?
7. ɔhene kwa?	Just the king?
8. ɔhene ne wo	You are the king
9. ɔhene fata Awurade	You deserve to be king my Lord
10. ɔberempɔn nahyase fata Awurade	The gracious one is from the Creator
11. Korɔbea, yefiri Ankoma	Korɔbea, we are from Ankoma
12. Asante Kɔtɔkɔhene se	Asante Kɔtɔkɔ King says
13. Yɛntɔ ɔhene kwa?	Do we just met the king?
14. ɔsei Tutu, brɛ brɛ, brɛ brɛ, brɛ brɛ	Osei Tutu, gently, gently, gently
15. M'asi ta	I have landed
16. Wototo wototo a enyae	No matter how you tie it
17. Wotutu wotutu a enyae	No matter how you uproot it
18. ɔsei, yɛn nyinaa nkɔ ko?	ɔsei, we should all go to fight?
19. Yɛn nyinaa nnkɔ sa?	We should all go to war?
20. ɔsei yi firi he ni?	Where is ɔsei from?
21. ɔsei firi Abankese Nyame Ani	ɔsei is from Abankese Nyame Ani
22. ɔsei firi Kokofu Nyahiniase	ɔsei is from Kokofu Nyahiniase
23. ɔsei firi Asuogya Gyambibi	ɔsei is from Asuogya Gyambibi
24. ɔsei firi Kokofu Adu Ampofo Antwi	ɔsei is from Kokofu Adu Ampofo Antwi
25. ɔsei, wo ho baabi ye dum	ɔsei, part of your body is the odum tree
26. Baabi ye dan	Part of your body is like a building
27. Baabi ye bɔne	Part of your body is wicked
28. Baabi ye fentemfrem	Part of your body is fentemfrem
29. ɔsei, wo ho baabi ye kakapenpen	ɔsei, part of your body is kakapenpen
30. Nipa nyinaa bɔmɔfoɔ	The hunter of mankind
31. Onyankɔpa Sakyi bɔmɔfoɔ	The Creator's hunter
32. ɔsei Tutu, ɔdomankoma Kyerema se	ɔsei Tutu, the Creator's drummer says
33. ɔda wo'se	Thank you
34. Ma no nam nkɔdi	Give him meat for him to eat

Source: Recorded and Transcribed by the Author.

Just as innovations in the *apentema* drum produced the *atumpan* drums, some individuals started experimenting with carving bigger versions of *petia* or *twenesin* drums out of larger tree trunks. Although the semi-cylindrical or barrel-shaped drum is not uncommon, the extremely large size was quite unique at the time and it came to be known as *twenekesee*

(large drum) and generations down the road, they replaced the initial name with *bɔmmaa*, a contraction of the Twi word, *bɔ mmaa* (drum or play with sticks). For due to its size, one will have to literary strike the membrane with larger sticks with extra energy to produce the expected sound. Figure 11 presents the two pair of *bɔmmaa* drums.

Figure 11: *Twenekeɛɛ*, *Bɔmmaa*, or now *Fontomfrom* drums are indicative of evolution of barrel-shaped *nkukua*, *petia*, and *twenesin* drums. Evidence of continuity is apparent in the drums present here.



Population increases and overpopulation in some areas will inevitably lead to intra-group and inter-group conflicts and land litigation, while powerful states may decide to invade less powerful villages and towns in search of lands. Akan migrations, according to Shujaa, involved land acquisition through warfare or purchases, and mixing with or displacing the indigenous populations they encountered along the way (Shujaa, 2014, p. 31). The congruence of all the above in musical terms is the upsurge of stylized signals sounded on horns, ivory trumpets, and a variety of drums that were institutionalized and co-opted by central leadership. Although the call to arms were mostly sounded on drums, ivory trumpets invariably accompanied the infantry to the battlefield. Sound producing instruments were identified individually as war drum or collectively as war drums. Ivory trumpets, *mmeɲ* (plural) and *aben* (singular), attained reputation as *akoben* (war trumpet) that is visually transmitted as part of Adinkra epigrams to symbolize militaristic alertness. A wooden carving of a short trumpet placed on top of large umbrellas (*benkyinyɛ*) as the *ntuatiɛ* (identifying epigram) produces same militaristic representational symbolism (see Figure 13). Although all the varieties of ivory trumpets, *mmentia* and the larger types that are performed in groups of seven such as *ntahera* play ancient verses and signals as part of Akan military campaigns, the war trumpet is unvaryingly referred to in the singular as, *akoben*, instead of the plural, *akommen*. At the National Heroes Park in Kingston (Jamaica), a monument to the powerful and remarkable eighteenth century leader of Jamaican Maroons, Queen Nanny, is represented by a sculpture of what Jamaicans referred to as *Abeng*, interpreted as the horn and placed on top of a tall metal sculpture. Nanny's monument is said to reproduce the sound of *abeng*, a sound producing instrument used by Nanny and her soldiers, and similar to its usage in their Akan homeland, for sounding coded signals and ancient texts. In 2014, I visited the Heroes Park during my first visit to Kingston in the company of my friend, Clayton Brown. The heroic militancy and the ancestral link of Nanny and his brothers, Quao (Kwaw), Cudjoe (Kwadwo), and Accompong (Akyampon) undeniably link their origins to the Akan of present-day Ghana (see Figure 14).

The value of sound producing instruments in defining the character, resolve, and strength of Akan political leadership is irrefutable that sometimes wars were won by simply capturing an enemy's instruments. It brings about untold humiliation on the part of the defeated. Conversely, sound producing instruments became war trophies; kept as part of royal regalia and heirloom that were used as part of festivals to subtly recount historical incidents

and collective experience. Another medium for archiving historical incidents were the creation of referential poetry that were later institutionalized as *Amoma*, *Adawu*, *Apae*, and *Kwadowom* and performed by members of the constabulary and the chronicle singers¹⁷. Currently, only the latter two types are performed as part of rituals and ceremonies and as we shall see these genres historicize lived experience in war while some verses are based on regular proverbs. *Apae* and *Kwadowom* verses are performed to convey incidents of the remote past and to encourage successive chiefs and kings to learn from the bravery, sacrifices, and accomplishments of their forebears and to live up to the expectations of the office. Further, it is a way of empowering as well as encouraging a ruler to be strong and firm like his or her forebears. It bears mentioning that successful migrations from location to location are overlaid with painful stories of grave incidents. There are stories of ailing adults who could not make it to the destination as they perished and were buried in transit. There are stories of sudden onset of thunderstorms and heavy rains that caused fatalities and brought untold hardships. There are stories of those who could not cross rivers and streams with powerful currents or who could simply not swim and were drowned. A sudden encounter with a wild animal or a snake bite are all painful reminders of the past that were recorded in musical arts. The *apae* in Example 5 is a historical account of specific incident in Asante.

Example 5: *Agya Nyane, Agya Nyane* (Wake Up Father, Wake Up Father), *Apae* by Kwabena Kyeremeh.

Twi Text

1. Ono no!
2. Agya nyane, agya nyane
3. Ose Agya wonte se anwam na esu yi?
4. Buei! Wo abɔfra yi wo ye abɔfra pa
5. Mese wo se anwam na eresu?
6. Ose Osee Tutu Ntahera retwa Amantam nsu a
7. Wose anwam na eresu yi
8. Ose Agya e! Agya e!
9. Se woretwa asuo a,
10. So wo tuo mu o
11. Na Osee Tutu no ara ka ho bi na ɔreba
12. Ono a, adummɔ, adammɔ, adankaweaboo

¹⁷ *Amoma* is the title of a collection and analysis of texts from Asante and Akyem by Nketia (1978). Despite the title, it covers *Adawu* and *Apae*. For a detailed discussion and textual analysis of *Apae*, see Ampene (2020).

13. Ɔpanin a ɔte Da
14. Afari a ɔko mpenten
15. Ɔsee Tutu no no,
16. Yetua wo mpenten so a
17. Wote mu anɔpa tutuutu
18. Nyankopasakyie a wo ti ho apa
19. Wo ka fra fra!

English Translation

1. That's him!
2. Wake up father, Wake up father
3. Father, don't you hear the cries of hornbills?
4. You are a child indeed
5. Did I tell you that this was the cries of hornbills?
6. When Ɔsee Tutu's Ntamera are crossing the Amantam river
7. You refer to them as cries of the hornbill?
8. He/she calls father! father!
9. When you are crossing the river
10. Hold your gun firmly
11. For Ɔsee Tutu himself is leading the charge
12. That's him, knocker of doors and building, the gourd that disperses bullets
13. The elderly man who lives at (O)Da
14. Afari who fights briskly
15. That's Ɔsee Tutu.
16. When you are besieged suddenly
17. You escape at dawn
18. The vulture that has a baldhead
19. Wo ka fra fra!

Source: Recorded in 2009 and 2011 and transcribed by the author.

The above *Apae* is a historical reference to the preventive measures that the Asante put in place to prevent the once powerful Denkyira Kindom from organizing insurrection to regain their independence after they were defeated by the Kwaaman Coalition in 1701. The *Abrafoɔ* informs us that Ɔpemsoɔ Ɔsee Tutu sent a group spies (*Kwanserafoɔ*) on top of a hill near present-day Manso Nkwanta, where they could easily monitor the valley below for troop movement on the part of the Denkyira. The name of the town, Manso Nkwanta, is in reference to *ɔman aso* (the ear of the nation). That is, those living in that village at the time were acting as the ears of the kingdom, and it was their duty to report any troop movement or suspicious maneuvers on the part of the Denkyira to Kumase. *ɔman aso* later became Manso while Nkwanta refers to a major intersection, a crossroad in the area. On their way to the

hilltop, they were accompanied by the Ntahera ivory trumpeters, and a child thought the sound they were hearing in the night were the cries of hornbills in the forest, but the father scolded the child from Lines 4-7 asking: when *Ɔse Ɔsee Tutu Ntahera* are crossing the Amantam river, do you refer to their sound as the cries of hornbills? The child then cautions the father to hold on tight to his gun when crossing the river. The Kwadwom in Example 6 uses dense texture and indirection to outline, in poetic verses from Lines 19 to the end, the pain and success in various wars against adversaries.

Example 6: *Amankum* (Destroying Nations), *Kwadwom* by Opanin Kofi Fofie and the Chronicle Singers.

Twi Text

1. Okuru Anim Naadu a
2. Adu Dwaben ɔhene Twum o Kyampɔn noforobo nge
3. O! Dwaben Sɛe Naa Agyei Gyaako nge
4. Ɛberɛankɛ Panin Sereboɔ Siakwan ama wako agye Mampɔn
5. Ofiramani nana o Sumantete awisiɛ
6. Ɔkɔdɛɛ Akraɛi Sɛberɛ tɔɔ ne mu o Twum o Kyampɔn noforobo nge
7. Ofiramani Akraɛi yeyere Nana o Sumantete
8. O Dwabena Akraɛi nana o Sumantete awisi ɛ
9. Ase ase ɔkwa?
10. Ɔsɛe Tutu tie sɛ wo dwom frɛ wo ɛ
11. Ɔnkasakyire bɔmmɔfoɔ
12. Ɔpatako Kyereko agye ko abɔ ne bo
13. Yɛmfɛ nkɔdi abranee mmɔ no ose
14. Yɛ Ɔpenemankoma su nna kɔ a ma ɔkwan beɔdi awisi
15. Ɔkesɛduamoa kɛsɛ di ayeyee ne ademmire atifi
16. O! Sɛe Dufianwoma de kyɛm ne afena ako ako ayen
17. Ɔhawfoɔ kyɛ me nnyawa nini bieku na wako ama wo awisi
18. Na asuo annya tire a anka wan sen.
19. Obiri Kwaa na yerebo no nkotie ne nsem kwa nge
20. Emireku Akyeamo tene Pobi Asomanin
21. Pobi Asomanin nso antumi ammɔ wo kyɛm so
22. Kwaakwaa de akyerɛma kɔɛ
23. Kwaakwaa de akyerɛma bae
24. Ampata Twum mesom no bi wɔ akonoano
25. Ampata-Twum a osie funu Bempa bi nso antumi ammɔ wo kyɛm so
26. Ɛnsɔkɔhene Gyamfi Ameyaw
27. Borɔfoɔhene Gyamfi Ameyaw
28. Yeebiebie, mmofra hunu a yeyare awia
29. Dwabuntwerebuo nua Ampaforako
30. Adu Gyamfi Bempa bi nso antumi ammɔ wo kyɛm so

31. O osi nkotoo, oda nkotoo, bere nkotoakwa Adanse Yankyemaduo
 32. Yaw Akyeamotene Boafo Anwoma
 33. Anti Kyei Bempa bi nso antumi ammɔ wo kyem so
 34. Asene, asene agye Mampɔn Asene
 35. Asene nifa Abaakorɔ ba Dootibo
 36. Dootibo nso antumi ammɔ wo kyem so.
 37. Yenku mma wo nwe? Nko mma wo nwe?
 38. Na yene Adawu Atakyi Demkyemfo Denkyemereson
 39. Denkyera Amoako Atta Bempa bi nso antumi ammɔ wo kyem so
 40. Ebitibiti Aduenya Berabata Aduenya
 41. Adomahene ne Takyi Amoa ne Kyerebeduedu
 42. Meso m'akatakyie hinampɔn akɔ sa
 43. Ohene Ameyaw Kwaa Twee nso antumi ammɔ wo kyem so.
 44. Otengkwa Panin Konadu kunu Amonu
 45. Ofitie pam adee Boafo Adu Anwoma
 46. Akymhene Boafo Owusu
 47. Owusu Peboɔ nso antumi ammɔ wo kyem so.
 48. Ewoso woso ne Ampem
 49. Kofi Sini Ampem
 50. Adinkra Kwadwo Bempa bi nso antumi ammɔ wo kyem so.
 51. Merebese ko, na mase nno,
 52. Brenkoto Akwa Bɔfoɔbi Nkwanta,
 53. Akwasi Kasa Bempa bi nso antumi ammɔ wo kyem so.
 54. Okyere ahene kwa?
 55. Pɔtɔee Kwaku bi nso antumi ammɔ wo kyem so.
 56. Osee a okum Bɔdweseanwo Adu Gyamfi e.
 57. Okum Ampatatwum a osie funu a ɔte Foase.
 58. O! Kyerefo damirifua, damirifua, damirifua nge
 59. Bobbie Aboagye See Frampon o damirifua awisi.
 60. Osagyefoɔ manya mfɛn nge
 61. Okuru Asante Naadu nyane nge
- Leader and Responder**
62. Okuru bɛdi atɔpereba demirefi su nna nyane ao Dɔmaako Sakyi asono aworoben.

English Translations

1. It is Okuru Anim Naa Adu
2. Adu, the chief of Dwaben, Twum Kyampɔn noforobo nge
3. Oh! Osee Nana Agyei Gyaako of Dwaben nge
4. Eberankye Panin Sereboɔ Siakwan has rescued Mampɔn from battle
5. Sumantete, the grandson of Ofiramani, Awisi
6. Okodee Akraɔi Sebere embraced Twum Kyampɔn noforobo nge
7. Sumantete the beloved wife of Ofiramani Akraɔi
8. Sumantete, the grandson of Dwamena Akraɔi Awisi
9. They call you in-law in vain?
10. Osee Tutu, listen, they are calling you with your songs
11. Don't murmur behind the hunter

12. The mediator who gets involved in a war
13. He who is being hailed for his gallantry
14. Is Ɔpenemankoma who wails and clears the path awisi
15. The canopy of Ɔkesɛduamoa forms on top of reeds
16. Oh! Ɔsse Dufianwoma has fought with shield and sword to rescue us from battle
17. Afflicter, offer me one very brave man to fight for you
18. For without a watershed the stream could not flow
19. It is Obiri Kwaa whose feat in war is being narrated to him nge
20. Emireku Akyeamo trails Pobi Asomanin
21. And Pobi Asomani could not stand your might
22. Kwaakwaa brought the drummers away
23. Kwaakwaa brought the drummers back
24. I serve Ampata Twum at the battlefield
25. Ampata Twum who buries the dead also couldn't stand your might
26. Gyamfi Ameyaw the chief of Nsɔko
27. Gyamfi Ameyaw the chief of Borɔfo
28. The exposure of the war machinery scares children to become sick in broad daylight
29. Ampaforako, the brother of Dwabuntwereɓuo
30. Adu Gyamfi Bempa also could not stand your might
31. Ubiquitous Adanse Yankyemaduo, whether one moves or stays at the place, one still meets you
32. Yaw Akyeamotene Boafo Anwoma
33. Anti Kyei Bempa also could not stand your might
34. The Asenes have captured the Asene clan of Mampon
35. Dootibo, the son of Abaakorɔ, the Right-Wing chief of Asene
36. Dootibo also could not stand your might
37. Should we fight for you to enjoy the booty? Should we fight for you to enjoy the booty?
38. And we are referring to Adawu Ataki Demkyemfo Denkyemereson
39. Denkyera Amoako Atta Bempa also could not stand your might
40. Ebitibiti Aduenya Berabata Aduenya
41. Adomahene and Takiy Amoa and Kyereɓeduodu
42. I move my great warriors to war
43. Ɔhene Ameyaw Kwae Twee also could not stand your might
44. Amonu the husband of Ɔtenkwaa Panin Konadu
45. Boafo Adu Anwoma whose presence disperses the crowd
46. Boafo Owusu the chief of Akyem
47. Owusu Peboɔ also could not stand your might
48. Ampem who stirs the crowd
49. Kofi Sini Ampem
50. Adinkra Kwadwo Bempa also could not stand your might
51. I am going to count one and count two (so prepared)
52. Brɛnkoto Akwa, the junction of a certain hunter
53. Akwasi Kasa Bempa also could not stand your might
54. Does he capture chiefs in vain?
55. Pɔtɔɛ Kwaku also could not stand your might
56. We are calling you, Ɔsee who killed Adu Gyamfi of Bɔdwesɛanwo
57. He killed Ampatatwum of Foase who buries the dead
58. Oh! Kyerefo, condonlence, condolence, condolence nge

59. Condolence, Bobie Aboagye Sɛɛ Frampon awisi

60. I have captured the large drums

61. Okuru Asante Naadu wake up nge

Leader and Responder

62. Okuru who keeps vigils over the ivory trumpets with Dɔmaako Sakyi

Source: Recorded and transcribed by Author.

Figure 13: Akoben (War Trumpet) as Adinkra and an epigram on top of Bɛnkyinyɛ (large royal umbrellas).



Figure 14: Abeng. In honor of Nanny of the Maroons, Kingston Memorial Park.



Source: Picture by Author.

The need to protect emerging principalities led to the formation of Asafo (warrior groups) in Akan areas in order to raise a standing army made up of all able-bodied men young and adult men. Remarkably, heroic shouts and songs accompanied by metal gongs and drums are central to Asafo groups and soon, specific types of drums that accompanied warrior groups came to be known as *Asafotwene* (Asafo drums)¹⁸. In the area of vocal music, the interwar years inspired artistic creation and the performance of *mmomome* (songs of exhilaration) where women who were left behind channeled their hopes and prayers through collective singing, for the men to not only return victorious but also return alive from the battlefield. As in *mpere* and *nsui* (funeral cries), *mmomome* songs eventually added to the pool of stock expressions that found its way into *adowa* songs and that may be the underlying reason why women form the core of *adowa* vocal ensembles. By 1000 CE, the *apentema* and *atumpan* drums were gradually added to sporadic performances of *mpere* during wake keeping and thus increasing the scope of affective response. Like percussion instruments, the *apentema* settled on recurring rhythm patterns while the *atumpan* drum improvised using stock expressions for dancers and the chorus. The *atumpan* especially could be played in the music mode with the instrumental section or the drummer may pause and play phrases in the speech mode. Both drums are played by men while the women play percussion instruments such as the rattle that it may be the beginning of the inclusion of males in a female dominated activity. The *atumpan* drums that accompanied *adowa* and some popular bands in the public domain are slightly smaller than those attached to Akan courts and played by the Creator's Drummer. Since the *atumpan* at the courts were limited to sending messages, they were stationed in front of palaces and were occasionally carried on the head during festivals. The inclusion of drums increased the level of expressions in dance and by now, dance gestures have expanded remarkably to include royal dances, heroic dances, celebratory dances, dances to communicate grief and pain and others.

Popular Bands

Population increase, upward surge in food production, developments in metal industries, salt production, and increase in commercial trading networks means hardworking

¹⁸ For further reading on Asafo, see Ama Oforiwa Aduonum (2022), Emmanuel O. Acquah (2022), and Godwin Kwafo Adjei (2000).

Akan needed diversions and recreation. It farfetched to suggest that the proliferation of performing groups in villages and all major principalities became part of social and community life at this time. Popular bands begun as a spontaneous response to life-cycle events and festivals marking end of harvest season or end of the year. The constant need for group performances transformed spontaneous groups to quasi formal groups. Specialization in food production and manufacturing industries had its parallels in popular bands as different locations became associated with certain types of music and instrumental ensembles. Currently, continuity with the past along these lines is evident. *Adowa* and *nnwonkorɔ* are popular in Asante, Bono, and Kwawu areas while *adenkum* is quintessentially a Fante genre. A unique aspect of popular bands in Akan areas is the turnover of musical types and dances they perform. The lifespan of popular bands depended in large part on patronage in a given locality for the music and dance associated with a particular group is abandoned as soon as it loses its vitality. Remarkably, songs and dances associated with older genres are repackaged and performed with renewed vigor in newer genres. For instance, during my field research in the mid to late 1990s, the leader of one of five *nnwonkorɔ* groups at Sunyani-Fiapre, Opanin Odie Yaw Boɔ, is said to have founded several vocal ensembles. He was known for introducing *faya* (fire), *konkoma*, brass band, *aweis* (always), *selewa*, and *odie* to Fiapre. Due to the popularity of the last genre, Odie was added to his name and that is how he ended up with Odie Yaw Boɔ¹⁹. A prototypical popular band was made up of a chorus accompanied by percussion instruments and a variety of drums. Some ensembles are based on a single gender or both genders while others are based on age. The type of dance, the leading drum, or a charismatic leader of a group, for instance, Akosua Tutum, are identified with some of the performing groups. Surprisingly, unlike ivory trumpets that are restricted to Akan political leadership and the courts, some flutes and pipes are combined with chorus and drums as the foundations for the nineteenth century *Atente* or *Osekye* ensembles. Additionally, popular bands thrived in the communities and to this day, not attached to royal courts.

¹⁹ See Ampene (2005, p. 184).

Figure 15: Onyame Akwan Nnwonkoro and Adowa. The men play drums and percussion with the women in the chorus with rattles in their hands behind the drummers.



Source: Picture by Nana Poku Dadie.

Figure 16: Manhyia Tete Nnwonkorɔ group in contrast to Adowa above, the women are in front while the male instrumentalist sit behind. They do not include atumpan drums. The author is recording the songs with a digital audio recorder.



Source: Picture by Nana Poku Dadie.

Bells, Rattles, Wooden Clappers

I would like to conclude this period by touching on corresponding developments in percussion instruments including bells, rattles, and wooden clappers. Most of the metal gongs and stick clappers were passed on from the Neolithic period to the Early Iron Age and to the Middle Iron Age. Thus, succeeding generations established continuity with previous generations by maintaining what they inherited and in some cases, affecting slight modifications, while in other instances creating totally new instruments. That might be the case with two new additions to metal bells and gongs and a new container rattle, *asratoa*, also known as concussion rattle in English. *Asratoa* is not included in ensembles but it is played by the youth, especially, boys for self-enjoyment. Two new innovations in metal idiophones are the castanet that is made up of a metal ring worn on the thumb and a fairly smaller and

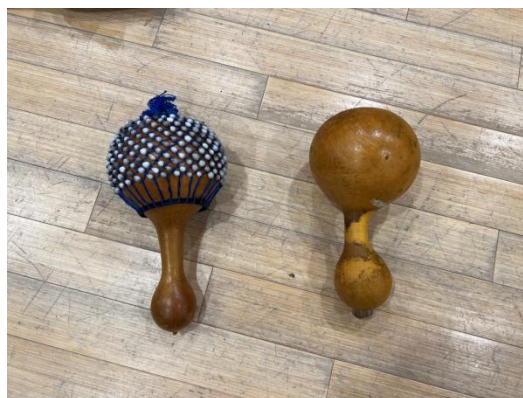
oval-shaped metal bell that is worn on the middle finger. Sound is produced by clicking the thumb ring on the bell on the middle finger. The castanet came to be known in Akan as *afirikyewa* or *firikyewa*. The second was a boat-shaped metal bell with a slit in the middle but unlike the gongs and clapperless bells from earlier periods that were played with wooden sticks, this new invention is played with a metal rod and it came to be known as *adawura*. The larger implications of the foregoing for artistic expressions are that, *adowa* ensembles adapted *adawura* and *firikyewa*, *kete* incorporated *dawuro*, and *fontomfrom* uses two or three large *dawuro* (gongs). *Afirikyewa* became popular as individuals played it to accompany solo singing. *Asratoa* is also popular with the youth and adults who used it to accompany solo singing.

Figure 17: Bells, Rattles, and Wooden Clappers are still in use in Akanland. Evidence of continuity with the remote past.

Asratoa



Ntorowa (gourd rattle with beads woven around it and a gourd rattle with beads inside).



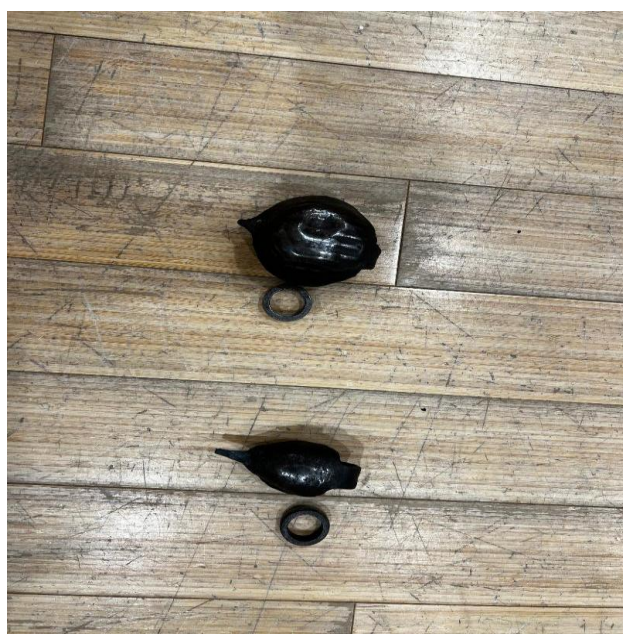
Dawuorta (double bell) with playing stick and Adawura (boat-shaped bell with a playing metal rod).



Akasaa (metal jingles) that are fixed to the male Atumpan drum for buzzing sound



Firikyewa (finger bell)



Late Iron Age (1500-1900)

The Late Iron Age is identified with unprecedented population increase, dramatic strides in urbanization, the era of states, empires, and kingdoms, expanded trade networks, and massive increase in the accumulation of material culture. Noted Akan states such as Bono Manso, Nsòkò, Wankyi, Takyiman, Gyaaman, Adanse, Dɛnkyira, Dwaben, Kokofu,

Kwaaman, Asantemanso, Akyem, Kwawu, Akwamu, Agona, Asebu, Ahanta, Wassa were well-established by the fifteenth century²⁰. After mid-seventeenth century, a new and one of the most powerful kingdoms, the Asante Empire, emerged and became a dominant force in the region. With the characteristic image of *Kɔtɔkɔ* (the porcupine) as its totem and *Sikadwa* (the Gold Stool) as an ideological force, Asante rapidly expanded in the eighteenth century and by the mid-nineteenth century, it covered an area larger than present day Ghana²¹. Lastly, the Late Iron Age also marked the arrival of Europeans, beginning with the Portuguese. From the fifteenth century onwards, European merchants arrived on the coast and later in the Akan interior and provided a trail of documentary and iconographic data of Akan socio-political sophistication inextricably tied to the visual and performing arts. For instance, in 1482, the Portuguese Captain, Diego d’Azambuja’s description of his meeting with King Kwamena Ansa of Edina, includes the prototypical Akan royal regalia such as wooden stools, drums, ivory trumpets, and swords which the Portuguese interpreted as weapons²². The Dutchman, William Bosman identified iron gongs and iron castanets in his interactions with the coastal Akan. Pieter de Marees’ account of Fante royal court published in 1604 refers to drums with designs carved on the shell that are sometimes combined with ivory trumpets. In addition to identifying sound producing instruments, the Frenchman, Jean Barbot, not only identified instruments but he also provided detailed descriptions of the playing mechanism including the use of curved or straight sticks, or the hand. Barbot observed royal drums that were adorned with charms and jawbones of enemies slain in battle. It is likely that he was describing the *Okyerema* when he observed that to be entrusted with the drum is to occupy an office of honor. In addition to clapperless bells, Barbot recognized about ten varieties of drums some of which are, according to him, combined with ivory trumpets. Such were the descriptions until 1819 when the British Merchant, Thomas Bowdich, published a colorful and detailed drawing with the caption, *The First Day of the Yam Custom*, that he observed in

²⁰ Kwasi Konadu (2014) includes oral histories of Adanse, Ahafo, Denkyira, Assin and Twifo, Bono-Takyiman, Fante: Komenda and Kwamankese, Nsɔkɔ.

²¹ European traders, missionaries, and colonizers produced volumes of literature on the Asante Empire. A handful include John Beecham (1841), R.S. Rattray (1927), Ivor Wilks (1975 and 1993), and T.C. McCaskie (1995).

²² Diego d’Azambuja 1482, William Bosman 1705, Pieter de Marees first published in Dutch in 1605 and later translated into English in 1987 and edited by Albert van Dantzig and Adam Jones; Jean Barbot 1844 in *Churchills Voyages*; and Thomas Bowdich 1819.

Kumase in 1817²³. Bowdich was on a mission, as it were, to negotiate a trade deal with the Asante Kingdom. The ceremony was presided over by the seventh Asante King, Osɛe Asibe Bonsu and the fifth Asantehemaa, Nana Akosua Adoma. Folded as an insert in his publication, the optics are detailed visually and leaves one to wonder just how Bowdich was able to recall all the imagery for his catographer to produce in such vivid detail. Despite all the known shortcomings of Bowdich's image, he succeeded in providing, for the first time, a glimpse of an Akan kingdom in the early nineteenth century. A great deal can be unpacked from the huge umbrellas to the sheer variety of musical instruments and performing musicians. In addition to the visual representation of the ceremony, Bowdich listed a number of sound producing instruments such as a variety of drums including the huge *bɔmmaa* drums that were carried on the head in processions, boat-shaped iron bells, *adawura*, which unlike the larger gongs, are struck with a metal rod, castanets, flat stick clappers, container gourd rattles and beaded gourd rattles. Additionally, he draws attention to large 'horns' that appears to be *sɔkoben* or *aseleben*. *Aseleben* literary means the talking or speaking trumpet. Additional instruments include the *pempensua* (lamellaphone) and *benta* (the mouth bow), and a long reed-like flute that is likely the *durugya*, and finally, *sankuo* or *seperewa* (harp-lute).

A critical observation by Bowdich and those who came immediately after him in the nineteenth century, Joseph Dupuis (1824), John Beecham (1841), and A. B. Ellis (1887), is the prevalence of instrumental speech surrogacy in Akanland. They were impressed by the skillful manipulation of pitches on drums, ivory trumpets, and flutes to reproduce linguistic tones in the Twi language. As I have noted throughout this paper, a highly sophisticated system of using horns, ivory trumpets, drums, and flute as communication tools and sending messaging to long distances, were long established before the arrival of Europeans in the early fifteenth century. Early European merchants have expressed their wonder in what they refer to as "flute dialogues." They recorded their bewilderment about how the natives explained every phrase of the "flute dialogues" to them. Surprisingly, they failed to observe similar usages of symbolic language and communication and instrumental speech surrogacy by ivory trumpeters and the Akan harp-lute (*seperewa*). In 1887, Ellis, for instance, noted how each Akan chief has his own call or motto sounded on drums but he failed to observe similar practices on *mmentia* (short ivory trumpets) for according to the Akan proverb: *sɛ wo*

²³ The information on European sources is from J.H.K. Nketia (1982).

were firi wo krom hene aben a, wo yera wɔ dwabɔ ase (you will be displaced in a festival if you forget the ivory trumpet signal of your chief). Having discussed some of the documentary and iconographic evidence produced by European explorers, I will move on to examine some of the momentous markers in this period with larger implications for the visual and performing arts. Artistic creativity, creation of sound producing instruments, singing, drumming and dancing, and verbal arts are unvaryingly inspired by these momentous developments and thus leading Anquandah to observe that “the period between 1500-1800 constituted a major formative era in the arts of the Akan” (Anquandah, 1982, p. 100).

City-States

By the end of the fifteenth century, some of the city-states that I listed at the beginning of this period doubled as political capitals as well as commercial centers trading with Mande merchants most of whom practiced the Islamic religion²⁴. Thriving commercial centers include, Nsɔkɔ and Ahwenekɔkɔ in the northern fringes, Adanse Fɔmena, Akrokyerɛ, Ahinsan, and Ɔboɔase in the central forest area, Akwamu Nyanoase in the Southeastern corridor, while the southern coastal towns of Ahanta, Asebu, Eguafo, and Fetu were well-known for mining gold and for salt production. Within the span of a century, Tafo, Ɛkaase, and Suntreso, for instance, developed as political and commercial centers in the central forest zone. Prior challenges noted in the Middle Iron Age persisted and led to similar solutions from the leadership and central authority. There are the perennial intra-family feuds, increasing conflicts between towns, and overpopulation that led to further migrations by family groups as in the case of the Ɔyoko family who settled in Dwaben, Kokofɔ, and Kwaaman. Similarly, a number of family groups relocated from Adansemanso to establish their own states. Some members of the Asona family moved from Adanse to Kyebi to establish the Akyem Abuakwa State²⁵. The Bretuo family moved to present day Asante Mampon and its environs while some members of the Aduana family moved to Kwawu, and others moved to Wassa and Twifo. By the end of the sixteenth century, Denkyera and Akyem Abuakwa in the Central Forest area, and Akwamu in the Southeastern area have become

²⁴ See for instance, J.K Fynn (1982).

²⁵ For a detailed account of Asona family migration from Adanse to their present settlement at Kyebi, see Kwasi Amfo Kwakye (2007).

powerful states with centralized political structures. Most of the independent states established political alliances in order to combine resources against mutual adversaries. For instance, there were coalitions between the Akyem and the Guan against Akwamu, between the Kwaaman and other states against Denkyera to cite two out of several.

Most of the Akan states depended on military strength to defend their sovereignty, embark on territorial expansion, and to facilitate regional and international trade. The kingdoms of Denkyera and Akwamu created the wing systems of political structure headed by territorial chiefs who doubled as military commanders of their respective territories. The wing system consists of Twafoo (the Forward Guard), Nifa (the Right Wing), Benkum (the Left Wing) and Kyidom (the Rear Guard). The Ankɔbea Division (Home Guard) was created by the Asante King, Opoku Ware, in the eighteenth century when the King of Sefwi, Nana Abirimuro sent his soldiers to invade Kumase, while the soldiers from the latter were far away in the campaign against Akyem Kotoku²⁶. All the above noted wings and divisions were supported by Asafo warrior organizations with corresponding songs and drum accompaniments. With the introduction of firearms by Europeans in the late seventeenth century, militarism intensified as powerful states acquired firearms from Europeans and embarked on conquests and territorial expansion and the control of major trade routes.

Court musicians and verbal artists, vocal ensembles in the communities, and visual artists responded to the momentous socio-political and economic times in the Late Iron Age with creative outburst in all media by composing a large body of musical and literary materials. In my conversations with courtiers at Manhyia Palace in Kumase, the numerous battles between independent Akan states, or Akan states and neighboring states, as well as Akan states and Europeans, especially the protracted wars between the Asante Kingdom and the British in the nineteenth century, were constantly cited as the inspiration for the creation of new sound producing instruments, songs, dances, instrumental texts, referential poetry, and several others. Members of the Ntahera group at Manhyia Palace informed me that they had over three hundred verses in their repertoire although it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to recall even thirty of the verses. In 1974, Nketia published seventy-seven proverbs as part of *ayan* (drum poetry) performed by the ɔkyerema (the Creator's Drummer) on the pair of *atumpɔn* drums. Instrumental and song texts, and texts from verbal art forms bear ample testimony to the surge of creative energy in the arts in the period under consideration.

²⁶ For an account of the Asante-Sefwi conflict, see A.A.Y Kyerematen (1966, p. 256-263).

Militarism and the inter-war years stimulated performance of *mmomomme* (songs of prayers) in Akan principalities by women who channeled their prayers for the safe and victorious return of both family members and loved ones from the battlefield through songs. Also referred to literally as, visiting married women (*asrayere*), a group of women will congregate in a household, sing songs for a while, and then step out and sing songs from one end of the town to another end before retiring to their various homes. Similarly, harvest and year-end festivals provided inspiration for artistic creations and performance outlets. In the area of verbal arts, members of the constabulary and the bards expanded their repertoire for *Amoma*, *Adawu*, *Apae*, and *Kwadowom* with new compositions referencing incidents on the battlefield, successful as well as unsuccessful war campaigns, heroic accomplishments of kings, chiefs, *ahemaa*, war generals, and grave losses of dependable citizens.

Further, migrations, natural and man-made disasters and several challenges in life provided a pool of themes for artistic creativity. Themes that eventually became praise names, strong names, or appellations for territorial chiefs, kings, *ahemaa*, and individuals who exhibit extraordinary vision and imagination in statehood and governance. For instance, *Ɔsagyefoɔ* (Redeemer), *Ɔkogyeasuo* (Redeemer of Rivers), *Kofoɔ* (the Fighter), *Dankagyeaboɔ* (the box that receives bullets), *Gyeaboɔ* (one who is able to withstand bullets), *Ɛboɔ a ehi akuma* (the stone that melts an axe), *Agyemang* (Savior of Nations) *Kyeretwie* (one who catches the leopard with his bare hands) and so on. The above-named stock expressions are subject to inter-textual manipulations in instrumental poetry on drums, ivory trumpets, flutes, and songs. By default, all the above became institutionalized in Akan courts and in the public domain. We can imagine a relatively busy time for all the *Akyerema* (the Creator's Drummers), poets, composers of songs and instrumental texts in all Akan states as they historicize lived experience and re-enforce social values in Akanlad.

No doubt expansion in statehood, increase production of food crops, acquisition of material culture, specializations in industries, and unprecedented population increase will inevitably lead to the demand for creativity in the musical arts as well as musical performances. Continuing from the Middle Iron Age, spontaneous groups hurriedly came together to provide music for *bragorɔ* (nubility rites), *mperɛ*, *mmomomme*, *mpeewa*, *nsaadwom*, *mmoguo* (song interludes as part of Ananse stories), and *apoɔ* (song of insults)²⁷. On the other hand, formally constituted groups include *dansuom*, *adenkum*, *atente*, *osekye*,

²⁷ For *Apoɔ* (songs of insults), see E.V. Asihene (1980).

adowa, *asafodwom* (warrior organizations), *abɔfoɔdwom* (hunters songs)²⁸. As I noted in the Middle Iron Age, unlike court ensembles that are retained by chieftaincy as heirloom or war trophies and are undeniable part of the state treasury, community-based popular bands that are mostly not rigidly tied to political authorities have higher rates of turn over in the musical types and dances they perform. Over the centuries, several ensembles lost their vitality as soon as the songs and dances loose their popularity or a new song type and dance craze come in vogue. Citing *adowa* dance as an exception, Nketia observes that the lifespan of popular bands is usually four to five years although currently, *adenkum* in Fante and *nnwonkorɔ* in Kwawu, Asante, and Brong are still thriving (Nketia, 1963, p. 63-74). In most cases, continuity with the old songs and dances is established when they transfer old songs and dances to a new genre. There are instances when existing musical types are enlarged or customized by successive generations in response to contemporary situations. In addition to some of the genres we have previously mentioned, here is a cursory list of popular genres not necessarily in chronological order: *mmaadwom*, *asɔ*, *nteewa*, (*nteewa* and *asɔ* for young girls), *ɔmpɛ*, *dwaɛ*, *sobom*, *osoode*, *asaadua* (tree of the sweet berry), *Akosua Tuntum* (a name), *adzewa* (Fanti version of Adowa), *abɔfoɔdwom* (hunter's songs) *adenkum*, *asɔnkɔ*, *awaa*, *sanga*, *adakam*, *ntan*, *sika-rebewua-ɛpere*, *ɔnni-bi-amanɛɛ*, *tɛtea*, *asiko*, *faya* (fire), *konkoma*, *aweis* (always), *selewa*, *odie*, *sikiyi*, *ɔdaano*, *akapoma*, *kurunku*, and *akwadum*²⁹.

Another creative impulse in the era of political and economic expansion is the general output of varieties of drums. Not surprisingly, drum carving in this period follows long and established tradition of wood carving in Akanland where the wooden stool, *asesɛdwa*, carved from the *sɛsɛ* tree, became the symbol of kingship authority by the end of the Middle Iron Age. Migrations to new settlements created demands for newly carved drums primarily as sound producing instruments to send signals and messages from central authorities to the communities and eventually as accompanying drums in vocal ensembles and instrumental ensembles at the courts of rulers. In addition to the barrel-shaped *nkukua* drums (small, medium, and large), the *twenesini*, and the bottled-shaped *apentema* and the pair of *atumpan* drums, several varieties of semi-cylindrical drums with shoulder straps appeared on the scene by the nineteenth century. In addition to the *mpebi ne nkrawiri* type of drums, most Asafo

²⁸ A recent study of Dansuom is V. Harriet Barnes-Duke (2017).

²⁹ References to the popular dances listed here can be found in Nketia (1949, 1973a, 1973b), Ampene (2005), and B.A. Aning (1975).

groups possess these types of drums that are simply called *asafotwene* (asafo drums). Additional examples are the *adedemma* or *adukurogya*, *worempem* (a type of asafo drums), and *ose* or *atetewa/atetee*. Amanhene in several Akan states enlarged their court ensembles with the huge *bɔmmaa* drums and kete ensembles. In line with the prevailing conditions in Akanland, dances associated with the courts mirrored heroic dances and militarism following the inter-war years as in the two dances below.

Figure 18: Heroism in *fɔntɔmfɔm* dances. The Asante King, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, dancing Atopretia with the Mpɔnpɔnson (sword) and a gun during royal funerary rites at Manhyia Palace.



Source: Picture by author.

Figure 19: Nana Wiafe Akenten III, Edwisomanhene, in his signature kete dance during royal funerary rites at Manhyia Palace in Kumase in 2012.



Source: Picture by author.

For a while, all territorial chiefs settled on a single *bɔmmaa* and accompanying drums until Opemsoo Osee Tutu expanded his ensemble from one to two *bɔmmaa* drums. The booming sound from two huge drums became known as *fentɛmfrɛm* or its corrupted and popular name, *fɔntɔmfrɔm*, and several *Amanhene* (Territorial chiefs) adapted that model. Overall, kete dances are elegant but some of the dance suites such as *Adaban*, *Abɔfoɔ*, and *Adinkra* exude heroic militancy like that of *fɔntɔmfrɔm* dances.

Through expanded trade networks, the Akan had sustained interactions with their northern neighbors, especially the Gonja, Dagomba, and Mande. By the late eighteenth century, Akan communities began using close-ended drums including *donno* and *mpintintoa*, from the north on limited basis. *Donno* (sing. *dondo*) initially performed by women during nubility rites that are strictly for girls, and eventually quintessential performers of court ensembles such as *fɔntɔmfrɔm* and *kete* added *donno* drums to the ensemble. The bigger types

that are used in *bɔmmaa* and later *fɔntɔmfrɔm* are known as *dɔnka*. While *donno* is a double-headed closed drum, the *mpintin* or *mpintintoa* (gourd drums) are single-headed closed drums and together with the *donno*, *dɔnka*, and the cylindrical double-headed *gyamadudu* drums, they constitute the *mpintin* ensemble at the Asantehene's court and courts of the territorial chiefs (see Figure 20). Medium sized double-headed cylindrical drums are part of *atente* and *osekye* bands and the Asantehene's *sekye* and *kwantenpɔnmuta* royal ensembles. Similarly, rectangular frame drums (or tambourines) are not originally Akan drums but are used on limited basis in popular bands such as *Asaadua* but the dance and songs associated with this genre have since gone out of favor.

Figure 20: Mpintin Ensemble at Manhyia Palace in Kumase.



Source: Picture by author.

Saawisie

Gyamadudu

Dɔnka

Dɔnka

Mpintintoa

A new addition to the pool of percussion instruments is *adenkum*, an elongated gourd with a small hole cut on the tip and a similar hole on the bulbous body that Fante women play to accompany the vocal ensemble with the same name. Apart from that, the variety of stick clappers, metal gongs and bells, boat-shaped bells, finger bells, gourd rattles, beaded gourd rattles, and *asratoa* has passed on from antiquity to the present generation.

Summary

Despite the profusion of, and emphasis on, the political and economic history and the near exclusion of cultural history of the Akan in nineteenth and twentieth-century publications, the evidence in this paper suggests that ancient Akan were not only concerned with creating artificial installations to deal with their environment. Neither did the Akan of antiquity developed socio-political structures, engaged in economic activities, created urban centers, or pursued territorial expansion without corresponding developments in creative arts. Due to my disciplinary leanings, there is no denying that my focus in this paper is overwhelmingly on the musical arts. Creativity in the musical arts is central to Akan sophistication from the beginning of time to the present day. To understand what propelled the Akan through their own cultural history, I referenced the text of *fɔntɔmfɔm Akantam* (oath swearing) that succinctly expresses the historical experience in settlements and migrations that informed Akan religious worldview. The text congenitally reveals Akan understanding of the natural order in their physical environment that rivers are from God, the Creator of all things, and that in their search for food and shelter, they constructed the path and met the river. While the path is constructed by human beings, the river is one of the spiritual manifestations of God on earth. This existential experience is artistically composed and performed by members of the royal *fɔntɔmfɔm* drum ensemble as a dance suite that continues to be passed on, orally, from generation to generation. Intertextual variations of the above text are featured across genres in vocal and instrumental ensembles including *adowa* and *nnwonkorɔ* songs, and the instrumental poetry of ivory trumpets. The performance of “The Path Crosses the River” in different genres and in present day Akanland is a constant reminder for the Akan to praise and thank the Supreme Being for providing them with rivers to sustain them on earth. I used the text of Akan as launching pad to understanding the physical environment of Akan settlements in present-day Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire. I then

moved on to discuss Akan socio-political organization that is fundamentally based on a matrilineal system whereby the seven or eight family groupings trace their lineage to a female ancestress. Following that, I shifted my attention to the broad spatial frameworks proposed by archaeologists and historians to tease out parallel developments in the musical arts. I examined corresponding developments in musical expressions with reference to why and how sound-producing and musical instruments were manufactured, the resources used in their construction, the uses of musical instruments, and the evidence for continuity with the usages in the remote past.

Although I did not devote a section to issues of continuity, I reference aspects of continuity throughout my paper. From the Neolithic Period to the Late Iron Age, there are noticeable continuity of Akan percussion instruments to the present times. The continued usages of organic vegetable materials such as the gourd variety, the *tweneboa* tree, animal horns and ivory trumpets are informed by the embodied spirituality that the Akan associate with organic materials, trees, and animals. When it comes to ivory trumpets, *ntahera* and *mmentia* continue to enjoy widespread distribution in all corners of Akanland. As the Asante Empire became powerful, its arsenal of ivory trumpet groups expanded to more than twenty types namely, *nkɔntwema*, *ntahera*, *kɔkrɔanya*, *nkofo*, *amoakwa*, *nkrawoben*, *asikaben*, *mmentia*, *mmodwemmɔdwe*, *sɔkɔben*, *kɔtononko*, *ɔkra*, *patuda*, *nnɔmuaben*, *abamoaben* or *abenben*, *Ankaasemmen*, *Akyeremademmen*, *Adwonsɔdwonsɔmmen*, *Gyaamanmmen*, *Edwaasemmen*, and many others. With the Akan, there is a discernible continuum that establish records of musical instruments, singing, and dancing that were used in the remote past as well as in contemporary times. For instance, corporeal accompaniment to the singing voice in antiquity, especially hand clapping, continues to this day. The ubiquitous use of organic materials readily available from the natural environment such as the variety of rattles from the gourd family and bamboo stick clappers began in the Neolithic period to the present times. As stated in this paper, the Akan realized the spiritual value in organic vegetable materials and never abandoned the use of gourd rattles or stick clappers to this day and that is one of the ways of establishing continuity with the remote past. The Akan were quite resourceful as they created musical instruments from materials with natural bore such as bamboo for flutes and horns of wild and domesticated animals, and the elephant tusk. The elephant tusk has since replaced horns from the goat, sheep, or cow. It is the same view of spirituality in natural materials that has sustained the use of elephant tusk for a variety of

ivory trumpets used in Akan courts. The onset of iron age produced metal bells of various sizes and shapes which due to the piercing sound, replaced bamboo sticks for providing short and recurring rhythmic patterns (timelines or reference points) in vocal and instrumental music. Over the centuries, the bells were passed on from generation to generation as well as the creation of bigger metal bells (gongs), boat-shaped bells, and finger bells.

The transformations in the construction of drums are amazing and provides a window of understanding of continuity with the remote past. From the smaller *nkukua* drums to *appentema* and *petia*, from *appentema* to *atumpan*, from *petia* to *twenesin*, and from *twenesin* to the huge *bɔmmaa* drums, there is striking continuity with the Akan past. Along the line, some instruments were discontinued while others were modified to meet sound aesthetics of the day. Flutes and pipes are not as widespread as they used to be but the *durugya* is part of the Asante king's court while *atenteben* in *atente* bands has become a national instrument used in educational institutions and cultural groups thanks to the work of Ephraim Amu³⁰. Apart from *mmɔdwemmɔdwe* and *sɔkɔben* or *aseseben* ivory trumpets, the vast majority of ivory trumpets are still in use in Akan royal courts and as I have stated previously, Manhyia Palace in Kumase has the largest collection of ivory trumpets. Similarly, a variety of drums accompany popular bands and are central to Akan chieftaincy as I have described above. By mid-twentieth century, the mouth bow, *bentɔ*, went out of fashion while the *seperewa* (harp-lute) almost became obsolete but resurfaced in the 1990s due to the singular effort by Osei Korankye, the world re-knowned *seperewa* master.

Singing is another creative endeavor that leads us to appreciate continuity in the remote past. I traced primordial musicality associated with the voice. From humming the whistling and solo and group singing, and the preference for call and response singing. I examined spontaneous singing from *mpere*, *mmommome*, and *nsui* in the remote past to *adowa* and *nnwonkorɔ*. I included creativity in poetry or what I refer to as verbal arts and included the texts for *apae* (referential poetry) and *kwadwom* (chronicle songs). Lastly, I examined briefly, dance as non-verbal artistic activity that is integral to music. I observed that, continuity with old songs and dances are established when they transfer old songs and dances to new genres. A critical aspect of all the sound producing and musical instruments, and the genres discussed in this paper that ensures continuity with the remote past is that the

³⁰ The pioneering work of Ephraim Amu is discussed in his biography by Philip T. Laryea (2012), Fred Agyeman (1988), Kofi Agawu (1996), and Kwabena Nketia, among others.

musical arts (and other artistic domain) are coded with historical experience of the Akan. In other words, Akan musical arts are depository of history and events and recalled and dramatized during ceremonies, rituals, and musical events.

Another method of establishing continuity is to assess documentary and iconographic trail left behind by European explorers, merchants, missionaries, and colonizers who arrived in the Gulf of Guinea in the fifteenth century. The evidence did not fail to show that Akan socio-political sophistication was in full bloom when Europeans arrived. Despite the noted flaws in Bowdich's representation of what he refers to as the beginning of the Yam festival in the Asante Kingdom, the optics in his cartographic drawing is our best resource for establishing continuity in the Akan past³¹. Accounting for dynamism in tradition, there are astounding similarities in scope and depth in the twenty-first century court ceremonies and festivals in the Asante Kingdom and similarity with Bowdich's early nineteenth century Public Assembly of Asante royalty presided by Asantehene Osee Asibe Bonsu. The huge colorful umbrellas with symbolic designs on top, the palanquins, a variety of musical instruments, the sitting arrangements, the militancy and a host of others continue to present-day Asante. A cursory look at festivals in Akan areas would yield similar conclusions with regards to cultural continuity with the remote past. For instance, Kundum festival in Nzema, Edina Bakatue, Fetu Afahye, Takyiman Apoo, Ohum in Akyem Abuakwa, Odwira at Mampon Akwapim, Adae or Asanteman Adaekesee in Kumase and others all have a stake in continuity with the Akan past. Herein lies my African musicological inquiry and positions on Akan civilization and History.

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³¹ For a critical assessment of T. E. Bowdich's image and narrative of his notion of "The First Day of the Yam Festival," see T.C. McCaskie (1995, p. 240-242) and the Appendix I, pages 268-271.

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