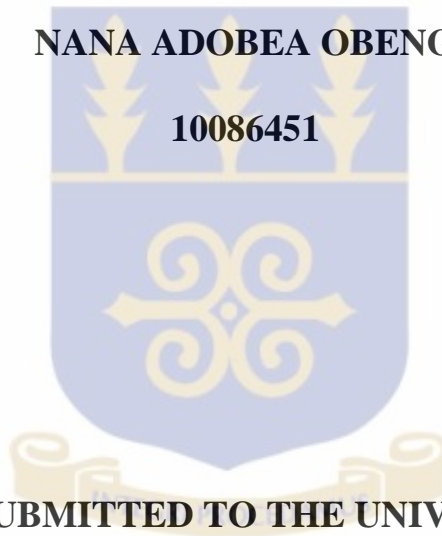


**GHANAIAN POPULAR MUSIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL
COMMENTARY: A CASE STUDY OF BARIMA SIDNEY**

BY

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE AWARD OF MPhil MUSIC DEGREE**

JULY, 2015

DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the present work is the product of my original research and that it has never been presented in part or in whole for another degree elsewhere. Wherever sources have been quoted or used, full acknowledgement has been made.

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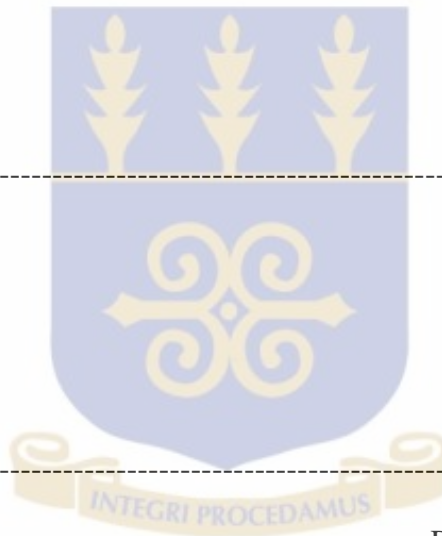
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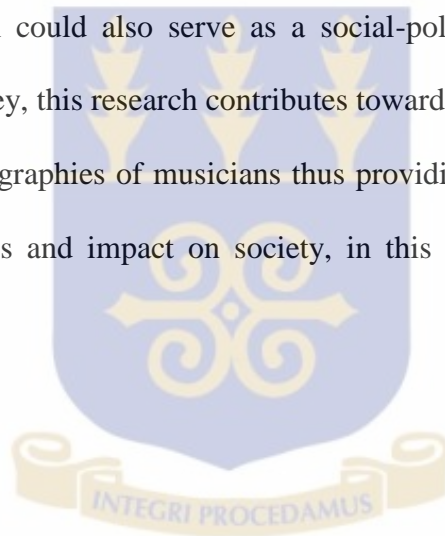
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation discusses the relationship between Ghanaian popular music and socio-political commentary. It explores Hiplife music focusing on five selected songs of Barima Sidney. Based on a case study approach, the study employs qualitative methods of inquiry by drawing on intensive personal interviews, focused groups, archive and commercial music videos, journals, press cuts from the Internet, the social media as well as life-history method. The interpretation of song texts from these selected songs employs aspects of discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and functions of song and song texts as suggested by Merriam (1964). The study posits that because of its poetic nature Hiplife music has multiple meanings which could also serve as a social-political critique of the country. Focusing on Barima Sidney, this research contributes towards the development of methods in the studying of the biographies of musicians thus providing a deeper understanding of their musical skills, styles and impact on society, in this case contemporary Ghanaian society.



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE THESIS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CDC	Congress for Democratic Change
CNN	Cable News Network
CPP	Convention People's Party
EHF	Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever
FIDA	Federacion Internacional de Abogadas
FM	Frequency Modulation
GH	Ghana
GTV	Ghana Television
ITT	International Thief Thief
LAFA	Locally Acquired Foreign Accent
MC	Master of Ceremonies
MUSIGA	Musicians Union of Ghana
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NLC	National Labour Commission
NPP	New Patriotic Party
PANAFEST	Pan-African Festival
P	Page
Pp	Pages
TV	Television
U.S	United States
WASSS	West African Senior Secondary School



DEDICATION

To My Sweetness Kwabena Obeng



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Praise be to Yahweh for seeing me through this battle to the end. Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is deepest within me bless His holy name.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Music is generally described as one of the artistic forms that are often thought to provide communication where individuals and groups could easily express themselves. It is often used to evoke political issues, aiding as an advocator, promoter and inspirer of social justice. Damilola (2011) shows that, to become a political activist goes beyond voting to having a burning desire to effect change in one's society. For musicians, one way by which such an active step can be taken is through the use of music in addressing certain social issues. Merriam affirms that, what is important is that a song itself gives freedom to express thoughts, ideas, and comments which cannot be stated baldly in the normal language situation. It appears, then, that singing apparently provides an extremely useful means for obtaining kinds of information which are not otherwise easily accessible (Merriam, 1964, p. 193).

Merriam goes on to quote Crowley that one of the forms through which this is made most evident is the topical song such as the Calypso, which has widespread distribution and may well be found in almost every society. Topical songs take many forms, but in broadest application, they may be characterised simply as songs of comment upon aspects of daily life (Crowley, 1959a). In Ghana, hiplife writers like Barima Sidney, Sarkodie, A-Plus, and Obour are musicians who address such issues through their music. The title track of Barima's 2003 album, *Scent Noo* for example detested uncleanness and teased various professions and "honourables"¹, thus acting as some sort of moral check in the society.

¹ The word 'honourables' here refers to how Ghanaian parliamentarians are addressed.

This study reflects on the socio-political nature of song texts and its commentary, drawing on a selection of Barima Sidney's music as the focal point.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Barima Sidney is one of the first generation hiplife musicians, whose texts are mostly socio-politically based. However, because hiplife is often composed and performed in complex poetic constitution and which also draws on the indigenous musico-poetic traditions of allusion and satire, it often encodes messages of multiple interpretations. This can only be dealt with, both by examining these lyrics in terms of the composer's intent, and how they are appropriated from public perception.

1.3 Objectives

- a. To investigate the use of music as an important instrument or medium that encourages socio-political commentary.
- b. To ascertain the extent to which music can be used as an effective tool for the dissemination of information.
- c. To investigate Barima's music with focus on the texts' multiple meanings from both the point of view of the musician and from public perception.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was guided by these questions:

- a. Why hiplife music?
- b. What is the difference between Barima's intention and how the public interprets it?

- c. In what ways does this interpretation reflect and support the general nature of socio-political commentary in Ghana?

1.5 Significance of Study

Barima Sidney is an icon where hiplife music is concerned and this research identifies his contribution to hiplife as a popular music style in Ghana. Although some amount of research has been conducted on hiplife music in Ghana, the contribution of the individual musician has not been the prime emphasis. Therefore, this paper aims at contributing to the scholarship on hiplife in Ghana. With its focus on the individual as a case study, the research contributes towards the development of methods in studying the biographies of individual musicians and thus provides deeper understanding of their musical skills, styles, and impact on contemporary Ghanaian society.

1.6 Scope of Study

The study focused on music and its relation to socio-political commentaries, drawing from five selected works of Barima Sidney. These included:

- *Scenti Noo* (That Scent, 2003)
- *Obiaa Nye Obiaa* (Nobody's nobody, 2004)
- *Africa Monie* (Africa Money, 2007)
- *Donkomi* (Reduction Sales, 2013)
- *Ayeka* (Dead End, 2014)

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Merriam states that,

“One of the most obvious sources of understanding human behaviour in connection with music is the song text. Text, of course, are language behaviour rather than music sound, but they are an integral part of music and there is clear cut evidence that language used in connection with music differs from that of ordinary discourse; one of the most striking examples is shown by the fact that in song the individual or the group can apparently express deep-seated feelings not permissibly verbalised in other contexts” (1964, p. 187).

This phenomenon has been commented upon most frequently for Africa, although it apparently operates in other world areas as well (Merriam, 1964, p. 187). He takes a queue from Hugh Tracey in speaking of the Chopi of East Africa who says: “You can say publicly in songs what you cannot say privately to a man’s face,” and so this is one of the ways African societies takes to maintain a spiritually healthy community (Merriam, 1964, pp. 190, 237). Barima’s songs are typical examples of this phenomenon hence, this study draws from this information in its song texts analysis.

Life history interviewing is an approach that uses a form of individual interview directed towards documenting the respondent's life, or an aspect of it that has developed over the life course. Plummer (2001) notes three main types of life stories: [1] stories of a life told in a given culture, unshaped by research intervention; [2] life stories specifically gathered for research purposes; and [3] life stories constructed self-consciously. An intensive interview is an integral part of the life history interviewing method and this approach is employed in this study. Through the process, the life of the musician in question and a selection of his works are analysed and discussed.

Barranco (2013) describe discourse analysis as a way to analyse how language is used in a specific context; the language used can be seen in a conversation, in a speech, in any type

of genre, such as the lyrics of a song. It is essential to address the language in context because it can display social problems that occur in society. Since language and language use, and communication are central to musical systems, this thesis places more emphasis on song text. Hence aspects of discourse analysis was therefore one of the appropriate analytical tools that was employed.

1.8 Methodology

1.8.1 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher consulted written relevant documents that included books, journals, magazines and press cuts from the library and internet. The research employed multiple forms of qualitative data collection strategies which included observations, music videos and face-to-face interviews with Barima Sidney, and a sample of persons in the entertainment media. Through question schedules and phone calls certain information that needed clarifications were crosschecked. The researcher also made use of recorded audio for the song text analysis.

1.8.2 Data Processing

All the data collected were carefully compiled and analysed to reflect the true and vivid picture as set out in the research outline. Information gathered was crosschecked from other sources to ensure that they were coherent. The texts of selected original compositions of Barima Sidney sung in Twi, Ga, French and Hausa were translated into English and typed into word files.

1.9 Field Experience

My field experience was a challenging one from the initial stages but became an interesting one as the research progressed. I combed around for anyone with links to Barima Sidney for close to two months without any success. What made it frustrating was that I was already behind time by the schedule I had set and I found myself in a tight spot as the normal avenues to get information on my icon for the case study had little or no help. Almost giving up, I decided to search for Barima Sidney on Facebook while I was on the page chatting with a friend. Having made my intentions known in the form of writing, I posted it into his Facebook message box. He almost immediately responded with his phone number for me to call him. This came as a surprise and joy to me as well. This was because I had a hard time trying to reach him through others in the entertainment industry, due to the protocol one has to go through in order to get a simple question answered or comment from them.

A date was fixed for our first face-to-face interview but something came up so we could not meet. Barima called later that he had a programme in Koforidua where I reside, so we finally had our first meeting on May 23, 2015. The reception given was very warm and to my surprise there were no protocol procedures to go through. He offered a drink for me which I politely refused though he kept insisting. This was because I was too excited and ready to have my interview before anything crossed our meeting. The interview lasted almost two hours and this was interspersed with interrupted phone calls and people, particularly others in the entertainment industry who were also part of the programme he came for and were staying in the same hotel with him. I learnt from the first interview with Barima Sidney that he was very friendly and caring by nature from the phone calls he answered throughout the period and the way he related with all, including the hotel hands.

Crosschecking of facts after my first interview was through phone calls and whenever he missed my call or saw a message from me, Barima replied and apologised for not being able to pick up the call and went further to explain why. This was very encouraging and led me to believe one of the things he told me on our first meeting; that family and people he worked with come first even before the money because his fans are his reward/award. My next interview was also in Koforidua where there was another programme he was part of. He called to inform me just like the first time and we set a date for the interview.

This one had challenges of rain and Barima leaving once I got to his hotel because he had to meet the Black Stars who were passing through town to make a donation for the needy at one of the local radio stations, before getting to their destination at Kumasi. I had to go back home and return later for the interview. This interview had traits just like the first one with interruptions. It rained throughout the whole time after which Barima refused to see me go for a taxi and instead drove me all the way back right to the doorstep of my home. This interview was on June 20, 2015.

A section of people I interviewed from various backgrounds including health, media, music, religion and politics after making them listen critically to the selected songs brought out very divergent yet interesting analysis on the song texts based on their perception, and this was added to my analysis of it in the chapter four of this study.

Challenges by way of the ‘Dumsomania’² weakened my laptop battery so made the working process frustrating most of the time. Efforts were however made by me moving to stay in Accrafirst with my elder brother at Lakeside, then to my nephew at Madina, then finally Legon campus by kind courtesy of an Assistant Lecturer at the Department of Music. Regardless of these challenges, the fieldwork has offered me the opportunity to gain experience in data collection and analysis, which will aid in any future research.

² Dumsomania is a coined word by the author, combining the Twi words “Dum So” which has become the lingua franca slang in Ghana to mean the indiscriminate eruption of power supply, with the word ‘mania’ because of both the positive and negative passion that has been attached to it. An example is a news report on some of the local radio stations about a man who was so worried his lights hadn’t gone off for two weeks so called the Electricity Company of Ghana to complain about the situation. This is how far the Dumsomania has affected some members of the society.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF POPULAR MUSIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL COMMENTARIES IN GHANA

2.1 Literature Review

Socio-political commentary and popular music has always played a vital role in shaping the political course in Ghana. From pre-independence through till now, music genres ranging from Traditional, Swing, Calypso, Jazz, Rock, Samba, Soul, Reggae, Highlife, Neo-Traditional, Gospel, and more recently Hiplife, Twi-Pop and so on, has become a part of the Ghanaian music culture. The following literature discusses some discourse on popular music and socio-political commentaries in Ghana.

For the purposes of the study, the use of Ghanaian popular music for socio-political commentary exists under three main categories namely:

- a. Music specifically commissioned by political parties for their benefit (Collins, 2005, p. 21)
- b. Music that are appropriated and applied to the circumstances of the country (Asante Darko and Van der Geest, 1982, p. 30)
- c. Hidden political message or reinterpreted by the public (Merriam, 1964, p. 193).

Socio-political commentaries involve a broad spectrum of issues including health, education, sanitation, agriculture, road management, energy crisis: like the “Dumsomania” in Ghana, but for the purpose of this study, socio-political commentary refers to the art of politicising songs in Ghana.

Asante Darko and Van der Geest (1982), opine that art has a double face. Art, particularly poetry, has a playful character (Huizinga, 1970); some of which lie in the fact that art often obscures what it wants to express. Music as an art is not exempted from these attributes. Therefore, based on the theory of poetic reinterpretation, the research seeks to examine how the meanings embedded in the lyrical content of these songs have effected changes or otherwise in the social and political decisions of the country. Asante Darko and Van der Geest (1982) discusses the double meanings embedded in highlife songs and how people in the country may ascribe certain meanings to songs to reflect the economic, social or political situation in the country at the time. This provides information relevant to the work. It reveals some aspects of the ‘playful character that art possesses’ as Asante Darko and Van der Geest talks about in some of the selected songs. Contrasting the ‘double meaning’ they discussed in highlife music, this thesis further explores the multiple meanings that can be ascribed to the selected song texts of an individual musician based on a case study method and how those meanings generate socio-political commentary.

In his book *The Music of Africa*, Nketia writes that the treatment of song as a form of utterance arises not only from stylistic considerations or from consciousness of the analogous features of speech and music. It is also inspired by the importance of the song as an avenue of verbal communication, a medium for creative verbal expressions, which reflect both personal and social expressions. Accordingly, the themes of songs tend to centre on events, matters of interest and concern to the members of a community or the social groups within it. They may deal with everyday life or with the traditions, beliefs and customs of the society. Nketia mentions types of songs such as cradlesongs, reflective songs, historical songs, and general songs pointing out that expression of emotions like

love and hate, joy and sadness, or praise and satire may run through different contextual categories of songs.

Nketia (1992) underscores that sometimes what cannot be said in speech can be stated in a song. Someone, who wishes to complain or cast insinuations, may find it more effective to do so in song than in speech. This is why, according to him, ethnographers, among others record and analyse song texts for data or use them to illustrate aspects of their analysis and description, for “song texts are a reflection of culture of which they are a part.” Hence some attention is given to songs as “oral documents” by some students of African history and philosophy, as well as by students of psychology. To emphasise his point, he further quotes Merriam, who says that, through the study of song texts it may well be possible to strike quickly through protective mechanisms to arrive at an understanding of the ethos of the culture and to gain some perspective of psychological problems and processes peculiar to it (Nketia 1992, pp. 189-205). Nketia’s works provides immense information to the understanding of the composition of songs. The focus of this study however is on an individual musician, whose song text generates socio-political commentary.

Just like Clark (2012) believes that hip hop writers and the youth they represent are an important component of any social or political struggle towards progress, Collins (2005) points to how in the case of Ghana, the urban youth now have their own special music idiom-hiplife. This genre with its outspoken lyrics, electronic instrumentation, solo artist and video clip format has become an identity symbol for the present generation of Ghanaian youth. This is because during Ghana’s 1970/80s military era, the live popular music scene collapsed for almost a decade with the evening curfews and high rate taxes of

about 160% on importation of musical instruments. Musicians left the country in search of greener pastures abroad. As a result, hiplife musicians who were a creation or a rippled off effect of the military interventions were therefore not exposed nor trained to play live popular band instruments. This essay's focus was on the socio-historical aspect of popular music in Ghana. However, this particular study focuses on one individual musician's life and the impact of his music on the public through the interpretation of song texts both from the author's and the listener's perceptions. It additionally explores the impact the song texts' power has on its hearers.

Collins (2005) conjectures that many of the older generation misunderstood the hiplife genre in the beginning because it did not conform to norms of popular music as found in Ghana at that time.³ The rap was too hurried in their opinion and this expression became its name "kasa hare."⁴ The lyrical content was also the model of the violent African-American gangsta rap variety, or contains sexually explicit and misogynist lyrics. This paper provides the needed information which will support the research in terms of the understanding the processes that led to hiplife becoming a popular music genre which was first embraced by the youth. This study explored how hiplife music could bring about socio-political commentary through the song text analysis of an individual musician as a case study.

In their introduction of the article *"Entertaining Repression: Music and Politics of Postcolonial Cameroon,"* Nyamnjoh and Fokwang assert that the manner in which music is produced and appropriated, by whom and how, is inseparable from power relations

³ The misunderstanding of the older generation as discussed by Collins lay in the appearance of the artists—the baggy jeans and sometimes with bare chest, gestures, insults and noisy nature of the music.

⁴ "Kasa hare" means hurried speaking in Twi, which is the lingua franca in Ghana.

including political, cultural, economic and gendered. It follows that in the case of Africa, social actors have appropriated music with variety of interests (Nyamnjoh and Fokwang, 2005, p. 251). This information agrees with the study's use of Ghanaian popular music as socio-political commentary's second category: Music that are appropriated and applied to the circumstances of the country. One of Barima's song *Scent Noo* for instance generated a lot of socio-political commentary that people in government referred to as "honourables" got angry because the song teased an honourable 'Apɔfee' whose smelly socks is so bad that all children in the neighborhood have to move far away when he comes back from work and takes it off.⁵ During the 2004 electioneering campaign for Ghana however, one of the major parties at the time, The New Patriotic Party, sought permission from Barima Sidney and appropriated the song for their campaign convincing the citizens that the "Bad economic scent" has filled the country and it is suffocating them. The solution to that problem was to accept and vote the "Good Kuffour scent" which will erase the suffering that the "Bad economic scent" has caused. The message went down well with the citizens and the appropriation of *Scent Noo* was one of the major promoters that brought victory to the NPP in the 2004 elections.

Banning, repression and significant contestations about music are found in both the past and present African societies. There are numerous cases according to Avorgbedor (2009), and it is therefore, very appropriate to conceptualise these traditions, social criticism and censorship efforts as important everyday cultural practices in African societies. This essay helps the reader to understand the perception of music in Africa in relation to the thesis, as some of the hiplife songs went through some or all of the above mentioned challenges. An example of one such is Barima's *Donkomi*, which was eventually censored in 2013 after

⁵ Honourable "Apɔfee" is one of the nicknames Barima gives in the song texts of his music "Scenti Noo"

its reinterpretation by the “Informer newspaper” that, it merited his arrest and imprisonment because of the song texts and symbols it contained. Although Barima had a different view of the song, the National Security also understood it from the newspaper’s point of view hence, the banning of the song.

Damilola (2011) writes about Afro-Beat musician Fela Anikulapo-Kuti and his role as a political activist who spearheaded the use of music in the discussion and promotion of social and political issues in Nigeria. Although his work is set in Nigeria, it provides adequate information on the relationship between music and socio-political commentary and the part that musicians play. In the case of this study however, the music being used is not the Afro-Beat as in Nigeria’s case but hiplife in Ghana and the impact of its song texts. *Africa Monie* which Barima Sidney released in the latter part of 2007 with socio-political commentary on African leaders and their misuse of money as its main theme picked up in 2008 and crossed the boundaries of Ghana to other African countries. This commentary in the song became a tool for opposition parties in these countries to bring about political change to their advantage. For instance Ama Larbie, in her report states, “Ghanaian Hiplife-controversial musician, Barima Sidney’s song, *Africa Monie* appears to be exhibiting some good-luck magic as it has contributed to formerly opposition parties, who used the song during its presidential election campaigns, to overthrow its country’s ruling governments. Now ruling parties who used *Africa Monie* as one of its campaign songs include Ghana’s National Democratic Congress; Burkina Faso’s Congress for Democracy and Progress; Equatorial Guinea’s Democratic Party; Côte d’Ivoire’s Rally of the Republicans formed in 1999 and just recently, Nigeria’s All Progressives Congress.”⁶

⁶ This report was posted on April, 8, 2015 by Ama Larbie, an E News reporter)

The origin of hip-hop lies in its use as a tool of both self-expression and self-definition as noted by hip-hop artist Chuck D who famously referred to hip-hop as the Black CNN. This means that, one gets information on what is going on in the inner city and Black communities by simply listening to the hip-hop music coming from those communities. There is ample commentary on the conditions of the urban poor and criticisms of government policies found within the hip-hop of the ghetto (Clark, 2012, p, 24). This article provides vital information on hip-hop in Ghana and Tanzania, and is relevant to this paper because, it was from that musical genre that hiplife was created. Though it is also a potent voice of expression for the youth in Ghana, the difference in purpose for Ghana's case is that hip-hop in Ghana has been re-contextualised, moving from black oppression to generational identity.⁷ Hip-hop blending with highlife was therefore a genre created to distinguish music of the youth from that of the older generation. This thesis also looks into five songs of an individual hiplife artiste, both from the viewpoints of the composer-performer and within sampled public perception.

Osumare (2012) captures the thoughts of some current hiplife artistes. She takes us through a number of reworking processes that hiplife has gone through and how it keeps evolving as: [1] Strictly hip-hop rhythm with local dialect; [2] Hip-hop mixed with local beats and local dialect; [3] Extremely traditional lyrics with it, which is highlife by production and instrumentation, with Twi or any other local dialect; [4] English on local beat; and [5] Gradually going back to the hip-pop beat with a fusion of hip-hop English language and minor Twi. According to Osumare (2012), the first phase represents the

⁷ An interview with Prof. E. J. Collins on May 19, 2015 led to this information

transition from the imitation phase into the adaptation phase of hip-hop turning into hiplife's first generation but the third phase is the "indigenising phase" that solidified hiplife as a separate genre of music from hip-hop. As the music continually evolves, the current third generation of hiplife musicians are recapturing some of the original "flava" as new splinter genres known as GH Rap and Afro-Pop (Osumare 2012, pp. 34-35).⁸ The book gives information that builds up on Collins' (2005) history of hiplife. However, instead of seeking thoughts of several hiplife artistes like the book, the research concentrates on a single hiplife artiste's life in relation to his music, and its song texts' contribution to socio-political commentaries.

2.1.1 Music and Socio-Political Commentary

Music used for socio-political commentary includes social critiques, which deal with exposing issues, and informing the public about them. It then follows by calling upon the public's sense of justice and pushing them towards action. Street et al. (2007) in the essay *Playing to the Crowd*, posits that most acts of political participation are directed towards persons who are in authority, and are able to influence decisions. Also, art and culture assume meanings that are not confined to their place in some pre-designated order. Accompanying the separation is the emergence of the cultural critic and its associated media to give voice to these meanings (Habermas, 1992, p. 41-43).

Habermas (1992) continues illustrating this shift by making reference to music. Until the 18th Century, Habermas argues that, music served to enhance the sanctity and dignity to

⁸In the development of hiplife, the first phase of is the era of Reggie Rockstone, which was the beginning; the second phase represents the first generation of hiplife; the third phase exemplifies the second generation of hiplife and the fifth phase symbolizes the current third generation of hiplife.

worship, the glamour of the festivities at court, and the overall splendor of ceremony. Musicians worked to commission and serve their patrons. This changed with the emergence of public concert societies; music was no longer tied to a purpose. For the first time, Habermas (1992) writes, an audience gathered to listen to music as such, a public of music lovers to which anyone who was propertied and educated could be admitted. Consequently, people became free to judge what they heard and to participate in discussion of its meanings and values (Street et al 2007: 4).

This point by Habermas (1992) reflects Art for life's sake which Basil Davidson (1969, p. 160-163) explains as examining art in totality of a culture, instead of examining each part in isolation from the whole. These arts he claims were not art for life's sake only but also art for pleasure's sake. In addition, music that falls under the art for life's sake category may also refer to 'Gebrausmusik' (Brown 2009). Barima Sidney's music has these two characteristics:

- i. It is functional; made for specific, identifiable purpose like his song *Scent Noo* which is an education on the environment and personal hygiene.
- ii. It is for pleasure's sake; one can listen to this same *Scent Noo* and enjoy it because of the twist of comic relief it possesses.

'Gebrausmusik' is a term used by the Germans, essentially meaning utility music, for music that exists not only for its own sake, but which was composed for some specific identifiable purpose. Stephen Hinton in 'The Oxford Dictionary of Music and Musicians' defines Gebrausmusik as a "term applied in the 1920s to works which were directed to some social or educational purpose instead of being art for art's sake. Examples of

Gebrausmusik include compositions for film and radio, and pedagogic music for children.

Gebrausmusik can be used in a particular historical event, like a political rally or a military ceremony, or it can be more general, as with music written to accompany dance, or music written for amateurs or students to perform. On the other hand, art for art's sake is music that is appreciated free of bias, self-interest and impartially or better still with disinterested pleasure where one attends an art form not for any personal interests but for what is perceived, not allowing one's perception and expectations to affect the judgment of an item-in this case music. This gives music the attribute of a double-edged sword, which can cut from both sides and still yield the needed result for each side.

Furthermore, Street et al. (2007) state that, many of the studies from the former Soviet block argue that music and musicians were instrumental in giving expression to resistance and even organising opposition to the regime (Wicke, 1992; Ramet, 1994; Cushman, 1995; Sheeran, 2001; Szemere, 2001; Steinberg, 2004; Urban, 2004). Writers tend to draw attention to the fact that particular music and sentiments contained in, is associated with political causes and movements.

In his study of music's relationship to the civil rights movement in the U.S., Brian Ward (1998, 6) explains, that the music offers a glimpse into the state of black consciousness and the struggle for freedom and equality at a given moment. The alternative approach is to present music as the cause of political participation. Sabrina Petra Ramet (1994, 1), for instance, opens her edited collection on music in the Soviet bloc with the claim that music

is an unexpectedly powerful force for social and political change. She goes on to say that: Music brings people together and evokes for them collective emotional experience to which common meanings are assigned.

Additionally, Goehr (1994) records Hanns Eisler, as the first Hollywood artiste to be charged for being part of the Communist conspiracy in infiltrating the motion-picture industry through his music.⁹ He was found guilty and deported the second time; the first time being ten years earlier in Germany. Eisler studied composition with Arnold Schoenberg in Berlin and collaborated with Bertolt Brecht. He wrote scores for numerous films and documentaries in Europe and America for example Brecht's 'Hangmen Also Die' and Steinbeck's 'Forgotten Village.' Goehr (1994) further explains that, Eisler certified two political reasons: the liberation of those at the grassroots and the battle against dictatorship, and richly wrote on music and politics. Being in agreement with the Marxists, he sought to improve a political musical language which he believed had become apolitical. Eisler in adopting Schoenberg's compositions as his model adapted it because he alleged that Schoenberg's compositions encouraged modern music to become even more isolated, overspecialised, and highbrow.

Goehr (1994) goes on to explain that,

“Modern composers are of the opinion that absolute music, music without words, cannot express anything definite at all and certainly nothing about the urgent

⁹ This was the US Mc Carthy era where he agreed enthusiastically with Edmund Walsh, a fellow of Roman Catholic and anti-communist who suggested a crusade against so-called communist subversives. Mc Carthy took advantage of the nation's wave of fanatic terror against communism. This panic arising from the witch hunts and fear of communism became known as Mc Carthyism (<http://www.coldwar.org/articles/50s/senatorjosephmccarthy.asp>)

issues of our day. They think the purpose of music is only to be found in music itself. Music for music sake but they are wrong. A music which loses its sense of community loses itself: music is composed for the people by the people.”

Eisler's idea was to abolish the reigning bourgeois and fetishistic view of music, and to replace it with a view of music as inseparable from politics.¹⁰ Consequently, the concept of art-for-art's sake and art-for-life's sake is reiterated in the above research by Goehr (1994) on Eisler's idea, hence making it an important concept when it comes to music.

Mark Mattern (1998) offers a more systematic attempt to connect music to political action. He does this by highlighting the different uses to which music may be put in the organisation of political action. Three modes are identified: deliberative, pragmatic and confrontational. These represent contrasting forms of political action, for which music is used.

- ❖ The deliberative use refers to the way music allows for debating collective identity,
- ❖ The pragmatic use refers to the place of music in promoting a set of interests;
- ❖ Confrontational use refers to music's application to a situation in which communication opposes each other (Mattern, 1998, 25-32).

Neuman (2008) writes that, Joe Hill in 1904 took American popular tunes, modified their lyrics to convey a political message often through humor and irony, and went to the streets to reach and recruit new members for the Industrial Workers of the World, also known as

¹⁰ Fetishism was coined in the late 1800s. It originated from the Portuguese word "feticio" which means "obsessive fascination." (<http://www.psychologytoday.com/conditions/fetishism>)

the “Wobblies.” He believed music had an intrinsic power to propagate. Unlike a political pamphlet, it was entertaining. Unlike a stirring speech, its echo could last beyond the origin-point of the pulpit. Unlike a manifesto, it could be memorised, repeated and disseminated. The power of song will exalt the spirit of rebellion.” Hill claimed:

*A pamphlet, no matter how good
Is read but once, but a song is
Learned by heart and repeated over and over
And I maintain that if a person
Can put a few common sense facts in a song,
And dress them up in a cloak of humor
To take the dryness off of them
He will succeed in reaching
A great number of workers who are too
Unintelligent or too indifferent to read
Pamphlet or an editorial on economic science
(Neuman 2008: 2)*

Neuman (2008) continues that, in circumstances of complete repression and surveillance as in the case of slavery, the one activity that plantation owners allowed, and even actively encouraged, was singing. From the perspective of the master singing was a sign of the slave’s contentedness. Music served as an acceptable medium between the dangerous presence of verbal communication and the paranoia inspired by loud silence. Slaves are generally expected to sing as well as to work, wrote Frederick Douglas. Masters or overseers do not like a silent slave. Make a noise, make a noise, are the words usually addressed to the slaves when there is silence among them.” From the perspective of the slave, Neuman (2008) further explains that, singing became a rare vehicle for safe expression, a veneer of obedience that marked deeper politics. Singing appeared to provide a double level of compliance. It is not just that slaves were singing as requested, but that they were singing the spiritual, a West-African musical form bolted onto the Judeo-Christian message. In signifying conversion to Christianity, the slave appeared to mark a dutiful obedience to their master, a form of compliance that initially caused

disappointment among traditional progressive activists such as Charles Seeger, who viewed these songs as anti-political and expressing a false consciousness, marking a belief among slaves that they would endure their lot in life to get their pie in the sky when they die.

In Neuman's view, such was precisely the point and the power of a form of political engagement that worked through metaphor and double entendre, what Lawrence Levine calls, techniques of indirection. The point was to communicate compliance to the dominant society while communicating defiance to another. Precisely because music appeared to be such an innocent form of entertainment, it became an ideal vehicle of resistance. Metaphor and double-entendre were deployed to speak just beneath the surface of dominant discourse. The minstrel show used the technique of indirection. Though minstrelsy was a completely bigoted form of entertainment meant to depict African Americans as simple buffoons, it was a subversive form for African American performers, who were now performing in a public forum for the first time. The songs directed grievances against the master class but did so through the veneer of a false nostalgia, nostalgia that dominant society was more than willing to accept at face value.

Neuman (2008) goes on to make the point that, one of the minstrelsy song *Blue Tail Fly* which is still being taught to and sung by children today, for instance, seems to be about the bygone days with a servant's master, but is actually about the happiness he felt over his master's death, or death of slavery. This is how it goes:

*When I was young I used to wait
On master and hand him his plate*

*Pass him the bottle when he got dry
And brush away the blue-tail fly...*

*Now he lies beneath the simmon tree
His epitaph is there to see
Beneath the stone I'm forced to lie
The victim of the blue-tail fly"*

Though mainstream society accepted these skits as slapstick, African American performers viewed them as: outlets for a quite different complex of emotions. Just as slaves found that they could easily articulate their longing for freedom by projecting it into the future world thus legitimising it through spirituals, so their descendants living in the repressive atmosphere of the turn-of-the-century south could most safely vent their complaints against whites and social system by projecting them back into the past and giving them the appearance of nostalgia and not protest. They were able to utilise the commonplace of the minstrel idiom to criticise parody, and sharply comment on their society and their situation (Neuman 2008:10-11).

The American blues was the first satirical song form in the English language-mounted on cadences that have now seduced the world. It is heartening to realise that both style and the inner content of this new genre are bold symbols of an independent and irrepressible culture (Alan Lomax, June, 1992). The blues was born behind a mule-this was a statement by Muddy Waters, a great Mississippi Delta bluesman, and quoted in the fourth paragraph of McGovern's introductory essay on *The Blues and Gospel Music*. He details that Blues and Gospel music originated in the oppressive experiences of African Americans in the post-emancipation south.

When the United States Congress ended Reconstruction in 1877, the political gains and civic protections African Americans had gained after the Civil War were suppressed, and millions of blacks were economically and politically disenfranchised. The daily humiliation of racist Jim Crow laws and the constant threat of violence made life difficult and often dangerous. But rural or urban, African American wrought their lives in music that stemmed from their daily experiences-Mc Govern (*The Blues and Gospel Music*).

The discrimination and the freedom taken away from the African Americans just because they were colored exposed the ethnocentrism of the whites. They judged the African Americans as primitive and barbaric and saw their culture superior to them; thus treating them as lesser human. The irony of this is that, these whites were doing everything to draw these African American slaves into Christianity which teaches that all men are equal because they were created in the image and likeness of God. It also encourages all to love their neighbour as themselves.

McGovern (*The Blues and Gospel Music*) examines Blues music as having characteristic features of musical tones that differed from the Western diatonic scale. The “Blues” notes fall between the intervals of the scale, microtones, and flatten the pitch of conventional music, creating powerful tensions and resolutions. The Blues also feature heavily accented and often syncopated beat. Simple Blues form follow an AAB structure over twelve bars; a form that has become the bedrock of Jazz, Pop, Country, and Rock and Roll over the years. In Southern plantations, lumber camps, prisons, and fields, Black work songs, field hollers, chants and ballads all combined to shape a unique new music with strong ties to African antecedents (McGovern’s *The Blues and Gospel Music*).

These strong ties that the writer talks about is an African thing where music is primarily made for specific purposes as I explained earlier stemming from Habermas' observation, is "utility music," music that exists not only for its own sake, but which was composed for some specific, identifiable purpose. This purpose can be found in the African life cycle right from birth. For instance, songs that put babies or children to sleep; work songs; songs for uniting people in a nation; initiation of girls into adulthood; war songs; and through to the death where dirges are sang to honour and also communicate to the dead person who is believed to be moving to another life or world.¹¹

McGovern underscores that Blues songs first emerged in the Mississippi Delta, the Piedmont Southeast, Texas and Appalachia, around the turn of the twentieth century. Among the most powerful resources that sustained African Americans through adversity and difficulty was strong religious faith. The sorrow songs sung in slave times gave birth to religious songs known as Spirituals. After emancipation, Black religious music-dignified, respectable, and powerful galvanised audiences around the world thanks to the touring of the Fisk University Jubilee Singers in the late nineteenth century-McGovern (*The Blues and Gospel Music*).

In the nineteen thirties, McGovern describes Thomas Dorsey as the one who married a blues sensibility to religious themes, and this pioneering style became known as Gospel music. With such collaborators as Sallie Martin, Willie Mac Ford Smith and Mahalia Jackson, the sounds of Gospel resonated in black churches throughout the United States.

¹¹ The African life cycle songs include lullabies which are sang at birth to put a child to sleep; work songs meant to release stress, uniting people in the nation which can be termed as patriotic songs or Gebrauschmusik, initiation of girls into adulthood e.g., *bragoro* and *dipo* songs and war songs known as *Asafo* songs.

Women found a prominence and influence in gospel as singers, choir leaders, and composers that gave them a say equal to the male preachers who dominated black churches. Gospel gave black women a public prominence in church that they seldom enjoyed elsewhere in black America. Music offered freedom to those who pursued it-the promise of freedom and money (McGovern's *The Blues and Gospel Music*).¹²

Over the twentieth century, McGovern stresses that Gospel and Blues gained acceptance around the world. The revivals of the 1950s and 60s introduced new audiences to the work of forgotten musicians from decades earlier. Since then, scholars, fans and audiences have engaged in a permanent revival, with continuing round of festivals, new film, radio, and recording projects to preserve the music of the past and document current practice for the future. And while newer styles emerge and hold commercial interest for a time, Blues and Gospel remain the bedrock of Black music. Anchoring the sounds of African America, Blues and Gospel music styles underlay the musical innovations of the century: Jazz, Rhythm and Blues, Rock, Soul and Hip-Hop- McGovern (*The Blues and Gospel Music*).

Avorgbedor (2009) in his review of *Popular Music Censorship* in Africa characterises his view on the rap group 2 Live Crew and their controversial hit recording "*As Nasty as They Wanna Be*" as one which may well earn a signal place in the history of First Amendment rights. But just as important, is how these lyrics will be interpreted and by whom. He details that for centuries, African-Americans have been forced to develop coded ways of communicating to protect them from danger. He points out that allegories and double

¹² Thomas Dorsey was a Blues pianist nick named 'Georgia Tom' because he came from Georgia. He is known as the father of Black Gospel Music. See www.southernmusic.net/thomasdorsey.htm

meanings, words redefined to mean their opposites, even new words have enabled blacks to share messages only the initiated understood.¹³ 2 Live Crew must be interpreted in the context of Black culture generally, where those who want to understand must become literate in the vernacular traditions of African-Americans. To do less is to censor through the equivalent of intellectual prior restraint-and censorship is to art what lynching is to justice.

From Avorgbedor's perspective, Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s piece titled "2 Live Crew Decoded," highlights double entendre, irony, social criticism, etc.; these features are central to African performance traditions and as documented by Gates in his 1998 book, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Criticism*.¹⁴ His sub-title, *Recoding the Decoded* is thus a re-signification and, at the same time, an indirect acknowledgment of the everyday cultural practice paradigm and which is reinterpreted by Gates in the African-American context (Avorgbedor, 2009).

Without delving into the ontological, transferred and historical relationships between African and African American performance strategies and their social repercussions, critical readers would want to challenge themselves double by asking why, in the case reported by Chirambo below, the decoding led to a ban, an outcome quite different from that of the 2 Live Crew: Some musicians, despite the tough censorship laws and practices,

¹³ These words redefined to mean their opposites like 'bad' meaning 'good' for instance are all forms of linguistic oppositions or inversions

¹⁴ Both "signifying monkey" and the "dirty dozens" are closely related African-derived verbal traditions involving trading of veiled and direct insults (including insulting families and these are known as "Yo Mama"), tests of verbal skills, including elements of humor and irony. See for example "Dozens", pp. 435-438 of *African American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Jan Harold Brunvald (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1996)

resisted and tried to elude censorship to subvert Banda's political establishment. These musicians interrogated and derogated Banda's dictatorship with varying degrees of success. Some of the criticism was decoded and the songs banned (Chirambo, p. 109)

As shown by Avorgbedor (2009), a deeper examination of the socio-cultural framework, both in Malawi and other African countries will show a web of interrelated layers and legacies of judicial processes, political ambition and related manipulative strategies and musical inventiveness. The double meanings, in Gates above, for example, is a critical resource which performers and general oratorical contexts manipulate to serve several, and sometimes contrastive ends, including significant interpersonal and social violence and cleavages.

Even so, a careful study of performers' lives, their social environments and web of relations would demonstrate the highly illusive nature of double entendre and which often creates situations of ambiguity, an important challenge in dealing with censorship and related court cases. For example, the notions of social commentary, social criticism, satire, etc. are highly desirable and hence potent qualifiers in music and dance performance settings in Africa. He adds that, the examples identified in popular music should thus be understood from this basic but indispensable premise (Avorgbedor 2009).

There are numerous cases, past and present in African societies of banning, repression, and significant contestations about music and dance. It is, therefore, very appropriate to conceptualise these traditions, social criticism and censorship efforts as important,

everyday cultural practices in African societies. Eloquent examples include those documented in Deng (1971, 1973); parallel traditions are found all over the African continent-Avorgbedor (2009). An example of a recent song, which happens to be one of the selected songs for this project that has suffered censorship, is Barima Sidney's *Donkomi* (2014).

Avorgbedor (2009) believes that an extended socio-cultural foundation is necessary for understanding offhanded remarks on musicians' common employment of indirection and double entendre in relation to criticism. Here are some instances:

- i. While primarily performing gospel music, some of Wambali Mkandawire songs make social-political comments on events in Malawi. In his songs, sung at a time of extreme repression and censorship, he relies more on innuendo than overt criticism. The song employs oral traditional materials and deliberate ambiguity to contest the government's story. Some musicians, like poets, for example, adopted ambiguity to criticise Banda. They hoped to avoid detection and detention in that way. The use of ambiguity and innuendo shows how difficult it was to compose songs in Malawi that were overtly critical of Banda (Chirambo, pp. 118-121).
- ii. However Collins, (2005, p. 178) states, it should be noted that the songs that were critical of Nkrumah and his CPP government were not usually in the form of direct political protest but were rather oblique, disguised or wrapped up in some way as a parable, proverb or allusion"

- iii. Taarab poetry revels in double entendre and metaphoric meanings; indeed, this is one of its defining characteristics.¹⁵ Like songs in local languages, then, Taarab songs could contain potentially subversive elements. But if a song's meaning was well hidden, it could pass censorial review without much trouble (Kelly Askew and John Kitime, p. 149-150).

2.1.2 Popular Music and Censorship

One cannot talk about music in any part of Africa without talking about censorship. The evidence presented in *Popular Music Censorship in Africa* suggests that there are five main areas in which particular characteristics can be identified within music censorship in Africa. These are:

- Censorship and resistance in colonial times;
- Censorship in post-colonial times;
- The relative importance of overtly political censorship including the role of praise songs;
- The role of broadcasting;
- Particular differences with western norms

These areas should not, of course, be seen as discrete but rather as overlapping with, and sometimes reinforcing one another. Collins shows how music, along with religion and the controlling of depictions of sex, was used by the British imperial power in Ghana as part of the colonisation process. In colonial censorship, liberation struggles are cultural as well as political (Cabral 1979, 1982, Fanon, 1970, Flulo 2004: 175). In the case of music, once

¹⁵ The word Taarab is of Arabic derivation and contains multi-layered meaning. Glibert Rouget in *Music and Trance* explains Taarab comes from the verb "tariba" which means "to be agitated" ... also signifies "to excite, to want to move," and hence "to sing, to make music." See Fargion Janet Topp, *Taarab Music in the Twentieth century: A Story of 'Old is Gold' and Flying Spirits*. London: Ashgate, 2014.

resistance was articulated in song, attempts were made by the colonial power to censor those songs.

This is shown in cases such as Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe and has been well documented in the case of liberation struggle in Africa (Drewett 2003, 2004a, 2004b). To a certain extent, this is what Cloonan has previously referred to as censorial climate linked to current events where music is more likely to be censored in times of political turmoil (Cloonan 1996: 115). It should also be noted that, as Collins shows in the case of Ghana, traditional indigenous values could be simultaneously part of the liberation struggle and a source of call for censorship.

In his work on "Ghanaian Highlife," Collins has pointed out that "high-life songs are often overtly political" in offering "adverse commentary on government." Both Sjaak Van der Geest and N. K. Asante-Darko agree with Collins but observe that, in addition to airing criticism and anger against political conditions without significantly altering them, highlife songs can be used to unite the oppressed population and "undermine the prestige and power" of the rulers. African governments equate their vision and well-being with that of the people, and they guard this leadership right so effectively and so jealously that they tend to exclude creative artistes from being shareholders in creating and fashioning a common vision of state for all. Governments in Africa tend to ignore or deny the role of the artiste as an arbiter of public opinion or as an intermediary between the ruler and the ruled. In practice, however, there always has been an intimate integration of the artist's vision and the concerns of the society in creative forms such as the highlife (Collins 1996).

Down below the seams of socio-cultural and political life, the highlife artiste and his people have always maintained an abiding faith in each other; hence, the persistent phenomenon in Ghanaian society of the public attributing "a secret political meaning to a song which is already popular for another reason" (Van der Geest and Asante-Darko, 1982). Where such a political dimension is particularly intended by the composer, it is quickly shared by the larger public, and this is true whether the song praises, supports, or criticises a given political situation or regime. The period of anti-colonial struggle in Ghana, for example, was dominated by a fierce cultural pride and an intense nationalism.

2.1.3 The Fusion of Music and Politics in Ghana

The fusion of popular music and politics can be traced as far back to the independence struggle, which brought into being the profound interplay of music and politics, as musicians and artists in the entertainment industry, joined forces and through their influence, helped make the independence of Ghana a reality. Since the struggle for Ghana's independence, music has been used for promoting specific political parties and for criticising the activities of the government in power.

Such music can be seen from three basic angles for the purpose of this study:

- a. Music composed under commission by political parties,
- b. Music that musicians themselves make about the socio-political issues which catches on with the people;

- c. Music that is originally not political but become appropriate for that cause based on the multiple meanings ascribed by public to it in relation to the turn of events in the country.

These songs cut across the various musical genres including Highlife, Hiplife, Hip-hop, Rap, Dancehall and Reggae just to mention a few.

Collins postulates that Ghana's independence saw popular music of the masses drawn into the struggle. Certain Ghanaian popular musicians openly supported Nkrumah's CPP by indigenising their performances and recordings in a self-conscious ideological way; in line with the African Personality and Pan-African ideals of the independence ethos. E. K. Nyame was one such musician whose motives were partly political for as he puts it, he wanted to get away from the colonial ideology and British mind. Indeed he wrote forty highlife songs in support of Nkrumah and accompanied Prime Minister Nkrumah on a state visit to Liberia in 1953 (Collins 2005).

Other highlife guitar bands that supported Nkrumah were those of Kwaa Mensah, I. E. Mason, the Fante Stars, Onyina, Bob Cole and Squire Addo, whilst Onyina, wrote his famous song *Destiny of Africa* to celebrate the Organisation of African Union, now African Union conference held in Accra in 1958. Moreover, the 1950s neo-traditional Oge music of Ga people and the Borborbor of the Ewes became identified with Nkrumah's Convention People's Party. The Tempos Highlife dance-band of E. T. Mensah played at CPP rallies.

Collins writes that Nkrumah supported the local popular music and entertainment sector in return for their support for him and the CPP during the independence struggle. This was followed in the 1960s with the introduction of Western Pop music and in particular African American Soul music and its associated Afro-centric fashions that triggered an Africanisation of imported Western Pop music in Ghana and Nigeria: leading to Afro-Soul, Afro-Beat and Afro-Rock.

The general collapse of the Ghanaian economy began toward the end of the 1960s through the 1970s with the Akyeampong/Akuffo military regimes. This was followed by a period of political instability (two military coups by J. J. Rawlings in 1979 and 1981, a two-and-a-half year night curfew (1982-4) and the imposition of luxury taxes of 160% on imported musical instruments. As a result of this, politico-economic interregnum the music industry slumped, live bands collapsed, and Ghanaian artistes left the country in droves (Collins 2005).

The observation drawn from this dark times of music and politics was due to the fact that the two are intertwined and therefore a malfunction was caused in the structure as they were not properly synchronised; the end result being the political unrest and musicians leaving the country as they could not afford musical instruments that helped them play live music.

However, new forms of popular music evolved to fill the vacuum during this time of popular music development in Ghana. These include local gospel music which operates

within the untaxed spaces of the churches, techno pop music styles like burger highlife and hiplife that are cheap to produce as their drum-machines and synthesisers cut down on large personnel of old-time highlife bands, and a proliferation of folkloric and neo traditional groups related to the growth of foreign tourism and an international interest in African and world music (Collins, 2005, p. 18-19).

Hiplife in Collin's view is a Ghanaian vernacular language form of rap that has its origins in Jamaican Ragga and particularly American Hip-hop. Both were popular in Ghana in the early 1990s and by the mid-1990s, Ghanaians began to Rap in local languages, the most important pioneer of this being British born Reggie Rockstone, who actually coined the name Hiplife in 1995 by fusing the words Hip-hop and Highlife. Other 'Hiplifers' who rapped over American Hip-hop rhythms in local languages particularly Akan and Ga were Nananom, Lord Kenya, Akatakyie, and Buk Bak. Some hiplifers like Madfish, Batman, Yoggy Doggy and Bandana concentrated on the West Indian Dancehall Ragga style of Rap (Collins 2005).

At first, the musical background of hiplifers was largely imported Hip-hop and Ragga drum-box beats, but in recent years some artistes have been rapping over Highlife, or crossing between the two genres, sometimes singing in a Highlife style and sometimes rapping. A striking feature of Hiplife is its lack of women rappers. An early exception was Jyoti Chandler who was a member of Nananom with Omanhene Pozoh and Sidney but she then married a pastor and moved onto gospel music. Currently, there are only three female Rap artistes: Abrewa Nana, Tripple M and Mzbel. This observation by Collins on the women rappers has still not changed in any significant way.

Collins conjectures that many of the older Ghanaian generation complained that Hiplife lyrics were too hurried to be deciphered, are of the violent African American gangsta-rap variety, or contain sexually explicit and misogynist lyrics. Some examples condemned in newspaper reports for promoting lewdness and teenage promiscuity include Batman's *Linda*, Kaakyire Kwame Appiah's *Nketewa Dɔ*, Lord Kenya's *Bɔkɔbɔkɔ* and Obour's *Konkontibaa*. Examples of misogyny are Sidney's *Abuskeleke* which made fun of the latest female fashion of bearing the mid-riffs at that time, Nana Nsiah's rap on the topic of women being sexually attracted to a policeman's abaa or baton and Tic Tac's *Philomena* which criticised the current imported female fashion of allowing the genitals and under-arm hair to grow at the time.¹⁶

Moreover, not only did the local newspaper commentaries accuse hiplife of being lewd and profane, but in 2002, the Director of the International Federation of Women lawyers, FIDA stated that some hiplife lyrics debase femininity and the bodies of women and constitute violence against women on the airwaves. As a result, FIDA threatened high court actions against some radio stations and disk jockeys. Furthermore, both FIDA and the Musician Union of Ghana, MUSIGA, asked the Ministry of Information and the Ghana Media Commission to closely monitor the local FM stations for indecent lyrics.

Collins further enlightens us about a journalist by name William Asiedu who commented that, hiplife songs, which are banned or come under fire for spawning immorality amongst the youth, become instant hits and chart busters. Not that all these criticisms by the older generation of hiplife make it more commercially popular, as this journalist Asiedu rightly

¹⁶ The appropriation of the word *Abuskeleke* to mean the provocative dressing of girls to attract guys landed some girls into trouble at the funeral celebration of Ricci Ossei, Reggie Rockstone's father at Kaneshie Sports Stadium in 2004. About 60 guys were arrested for raping some girls at the program. When asked about why the act, their defense was that the girls were dressed in "Abuskeleke way."

says, but it is precisely what the hiplife musicians and fans like, for these controversial lyrics puts a distance between themselves and the older generation and their music (Collins 2005).

The song *Donkomi* (2014) by Barima Sidney, which is part of the songs being analysed in this work, was banned after the Bureau of National Investigation and National Security analysed the video clip. The verdict to this censorship of the song was that he used the image and voice of the President without his consent. However, due to the technology age we find ourselves in, the song somehow got to YouTube and according to Barima it has caught on like wildfire since he keeps receiving WhatsApp messages from friends both inland and abroad with the banned video, asking him how they could get the audio version of it.¹⁷

Quite a different area of controversy as recorded by Collins resulted from Nkasei's song *Ye firi Tuobodom* which annoyed the people and traditional authorities of this Akan farming town in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana as the song was appropriated to mean that they are a backward and bush people. The song created a huge fuss in the newspapers for insulting the people of this town that the Brong Ahafo Chiefs wanted it banned from the airwaves and MUSIGA had to apologise to them.

The twist to this particular story is that, the town Tuobodom and its environs was brought into the limelight because of this song as it had a mix up about the name of the town's

¹⁷The information in this paragraph is based on an interview with Barima on May 23, 2015.

capital, causing people to start giving attention to it by paying visits to the place out of curiosity which hitherto was nonexistent.

Collins (2005) resolves the issue by challenging that hiplife not only includes negative type lyrics condemned by the press, the older generation, traditional chiefs, and Ghanaian establishment figures. Many hiplife lyrics, as observed by Collins, also dwell on positive topics. Some warn against promiscuity. For example, Mighazy and Sabato's *Sugar Daddy* warns young girls to beware of older men who lure them into sex, while the Timber and Virux groups rap on the AIDS epidemic.

Other songs on social matters talk about morals. Like Buk Bak's *Tankase* (Town Council) praising the local town council's campaign to clean up urban filth, Don King's 2003 song *Kotofa* supporting government's campaign against indiscipline and Obour's *Menwu Biom* on road safety. There are also a few political hiplife songs: such as the Native Funk Lords' humorous *Vote for Me Make I Chop President* made during the 2000 elections, *Freedom of Speech* by A-Plus and Barima Sidney's song *Scenti Noo* that even an honourable sweat and smell.

Collins (2005) believe that hiplife with its outspoken lyrics, electronic instrumentation, solo artiste and video clip format has become an identity symbol for the present generation of Ghanaian city youth as during Ghana's 1970/80s military era. The live popular music-scene collapsed for a decade and the teaching of music was demoted from the school syllabus. Also, hiplifers were thus neither exposed nor trained to play live popular band

instruments. Indeed, without the easy-to-produce and perform electronic music of hiplife, the urban Ghanaian youth today would not even have their own special musical idiom. Even though the older generation was not so comfortable with it, Collins argues that, hiplife has provided a voice for the youth.

As Collins (2005) gives a historical background to hiplife in Ghana, Osumare (2012) also reports that media support of the new hiplife sound was sparse because it was initially viewed as a poor imitation at best and a foreign invasion at worse. In addition, hiplife came to the public's attention during the time of martial law under the second Rawlings regime, with its street curfew that was enforced from 6:00 p. m. to 6:00 a. m. Therefore, there was increased pressure on media to showcase all Ghanaian music, because live shows were at a premium. GTV was one of the few television stations in the early 1990s, because many of the channels broadcasting out of Nigeria and South Africa today had not yet established themselves in Ghana. Early pop-formatted radio stations like Vibe-FM and shows such as B. B. Menson's "The Night Train" on Radio Gold, began functioning during the mid-1990s, and would occasionally take a chance with the new hiplife sound (Osumare, 2012, p. 21).

CHAPTER THREE

BIOGRAPHY AND MUSICAL LIFE OF BARIMA SIDNEY

3.1 Early Life and Education

Barima Sidney was born to Miss Gladys Kwarteng and Daniel Owusu Ofori on the 3rd of June 1977 at Dzorwolu, a suburb of Greater Accra. He was born as the second child to his mother and father and has half siblings from his father's side; he is however the last born on both sides. He spent his formative years schooling, starting from Buckman Early Childhood Centre at Tesano, to New Royal International School, Darkuman, where he had his primary education. He wrote the Common Entrance Examination, passed and proceeded to Harvard College, Kokomlemle. Barima was in form three when the Ghana Education Service introduced the new educational system, which came to replace the Ordinary Level and Advance Level education to Junior Secondary School and Senior Secondary School. This made his mother move him from Harvard to Awudome Four Junior, where he wrote the Basic Education Certificate Examination and got admitted to St. Augustine's College.

He stayed there only two weeks because the course of his choice, which was Science, was not offered to him. He therefore moved to West Africa Senior Secondary School, where they offered him Science. As the Class Assistant Prefect, he was given a new designation as the Entertainment Prefect when the last set of students of the old educational system was completing their term. According to him, he was the first Science student to be given the position of an Entertainment Prefect. He also attended the Institute of Professional

Studies, now University of Professional Studies, where he pursued a Diploma in Business Studies, marketing, social option.

For the past eleven years Barima Sidney has contributed to the Ghanaian music industry with his songs on socio-political issues and has performed on various platforms both in Ghana and abroad. The documentation concerning his life and musical career has barely been documented however. This chapter thus discusses the biography of Barima Sidney including his educational background, music career, challenges and contributions to the music industry. The chapter further discusses Sidney's experience with the musical group called Nananom. This is important because the group served as a stepping-stone for Barima Sidney to eventually step out as a solo performer.

3.2 Life as an Amateur Musician

Barima's grandfather, Osei Kwame was the second musician to have recorded musical works on a gramophone plate in Ghana in 1928. His mum was also a professional ballet dancer, who was part of the Young Pioneers during Nkrumah's time who performed at the State House. With the music that came from these two family members as part of their profession, the interest in music in Barima started right from his primary school days at Pentecost Sunday School, and the Ebenezer House at Darkuman where he lived:

It was a very big compound with lots of children so I formed a football team, choir and a concert party band. I would have some children who were good in drumming used empty metal containers and gallons as makeshift drums while myself and some others imitated Nana Ampadu and Adofo's music for their concert party, which was prominent among the three groups. As an active Sunday school child, I took part in singing and sword drill competitions that took the church to the nationals at one time but unfortunately we did not win.¹⁸

¹⁸ Interview with Barima, May 23, 2015

In 1994, Barima started taking music seriously when he took up the position as the entertainment prefect in West African Senior Secondary School, and once he started writing songs and miming, he decided to change his course from science to business. This was because science did not give him enough room to pursue music. A debate sparked between the teachers and the school authority whether it was a good idea to change courses because he was halfway through. The conclusion was to maintain the science. Barima nonetheless held on to music. He found out that one of his senior's by name Zach was part of a music group known as the Native Funk Lords, after seeing them on Ghana Television's Second Generation programme. Zach introduced him to the leader of the group, Eddie Blay at Aveno, one of the communities in Accra. Eddie suggested that Barima join their junior group Native Tribe instead after an informal rap audition he had for Barima. It was there that he had his first training as a musician and met Jake and Tiny Quaye who began to groom him. At this time, the music was purely hip-hop.

In 1994, PANAFEST organised a rap competition as part of the entertainment activities of which Native Funk Lords partook. This was the first time 'Public Enemy', one of the hottest and famous musical groups in the United States of America at that time stepped on the shores of Africa for the first time under the auspices of Louis Farrakhan.¹⁹ It was in this competition that Barima had the opportunity to join the Native Funk Lords to perform due to the concept they were presenting. He featured as a fetish priest and from thence became a recognised member of the group who was part of their musical tours in the country. Reggie Rockstone, a cousin of Barima who was also into music returned to

¹⁹ Louis Farrakhan is a religious leader who has led the nation of Islam, an African American movement that combined elements of Islam with Black nationalism since 1978 (<http://www.biography.com/people/louis-farrakhan-9291850>)

Ghana from the United Kingdom in 1994 as well. He with Freddie Funkstone and DJ Pogo formed the musical group Party á la Mason.²⁰

After a lengthy discussion with his cousin Reggie about using the local dialect for the rap language instead of English, they settled on the Twi language. This is because Twi is the lingua franca in Ghana and so will reach a wider audience with their message. Since the Native Funk Lords was purely a hip-hop group, Barima opted out after expressing his gratitude to the leader Eddie Blay and the crew for the opportunity given him. In the latter part of 1995 he formed his own group known as “Nananom”.²¹ This group included Omanhene Pozoh, and Jyoti Chandler and Barima himself, with all three of them being old students of WASSS. An opportunity to perform at the Second Generation program on GTV came for the group and this opened a door for Nananom’s popularity.

3.3 Challenges as Part of a Group

A rap competition known as ‘Recognise ‘96’ whose event dated 10th August, 1996 brought together twenty-seven rap groups from the various secondary schools like Achimota School, Presbyterian Boys School, etc. According to Barima although their school was not recognised on such platforms as the National Theatre they decided to partake nonetheless. Another problem the group had to deal with was securing of funds for their registration. Barima decided to seek help from his prime group leader Eddie Blay who agreed to pay the registration fee for the group. Their next challenge was their costume for the competition. Barima recalls,

²⁰ Freddie Funkstone is a Sierra Leonean rapper; DJ Pogo, a well-known London deejay were Reggie Rockstone’s partners who formed Party á la Mason also known as PLZ-Parables, Linguistics and Zlang.

²¹ The name Nananom represented the ancestors or elders; Barima was the Okyeame (linguist); Jyoti was the Ohemaa (queen mother) and Pozoh was the Omanhene (paramount chief).

“We had no cash for appropriate costumes so we got some black second hand tops to match our black trousers and bought medical plaster to design the letter ‘N’ as representing Nananom”.

They seemed to have a lot of challenges since they could not even decide on the particular song to perform at the competition. They only had two songs to their credit, *Panyin Na Obi Nye Bi Da* and *Asem Sebe*. They finally decided on the one titled *Asem Sebe*. Thinking that their woes were over, Nananom were called onto the stage only to be told that their cassette had gone missing. Barima recounts how they had to fall back on their second song *Panyin Na Obi Nye Bi Da*. The instrumentals of these two songs were both recorded at Jaggard Studio in Nima, Accra where they normally had their rehearsals. According to Barima Sidney,

Jyoti wanted us to use Panyin Na Obi Nye Bi Da while Pozoh and I argued that the Asem Sebe had an upbeat tempo so was perfect, considering what we had heard from most of the performers during the competition. Since it was two against one, Asem Sebe won and the track was given to the deejay in-charge of the program. Jyoti was experiencing abdominal upset and this affected the group negatively since she couldn't perform.

The turn of Nananom came and Barima again recalls the response of the audience about their knowledge of the group Nananom by Solomon Parker, who was then MC for the program. According to him,

Their response was a big nooooo! If they no force we'll boo them o!” and the MC said, “Hey Nananom, Nananom, where are you come, come! This was a very discouraging introduction, which caused us to remain backstage for a while.

As stated earlier, the group was called on stage while their track was nowhere to be found. But the MC nonetheless kept signaling them to come on stage and this turned into an

argument backstage. Knowing that this was a crucial moment for the group, Barima though angry about the situation, got on stage, took the microphone and unlike the locally acquired foreign accent that everyone was using, he chose Pidgin English and said,

“Look at dis man o, dey say dey can’t find our cassette but yet charley dey call us, what we go do? This caused shouts and applauds from the audience as backed him, serving as an icebreaker. I then called Pozoh, charley Pozoh join me make we sing. Then I asked the deejay to give us the instrumentals for ‘Panyin Na Obi Nye Bi Da’.”²²

This song talked about the fact that no one has been an adult before because you keep becoming unlike being a child, which has already been experienced. To drive home the message, the song talks about some childhood games like ‘Pilolo’, ‘Once eh’ etc., that are used by children during playtime.^{23 24}

“It got to one of the songs which had rope jump being demonstrated on stage and Jyoti suddenly appeared from nowhere onto the stage to be the one doing the skipping for us and this was the turning point for the group as we had a rousing applaud and screams from the audience as they finally gave their full approval.”²⁵

During the break time of the competition, people started chatting about Nananom and how they “stole” the show because of their unique performance. Others like Sammy B, the first Ghanaian to represent Ghana at the Big Brother Africa reality show got closer and took them on a tour around the National Theater where the competition was held. After all the

²² LAFA-locally acquired foreign accent is a popular culture where the American and British accents are imitated to show that a person comes from a higher class

²³ Pilolo is a unisex childhood game in Ghana normally for children between the ages of 6-12 years. It involves one of the players hiding sticks without the knowledge of the others for them to look for it. The one who finds it first becomes the winner.

²⁴ Once eh is a rope jump game for girls between the ages of 8-15 years. It is a counting game and to make it rhyme the word “eh” is added to every count so once, twice, thrice becomes once eh, twice eh, thrice eh and so on.

²⁵ Interview with Barima, May 23, 2015

contestants had performed, the MC came on stage and asked, “Which group do you think will win?” and before he even finished asking, the audience unanimously screamed, “Nananom, Nananom”. Sidney broke into tears as they were called on stage to receive their prize for the first position. The cash prize realized from the competition was used to record the single at a recognized studio owned by Zapp Mallet, a music sound engineer.

Barima’s uncle Ricci Ossei also paid for *Asem Sebe* to be recorded at another studio.²⁶ Since Reggie Rockstone was already a household name, and was about releasing the first hiplife album *Maka Maka*, the *Panyin Na Obi Nye Bi Da* song was put on the album and featured on ‘Agoro’ an entertainment television show on that same album by Reggie Rockstone, to serve as an introduction to Nananom. The group started touring with their single hit to places like the Kumasi Centre for National Culture, and Takoradi although they had no album yet.

They were awarded the best native group of the year at Freakz Awards, for hip-hop and hiplife artistes. It was held in 1996 at the Trade Fair Site by a private company, which had Panji Anoff, a renowned music producer as part of the organisers. Then in February 1997, the group came out with their debut album titled, *Wo Kyere Woho*, with Kay's Frequency as their record label. Although this was a massive hit, Pozoh left the group shortly after that 1997 album. With Jyoti and Barima Sidney left, they released another album in 1998 titled, *Nana Nono* with Ahenfie Records as their record label which included the track *Everything's Gonna be Alright*. Jyoti after this album also met a pastor whom she married and also decided to move from secular music to gospel music so left the group too.

²⁶ Reggie Rockstone’s father

3.4 Life as a Solo Artiste

The short lifespan of the group gave Barima Sidney no option then than to prepare himself for a solo career. He underscores,

"That was when I went through hell". Because Nananom was a big brand, every producer wanted me to use it. I kept explaining that Nananom was a group and since I'm the only man standing, I can't use it. But it all fell on deaf ears."

Every producer he went to turned him down because in his own words, *"Nobody knows Sidney"*. Their argument was that Nananom was a household name that will sell so he should stick to that instead of Sidney, which was new and too much risky. Sidney left the comfort of his aunt's home to stay with Kobby, a teacher friend at Madina. This period of his life he calls,

"Being in the wilderness because no one wanted to produce me and I felt left alone with Pozoh and Jyoti gone. I was sad, devastated and wanted to come out with an album badly but didn't have money to produce myself."

It was this friend who supported him to record his songs one after the other with his meagre salary. That was how he was able to record his debut album, Agoo (Knock, knock) with the hit track Tinana.

"That particular track Tinana was where I poured out my heart and carefully listening to the six minutes song, one will find out that every line is catchy. In fact, I haven't been able to write any song the way I did Tinana."

How to come out after the recording of the album became a challenge because everyone knew Nananom and the group was no more, meanwhile no one knew Sidney. Nananom

presenting Sidney on the *Agoo* album came about as a solution to this challenge. *Agoo* was finally released in 2001.

3.5 Challenges as a Solo Artiste

Barima Sidney shared in the researcher's interview with him how difficult it is when he goes for sponsorship. He gave an instance where a company agreed to sponsor him to do a song on road safety. The person in-charge of the sponsorship started talking about something else, veering from the topic of discussion to give him a "lecture" on how he should move away from the topics that he addresses in his songs and how he puts the message across, into something more sober. The sponsorship was in the end not given because he would not do the song the way the sponsors wanted it. This trend of event runs through almost all sponsorships, which are promised to him, after he presents his concept to the sponsors.

A post on September 18, 2014 by Michael Bamfo states that, "since the issuance of the directive under the NLC Decree 177 (1967), some musicians had to be disallowed from performing at events and TV shows with military gear at their disappointment with a limited option to find suitable clothing to complement the concept of their performance. Recently, Hiplife artiste, Barima was stopped by producers from performing in a camouflaged outfit at TV3-one of Ghana's television stations' live performance show, 'Music Music'. The musician described the action as 'uncomfortable' because his act was uncompleted by the military attire to better explain the message he is putting across. According to Lieutenant Commander L. A. Anyane of the Ghana Armed Forces Public

Relations Directorate, the directive is very effective hence the need for all civilians to abide by it.²⁷

The above reports are some of the challenges that discourage musicians but for Barima, it was an indication that he was doing something right which some observers were not comfortable with. This gives him strength to go on fighting as a voice for the voiceless with more boldness.



Figure 1: Sarkodie with Barima Sidney

Declaring a musical coup d'état in the 3rd quarter of last year, Barima Sidney has congratulated Sarkodie for heeding to his advice by releasing *Inflation*, a song that questions the competence of the ruling government, National Democratic Congress. Barima Sidney who advised his fellow musicians to wake up and compose songs that will endeavor to remind the ruling government of its actual responsibilities to the country and also to know the suffering of Ghanaians, said,

²⁷ The directive signified by the Directorate of Public Relations was issued to news editors at various media houses including GTV, TV3, Metro TV, Daily Graphic, Crusading Guide, The Ghanaian Times, Peace FM, Joy FM, Oman FM. <http://www.amalarbieafrica.com/ban-on-the-use-of-military-gear-by-entertainers-still-effective-gaf-pr/>

“I am glad Sarkodie took this bold step to add his voice to the advocacy to address the disheartening state the country finds itself now.”

Inflation, a song which addresses the current state of the country’s economy, the fall of the country’s currency and a quest to question the competence of the ruling government; President Mahama and his cabinet as to whether they are indeed working for the interest of Ghana or not.

“The life of an artist who does my style of music is a lonely and very challenging one. That's why I was extremely overjoyed when other musicians and artist in the entertainment industry decided to add their voices in the "Dum So" crises by making music and also granting press interviews on it. I was like wow! Now you people are no longer scared to talk about the national issues that are negatively affecting the ordinary man? Welcome aboard!”

On May 16, 2015, The Dum So Vigil took place on the streets of Accra. This vigil was to show the dissatisfaction of these musicians and artistes in the entertainment industry about the inconsistency of the government in bringing a solution to the irregular, unannounced erratic power outages. Barima was part of the front-runners in the campaign of this vigil.

3.6 Turning Point

Through these challenges, Barima Sidney drew closer to his maker and started attending Jericho Hour, a Thursday prayer meeting that had just begun at the Christian Action Faith Church in Accra. His faith and confidence gradually revived. His motto from that encounter with his maker till date is, “With Jesus in my boat I will smile at the storm.”

This album was dedicated²⁸ to God at the Jericho Hour and gave a seed offering for it. ‘U Name It’, a music promoter and distributor who shot the video and bought the copies of the audio outright, made the distribution and promotion for him and from the tenth position on the chart; the *Tinana* hit track gradually rose to be in the number one position in Kumasi based on sales. This encouragement led to the birth of the next album *Abuskeleke* (2002). Though there was a lot of controversy about *Abuskeleke* to the extent that it was debated on the floor of the Ghanaian parliament to be banned, *Abuskeleke* became a popular word used to describe short, skimpy or provocative dresses. It was also thought to mean investing in prostitution so used to tease women and girls who wore those dresses. This was beside the point that Sidney described it as meaning good investment. *Abuskeleke* holds the title as the highest sold hiplife album till date, in spite of all the challenges it went through.

3.7 Contribution to the Ghanaian Music Industry

This is the discography of Barima Sidney’s music from 2001 till date. With Squardiee Entertainment as his record label for all works as a solo artiste, he released the *Ago* album in 2001 with the hit track *Tinana*; it did very well but his succeeding album *Akofna* with *Abuskeleke* as the hit track in 2002, which was extremely controversial, was even better. The word became popular and used to describe short skimpy or provocative dresses and actually used to tease people who wear them. Though Barima Sidney described it as meaning ‘good investment’, it has also been thought to mean investing in prostitution. *Abuskeleke* was his first hiplife song to be sung live and for that cause it was branded

²⁸ The practice of dedication is a popular culture that cuts across all stages in life in Ghana. Right from birth a baby is dedicated to God no matter the religious background. Similarly both secular and gospel artists normally dedicate their albums to God and give a thanksgiving or a seed offering in addition.

“Hiplive” with a “V” instead of Hiplife with the “F” that is known. The launch was held at the Labadi Beach Hotel.

The title track of his 2003 album, *Scenti Noo*, with *Scent Noo* as the hit track was also controversial as it detested uncleanliness and teased various professions. Though the song was released in 2003, it gained popularity in 2004; permission was sought from Barima and the song was used as a campaign song by the New Patriotic Party, one of the major political parties during their tangle with the National Democratic Congress another major opposition party which was then in the governing seat, over its rights to run-up Ghana’s 2004 election. *Scenti Noo* was the New Patriotic Party’s candidate John Agyekum Kuffour’s slogan on which he rode to victory.

The controversy with Barima Sidney’s music doubled with his 2004 album, *Obiaa Nye Obiaa* which struck a timeless debate about equality in the society. There was a break after this album where he researched for a whole year on how to break through the Francophone countries with his music. He returned with a big bang, releasing the album *Africa Monie* in the latter part of 2007 with *Africa Monie* as the hit track as well. This breakthrough led him to tour and perform on several platforms African countries like Benin, Cameroon Chad. As posted on April 8, 2015 by Ama Larbie, she reports that, *Africa Monie* by Barima appears to exhibit some good-luck magic as it had contributed to formerly opposition parties, who used the song during its presidential election campaigns, to overthrow its country’s ruling governments.

Now ruling parties who used *Africa Monie* as one of its campaign songs include Ghana's National Democratic Congress; Burkina Faso's Congress for Democracy and Progress; Equatorial Guinea's Democratic Party; Côte d'Ivoire's Rally of the Republicans, an Ivorian political party formed in 1999; and just recently, Nigeria's All Progressives Congress. Seemingly, these political parties followed suits in using Barima Sidney's *Africa Monie* upon its release in 2008; after Ghana's ruling government, National Democratic Congress, who unofficially used the song at its various campaign grounds against President Kuffuor's regime won the country's 2008 Presidential Election.

Upon using the song unofficially at the party's various campaign grounds, there ensued a heated argument over intellectual property right on Peace 104.3FM's midday news prior to the election between the singer, Barima Sidney and then aspiring Member of Parliament for Akwatia also, a member of the communication team as at the time. After all said and done, the National Democratic Congress Party won the 2008 Presidential Election and paved way for the late President Atta Mills' regime. The song, which hammers on the ill-manner ruling governments misuse the country's funds to their beneficiaries than taking up its responsibilities to ensuring that the country and its citizens face less economic hardship; has been used by some opposition-now-ruling parties in the African continent.

Then opposition-now-ruling parties include Côte d'Ivoire's Rally of the Republicans, led by President Alassane Ouattara during country's 2010 Presidential election used Barima Sidney's *Africa Monie* as one of its campaign songs. With the Ghanaian musician performing at Abidjan during one of the party's rallies, he won the election in spite of the conflict that arose because the then President Laurent Gbagbo failed to accept defeat after

the preliminary results announced by the Electoral Commission showed a loss in favor of his rival, former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara.

Burkina Faso's Congress for Democracy and Progress, led by President Blaise Compaore, who used *Africa Monie* as one of the party's campaign songs in the country's 2010, had Barima perform during one of their rallies at Tengodogo, a suburb of Burkinabé. Equatorial Guinea's second incumbent President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of the Democratic Party during the country's 2013 Presidential election used Barima Sidney's *Africa Monie* as one of his campaign songs during rallies although he ousted his uncle, Francisco Macias Nguema in an August 1979 Military coup. And again Barima Sidney performed at one of the party's rallies held at Malabo and Bata in Equatorial Guinea. Upon assuming office, President Obiang Nguema oversaw Equatorial Guinea's emergence as an important oil producing country in the 1990s beginning.

And just recently, Nigeria's All Progressives Congress' leader, now President Muhammadu Buhari, was reported to have used the song, *Africa Monie* as one of the party's main campaign songs. Although the election was scheduled for February 14, 2015; it was postponed to February 28, 2015. He won the 2015 Presidential election against then incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan's party, People's Democratic Party a week ago. President Goodluck Jonathan is the first sitting Nigerian president to concede defeat in such a competitive election in history. Although Barima Sidney was expected to perform

at one the rallies held by APC, it came as a short notice, hence he could not perform for the Buharism supporters; nevertheless, the song aided in his victory.²⁹

Fɔ̄rso Ye No Saa was released in 2012 with two hit tracks: *Enkɔ̄ yie* and *Awuchie Kpɔ̄ngɔ̄*. His singles as a solo artiste started with *Ebobɔ̄ba (Gadindim Gadem)* in 2012, and *Ebobɔ̄ba Reloaded* in 2013. *Ebobɔ̄ba* is yet another controversial song, deeply political in nature that captures a joke by former President Jerry John Rawlings made at the historic Sunyani congress of the ruling National Democratic Congress. He states,

“There are two verses of the song; the first verse is strictly for our politicians and the other talks about ‘fake’ pastors. I will officially be presenting the song to Ex-President J. J. Rawlings and wife in the course of next week.”

According to Barima Sidney, he had his inspiration from the joke former President Rawlings narrated during the NDC Congress at Sunyani where he told a story about an Osu Alata Mantse who abandoned his own subjects and rather spent more time with whites. Then one day, according to Mr. Rawlings, the Alata Mantse’s subjects decided to go on a demonstration and started drumming the Kolomashie. Shocked, he phoned the police to bring dozen of policemen to save the situation at hand. The people were dancing up and down dancing ‘Gadindim Gadem. The ex-President was literarily advocating for social justice and accountability.

²⁹<http://www.amalarbieafrica.com/africa-money-magic-buharism-is-the-4th-to-overthrow-its-govt-after-using-the-song/>

In a telephone interview with *The Heritage Entertainment Crew*, Barima Sidney noted that he is not a controversial person but the content of his songs is. According to him,

“I am never controversial, rather it is the titles that I choose for my songs that are controversial, for instance, if I say ‘Ebobɔba’, the title alone explains it all and people choose to read lots of meanings to it and I tell you, it is the topics that I prefer to write about. I don’t talk about love songs because I am not good at that.”

Then in 2013 the censored single *Donkomi* was released followed by *Who Said Twea?* And *Ayɛka* in 2014. *Ebola* and *Sikadie Basaa* were both released in 2015 as well.

In another report, Barima retracting his words to have stopped recording political songs indicated that he is not on the payroll of any political party, cautioning gurus of opposition parties to refrain from calling him in the name of applauding him for his decision to bombard the government till he takes up his responsibilities.

“I am not on the payroll of any political party, and so I don’t want any opposition party to call me to encourage or praise me for my decision and the just released song, because should they attempt; I will mention their names in the next song I will be recording and state their ‘sneaky’ intentions,” he said. Adding, *“they are all the same, that’s why I am forewarning them to back off any attempt to approach me in the name of endorsing my songs; else, I will turn my bombarding lesson to them. Ghana is just one; we need the betterment of the country for our next generation’s sake.”*

According to Barima,

“yes, I said I had quit recording political songs; but I have decided to bounce back to ‘musically’ bombard the President till he is ready to turn focus on the appalling and horrible situations in the country as they appear not to be ending anytime soon.”

He further indicated that analysing the state the country finds itself in recent times, President Mahama and his administration has failed Ghanaians,

“The situation is that bad that the Ghanaian youth has no future; not even with the Agricultural, Education and Health Ministries have any hopes for the youth. The government has lost its focus which I think will do the country some good if he overthrows himself out of office; he has no excuse or explanation to give Ghanaians let alone access the performance of his cabinet from the assembly member, ministers and to himself. President Mahama and his administration has nothing to point at as the major cause or the reason for poor performance rather, they are poised at spending state funds while we have many unattended to challenges and problems,” the Donkomi singer lamented.³⁰

Continuing,

“In its mix, corruption cannot be exempted as government and its officials cannot even control the heightened corruption among them, let alone manage the country well. They have lost focus, and the leader of the country seems not to have a clear priority.”

The *Africa Monie* singer noted that the president needs to outline his priorities to enable him know which scale of preference is necessary at a particular time;

“Ghana has the money to solve the existing problem; a prove is the 7 billion dollar deal with the Italian Energy Company, Eni and Vitol for the development of oil and gas to provide over 1100 megawatts of power for the next 20 years starting from 2017 which by then, Ghanaians would be extremely used to the ‘dumsor’ and economy crisis.” *“The government has given us every possible hint that he is rather being smart implementing strategies that will enable his win in the 2016 elections; unfortunately, Ghanaians have grown too used to such strategies. On my part, I will be bombarding him with easy-to relate with songs and titles that will remain on the lips of every Ghanaian like the ‘kpa-kpa-kpa’ and ‘tweaaaa’ terms every 2 weeks whether in ‘dumsor’ or not,”* Barima declared.

³⁰ Phone interview with [AmaLarbieAfrica](#)

On a lighter note, the *Scenti Noo* singer stated reason for featuring Countryman Songo on ‘*Sikadieeee basabasa*’ produced by Dr. Ray Beatz; for the fact that the Asempa FM presenter,

“Is fond of using the term ‘Sikadieeee’ to pour his anger on the Sports Ministry, but I felt the need to generalise it.”³¹



Figure 3: Barima Sidney



Figure 2: Mr. George Oppong Weah

Liberian founder and Presidential Candidate for the Congress for Democratic Change Party, Mr. George Oppong Weah has in a partnership project with the United Nations assigned Ghanaian musician, Barima Sidney to spearhead a massive campaign on the Ebola hemorrhagic fever outbreak. The campaign theme song dubbed: ‘Ebola; Africa must stand and fight together’ was recorded under the cover of Lionel Peterson’s ‘Peace’ song. The song which was played on BBC World Service for about 5-minutes on Tuesday is aimed at creating an all-embracing awareness on the outbreak of the deadly virus, Ebola hemorrhagic fever, which has taken a severe turn of its outbreak in Liberia. The artiste who has since 2004 been the composer of the CDC Party’s campaign songs was contacted over the weekend to lead the Ebola campaign team in Liberia expressed gratitude for the task given him to help create awareness on the deadly virus in Liberia and Africa as a whole.

³¹<http://www.amalarbieafrica.com/no-opposition-party-endorse-sikadieeee-basabasa-else/>

“I am grateful for being made the Ambassador to create extensive awareness through music, health talks and forums in Liberia that will as well detailed and enlighten neighboring countries on the deadly virus,” Barima Sidney said.

Although it is a joint project by Mr. George Oppong Weah and the United Nations, Barima Sidney indicated that he has discussed and presented the song to some officials at Ghana Health Service and other leading health sector organisations on Monday to use the theme song to create a more massive awareness in Ghana.

“They are yet to give us feedback,” he said. *“With the neglecting and mode of attending to affected persons in spacemen-like attire, the need to enlighten the public on preventive measures on the deadly virus, Ebola hemorrhagic fever (EHF) is very necessary but, unfortunately, in Ghana, although citizens are aware of its existence, the awareness created is on the low key,”*

The deadly virus, Ebola HF had its first outbreak in a village in Congo Republic in 1977 and resurfaced on December last year, 2013 when a 2-year old girl died of a strange disease. The *Ebola; Africa must stand and fight together* campaign song produced under South Africa’s ‘Peace’ by cover by King Dey of the Sun City Studio. But with the cold reception from the Ghanaian Health sector, the campaign team of the Liberian initiative is contemplating on whether to shoot the video in Ghana or Liberia.³²

The above post on Ebola illustrates how Barima decided to represent the Ghanaian Music Industry as an ambassador even in the face of danger; he faced his fear of the possibility of contracting the disease or being rejected if the recording was done in Liberia where the

³²E-News posted on August 14, 2014 by Ama Larbie

disease was prevalent. He exhibited the virtue of valuing human life more than his comfort as people generally feared and did not want anything to do with even just the mention of the name Ebola.

Barima was awarded as the Hiplife Artiste of the Year 2002 at Ghana Music Awards in the United Kingdom. He has also done some collaboration. In 2003, he collaborated with Samini to do *Abuskeleke Remix*, and *Child Soldier* with Ayisoba, which was campaigned and launched in Liberia that same year. *Nkwaraa Yi* was done with Tinny in 2004 and *Africa Monie* with Morris Baby Face in 2007. He got a SICA lifetime award in Benin where it was about discovery of talent, recognising the fact that he started the journey with them and has finally been able to break through with the *Africa Monie* hit track. He also had an award in Abidjan with the *Africa Monie* in the category of “Popular Song in Africa”.

Sidney has been involved in various educational campaigns. *Give them the Pen, and not the gun* is a song which he dedicated to all child soldiers in the world especially Africa; it features Dr. Kaunda, his lyrical mate and King Ayisoba, a traditional musician.

3.8 Personal Life

Barima Sidney is married with three children. He has had to go through three phases of life so far and with each phase there has been a change of name. As a member of the group Nananom he was Okyeame of the group. When the time came for him to go solo he chose the name ‘Sidney the Hiplife Ninja.’ Through Sloopy Mike Gyamfi, a Ghanaian highlife

artiste, he had the chance to perform at “Muziekfestival” in Amsterdam, 2005. There was a surprise atmosphere in the audience as the name Sidney was mentioned and he was supposed to be from Ghana. According to Barima, the confusion and disappointment on their faces was such that it intimidated him. Right in that moment he made a decision to choose a name that best describes him and his identity as a Ghanaian. He pondered on how he started out forming a group and remembered that he had chosen an indigenous name right from the beginning, Nananom. He also recounted how almost all his colleagues who started the musical journey with him had diverted into other work fields like banking, marketing, and so on due to financial reasons or personal ones. He chose the name ‘Barima’ and when asked why, he said,

Barima meaning I've been able to stand all these years from 1994 till now. A lot of people whom I started with are no more doing music. Some have become bank managers; others have become businessmen and women. But by God's grace I'm still in this game. And of course me ye Barima (I'm a man), metumi egyina (I've been able to stand the test of time). So that's the meaning of Barima.”

He chose a name that will identify with Ghana, Africa, but did not just choose any name; he chose one that means he is still standing with all the glory to God. The question of “who is Barima Sidney was posed and this was the answer,

“If you ask who Barima Sidney is I would say he is the voice of the voiceless; a Music Politician whose only weapon is the music he uses to fight for the voiceless.”

His persona as a musician is a fusion of bits and pieces of positive skills he learnt from musicians all over including Eddie Blay who was the leader of his first professional music group, Daddy Lumba, and Fela Anikulapo-Kuti. He was a professional footballer of the

Darkuman Football Club from 1990-1993. He also loves running and enjoys sprinting for the 100/200 race. For hobbies, detective series and video games are the ones he goes for.

He comes from Akwatia in the Eastern Region of Ghana and as part of his social responsibilities, he has been organising a programme called ‘New Year Bash with Barima and Friends’ on January 1 every year for the past five years where he celebrates an artiste in the entertainment industry be it a musician, actor/ess, comedian etc. He then does a fundraising during the programme for the Good Shepherd, an orphanage in the town. This event is always held at Life Spot, otherwise known as Main Gate, a popular venue in his hometown. Sponsorship is sought for both in and out of the country.

In his music career, the only nomination he has had was for the award in the category of Afro-Pop for his track *Africa Monie*. The award was however given to the group ‘Praye’ for their song *Angelina* on the account that he was not in the country at that time to perform the track. His fans to him are his greatest awards and since he is aiming for Africa and the world and not just Ghana, he took the refusal of the Ghana Music award in good faith. He believes that no one is perfect but all are equal in the eyes of God so he respects people’s opinions. Based on this view, he listens to criticisms from all quarters and works on the constructive ones, though he admitted that it was sometimes difficult because they are debatable. For the destructive criticisms he points out to his destructive critics where they have also gone wrong. This is because all the destructive ones tend to attack his personality and not any of his songs in particular; “*such people just want to run you down.*” He has musicians he mentors and these include, Sarkodie, Kaunde, Nana Oheneba, Kakalika and Alan Cash. His highest target is to step into Fela’s shoes and even go further

by using musical influence to become the “Voice of the Voiceless for Africa” (Interview with Barima, June 20, 2015)



Figure 4: Barima with the researcher after an interview

CHAPTER FOUR

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Barima Sidney has five albums and eight single tracks to his credit. However, five out of his works have been selected to be analysed in this chapter. The analysis is preceded by sources of inspiration, the purpose of the song, and how they were composed and a general overview of his songs. Some aspects of discourse analysis, life history interviewing and Merriam's (1964) functions of song and song text/music mentioned earlier in chapter one will be employed where applicable in the analysis.

4.1 Sources of Inspiration

Musicians have something that inspires them to write the songs that they perform or let others perform for them. Some obtain their inspiration through dreams. However Barima Sidney's inspiration comes from everyday routine, life experiences, and happenings that people need to hear about. According to him, every musician must have a third ear to catch what is out of the ordinary for people; they must also have a journal just for every new vocabulary they learn. He affirms that these two are very necessary for him when it comes to his processes of composition. Some songs he is able to compose within a day, others can take a week or more, based on the mood he finds himself. His overall philosophy, which guides his life and especially his song writing, is, "with Jesus in my boat, I'll always smile at the storm." This belief guards the way he charts his life by consciously staying out of trouble; it gives him the boldness to be 'the voice of the voiceless' to write and speak about issues that need to be addressed which is yet difficult for most people to do so, through his music.

Through observation, listening through a conversation, news or reading, he gets a word, a phrase or idea out of which he gets a theme to write about for his songs. He first puts them into writing in his journal and goes back to it as and when new ideas crop up, or something he wrote comes back to mind. He then does some research on the topic to understand the concept. This first of all helps him to know whether it will be good to write a song on it or not. The second reason is that he strives to select songs that will be applicable in all eras. In writing a song, the hook or chorus is the most important and also the most difficult part. This is because it has to be: catchy and appealing to listeners; it should also be very simple and easy to grasp to the extent that both educated and uneducated can at least sing some lines before the song ends. It must also flow. Time is therefore spent on the hook to make it attractive.

When the chorus is done, he goes to the studio and sings it to the sound engineer/instrumentalist who follows it with a keyboard. It is here that the key of the song is developed and when the chorus is satisfactory he follows with the rap, backing vocals and any other musical inclusion that will give the results needed. This process can range between a day into weeks based on internal and external factors including the weather, electrical power, availability of help at the time of recording and the mood of the team involved in the recording. He revealed that when it comes to messages in his compositions, it is only thirty percent that comes from him. The seventy percent comes from listeners. Listeners are the ones who point out most of disturbing issues in the society, which he talks about in his song texts.

Unlike other musicians, Barima possesses the ability of writing, arranging and performing his own music. This ability helps him to be able to communicate his messages without any alterations.

4.2 Discourse Analysis of Barima Sidney's Works

Discourse analysis is described by Barranco (2013) as a way to analyse how language is used in a specific context; the language used can be seen in a conversation, in a speech, in any type of genre, such as the lyrics of a song. Barima Sidney seems to have a natural knack of being the voice of the people. He speaks directly to all and sundry about a wide range of social vices. He speaks straight to issues in context through the use of catchy rhythms and rhyming nature of his lyrics that fuse the serious and the humorous. He uses everyday language, Twi, commonly spoken across the length and breadth of the country and in some instances the Ga and Hausa dialects too.

Furthermore, he mixes his lyrics at times with Pidgin English, which is spoken both by the literate and semi-literate in Ghana. This is obvious in the titles of all his hit songs except *Africa Monie* where he implores the use of the French language to address the sub-regions of Africa. The story about the National Security concerning his single *Donkomi* which relates to a reference by Merriam about musicians being able to say sensitive things in a song came as a shock to me because it even goes on to say that “this phenomenon has been frequently for Africa although it apparently operates in other world areas as well” (Merriam 1964, p. 187). Ghana is a democratic republic and therefore should promote democracy and free speech. The main theme of Barima Sidney's *Donkomi* was for equality and fairness. However Ghana's National Security banned the song which seemed

to challenge the general sense of democracy in general and free speech in particular. A good example relevant to this matter is Fela Kuti from Nigeria who had countless fracasas with the government of the day due to him cleverly damning and shaming corrupt government officials in his songs. In fact, Barima Sidney was left off the hook by the intelligence unit of the government in comparison to the harsh treatment meted out to Fela by the hands of the same type of officials in Nigeria. The interview shaped my understanding better of why Barima Sidney composes, writes and sings in the way he does.

Barranco (2013), also notes that lyrics can describe how a society is and their social implications such as social problems. One of the areas which speech discourse analysis addresses is speech act. This according to Chaika (1994:154) is “Speech acts are ways people use language to manage social interactions.” Speech acts require not only knowledge of the language but also the appropriate use of that language within a given culture. This refers to the purpose of language in terms of who one communicates with, when one does the communication, and the way language is used in a social context. Barima makes use of the Twi language, which hardly affords itself any possibility of being wrongly interpreted as its meaning and choice of words in the Twi dialect hits home in a directly comprehensive manner. Barima Sidney’s choice of words in his songs speaks straight to the issues in context. Speech acts can be identified by the speaker’s intention. This means what people use the language for. In all his songs, Barima uses local dialects, which include Twi, Ga, and Hausa as well as a Pidgin English, English and French to reach a wider audience.

Ayi (2013) describes emotive expression as a language employed by politicians to stir emotions of love, hatred or anger. Quoting Lauer and Amponsah (2010:8), he says that one of the ways in which a communicator can convey information is the use of incomplete sentences which they termed as emotive expression. Although Barima Sidney is not a politician, his position as a musician affords him the opportunity of communicating to an audience through his songs. The lyrics of a song acting as a communicative tool are laden with various devices, which make for effective communication. One of such devices is emotive expression. Being mindful of his audience, he makes use of code switching in order to appeal to the masses. Code switching refers to the use of more than one language in a communicative process (Akmajian et al, 2003, p, 307). "Code switching refers to a situation in which a speaker uses distinct varieties as discourse proceeds" the aim here is to facilitate audience' understanding especially where one is targeting an audience of varied backgrounds. Although Barima Sidney's lyrics are mostly in Twi, which is the lingua franca of Ghana, he mixes some of his songs with Ga and Hausa, also local dialects. He broadens his scope by employing English and French to reach beyond the borders of Ghana to the rest of Africa. His use of code switching provides evidence of his control over the languages found in his songs. The effect of this technique is evident in the popularity, which his songs have acquired.

According to McCarthy (2005:9), "when we say that a particular bit of speech or writing is a request or an instruction or an exemplification, we are concentrating on what piece of language is doing, or how the listener/reader is supposed to react."

4.3 Song Text Analysis of Scenti Noo(2003)

This song sits differently from all Barima Sidney's other hit songs by way of the lack of heavy political commentary. It still however portrays Barima's use of music to address sensitive socio-politico-environmental issues both national and international.

The song addresses issues of hygiene within the rank and file of society-from the rich or highly respected to the common man. The agenda of cleanliness is pushed subtly in the song texts with the phrase "Honourable Apɔfee" who though an honourable in parliament is grimy to the extent that children in his neighborhood flee when he takes off his shoes. Surprisingly, the phrase, "Honourable Apɔfee" sparked off a debate in Parliament with some parliamentarians suggesting that the song should be banned because the song ridiculed members of Parliament. This illustrates the power of song texts and how it is able to directly or indirectly affect people.

The song contains various levels and veils of comedy that educate listeners about these issues which are usually awkward to address. The combination of the song texts with comedy makes it easy to absorb or receive. The professions teased in the song can be related to Merriam (1964, pp. 190, 237) that says, "...you can say publicly in songs what you cannot say privately to a man's face," and so this is one of the ways that song is used in African societies to maintain a spiritually healthy community. According to McCarthy (2005:9), "when we say that a particular bit of speech or writing is a request or an instruction or an exemplification, we are concentrating on what piece of language is doing, or how the listener/reader is supposed to react."

By relating this to Barima Sidney's *Scenti Noo*, we realise that it is a call for people to be cautious of their personal and environmental health. The following are examples of 'scent' issues he addresses in the song:

One example is drunkenness: *Watwa akpeteshie de akɔda na adeɛ akye, na wo rentwitwii wo se*; meaning when one goes to bed drunk and wakes up in the morning without brushing their teeth, the scent that comes out is bad. This line is reiterated after the whole verse and the chorus is repeated before verse two comes in. Aside the fact that the smell from a drunkard's unbrushed mouth is bad it is also a health hazard and social vice. This is because a drunkard is a disgrace to their family and such a person is not taken serious in the society in any way.

Another very important point which has been interspersed with comedy is this line: *Wote wo baabi redwen wo ho na obi retwe jot, na woapu agu wo so*. This is interpreted as- when someone puffs the smoke from his cigarette on you, the scent is a bad one. This is another health related issue that is perhaps even more serious and dangerous than a bad breath. The one who does the smoking, known as the "active smoker" spreads their health problems to the one who is being smoked on, known as the "passive smoker". This line of the song that smoke produces bad smell is obvious. The latent message however is the warning the song gives to people especially those who hang out with smokers and think they are safe because they are not doing the smoking. The social aspect of this problem is that the scent of the cigarette stays even after the person smoking has left the area. The warning in this line therefore is a reminder of this menace to the society as a whole.

The lines: *Woapo wo ho saa ama scent no agye wo ho; Koogoa ne to pɔ kɔ ka ye a, wo se odwan wo ho. Felicia, Monica, Mansa mo nyinaa twa clean; Ebeye den na ɔmo nya market.* This literally means you have bleached to the extent that you have developed a pungent bad smell, and dismisses the advice of *Koogoa ne to pɔ* (nick name). Felicia, Monica and Mansa are clean and don't bleach so it's no wonder they have numerous suitors. Bleaching causes serious health problems that can lead to skin cancer. On the other hand, it causes one to lose the respect and warm reception from society. This is because Ghana is in the tropical zone and despite the perfume such people use, the situation in terms of bad smell worsens when even a little heat falls on their skin.

The other lines:

Mate bi regyegyeye sika ɛwɔ trɔtrɔ mu, na watene ne nsa:

The bad smell that comes from the armpit of a bus conductor when taking money;

Honourable apɔn abɛduru fie na woayi ne mpaboa, socks no:

The bad smell that comes from honourable taking off his socks after work

Koogoa ne to pɔ, oblow fuse; Brothers sit am down yob am, no use. Dabiara wo behu no Glenns anim mu, ɔne ne crews; Wonam kankan TDB, ɔtua ne dues: Koogoa ne to pɔ (nickname), smells bad. Brothers have sat him down to talk to him but it's of no use. He's always found in front of Glenns (a night club) with bad body odor till daybreak, he's paying his dues.

Line by line, hwɛ, obiara mma ne nsa so, wo a w'amma so, na ɛfu abro so:

Everyone should raise their hands up one after the other. If you are not able to do so then it means your armpit is overgrown

Obarima bi a neho yefe, ase ape wo, na wabaa n'anum: The bad smell that comes from a handsome boy who is trying to woo a girl

W'anya abaa bi a, ne ho yefe, wode no akɔ duru dan mu (Scenti no): Taking a nice girl to bed only to find out she has a bad smell down there

Long John DK a.k.a Uncle Huggy, Emaa no hu no dabiara a, ma amo feeli jiggy; Oshada nice, feeli nice, te se Uncle Ricci; Scent na ewɔ ne ho no, bisa Micky: Long John DK is a guy who is loved by girls because he dresses very well like uncle Ricci.

All these lines about smelly armpits, mouths, socks, bad body odor, overgrown armpit, unkempt private parts all fall in the domain of personal hygiene.

Oh ye witches of Africa; Why are thou doeth this to Achimota? Nkran gutter kankan nyinaa headquarters. Filling station no anim hɔ pɛɛ, no offence: Oh ye witches of Africa; why art thou doest this to Achimota? The headquarters of all smelly gutters in Accra, right in front the filling station.

These lines are describing how the environment can smell bad regardless of the location of a landmark like the filling station, in this case one in Achimota. Barima explains that this example was to bring to the minds of politicians, doctors, the law enforcement agents and the citizenry in general who may be customers of the filling station or may have seen it and yet have not bothered to do anything about the situation.

The line:

Wonam obi dan akyi na ɔrebɔ nkwan, na abɔ afa wo hwene mu (Scenti no): the aroma that passes through your nose when passing behind someone's house. According to Barima, even the scent coming from someone's food was not a positive one. The phrase: *Gbosaje, lo ni jeɔ sa*: Gbosaje, refers to a type of edible sea turtle that has a strong scent that can stay on your fingers, even after hours of washing. The line is found at the latter part of the song text and is repeated four times. The repetition according to the artiste was to fill in the gap musically.

To make listeners know the seriousness of the issues he chips within the song: *Nea mereka nyinaa, state of emergency*: All these issues he's addressing are very important and must be seen to be as serious as a state of emergency. These are dicey issues that are difficult to talk about openly. However, because it is creatively weaved with funny nicknames and elaborated in a playful musical way, it makes the reception, acceptable as Merriam's theory explains.

The timing (2003) of the song could have something to do with why Barima Sidney wrote this song although issues of hygiene, be it the personal or environmental ones have plagued many areas of Ghana from time immemorial. For instance, due to the popularity and repeated airplay of the song, the area in Achimota mentioned in the song was cleaned up within a week. "Mates" or bus conductors also became very particular about their dressing and personal hygiene before work, and because the song was still popular on various media platforms, this awareness stayed. However, without these tuneful warnings people tend to go back to their old ways. This was seen when new popular songs replaced the song; and people's consciousness of hygiene gradually declined and littering and other

unsanitary practices soon set in. The consequence is a dangerous apathy for uncleanliness through littering and other sanitary practices, blocked gutters and other water channels. This created the flooding and fire that caused the June 3, 2015 disaster that hit the country claiming over a hundred and fifty lives. So Barima Sidney's *Scenti Noo* is still relevant today because its message of personal and environmental hygiene is still applicable even though the issues were addressed in 2003.

4.4 Obiaa Nyɛ Obiaa

The inspiration to write this song came from another hiplife artiste Okomfo Kwaadɛ on the occasion of a birthday get-together organised for Barima Sidney on June 3, 1977 and Okomfo Kwaadɛ on June 4 1979. On this particular occasion, the phrase that Kwaadɛ kept repeating was, “charley, obiaa nyɛ obiaa” (brother, nobody's nobody). This caught Sidney's attention because he had always wanted to do a song about ‘everyone being somebody’ but wanted to put it in such a way that it would spark a debate. While he thought about it he heard a sound bite on Radio Gold, a local radio station, about an argument between two politicians when the phrase “wo yɛ hwan? Wonyɛ obiaa”-who do you think you are? You are nobody; was the central theme of the discourse. It was the continuous airplay of this sound bite that caused Barima Sidney to implement his initial idea of composing the hit track *Obiaa Nyɛ Obiaa*.

At the face value, the chorus line, “nobody is nobody”, may sound negative. However the message being transmitted in the verses is that, all men are equal no matter the hierarchical level they find themselves. Therefore there is a need to show respect to one other. As Barima Sidney was anticipating, a debate sparked out by this track and there was a counter

track toit called *Obi Ye Obi* (Somebody is somebody) by hiplife artistes' Obeyifoo, JQ and Roro. This counter attack by three artistes is quite unique as there are usually musical duals and not otherwise.

4.5 Song Text Analysis-Obiaa Nye Obiaa

Speech act as a tool for discourse analysis is also employed in *Obiaa Nye Obiaa*. Barima begins his song with a bold statement, *Obiaa Nye Obiaa* and although it is a bold statement, he is able to get away with it as a musician. One trait that seems to cut across Barima Sidney's song is the verbose nature of his lyrics which do not present any form of ambiguity or euphemism. However, in this song he presents some level of ambiguity for example, *apɔnkye se ɔbe ma wo jaundice aduro a, eye a hwe ne dwonsɔ*: if a goat says he will give you medicine for your jaundice, don't waste time, check its urine. Because people with that disease usually have yellow eyes, it is assumed that the goat's urine, which is also very yellow, is full of disease. Therefore the goat cannot provide a cure for jaundice.

The music explores the theme of inequality, as it exists in the everyday life of people. Levels of inequality may exist at the workplace, market square, the type of car one uses, the house one lives in, their style of dressing, even in our day, the church that one attends may imbibe in them a sense of superiority over others. An example in the song is the comparison made between "Apɔtrɔ kaa"-VW Beatle-old version and Benz. Benz at the time of the writing this song was in vogue and hence the tendency for one using it to see himself as being of a higher class. However, the "Apɔtrɔ kaa" was once in vogue also so it gives it a form of "antique" value. This is because the model may have been outmoded but

still of great value in historical terms. The idea of one car being of a higher class than the other is lost since the value of both cars may be realized on different level-antique versus modern.

He further reiterates that regardless of what work one does, the common denominator is the money factor. Therefore whether you sit in an air-conditioned room with a tie around your neck or have to stand in the sun to sell, the end result is to earn a living. Additionally, he explores areas such as football teams, making reference to the two most influential rival football clubs in Ghana. These are Kotoko also known as “Fabulous” and Hearts of Oak, which is also known as “Phobia”. Both teams have massive supporter base and as it pertains around the world, there is the tendency of supporters of one club to perceive themselves as being better off than the other team. Regardless of these differences, it makes for better coexistence.

The issue of politics is mentioned twice in the song text. The first mention was a comparison of opposite sides as in verse one, some of which are mentioned above. *Wo wo aban mu a, me wo opposition*, literally means, if you are in government I am in opposition. According to the song, being with a government in power does not make you better off than the other in opposition. This idea establishes the relevance of opposition parties in a country; their role is to check, critique, and collaborate with the government in power for the greater good of the nation. Opposition parties therefore help to create a healthy balance in the management. Thus, being in power only gives one power to a certain extent. An upcoming election is all it takes to see one on the opposite side. This in effect makes both sides equal.

The insertion of politics comes again in the second verse where Barima Sidney narrates a story about three friends: a doctor, an engineer and a politician. The conversation between these three friends gets to a point where they try to justify among themselves the one whose profession was first based on the creation story in the bible. The doctor starts by reminding them of how God caused Adam to sleep and used one of his ribs to make a woman. He explained that surgical operation was performed right there. The engineer disagreed and also came up with an explanation that there was total mess in the beginning even before God created man; since it was his work that brought order by putting things into their proper places. He argued that since engineering work was found right there, his work came first. The politician stayed out of the argument and was silently listening; he started laughing so hard so much that he fell from his chair, rolling on the ground. When asked why he also threw a question that if they all agree that in the beginning there was a mess before the engineering work placed things right, then who created the mess? According to Barima Sidney all these three professions have their place making them equal in that sense. The bottom line of that text talks about the fact that we all were created equal in the sight of God, so all need to respect one another regardless of one's rank in the society.

4.6 Africa Monie (2007)

There was a break of songwriting from the year 2004 until *Africa Monie* in the latter part of 2007. Research into the best way to breakthrough to the French neighboring speaking countries and beyond to other African countries, necessitated the pause in songwriting for Barima. With the results of the research came a theme that runs through African countries: money problems; and how Africans complain of the little money in the system and their inability to take care of the little left. The song reminds those in authority about the need

to start paying attention to their subordinates, since they are the ones who do the all “donkey” work. The advice in this song is for those in authority to be fair in the distribution when money is involved.

4.7 Song Text Analysis-Africa Monie

Barranco (2013) points out that it is essential to address the language in context because it can display social problems that occur in society. This song explores the issue of corruption as it exists in all institutions including churches and workplaces. The songwriter tackles the problem of money accumulation at the expense of others as an “African phenomenon,” perhaps alluding to the reason for Africa’s underdevelopment. After confronting the issue of inequality in his 2004 hit song *Obiaa Nyɛ Obiaa* here, he then questions how the gap can be bridged when the high in society keep accumulating wealth for themselves. The church is not left out of the attack. Reference is made to pastors who help themselves with church money. According to Barima Sidney, ‘he has arrived to rock.’ He will therefore not keep quiet in the face of the ruthless amassing of wealth. His main concern is the politicians who, according to him, “have taken them all.” The original intent of the composer on this song was the same analysis that was expressed by the select audience participation on the song text.

4.8 Donkomi (2013)

A survey to find out how people are coping with daily life in the midst of the erratic energy crises necessitated this single. The main idea behind this song was to create a virtual dialogue between Barima Sidney and the president where Barima Sidney as the linguist communicates the concerns of the citizens to the President and takes the reply

from him to the citizens. Barima Sidney hoped to keep releasing single tracks on these concerns until the president's attention is drawn to his message and invited him to actually address these concerns. The results from this dialogue would then be used for the original of these series of song. Unfortunately for Barima Sidney, this dream was crushed as the "Informer," a local newspaper hyped his use of the President's picture and voice as a serious offense that merits his arrest. The Bureau of National Investigation and National Security requested from him a video copy of the song. He was not given and has still not received any feedback from the authorities as to why the song was being banned, as at the time of the writing of this project.

4.9 Song Text Analysis-Donkomi

This song is in a form dialogue between Barima Sidney and Ghana's president at the time of writing. Basically, the musician stands as a linguist who presents a petition to the president about the state of affairs as it pertains to the ordinary Ghanaian. Barima Sidney underscores that the president of Ghana has put the country on a "reduction sale" which is what the word *Donkomi* stands for. In the course of their discussion he is encouraged to have patience-*nya abotre*. This notwithstanding, he goes on to talk about the soaring rate of water and electricity bills, backlog of workers' salaries and transportation bills. He also tackles the problem of delayed payments, which has caused people to either secure loans or beg for money on the social media such as on WhatsApp, which has become popular in Ghana. Though the corruption in some government sectors have been made public, some ministers are still gaining wealth for themselves with ministerial bonuses being paid to them whilst the masses suffer and workers go on strike. In response to the various issues bothering the citizenry, all the president could say was, *Nya abotre*-have patience. A section of people interviewed after listening to this song had majority agreeing that the

song text latently pointed important issues which are brought to the attention of all and sundry and not so much the president as Barima originally intended it.

4.10 Ayeka (2014)

After the Brazil World Cup in June 2014, a lot of socio-political issues on the footballers, their technical team and supporters were generated. Mismanaged of state funds was the main theme running throughout these commentaries; some people lost their positions only to be re-designated to different posts in government. According to Barima Sidney, the opposition whom he expected to pressurize the government into taking the right step by firing the guilty persons did not. Instead of them taking advantage of the situation to team up, and cause people to look up to them as an alternative relief, they keep fighting among themselves to the extent that they even “wash their dirty linen in public.” If the government in power is not living up to expectation and the opposition, by their actions, does not seem to be ready to take up the mantle, then it means that Ghana is being run at a loss (Ayeka).

4.11 Song Text Analysis of Ayeka

This song literally implied the dye is cast. This song features as a proverb, which starts with funny and interesting word “Adowoe” which is monkey in the Twi and draws attention to listeners by being repeated nine times in the beginning. The proverb is mentioned with variations that concern the state of the nation. Barima Sidney states in the beginning of the song that he knows the song will not be played and congratulated ‘the brave’ who will go ahead to play it regardless. He states in the songs that he needs to say the things he addresses and if he dies he is sure someone like him will continue from

where he stopped. There is a lot that is said in this almost three-minute rap song. Barima Sidney touches on almost every area of responsibility of the government to the citizenry.

Moreover, he conveys the peoples' message to the president about their suffering, not the least from the President's own camp. Interestingly and as it is normal practice, he begins the song with a proverb "*Adowoe to abɔ adwe*" to wit, "Monkey's bottom has cracked nut", "*Things fall apart, center cannot hold*" (Chinua Achebe), 'if you follow your stomach too much You'll end up laughing at your bottom... These proverbial phrases used by Barima Sidney in this song demonstrates his knowledge and command of the Twi language and oral tradition that is passed on from generation to generation. A clarion call to the youth to rise up for the sake of Ghana is followed quickly with a note of caution not to involve guns, as Barima Sidney is a peacemaker. Barima Sidney's writing and thinking style springs from his longing for the right thing to be done in society, in the nation as a whole and, in the sub-continent of West Africa.

The very title of this song is 'the dye is cast' unequivocally lends itself to multiple interpretations by all and sundry and I agree with him that it can be branded as controversial. Barima Sidney has solely pioneered music that directly, or with the use of humour and clever metaphors at times, addresses the social and political vices in the country. He daringly teases the President by asking who's in charge mentioning 'chisel' and 'hammer.' The response 'chisel' which is mentioned first ridicules the name "Mahama," (the president at the time of the writing) which rhymes with 'hammer.' Those interviewed on this song unanimously believed that a few years earlier, this mention of Chisel and Hammer when he's asking of who is in-charge would have put Barima Sidney

in all sorts of trouble by the then government in power though the country is under democratic dispensation

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

The first chapter gives a background to the study in the area of socio-political nature of song text with Barima Sidney as an ambassador. The second chapter reveals that music is associated with different events such as political rallies, military parades, music accompanying dance, etc. The chapter reveals that Barima Sidney's music has two characteristics namely: the ability to talk about sensitive issues and for the listening pleasure of his fans due to the twist and turns of the song texts. The chapter establishes the fact that music and politics can be traced as far back as the independence struggle of Ghana. Music was used as a tool to exercise the dissatisfaction of the colonial rule. Music is used for promoting socio-political commentary in three main ways. Firstly, political parties may compose music under commission. Examples are *I Dey Bii* by Adangba for the National Democratic Congress, NDC and *NPP Wo Soro* by Kwabena Kwabena for the New Patriotic Party, NPP, all in the 2012 as campaign songs. Secondly, music may be composed through the creativity of an artiste about socio-political issues affecting the country as a tool of expressing their grievances. Thirdly, music also may be adopted by the masses in different contexts relating to issues of the nation.

The third chapter of this thesis gives the biography of Barima Sidney right from early life and education to his role as a musician and his achievements. The chapter also establishes how Barima Sidney got himself into music, the challenges he faced and his contributions in the music industry.

The fourth chapter analysis the five selected songs of Barima Sidney namely: [1] *Scenti Noo*; [2] *Obiaa Nyɛ Obiaa*; [3] *Africa Monie*; [4] *Donkomi*; and [5] *Ayɛka*, the purpose of the songs and the manner in which they were composed. The analysis is also centered strongly on the song texts of the five selected songs.

MAJOR FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

Sidney's music contains a pleasurable component and one that has the purpose or function of making socio-political commentaries. This was linked to other works that see popular music as a form of social action, Garofolo (1992), Steinberg (2004), Urban (2004) and Szemere (2001).

The study then goes on to examine various ways songs have been used politically. For instance, the anti-slavery coded messages of 'negro' spirituals, America minstrel songs that when performed by African Americans sometimes used double entendre, allusion and parody to criticise white America's racism, and late 19th American trade union songs that exalted 'the spirit of rebellion'. It extends this discussion to American hip-hop, a major influence on Ghanaian hiplife and finds this is full of double meanings, allegories, linguistic puns and 'signifying.' In the African context the paper refers to the works of Avorgbedor (2009) and Collins (2005) on the uses proverb and allegory in African popular music. It also discusses the use of African popular songs during the independence struggle for instance, highlife songs by E.K Nyame, Kwaa Mensah and E.T Mensah and the censorship of some Ghanaian highlife, hiplife, reggae and neo-traditional music in the post-independence era.

In the case of hiplife the study discusses the dislikes of the older generation for this music due to its hurried lyrics *Kasa hare*, misogyny and lewdness. It makes the points that music, created by music Ghanaian youth of the 1990s, began indigenising American hip-hop in order to create a distinct local form of this music. However, whereas the American rap was born out of the oppression of the black urban ghettos, the paper notes that hiplife was re-contextualised to provide the youth with their own identity, fashions and voice. So hip-hop became a factor in Ghanaian generational change.

The study presents a detailed biography of Barima Sidney who was born in 1977 into a musical family, with his grandfather being an early highlife recording artist and his cousin the famous hiplife pioneer Reggie Rockstone. In his youth Barima was influenced by concert party musicians who came with their highlife musical plays to the Darkoman area where he lived, and he began writing songs at school. In 1994 he joined the Native Funk Lords hiplife group that performed mainly in Pidgin English. Then in 1995 Barima and two other, Omanhene Pozo and the lady rapper Jyoti Chandler formed the Nananom hiplife group that performed in Twi. This made its first big public performance in 1996 at the National Theatre competition for 27 local rap groups, for which Nananom won a cash prize and the recording of a single at Zap Mallet's recording studio. Nananom began touring Ghana and released their first album *Wo Kyere Woho* (you are too proud) and then broke up when Jyoti went into gospel music, whilst Pozo and Barima went solo. Barima then began releasing his own music in 2001 e.g *Agoo*. This was followed by his 2002 *Abuskeleke* about young women's fashion of bearing the midriffs. The same year at a show at Labadi Beach Barima Sidney was the first hiplifer to move from lip-synching to the live performance of hiplife. From this point came a succession of releases, like *Scent Noo* released 2003, *Obia Nye Obia* in 2004 and *Africa Monie* in 2007. In 2012 he released

the album *Forso Ye No Saa* and also single *Eboboba* that referred to fake pastors and also drew on political joke once made by former president Jerry John Rawlings concerning a Ga chief who disregarded his people that they made demonstration against him using Ga kolomashie neo-traditional music. In 2013 came Barima's *Donkomi* followed by *Who Said Twea*, concerning an inappropriate expression a politician said on TV and in 2014 *Ayeka*. That year he also released *Ebola*, the song about an infection where he became involved in the Ebola awareness campaign and even travelled and recorded a song on the topic in Liberia.

The study captures in the biographical chapter Barima Sidney's thought on his political songs that criticise corrupt politicians, various ministries, the current 'dumsor' crisis and also provides 'a voice for the voiceless.' Indeed a big influence in Barima Sidney's life is the famous Nigerian protest singer Fela Anikulapo-Kuti into whose shoes Barima would like to step. Barima has influenced the Ghanaian hiplifer Sarkodie whose song 'Inflation' questions the competence of the ruling NDC party. This was after Barima declared a "Musical Coup d'état" and he and some artistes in the entertainment industry decided to join him in adding their voices to fight for the less privileged through music, demonstrations and on other social platforms.

Barima Sidney collaborated with other hiplifers artist like Morris Babyface, Samini, King Ayisoba and Tinny. He also became involved with various educational campaigns expressed in his song *Give them the pen not the gun* that he did with King Ayisoba and Dr. Kaunda.

Sidney changed his name to Barima Sidney after a chance to perform was given him by Sloopy Mike Gyamfi in a “Muziekfestival” organised in Amsterdam, after the Dutch audience was perplexed to see that man with such a western name being infact a Ghanaian. So he added the name Barima Twi for ‘man’ to identify himself as a Ghanaian more clearly on the international scene.

According to Barima 30% of the inspiration for his song lyrics comes from his own everyday life experiences and 70% from what he hears from people talking about. For a recording session he sings his newly composed song to an engineer who works out the instrumentation, then Barima adds backing vocals and raps. He mainly sings and rap in Twi but also includes code switching between this language Ga, Hausa, Pidgin English and French. Barima has five albums and eight single to his credit and the paper analyses five of these songs which are fully presented in the dissertation appendix.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Scenti Noo or ‘that scent’ (2003) is on the topic of personal, social and environment hygiene. It humorously mentions the smelly socks of ‘honourables’ (Parliamentarians), a drunkard’s breath, passive smoking, the danger of skin bleaching, bus conductors armpits and women’s unkempt private parts. He also refers to the stench of gutters at Achimota Lorry Park-that resulted in clean-up of the area. Despite the objections of some members of Parliament who wanted to ban the song *Scenti Noo*, it rather became the campaign song for New Patriotic Party in the run up to the 2004 elections-which they won.

Obiaa Nye Obiaa or 'nobody's nobody' (2004) is about need for everyone to respect each other and its uses as animal proverb concerning goat that cannot provide a cure yellow jaundice as its own urine is so yellow; i.e. the need to find the right person for the right job. The song also talks of the need for equality in various ways: from a VW being as good as Benz car to the importance of the status of the opposition parties. It also includes funny conversation between a surgeon, an engineer and politician concerning the relative importance of their profession by using biblical analogies. The surgeon says God surgically removed a rib from Adam to make Eve, the engineer said God engineered the creation of the world whilst the mess that Adam and Even found themselves in after eating the forbidden fruit, was according to the politician, type of political mess.

Africa Monie (2007) is a collaborative effort of Barima and Morris Baby Face that combines Twi, English and French. It says that people in authority should respect their subordinates who all do the 'donkey' work.' It criticises corruption in workplaces and in churches when pastors take church money.

It also tackles money accumulation by politicians and 'Ogas' (Bigmen) at the expenses of the public, which Barima claims is an 'African phenomenon' that leads to under-development. Barima performed this song in several West African countries and the song was used by various political parties in Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Burkina Fasso and Equitorial Guinea.

Donkomi or 'reduction sales' (2013) is also on the topic of equality and involves Barima talking to the President of Ghana who has put the country into a 'reduction sale,' resulting in the soaring price of water electricity, transport and backlogged salaries-whilest ministers get bonuses. The song also used the proverb 'monkey dey work and baboon dey chop' about the division of society into rich and poor that was once one of the slogans of the Ghana Trade Union Congress. In *Donkomi* Barima incorporates snatches of the President's Mahamma's voice and the President's picture in the accompany video and as a result this song was banned.

Ayeka or 'dead end' or the 'dye is cast' (2014) includes Barima rapping for three minutes about the responsibility that the government has to its citizens. But rather there is mismanagement of state funds and also the problem that the opposition party not taking up this matter seriously. The song begins with a funny animal parable about 'monkey's bottom has cracked palm-kennels, i.e. an unmanageable situation. Barima also uses humour and pun by equating the word 'hammer' as in hammer and chisel to President 'Mahamma'

5.2 Conclusion

This research has discussed the biography, musical career and contributions of Barima Sidney to the musical industry through hiplife. The study has revealed that Barima Sidney in his capacity as a professional songwriter, arranger, and performer has released five albums and eight singles to his credit. The study also revealed that hiplife has gone through five evolution stages and still counting and this is due to its acceptance and popularization. In comparison with other contemporary African musicians, some similar

themes as do Barima's songs can be referred to Fela Anikulapo-Kuti's Nigerian Afrobeats. Examples are Fela's lyrics on government mismanagement such as *Authority Stealing* and *ITT*, against female skin bleaching like *Yellow Fever* and the shortage of electrical power *NEPA*. For the re-interpretation of song text by listeners, examples can be found by E.K. Nyame's *Pɔnkɔ Abɔdam*, King Bruce's *Srɔto Ye Mli*, K. Gyasi's *Agyimah Mansah* and Nana Ampadu's *Ebi Te Yie* or more recently by C.K. Mann's *Adwoa Yankey*.

The use of humour, allusion and pun was also linked to Black American hip-hop linguistic inversion and hidden codes and traditional African use of indirection, metaphor and animal parables. The fact that rapping itself is a form of poetry and so inherently ambiguous and contains multiple interpretations was established as a reason for the research.

5.3 Recommendations

Researchers have focused on the musical analysis of music much to the neglect of song texts analysis. Attempts should therefore be made at the song texts analysis as an alternative because song texts have not been too much analysed though this area has important messages, which can be addressed. Song texts are also means of communication as they can express main ideas about society and it can transmit different messages. Efforts should also be made at documenting the lives and works of hiplife musicians because not much research has been done in this area, though hiplife became part of the Ghanaian culture since the late 1990s. Serious consideration should therefore be given to research in this area. Finally, it is recommended that future researchers and policy makers

pay attention to the various ways in which music and performance contexts alter the lives of individuals and group dynamics in the Ghanaian society.

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Interview with sampled individuals.....	May 22, 2015
Interview with Barima Sidney	May 23, 2015
Interview with sampled groups.....	June 19, 2015
Interview with Barima Sidney	June 20, 2015
Telephone Interview with Barima Sidney	June 1, 2015
Telephone Interview with Barima Sidney	June 5, 2015
Telephone Interview with Barima Sidney	July 8, 2015
Telephone Interview with Barima Sidney	July 10, 2015

APPENDIX

Song Texts and their translation

1. Scenti Noo,

Scenti noo, scenti no
 Agye bæbia
 Nkwan no scenti no, agye bæbia
 Mpaboa scenti no, agye bæbia
 Atadee scenti no, agye bæbia
 Socks no scenti no, agye bæbia
 Scenti noo, scenti no
 Agye bæbia
 Scenti noo, scenti no
 Agye bæbia

Verse 1

Watwa akpeteshie de akoda na adee akye, na wo twitwii wo se (Scenti no)
 Wonam obi dan akyi na ɔrebɔ nkwan, na abɔ afa wo hwene mu (Scenti no)
 Mate bi gyegye sika ewɔ trɔtrɔ mu, na watene ne nsa (Scenti no)
 Honourable apɔn abeduru fie na woayi ne mpaboa, socks no (Scenti no)
 Hwɛ, manka a, hwan na ebeka
 Monma menka, controversial first class
 Enye enne a, nea yentee bi da, ene tuwi
 Pɔmpɔ adi w'amotum abro a, wose pimples
 Enne mmara mu, anibie aba nyinaa, no way
 Honourable Apɔfee koraa usu spray
 Obeyi ne mpaboa no ato ho a, Awurade e
 Nkwadaa ewɔ 18 mo ha nyinaa, runaway
 Woapo wo ho saa ama scent no agye wo ho
 Koogoa ne to ko ka ye a, wo se odwan wo ho
 Felicia, Monica, Mansa mo nyinaa twa clean
 Ebeye den na ɔmo nya market
 Hwɛ, w'atwa akpeteshie de akoda na adee akye, na wo rentwitwii wose (Scenti no)
 Wonam obi dan akyi na ɔrebɔ nkwan, na abɔ afa wo hwene mu (Scenti no)
 Mate bi regyegye sika ewɔ trɔtrɔ mu, na watene ne nsa (Scenti no)
 Honourable apɔn abeduru fie na woayi ne mpaboa, socks no

Repeat Chorus

Verse 2

Oh ye witches of Africa
 Why are thou doeth this to Achimota?
 Nkran gutter kankan nyinaa headquarters
 Filling station no anim hɔ pɛɛ, no offence
 Koogoa ne to pɔ, oblow fuse
 Brothers sit am down yob am, no use

Dabiara wo behu no Glenns anim mu, one ne crews
 Honam kankan TDB, otua ne dues
 Long John DK a.k.a Uncle Huggy
 Emaa no hu no dabiara a, ma omo feeli jiggy
 Oshada nice, feeli nice, te se Uncle Ricci

Scent na ewo ne ho no, bisa Micky
 Line by line, hwe, obiara mma ne nsa so
 Woa w'amma so, na efu abro so
 Koodea moma po apostrophi pantalo
 Nea me ka nyinaa, state of emergency
 Wote wo baabi redwen wo ho na obi retwe jot,
 na woapu agu wo so (Scenti no)
 Mo nyinaa mo tena aircon mu, rebɔ nkɔmɔ,
 na obia eyi mframa bone (Scenti no)
 Obarima bi a neho yefe, ose ope wo, na wabaa n'anum (Scenti no)
 W'anya obaa bi a, ne ho yefe, wode no akɔ duru dan mu (Scenti no)
 Ayoo o (3x), (Scenti no)

Repeat Chorus

Gbesange, lo ni jeoo sa (4x)

Repeat Chorus

English Translation

Chorus:

The scent has filled everywhere
 The scent of the soup has filled everywhere
 The scent from the shoe has filled everywhere
 The scent in the clothes has filled everywhere
 The scent from the socks has filled everywhere
 The scent has filled everywhere
 The scent of the soup has filled everywhere
 The scent from the shoe has filled everywhere
 The armpit scent has filled everywhere
 The under scent has filled everywhere

Verse 1

Getting drunk with akpeteshie (local gin) and sleeping till morning
 without brushing your teeth (the scent)
 Passing behind someone's house
 and smelling the scent of soup being prepared (the scent)
 A mate (bus conductor) stretching out his hand to receive the bus fare (the scent)
 When honourable gets home from work and takes his socks off (the scent)
 Look, if I don't say it, who will? Let me say it.
 When it comes to controversial issues, I'm first class

It's not the first time we've heard the sound of gassiness
 A boil is having a field's day in your armpit and you claim it's a pimple
 Despite this age of enlightenment, no way
 Even honourable Apɔfee (metaphoric name) uses perfume
 If he's about to remove his feet from his shoe, oh my God
 All the children in his yard run away
 You've bleached to the extent that the scent is stuck on you
 When Koogoa (nick name) said it you said he's annoying you
 Felicia, Monica, Mansa are neat. Why won't they get market?
 Getting drunk with akpeteshie (local gin) and sleeping till morning
 without brushing your teeth (the scent)
 Passing behind someone's house
 and smelling the scent of soup being prepared (the scent)
 A mate (bus conductor) stretching out his hand to receive the bus fare (the scent)
 When honourable gets home from work and takes his socks off (the scent)

Repeat chorus

O ye witches of Africa, why art thou doeth this to Achimota?
 The headquarters of all the stinking gutters in Accra
 Right in front of the filling station, no offence
 Koodea moma pɔ (nick name) siting there your mouth smells
 Brothers have sat down to tell him, no use
 Everyday you'll see him in front of Glenn's (night club) with his buddies
 Bad body odor TDB (Till Day Break), he's paying his dues
 Long John D. K (nick name) a. k. a. Uncle Huggy
 The ladies see him and always feel jiggy
 He dresses nice, feels nice, like Uncle Ricci
 The scent on him, ask Mickey
 Line by line, look everyone lift up your hands
 If you're not able to do so then it means it's overgrown (armpit hair)
 Koodea moma pɔ apostropho pantalɔ (description of nick name Koodea moma pɔ)
 All I'm saying is state of emergency,
 When you're sitting somewhere quietly thinking about yourself
 and someone puffs his smoked cigarette on you (Scenti noo)
 All of you are sitting in an air-conditioned room chatting
 and someone pollutes the atmosphere with bad air from the bottom (Scent noo)
 A handsome guy who wants to woo you and opens his mouth (Scenti noo)
 You've got a beautiful girl; you reach the room with her and ... (Scenti noo)

Ayoo o (3x), (Scent no)

Repeat Chorus

Gbosanje (a type of edible sea turtle), lo ni jeoɔ sa
 (what a strong scented meat) (4x) Repeat

Chorus

2. Obiaa Nyɛ Obiaa

Intro

Sidney, back again
 Aane, madi kan akakyere mo deda
 Na meguso renoa, afei, anya aben
 Sidney, ah, Morris babyface
 Alongside Squadiee

Chorus

Obiaa nyɛ obiaa e, obiaa nyɛ obiaa
 Hey, obiaa nyɛ obiaa (2x)
 Wonyɛ obiaa e, me nso menyɛ obia
 Hey, obiaa nyɛ obiaa (2x)
 Wotwi wo benz a, metwi m'apɔtrɔ kaa
 Volvo a, me nso metwi tsolɔɔre
 Hey, obiaa nyɛ obiaa (2x)
 Wowɔ aban mu a, mewɔ opposition
 Phobia a, mewɔ Fabulous
 Hey, obiaa nyɛ obiaa (2x)

Verse 1

Wonyɛ obiaa, menyɛ obiaa
 Yɛn nyinaa, obiaa nyɛ obiaa
 Sɛ woyɛ obi, me nso meye obi
 Enti yɛn nyinaa, obiaa nyɛ obiaa
 Atadeɛ na ehyɛ wo no, sɛ eyɛ wo fɛ
 Eno nti na wote wo sika kɔtɔɔyɛ
 Me deɛ yi nso ye me fɛ
 Enti yɛn nyinaa, obiaa nyɛ obiaa
 Wabɔ wo tie, wote air-condition mu
 Megyina wia yi mu, meretɔn ma deɛ
 Yɛn nyinaa, sika korɔ yi a
 A, obiaa nyɛ obiaa
 What, obiaa nyɛ obiaa
 Obia nni hɔ, ɔyɛ nipa sen obi
 Nyankopɔn bɔɔ yɛn nyinaa pɛ
 Fɛ n'efɛ sɛ, mehu wo a, mekyia wo
 Wongyee so a, wonyɛ obiaa
 Me nso so, menyɛ obiaa
 Yɛn nyinaa, yehyɛ mmra ase
 Obiaa nni hɔ a, sɛbe, mmra hyɛ n'ase
 President o, lawyer o, yɛn nyinaa yehyɛ mmra ase
 Wowɔ aburokyire a, mewɔ Ghana
 Wotwi car a, menam daadze
 Already made, mehyɛ foos

Wobɔ premier, meɔ colts
 Wodi dollars, medi cedis
 Ɛwɔ mu sɛ wo deɛ no so deɛ
 Nso nne, ma yen nyinaa gye tu mu sɛ, enne enye sika bio
 Yen nyinaa, obia nye obia

Montie (2x)
 Engineer no rekasa no, ɔkaa asem bi
 Ɔse, the whole world was in a mess
 Merebisa o, asem bisa
 Merebisa, who created the mess
 Poltician, doctor, engineer, who created the mess Amanfoɔ, meto ma mo
 Ɔmo nyinaa, obia nye obia

Translation of Obiaa Nye Obiaa

Sidney, back again
 Yes, I've already told you,
 I was still cooking, now it's ready
 Sidney, ah, Morris Babyface
 Alongside Squadiee
 Hey, nobody's nobody (2x)
 If you're in government, I'm in opposition
 If you're a Phobia fan, I'm a Fabulous fan (two football local clubs) Hey, nobody's
 nobody (2x)

Verse 1

You're nobody, I'm nobody
 We are both nobodies
 You are somebody, I'm somebody
 So both of us, nobody's nobody
 You're wearing your dress because it's nice to you,
 That is why spent money to buy it.
 Mine too is beautiful
 So both of us, nobody's nobody
 You're wearing a tie, sitting in an air-condition
 I'm standing in the sun, selling my goods
 Both of us are doing so because of money
 Ah, nobody's nobody
 Bro, nobody's nobody
 No one is more human than the other
 God created us all equal
 It's only nice that I greet you when I see you
 If you won't respond, you're nobody
 Me too I'm nobody
 We are all under the law
 No one has the law under him
 Be it the President, or the lawyer,

We are all under the law If you're abroad, I'm in Ghana
 If you drive a car, I walk
 Already made, I wear second hand clothing
 If you play the premier, I play colts
 You spend dollars, I spend cedis
 It is true that yours is heavier than mine
 But today, let's all accept the fact that today it's not money again
 Both of us, nobody's nobody
 Bro, nobody's nobody
 Human being look don't be proud
 You don't know where you'll die
 You're a Catholic, I'm a Presbyterian
 It's the same God for both
 Bro, nobody's nobody

Repeat Chorus

Repeat Chorus in Hausa

Verse 2

If a goat says it'll give you medicine for jaundice
 Don't wait, check its urine
 There were three friends
 One doctor, one engineer, and a politician
 They met for a chat one hot afternoon
 As the chat when on a big question came up
 A doctor, an engineer, a politician
 Whose profession was the first on earth?
 The doctor was the first to raise his hand that it was him; have they forgotten?
 When God created Adam he took out one of his ribs to make Eve.
 Right there, surgical operation
 Right there, the doctor was there
 The engineer raised his hands that he disagrees;
 His work is more important than everybody's.
 Before God created humans the whole world was in a mess.
 And he separated the waters from the vegetation
 And told the mountains to go where they are
 Right there, engineering work
 Right there, engineer was there
 The politician started laughing
 He laughed till he was rolling on the floor
 Bra Sammy Kotoo (nick name), politician
 This was the question he posed, listen, listen

When the engineer was speaking he said something:
 He said the whole world was in a mess
 I'm asking o just a question; I'm asking, "who created the mess?"
 The politician, the doctor, and the engineer, who created the mess?
 People, I this question is to you

All three of them; nobody's nobody

Chorus

3. Africa Money

Our money, wanna money (4x)

Yeah Sidney, Je suis arrive.
 Que c'est bras dessous, Quoi, c'est le Ghana
 C'est moi qui tue
 Ah Sidney back again
 Yeah Nana Oheneba
 What do you say now
 Squadiee alongside my man
 Morris Babyface
 What do you say now

Chorus 1

Wonna money eh, ao money oh
 Africa money eh, Oga dey chop am fuga fuga
 Wonna money eh, ao money oh
 Africa money eh, Oga dey chop am fuga fuga
 E dey chop am nyaga nyaga
 Oga dey chop am nyafu nyafu, nyafu nyafu
 Waa waa waa, Oga dey chop am nyaa
 E dey chop am fuga fuga
 Oga chop am nyaga nyaga, nyaga nyaga
 Buum buum buum, Oga dey chop am waa

Chorus 2

Our money eh, aaw wanna money
 Africa money eh, Oga dey chop am oh
 Poor man dey work, rich dey enjoy
 I say how we go bridge o, the gap between
 Accountant dey chop oh
 Oga dey chop am fuga fuga
 Bank manager dey chop
 Oga dey chop am basa basa
 Director dey chop oh
 Oga dey chop am nyaga nyaga
 Even pastors dey, chop chop, chop chop

Verse 1

Hey l'argent eh, l'argent eh

J'ai bien cherche mais j'ai rien gagne,
 Nos chers politiques à tous coupe oh
 oh oh oh oh oh oh
 Oga dey chop am fuga fuga
 oh oh oh oh oh oh
 Oga dey chop am basa basa
 Eh oh oh eh oh oh
 Oga dey chop am nyaga nyaga
 Eh oh oh eh oh oh

Repeat Chorus 1

Verse 2

Monkey dey work baboon dey chop
 Oga and me na who dey job?
 And yet who dey chop?
 And now how you dey stop?
 Monkey dey work baboon dey chop
 Oga and me na who dey job?
 And yet who dey chop?
 And now how you dey stop?
 Abi you know that Africa be poor
 And yet na we get more
 Cocoa, timber, gold and more
 Yet we don't know we get all
 Wo nko wodi, wo nko woyɔ
 Wo we efuo nsa, hwe wo dee
 Ten years ekae wo deen

Repeat Chorus 2

Our money, wanna money 8x

Yeah, for the people are you ready for this?
 Yeah now when I say zoukou zoukou (Nyafuu nyafuu) 4x
 To the left, to the right (To the right, to the left)
 To the left, to the right (To the right, to the left)
 Kudi 7x
 L'argent 4x
 Kobo, Naira, Cedi, CFA
 L'argent 4x
 We no go sit down make them trick us every day
 We no go sit down make them trick us every day
 Every day for thief, one day for shef (sheriff)
 We no go sit down make them trick us everyday

Repeat chorus 1 till fade

Translation of Africa Monie

I have come
 What is this folded arms?
 What! It is Ghana
 I rock (literally means I am the one who kills)
 Ah Sidney back again
 Yeah Nana Oheneba
 What do you say now
 Squadieh alongside my man
 Morris Babyface
 What do you say now

Chorus 1

Our money eh, ao money oh
 Africa money eh, Oga is spending it mercilessly
 Our money eh, ao money oh
 Africa money eh, Oga is spending it mercilessly
 He's spending it heartlessly
 Oga is spending it senselessly
 Continuously without break Oga is spending it in a slow and annoying way He's spending
 it mercilessly
 Big big big, Oga is spending it without break

Chorus 2

Our money eh, aaw our money
 Africa money eh, Oga is spending it o
 Poor man is working, rich is enjoying
 I say how can we bridge o, the gap between
 Accountant is spending oh
 Oga is spending it mercilessly
 Bank manager is spending
 Oga is spending it without formula
 Director is spending
 Oga is spending it heartlessly
 Even pastors are spending, spending, spending, spending

Verse 1

Hey money eh
 This money eh
 I have really looked for it but I didn't get anything Our dear politicians have taken them all
 Oga is spending it mercilessly

oh oh oh oh oh oh
 Oga is spending it without formula
 Eh oh oh eh oh oh
 Oga is spending it hearlessly

Eh oh oh eh oh oh

Verse 2

Monkey works baboon eats
 Oga and me who does the job?
 And yet who eats?
 And now how can you stop it?
 Monkey dey work baboon dey chop

(Repeat)

I hope you know that Africa is poor
 And yet still we get more
 Cocoa, timber, gold and more
 Yet we don't know we get all
 If you eat alone, you empty the bowels alone
 When you're chewing efuo's hands, check yours
 Ten years, what does it remind you of?

Repeat Chorus 2

Our money, wanna money 8x
 Yeah for the people are you ready for this
 Yeah now when I say zoukou zoukou reply Nyafuu nyafuu 4x
 To the left, to the right (To the right, to the left)
 To the left, to the right (To the right, to the left)
 To the left, to the right (To the right, to the left)

Kudi 7x

L'argent (money) 4x
 Kobo, Naira, Cedi, CFA (money in different languages)
 L'argent (money) 4x
 We won't sit down for them to trick us every day
 We won't sit down for them to trick us every day
 Every day for thief, one day for sheriff
 We won't sit down for them to trick us every day

Repeat chorus 1 till fade

4. Donkomi

Intro:

Aww Mr. Presido, mo bo Ghana Donkomi
 (Nya abotre, nya abotre, nya abotre nya abotre)

Chorus:

If no dey fit the kitchen heat (get out, get out)
 If you fit pay your water bill (put it off, put it off)

Ibi so dem dey tell us o
 If no dey fit the kitchen heat (get out, get out) oh
 If you fit pay your water bill (put it off, put it off)
 Our politicians Yɛbɛbɔ wo Donkomi,
 KD beats, KD beats ei your sectors

Verse 1

Barima: Agoo I dey knock o, Mr. President, you dey?
 Ei I dey knock o, I beg open small
 Ibi me, you no dey kai me? Barima (Scent Noo)
 President: haha, I see. Ibi you dey lash us so?
 Barima: o no, I dey feel you o
 Azonto, alkaida, I no say you get swag
 This be just wake up call, ei, wake-up call
 Anyway what dey go on?
 Yɛtete amanfoɔ bi we dou (sika)
 Ibi say you fit soa dem or campaign time you dey show love? Presido shine your eyes;
 people dey chop wana dou (sika)
 Gold, oil ne cocoa you no dey see top, kotoo!
 Aw system high. Day in and day out people dey hustle
 Light bill: up, up!
 Water bill: up, up!
 Transport: up, up!
 Wana salary: down, down!

Aww Mr. Presido mo bɔ Ghana Donkomi
 (nya abotre) Ai, agyei, aah, agyei, yeah

Repeat chorus

Heya ei, tie:
 Barima: one man for my road top anytime he sight me then he bore
 One woman like that too, anytime i spot me she squeeze
 Boys boys brɛ wɔ ghetto; girls , girls no dey fit shoto
 Yawa don pai wahala Ghana. Everywhere you go Mahama
 Ibi true say obiaa baa saa anaa sɛ nowhere cool
 We no say you need time no doubt cause of the court case
 Eight months but still what be wana priorities?
 Create, loot and share? Paying extra bonuses whiles workers dey strike. Why?
 How much I dey earn sef? Two years my salary so nor i dey
 When your phone beep pi then your heart cut.
 Whatsapp dier don't talk. Ibi der people dey srɛ dou (sika); if i no be so loan
 Ino bi say I want play politics, rather i dey play me
 Boys boys no dey fit album, so so singles nkoa
 Aww Mr. Presido mo bɔ Ghana Donkomi

Repeat chorus

Barima: aaaah Presido, all be dat o! this be word on the street.

Barima, voice of the voiceless; I'm done. Away!
 President: yoo Barima, obiaa, se wo hye bra ase ne ade ade a, emere pii no eden kakra
 Barima: your Excellency yee tie wo
 President: wo be she ase anopa na abinom aka se:
 Ah yen hunu babi a yee ko na yen hunu hwee. Nya abotre
 Barima: light bills ko soro
 President: nya abotre
 Barima: workers akatua
 President: nya abotre
 Barima: na GYEEDA report no ee?
 President: wodee nya abotre.
 Wo tu kwan a enye se driver no de hye first no a na wo se kaa no enkɔ ntem.
 Second wo ho, third wo ho, fourth wo ho; fifth mpo wo ho.
 Omo nya abotre, ehunu dee omo be hunu.
 Na nea ye hye bo se ye beye wo Ghana ha Nyame adom yebe ye.
 Barima: Ghanafoɔ err soma na mo soma me no nea oman panyin see no no.
 W'ayi dee mon sem pa

Repeat chorus

Donkomi Translation

Barima: Aww Mr. President you're selling Ghana very cheap
 President: have patience, have patience, have patience, have patience
 If you can't stand the heat in the kitchen, get out! get out!
 (that's what they are telling us)
 If you can't pay your water bill put it off! Put it off! (our politicians)

Chorus:

We will sell you cheap, we will sell you cheap
 We will sell you cheap, Heya very cheap
 They are selling it very cheap

Verse 1

Barima: knock knock I'm knocking o Mr. President, are you there?
 I am knocking o, I beg open small. It's me.
 Don't you remember me? It's Barima (that Odor)
 President: haha, I see. You are the one lashing at us not so?
 Barima: o no, I like you: azonto, alkaida, I know you've got swag
 This is wake up call, yeah, wake up call.
 Anyway what's going on?
 We are hearing some people are squandering the country's money
 Is it that you can't grab them or you're showing love because of campaign time?
 President open your eyes, people are squandering our money
 Gold, oil and cocoa you can't manage one bit
 Aww the system is high. Day in and day out people are hustling.
 Light bill keeps going: up! up!
 Water bill keeps going: up! up!

Transport keeps going: up! up!
Our salary keeps going: down! down!

Aww Mr. President, you're selling Ghana very cheap!
Ai, ouch! aah, ouch! yeah

Repeat chorus

Verse 2

One man along my road, anytime he sees me in sight, he gets angry.
One woman like that too, she squeezes her face anytime she spots me.
Boys boys suffer in the ghetto; girls girls can't be fashionable anymore
Disgrace has come, disaster Ghana everywhere you pass: Mahama
Is it true that it's like that with everyone or nowhere is cool?
We know that you need time, no doubt because of the court case
Eight months but still what are our priorities?
Create, loot and share? Paying extra bonuses whiles workers keep going on strike. Why?
How much do I even earn? Two years my salary is still the same
When your phone beep pi (the beep sound) then your heart misses a beat.
As for Whatsapp don't talk; it is there that people beg for money; if not so it is loan
It's not that I want to play politics, rather it is playing me
Boys boys now can't make album anymore, it is only singles that we manage now

Aww Mr. Presido you've reduced Ghana to the lowest price

Repeat chorus

Barima: aaaah Mr. President that is all o! This is the word on the street.
Barima, voice of the voiceless; I'm done. Away!
President: yoo Barima, everyone when you start the journey of life
and things like that, most of the time it's a little difficult
Barima: your Excellency we're listening
President: you'll start in the morning and some will say,
Ah, we can't see where we're going and we can't see anything. Have patience.
Barima: light bills have gone up o
President: Have patience.
Barima: what about workers' salary upgrade?
President: have patience
Barima: and GYEEDA report too?
President: you just have patience.
When you're travelling and the driver put the gear in first mode
and you say the car is not going fast:
Second is there, third is there, fourth is there, even the fifth gear is there.
They should have patience; as for seeing they will see.
And whatever we promised that we'll do in Ghana here, by the grace of God we will do.
Barima: Ghanaians, err the sending that you sent me; this is what the nation's leader says.
There you have it!

Repeat chorus

5. Ayeka

Chorus:

Adowoe to abɔ adwe
 Adowoe to abɔ adwe aha ha aaa
 Adowoe to abɔ adwe hebaa
 Adowoe to abɔ adwe Ayeka
 Adowoe to abɔ adwe haa Ayeka
 Adowoe to abɔ adwe hebaa, Ghana ha ye den o!
 Adowoe to abɔ adwe, hebaa, agye nsem, tie
 Adowoe to abɔ adwe, Ayeka, Ghana ha ye den o!
 Adowoe to abɔ adwe, hebaa, agye nsem
 Now who be the presido? (Chisel)
 Na who be the president? (Anaa hammer)
 Na who's in charge now? Yiee, nokware Ghana ha ye den Yiee (agye ɔmo nsem)
 Now who be the presido? (Chisel)
 Na who be the president? (Anaa hammer)
 Tell me who's in charge now?
 Yiee (agye ɔmo nsem Heya heya heyaaa; them running away (herrr)
 Dem dey steal (ai ai ai)
 Heya heya heyaaa; them running away
 Dem no dey fit

Verse 1

This song I dey do I no dey no go play
 Wo tumi bɔ nnwom w'ayi a, woye buei
 Yee keka se ɔman yi mu aye den
 Chooboi! nso wo ma so a, obiaa ne ho a ɔbe gye so: yie!
 Anyway manka a, hwan na ɔbe ka? Moma menka
 Me wu a, ɔkyena me so bi be ba
 Light, water, afei dee petrol
 ɔman ben koraa na yete mu yi, ohoo!
 Amanfoɔ akoma ahu, aka tuo ebe to
 Mmran tie bɔ korɔno, mmabaawa kyenkyera
 ɔmo a ɔmo kasa ma wo nyinaa se ɔmo abre
 Nso ɔmo hunu wo a na ɔmo ne wo sere; ɔmo boa!
 Sika yi amanfoɔ adi; wo se committee.
 Committee biara ho nhia, fire!
 Things fall apart, center no dey hold
 Wodi w'afu akyi bebre a, wosere fa woto
 Uh Ayeka!

Repeat chorus

Verse 2

Opposition na mo tirim ye mo dee
 Me hwe me lens mu a enye power na mo pee

Nea ekɔ so mon hunu? eye mo fe?
 Herr, ammunition ben bio na mo pe
 Se me nam a na amanfoɔ mmame me nkra:
 Barima kasa; apaawa no dabɛn na ebe ba?
 Ghana ho do nti me hunu a yebe ka;
 Nea otwa sa no onnim se n'akye akyea
 Shows akeseɛ no emma mo mfre me, meda!
 Nea ehia me ne se oman no be sesa
 Ghana mmɛbunu nyinaa mon sore waka!
 W'ayi nye politics, eye critical
 Obiaa ne ho a oko twe tuo, yebe si dwom
 Adowoe to abo adwe herrr see-saw up and down Ghana paa na yeɛ bo no Donkomi yi
 Won tie obiaa a, obiaa nye obiaa saa
 Herr obiaa nso nsuro obiaa saa

Repeat chorus

Ayeka Translation

Monkey's bottom has cracked palm kernel
 It's hard here in Ghana o
 Monkey's bottom has cracked palm kernel
 No hope remains
 Who is the president? (Is it chisel?)
 Who's the president? (Or is it hammer?)
 Tell me, who is in-charge now?
 Truth be told, living in Ghana is hard
 Heya, heya, heya, heya
 They are running away after stealing
 They are running away because they can't manage the country

Verse 1

I'm dead serious about this song
 If you are able to play this music on your radio/TV station, I salute you
 We say things are not going well in this country
 Yet no one backs you when you take the lead of voicing it out
 Anyway if I don't say it who will? Let me say it
 If I die through that, someone will take up the mantle tomorrow
 Light, water and now petrol
 What kind of country are we living in? oh hoo!
 People's heart are panicking, it's left with gunshots to be fired
 Young men are stealing, young women are prostituting
 All those who speak for you say they are tired
 But laugh with you when they meet you; they're liars!
 People have already squandered the cash
 And you're talking about setting up a committee
 What committee is needed in this matter? Fire!
 Things fall apart, center cannot hold

If you follow your stomach too much
You'll end up laughing at your bottom
Repeat chorus

Opposition you guys are swollen headed
When I check through my lens it's not power that you want
What is going on, can't you see? Is it beautiful to you?
Hey, what other kind of ammunition do you want?
People keep giving messages when I meet them along the way:
Barima, speak. When will the album be released?
Because of the love for Ghana,
We will say it when we see it
The one weeding cannot see his back
Whether it's crooked or straight
Don't call me when it comes to the big shows. I'll sleep!
All I need is a change in the country
Youth of Ghana arise with urgency
This is not politics, it's critical
No one is going to pick a gun we'll get to the streets
Monkey's bottom has cracked nut
Hey, see-saw, up and down
Ghana is being played like that childhood game
If you won't listen to anybody
You should know that nobody is nobody like that
No one fears no one too

Repeat chorus