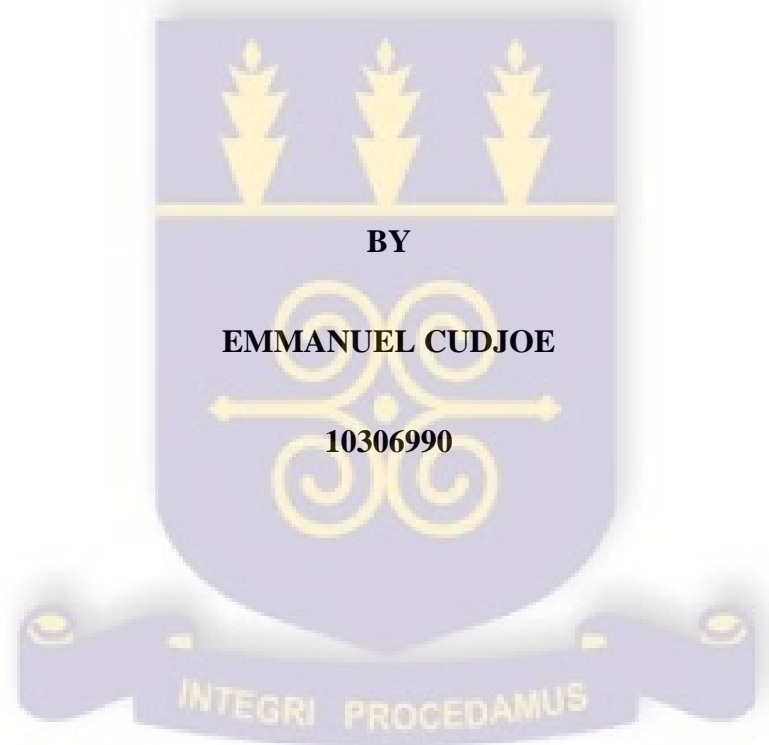


**THE CONTEXTS AND MEANING IN ASANTE DANCE PERFORMANCE: THE
CASE OF *KETE***



**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF M.A. IN AFRICAN STUDIES DEGREE.**

DECEMBER, 2015

DECLARATION

I certify that this dissertation is my original work produced from research undertaken under supervision.

.....

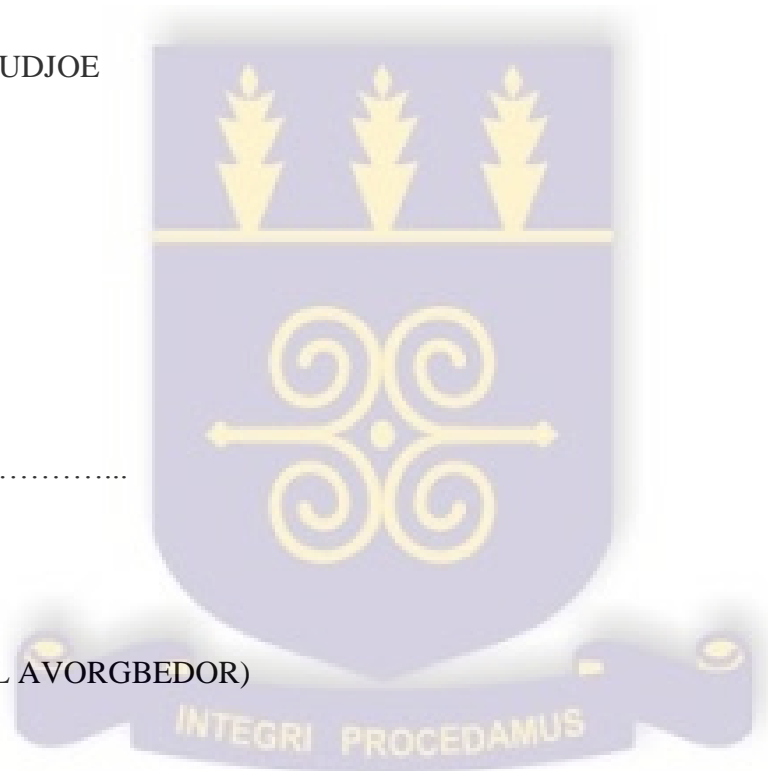
EMMANUEL CUDJOE

Candidate

.....

Main Supervisor

(PROF. DANIEL AVORGBEDOR)



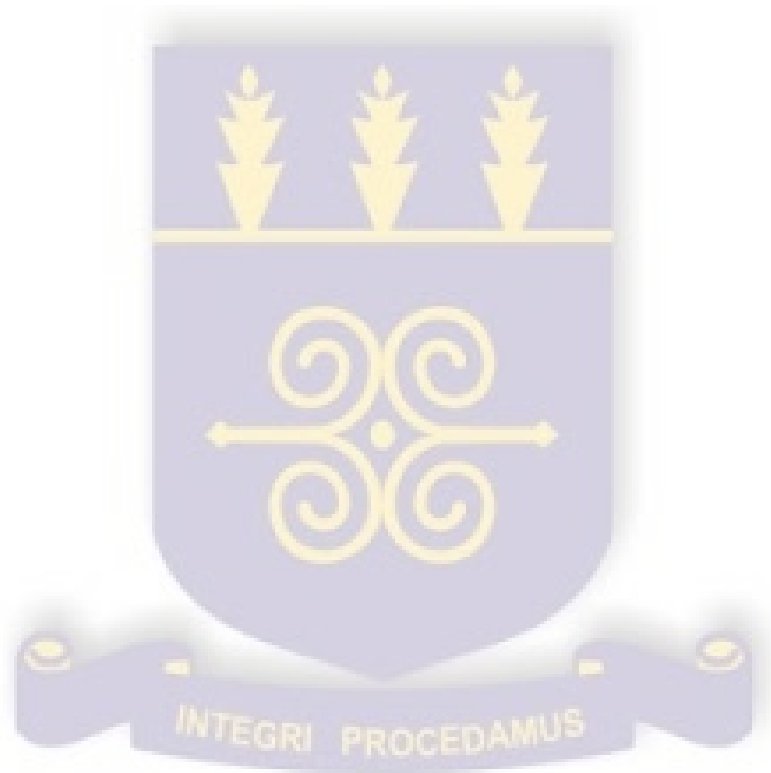
.....

Assistant Supervisor

(DR. MOSES NII- DORTEY)

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my Lord and Master Jesus Christ for His vision and love.



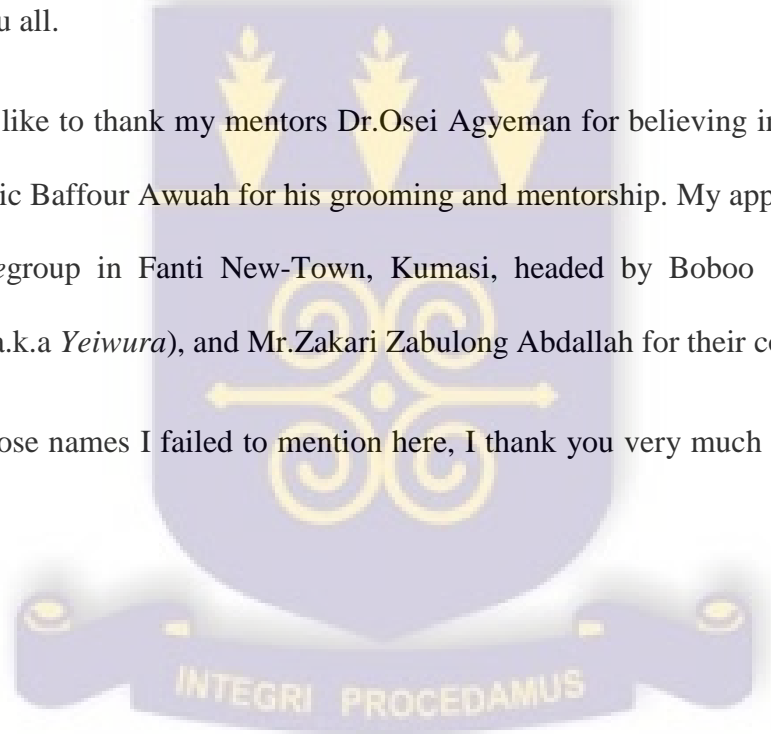
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to God for his mercies and to my supervisors, Professor Daniel Avorgbedor and Dr.Nii Dortei for their guidance and supervision. This work would not have been possible without their insights and direction.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my mother Georgina Antwi, my seniors Sandra Owusu, Twumasi-Ntiamoah, Senyo Okyere, the Cudjoe family, God is Able Family (Nɛkɛ fellows), friends, and colleagues who contributed in diverse ways and assisted in proof reading this work. I thank you all.

Finally, I would like to thank my mentors Dr.Osei Agyeman for believing in me, and for his tutorship, and Eric Baffour Awuah for his grooming and mentorship. My appreciation goes to Ahenemma *Ketegroup* in Fanti New-Town, Kumasi, headed by Boboo and Mr Baffour Kyeremanteng (a.k.a *Yeiwura*), and Mr.Zakari Zabulong Abdallah for their contribution.

For all those whose names I failed to mention here, I thank you very much and wish you all the best.



ABSTRACT

Dance is an important aspect of the culture of the Ghanaian (African). Dance embodies and articulates the philosophies of the culture, the origin, and serves as a unique symbol of identity. Our increasing interaction with various world cultures has undermined certain aspects of our dance heritage. We incorporate ideas which threaten our indigenous philosophies and symbols of our identities to the detriment of our uniqueness as Ghanaians or Africans.

Unfortunately, dance is one aspect of our heritage that is experiencing such impact given its contribution to humanity through its resourceful and artistic integration of socio-political-cultural philosophies of a people. However, in recent times, *Kete* performances have proven over the years to be a formidable medium through which cultural and artistic knowledge are passed on from one generation to another. *Kete*, an Akan dance form, exemplifies the impact of the acculturation on Ghanaian dance forms. Some *Kete* performers in their quest to adorn a cultural activity with graceful movements employ *Kete* movements in wrong contexts. For instance, some contemporary *Kete* dancers who may not necessarily be indigenous Akan, miss out on the symbolic meanings and philosophies of the *Kete* dance movements they articulate and thus a culturally laden themed movement execution for example, is performed in wrong context.

It is common knowledge that every dance has its own ethics and aesthetics. Many researchers have investigated the *Kete* dance and its aesthetics, but less attention has been paid to the contextual use of the gestures. The purpose of this thesis is to analyse critically some gestures, meanings and contexts of one of the well-known Akan court dance suites, the *Kete* dance and determine how the dance movements differ from various contexts as well as their implications on safeguarding in Ghana.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE

DECLARATION..... i

DEDICATION..... ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT..... iii

ABSTRACT..... iv

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION: DANCE IN GHANA..... 1

1.1 Background to the Study..... 2-11

1.2 Problem Statement..... 12-14

1.3 Methodology..... 15-16

1.4 Significance of Study..... 17

1.5 Delimitation of Study..... 17

1.6 Limitations of Study..... 18-19

1.7 Objectives of study..... 19

1.8 Summary..... 20

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW..... 21-32

2.1 Summary..... 33

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 From court to common grounds..... 34-36

3.1 Asante Dances.....	36-47
3.1.1 EtuoniAfena gestural variation.....	38-43
3.1.2 MabatiAhwan gestural variation.....	44-46
3.1.3 Minsa aka makyi gestural variation.....	46-47
3.2 Summary.....	48

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Critical perspectives on <i>Kete</i> dance in the 21 st century.....	49-50
4.1 <i>Kete</i> language.....	51-53
4.2 Contextual underpinnings of movement variations in <i>Kete</i>	54-56
4.3 <i>Kete</i> as a cultural commodity.....	56-58
4.4 Theorising aesthetics in the <i>Kete</i> dance.....	58-64
4.5 Critical discourse on safeguarding <i>Kete</i> dance heritage.....	64-67
4.6 Summary and conclusion.....	68-69
List of Figures	70-71
Bibliography	72-76
Interviews	77

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Dance is an aspect of culture that embodies and articulates the philosophies of the culture of its origin. It is one of the oldest of the art forms and according to Sorell (1967) ‘before man found means of artistic expression in measured movement he enjoyed the sensation of stepping, turning, swaying, swimming, stamping and leaping(p. 7)’. This affirms the notion that most dances are as old as man himself and in Africa they are predominantly an organization of our daily activities. Doudu (1994) describes dance as the ‘people’s art’ and in his extrapolation he points out that people of all walks of life express themselves through movement/dance and that the typical African has at one time in his lifetime danced. Opoku (1964) further explains that dance is life expressed in dramatic terms and as such we dance to show that we are alive whilst, on the other hand, stillness connotes death. As a symbol of identity, dance is reflective of the constant conception and re-conception of self and society, thus confirming and sustaining the dynamism of culture.

Our increasing interaction with various world cultures has undermined certain aspects of our dance heritage. In addition, Africa’s contributions to world cultures remain to be fully documented and appreciated. It is, therefore, imperative that we analyse the extent to which changes in intangible forms such as dance affect a people’s production of meaning and identity in a given society.

Dances have gone through changes and as such their relevance to generations differ as ‘civilization’ continues to redefine paradigms and notions of understanding. The Akan *Kete* dance, which falls within the expressive heritage of its people, contributes to paradigm shifts in collective meanings and identities. As such, an engagement with this ephemeral yet salient part of the Akan (specifically the Ashanti) culture in scholarly discourse is relevant. This is to

ascertain what changes in its propagation affects other important elements such as aesthetics, kinaesthetic configurations and meanings in various contexts for politico-socio-cultural analysis of societies. This thesis by no means gravitates towards the search for “authenticity” through the analysis of selected gestures within the *Kete* dance suite. On the contrary, it seeks to bring scholarly attention to the changes resulting from political, social, religious, and educational influences in traditional and neo-traditional dancing in Ghana. One of the main premises of this study, therefore, holds that a serious analysis of the functions and uses of the Ashanti *Kete* will remain incomplete unless it pays close attention to the contexts, meanings, and aesthetics of the dance.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Traditional as well as Neo-Traditional dances¹ (Welsh and Hanley, 2010) go through much change, innovation and adaptation, contrary to early observers’ conclusion of it being fixed/stagnant in growth. In addition, such resilient and innovative tendencies are greatly facilitated by the various sociopolitical, religious, and general contexts of performance. Importantly, in the traditional Ghanaian society, dances make meaning through context. Sondra Fraleigh and Penelope Hanstein (1999:9) state that ‘context is the weaving or joining together of elements to produce a whole...neither words nor meaning make meaning when perceived out of context. Rather, we come to understand dance and to define it in terms of context, an inner coherence of movement elements according to purpose.’ As such to study movements isolated from context and its relevance to a people will be to take away relevant information pertaining to the dance and its purposes. Bartenieff (1980), Farnell (1999), in Loke, Larssen, Robertson (2005, 1)

¹ Neo-traditional dances, according to Kariamuw Welsh and Elizabeth Hanley, are dances that are created in the likeness of traditional dances and are not bound to all aesthetics and cultural rules of the society (Welsh and Hanley, 2010, p. 18).

We can describe human movement from many perspectives – the mechanics of the moving body in space and time, the expressive qualities of movement, the paths of movement through space, the rhythm and timing of movement, and the moving body involved in acts of perception as part of human action and activity, to name but a few,

and yet, within the African/Ghanaian conception of dance, movements must correspond to a context to be rendered meaningful and useful to a people. After the set-up of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, there emerged visible paradigm changes in contexts, aesthetics and meaning in dance performance. Ofotsu Adinku (1994) posits that the set-up of the Ghana dance ensemble within the broader cultural emancipation goals of the first republic was that ‘...traditional achievements (including dance) should be thoroughly examined, interpreted, and recreated for modern use...’

The *Kete* dance has gone through many changes since its break away from the older Adowa form. Joseph Kaminski (2007) states that

the music of *Kete* is reputed to possess the power of attracting good spirits...[Nketia] explains that the surrogated texts extol high moral values through the telling of heroic ideals and a *Kete* dance must be developed with the involvement of symbolic hand gestures reflecting these values. It is danced barefooted and trained male dancers dance with their *Lapa* cloth lowered beneath the chest. (p3)

There are varied accounts of the origins of the *Kete* dance. This research will offer two ethnographic explanations on the origins of the dance for analysis. These two are by no means authoritative over the many other accounts that exist about the dance but on the contrary, they offer interesting insights into the scholarly departure points this research will argue from. According to Baffour Kyeremanteng, (a tutor from the Music Department of the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, and an accomplished *Kete* performer who performed in the court of the Ashanti monarch (of blessed memory) Otumfuo Opoku Ware

II), *Kete* came from the Volta Region even though he agrees and identifies it as an Asante court dance. He states that,

Even though we do not have a specific root of the name ... *Kete* happened to behunters drumming and this is because the original *Kete* is *Abɔfoagorɔ*². So we [the Asante's] conquered the *Kete* dance during war [*Kete*-Krachi³]. This is evident of the symbolic cloth used to cover the *Kete* drums known as *sum ne mogya*, meaning darkness and blood. Everything our ancestors did had a meaning. *Sum ne mogya* further explains that if one goes to war and there is no death, there should still be blood.(personal communication, September 30, 2015)

However, this thesis will employ the ethnographic account of Esther Dampney-Akom (1982) who describes how the form was created in post-colonial Ghana. First, Ampofo Duodu⁴ asserts that 'the evolution of music and dance artistry in Ghana took a dramatic turn after Ghana gained independence under Dr Kwame Nkrumah in 1957. Soon after, new ideas, concepts, and, enthusiasm were injected into cultural revivals and re-assertions of the important dimensions of the music and dance to its proper place' (1994, p.14). It was within this new artistic environment that Dampney-Akom concord that,

borrowing ideas from the structure and organization of the Adowa with which they (the Asante people then) were familiar, the chorus of women sang the refrains to the lead [singer]...and a male percussion section then added the box-hand piano, bell, and *donno*⁵ with which they created a new musical form which could be interpreted movement-wise in many ways...the *Kete* was added after

²*Abɔfoagorɔ* literally means 'hunters dance/games'. According to Younge (2011, p 200), 'the *Abɔfo* [*Abɔfoagorɔ*]...is performed by the chief as an acknowledgement of his attributes as a hunter. These special qualities include: bravery, fearlessness, being a courageous leader, intelligence, and, above all, being a spiritual person'.

³ A town in the present day Volta Region of Ghana where the dance may have been from.

⁴ A former artistic director of the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

⁵ What is commonly known as the hourglass drum.

they had introduced *Kete* rhythmic forms with the percussion section. (1980, p 40)

Two observations arise from these two accounts which provide insight into traditional dances. First, due to the importance attached to booty from wars, I argue that music and dance arguably were as important as looted gold, captured slaves and colonial supremacy over subdued states. This is because a people's music and dance represented their dignity, identity, and authority and thus offers a viable explanation of why some dances like *Kete* remained in palace courts for royal entertainment. Mawere Opoku shares that,

so great was the value placed by the Asante on ... art forms that they collected musical and dance forms as part of war booty and displayed them with the captives of vanquished nations during victory parades. The *Mpintin* drum ensemble of large round gourds with skin at the top and straps for tuning, and the *Dondo*, or hourglass drum, which provides music for royal processions, show an Asante link with the *Gonjas*, the *Dagombas*, and other northern ethnic groups.

(Opoku in Austin., 1987, p. 192).

Secondly, the overflow of these court dances unto the masses may have been necessitated by the decline of traditional authorities and monarchies during European colonization. The '...levels of territorial authority, military and judicial functions were stripped off traditional leaders with the introduction of security services such as the police and military (Abotchie, 2006; Keudler, 2010 in Amoah, 2011, p. 27).

That notwithstanding, the dance has adapted to all situations in its propagation. Ampofo Duodo identifies the pre-colonial categorization of traditional music and dance and states that,

before colonial domination, music and dance in Ghana (Gold Coast) were grouped into five main categories as follows; (i) court or palace music and dance (ii) Ritual music and dance (iii)

social music and dance... Court or palace music and dance was meant for the exclusive use of traditional rulers or chiefs, and the position or status of a chief in the institution was determined by the types of court dance and music he is entitled to, and the type he can use may also be determined by it. (1994, p. 8)

Kete, formally a court dance, raises discussions on the concepts of power and identity before and after Ghana's colonization due to its changing role from an exclusive dance for royalty in the past, to a ceremonial and open-to-all performance form in the contemporary dispensation. The shift from Adowa to *Kete* ushered new aesthetic, meanings, and contexts through the expressivity of movement variations in faster tempos. For example, from my own experience as a performer and from the opinions of dancers interviewed during data gathering for this research, some argued that some *Kete* performers in their quest to adorn given cultural activities like funerals, festivals and the like, with their dancing prowess, employ *Kete* movements in the "wrong"⁶ context much to the dissatisfaction of some "old" dance practitioners of the dance form. Contemporary *Kete* dancers who may not necessarily be indigenous Akans miss out on the symbolic meanings and philosophies of the *Kete* dance movements they articulate. For example, dancing with the *Ahinima*⁷, which is not permitted to commoners is very prevalent at certain observed performances during varied social occasions in Accra the capital city of Ghana during data gathering for instance. Opoku (1987) states that 'for the ordinary citizen the situation can be more taxing; [when dancing] he must remember to show respect for the royal drums by baring his shoulders and wearing his *Ntama*, or *toga*⁸, between his armpit and his waist. He must be more circumspect in his use of gestures than he would be in freer, informal, recreational dances' (p. 196). Duodu (1994) further adds that '...court dances (like *Kete* and *Fontomfrom*) are danced by adults since an incorrect use of

⁶ Wrong is used in the context of an illogical connection of movement to philosophies and to meaning.

⁷ A locally made sandal.

⁸ *Ntama* is the cloth worn during dancing and *toga* is an oversized short worn under the cloth.

any of the many symbolic gestures might lead one into trouble. People who misuse gestures are punished and disgraced'. Opoku purports that,

Asante etiquette pays great attention to hierarchy: only title holders may dance the court dances with their sandals on and their shoulders covered. Certain gestures are reserved for senior rulers; for instance, placing the right fist atop the left fist indicates one who "sits" on others (that is, belongs to a higher chieftaincy rank) and can only be made by those of that rank. It is not enough, even for a chief, to be an expert dancer; he must also be very conversant with the traditional language of gesture or else he faces censure and, possibly, reprimand and heavy fines. (Ibid)

Allan Lomax also promotes the idea that a clearer understanding of philosophies of the dance is a very necessary requirement in performing the dance. He identifies that,

an individual's wisdom, knowledge and self-respect are measured against how much he knows about himself and about the society in which he lives. The individual should also be competent in oral literature and court manners. The dance is composed of those gestures, postures and movements which are qualities most characteristic and most essential to everyday activities, and thus crucial to cultural continuity.(Lomax in Duodu 1994, p. 22)

Having established the necessity of a dancer to be apt in what scholars Egil Bakka and Gediminas Karoblis (2010, pp. 172-173) explain as the two dimensions of dancing categorized under "concept and realization" of dance, it becomes evident upon analysis from an etic point of view that some actions and movements go contrary to governing philosophies taught in renowned *Kete* groups in Kumasi such as the *Ahenema*⁹*Kete* and *Adinkra*¹⁰*Kete* groups. They explain that 'the realization is the actual dancing of a dance [while] the concept

⁹ The researcher was trained as a *Kete* performer from the *AhenemaKete* group.

¹⁰ A principal informer and *Kete* dance specialist Baffour Kyeremanteng trained in *AhenemaKete* group.

for the same dance is the potential of skills, understanding, and knowledge that enables an individual or a dance community to dance that particular dance and to recognize and relate to each particular realization of it...’ (Ibid).

Therefore, it is possible that this new artistic direction propelled by independence in 1957 may not have entirely modified existing notions of aesthetics or meanings, but can be argued that they added new dimensions of understanding in the areas of aesthetics, art politics, cultural policies, arts education, and performance. Therefore, an investigation into these resultant changes can help shed light on how these artistic dimensions can add to the understanding of our intangible cultural heritage. As Jane Desmond (1993-1994, pp. 33-63) says, ‘in studying the transmission of a form, it is not only the pathway of the transmission, but also the form’s re-inscription in a new community/social context and resultant change in its signification that is important to analyze’. In the African traditional system, it can be argued that there is a thin line between past and present because inferences from various philosophies on ‘timing’ are used as and when convenient. Understanding time as used by African traditional systems is important in understanding the concept of heritage (Awuah 2014). This is because whereas certain schools of thought separate the distant past from the present to distinguish what qualifies to be heritage and what does not, one must understand that some African traditional philosophies do not separate the past from the present. The boundary is blurred between the past and the present because “past is present and present is past” (Ibid). However, in some western schools of thought, the concept of heritage stems from subjectivity and often backed by strong nostalgic longing to the distant past. ‘Heritage is posited as common to all, a universal notion’ (Royo 2002, p. 3) – it is thus so because human interactions cross-culturally relate to something that evokes a construct of “powerful emotive rhetoric” (ibid) an example can be the universal relationship of a national flag to a nation and its citizenry but on the contrary, the different levels of heritage is peculiar to a specified individual or social group. It can be argued that heritage strongly possesses a strong sense of

exoticism to the past (not always the distant) and sometimes tends to glorify the past as very important to human growth regardless of how good or detrimental it was to a people (Awuah 2014, p. 2).

Heritage safeguarding in Ghana and most African societies have heavily depended on oral and practical propagation of the intangible forms of music, dance, and oral history. Ethnic groups depend mostly on performances at various life cycle events to retain certain culturally and historically relevant elements to a society's existence. But as Baffour Awuah (2014) contends,

Safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is a subject that is addressed with some level of caution nowadays. Safeguarding as an idea is different from safeguarding as a practical goal set to be achieved. The viability of effective safeguarding measures depends on very pertinent factors like the historical and socio-politico-cultural elements for which the intangible cultural heritage in question is derived from.(p.71)

As such this thesis identifies through the epistemological stance of social constructionism (Simard 2014), the elements which make up the aesthetics, the semiotics, and certain contexts of the *Kete* dance form. This is imperative because to understand the socio-politico-cultural role of kinaesthetic communication in Akan societies, one must understand through analysis, the sociolinguistic structure of dances like *Kete*. Tara Firenzi (2012) opines that, one of the more useful analytic approaches to investigating dance practices in precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial contexts is to look at the role of tradition in different dances, and how this connection to the past has or has not played a role in the manipulation of these dance practices for political or social purposes.

Harper (1967) defines dance as an integral part of the society in which the form and motivation of the dance are familiar to all members of that society as a statement of their way of life. This opinion by Harper asserts how members of a particular society inculcate their day to day activities in their dance that eventually evolves into a ritualized activity. Undoubtedly, dance has proven over the years to be a formidable medium through which cultural and artistic knowledge are passed on from one generation to another, especially in oral cultures which have helped in preserving heritage. For instance, according to Ranger (1975), the study of Bene dance offers many advantages to researchers who wish to use Bene dance to trace the cultural history of East Africa.

According to Duodu (1972), “philosophical utterances and ideas which are difficult to express or risky to proclaim verbally are embodied in symbolic dance movement”. I argue here that contexts, meaning, and aesthetics within the Akan society are validated through the kinaesthetic arrangements of movements into dance. Thus, context, aesthetics, and meaning are complimented by dance and vice versa. As such, for context, meaning, aesthetics, and movement to become salient to the theme of a performance, philosophical norms which provide the political support for these movements must remain paramount in the dancing. Therefore, context, aesthetics, meaning and movement must interlock to support social philosophies upon which they draw their inspiration. Dance Ethnochoreologist, Anca Giurchescu (2001) elaborates this point further by drawing together all the social and philosophical elements in the community through the dancer. She states that the ‘structure of dance maybe considered as a culturally determined “program” where social, historical and environmental factors interlock with the physical, psychological and mental features...’ Nii Yartey (2014) further elucidates this statement by supporting the assertion that dance is an indispensable element in many important rituals and ceremonies in Africa which serves as a vehicle through which symbolism and other coded messages are manifested. *Kete* provides a

worthy case study to trace the linkage between meaning, aesthetics, and context, to discover how they complement each other and help in understanding segments of Akan social life. It also exemplifies the impact of acculturation on other Ghanaian dance forms.

Kete's articulation of Asante philosophies such as, for example, a dancer dancing barefooted¹¹ highlights a socio-political imperative – the status of the dancer and the movements performed barefooted highlights social identities and roles.

¹¹ A dancer who dances barefooted provides details into the social order where a person's role in the society is identified by how he or she dances and whether the person dances barefooted or not. A commoner dances barefooted while a royal does not.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

It is tacit knowledge that every dance has its own ethics, meanings, and aesthetics. Many researchers have investigated the *Kete* dance and its varied historical origins and uses (Opoku 1964, Duodu 1994, Nketia 1965, Young2001). Researcher Sheenagh Pietrobruno (2009, p. 238) states that even though ‘researching the history of... [most dances] provides an insight into the way this practice regarded as traditional form of culture, developed in part through commercialization...’, less attention has been paid to the connection between the contextual, aesthetic, and philosophical through a study of kinaesthetic construction of movements within the commercial and political performance of the dance.

This is because researches have hinged on mostly ethnographic methodologies rather than other emerging analytical systems like ethnochoreology which employs varied theories and approaches from structural analysis, Labanotation, and the use of grounded theory in analyzing the role of the body and movements in communication. Modernization and inculcation of other cultural values are gradually affecting our cultural practices of ethical concern. For example, my teacher told me during my early training days that values like virginity for example, which society extoled before marriage is now falling at a drastic rate. Modernity now encourages (arguable) “protected” sex through condoms which has increased the rate of sexual activity and eventually infidelity among couples. He mentioned that movements were created to communicate these societal values to the youth during their adolescent stages. Due to the effects of appropriation (Desmond 1993) in our Ghanaian dance forms, many culturally significant factors like family, man as a social being, dignity, and respect have been altered. As such, with regards to the changes to dance and their related knowledge, there is a growing fear that our future generations will be disadvantaged when it

comes to references to *Kete* dance heritage. Ethnomusicologist Doris Green (1985) observes that,

unfortunately, many of these drum languages and dances previously maintained by the griots, jalys, and ayans[Griotte or Jali (West Africa) and the Imbongi (Southern Africa)] are rapidly dissipating because of colonization and the onset of technology that prohibited generations from participating in drumming and dancing. During this period of musical prohibition, the drum languages were reduced to instrumental onomatopoeia, which is the vocal imitation of sounds the instruments produce when played. The dances were reduced to mimicry of movement without the knowledge of the drum language and the significance of the movement. Subsequently, many studies have been done on music and dance as separate elements and not as an integrated element. (p. 408)

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to critically analyse selected gestures, meanings and contexts of one of the well-known Asante dances, *Kete*, and the relationship thereof, missing or diminished, between various historical instances as well as inherent philosophical meanings and their implications on the dance today to ascertain their development through time. Ghanaian dance scholar Beatrice Ayi (2012, p. 6) points out that ‘the life of any tradition is tied to its perpetuation, not in a manner that suggests traditionalism or conventionality, but rather one that celebrates tradition for what it is and what it offers’. Herein lies the essence of Desmond’s appropriation theory when she advises that,

in studying the transmission of a form, it is not only the pathway of that transmission, but also the form’s re-inscription in a new community/social context and resultant changes in its signification that is important to analyse. An analysis of appropriation must include not only the transmission pathway and the mediating effects of the media, immigration patterns, and the like, but also an

analysis at the level of the body of what changes in this transmission. (1993-1994, p. 39)

I contend that the meanings of varied *Kete* dance movements are validated by association to particular contexts which in turn produce meaning. Green (1985) further states that, ‘...any system depending entirely upon oral communication for its transmission is doomed to partial failure because of human memory and outside interpretation. How are they related? [However] Traditional music that is designed for dance is, according to Nketia (1974), bound to develop and stress those elements that can be articulated in bodily movement (p. 407). As such in preserving certain elements considered as heritage in the *Kete* dance performance, careful analysis and linkages must be made between the linguistic structure of the movements which “may” or “may not” be validated by the oral linguistic structures and then justified within a performance context. ‘It is extremely difficult to write about music and dance in a verbal fashion (Ngumu, 1975) and be assured that each reader draws the same conclusion’ (Green 1985). This task has attempted to undertake an analysis of selected *Kete* dance movements to offer insights into the varied discrepancies and make visible, the varied elements within the kinaesthetic construction of meaning to add to existing scholarship on Ashanti dance suites.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative approach to conducting interviews and gathering data. According to Bruce Berg (2004) he states that ‘qualitative research thus refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things (p,3). The nature of this research and its objectives necessitated the use of qualitative research methodology due to the relevance of interacting with traditional leaders and indigenes about the delimitation of study to gain first-hand information about the dances and other elements that make up their understanding of aesthetics, contexts, and meanings that is beneficial to the research work. This methodology hinged on the fact that most of the philosophies of the Ashanti dances could be acquired orally and as such an emic perspective of the informants and performers as well as my own etic perspectives as an indigene and dancer played a crucial role in forming and expanding the study. The researcher utilized the observation and participation method of sampling information of dance performances in various contexts. Methods like structural movement analysis (Kaeppler 1972; Kaeppler in Felfoldi 2002) and ethnological description of dance were employed to analyse movement structures to ascertain their impact on the meanings and aesthetics of the *Kete* dance. Bartenieff et al (1984) stress the need for the focus on movements as a source to understanding dance by asserting that, ‘while all approaches to the study of dance provide potentially meaningful data and insight related to the role of dance in its socio-cultural context, the heart of dance is the movement. Dance research that ignores dancing... ignores a major component that has potential for revealing a great deal about those who create and use dance’. The structural movement analysis system is employed to understand the components and construction of movement to music and to clarify the idiosyncrasies identified in order to contribute towards the use of relevant concepts to understand the changes. This is useful to the research because as a performer myself, I have seen a number of changes in movement

construction and execution over the years. Therefore this research relies partly on my own experiences with the expressive *Kete* form. This research also uses grounded theory in its explanation of components pertaining to the dance. This theory, as described by Margaret Wilson is a ‘method of analysis [that also] helped the researcher identify themes in all the data by fracturing or breaking the information down into themes and core categories. The distilled themes are then reassembled to develop the data, augmented with researcher reflexivity, into a theoretical perspective’ (Wilson 2009, p. 6). Thus the use of ‘the grounded theory approach...offers flexible strategies and not rigid prescriptions’ (ibid) to the discussion of findings from the field. Kathy Charmaz identifies this emergent methods as open-minded and posits that

‘... [they] are particularly well suited for studying uncharted, contingent, or dynamic phenomena. These methods also allow for new properties of the studied phenomenon to appear that, in turn, shape new conditions and consequences to be studied. By adopting emergent methods, researchers can account for processes discovered in the empirical world and direct their methodological strategies accordingly’ (Charmaz in Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2008, p. 1).

The purpose is not to assume the responsibility of influencing any changes in the dance but to contribute to scholarship in traditional and neo-traditional dance development in Ghana. Finally, various scholarly works were consulted to support the research work.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This research investigates how the dynamism of dance and its changing roles over the years have contributed immensely to understanding societies and individuals who practice them in Ghana. The *Kete* dance is a relevant marker in the determination of changes or adaptations to globalization and the drive to forging new identities through movements in contemporary Ghana. It thus lends an understanding to the internal appropriation of movements and ideas by groups, ethnicities and individuals as well as the drawing of attention to cultural norms. *Kete* emerges from a rich culturally layered artistic and intellectual system based on politics of power and heritage. Thus an understanding of kinaesthetic construction¹² of movements induced by cultural norms and accentuated by traditional authority within the democratic state of Ghana can shed light on the effects of modernity on culture and heritage. This research work will benefit future dance researchers and social anthropologist by providing insights into the Akan movements systems.

1.5 DELIMITATION OF STUDY

This research was conducted in *Fante-New Town*, a suburb of Kumasi the Ashanti Regional capital in Ghana under the Subin Municipal Assembly. It was in this neighbourhood the researcher grew up from and underwent *Kete* dance training and performance for years. The reason for its selection lies in the area's rich interaction and propagation of the dance through various ethnic and dance groups for many generations. Kumasi serves as the administrative capital of the Ashanti Region and is divided into ten (10) Sub-Metro councils. According to the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, Kumasi spreads across 299 square kilometres and located 270km to the north of the capital city of Ghana, Accra between latitude 6.35° - 6.40° and longitude 1.30° ¹³. Fante New-Town is one of the most diversified of all the sub-

¹²Kinesthetic construction here denotes movement sequences that make meaning within a particular society.

¹³ (http://www.kma.ghanadistricts.gov.gh/?arrow=dnf&_id=6&r=2&rlv=location)

metros in Kumasi because of the existence of many families from varied ethnicities in Ghana like the Ewe, Ga, Fante, etc. I also had the opportunity to observe some performances in Accra to aid my understanding of movement changes.



Map of Kumasi the Ashanti Regional capital of Ghana¹⁴.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

There were a lot of challenges that almost derailed the research. There was difficulty in identifying and using *Kete* groups as primary sources for movement comparison and analysis. This was because in Kumasi the capital of the Ashanti state alone there are a myriad of *Kete* performing groups that are scattered across the length and breadth of the land. As such identifying a group that has gone through the changes and are sensitive of the movement

¹⁴<https://www.google.com.gh/search?q=map+of+kumasi&client=ms-android-hms-tmobile>.

changes was quite a challenge. This led to many back and forth trips to Kumasi from Accra until I settled on the groups. Secondly, the time allowed for a comprehensive research was limited to less than three months. This did not allow me enough time to delve deeper in the field of *Kete*. Lastly, money was a major contributory factor that added to the limitations of study. The researcher had to make honorarium payments to the four groups I used in my research as well as payments to individual contractors and the buying of alcohol for drummers each time they had to play music for my training and assimilation of the movements and changes that occur in the body level. These limitations could have led to my inability to, for example, analyse the selected motifs for this thesis. Without money, it would be impossible to document a dance session and even get a personal learning session with lead drummers and dancers.

1.7 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are;

1. To identify to the extent to which appropriation (Desmond 1993-1994) has affected the transmission of *Kete* philosophy (ies) and aesthetics.
2. To investigate the motifs of selected gestures of the *Kete* dance to determine their structural composition as well as the philosophical relationships of movement to context, aesthetics, and meaning.
3. To critically seek the meaning of the gestures used in *Kete* dance in order to define its socio-cultural relevance today.

1.8 Summary

The chapter introduces dance within the socio-cultural life of the African and the Ghanaian. It attempted to address the level of uncertainty surrounding the origins of dances by alluding to the creative potentials of social individuals rather than spirit beings. It establishes the various elements and institutions that control the performance and propagation of traditional dances and thereby sets the grounds for the discussion of socio-environmental and physiological elements that characterize each performance context. Most importantly, it has argued the notion that without the requisite conceptual as well as practical knowledge, one cannot be considered a good dancer in any traditional setting.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

CONTEXTS

“A dance form not rooted in the past, which is of the present only casting no shadow into the future dies with the generation that create it” (Opoku 1966). To the Ghanaian/African, the continuity of dance through constant practice is as important as its propagation through documentation or any other form of scientific methodology. Ethnomusicologist Doris Green (1985) states that,

traditional African dances are more than movements or a visual art that exists in time and space. They are history re-enacted, a source of communication. Why? In Africa there were more than eight hundred languages that were not written, only spoken. Therefore Africa had a different method of recording and keeping its history. The oral traditions of Africa, the lifestyles of Africans, the history and culture of African peoples were preserved, in the majority of African nations, solely through a system of oral transition from generation to generation. This oral system was composed of dance, music, song, and iconographic artistic representation. (p.407)

There are many approaches to dance studies and its understanding. In explaining the cognitive approach to dance, Ethnochoreologist Laszlo Felfoldi (2001, p. 17) posits that dance ‘...cannot be taken independently, torn out of its socio-cultural context, and separated from creator(s), a psycho-somatic entity. It must be viewed as a complex phenomenon (dance-music-text with the necessary props e.g. costumes) representing a culturally patterned, grammatically structured, meaningfully kinetic sign system used, performed, manifested in a community by its members’. Dance creation within the sociocultural context of a society is

dependent on many structures that propel its life. Adrienne Kaeppler (Kaeppler in Felfoldi 2002) states that,

structured movement systems occur in all known human societies. They are systems of knowledge, the products of action and interaction as well as process through which action and interaction take place, and are usually part of a larger activity or activity system. These systems of knowledge are socially and culturally constructed by a group of people and primarily are preserved in the memory. Although transient, movement systems have structured content, they can be visual manifestations of social relations, the subject of elaborate aesthetic systems, and may assist in understanding cultural values. (p. 14)

Therefore, to create dance without paying cognizance to posterity by employing contemporary methods compatible with safeguarding measures of the community renders the form's lifespan short. Opoku states that

to Africans, life, with its rhythms and cycles is Dance. Dance is a language, a mode of expression, which addresses itself to the mind, through the heart, using related, relevant and significant movements which have their basic counterparts in our everyday activities. For a deeper insight into our way of life, our labour, material cultures, aspirations, history, social and economic conditions, religious beliefs and disbeliefs, moments of festivity and sadness...in short, our life and soul, and the realities are revealed....in our dance.(Opoku1964)

Albert Mawere Opoku¹⁵ in his description above on the role of dance in the Ghanaian society contends that the African sees dance not only as beautiful movements pertaining to the body as well as the pleasing nature of rhythm but also a cluster of cultural elements that is a significant part of life. However, through carefully selected movements of cultural behaviour,

¹⁵ The first artistic director of the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

dance serves as a viable tool used by the individual and the community to communicate their thoughts, sentiments and matters of social importance, and thus our thoughts must correspond to contexts.

Opoku(1987, p. 193) states that ‘Asante dance is an almost unconscious expression of the religious and spiritual beliefs of daily life, and of Asante's steadfast faith in the achievements of its forebears. It also expresses the Asante's self-confidence, and love for the elegant and sophisticated’. Dance follows varied linguistic orders in the Akan system. This means that routines of communication must follow certain rules to be understood orally in various contexts. The same rules apply to dance. Akan linguistics scholar Kofi Agyekum (2010, p. 77) defines linguistic routines as ‘sequential organizations beyond the sentence either as activities of one person or the interaction of two or more. These include gestures, paralinguistic features, topics and rituals in everyday interaction. Among the Akans, the most outstanding ones are greetings, apology, request, gratitude/thanking, and the recounting of one’s mission because they are encountered daily’. Hanna (1973)thus adds that,

...dance...is communicative behaviour in that movements...form a para-or quasi-language...sometimes more effective than verbal language. Indeed, dance is often a multimedia communication: performers moving in time and space are seen, sounds of physical movements are heard, kinaesthetic activity or empathy is felt, as in the touch of body to body, body part, and performing area...dance is thus significant because it has powerful communication potential. (p. 166)

AESTHETICS AND MEANING

The communicative patterns highlighted above are only realized through a careful kinaesthetic construction of movements inherent with discursive aims and accentuated with music. Specific areas such as bodily postures, facial expressions all form a complex

continuum of social knowledge embedded in cosmic and philosophical values. Opoku (in Austin 1987) also adds that,

the distinguishing characteristics of Asante dance are the intricate and subtle manipulation of hands, arms and legs, body sways and tilts in polyrhythmic combinations- expressive miming with rich symbolic undertones and typical Asante hauteur. (p. 193)

These gestures and social norms allow individuals and the community as gather in a whole to show their resentments and or appreciation or gratitude to those who have been helpful to them. Ethnochoreologist Laszlo Felfoldi (2001) describes that

...they (the dancers) are surrounded by verbalised instructions (sometimes in form of proverbs, stories, tales and other kinds of oral poetry), bound in emotional bondage. The corpus of knowledge can be divided into two main parts: verbalized and non-verbalized information. The verbalized information comprises the dance names, the special terminology used in connection with dance/dancing in a community and other oral representations belonging partly to the sphere of oral poetry. The non-verbalized part of the data may be divided into two main domains... Conscious information which is not verbalized in everyday communication of a community, but it can be verbalized in case of necessity... (second) Unconscious, quasi-conscious or subconscious information.

Additionally, Martha Eddy's explanation of somatic disciplines as 'those systems of study that view physical reality and specific bodily or even cellular awareness as a source of knowledge, usually to be gained through touch, movement, and imagery as processes of embodiment' (2000, p.1) are relevant for the study of socio-cultural practices. The ability of dance to be used by a society as a communicative tool due to its potency of attracting the attention of all makes it essential for modern day communication. According to Duodu(1972)

“philosophical utterances and ideas which are difficult to express or risky to proclaim verbally are embodied in symbolic dance movement”. Duodu (1994) further asserts that, court dances are danced mostly by adults and an incorrect use of any of the many symbolic gestures might lead one into trouble and will be punished or disgraced when misused”. Therefore, it is very imperative for a performer to be mindful of the cultural philosophies embedded in the dance during performance in order not to violate the norms and custom of the people. In observing these rules, we will be building a great foundation for our posterity to inherit. “Bad dancing does no harm to *AsaaseYaa* (mother earth) is a popular Ghanaian proverb which encourages all to dance. Hence all forms of dance are encouraged at the right time and place” (Duodu 1974). This assertion of Duodu highlights the importance of proverbs in Ghanaian dance and hence it is expected of each individual to value and accurately use cultured speech that can be communicated verbally or non-verbally in our social set up. I concur to the assertion of Duodu because even though there is free will to dance, it has its limitation and must be taken into consideration in order not to violate the norms pertaining to the dance. This is because according to Gyekye (1996), apart from dance serving purely aesthetic reasons (appreciating the art for its sake), value is placed on its functionality and symbolism. It is through the functionality and symbolism that meaning is derived from a context. In observing cultural norms, we can contribute to the safeguarding and preservation of our cultural heritage. “Through the dance, individuals and social groups can show their reaction to attitudes of hostility or cooperation held by others towards them. They may show differences to their superiors, gratitude to benefactors, their own estimation of themselves in the presence of rivals, servants, subjects and others through the choice of appropriate symbolic gestures” (Nketia1965). It is believed that through signs and symbols in dance, statements are sent out. Symbolic gestures reveal the hidden or unseen cultural trait of people and their surroundings and there is the need for a dancer to know the right symbolic gestures to use .To be a good dancer or cultured dancer, the dancer must know and understand the

traditional movements and aesthetic values pertaining to the dance in order to define its fitting context. Therefore it is imperative that in the execution of movements, adherence must be paid to when and how to use the movements. *Kete* dancer Baffour Kyeremanteng (personal communication, September 30th, 2015) conceptualizes two instances within the *Kete* performance into ‘climatic’ and ‘anti-climatic’ instances. The climatic is where a dancer exhibits or performs the required movements culturally accepted within varied contexts while the anti-climatic is the direct opposite. He explains that some dancers perform with the notion that by virtue of the audience’s¹⁶ appreciation through loud cheers and admiration they are performing to satisfaction, but on the contrary, certain elements may be within their execution of structured patterns that may be ‘wrong’ or offensive to the personal audience who will consider the dancer to be disrespectful. He explains that

customarily the *Mponponsuo*¹⁷ can be sent by the elders to call you off the dancing ring because you are being disrespectful. If one refuses to get off the dancing ring then it means one is proud and in such a case the *Asafo* will be taxed to carry one off the dancing arena. Sometimes if one is not lucky, the *Asafo*¹⁸ might torture¹⁹ one for a little while. I have witnessed an incident like that before. There was this guy in Kumasi whose demeanor and movements were questionable and had been a victim of this instance. His ‘crime’ is that during dancing, his movements fill the arena with dust which is unacceptable especially in the presence of royalty...he was consequently carried off the stage.

(Ibid)

¹⁶ The audience may be more of impersonal audience who enjoy the dance for its sake rather than the personal audience who the dances and norms belong to.

¹⁷ They are the messengers of the king who are sent by him personally to relay information to various departments or individuals at a gathering.

¹⁸ They are the youth/warriors in a given community.

¹⁹ Physical abuse administered based on the culprit’s reaction to abrupt cancellation of his/her dancing.

Over a period of time, some amateur *Kete* performers in Kumasi and Accra pay no attention to “required” norms on execution of movements. Some popular dance groups and individual performers execute movements and sequences out of context and without scrutiny which has caused a re-occurring effect in most performances. This may be due to the inadequate access to scientific data pertaining to movement progression and or regression in dance in academia in Ghana today. The conscious or unconscious transposition of certain movement phrases in the performance of *Kete* at varied locations and under various contexts can be attributed to what dance researcher Baffour Awuah (2014) terms as radical aestheticization. He explains that,

Radical aestheticization happens when [dance] groups combine movements based on their beauty or how they fit into certain dance choreography rather than paying attention to the meaning and context of what the movements serve within a specific stanza. After this act, most of the groups end up referring to these ‘altered’ movements as the same traditional dances they changed from. The radicalism of the aestheticization is based on the frequency of the act of movement transposition which varies in days, weeks, months. (p. 34)

Therefore the need to analyse distinct changes in some aspects of the dance in itself is a viable departure point to ascertain the transmission paths, the influences and or opposition movements encounter in their evolution. This is discussed on the basis or rate at which changes are effected to specific movements this research will analyses. Initial findings have identified disparities existing in the discussion and acceptance on what beauty and aesthetic mean with regards to each traditional group in Ghana. This is relevant in this study because the use of aesthetics in this research is subject to the researched dance group’s understanding of the concept and can also be discussed in relationship to the emergence of first, the politics of power, second, relevance, and third, beauty (social acceptance). The field of aesthetics is

somewhat a very open and cautious field to endeavor into. Bannon& Sanderson contend that ‘literature that addresses the meanings of the concept of the aesthetic reveals a wide range in the use, and apparent misuse, of the term’ (2010, p. 12). This is relevant to Ghanaian dance scholarship because little scholarly attention has been paid to dance aesthetics and this research seeks to engage in a discussion to help shed some more light on the topic so as to offer perspectives for further expansion. It is somewhat accepted that aesthetics is very subjective and can belong to an individual or a group of people. Within arts education, they subscribe to the theory that ‘it is by art education that such aesthetic encounters are intentionally activated, encompassing more than surface phenomena, moving into the realms of expressive and symbolic meanings’ (ibid).

As such, ‘identifying the development of aesthetic awareness as an important aim of the [educational] curriculum would promote the exploration of notions of context, purpose, relevance, form and content throughout the medium of dance’ (ibid).

Modesto Amegago (2011) highlights that;

African aesthetics is shaped by the interwoven biological/physical, social, economic, political, religious and ethical values. In general, the Africans are born within certain environments. They interact with environmental features and creatures by using their senses of feeling, seeing, smelling, hearing, touching and tasting. They also think about the origin of the cosmos and formulate concepts and ideas to communicate among themselves and with their source. (p. 220)

Awuah (2014) thus adds that,

it is then important to say that first, traditional African philosophies form an important part of any African culture; secondly, the dances evolve from within such

cultures; thirdly, the dance in turn materializes the meaning of the metaphors through [aesthetic] bodily movement expressions which lie in the choreographic structures/form

Howard Morphy also explains that

aesthetics is concerned with the whole process of socialization of the senses with the evaluation of the properties of things. However, such socialization takes place in the context of the process whereby qualities acquire connotations and are incorporated within systems of meaning. [...] Aesthetics is concerned with the human capacity to assign qualitative values to properties of the material world' (Howard Morphy 1996 in Tim Ingold: 258)

From various interviews and discussions with performers and natives, my view on the concept of aesthetics has been contested with respect to the Akan cultural values and systems. During the research, whatever was deemed "correct in process and product" was deemed aesthetically pleasing or beautiful. To explain this, I have come to understand that the adherence to the kinaesthetic enactment or construction of reverence to elders (politics of power) for example, in movement that results in getting clearance to perform (relevance) at a function is considered within the broader view of aesthetics of social acceptance. Opoku (1987) clarifies that

so great is the evaluation placed on dance and performance as an index of traditional feeling and thinking that both formal and informal instruction in dance begins at an early age for all Asante. The ability to express oneself competently and to communicate ideas, emotions and knowledge through the language of dance is recognized as an important attribute of a cultured, educated citizen in traditional Asante evaluation (p. 194)

Kaepler (1972) states that, ‘the first task of a structural analysis of dance is to locate for a specific tradition, the basic movement units and define the range of permissible variation within these units’ (p. 174). As such it can be argued that a dancer who possesses no ethical understanding of performing a greeting or paying reverence to elders and peers in normal day-to-day activities is likely to transpose that level of ineptitude to dance which can be seen as opposition to a “beautiful” or aesthetic standard. Kwame Gyekye (1996) explains that aesthetic is functional in determining social acceptance of movements. He states that, ‘aesthetic values refer to those features of objects, events, and scenes that are considered worthy of sustained appreciation, attention and interests (Ibid).’ In the Akan...conception of art, the aesthetic value of a given ...work of art is determined by its functional or symbolic aspects’ (ibid). Thus as Fiona Bannon & Patricia Sanderson (In Brown, Manley & Nielson 2010) contend, ‘identifying the development of aesthetic awareness as an important aim...would promote the exploration of context, purpose, relevance, form, and content...of...dance’ (p. 14).

The understanding of on how changes in context affect arrangement and execution of movements and meanings is also an important analytical point in helping to understand *Kete* movement transmission. In most African (Ghana) dances, beauty, as understood by the creators of the dance, is very important even though it is very subjective. Therefore employing Kathy Charmaz’s (Charmaz in Wilson 2006, p. 6) constructivist theory to support these emic perspectives, she states that ‘a constructivist approach recognizes that the categories, concepts and theoretical level of analysis that emerge from the researcher’s interactions with the field and questions about the data, one that does not seek a single truth, but addresses human realities and assumes the existence of real worlds. The importance of beauty in African dance is supported by Begho’s (1986) assertion that, ‘...in traditional African dance forms, beauty is regenerative, and ugliness is only that which cannot be

accommodated within the broad limits of even a regenerative approach to attainment of beauty' (p. 119). Begho further opines that aesthetics of movements can be discussed within a cultural context because movement is mostly meaningful within a cultural context. He states that,

traditional African dances are transformations from mythic raw materials that are elements of the world-view of Africans. It is in this sense that African dances are a reflection of culture..., a microcosm of macrocosm..., and therefore functional (or utilitarian) and deriving their beauty from this functionality.(Ibid)

Dance scholar Kwashie Kuwor (2014) in explaining the Anlo-Ewe aesthetic values as expressed in his *Wu* and *Atsia*²⁰ concepts posits that,

...participants of the Anlo-Ewe²¹ dance in displaying these aesthetic qualities must operate within the social ethics in which the entire performance exists. Any violation of these social ethics may negatively affect the evaluation process and may cause displeasure to both performers and the elders who have the responsibility of making evaluative comments as to whether the performance is pleasing or not.

(p. 79)

Scholar Zelma Badu-Young (2002) opines that 'as contexts changes, spatial arrangements have also been affected resulting in modification in movement and music. These changes have affected the original aesthetics of Ghanaian dances and altered the cultural perspective (p. 13)'. It must be understood that dance in academia is not just a discipline that relates to movements alone but also abides by conceptual data and developments that can be viewed as a 'humanising pedagogy' (Bannon& Sanderson 2010, p. 16).Furthermore, Donaldson as quoted by Bannon& Sanderson supports this assertion and further adds that dance forms

²⁰ According to SylvanusKwashieKuwor, "*wu*(dance- drumming) refers to a collective expression of history and culture through drumming, singing, movements and gestures; and *atsia*(movement style) which includes the dynamics of movement, sound, costume or a particular response from a performer (2014, p. 79)".

²¹ The Anlo-Ewe are indigenous Ghanaians located South-Eastern part of Ghana.

dynamic complexes in which elements play active roles. ‘The nature of this inter-relatedness and co-dependence of multiple aspects of dance, in process and product...creates a dynamic and fluid art form. When further layered with cultural, historic, economic and political considerations, an apt appreciation of the notion that works of art can be seen as ‘meaningful’, rather than ‘meaning something’ becomes apparent (ibid).

Context in this research explains the created environment that necessitates and gives meaning to a performance(s). Dances can be classified under social, religious, and ceremonial contexts. Most dances travel through one or two of the contexts provided and within such new identities assume new roles and meanings even though movements variations may not remain unchanged. This is because for example, if a chief is in attendance at a social or religious ceremonial event, *Kete* movement variations that are fit for his chiefly status remain unchanged within these contexts although the meanings derived from such movements lend their identity and meaning from the overall context under which the dances are performed. A social dance context is normally understood to be an avenue for participation from all and sundry in the society under the guise of socialization. It promotes togetherness and creates a “happy” environment for the transmission of some cultural values to young ones in attendance. Under this context, participation is encouraged from all members, especially children who are seen as the future propagators of societal values through dance.

2.1 Summary

The chapter raises many key theoretical points concerning the foci of this research being traditional and neo-traditional dance forms, context, aesthetics, and meaning in traditional African and Ghanaian dance forms. It also discusses the dichotomy of some western knowledge of the body to that of the Ghanaian/African dancing body and contributes to making interesting inferences that aligns phenomenological, kinaesthetic, abstract ideas about the body in motion. For instance, it draws attention to theories that are pro-inclusive (that is, dance is discussed and understood on all elements that makes it meaningful to its people). As such it propagates emerging methods of analysis of dance that highlights the crucial elements within the dance and how such elements make up the holistic meaning of meaning through movements.

It therefore sets the ground for the eventual critical movement analysis in the subsequent chapter through the method of structural analysis. This will offer a breakdown of movements and gestures within the dance to understand how their construction helps creates meaning and their understanding.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 FROM COURTS TO COMMON GROUNDS

The research work was undertaken between the periods of May to August 2015 in Kumasi – Fante Newtown. Growing up in this popular suburb in the Subin Municipal Assembly, I did not pay much attention to the complexities of the *Kete* dance form and its inscriptions on varied contexts within both my immediate environment and beyond. As a dancer trained in the Ahenema*Kete* dance group, I came to understand from a young age that gestures within the *Kete* and most Akan/Asante dances are very relevant. My understanding of the meanings within my adult and academic lives changed dramatically when I first arrived at the University of Ghana to study dance and was invited to perform at varied occasions under different contexts within Accra the capital city of Ghana. My interest in this research as highlighted in the introduction is not to assume a position reflective as an authority on the practice and concept of the *Kete* dance. That would be a grave disrespect to scholars like Professor Emeritus J.H. Nketia, Professor Albert Mawere Opoku, Pascal Younge, Ampofo Duodu among others who have spent a lot of time to document the dance. The interest however involves the analogy of kinaesthetic constructions to Akan socio-linguistic patterns and the cultural philosophies of the dance to shed more light on context, meaning, and aesthetics of *Kete*.

From the two historical instances of the dance given earlier, two important paradigms can be seen to cut across within the dance performance. These are the paradigms of political power (sovereignty, superiority to others etc.), and unity (of a people). Movements to be analysed subsequently will throw more light on these paradigms through the names of movements and their execution within various contexts. However, some movement variations can be seen under all contexts of performance which carries the same meanings like thanking, paying

reverence to all protocols observed (asking permission to perform), and giving praise to God. Other movements, even though they may appear same under varied contexts, have different meanings like for example, the display of strength and authority (which varies according to performers).

Therefore to understand the preceding and subsequent discussions on the elements of the main topic, one needs to understand the discrepancies of Asante dancing.

3.1 Asante Dance

The Asantes, as a group of people bound by a common socio-politico-cultural history, have many dances. That notwithstanding, it may be a bit problematic to summarize the totality of the characteristics of the myriad dances by virtue of their performance and their continuous evolution through time. However, dance Scholar Albert Mawere Opoku (1987), an authority on Asante dances in Ghana, does well to articulate, to a large extent, the qualities that have shaped how current Ghanaian dance scholars think of dances from the Asante. He elucidates that,

Asante dance is characterized by a complex of basic walking steps of varying length and strength, with expressive and meaningful changes of direction accompanied by appropriate pelvic shifts or swings... Also important are changes of levels in the whole body, and the raising and lowering of the shoulders-a gesture symbolizing affirmation of status... The feet may move to a steady two-beat measure, four half-beats to the measure or in a sustained dragging motion for the interval. The distinguishing characteristics of Asante dance are the intricate and subtle manipulation of hands, arms and legs, body sways and tilts in polyrhythmic combinations-expressive miming with rich symbolic undertones-and typical Asante hauteur. The impetus coming from the musical ensemble is the propulsive power which initially moves one to dance. It is the rhythmic percussive structure and organization of

the tones, pitches, and timbre of the drums which characterize a particular dance. (p. 193)

This assertion offers many gateways to understanding the philosophical as well as political underpinnings of the *Kete* dance movements among other Akan dances. However, to grasp the knowledge, one must differentiate the various elements within the myriad of movements within the *Kete* in order to comprehend the masterful linguistic kinaesthetic constructions that inform context, meaning, and aesthetics. To achieve this, Kaepler (1972) advises that,

in a dance tradition where several parts of the body move at once, the most economic procedure is to analyse each gross part of the body separately. Then we must discover which the significant elements are for each of these parts of the body. Eventually an inventory of the kinemes²² can be made...in order to make sense out of a universe of movement(s)...a productive procedure is to isolate these smallest significant units, kinemes, and then to analyse what is done with them to build a totality (dance)(p.175).

In this dissertation, three variations within the *Kete* dance will be analysed namely, the basis of their political power play, reverence and kingship ties, and emotional state of an individual or a people. This is relevant to the understanding of meaning, context and the aesthetic build of the *Kete* dance as Opoku (1987) contends that,

the Asante dance experience reflects several aspects of traditional Asante society, and depicts its birth and development along with its distinctive methods of expressing commonly accepted ideas and ideals, such as reverence for the elderly and for status. Asante dance is an almost unconscious expression of the religious and spiritual beliefs of daily life, and of Asante's steadfast faith in the achievements of its forebears. It also expresses the Asante's self-confidence, and love for the elegant and sophisticated. There is room too for individualization,

²² 'Kinemes are those actions and positions which, although having no meaning in themselves, are the basic units from which all dances of a given tradition is built' (Kaepler 1972:174). I contend that specific gestures do not have meanings in themselves individually within the *Kete* dance unless they are linked to a 'linguistic phrase' made salient by a performer within a specific context.

for each performer seeks to highlight his personal experience in movement; the dance is a dramatization of traditional Asante customs and of the dancer's individual status in the society. (ibid)

There are many gestures this research cannot fully exhaust in analysis. Duodo (1994) created an index of movement descriptions but without their local names and thereby making it difficult for subsequent researchers to theorize and analyse the names with their accompanying gestures. In this thesis, I go further to add the local names of the movements to their descriptions as Duodo did to add to a clearer visualization and understanding of the dance variations for future scholarly researches. The variations to be described in this thesis do not follow any sequential order.

1. ***Tefrɛayiyanda***– *Tefrɛ* literally means a cockroach and *ayiyanda* literally means lying down facing upwards. This is where a dancer rolls and stretches the palms over each other whilst in locomotion or in axial position. The name symbolizes the resilience of the cockroach even in death. It is tacit knowledge within the Asante culture that if a cockroach dies prostrate it still finds a way to lie on its back somehow (See freehand sketch at list of figures)
2. ***Dwannyinimienushia a, nayehu bɛɛma*** – This translates into “when two rams clash, the stronger emerges”. *Dwannyini* literally means an adult Ram (in this context with horns); *mienu* literally means the number two; *shia* literally means to clash; *nayehubɛɛma* literally translates to we see the stronger man. Movement-wise, this is exhibited by the adjacent hitting of the two clenched arms. This symbolizes competitiveness or war and further goes on to add that in the face of confrontation, only the strong will survive. (See freehand sketch at list of figures)
3. ***Pɛpɛpɛ*** – This can literally translate to “equality”. The palms of both arms are touching each other (as in the manner of Christian prayer in a Catholic church

perhaps) and slightly pointed away from the body. (See freehand sketch at list of figures)

4. *Nkabom* –This literally translates to “togetherness”. ‘The index fingers put together or joined side by side’ (Doudo 1994, p. 151). This movement is done to signify and symbolize the need for togetherness. (See freehand sketch at list of figures)
5. *Ahudede* – This is where the left palm is slapped with the right palm and lifted upwards to the level of the mouth and air is blown onto the palm as if blowing imaginary substance into thin air. This movement is quite derogatory when directed to an individual because it symbolizes a huge sign of disrespect for that individual by the reduction of their status to mere chaff (something not of any worth).

This thesis will however use three selected variations for the purpose of analysis. By analyzing these three gestural variations which are; *EtuoniAfena*, *Mabatiahwan*, and *Minsa aka makyi*, commonly accepted ideals highlighted through movements, contexts, and aesthetics will be highlighted to advance scholarship in the *Kete/Asante* dance suites. These variations are discussed on the backdrop of their kinaesthetic construct – how they are performed; Socio-linguistic pattern – how they are spoken orally; cultural philosophies – what they reflect.

3.1.1 *EtuoniAfena* gestural variation

This variation hails from the politico-cultural build of the Asante system. It is a gesture reserved for royalty especially kings/chiefs adorned with appropriate props and regalia. It is also however performed by commoners without accompaniments. There are three major elements within this gesture. First the gun (*Etu*), the sword (*Afena*), and the hands (*Nsa-* for gesturing). To understand this gestural motif and its relevance within the repertory of Asante kinaesthetic arts, one must understand the roles and relevance of these three elements that make the meanings behind the dance motif.

Afena: Swords occupy very important positions within the Asante cultural system. ‘Swords (*Afena*) are second only to stools as crucial items of Akan regalia...’(Ross 1977, p. 16). As such their incorporation in, or their mimetic representation within a dance are very crucial both to the socio-linguistic and gestural (dance) rhetoric of understanding. There are many swords within the Asante kingdom with varying importance and uses. There are swords reserved for the Asantehene alone that are used in state ceremonial affairs like the swearing of oath during enstoolment and others that are adornments to his presence on an occasion (Kingly opulence and power). It is within this ceremonial context that the state swords are displayed and their powers made manifest to the sub-chiefs and the whole kingdom. Ross affirms that “their most important political function is in the enstoolment of a paramount chief (*Omanhene*), when the ruler-elect holds a specific sword while taking his oath of office. Sub-chiefs hold another sword while affirming loyalty to the new leader. Different swords are used in rituals purifying the chief’s soul and the blackened state stools. Still others are carried (or were) carried by the chief’s messengers or envoys” (Ibid).Opoku (1970) further affirms the role of the sword during dancing when he elaborates how it displays a king’s military authority within rhythmic music and movements.

“In Ashanti where chiefs hold military ranks, the dance of the chiefs in the *FontomfromAtɔpretia* takes the form of a mock battle in which the chief, clad in battle dress studded with talismans, re-enacts past personal achievements or that of his predecessors or regiment with a gun and sword supported by dancing attendants. In this dance, the ordinary dancer is not permitted to use the gun and the sword and therefore uses his whole arms for slashes, thrusts, feints. Side stepping, manoeuvres are discernible, ending in the capture and beheading of the opponent. (p. 6)

Whilst performing movements with props like the sword and gun, a chief’s status is thus elevated above all others because in such a role, he in that moment serves as the link between his predecessors in the past and of himself in the present. Thus, the sword and gun

accentuates his role as the lead warrior of his nation and as such all gestures affirm his power. ‘A chief’s dance movements must at all times reflect his position to win the acclamation of his people, who while exhorting him to make graceful, studied and regal gestures, use stronger dynamic forms of the same movement patterns to express pride in him as the embodiment of the highest within his society and their willingness to die for him in peace or war’ (Ibid). This statement thus affirms the notion that other dancers can perform similar movements within the allowed context but the status of an individual like the chief gives a different meaning and purpose to the gestures. Importance is thus placed on elegant use of the body in communication through dance accompanied by social status and props. Thus *Kete* that is performed by court dancers for the enjoyment of the king are rid of props as mentioned earlier. They therefore tend to converge towards praising the king instead of exalting themselves (commoner).

There are serious penalties should one be found exalting himself instead of the king. The contention here is that many dancers who are not trained with this knowledge perform this particular gesture at occasions where there are personalities of high social order without paying reverence to them. This research thus argues that the lack of awareness of social order and politics creates situations where such mistakes are committed unconsciously. Therefore, to perform this gesture even without the sword and the musket devoid of proper acknowledgment renders the authority of a chief and the sword invalid. It is considered as disrespectful and a show of infamy. Ross (1977) states that at,

...this point underlines another major function [of the sword]: as display pieces symbolizing the office of chief and, of course, his military strength. Whether exhibited at the chief’s court, carried by bearers in a procession with hilts resting on a palanquin, or propped against the bed of a deceased chief as he lies in state, swords emphasize in

both number and splendor the power and dignity of the
Omanhene (king/chief). (p. 16)

Etuo:Etuo (gun) depicts the European influences within the military armoury of the Asante. As such it can be dated as far back as the time of the barter trade system emerged through to when the Asante expanded their kingdom to include the coastal belts of Ghana to control trade with the foreigners. Relics from the *Manhyia* palace show that these guns were Muskets.²³ They were used to aid the expansion of the Asante states and can be dated as far back as from the 17th to 18th centuries and even beyond. Historical research from the museum of the Manhyia palace shows that muskets used by previous Asante kings were given local *Twi*²⁴ names. These guns are very important historical relics that add to the understanding of the dynamic nature of the Asante confederacy. Thus each musket used by a past king is stored in the *Manhyia* museum. According to Amoako et al (2014) in their paper, *Sustainability of Asante Manhyia Palace Museum: A collection of cultural identity*, they state that,

there is a specimen of ... (a) gun used by Nana Osei Tutu 1 (1695-1719) called *doku*. He used this gun during the war against the Denkyira people...There is also *Sikanto* gun used by Nana Opoku Ware I (1720-1750). He succeeded his grand uncle Nana Osei Tutu when he was called to eternity. Shortly after his enstoolment Nana Opoku Ware I and his army were faced with the task of waging a war against the Akyem to avenge the defeat of the Asante under Nana Osei Tutu I...The gun used by Nana Osei Kwadwo Oko-Awia (1746-1777) is *Gyahyetoa*. He succeeded his uncle Nana Kusi Obodum and continued the extension of the Asante kingdom through wars. (pp. 5-6)

²³Palace of the Asantehene in Kumasi.

²⁴Twi is the official dialect of the Asante kingdom.

As such it is evident that the sword and the gun play very important roles in the projection of a king's status and as such movements performed by them vary from those of commoners based on their lineage royal.

Nsa: *Nsa* literally translates into hands. The hands are used in the execution of this movement motif. The variations performed by use of the hands with the sword and the musket as props ties the aesthetic, the meaning, and the contextual together in highlighting the social status of the performer and the history together for ceremonial as well as educational purposes. It has already been established by Opoku (1970) that commoners are not allowed to perform with the sword. However, their mimetic depiction of the action and ideas embedded within the variation could arguably be similar with that of the king/chief. This is because even though a variation may be seen as same, the various degrees of bent or flexed arms, dynamic (low, medium, high) level of the whole body and or the arm, intensity in gestural depiction, energy, and subtlety could be different from the other but the basic understanding lies within the beginning and the ending of the motif. To elaborate this stance, I draw attention to how a king/chief dances as compared to the commoner. The king/chief is not supposed to sweat and exert maximum energy whilst dancing. Movements must be elegant, subtle, and graceful and as such movements are 'restricted' to an extent. On the other hand, a commoner is allowed to sweat and exert maximum energy whilst performing and as such one could argue that their movements become an exaggeration to that of the king's. The variation is performed in full regalia by the king whereas the commoner performs with his cloth lowered and tied around the waist exposing the upper torso.

Now in the execution, the right hand holds the gun (*Etuo*) whilst the left hand holds the sword (*Afena*). In a crisscross formation, the right hand rests on the left hand a bit above the wrist line. What this means is that, for the king/chief, he is reasserting the fact that when there is any war he is ready to lead his people as the lead warrior. Baffour Kyeremanteng elaborates

that, when one observes the king with the sword and gun in a criss-cross on his chest, it means “se ekoba a, ebo me bo”, (lit. if there is war, it will be in my chest). This symbolizes “ne tumienen’ahooden” (lit. his prowess and his powers) and the fact that he is ever ready to lead his nation to war (personal communication, September 30th2015). The sword and gun, his royal regalia, his attendants, his movements, the context of the performance all concord to the meaning of that particular gesture to the onlooker (both personal and impersonal).²⁵

Images of *EtuoniAfena*



AllPosters

fig.1 (*Afena*²⁶)



fig. 2 (*Etu*²⁷)

²⁵ See Adinku

²⁶ [https://www.google.com.gh/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAYQjB1qFQoTCISz2u-w6sgCFUhZGgodlsAKQA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.allposters.com%2F-sp%2FAsante-Swords-from-Ghana posters_i9036377_.htm&psig=AFQjCNGpp5C_vEW2jR8a2cldLCxNEW4hkg&ust=1446300869252410](https://www.google.com.gh/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAYQjB1qFQoTCISz2u-w6sgCFUhZGgodlsAKQA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.allposters.com%2F-sp%2FAsante-Swords-from-Ghana%2Fposters_i9036377_.htm&psig=AFQjCNGpp5C_vEW2jR8a2cldLCxNEW4hkg&ust=1446300869252410) (This image is not an actual depiction of specific swords used by the Asante’s in war during the olden days. This is because all swords have varied designs meaning different things to the people and the performer. The picture used here is just for comparative representation and not actual).

²⁷ <https://www.google.com.gh/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAYQjB1qFQoTCLmHucOz6sgCFQxJGgodwPANUg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fomgghana.com%2Fmeanwhile-happened-bekwai%2F&psig=AFQjCNGeRud14Qwk8KPwzelz7zDEGIR8tA&ust=1446301469942477> (This image is not an actual depiction of specific guns used by the Asante’s in war during the olden days. The picture used here is just for comparative representation and not actual)

3.1.2 Mabatiahwan gestural variation

This next variation, like its predecessor above, connotes a philosophical imperative. Although it is not necessarily linked to royalty, like the *EtuoniAfena* variation, it registers a common cathartic response under the social context of funerals within the Akan society. Universally, there is one main element in the execution of the movement variation (which is the body), but technically, specific components within is such as the shoulder, the left/right arm, and lowering of the body (dynamics) are involved in this variation. The philosophical connotation leans towards “despair”, “loneliness”, “state of dejection and helplessness”, and sorrow. My informant explains that the variation means that, ‘one has dislocated their arm’ – a metaphor for the loss of a bread winner – a personal or family tragedy.²⁸ In this variation, the dancing body slants to the left or the right with the left or right arm hanging loose (as if inactive/dead). This symbolises the fallen “support” and the body represents the institution of family/community. The uprightness and activeness of the arms before the execution of the variation connotes stability but as soon as the right hand pushes the left shoulder or vice versa and renders the body slouched to the left side as if falling with the left/right hand hanging loose, it symbolises the death of a benefactor. The hands are symbolic here because they are the instruments for work. The work of the hands provides food and so the loss of one hand means the sustenance of the body is in jeopardy. As such if the right hand pushes the shoulder of the left (which is the source of joint to the whole body), it means the joint has been detached hypothetically with the whole body responding with the slouch leftwards signifying the imbalance of the whole body in the process. There are varied ways of performing this gesture with emphasis on the lower (the lower arm represents the elbow to wrist) left or the right arm. After the touching of either shoulders, one can just leave the arm hanging or can elaborate the fall by literally throwing the lower arm down (in a gesture reminiscent of throwing the arm in despair but this time not involving the whole arm but just the lower arm).

²⁸Personal interview of BaffourKyeremanteng 2015

Pictorial exhibition of Mabatiahwanvariation.



Pic.1



Pic.2



Pic.3



Pic. 4



Pic. 5

These pictures show the variation from the point of touching the shoulder to the point where the touched hand of that particular shoulder (and in this illustration, the right hand) hangs inactive. The demonstrator in the picture Mr. Baffour Kyeremanteng at the Music Department, School of Performing Arts – University of Ghana) is my informant.

3.1.3 *Min sa aka makyi* gestural variation

This variation also falls within the broader social context of funerals. It also depicts an emotional state of mind. It literally means “my hands are tied behind my back” as commonly seen when one is wailing. Outside the *Kete* dance performance, it can be a gesture reminiscent of passiveness or a show of obedience to an elderly or someone of higher authority in Akan societies. My informant explains that the variation may symbolize that one is hungry and is now in a state of loneliness. In this variation, both hands are criss-crossed behind the dancer just on the waist line. This attests to the fact that the Asante’s are very particular about the semiotics of symbolic gestures in their dances and that the simplest of movements can be linked to individual as well as societal constructions and understanding of the psychological and or mental, the physiological, and the philosophical. This variation, from inquiry, does not require any specialized or stylized depiction apart from the symbolic

placement of the arms, a dancer's facial expression, and the funeral context to make it meaningful. This variation obviously cannot be performed at ceremonial events or other social events such as puberty rites, weddings, and the likes.

3.2 **Summary**

This chapter has dealt with the structural breakdown of all selected variations. The methodology used for the breakdown hinged on the descriptive analysis based on the structural analysis model as propounded by researcher Adrienne Kaeppler. In the descriptions, analyses were made in juxtaposition to context, politics, transmission, and the linkages between them. As such the chapter establishes the notion that the survival of the dance relies on the merger of all these elements.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Critical Perspectives on *Kete* dance in the 21st Century

The first part of this dissertation outlined the background of the dance as well as problems this research identified as the locus for this study. It does not dwell on the historical and mythical origins of the dance as most researches do but rather set out to identify how commercialization and the lack of comprehensive training affect the aesthetic, the contextual, and the philosophical meaning(s) of movement variations within the *Kete* dance. Within the broad purview of heritage scholarship, this research identifies that for heritage to be salient within Akan cultural arts, it has to be closely knit underground by such elements as aesthetics, context, and meaning. This is relevant in the sense that an inadequate understanding of these elements in Akan arts, such as music and dance, renders one disadvantaged. Safeguarding of music and dance has always taken the oral heritage route where no “formal” documentation is available for scholarly referencing but rather the formality of the safeguarding lies in the embodiment by the social beings in a particular African society. That is to say, heritage has been passed on from generation to generation through the voice and the physical body. It must never be forgotten that traditional forms include all kinds of adoptions of materials derived from rural village life and forms part of the philosophical, as well as practical knowledge of that community.

As the main focus is to look at selected *Kete* variations to help understand the various influences the movements get their meanings from, the second part of the dissertation provides an outlook into the structural make-up and performance of these movements. Therefore, since the research is to locate and identify the kinaesthetic enactments of meaning in varied contexts galvanized in beauty (aesthetics) albeit searching for working methods that

serve the aim of safeguarding this dance form, certain notions like identity, and dance as social construction will be discussed further. Proceeding, one must understand how movements function in a society. Awuah (2014) states that,

traditional dances all across Ghana came into being for specific reasons. Whether for recreational, political, or for religious purposes, dance permeates every aspect of living in the rural areas in the country. A look into all traditional dance forms in Ghana promotes insights into the salient traditional knowledge base created by the numerous ethnic communities in the country. Chief among these pockets of knowledge are the paradigms of unity and, religious affirmation through dance and of, knowledge transmission, continuity, and identity through movements. Within a particular traditional dance form, one can observe distinct cultural characteristics of a group of people and their relationship with their history. (p.58)

With that established, we must now identify how context affect aesthetics and meaning. As mentioned in the introduction, these three elements are closely knit together and each derives their autonomy in part, through the exchange or overlaps of characteristics the rest under the umbrella of the culture they hail from²⁹. Moreover, it is evident from the variation analyses in Chapter two that indeed meaning of variations are derived from the “marriage” of context and aesthetics. Now the task is to discuss the continuity or effective safeguarding of the *Kete* dance heritage through the critical engagement of context and aesthetics within the Asante kinaesthetic culture of knowledge propagation. The kinaesthetic construction as I mentioned earlier may or may not follow an oral linguistic structure, but that notwithstanding, in the interpretation of an oral statement, movements may employ other elements such as music and facial expressions as well as gestures to communicate a meaning.

²⁹ See page 12.

4.1 Kete Language

A person can think objectively and talk about her own or anyone else's body; a person can feel and talk of her bodily experiences; and a person can enact the body (i.e., move) and thus 'talk' from her body.

(Brenda Farnell 1994, p. 934)

Asante's are very masterful with words as with movements and music. The interesting thing about the culture is the fact that most visible and invisible things most likely communicate some message(s). Such is a reason why most Africans/Akans/Asantes use proverbs and or coded languages in their day to day activities. It must be observed that the body is also used in the expressivity of coded and un-coded messages within the culture and as such attest to the creative and masterful use of the body to affirm social, religious, and political positions within the society. Kqoufi et al (2015) agree that proverbs are a significant part of the Akan society and that they beautify African values in terms of language as highlighted by John Mbiti. To Mbiti,

the language of proverbs is a whole way of seeing the world, a way of speaking with other people, a way of feeling the atmosphere in the society in which they live. This assertion by Mbiti clearly illustrates the quality and finely laid down structures of our Ancestors, which are handed down from generation to generation. To the African, and for that matter the indigenous Ghanaian, languages are spiced up with wise sayings in terms of proverbs and philosophies. This is what guides and makes us well recognized as one people with a common destiny. (p. 140)

To this, I argue that the bodily expression of the socio-politico-cultural tenets of knowledge in any society is made manifest through dance in many Ghanaian traditional societies. It is sometimes impossible to really get one's message across only through the engagement of oratory without the use of some performing arts elements, especially dance and music, to send out a message(s). Hanna (1973) argues that,

...dance...is communicative behavior in that movements can form a para- or quasi-language, sometimes more effective than verbal language. Indeed, dance is often a multimedia communication: performers moving in time and space are seen, sounds of physical movements are heard, odours produced by physical exertion are smelled, kinaesthetic activity or empathy is felt, as is the touch of body to body, body part, and performing area. (p.166)

Nancy Bonvillain (Bonvillian1993 in Agyekum 2010) states that ‘linguistic routines combine verbal material and social messages in patterns expressive of cultural values and sensitive to interactional context.’ It is within this same framework that dance combines movements and social messages, with a masterful combination with music to create meaning. In his further inference of the socio-linguistic structure of the Akan, he states that,

each of the linguistic routines is of greater socio-cultural value to the Akan; that is why they have been able to withstand the test of time and globalization. Each of them is patterned differently from the others, despite their similarities and functions. Linguistic routines are determined by the formality of the setting, the nature of the relationship between the participants, social variables, and their communicative goals. Linguistic routines are therefore context bound and socio-culturally oriented. To be able to combine the verbal and social messages effectively, one must know and understand the rules of ethnographic communication. (Ibid)

By this assertion, I hereby draw attention to the concept that socio-cultural values of the Asante are perpetuated through *Kete* movements that are carefully patterned to suit individuals and contexts. As a social paradigm, ‘...the vitality of dance persists in most areas, and it seems to contribute to some of society's key needs - maintaining cultural patterns, managing tensions, attaining goals, adapting to the environment, and integrating members of the community’ (Hanna 1973 p. 167). Orally and also through dance, there are many ways to express an idea or to even stress a point. The sequential arrangement of words in, for

example, thanking someone for an act of benevolence done you will not follow the same order a *Kete* dance variation expressing the same motive will turn out to be. The beauty does not lie in the literal translation of words but the masterful combination of fewer movements and appropriate facial expressions to convey the same sentiments. Agyekum (2010) defines linguistic routines as

sequential organisations beyond the sentence either as activities of one person or the interaction of two or more. These include gestures, paralinguistic features, topics and rituals in everyday interaction. Among the Akans, the most outstanding ones are greetings, apology, request, gratitude/thanking, and the recounting of one's mission because they are encountered daily. (p. 77)

The inseparability of language (both oral and bodily) is very prevalent in the *Kete* dance performance. From a particular *Kete* performance, one can observe a combination of the voice, drum music, and movements to convey emotions and political position that are difficult to portray to someone orally and be imagined visually. Even without the voice, the drum serves as the surrogate voice to aid bodily movements in projecting, ideas, messages, and sentiments to an audience visually. Like proverbs, dance employs short, sharper, and brisk expressions to communicate to an audience. It is evident from the analysis of, for example, the *EtuoniAfena* variation that although speech can succinctly tell the status of a king and the history of the kingdom, through movements on the other hand, a king can express himself more with graceful symbolic gestures which combine masterfully histories of generations before him, his current power, his emotional state should there be a war, and his brevity as is expected of any king.

4.2 Contextual underpinnings of movement variations in *Kete*

Contexts like movements are continually evolving. This is because context of performances before inter-contacts, European contact, slavery, colonization, independence, post-colonization, neo-colonization, and the 21st century globalization attests to the dynamism and resilience of most traditional Ghanaian dances in time. However, it must be understood that what defines each context of performance are the performers and their symbolic representations either through their individual personalities and or through the gestures they exhibit during a performance. In as much as a setting prematurely dictates a function, it is the dance that validates and justifies an occasion. For example, during funerals, there is an expectation of much sorrow and wailing. Even without the dance, a passer-by (from within the culture) can associate a meaning to the event. I argue that lamentations are projected through the *Kete* to communicate the extent to which the family of the deceased are faring. Most times family members who know the dance use the movements of *Kete* as a cathartic valve to demonstrate their position socially, financially, and emotionally to all sympathizers. This is in reference to the *Mabatiahwan* variation discussed in chapter two where a family member or hired dancer performs that variation to express their position after the loss of a loved one.

Arguably, context is fluid within the Asante culture. Except for some religious dances that cannot be performed out of context, other dances and landscapes cross paths most often. For example, it is believed that *Kete* was found only in the palace of the Asantehene as entertainment. It is also added to the entourage of the king when he processes or sits in public. Subsequently, *Kete* finds itself within the hoi-polloi (masses) who quickly adopt it to suit varied social contexts within the society, starting from funerals (arguable). So far, we establish two key contexts for the performance of *Kete* - first for the entertainment of royalty as well as the edification of the king (whether he performs or not), and second being funerals. My focus here lies in the symbolic gestures that traverse between contexts of performance

and the level of their adaptability to individuals and society as a whole. Context sets the ground for symbolic messaging through gestures. With the *Kete*, the political symbolism of an individual or an occasion is necessitated by the context which sets the ground for a “character” such as a king to transmit specific gestural messages about what ever topic he deems fit. In the Asante culture, there is no dance without a context no matter how separated they are from the originality of source or in other words, remaining true to its original environment for their performance. Hanna (1973) states that,

traditional dances are perpetuated outside their original contexts; the fusion of old and new is a recurring phenomenon. People continue to be socialized to old and new values through African dance which is being introduced into schools and churches. In rural and urban areas it celebrates Christian church marriages, installations of contemporary government representatives, dedications of modern schools and hospitals, and achievements of Western professional accreditation. War dances no longer appropriate for battle preparation continue to recount history and to proclaim national identity – now that of heterogeneous peoples within new boundaries.(p. 171)

It is evident from Hanna that the fusion of the old and new has set the ground for a justifiable change in contexts for performances. The contention this thesis raises is with regards to whether this knowledge of change resonates well with the politics of appropriate movement selections to suit these “old and new” changes. From its problem statement, this research points out the lack of awareness displayed in the performance of *Kete* at various functions/contexts evident in the use of gestures by various dancers. Even though the aim is not to push the agenda of the “correct and incorrect” use of gestures, the aim becomes to identify this as a viable problem fighting against the safeguarding of Asante dance heritage. Therefore, an understanding of context through the appropriation of movement variations devoid of philosophical underpinnings which acts as the performance “compass” leaves researchers and performers wondering whether it is indeed necessary to propagate the

Ketedance by viable methodologies. The research also identified a very potent power behind contextual shifts being the commodification of the *Kete* dance form. The dance as a commodity sets the ground for the control of direction where the dance ought to be performed.

4.3 *Kete* as a cultural commodity

Kete is one of the most popular dances in Ghana. It is a dance that is mostly likely to be used by state protocol to welcome government dignitaries on official international duties. Even when there is no dancing, little flower girls are commonly clad in *Kete* costume when presenting bouquets to dignitaries on official visits whether internationally or nationally. With the Akan being the demographically dominant ethnicity in Ghana, it is only natural that their cultural exports within a multi-ethnic state like Ghana be projected heavily in most social affairs. This has consciously or unconsciously placed dances like *Kete* on a pedestal capable of promoting it as a commodity for national and international “consumption”. This however presents interesting departure points for a critical analysis on how such an elevation creates the opportunity for consumerism to have a stake in steering, to a large extent, motivation for learning and performing this dance form. Varied video searches on the internet by use of the key words “Asante dances”, “Adowa”, “Otumfuo” etc. is likely to lead one to a video link to the *Kete* dance on YouTube³⁰. In the wake of traditional dance revival after the independence of Ghana, societies and individuals have desired to “market” themselves well in order to survive financially, even if partially, on their cultural capital of music and dance. Researcher Habib Chester Iddrissu (2011) succinctly points out that ‘for better or worse, Ghana’s contemporary political economy promotes indigenous artists who desire to make performance their source of livelihood through a monthly salary’ (p. 82). I argue here that the creation of various cultural centres within districts in Ghana attests to this fact. In Kumasi, the art centre

³⁰YouTube is a popular video hosting website. It can be accessed with the address, www.youtube.com.

is one of the places people patronize to observe traditional Asante dances and in turn pay some monies as a show of appreciation or as an obligation for the entertainment. These art centres became one of the areas to learn traditional art forms belonging to a people and serves as an aid to the tourism industry. Tourism is a major employer of the traditional art forms of Ghana. The demands in the industry are so huge that it is practically impossible for the ministry to regulate tourist directions and movements with regard to the learning of performing art forms such as dance. This has given the impetus for the creation of many amateur dance groups within the southern belt of Ghana especially to cater for the growing demand of the industry. Within this environment, performance groups seeking quick monies employ what Iddrissu terms “fast-food” methodology in learning dances in the shortest possible time and performing it regardless of the “appropriateness” or not of movement gestures or context. Iddrissu (ibid) states that,

unfortunately, the quest to earn tourist money sometimes led to performers reinventing and redesigning music and dance to conform to tourists’ demands...Many of these individuals have all it takes to properly acquire the knowledge, but they prefer shortcuts to “legitimate” means of learning, because these shortcuts are so easily accomplished. Simply to earn money quickly, incomplete instruction and insufficient mastery of technique become the preferred choices of these artists. (p.83)

This is because ‘tourism is no simple matter. To satisfy an enormous and still rapidly growing market of intercultural, international, intra-cultural, intra-national tourists, performances of all kinds have been found, redesigned, or invented (Schechner 2002 in Iddrissu 2011, p. 83). It then becomes empirical that the premise of consumerism/commodification this research has highlighted as a problem is indeed one worthy to analyse if safeguarding of heritage is indeed paramount to the existence of Akan music and dance heritage. Thus the focus returns

to the mastering of proper techniques and styles through arduous preparation to adequately gather requisite philosophical and kinaesthetic training in order to perform the dance.

4.4 Theorizing aesthetics in the *Kete* dance

As was established in chapter one, aesthetics is a very cautious area to endeavour into especially with regard to dance in any multi-ethnic African state like Ghana. This is very fascinating in the sense that even if two neighbouring villages share the same dance³¹, their aesthetic sensibilities are most likely different and as such their dances would serve different purposes. For to think that their likeness connotes sameness or vice versa will only add to the ‘...conflation...[that] perpetuates the frequently held assumption that what looks the same (because we share a common physiology) will mean the same across linguistic and cultural boundaries and will therefore be experienced as the same (Brenda M. Farnell 1994, p. 937). But as already stated, the use of aesthetics in this research is subject to the researched dance group’s understanding of the concept and will also be discussed in relationship to the emergence of the politics of power, relevance, and beauty (social acceptance) (See page 27). I further argue that even though aesthetics is subjective, it is also culturally controlled by institutional authorities within any society. In defence of this, I employ Vijay Iyer’s (2002) explanation on cognitive embodiment hypothesis to explain the subjectivity of the topic and how prudent it is to delimit its scope to this research. He states that, ‘in the embodied viewpoint, the mind is no longer seen as passively reflective of the outside world, but rather as an active constructor of its own reality’ (p. 389). As such the group’s construction of their own realities pertaining to the dance which is informed by the culture they hail from propels their understanding of the concept of aesthetics based of their own experiences.

³¹ There are villages in Ghana who share the same dance by virtue of identity (name) and even movements.

Aesthetics will be discussed here based on three elements namely; politics, social acceptance, and gender. To theorize *Kete* aesthetics within this research, one must understand the political forces at play that “dictate” the flow of philosophies, movements, and dogmas that are universally accepted as appropriate for the society and how both genders embody them.

Iyer elaborates that,

...the theory of embodiment encompasses both neuropsychological and socio environmental views of cognition. Embodied cognition stresses physical, temporal, and functional situatedness, and enforces interaction between the agent’s body and its environment. Such a holistic view prevents oversimplifications or unrealistic assumptions, because it provides specific grounding in reality (Mataric, 1996). And, quite significantly, the embodied view of cognitive science allows for direct cultural interaction, which is undeniably crucial for both language and music.(Ibid)

Now turning to the society, it is tacit knowledge that there exist many institutions with some elevated above others. Depending on the hierarchical structure of that society, they likely consist of ruling class (royalty), the priestly (religious), and the military as the major institutions that control social behavior. It is these institutions that regulate what elements should be highlighted in any social event. Pierre Bourdieu’s (1972) concept of habitus explains this notion further and declares

habitus as a system of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules. (p. 72)

A habitus is a set of dispositions that generate and structure human actions and behaviors. It shapes all practice and yet it is not experienced as repressive or enforcing. Its effects on us typically go unnoticed. He contends that habitus is a learnt behavior that shapes the actions

and thinking of an individual within a class specifications (Auslander 2008). This is very evident in the performance of movement gestures within the *Kete* dance as has been established in the two chapters preceding this argument. That is to say, the habitus of an individual within a particular social class determines the kind of gestures to use in a dance, how, and when to use it. With that established, I turn my attention to the three elements of politics, social acceptance and gender roles to help theorize aesthetics within the *Kete* dance. From the onset, it is evident that the movement variations within the dance are socially and individually specific. This is analogous to the linguist structure of the Akan language Twi, and its relationship to powers that be within the society.³² If indeed language structure is shaped by political institutions and authorities within the Asante setting, then the metaphysical understanding of cultural philosophies based on habitus sets the precedence for the understanding of, and actual gestural use of specific movements. I hereby contend that the mediating powers of knowledge and social classification dictate what is beautiful pertaining to each social class and context for performance. Then herein lies the understanding why the Asantehene will perform the *EtuoniAfenavariation* in a particular ceremonial or social context as a display of political influence over other social classes and, how even other classes can only perform such variations to the veneration of the living monarch or stool. The acceptance of gestural norms and rules of engagement becomes the political basis for the creation of beauty within all social classes. I propose the notion that per the kinaesthetic lingua in the *EtuoniAfena*, the notion of “strategic essentialization”³³ as displayed by the individual (be it royalty or not) denotes a certain “beauty” imperative that is philosophical and socially

³² This is where there are clear linguistic routines adhered to in communicating socially by the Asantes, like the use of submissive and respect laced sentencing in oral exchanges with the elderly.

³³ Patrick Alcedo (Associate Professor of dance, York University) explains strategic essentializing as a tool “...that marginalized communities choose to essentialize themselves in moments when they need to set themselves apart from others in order to unite for political reasons (2014, p. 40)”.

mediated by political power play and consciously or unconsciously projected through regalia to essentialize the “other” in a particular social order.³⁴

With that established, then the concept of aesthetics as social acceptance becomes a construct of political power play imposed by the few (royalty, religious, and the military) and accepted by the masses. Socially, aesthetics is an agreement between socio-environmental, cosmological, and the philosophical facets of culture to modes of specifications and registrations. In Edwin Ardener's analysis of events theory, Farnell explains that “...particular events that are registered depend on our modes of registration and specification, that is, the means by which they are perceived. He advises that we should know as much as possible about these modes because 'our definition of... the "events" depend upon the modes of registration available to us' (Ardener 1989b: 87 in Farnell 1994, p. 935)”. Therefore a *Kete* dance performed during a funeral falls within a specification that infers from a dogma to which events in that context is expected to be carried out. Therein, the trajectory of the event is expected to align itself with the festive remembrance of the deceased, the ancestors, and a commitment to family and communal growth. Thus the social actor (dancer/performer) enshrined in the “habitus” defines the funeral events and its accompanying aesthetics based on specification and as such any movement variation registered outside the norm of the context registers a mode different from underlying aesthetic requirements look out for. Moreover, with regards to the mode of registration within a social event, an identification of a particular movement flow (a sequence of kinaesthetic combinations of meaning) becomes the focal point for use in a particular social event. That is, ‘the ability to perceive movement as a processual flow of events in space rather than as a series of body positions depends, then, upon having modes of registration and specification adequate to the task’ (Ibid). Movement created, thereby flows in sequence and in its pattern of sequential flow

³⁴The use of regalia here connotes costuming and pomp surrounding a king or perhaps an individual of high social standing. The physical outlook provides insight into the status and privileges of an individual.

creates events (movement) in space which infer from the sociocultural fabric of habitus. Here again, the body does not become a static agency nor a two dimensional object or still “body positions” but rather the body which is an agent becomes lived. In this vein, the lived experience (in the social setting) of the body which manifest itself through actions (gestures) meets the mode of registration and specification due to the context to which the action becomes performed in the space and the specific time of expectation. By so doing the said action satisfies the task requirement of what is specific and what has to be registered movement wise. ‘Aesthetics is concerned with the whole process of socialization of the senses with the evaluation of the properties of things. However, such socialization takes place in the context of the process whereby qualities acquire connotations and are incorporated within systems of meaning. [...] Aesthetics is concerned with the human capacity to assign qualitative values to properties of the material world’ (Howard Morphy 1996 in Tim Ingold 258). Therefore, within the understanding of the modes of specification and registration, I argue here that whatever is deemed “correct in process and product” and deemed appropriate within a specification that is accepted (registered and conformed to social dogmas) is aesthetically pleasing or beautiful and considered within the broader view of aesthetics of social acceptance. *Kete* dance can be a viable methodology in identifying a link between social powers on the construct of what is beautiful and what is not.

Gender specific aesthetics is another notion that is prevalent in the performance of *Kete* dance. That is to say there are specific rules and registrations assigned to each dancing body. The research has already identified differences in movement executions based on female and male dancers on varied degrees on execution and energy exertion. Baffour Kyeremanteng opined that,

we have masculine and feminine attitudes in the performance of *Kete* dance. This helps to separate the identity of each dancer during

performance.³⁵ That is why if you are a male and you dance like a woman (i.e. with female attitudes and attributes) they call you “*Kwadwobasia*”³⁶ because you dance like a female and also if a lady dances like a man then they would say that you dance like a cassava stick; that is, one is too mechanical and not flexible as should be of a woman.(Personal communication, September 30th 2015)

As such the ascription of gender roles on dancing bodies adds to an understanding of what can be deemed beautiful and what cannot. It can be argued that the Asante society has rigid views on sexuality that ultimately transcends onto the body of the dancer in performance with regards to the *Kete* dance. Therefore the mode of registration becomes the visual imagery perceived by the society that is judged by the dancer’s adherence to a particular specification of a performance and staying true to societal definitions and categorizations of gender and gender related movement variations. As such the beauty lies within the technicality of the movement executed accentuated by philosophical ideals on bodily praxis. Conformity to technique serves as an avenue through which a society determines whether one is good or bad. Technique can be defined according to Gediminas Karoblis (2006) as ‘the system of artistic thought which attributes forms to the movement characteristic for the human expressiveness through dance in various stages of the culture’(Karoblis in Rainer and Copoeru p.374).³⁷ Therefore the ascription of beauty through movement execution rests on the “concept and realization” of dance concepts propounded by scholars Egil Bakka and Gediminas Karoblis (2010) which states that ‘the realization is the actual dancing of a dance [while] the concept for the same dance is the potential of skills, understanding, and knowledge that enables an individual or a dance community to dance that particular dance and to recognize and relate to each particular realization of it...’ (pp. 172-173). Bakka also opines

³⁵ Within certain cultures, males can dance as females and vice versa,

³⁶*Kwadwo* is a name of a male born on Monday and *Basia* is a term used to represent a girl/woman. *KwadwoBasia* is a term that can be likened to man who has girlish attitudes or even to an extreme sense a transgender.

³⁷ This definition was given in his paper, “the question concerning dance technique” in *Phenomenology* 2005 V. IV.

that for a dancer to attain a certain level of respect in a group, adequate knowledge of the movement structures alone does not suffice. He states that ‘a dance competence is defined as a sum of motor ability, knowledge and understanding which enables a dancer to carry out a particular dance in accordance with the norms of a group’ (Bakka in Buckland 1999, p. 77). Therefore whether a male or female performs the *Kete* dance, the concept of beauty is mediated between his/her body in tandem to their knowledge of philosophical norms of the society and the adequate motor ability confined within a context.

From current *Kete* performances, one can argue that, like the dynamism of culture, context, and ascription of meaning to certain movements for reasons only known by performers, aesthetics (beauty) has become regenerative. That notwithstanding the study of the evolution of *Kete* movement variations offers insights into the changing landscapes of beauty within the Asante populace.

4.5 Critical discourse on safeguarding *Kete* dance heritage

For intangible cultural heritage of music and dance, safeguarding goes beyond just documentation. For technically intricate dances like *Kete*, mere documentation will not suffice to bring out the varied discrepancies within the dance for critical analysis. Safeguarding will have to be constant, spontaneous, and evolving to keep up with the changing contexts and meanings within the dance. As such borrowing UNESCO’s definition of safeguarding, their 2003 convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage states that safeguarding are “measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage including, the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education as well as the revitalization of various aspects of heritage” (2003). It has already been established that prior to academic preservation, safeguarding and documentation in most African societies have always been oral. As such, in juxtaposition to the definition

above, advances have been made in all other aspects except for the protection of, enhancement of, and the transmission of most traditional dances that need particular attention. I agree that steps have been taken in all three elements but the problem lies in the localizing and theorizing of each concept and the eventual expansion in dance scholarship in Ghana. This is because the mechanisms for protection of these dance forms are very crucial to the sustenance and enhancement of the dance forms. KadidiaDoumbia (2013) opines that ‘the specificities of African dance traditions need to be preserved, and the work needs to start now. Many traditional dances have been lost; nevertheless, with more African professionals educated and with technology Africans have the opportunity through notations, videos, and research to protect what is left of their dance heritage’ (p. 46).

It is through viable working methodologies for safeguarding that transmission of these dances can be perpetuated effectively for years to come. I argue that safeguarding must not be over magnified to cover national and academic interest in the initial stages as is commonly done under the notion that the existence and propagation of these forms are safe when national interest and support is constant. On the contrary, I propose an ethnographic safeguarding methodology - one that seeks to prioritise the propagation of intangible elements within its “natural” environments. Within this idea, traditional propagation methodologies must be studied and re-adapted to seek the re-invention of the traditional forms including philosophical knowledge (concept) that supports the dualism (mind and action) of societal norms and politics. In this methodology, context must be examined to identify parameters that define a setting; how the elusive topic of beauty is “coined” and lived through the body; the social construction of meaning as well the meaning ascribed to meaning within each society. Begho (1986) contends that ‘...survival has been possible only because of the continuing presence of creative minds willing to keep and improve heritage in the light of their particular circumstances at any one historical time’ (p. 116). Since safeguarding of cultural elements

adds to a society's identity, researching and documenting safeguarding measures used in perpetuating a particular society's heritage can reveal a lot of details with regards to, for instance, the various stages of music and dance development and how they have affected the lives of a particular society (Awuah 2015). This is very crucial to the topic of authenticity because people who ascribe the notion to their dance forms exhibit some level of belongingness and pride in their existence. But we must also keep in mind that before this cultural element became an export commodity to other places, it started in a palace. Therefore knowing how the Asantes pay reverence to their ethnicity, monarchy, and the golden stool, some can argue that this is as authentic as it gets. The issue of authenticity is crucial to the understanding of my ethnographic approach to safeguarding because coming from the rural setting departure point, it is imperative to understand how the indigenes perceive their dance forms. Kuwor (2014) in his explanation of what rural performers view their dance to be states that,

although the notion of original does not exist in contemporary scholarship, the Anlo-Ewe tradition keepers insist that it is the version that can be found only in their native soil. It is however arguable that what they refer to as original has gone through changes over time and therefore may have lost some of the qualities that make it 'original'. Also, what they call traditional is being influenced by contemporary society and its technological advancement of creativity. (p. 205)

Therefore, there is already a contention with authenticity which, like aesthetic, is very subjective. But the ethnography theory acknowledges the subjectivity of identities and hereby proposes ideas to combat such authoritarianism. It subscribes to the notion that there is no authenticity in contemporary dance scholarship and as such employs ethnochoreological methodologies that focus on the movement variations to ascertain levels of changes within the socio-cultural build of the people. The concept also acknowledges that change is inevitable and as such subsequently seeks to locate these changes through comparative

analysis the influences there be in movement executions in varied variations. The aim is to be consistent in theorizing the changes and being even predictive of future changes.

4.6 Summary and conclusion

This research has raised many interesting issues pertaining to the *Kete* dance performance. In dealing with any complex dance like the *Kete*, researchers must understand that there is more to the movements than just dancing. On the contrary, the movements serve as a conduit through which the varied elements which necessitate the performance of the dance exist. As such this thesis gave attention to the comprehensive analysis of movements in variations to ascertain what elements in them accentuate a particular context and subsequently add to beauty.

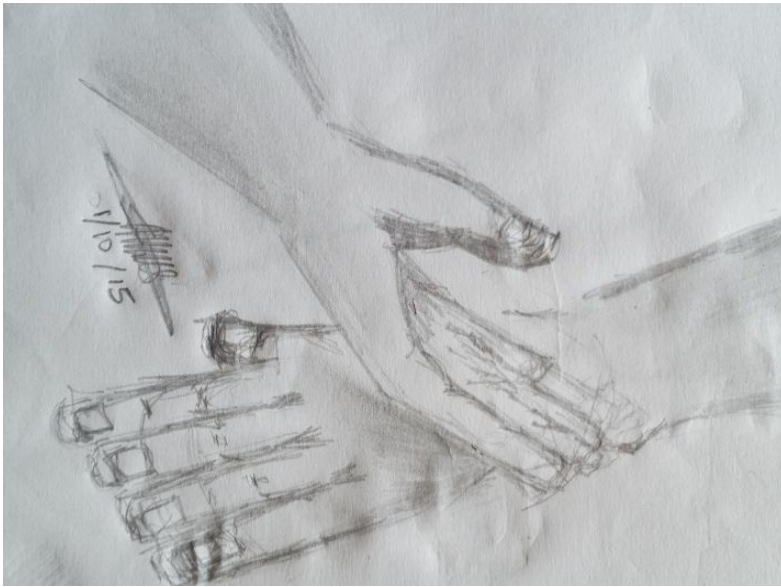
From the dance analysis, beauty is regenerative and the non-beautiful is only that which goes contrary to existing norms of societal dogmas. Context and beauty are very strong elements that add colour to a *Kete* dance performance. Without them movements are meaningless. The research raises important focal points in relation to the pedagogical direction of contemporary *Kete* dance teachers. The pedagogical flow of transmission was identified in the introduction as problematic in the sense that the lack of adequate knowledge by the transmitter causes stagnation in the propagation of varied conceptual data that is paramount for the job. As such inadequate education on the side of both the transmitter and the student endangers the philosophical underpinnings of the *Kete* dance and hence an advocacy for the promotion of the conceptual.

Within *Kete* dance performance at a particular context, vast knowledge of the lives of the Asante is made evident through movements- i.e., the linguistic routines of the Asante through dance, music, and speech. Such patterns no matter how different they maybe, live parallel to each other in adding to the complexity of socio-linguist patterns of movement communication.

It is evident from the whole work that movements in the *Kete* are linked to certain political institutions that give it power and meaning within the society. These institutions validate variations in any performance context and aids in the understanding of social order and identity.

As such the thesis identified the impact of commercialization, social changes, and the absence of comprehensive dance education as combined influences on the Kete dance that affect in one way or the other, the performance of the dance. This was achieved by the analogical study of the kinaesthetic constructs of movements, and symbolisms, and Akan socio-linguist patterns as elements that influences the aesthetics, meaning, and contexts of performances.

List of figures



Tefreayiyanda



Dwanyinimienushia a, nayehu bæma



Perepere



Nkabom

Bibliography

- Adinku, W.O. (1994). *African dance education in Ghana: Curriculum and instructional materials for a model Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) Dance in Society*. Accra: Universities Press.
- Agyekum, K. (2010). The sociolinguistics of thanking in Akan. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16(2), 77-79.
- Amegago, M. (2011). *An African music and dance curriculum model: Performing Arts in education*. Carolina: Carolina Academic Press.
- Auslander, P. (2008). *Theory of Performance Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Awedoba, A. K. (2002). *Culture and development in Africa with special reference to Ghana*. Legon, L.G.: Institute of African Studies.
- Awuah, E. B. (2014). *A study of Amateur Groups' Re-interpretation of Traditional Dances in Ghana: Role on Continuity and Safeguarding*(Unpublished MA dissertation), Choreomundus International Master in Dance Knowledge, Practice and Heritage – (Norway, France, Hungary, United kingdom).
- Badu-Young, Z. C. M. (2002). *Ewe culture as expressed in Ghana, West Africa. Through Adzogbo Dance ceremony: A foundation for the development of interactive multimedia educational materials* (Doctoral dissertation). McGill University, Montreal, Canada.
- Bakka, E., &Fiskvik, A. M. (Eds.). (2002). *Dance knowledge – Dansekunnskap: International conference on cognitive aspects of dance: Proceedings: 6th NOFOD conference, Trondheim January 13-20 2002*. Trondheim: NOFOD.
- Bakka, E., &Karoblis, G., (2010). Writing "A Dance": Epistemology for dance research. *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 42, 167–193. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41201384>
- Bartenieff, I., Hackney, P., Jones, B.T., Van Zile, J., &Wolz, C. (1984). The potential of movement analysis as a research tool; A preliminary analysis. *Congress on Research in Dance*, 16(1), 3. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1478254>, (Accessed: 10/04/15).
- Begho, F.O. (1986). Function and aesthetics in traditional African dance. N.p., n.d. Web. (Date Assessed: 10/02/2014).
- Berg, B. L. (2004). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Boston: Pearson.

- Brown, A.K. Manley, M. & Nielsen, C.S. (2012). *DaCi's first 30 years rich returns (Vol.1): In search of our own dance knowledge*. Taipei: Dance and the Child International (daCi), Member of the Council International de la dance UNESCO
- Buckland, T.J. (1999). *Dance in the field: Theory, methods and issues in dance ethnography*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dampney-Akom, E. (1982). *The history and development of Asante Adowa with special reference to Kumasi* (Unpublished Diploma thesis). University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana.
- David, A. R., & Dankworth, L. E. (n.d.). *Dance ethnography and global perspectives: Identity, embodiment, and culture*. England: Pelgrave-Macmillan.
- Desmond, J. (1993). Embodying difference: Dance and cultural studies. *Cultural Critique* 26(3), 33-63.
- Doudu, E. A. (1994). *Topics in African dance and the related arts*. Legon, L.G.: Institute of African Studies, Legon.
- Doudu, E. A. (1972). *Drumming and dancing in Akan society: A study of court musical and dancing tradition* (Master's thesis). Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut.
- Doumbia, K. (2013). Poetry expressed: Dance diversity in the African subcontinent – Perceptions, misperceptions, and preservation (With a focus on the Ivory Coast and Mali). *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 84(7), 41 – 46. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2013.821010>
- Eddy, M (2000). *Movement activities for conflict resolution. The Fourth R*. Washington, DC: CREnet.
- Farnell, B. M. (1994). Ethno-Graphics and the moving body. *Man*, 29(4), 929. Doi: 10.2307/3033975
- Felfoldi, L. (2001). Connections between dance and dance music: Summary of Hungarian research. *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 33, 159. doi:10.2307/1519640
- Fraleigh, S. H., & Hanstein, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Researching Dance: Evolving Modes of Inquiry*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Giurchescu, A. (2001). The power of dance and its social and political uses. *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 33, 109. Doi: 10.2307/1519635
- Ghana Studies. (2014). Madison: African Studies program. 15/16: pp. 374-407
- Green, D. (1985). African oral tradition literacy. *Journal of Black Studies*, 15(4), 405–425. doi:10.1177/002193478501500404

- Gyekye, K., (1996). *African cultural values: An introduction*. Philadelphia, PA: Sankofa Pub.
- Hanna, J. (1965). Africa's new traditional dance. *Ethnomusicology*, 9(1), 13-18.
- Hanna, J. (1973). African dance: The continuity of change. *Yearbook of The International Folk Music Council*, 5, 165. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/767501>
- Harper, P. (1967). Dance in a changing society. *African Arts*, 1(1), 10-13, 76-77, 79-80.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (2008). *Handbook of emergent methods*. New York, N.Y.: Guilford press.
- Iddrisu, H.C., (2011). The price of adaptation: Hybridization of African music and dance from village to international stage (Doctoral Dissertation). Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.
- Ingold, T. (1996). *Key debates in anthropology*. London: Routledge.
- Iyer, V., (2002:2003). Embodied mind, situated cognition, and expressive microtiming in African-American music. *Music Perception*, 19(3), 387-414. Doi: 10.1525/mp.2002.19.3.387
- Kaepler, A. L. (1972). Methods and theory in analyzing dance structure with an analysis of Tongan Dance. *Ethnomusicology*, 16(2), 173. Doi: 10.2307/849721
- Kaminski, J. S. (2012). *Asantentahera trumpets in Ghana: Culture, tradition, and sound barrage*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.
- Kquofi, S., Sarbah, G. T., Arthur, N. A. P., (2015). Aesthetic Communicative and Symbolic Representation of the Philosophical Underpinnings of Akan (Akwapem) Proverbs. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 2, 9. DoI:10.14738/assrj.29.1468.
- Kuwor, S.K., (2013). *Transmission of Anlo-Ewe dances in Ghana and in Britain: Investigating, reconstructing and disseminating knowledge embodied in the music and dance traditions of Anlo-Ewe people in Ghana* (Doctoral Dissertation), Roehampton University, London, United Kingdom.
- Kumekpor, T.K. (2002). *Research methods & techniques of Social Science*. Accra: Sonlife Press & Services.
- Kyeremateng, A. 1969. The royal stools of Ashanti. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 39(1), 1-10.
- Loke, L., Larssen, A. T., Robertson, T. (2005). *Labanotation for design of movement-based interaction: Proceedings of the second Australian conference on Interactive entertainment (IE)*, (p.113-120), University of Technology Sydney, Australia.

- Nii-Yartey, F. (2013). Dance symbolism in Africa. In T. Manuh & E. Sutherland-Addy (Eds.), *Africa in Contemporary Perspective* (pp. 412-28). Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers.
- Nketia, J.H. K. (1963). *Drumming in Akan communities*. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd.
- Nketia, J. H. K. (1965). *Ghana-Music, dance and drama: A review of the performing arts of Ghana*. Accra: Ghana publishing Corporation.
- Nketia, J. H. K. (1966). *Music in African cultures*. Legon, L.G.: Institute of African Studies.
- Nketia, J. H. K. (1968). *Our drums and drummers*. Accra: Ghana Publishing House, Accra.
- NsuaseKete Group., & Kaminski, J. S. (2007). *Asante Kete drumming: Music from Ghana*. New York, N.Y.: Lyricord Discs.
- Opoku, A. M. (1964). Thoughts from the School of Music and Drama. *Okyeame*, 2(1), 51-56.
- Opoku, A. M. (1966). Choreography and the African dance. *Research Review, Institute of African Studies, Legon*, 3(1), 56.
- Opoku, A. M. (1966). *Profile of African dances*. Accra: Ghana Publishing House.
- Rainer, H., & Copoeru, I. (2006). *Phenomenology 2005* (Vol. 4). Bucharest: Zeta Books.
- Rattray, R. S. (1928). *Religion and art in Ashanti*. Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press.
- Ranger, T. O. (1975). *Dance and society in East Africa*. London: Heinemann.
- Ross, D. H. (1977). Iconography of Asante sword ornaments. *African Arts*, 11(1), 16. Doi: 10.2307/3335218
- Schildkrout, E., Gelber, C., & American Museum of Natural History (1987). *The Golden Stool: Studies of the Asantecenter and periphery, anthropological papers of the American Museum of Natural History, vol. 65, Part 1*. New York, N.Y.: American Museum of Natural History. doi:10.2307/1160242
- Sorell, W. (1967). *The Dance through the Ages*. New York, N.Y.: Grosset and Dunlap Inc.
- Stella, A. (2014, 06). Erotic expressions in Adowa dance of the Asante: The stimulating gestures, costuming and dynamic drumming. *Journal of Music and Dance J. Music Dance*, 4(1), 1-9. Doi:10.5897/jmd2013.0021

UNESCO (2003). *Conventions for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage*.

Retrieved from (<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00006>) (Date assessed: 05/06/15).

Welsh, K. A. & Hanley, E.A. (Eds.) (2010). *African dance*, Google scholar edition. Chelsea: Infobase Publishing.

Wilson, M. (2006). Dance pedagogy case studies: A grounded theory approach to analyzing qualitative data. *Research in Dance Education*, 10(1), 3–16. doi:10.1080/14647890802697148

Yankah, K. (2011). *The Proverb in the context of Akan Rhetoric: A Theory of proverb praxis*. New York, N.Y.: P. Lang.

Younge, P. (2011). *Music and Dance Traditions of Ghana: History Performance and Teaching*. North Carolina: McFarland and Company.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS.

1. Baffour Kyeremanteng (30/09/2015)
2. Boboo (leader of AhenemaKete Group - Kumasi) – 10/08/2015
3. Eric Baffour Awuah (Email correspondence) – 02/03/15; 15/05/2015; 11/09/2015; 10/11/15
4. Georgina Antwi (05/08/2015)
5. Emeritus Professor Kwabena Nketia (20/09/2014; 03/10/15)
6. Senyo Okyere (10/10/2015)
7. Mrs Sarah Dorgbadzi (08/08/2014; 15/12/2014; 11/07/2015; 11/09/2015)
8. Dr.Osei Agyemang (07/08/2014; 14/12/2014; 08/07/2015)
9. Akwasi Kumi (AhenemaKete drummer) – 20/04/2015
10. Kwame Owusu (Ahenema Dancer) – 20/04/2015
11. Oolai (Drummer) – 19/04/2015
12. Gasco Atsu Ablordey (Drummer) – 15/07/2015