

THE CHORAL MUSIC SCENE IN THE GOLD COAST (GHANA) PRIOR TO 1933

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Abstract: *The paper looks at the choral music scene in the Gold Coast (Ghana) prior to the year 1933, the year after the publication of Amu's 'Twenty-five African Songs'. The paper argues that before the publication there was the tradition of choral music composition in the country. This tradition had been nurtured by the introduction of art music, the hymn and anthem of Western Europe, and the introduction of formal education and music education into the country by the Europeans. The paper also presents a profile of some of the early Ghanaian composers of choral music, with samples of some of their compositions, which show influences from the tradition known to them – the hymn and anthem introduced by the Europeans.*

Introduction

This paper attempts to trace the conditions that prevailed in Ghana which made the tradition of choral music composition thrive. The development of formal European type of music education has been evident in Ghana for a very long time. It is on record that Ghanaians were composing along the 'classical style' before 1933. These were Ghanaian composers who had benefited from European education. Thus prior to the year 1933, Ghanaians had experienced the art music tradition of the Europeans, and were composing in the style of the music they had experienced and been exposed to. In this paper, a profile of some of the composers is given with samples of their compositions.

It is important to point out that the date 1933 is relevant on account of two points: Ghanaians such as Rev. J.E. Allotey-Pappoe and others were

composing before this date, and, it was at this date that Amu's work, *Twenty-five African Songs*, was published. It is worth noting that at the time the work was published it was hailed as a "book which every teacher, whether he speaks Twi or not, is strongly recommended to purchase"¹ and was hailed as marking a new beginning in the musical practice of Ghana.

Introduction of Choral Music in Ghana and the First Sung Mass

It is recorded that the first day after the Portuguese landed on the coast at La Mina (Edina, Elmina) to found the first European settlement on the Guinea coast, on January 19, 1482, they suspended the banner of Portugal from the bough of a lofty tree, at the foot of which they erected an altar, and the whole company assisted at the first mass that was celebrated on the Guinea coast, and prayed for the conversion of the natives from idolatry, and the perpetual prosperity of the church which they intended to erect on the spot"². It was on this occasion that the first mass was sung in Ghana³. This ceremony therefore marked the beginning of the introduction of Western Church and other art music in Ghana.

The above quotation is significant in various respects. First, the event the quotation talks about marked the beginning of the influence of the Church and missionaries on the life of Ghana. Second, it marked the introduction of western education to Ghana; and third, it also marked the introduction of music of foreign provenance, the art music of European origin, to the people of Ghana.

¹ *Teachers' Journal* vol. V 1933, quoted from the Introduction to Amu Choral Works vol. 1, 1993

² C.G. Baeta, *Aspects of Religion: A study of Contemporary Gold Coast*, Vol. II (eds. W. Birmingham, I. Neustadt, E.N. Omaboe), Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967, pp. 240-250; S.G. Williamson, *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith: A comparative Study of the Impact of Two Religions* (ed. K.A. Dickson), Accra: Ghana Universities Press. 1965a: ix

³ Hans W. Debrunner, *Pioneers of Church and Education in the Gold Coast*. Copenhagen 1962, p. 17.

Ghanaian, before the arrival of the European missionaries, had their own music. However, the Europeans preached against African cultural practices and promoted Western cultural values and usages. They adopted a hostile attitude to African music, especially to drumming, because this was associated with 'pagan' practices; indeed African music was considered to be 'hideous or at best, the most charming asses music that can be imagined.'⁴ This influence, it could be inferred, tended to uproot the people tragically from the culture and tradition they were used to.

It must be pointed out, however, that the first efforts of the Portuguese to evangelize had no serious Christianizing effect. Though chapels were built inside the castles and forts, and also some for Ghanaian, the Portuguese only made sporadic attempts at converting the people to Christianity⁵. The chaplaincies in the European settlements on the coast were mainly used by the European garrisons and their families, in some cases including mulattos.⁶ Although some evangelizing or baptisms of Ghanaian did take place, this event appears to have been related more to trading than to religious interests.⁷

Nothing permanent, therefore, resulted from these early evangelizing activities partly owing to lack of well-trained missionaries and partly owing to the stifling influences of the slave trade. The trade in slaves was particularly lucrative and the interest in missionary work was sacrificed to that in commerce.

Informal Christian contacts at the individual level was made, and the most effective of these was the adoption by Europeans of African youths

⁴ Barbot and Bosman, *Musical Observations in the Gold Coast*, 1704.

⁵ Debrunner, 1967: 18 Baeta, 1967:37.

⁶ Mulattos are children of African mothers with European fathers (see Baeta, 1967: 37).

⁷ Baeta, 1967: 245.

whom they sent, or took with them, to Europe for education⁸. The most important of these were Anthony William Amo of Axim and Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein of Elmina⁹.

The history of the introduction of certain types of European music to Ghana is closely tied up with the history of the Christian missions and, especially, with Christian education as well as the activities of the European traders. These European traders, missionaries and colonial agents introduced the church hymn, the school part-song, classical music and other western musical types. The effect of such exposure was the creation of new musical forms in Ghana in which could be found certain elements that can be traced directly to European music. These new developments can best be traced while discussing the early European contact, missionary activities, and the formal education that was established.

Missionary Work

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel came to Ghana with the sole aim of propagating the gospel to the people of Ghana. They did not, however, make any effort to organize a systematic missionary work among the Ghanaian people. Their main aim was a school for African and mulatto children, which was supported by the British Royal African Company (a trading company) and later by the colonial government.¹⁰ The effort of a group of former pupils of this school, who requested a sympathetic English sea captain to bring them bibles from England, resulted in bringing down to Ghana the first Wesleyan (Methodist) missionary in 1835¹¹.

⁸ Debrunner, 1967: 64-66.

⁹ McWilliam, 1959: 9-10.

¹⁰ McWilliam, 1959:13ff

¹¹ C.C. Reindorf, *The History of Ghana and Asante*, (Accra, Ghana Universities Press, 1966) : 226-227

The Basel Mission of Germany and the Methodist Mission of England which arrived in the east and west of Ghana in 1828 and 1835 respectively were those who really began effective and lasting missionary work besides their educational activities and their agricultural and commercial enterprises. The coming of the Basel Mission (Evangelical Missionary Society in Basel) and also of the Methodist Mission to Ghana, was the outcome of a growing demand for schools and Christian missions from among the population along the coast¹².

The Basel Mission

The first missionaries of the Basel mission arrived on December 22, 1828. The rate of expansion they anticipated, however, was slow due to a frightful death toll. Between 1828 and 1839 out of nine Basel Missionaries sent to Ghana (including a physician) only one survived – the Rev'd. Andreas Riis. He left the coast and moved inland in 1835 to Akropong Akwapem in the eastern regions of Ghana, a hilly town with a healthy climate, and established the Basel Mission headquarters in order to “work among a truly indigenous people as yet largely unaffected by the demoralizing influence of Europeans on the coast”¹³. Riis realized that the only possible approach to fruitful missionary work was to learn the language of the people. Thus, soon after arrival at Akropong, he started to learn the Akan language.

An outbreak of political strife (chieftaincy dispute) in Akwapem during the early days of the settlement of the missionaries gravely hindered the progress of the mission¹⁴. The Basel Mission sought to establish a very strong mission station with several missionaries at Akropong to be the

¹² Debrunner, 1967: 93 – 96.

¹³ Noel Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835 – 1960* (Accra, Ghana Universities Press, 1966: 30

¹⁴ Smith, 1966:31-32; Debrunner, 1967: 100

nerve centre for spreading the gospel. The missionaries imported a sizeable number of black West Indian Christians, a group of second-and-third-generation liberated slaves, to Ghana to help with the missionary work. The West-Indians were brought to Ghana to demonstrate that Christianity was also a blackman's religion, a religion for the Africans¹⁵. The local chief of Akropong and his subjects had earlier told Andreas Riis they would follow his Christian religion if he could prove to them that some blackmen were followers of his religion, and that they could read the Bible¹⁶.

When the missionary work started to take root in Akwapem, a chapel (later serving as a school building) was built for the use of the Christian community. The intensive language study embarked on by the missionaries made it possible for the first sermon to be preached in Twi without an interpreter. The first Twi Hymn was sung by the middle of 1884 (Smith, 1966: 39). The hymns sung in the local Basel Mission churches at the time were mainly translations of German hymns. The fifth edition of *Tunes to the Twi and Ga Hymn Book* (London: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1953) in use in Presbyterian Churches in Ghana contains mainly German and English Tunes. Some of the compositions are by J. Crüger (1653), Felix Mendelssohn, J. Haydn, Augustt Gross, Orlando di Lasso, F. Gluck and Martin Luther, to mention just a few (see *Tunes to the Twi and Ga Hymn Book* numbers 93, 95, 139 and 146). Excerpts from a few of the tunes are reproduced below:

¹⁵ Smith, 1966:36

¹⁶ N.T. Clerk, *A Short Centenary Sketch: The Settlement of the West Indian Christians on the Gold Coast, 1843 – 1943*: 8

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy
93. *Onyame ne m'agyeakwa*

95. *Jesu, wo yim, wo amame* 1554

139 *Mey' adebon'yefa* Aug. Gross, 1799-1840

In the excerpts above ¹⁷, a) is an adaptation from Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's *Lieder ohne Worte* (Songs without Words) Op. 38 No.4, dating from the nineteenth century, while examples b) and c) date from the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, respectively.

The Methodist Mission

The present Methodist Church descended from the Wesleyan Mission in 1835, the year in which Riis moved from the coast to the healthy hill country of Akropong Akwapim. Joseph Dunwell of the Methodist Missionary Society in England arrived at Cape Coast to start the mission's work in the western part of Ghana ¹⁸. He was the first Methodist

¹⁷ See *Tunes to the Twi and Ga Hymnbook*, 5th Edition (Basel Mission Book Depot, Kumasi), 1957

¹⁸ F.L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (Cambridge, in association with Methodist Book Depot: Cambridge University Press, 1965) 1

Missionary to Ghana. However, we must point out that it was through the efforts of a small group of African Christians, led by one William de Graft, which brought the Rev. Dunwell to the country, in an attempt to start Methodism in Cape Coast and other parts of Ghana.

Divine service or worship in the castles was the practice before Dunwell arrived in Cape Coast. Beecham¹⁹ records that 'they adopted for their guidance the following rule that, as the word of God is the best rule a Christian ought to observe, it is herein avoided framing other rules to enforce good conduct'. From twelve to eighteen 'educated' Africans attended public worship in the Cape Coast Castle each Sunday²⁰, and out of this group came the 'Bible Band' or the 'Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge' (S.P.C.K) of Cape Coast. This band provided the foundation members of Ghana Methodist Church. It should be noted that before systematic missionary work started after January 1, 1835, Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, a mulatto, and others met on Sundays in the house of one of their members at a very early hour (Bartels, 1965: 8). 'They sang *psalms* and read some of the prayers in the liturgy of the Church of England. Some scripture was read and explained in the Fante language. They always concluded their service by singing another *psalm* and used another prayer from the liturgy',²¹

Dunwell, who preached his first sermon in Ghana at one of the SPCK meetings, had this to say: 'My feelings on this occasion, I cannot tell ... they sung a *psalm*, which delighted me. I preached to them a short sermon.'²²

¹⁹ J. Beecham, *Ashantee and the Gold Coast*, (London, 1841), p.260

²⁰ Bartels, 1965: 8

²¹ Bartels, 1965: 8

²² Bartels, 1965: 13

From the onset, singing formed a very important part of the Methodist class meetings. 'To the Christian practice which grew out of the "meeting" to the fellowship and prayerfulness of its members, to their singing and their seeking, to their reading and interpretation of God's holy word, Dunwell brought the instruction and inspiration of the sermon, the meditation and witness of the class meeting, and the appeal of the extempore prayer. The Methodist Church, Ghana, had been born.'²³

Singing remained a powerful means of spreading Methodism in Ghana, and most of the hymns were British Methodist Hymns. Thus, the Methodist Mission accomplished its evangelizing work through the hymns that the congregation sang (see the Preface to The Methodist Hymn Book). Indeed, the opening line to the Preface of the Methodist Hymn Book reads 'Methodism was born in song.'

As already stated, singing remained a powerful means of spreading Methodism in Ghana.²⁴ It is said that at about 1860, a hardened and skeptical captain of an American anti-slave trade patrol boat said after a visit to Cape Coast, Ghana, to his Chaplain at the mass table:

I tell you what it is gentlemen: I have often questioned the usefulness and good sense of mission in Africa; but when I heard them little Guinea niggers, at Cape coast, singing those old Methodist Hymns that I used to hear on Long Island when I was a boy – and that wasn't yesterday – I thought ... "Well, the Christian religion is bound to go over the whole earth". Chaplain, I give in.²⁵

²³ Bartels, 1965: 15

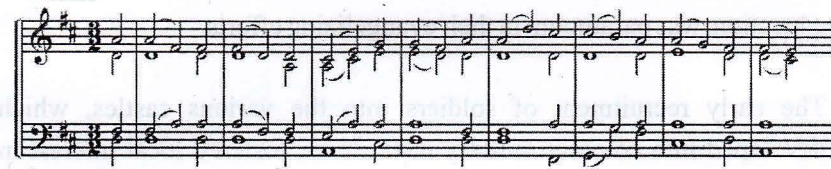
²⁴ Debrunner, 1964; 106

²⁵ C.W. Thomas, *Adventures and Observations on the West Coast of Africa*, (1864) 205

So powerful was hymn-singing an evangelizing tool for the mission that a large number of people were converted and became attracted to the Methodist Church.

It is not known when the first hymns were sung in the Methodist Church, but from accounts as those above, hymns were sung during the Sunday meetings of the SPCK. Some of the tunes were by such composers as Mozart, Bach, Haydn, M. Herbst (c. 1654-81), and Gibbons (1583-1625) (see *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes*). Excerpts of some of the hymn tunes in the *Methodist Hymn Book* are reproduced below:

572
Mozart



from Mozart's Die Zauberflöte
1791

16
AUSTRIA



F.J. Haydn, 1732-1809

202
PASSION CHORALE



H. L. Hassler, 1564-1612

In the excerpts above ²⁶, a) is an adaptation from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, dating from the eighteenth century, b) also dates from the eighteenth century while c) dates from the sixteenth century.

²⁶ See *The Methodist Hymn-Book with Tunes*, (London: Methodist Conference Office, 35th Edition, 1933)

The Castle Schools

Formal western education was first introduced into Ghana through the coastal castles and forts erected by the European trading nations²⁷. The first reference to a Christian school in Ghana is said to be one that the Portuguese attempted to establish in the Elmina Castle in 1529. MacWilliam²⁸ avers that King John III of Portugal instructed the Governor taking care of his country's interests in Elmina "to bring the people of Elmina and those who came to trade to the Christian faith". He further instructed that "the children of Elmina village should learn to read and write, [and learn] how to sing and pray while ministering in church..."²⁹ An exact record of this school was asked to be kept in the castle archive. Thus, to the colonizers, education, including music education, was paramount in their evangelizing efforts.

The early recruitment of soldiers into the various castles, which developed into colonial military institutions, fostered local interest in western popular and classical music.³⁰ Beecham, writing in 1841, noted that a native band at the Cape Coast Castle had several current English popular tunes in its repertory which it played well by ear. Beecham did not give any example of the "current English popular tunes" in his writing. The need for providing Western musical entertainment for colonial officials and traders was met subsequently by the army and police bands, to which Africans were recruited and trained by Western band conductors. Some of these tunes included waltzes, foxtrots and ragtime, to mention a few.

It is clear from what has so far been stated that European traders, missionaries and the colonial agents opened government schools that

²⁷ Bartels, 1965: 63; MacWilliam, 1959: 8

²⁸ MacWilliam, 1959: 8

²⁹ Debrunner, 1964: 21

³⁰ Beecham, 1841: 169

were to provide Ghana with clerks, teachers, pastors, etc. Besides their trading and commercial activities, and also spreading Christianity, education and European music cultures, they became equally concerned with the improvement of the personality of Africans. They built schools and churches, preached the gospel and converted the natives to Christianity; they also developed agriculture and legitimate trade all to the raising of the standards of living of Ghanaians. The influence of the church is therefore bound up with its introduction of Western education, and the established mission and government schools have helped to hasten the process of social change.

It is also noted that western music traditions had been practiced in Ghana from the time that the colonialists first set foot on the Guinea coast. And, like most literate musicians of the colonial period, many of the composers of the early Ghanaian era began to compose in the style of the western idioms they were familiar with. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the output of these early composers comprised of hymn-tunes and anthems.

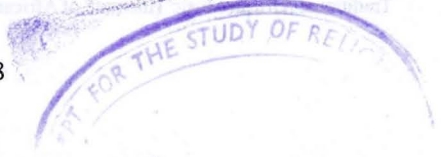
Early beginnings of choral music composition in Ghana

African Christian musical compositions appeared very early in the history of Christianity in Ghana. It is probable that the earliest compositions were parodies of African songs.³¹ In 1835 or thereabout, the Wesleyan missionaries encouraged the adaptation of Fante musical forms such as *adenkum*³² and *adzewa*³³ to the words of hymns and

³¹ A.R. Turkson, 'Evolution of Fante Sacred Lyric' *Research Review*, pp.1-13 (1973).

³² Adenkum is a musical type played by the Akan. It is accompanied by a gourd stamping tube of the same name. The music and dance of this musical type are also known as adenkum. Like adzewa, adenkum is a predominantly female band.

³³ Adzewa is a recreational music type of the Fante. The band is predominantly female. The main instruments accompanying adzewa songs are gourd rattles which are played by women; but they are also accompanied by a drum known as *apentemma* which is played by a male member of the band.



scripture.³⁴ This was common even with the trained African hymnodists of the Church. Rev Gaddiel Acquaaah, for example, parodied the Fante national song, *Osahen eyi hen efir mbusu mu* (The Warrior-king has delivered us from evil) into what has now become the popular Akan Christian classical, *Osabarima* (Hero).³⁵ It is possible that even without the encouragement of the European Missionary African Christians would still have sung their faith in their own style. For singing comes naturally to the African and in all activities and on different occasions appropriate musical forms are employed to give expression to fears, aspirations, hopes, sorrows and joys.³⁶ By 1899 the singing bands started by Rev J. B. Anaman had spread throughout most places on the coast and although these bands sung songs that were translated from English hymn books into Fanti, they also sung songs that had been composed locally. A collection of hymns made by Rev Anaman between 1893 and 1899 included *Tsetse Mfantse Ndwom* (Ancient Fante Songs) and *Nanaam* (grand parents/ ancestors). Included in the *Tsetse Mfantse Ndwom* was a popular song, *Bɔ Me Nantsew* (Lead me on), which is still sung by Church groups, and which has seen several arrangements by some of the early and present day Ghanaian composers. The songs in *Nanaam* were about the humiliated Fante national oracle, *Nanaam Mpɔw*. The texts exposed and condemned the alleged deceit and fraudulent practices of the oracle. *Nanaam Mpɔw* was a powerful and influential oracle of the Fante nation that, in 1851, was exposed through the activities of a Fante convert to Methodism as fraudulent. The rather devastating exposures led to the total collapse of the oracle and the public humiliation of its many functionaries.

³⁴ A. R. Turkson, 'Contrafactum and Parodied Song Texts in Religious music Traditions in Africa' (University of Ghana, Legon, n.d.) pp.5-6

³⁵ See J. Yedu Bannerman, *Asɔfoponmuapɔn Ho Anwensem* (Accra, Centre for Indigenous Knowledge Systems, 2002), pp. 33-34

³⁶ J. H. Nketia, 'Music in African Cultures – A Review of the Meaning and Significance of Traditional African Music' (Institute of African Studies, Legon, 1966), pp.11-45

The popular *Ebibindwom* or the *Fanti* sacred lyrics (Fante Christian songs spontaneously improvised to African (Ghanaian) tunes), which has become an identifiable expression of indigenous Fanti Methodism, seems to have emerged in such a context. *Ebibindwom* emerged very early in the history of Christianity in Ghana. It is said that as early as the time of the pioneer Wesleyan missionary, Thomas B. Freeman, *ebibindwom* was being used in Church services. Worshippers were allowed to adapt biblical texts to traditional tunes whenever they felt inspired by a sermon. It was also to aid the learning of the scriptures by the largely non-literate membership of the Church. It needs to be noted that the use of *ebibindwom* in between sermons is similar to the traditional *mboguo*, which is sung in between the telling of Ananse stories. Williamson explains that the interruption of Ananse stories served the same purpose as the entr'acte in Western dramatic production or served the purpose of commentary on the story or some aspect of it³⁷. Otto Boateng suggests that the establishment of *ebibindwom* as an African Christian musical form was the most important achievement that came out of the earliest encounter of African indigenous musical forms with Western ones³⁸. The very term, *ebibindwom*, which literally means 'African music', was meant to distinguish that genre of music from 'European music' that was considered the original and normal musical form of the Church. It appears the European Missionaries were quite open to the use of *ebibindwom*. For example, the Basel Missionaries included 'Fante lyrics and Negro Spirituals' in The Twi Hymn Book as early as 1891,³⁹ and the Methodist Church also included some *ebibindwom* in the Christian *Asor Ndwom* – a collection of translations of some of the hymns in the Methodist Hymn Book.

³⁷ Sidney G. Williamson, *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith: A Comparative Study of the Impact of Two Religions* (ed. By K.A. Dickson, Accra, Ghana Universities Press), 1965

³⁸ Otto A. Boateng, *An Insight into the Musical Culture of Africa Through Ghana Gates*, p. 103

³⁹ Boateng, *An Insight into the Musical Culture*, p. 102

Even before the works of J. B. Anaman, many songs in the pattern of local folk songs but with Christian or biblical texts had appeared in the African Christian communities. Among such songs were some of those that the Rev J. B. Anaman published in the collections *Tsetse Mfantse Ndwom*. According to Otto Boateng, children in the Christian Mission stations developed their own versions of traditional music and dances. The songs normally were indigenous in tune and style but had Christian or biblical texts⁴⁰. An example of these songs was,

WUBENYA JERUSALEM AKO



Source: O.A. Boateng-In *Insight Into the Musical Culture of Africa Through Ghana Gates*

[You must pray before going to bed,
Pray before going to bed,
You will be allowed to go to Jerusalem]

Otto Boateng explains that these tunes represented some of the earliest 'natural attempts' to make the 'rhythm, words, percussion (clapping) and dancing suitable for modern Church life.'⁴¹ He also reports that around 1900 the Christian community at Otumi, a Basel Mission station in the Akyem Abuakwa traditional state had developed a completely African tune set to Christian ideas. The song was called, *Nana Nyankopon mma ne yen* (We are the children of God). Such developments represented some of the clearest testimonies of the deep assimilation of the Christian faith by African converts. Christians across the social spectrum – the educated elite such as pastors and teachers as well as the ordinary,

⁴⁰ Boateng, *An Insight into the Musical Culture*, pp. 7-6.

⁴¹ Boateng *An Insight Into the Musical Culture*, p.76

sometimes illiterate Christians, including children – had grasped the Christian faith in such depths that their faith freely flowed in songs composed by themselves in their indigenous idiom.

Apart from the early folk-style African Christian songs that seem to have had spontaneous origins, some early Churchmen and collaborators of the Western Missionaries also composed songs. Among such musicians were C.C. Reindorf, T. B. Kwatei, Simeon Koranteng, and Christian Obuobi of the Basel Mission. Others were J. B. Anaman, Gaddiel Acquaaah, and J. E. Allotey - Pappoe of the Wesleyan Mission. Such people translated Western hymns or composed their own original ones, many of which are included in the vernacular hymnbooks of Ghanaian Churches. However, the style of their music was very close to the Western European hymns to be considered distinctly African, though there were a few who departed markedly from the European style. From 1900 onwards Western European musical instruments such as the accordion, concertina, harmonium and, later, the brass became widely used by congregations. Though, it was not allowed to accompany these with drums or percussion this development helped to 'ease the fixidity in African musical elements'⁴² and pave the way for the blending of African musical forms with European ones.

It is significant to state that the year 1933 was a great watershed in the history and development of choral music in Ghana. As stated earlier on in this paper, it was the year in which the *25 African Songs* by Amu was published. This was a revolutionary event because, for the very first time, attention was paid to African works of such nature, even though before this time, between 1893, J.B. Anaman had come out with a collection of songs in a publication titled *Tsetse Mfantse Ndwom and Nanaam*.

⁴² Boateng, *An Insight into the Musical Culture*, p. 105

Some Early Ghanaian Composers and their works

Ghanaian choral music traditions have not been free from external influences. The advent of missionary and colonial education brought with it new concepts of musical traditions along with a new set of objectives based on a new music of a distinctive kind. Much of this new kind had no previous roots in Ghanaian culture, the result of a negative attitude to the traditional music and religions practiced in Ghana.

During the mid to late nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century there arose in Ghana a new group of literate people who had retained their love of the choral music they had learned in School, and from quite early times some members of this group also acquired the skill to create original choral compositions, or models, of what they had learned and enjoyed to sing. It was in the church music that the drift in western creative skills first became manifest. According to Mensah,⁴³ the churches raised choirs and singing bands and out of their midst arose choirmasters and organists who were creative composers. The church musicians discovered examination syndicates which offered instruction by correspondence. The output of the products of these overseas music education colleges consisted largely of church hymn-tunes and other kinds of sacred songs for Christian worship, and they were almost entirely written in the style of western music. Some of the pioneers in the field include Rev. J.B. Anaman, a collector and composer of songs for the Fante community in the Methodist Church, Charles Graves-Abayie, a church organist, Rev. J.E. Allotey-Pappoe, a Methodist minister and composer, Rev. Gaddiel R. Acquaaah, also a minister of the Methodist church and a composer of sacred 'lyrics'. Other composers are Ephraim Amu, R.O. Danso, O.G. Blankson, O.A. Boateng, I.D. Loo, and I.D. Riverson.

⁴³ A.A. Mensah, *Compositional Practice in African Music* (unpublished manuscript, 1991)

Rev. J.E. Allotey-Pappoe

The Rev. J.E. Allotey-Pappoe was born in the year 1887. At the age of nine he lost his mother and he was cared for by his father who, then a catechist of the Methodist Church at Prampram, had retired from his post and came to live in Accra. He became a chorister at the Wharton Memorial Methodist Church and, at the very young age of 16, he was appointed the organist of the Freeman Memorial Chapel, all in Accra, after he had gained the Fellowship of the Victoria College of Music (FVCM) London, studying for the fellowship by correspondence. He started working with the P&T Department, and after 15 years' service was called to the Methodist ministry, during the influenza epidemic of 1918. He was sent to the Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone, for theological education. On his return, he was posted to Peki as the resident Methodist priest. There, he met the young man Ephraim Amu and instructed him in music theory and harmonium playing. When he was transferred to Accra, he invited Amu to stay with him during vacations to pursue his music studies. He served in many capacities in the Methodist church, Ghana, until he retired in 1968.

The import of this brief biography of Rev. Allotey-Pappoe is two-fold: a) he had gained the FVCM before 1910, which buttresses the fact that examination syndicates offering correspondence music studies in Ghana had been in existence long before 1923;⁴⁴ as Mensah notes, "Percy Jones Mensah, for nearly five decades a renowned Ghanaian music teacher, notes in his copy of the National Academy's *Regulations and Syllabus* brochure that he had joined the membership of the National Academy of Music in 1923, having qualified to do so by passing a diploma examination"; b) he was composing hymn-tunes before his call to the Methodist ministry in 1918. One of the hymn-tunes he composed,

⁴⁴Mensah, *Compositional Practice in African Music* (unpublished manuscript, 1991)

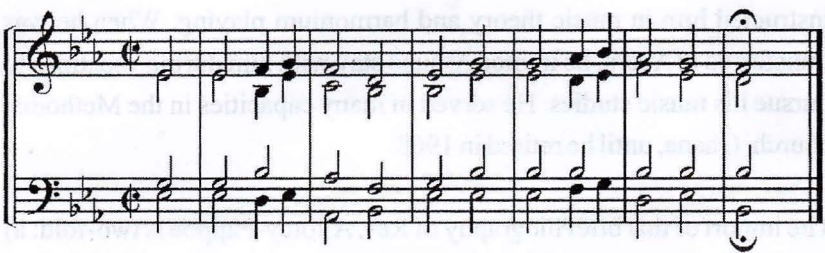
"*Bubonic Plague*", was composed in memorial of the influenza epidemic of 1908. It is based on a melody reflective of the western melodies he had been used to hearing, and as contained in the Methodist Hymn Book. Other compositions by Allotey-Pappoe reflect the trend as *Bubonic Plague*.

Excerpts from examples of hymn-tunes composed by Allotey-Pappoe are shown below, and they show the influence of the hymn-tunes that he had experienced and used in the church and, may be, for his own use as a preacher in the Methodist Church of Ghana:

A FEW MORE YEARS SHALL ROLL

Tune: "BUBONIC PLAGUE"

J.E. Allotey-Pappoe
Accra, Gold Coast
West Africa



(C) 1908

"Harvest Festival" Hymn-tune

J.E. Allotey-Pappoe



(c) 1915

The examples above illustrate the progress of Allotey-Pappoe's compositions from the time before his call to the ministry of the Methodist Church and during the time when he was in training at the Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone. It must be stated that the 'Harvest Festival' hymn-tune was a favorite among many Methodist societies in Ghana when it came to 'Harvest' time, i.e., the time when those various societies of the Methodist Church used to raise funds for various development projects in the churches with the sale of items, mostly foodstuffs which members of the church had presented as their thank offering to God for His benevolence. The example 'Fourah Bay College' was composed 'in remembrance of the Sunday evening devotions at Fourah Bay College, and respectfully dedicated to Mrs. Anna Denton, wife of the ex-Principal of the College, the Rev'd. James Denton.' Until his retirement in 1968 from the Methodist Church as a minister, he composed mainly hymn-tunes, Vespers, and Canticles.

Charles E. Graves

Charles Ebenezer Graves was for many years the resident representative of the Royal College of Music in Ghana. He had trained many young Ghanaian musicians in the Cape Coast township.

Charles Emmanuel Graves was born in 1884 in Cape Coast, and learned music from his father. At the age of 11 years he was said to be able to play the violin, accordion, mandolin and the harp. He taught for many years at Mfantshipim School, Cape Coast, from where he resigned to found the West Africa College of Music and Commerce. This college provided correspondence courses for students and also organized classes for day students who studied various courses, not only in music. A very versatile musician, he passed the Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists (FRCO), the Fellowship of the Victoria College of Music (FVCM) and the Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Music (FRAM), and was affectionately referred to as "Professor" Graves. He was the organist of

the Christ Church (Anglican) at Cape Coast until he became a Catholic, and became the organist of the Cape Coast Catholic Church. Graves composed many hymn-tunes and church anthems in the style of the English anthem. Excerpts of a few of the hymn-tunes are given in the examples below:

ONNSO NYAME YE Charles E. Graves

A - man - suon hom mbra, na ndo - baa Wu - ra N'a-dom mwa - mwa no se nda se mbo - do, Hom mfa

GUIDE ME, O THOU GREAT JEHOVAH.
(The popular Singing Band Tune)

Harmon. by: Chas. E. Graves-Abayie
Director of the school

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who has taken our nature, who has died for our sins, who has risen again, who sits at the right hand of the Father, who will come again to judge the living and the dead, who will give us life everlasting, Amen.

(c) 1924

From the excerpts above, it is seen that the compositions of Graves also show a style that reflects the western hymns that he was used to, melodic and harmonic styles reflective of the western systems he had learned and knew so much about. It is important to note that the first example of Graves' compositions above, *Onnso Nyame Ye*, had text written by the composer himself, and not a tune which was/is to be sung to a set of texts from the Methodist Hymn Book, as with the examples of Rev. J.E. Allotey-Pappoe.

Rev. Gaddiel R. Acquaaah

Rev. Gaddiel Acquaaah, the first Ghanaian minister to head the Methodist Church, Ghana, was an astute musician and composer of hymn-tunes, Fante Sacred Lyrics, and arrangements of other types of traditional songs. Gaddiel Acquaaah was born in the year 1884 at Anomabu in the

Central Region, and educated at the Methodist School in Anomabu and later at the Richmond College, which later became Mfantshipim. Between 1902 and 1904 he trained as an electrical engineer with the then Gold Mines Corporation at Obuasi, but he turned to teaching later and joined the staff of Richmond College.

In the year 1912 he was ordained as a minister of the Methodist Church, and he was a chief reviser of the Fante translation of the Bible which was completed in 1944. He wrote many hymn-tunes and anthems, and also translated many hymns from English into Fante. Gaddiel Acquah is remembered for his composition *asabarimba* (Warrior) and *Sunsum, Soer yi Nyame Ayew* (My Spirit, rise and praise the Lord). Below is the opening section of *Sunsum, Soer yi Nyame Ayew*:

Sunsum, Soer yi Nyame Ayew.

Gaddiel R. Acquah

Sun - sum, so[r yi Nya - me a - y[w, sun - sum, so[r yi n'a - y[w. mo Sun - sum

In 1918 or thereabout, Gaddiel Acquah composed *Bom' Nantsew* (Lead Me On/ Help me to walk), which was an arrangement of one *ebibindwom* of the same title. This work became an instant hit for choirs in the Cape Coast area. The beginning phrase of the melody is shown below:

Bom' nantsew

transcribed by Gaddiel Acquah

Bom' nan - tsew, bom' nan - tsew, bom' nan - tsew na 'nyem' ko, a - yaa bom'

5
nan - tsew mo W'ra - ee, - bom' nan - tsew na 'nyem' nko.

According to Otto A. Boateng (1967; p.103), the work was an improvement 'on the Fante Lyric, and was set in musical notation by Gaddiel Acquaaah.' This work was one of the earliest attempts at writing songs for the Church using traditional elements, and to show how possible it was to transcribe and arrange traditional songs for Church use in choral style. The following are excerpts of some of the works by Rev. Acquaaah:

JESUS AKOFO G.R. ACQUAAH (1884-1954)

TEKYIWA G.R. Acquaaah

Isaac Daniel Loo

Another composer of note was Isaac D. Loo, also a church musician and organist. He was born and educated in Cape Coast as a Wesleyan. He was employed with the United African Company (UAC) and in 1900 was transferred to Nigeria to work there. In Nigeria he became an Anglican. He later joined the Nigerian civil service and rose to a senior position in the treasury before he retired and returned to Ghana in 1940. A fine musician, he trained and prepared many Ghanaian and Nigerian musicians to sit for some of the many overseas music examinations, like the examinations of the Trinity College of Music and the Victoria College of Music.

He composed a number of hymn tunes and songs, the most popular of his songs being *The Negro Race* (Lord of the Endless Universe), the first phrases of which are shown below:

Negro Race

I.D. Loo (1877-1944)



Another of his compositions, an anthem which became very popular at the time, and which is sung by some Methodist choirs during Palm Sunday services, is *Hosanna in the Highest!*

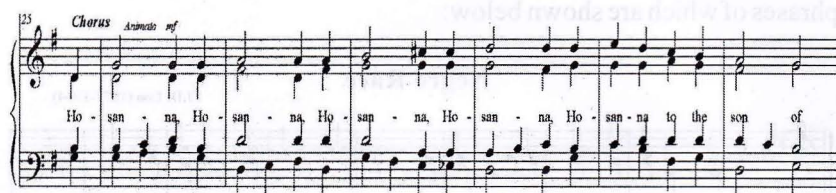
The compositions of I.D. Loo are interesting, especially with *Hosanna in the Highest*. The song begins with a bass solo in recitative-aria style, which is followed immediately by an animated chorus *Hosanna to the son of David*. This song is in the English anthem style and is in three sections with a coda.

Another of his compositions, an anthem which became very popular at the time, was, *Hosanna in the Highest!* The excerpts below are taken from the *Hosanna in the Highest*, and they show the very great influence of the English anthem style. The opening is a Bass solo in recitative-aria style, shown below:

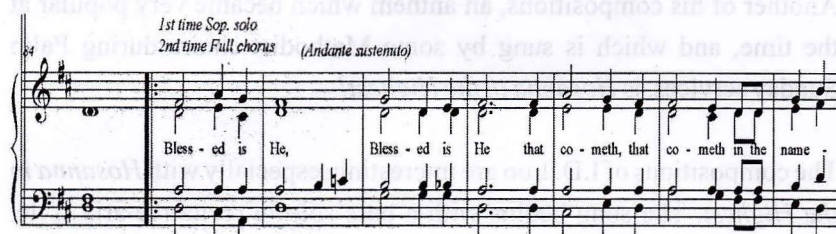
7

And the mul - ti - tude that went be - fore, and they, — they — that

This is followed immediately by an animated chorus ‘Hosanna to the son of David’:



The second section of the song is in the dominant key, an *Andante sustenuto*, ‘Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord’:



The song is in ternary form (ABA) with a Coda, very typical of the English anthem.

O.G. Blankson

Oman Ghan Blankson lost his father at the very tender age of seven and was brought up thereafter by his mother. After completing elementary school in 1917 at Winneba, he taught for six years in his hometown before taking up employment as a book-keeper with UAC and its associated companies mainly at Winneba and Swedru.

At school Blankson came under the tutorship of the Rev. S.C. Dodd who was his Schoolmaster, and who compelled him to join the Winneba Methodist Church Choir. Rev. Dodd also helped in no small measure to nurture Blankson’s musical talents.

Blankson started music lessons with Sam Yarney, which prepared him to write some of the external examination syndicates in the country. He later had further lessons through correspondence with Charles Graves of Cape Coast, who was the resident representative of the Victoria College of Music, London, and passed the advanced course in music with A. Mus, VCM. In the year 1920 he was appointed the choirmaster and organist of the Winneba Methodist Church. He started composing the same year. In 1949 he published *Robertsville Hymnal*, a collection of some of his compositions dedicated to the memory of his mother, Hannah Roberts, and named after her house.

One of the hymn-tunes he composed, “*Kofbon*”, indeed his first work composed in 1923, was inspired by the death of one of his choristers. This work aroused public interest, and spurred him on to further compositions. Another of his works, “*Da Yie*” is a regular hymn sung in many churches during burial, memorial, and thanksgiving services of beloved ones, also written in 1923.

A cursory look at the works in *The Robertsville Hymnal* shows that Blankson confined his interest in music to church music. Almost all of his compositions were dedicated for use in the church, especially music for the burial service. Excerpts of some of the works of Blankson are shown below:

DA YIE

Words by
Rev. G.R. Acquah

Suggested Hymn- “Now the labourer’s task is o’er”

O.G. Blankson, Winneba

(c) 1923

BOAFO WO IIEN?
Suggested Hymn - "Just I Am."

Words by
Rev. A.B. Dickson

O.G. Blankson, Wimeba

(c) 1924

All the examples above show the choral style of the composer, and are a reflection of the great influence of the English hymn on the compositions of Oman Ghan Blankson and other composers from the early twentieth century, specifically before the year 1933.

Rev. Jacob B. Anaman

Reverend Jacob B. Anaman was one very influential figure both in Church and State. He is credited with starting the Singing Band in the Methodist Church before 1899 because by this time the bands had begun to spread to other areas along the coast.

Rev. Anaman was the first to come up with the idea of singing bands singing in their mother tongue accompanied by dancing. These were offensive to the hierarchy of the Church but which the members found meaningful. There arose sharp disagreements between him and the leadership of the church which attempted to disband the singing bands, with the result that Rev. Anaman broke away from the Methodist Church to found the Nigritian Episcopal Church.

The significance of Rev. J.B. Anaman is the fact that as early as 1893 he had published a collection of hymns which included *Tsetse Mfantse Ndwom* (Ancient Fante Songs) and *Nanaam* (literally, grand parents/ancestors).

Dr. Ephraim Amu

Dr. Ephraim Amu influenced the course of the development of art music in contemporary Ghana, and is recognized not only for his achievement as a pathfinder in contemporary modes of composition in the African idiom, but also for his contribution to the field of African music education in Ghana. Ephraim Amu was born in Peki-Avetile on September 13, 1899, and grew up in a home that was once a part of the traditional musical environment. This statement is made because before his father embraced the Christian religion he was a traditional drummer and singer.

At the Presbyterian Seminary at Abetifi where he trained as a teacher and catechist Amu learned to play the harmonium. At Abetifi Amu was so much influenced by the Rev. Gershon Stern who introduced him to the works of composers like Bach, Handel and Mozart. The works of these and other western composers became a source of inspiration and enlightenment for Amu, and by the time he left the college he had acquired enough musical skills to become a music teacher at Peki-Blengo Middle Boarding School. At Peki he continued his lessons this time with the Rev. J.E. Allotey-Pappoe, who taught him the rudiments of music and composition, and also gave him further lessons on the harmonium. It is significant that at this time he tried not only to pass on his acquired knowledge of western music to his pupils but also to write songs for them. At this same time, between 1921 and 1923 he wrote such choral works as *Nkwagye Dwom* and *Meye Adwuma ama Yesu*.

Amu moved to Akropong where he continued to teach and to compose music. It was during his tenure at Akropong that he became a national figure as an innovative composer. But the songs he wrote before this time are of importance to us as far the title of this paper is concerned. And the compositions of Amu reflect the practice at the time where almost all the

composers tried to write in the style of the music that they were used to – the hymn. Below are two examples of Amu’s works at this time which show this influence:

Yen Wura Yesu anim obi nni ho

S.A.T.B. E. Amu

Moderately slow

Onipa da wo ho so.
(O man be on your guard)

S.A.T.B. E. Amu

Moderately slow
Solemnly

These examples of some of Amu’s early works show the chorale approach of the early composers to writing their own music, and the influence of the church hymn to choral music writing of the time. The difference between Amu’s works and those of the composers mentioned earlier is the use of the vernacular in the compositions of Amu, as against the hymn-tunes set to existing hymn texts that many of the early composers wrote. The excerpts of some of Amu’s songs shown above are part of the compositions published in 1933 as *Twenty-five African Songs*. Other songs by Amu in the publication included *ennyē yen Nyame*, *ɔd ɔ ye wu*, *Oseebo*, *Yen ara asaase ni*, and *Yen Wura Yesu anim obi nni ho*.

Other very important composers of the time were R.O. Danso, I.D. Riverson, and Asa Otu. The output of these composers was all in the style of the hymn-tunes, the music that was first introduced to them, and which type and style they composed to.

Discourse

The composers and the works cited above, show the extent of influence of western music on the music of Ghanaian composers prior to 1933, and even though it has been shown that attempts had earlier been made at writing songs for use in the Church, the composers did not pursue the idea of using materials from their own culture. One may be tempted to ask why the composers composed the way they did; was it that they did not appreciate their own musical practices, or that they wanted to show that they could also compose like their European teachers and the churches for which they served? The answers to these, and perhaps many other questions, may not be too difficult to fathom. We have noted the fact that the African, and for that matter the Ghanaian, was made to feel alienated from his own culture and traditions. Anything that had to do with tradition was frowned upon and touted as pagan. It was unheard of for the Ghanaian church member to clap to the singing in church let alone dance to the song. That would be sacrilege. In the Methodist church, for example, Rev. Anaman was sanctioned for introducing vernacular songs through the singing bands, into the services of the church. He resigned and formed his own church, the Nigritian Church. Ephraim Amu was also reprimanded, and was not allowed to preach in the Church in cloth. He did not resign from the church, but he went ahead and introduced his own type of compositions – compositions of ‘church music’ – to the church through the singing bands brought about into the Presbyterian Church by O.A. Boateng in 1927⁴⁶. The singing bands had been started in the Methodist Church earlier in Cape Coast before 1900, singing in Fante.

In all these instances, the precedent had already been set by Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman in the Methodist Church, but it appears the leadership overlooked this precedent and perpetuated the use of European songs.

⁴⁶ Boateng, *An Insight into the Musical Culture*, p. 102

Freeman had at the time encouraged the congregation, whenever they felt inspired by the sermon or the reading, to sing biblical texts using traditional tunes and melodies, and this developed into *Ebibindwom*, a development which had a lasting impact on the congregation, for it was apparent to Freeman that many members of the congregation did not participate in the singing of the hymns. The practice had an inspiring and understanding effect on the congregation, and they actively participated in the singing and the worship.

It needs also be pointed out that the very beginnings of European contact with Ghana, attempts had been made to inculcate in the Ghanaian an inferiority complex regarding his own culture ⁴⁷. The African church leaders, on taking over from the missionaries, 'preached against African cultural practice ... [and] adopted a hostile attitude to African music, especially drumming, ... [because] this music did not appear to be suitable to the form of Christian worship that westerners were accustomed to' ⁴⁸. There was an ardent desire to 'protect the convert from all heathen associations'. So if the composers did not use any Ghanaian elements in their compositions, can anyone blame them for writing the way they did?

But, if the precedent had been set by Freeman in encouraging the members of the congregation to sing biblical texts to traditional tunes whenever they felt inspired, why didn't the composers continue in the steps of their 'illiterate' brethren? It may be argued that thinking on the lines of the western hymns and songs they were used to, they could also not deviate from composing on those lines.

⁴⁷ G. C. Oosthuizen, *Post-Christianity in Africa – A Theological and Anthropological Study* (London, C. Hurst 1968), p.8

⁴⁸ Nketia, *The Music of Africa*, 1974, pp.14-15.

The church hymn and anthem/songs were the 'be all' and 'end all' of church music. Added to this is the fact that they were aware of the enormous power of the church leadership to allow or disallow the use of certain types of songs or music in the church. The fact that the efforts of J.B. Anaman were thwarted by the church, and which nearly also brought about the disbanding of the singing bands started by him in the Methodist Church, was another factor in the composers writing the way they did. The composers mentioned above, therefore, composed the way they did because they were composing something they knew and thought was suitable for use in the church, and not because they just felt like composing. Again, looking at the compositions, they composed in praise of God, and they composed songs that they felt edified God.

The composers had been indoctrinated to look at their own culture with distaste, and so they rejected their own musics and accepted the imported ones handed to them through the music education they had received. They composed on the lines of the imported traditions. One may also mention the fact that in the colonial period, contemporary society more or less rejected African values and assimilated western values as much as possible.

The compositions of Amu showed the way to a new way of thinking – musically speaking – by using the vernacular as the basis of composition. But even with his compositions, they followed the same lines as those of the imported traditions – the church hymn and anthem – using the harmonic and melodic language he had learned from his teachers.

Conclusion

Robert Kauffman of the Union Theological Seminary, New York, after touring thirteen African countries, concluded that '... to see and hear more and more genuine African hymns and Masses is an encouraging sign that the Church is becoming rooted in the soil of Africa and is making itself relevant to the great wave of nationalism that is sweeping

the continent.⁴⁹ The church hymn seems to be the most performed western music in Ghana, and the practice of Western sacred music has continued to be connected with the Christian churches and schools.

As Turkson⁵⁰ has noted, “music is a major manifestation of man’s creative impulse which has constantly undergone change through the ages like every other living language. Each successive generation of musicians inherits a tradition that becomes an established body of techniques and which it enriches by its own efforts and passes on to later generations”. The works of the composers and their lives have shown a commitment to the Church which is a manifestation of their creative impulse. They were composing to the needs of the times, when their culture did not make any great impact on their own lives.

The composers had been exposed to a new type of music which precluded the music of their culture. The effect of this exposure was the product of new forms of music in which were found certain elements the roots of which could be traced directly to European music. The development of the new musical traditions could be further traced while discussing the early European contact, as stated from the outset. This needs to be restated, however, to show the extent to which this exposure influenced Ghanaian musical traditions. Under the leadership of Freeman the Methodist church brought formal European type of education from the castles to the people on the coast.⁵¹

Thus the beginning of the new fine art tradition of Ghana was inspired largely by the classical (fine art) tradition of western music. The new

⁴⁹ Robert Kaufmann (ed.), *Impressions of African Church Music*, 1964, vol. 3 No. 3, p. 109 (1979)

⁵⁰ A.R. Turkson, *Contrafactum and Parodied Song Texts in Religious Music Traditions in Africa* (n.d.) p. 8.

⁵¹ Bartels, 1965:63; McWilliam, 1959:8

idiom of art music therefore, showed itself in the works of literate (western educated) Ghanaian composers. A greater proportion of Ghanaian art music of the time was choral.

The western music training given to Ghanaian art music composers in music schools and conservatories at home and abroad made them approach their compositions or musical development from western music to African music rather than the reverse. It has thus been observed that 'using western models as a starting point much of the music composed so far naturally bears the heavy stamp of the west'²². The influence of the West so dominated Ghanaian culture to the extent that it showed in the music composed in the early part of the twentieth century, specifically before 1933.

The compositions, therefore, did reflect the influence that western music education imparted to the Ghanaian musician. For, when the early Christian missionaries arrived, they discouraged the use of traditional African music and its related arts in churches and parochial institutions. The Europeans regarded African religion and recreational musical types as secular, and those who practiced them were called pagans. However, the few attempts by some composers like Ephraim Amu and Rev. J.B. Anaman before him, led to disagreements with the hierarchy of the church. These disagreements led to J.B. Anaman breaking away from the Methodist Church to found the Nigritian Episcopal Church, and a near disbanding of singing bands in the Methodist Church. Ephraim Amu on the hand continued to compose for the singing bands started in the Presbyterian Church at about 1930. The songs became very popular and many other singing groups started using them because they were more meaningful to them than the hymn tunes introduced by the Europeans.

²² Nketia, 1964: 37