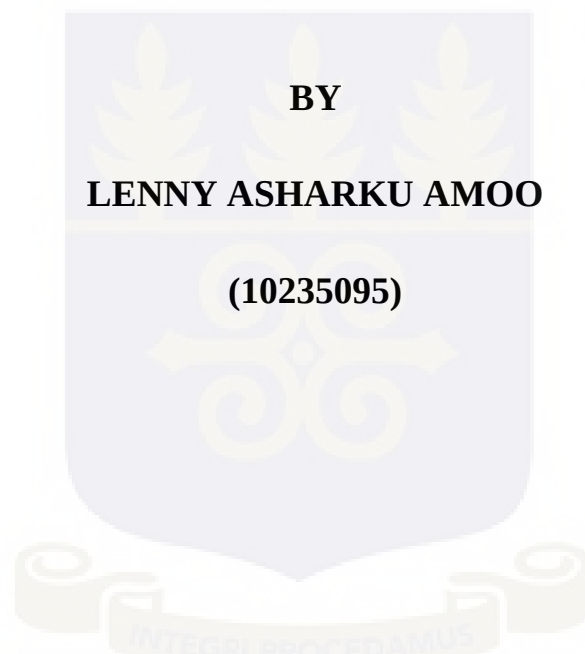


UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

**DANCE AND POLITICS: A SYNTHESIS FOR NATIONAL
COHESION AND DEVELOPMENT IN GHANA**



BY

LENNY ASHARKU AMOO

(10235095)

**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
LEGON, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR
THE AWARD OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN THEATRE ARTS**

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DECLARATION

I, Lenny Asharku Amoo, with candidate number 10235095, hereby declare that I have dully acknowledged all citations, references, and ideas of other scholars in the thesis. Therefore, this thesis is an original work produced by me from a study personally undertaken under the supervision of Dr. Sylvanus Kwashie Kuwor and Mr. Seth Asare Newman, and has not been presented to any other institution for the award of a degree.

Lenny Asharku Amoo
(Student)

.....
Signature

.....
Date



CERTIFICATION

We, Dr. Sylvanus Kwashie Kuwor and Mr. Seth Asare Newman of the Department of Dance Studies, School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, hereby certify that this thesis: *Dance and Politics: A Synthesis For National Cohesion And Development In Ghana* was undertaken by Lenny Asharku Amoo under our supervision.

Dr. Sylvanus Kwashie Kuwor
(Main Supervisor)

.....

Signature

.....

Date

Mr. Seth Asare Newman
(Co-Supervisor)

.....

Signature

.....

Date

DEDICATION

Dedication for this thesis is of a tripartite categorization. First and foremost, this thesis is dedicated to the entire Abordai-Amoo family of Abeka and Alajo, in Accra. Most especially, it is dedicated to my wife Abigail Sena and our two lovely children Senam and Boni. Finally, but most unfortunately, the study is dedicated to the memory of the late Professor Francis Nii-Yartey for his unwavering quota towards the successful realization of this research.



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ABSTRACT

According to earlier scholars including Nketia (1965) and Opoku (1964), dance education and practice in Ghana emerged as an offshoot of a cultural educational programme that was geared towards inculcating strong sense of discipline and professionalism amongst Ghanaians, to induce collective co-existence and national growth after the attainment of self-rule in 1957. Furthermore, Adinku (1994) recalls Nkrumah's employment of indigenous dance and arts as a unifying tool amongst citizens during the early periods of Ghana's post-independence era. Yet, even though dance theatre system in Ghana by the National Dance Company epitomizes growing standards of arts within the continent currently, not much has been seen in terms of dance theatre for sensitization and public advocacy. This thesis gives an account of dance theatre not merely as a means of entertainment, but as a strong tool for communication and discourse. It sheds light on some political concerns that undermine good governance and responsible citizenship in Ghana, and Africa at large. It is a testimony of the power of dance to speak on political issues that are detrimental to sustainable national cohesion and development. Within this thesis, the *Asipim*¹ dance theatrical production, by the prolific choreographer and dance scholar Francis Nii-Yartey² is employed as case study in ascertaining the value of engaging dance theatre in political discourse, through both primary and secondary sources of data collection.

¹ *Asipim* is a dance theatrical production performed and staged by the National Dance Company of Ghana and Ghana Dance Ensemble at the National Theatre in Accra. This dance production is embedded with political themes.

² Professor Francis Nii-Yartey is a prolific Ghanaian choreographer and scholar of dance who worked with the National Dance Company of Ghana and the Ghana Dance Ensemble as Artistic Director for more than three decades. He is highly acclaimed and respected across most countries in Africa, and the world at large for his creativity in dance theatre. He is a winner of the 2015 Millennium Excellence Awards for the Creative Arts alongside Uncle Ebo Whyte.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

In this 21st Century, the need for collective governance as basis for sustainable development is not advocated for only by international institutions such as the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund. Advocacy for collective social participation as basis for democracy is also largely emphasized by state institutions,³ which are equally tasked with greater responsibility of ensuring higher moral and professional standards amongst people (country or state). State institutions in this context are referent of socio-political structures which ensure transparency and accountability within politics.

Politics, by definition, involves the control of people and state institutions through governance towards the attainment of citizen's expectation of a flourishing state. Perger & Luckmann (1999, p.269) states that "political institutions are those patterns that deal with governing society."⁴ Politics in this perspective reiterates the need for all state actors (which includes cultural institutions) to ensure total commitment to professional responsibility. The Cultural Policy of Ghana (2004, p.1) insists:

In the era of globalization and contemporary technological challenges, the people of Ghana must recognize that their culture is the basis of, and the most important factor in the nation's human and material development. Thus our history, cultural values and institutions must continue to exercise a deep

³ Sectors in this regard refer to various fields of social engagements including the arts, business, commerce, finance, health, defense and education. This is to mention a few.

⁴ Berger, L.P. & Luckmann, T. (1999) The Meaning of Sociology: "The Origins of Institutions." (p. 269) 6th Edition, Ed. Joel M. Charon. New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc.

influence on the nation's destiny and play a key role in governance and national life.⁵

The Ghana Dance Ensemble and the National Dance Company of Ghana have for more than five decades held its place as a cultural institutions under the regulatory body of National Commission of Culture whose duty is “to contribute to national development through the best artistic approaches.”⁶ Dance as a major theatrical tool in this case; reserves the power to communicating true-life situations and happenings on any performance stage before any audience.

Theatre in Ghana over the last five decades has served as a major outlet upon which dance has thrived. Theatre in this perspective provides a conducive environment (platform) for the dissemination of relevant information to different audiences across the country. These audiences, who form the citizenry, usually attend theatrical dance performances basically to be entertained. Apart from its entertainment nature, there is a much greater expectation for dance to contribute to education and knowledge through stage productions that have the power of informing citizens. Copeland observes that:

Today of course, political agendas invariably take precedence over more ‘purely’ aesthetic concerns such as sensory beauty, formal complexity, or emotional expressiveness. Thus, dance presentation in modern times, places a great deal of emphasis on the philosophical benefits of employing dance as a medium in addressing topical concern of political and national interest.⁷

Asiama (2006) believes that “it is the natural thing for humans everywhere to want to develop and better their lot materially, spiritually, politically and geographically.”⁸ This means that in a situation where a particular people (a state or a country) aspire to broaden

⁵ National Commission on Culture. (2004). *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*. (p. 1) Accra. GPC/Assembly Press.

⁶ National Commission on Culture. (2004). *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*. (p. 3) Accra, GPC/Assembly Press.

⁷ Roger. C. (2011). The Death of the Choreographer: From Modern to Post Modern Politics. *Dance and Politics*. (p. 41) Ed. Alexander Kolb. Bern. Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers.

⁸ Asiama, E. (2006) *Legongon Dance Drama As A Medium of Culture Education*. (p. 1) Accra, Jac Multi-Media Centre.

their political, social and intellectual scope; all viable means of communication (which also involves dance) need to be employed as instruments for public advocacy and education. Judith L. Hanna (1979) quotes as saying, that “power refers to the ability to influence others, their predispositions, feelings, attitudes, beliefs and actions.”⁹ The Cultural Policy of Ghana (2004, p.21), which is a regulatory document governing the development of arts; declares that “the state shall support efforts of relevant institutions, associations and individuals to undertake research, documentation, development and promotion of traditional and contemporary dance forms.”¹⁰ The Policy in this perspective, calls on the state to “ensure the growth and development of cultural institutions, as a means of making them relevant to human development, democratic governance and national integration.”¹¹

The National Dance Company of Ghana, the Ghana Dance Ensemble, in respect of this declaration owes it a responsibility of informing Ghanaians through its best artistic creations that border on various fields of study, including politics. Berger & Luckmann (1999, p.272) theorizes that:

The development of specific mechanisms of social control also becomes necessary with the historicisation and objectivation of institutions. Deviance from the institutionally “programmed” course of action becomes likely once the institutions have become realities divorced from their original relevance in the concrete social processes from which they arose.¹²

The analogy behind the above quotation finds meaning in the role of dance in our current political dispensation. This is to say, that in as much as dance was employed by our

⁹ Hanna, J. L. (1979) *To Dance Is Human: A Theory of Nonverbal Communication*. (p. 129) Austin, The University of Texas Press.

¹⁰ National Commission on Culture. (2004). *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*. (p. 21) Accra. GPC/Assembly Press.

¹¹ National Commission on Culture. (2004). *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*. (p. 3) Accra. GPC/Assembly Press.

¹² Berger, L. P. & Luckmann, T. (1999) *The Meaning of Sociology: “The Origins of Institutions”*. (p. 272) 6th Edition, Ed. Joel M. Charon. New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc.

political forebear such as Osagyefo Nkrumah as a tool for public sensitization during the early periods of Ghana's post-independence era, there is much greater prospect for dance in achieving more in terms of social education towards national development. This eludes that even though dance education and practice has improved steadily over the years in Ghana, there is a far reaching possibility of dance in granting commentary on political happenings in the country. Soo & Tatjana (2011, p. 282) observes, that:

In recent decades, the emergence of cultural industries and dance's positioning within theatre practice has led to a reappraisal of its role as a form of expression and set of bodily practices. Whereas in the 1980s much of the works carried out in the field of dance anthropology focused on the politics of dance and the relations among culture, the more recent appropriation of dance for economic and social welfare purposes has turned attention from direct discussion of power and resistance in relation to ethnicity, class or gender and towards its contribution to achieving very specific policy objectives. The politics of dance now includes a debate over its very nature and role in society.¹³

The Ghana Dance Ensemble and the National Dance Company in Accra are sourced within this documentation as reference point upon which thorough analysis relating to dance theatre and its significance in our political discourse is conducted. The Ghana Dance Ensemble as an experienced performance unit; has over the years in practice experimented with various issues that speak within varying contexts. Kolb (2011, p.9) states categorically that "dance works with political contents mostly derive themes and significance from political events which are chronologically or logically structured, and usually located outside of art."¹⁴ Snipe's (1996) definition of a political dance implies:

Dance that expresses a political conviction, and is guided by ideological content, style, meaning, symbol and imagery. Political dance can also be nationalistic or incorporate radical political views. Moreover, political dance

¹³ Soo, H.L & Tatjana, E.B (2011) "*Politicizing Dance: Cultural Policy Discourses in the UK and Germany.*" *Dance and Politics*. (p. 282) Ed. Alexander Kolb, Bern. Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers.

¹⁴ Kolb, Alexander. (2011). "*Cross-Currents of Dance and Politics: An Introduction.*" *Dance and Politics*. (p.9) Ed. Alexander Kolb, Bern. Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers.

can make a statement about society or suggest the reallocation of goods or the authoritative value of a society.¹⁵

The thesis focuses on the *Asipim* Dance Theatre presentation as scope for analysis. The *Asipim* dance presentation is an intriguing theatrical dance showcase that is choreographed and performed by *Francis Nii-Yartey* and the *Ghana Dance Ensemble*¹⁶ respectively. The choreographer, through his interpretation as an artist created *Asipim*, a dance theatrical production which gives meaning to respectful and tolerant governance.

Precisely speaking, the documentation unveils salient political issues and concerns that are embedded in thematic concerns of theatrical dance performance. The thesis addresses political issues including dictatorship and extreme power obsession in Africa, turmoil in African political dispensation, role and involvement of women in African politics, as well as political injustice on targeted individuals. Kolb (2011) in this regard agrees that, “in such cases, dance is effectively turned into a forum for state politics.”¹⁷

1.1 Problem Statement

Even though dance education and practice in Ghana has improved steadily over the years, not much can be said concerning audience¹⁸ perception and understanding of theatrical dance presentation, and its influence on the development of the country. This reiterates that even though dance remains a credible medium of education and sensitization on divergent concerns (in the case of this research- political issues), audiences usually tend to place emphasis on the entertaining value of such performances to the detriment of philosophical benefits embedded in such dramatic form.

¹⁵ Snipe, D. T. (1996) *African Dance: An Artistic, Historical, and Philosophical Inquiry*. “African Dance: Bridges to Humanity.” (p. 70) Ed. Kariamuwelsh Asante, African World Press, Inc.

¹⁶ This is the National Dance Company of Ghana. It is the country’s dance ensemble stationed in Accra. The Ghana Dance Ensemble is the nation’s dance repertoire troupe that happens to be one of the agencies under the National Commission of Culture. It engages in exploration and experimentation of varied Ghanaian dance forms in new context for the modern theatrical stage.

¹⁷ Kolb, Alexander. (2011) *The Death of the Choreographer: From Modern to Post Modern Politics*. *Dance and Politics*. (p.26) Ed. Alexander Kolb. Bern. Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers.

¹⁸ Who invariably also represent the citizens of Ghana.

A critical assessment of this concern in Ghana stems from two perspectives. First and foremost, even though the National Dance Company of Ghana epitomizes a professional performance unit exploring with indigenous artistic elements,¹⁹ there has not been the upsurge of dance groups and choreographers to augment the artistic effort of the national dance group. Secondly, the National Commission on Culture as the legitimate governmental institution responsible for the application of the Arts in governmental and political discourse has not lived up to its responsibility of “ensuring the growth and development of our cultural institutions, in order to make them relevant to human development, democratic governance and national integration.”²⁰ This implies that in as much as Ghana is revered around the globe for the worth of its culture, dance creativity within the theatre remains heavily untapped irrespective of its potency as a viable channel in addressing political concerns in the country. In addressing this, the research employs the *Asipim*²¹ Dance Production by the National Dance Company of Ghana as case for enquiry and documentation into the educative prospects of dance in shedding light on political and topical concerns within Ghana.

1.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The under listed theories and concepts are the governing principles upon which analysis and discussion are made with regards to this research. Hence, the following are basis for the creation of a framework for this documentation.

¹⁹ As experimented by Professor Albert Mawere Opoku and Professor Francis Nii-Yartey, who are two former Artistic Directors of the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

²⁰ National Commission on Culture. (2004). *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*. (p.3) Accra, GPC/Assembly Press.

²¹ *Asipim* is a dance theatrical production embedded with political themes.

- i. The insistence on an *African Performance Theatre*²² system in the creation and staging of dance pieces for the contemporary Ghanaian stage. Under this theory, earlier scholars including Kerr (1986) and Nketia (1965) have categorically stressed the need for the establishment of an *African theatrical situation* that translates real-life happenings or occurrences characteristic of African communities. Hence, this research is framed on a Ghanaian-centred approach through the use of indigenous artistic resources that are identifiable by audiences of a given performance.
- ii. Nkrumah's theory of *African Personality Consciousness*²³ (1964) as a guiding principle for acceptable moral and ethical behavior among individuals within Ghanaian societies. This research is also framed on Nkrumah's conviction that the ordinary citizen is an indispensable ingredient in the developmental process of a country. Hence, in all fields of endeavor, Nkrumah expresses the need for individuals to attach uppermost diligence and professionalism in the delivery of their duties.
- iii. The concept of Dance as a means for *Participatory Democracy*²⁴ in promoting National Cohesion and Unity. This documentation is also guided by an understanding that there is the need to factor dance as a medium of discourse in Ghanaian politics. Hence, dance in Ghana should be appreciated not as mere entertainment but rather as a major vessel for political discussions.

²² Kerr, D. (1986) *African Theatre Review*. (p. 1) Vol. 1, Number 2, Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books (NIG.)

²³ Nkrumah, K. (1964) *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonization*. London, Panaf Books Ltd.

²⁴ According to the prolific scholar and choreographer Francis Nii-Yartey, dance becomes a tunnel for knowledge when the theatre establishes itself as a resort for enlightenment and discourse. This was a submission he gave during an interview with the researcher.

1.3 Definition of Terms

The following key words are defined to provide understanding in relation to this research.

- i. **Politics**: According to *Yonca Altindal* (2008, p. 539):

Politics can be defined from the politicians' point of view as the art of obtaining, or having, a share in power and keeping it but, from the public's point of view, it is a social phenomenon that contains comprehensive and complex topics such as the source of power; the legality of the way in which those in power firstly obtain and then use it, the degree of openness of the political arena (and to whom it is open); the working style of the mechanisms positioned in this field; and the changeability of the government.²⁵

Politics in view of the above submission speaks on the attainment of political authority; as well as the need for transparency and diligence in securing that attainment power. Altindal (2008) by virtue of this definition stresses that there is the need to recognize state institution (such as the National Dance Company) as co-partners in the development process of a particular state. Hence, the collective participation of politicians and citizens in shaping the fortunes of Ghana is indispensable if sustainable development is to be attained.

- ii. **Cohesion**: Chan et al (2006) insist:

Social Cohesion is a state of affairs concerning both the vertical and the horizontal interactions among members of a society as characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that includes trust, a sense of belonging and the willingness to participate and help, as well as their behavioral manifestations.²⁶

²⁵ Altindal, Y. (2008) *Powerless Duplicators of Masculine Politics* (p. 539) Accessed: 26-08-2015 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/43293291.pdf?acceptTC=true>

²⁶ Chan, J., To, H. P. & Chan, E. (2006) *Reconsidering Social Cohesion: Developing a Definition and Analytical Framework for Empirical Research* (p. 290) Accessed: 04-02-2016 17:44 UTC <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27522534>

Since Ghana is made up of different ethnic groups with different cultural orientation and background, dance theatrical presentation in the country holds the fortune of championing group solidarity towards progress. This is manifested in the employment of various indigenous Ghanaian dance types in the creation of theatrical dances for the contemporary Ghanaian stage.

The merits in relying on such dances are that, Ghanaian audiences are able to identify themselves with dances that are native to their region of origin. In this sense, they are able to associate with such dances since inter-ethnic recognition, respect and co-existence is emphasized through dramatic dance medium. In the case of this documentation, the choreographer makes use of different dance forms in creating the *Asipim* dance piece. The repercussion is that Ghanaian audiences are able to see themselves as “one people with a common destiny”²⁷ as stated by Kwame Nkrumah.²⁸ Dance theatre in this regard, becomes an appreciable platform for sustainable national cohesion.

iii. **Development:** Binns (1995) asserts that “Development refers to progressive improvement of conditions and the fulfillment of potential.”²⁹ Development in this context stresses the need for improved quality of life of a people. Since this research focuses on dance theatre as a means for education; there is proximity of improving citizens’ awareness regarding *actions and decisions* of politicians, which invariably under-develops or develops a country.

iv. **Synthesis:** Roozenburg (2002) is convinced that:

Synthesis is used in the literal sense of putting together, combining or assembling parts into a new whole. Synthesis then refers to particular ways

²⁷ This pronouncement happens to a section of submission made by *Dr. Kwame Nkrumah*, during his declaration of independence on the 6th of March 1957; at the independence square in Accra.

²⁸ Dr. Kwame Nkrumah is the first president of the Republic of Ghana, who gained independence from colonialist rule on the 6th of March, 1957.

²⁹ Binns, T. (1995) *Geography in Development: Development in Geography* (p. 304) Accessed: 27-08-2015 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/40572706.pdf?acceptTC=true>

and specific methods for generating schemes, principal solutions, concepts and layout, *i.e.*, by combining or assembling functional and physical representations of available or conceivable parts and components.³⁰

Roozenburg's description of synthesis gives commentary on the practicability of infusing dance into the mainstream discussion of politics. His interpretation of synthesis gives commentary on *dance* and *politics* as separate pursuits in terms of nature (approach), but of similar purpose in terms of transforming lives.

Dance and Politics are fields of study within the humanities. The art of dance, which is a form of language "is a unique process of creating awareness, challenging negative attitudes and mentality; and thus improves upon a people's self-worth, perception and consciousness."³¹ In achieving this, dance relies predominantly on bodily movements, gestures, dramatic expressions and mimes in communicating varied messages (through the establishment of thematic concerns) to audiences. Politics on the other hand, involves the management of people and resources in fulfillment of appreciable standards of living.

Synthesis, for purposes of this documentation reiterates that dance (specifically dance theatre in Ghana) and politics (topical issues affecting development) can be harnessed in addressing *ill-political attitudes* for improved standards of living.

1.4 Scope of the Study

It is imperative to admit, that within varied Ghanaian traditional settings, dance performances depict shared societal beliefs, principles and experiences, disseminated through dramatic and gestural movement vocabulary with didactic references that speak

³⁰ Roozenburg, N.F.M (2002) *Defining Synthesis: On the Senses and the Logic of Design Synthesis* (p. 7)
Accessed: 26-08-2015

https://books.google.com.gh/books?hl=en&lr=&id=aITSBwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=definition+of+synthesis&ots=v_8BWvs06Y&sig=VlpG43ekXOuO5pKeB6eMZMZ8Eg4&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=definition%20of%20synthesis&f=false

³¹ Asiama, E. (2006) *Legongon Dance Drama As A Medium of Culture Education*. (p. 32) Accra, Jac Multi-Media Centre, 2006.

on various issues. Neo-Contemporary African dances on the other hand are characterized not only by traditional dance forms, but also by a myriad of artistic and intriguing concerns arising out of Ghana's interactions with other cultures, both from within and outside the Africa continent.

This research is based on a Ghanaian theatrical dance production titled *Asipim*. It was choreographed by the prolific F. Nii-Yartey (a former Artistic Director and Choreographer of the Ghana Dance Ensemble and the National Dance Company of Ghana) and staged at the National Theatre of Ghana, in Accra.

Since *Asipim* is a dance theatrical presentation that targeted Ghanaian audiences, analysis and discussion is directed basically towards an understanding of what comprises a Dance Theatre within the Ghanaian context.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The following under listed reasons, are the targets for carrying out this study.

1. To establish the authenticity and feasibility in employing dance as a viable medium through which pertinent concerns relating to governance as well as national development could be channeled.
2. To analyze the import of engaging indigenous Ghanaian dance forms as artistic and aesthetic pursuits “in offering new perspectives on the connections of dance to governmental, state and party politics, nationalism, activism, human rights, political ideologies and cultural policy” (Kolb, 2011, p.349).
3. To apply and interpret *Asipim* as a scope, in analyzing some political engagements which could be detrimental to Ghana's peaceful existence as a country.

1.6 Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following questions, as its basis for data collection.

1. What is the state of dance theatre system in Ghana at the moment?
2. Is dance highly recognized as an integral facet of political and national engagements in Ghana?
3. To what pedigree has the *National Dance Company of Ghana* exploited and utilized dance as a propaganda instrument in commenting on issues of political and national interest?
4. What are the pedagogic political themes embedded in the dance theatrical production titled *Asipim*?
5. Can dance presentations induce cohesion towards development in Ghana?

1.7 Methodology/Research Approach

This thesis employs the qualitative method of data collection and analysis, with emphasis on exploratory and interpretative approaches. To achieve this, the researcher applied the following procedures as part of his research process.

1. Conducted personal interviews for data collection. The researcher undertook interviews in gathering relevant data from both crew and cast of the production, whose contributions culminated in the successful staging of the *Asipim* dance piece. Personnel including the choreographer Francis Nii-Yartey, scenic designer David Tawiah Akushey Amoo, and lighting-designer George Kartey were members of the crew who were interviewed. Also, members of the National Dance Company of Ghana including Peace Simons, Caroline Yemeh, Abubakar Salifu Mereigah, Taahiru Muhammed, Isaac Kwesi Ansah Owusu, Alidu Alhassan and Alphonse Kumla Ahumani were some performers who were interviewed as participants of

this research. Before interviews were conducted, respondents were assured of confidentiality with regards to information they provided.

2. Accessing non-written sources like video or audio. Audio-visual recording of the *Asipim* piece was solicited from the company's ³² archive for evaluation, interpretation and analysis of data. Hence, even though I personally had the opportunity of watching the *Asipim* production at the National Theatre, there was the need to review the entire piece to get acquainted with various artistic elements underlining the creating and staging of the performance. There was a comparison between data collected during interviews and audio-visual recording of the entire piece.
3. Exploring and analyzing relevant data from written/secondary sources like journals, articles, etc. Thus, documentations of some earlier researchers like Nketia (1965), Adinku (1994) and Yartey (2009) on the artistic exploits of the National Dance Company were thoroughly applied to buttress discussions.
4. Finally, Internet documents or articles relating to the topic were studied and factored into the analysis. Through reputable internet sources such as *Jstor* and *Googlescholar*, works of reputable dance scholars including Kolb (2011) and Roger (2011), just to mention a few, are cited as reference on emerging theories governing the use of dance as a medium to political discourse.

1.8. Significance of the Study

1. This documentation highlights not only the interrelation between Dance and Politics in Ghana, but also shed light on pedagogic benefits of applying political thematic motifs in dance creation.

³² The National Dance Company of Ghana at the National Theatre in Accra,

2. The document further serves as motivation for prospective Ghanaian choreographers; in coming up with intriguing dance productions based on divergent thematic concerns addressing salient political issues.
3. Finally, this documentation serves as a reference source for all art enthusiasts, students, teachers, practioners and researchers.

1.9. The Expected Outcome of the Study

This thesis reiterates the “needed effort of relevant institutions such as the National Dance Company of Ghana, National Commission on Culture as well as the School of Performing Arts in undertaking research, documentation, development and promotion of traditional and contemporary dance forms.”³³ In using the Asipim theatrical dance production as focal point for analysis, the thesis prescribes diversification for movement exploration and dance creation in Ghana. In effect, the document encourages choreographers to explore and infuse indigenous artistic resources and techniques in creating dances with themes based on political, and other social references.

This thesis provides a new approach to dance creativity by breaking the monopoly associated with dance for the contemporary Ghanaian stage, whilst addressing vital grievances and concerns of the citizenry. It further broadens the scope of future dance scholars, researchers and students in experimenting with the arts as a means to corporate human enlightenment. Hence, there is heightened “awareness of the contemporary relevance of our cultural resources as means to human and material development.”³⁴

³³ National Commission on Culture. (2004). *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*. (p.21) Accra, GPC/Assembly Press.

³⁴ National Commission on Culture. (2004). *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*. (p.4) Accra, GPC/Assembly Press.

1.10 Conclusion

In attaining the desired benefit from dance theatre as a worthy vessel for communication regarding sustainable national co-existence and development, there is the need to establish a strategic approach in terms of conceptualization and appropriation of artistic resources during the creation of dance pieces for particular audiences. Hence, with the *Asipim* Dance Theatre production as a focal point in unraveling the benefit of dance theatre in political discourse, this thesis has been categorized into five chapters.

As an offshoot from this prelude, Chapter Two of this documentation is designated to the review of existing literature concerning the thesis topic. In categorization, the chapter begins with a Theoretical and Conceptual Framework which streamlines the direction of discussion on dance theatre in Ghana's political discourse. There is also an analysis of varied context of Indigenous Ghanaian dances and their relation with the political dimension of Ghanaian life. Furthermore, an overview of the development of dance theatre in Ghana and the role of the National Dance Company of Ghana in achieving a higher pedigree is also addressed. Scholarly documents and publications from distinguished researchers in dance, including Nketia, Younge, Gyekye, Kaeppler and Adinku, as well as internet sourced articles are factored into the discussions.

Subsequently, Chapter Three delves into methodology. It gives a detailed account of research procedures which were engaged in gathering data for this thesis. Since the qualitative process of data collection is employed in this research, documented literature, audio-visual commentary and interviews both cast and crew of the *Asipim* Dance production are highlighted as testimony of data collected.

Chapter Four involves an entire description and analysis of the *Asipim* dance production. It comments on some salient political concerns (misgivings or bad attitudes) that the

choreographer highlights as political themes within the production. Most importantly, the philosophical representation and meanings of various characters within the performance, as well as their relation to politics is identified.

Finally, Chapter Five sheds lights on challenges encountered during the research, and recommendations.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses relevant literatures related to the topic. The review begins with a theoretical and conceptual framework for the research. It looks at the interconnection of the political context of dance to other contexts while discussing also the place of dance in Ghanaian political discourse. Finally, the need for an improved dance theatrical system in Ghana as a means of communication on political issues is further addressed.

Categorically, the chapter comprises of:

- i. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework.
- ii. Varied contexts of indigenous Ghanaian dances and their relatedness and application in political perspective.
- iii. The place of dance in the political discourse of Ghana.
- iv. Towards the development of dance theatre in Ghana: Audience perception and place of the National Dance Company.

2.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Theories and concepts are employed in research as guiding principles for analysis and discussions. In this documentation, theories of an African personality consciousness³⁵ and an African performance theatre system³⁶ are employed as frame in discussing the role and effect of dance as a means of political discourse in Ghana. Also, the concept of participatory democracy through dance is also stressed as a related frame in understanding the critical role of arts towards good governance, sustainable unity and development.

³⁵Nkrumah, K. (1964). *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonisation* (p.98) London, Panaf Books Ltd.

³⁶Kerr, D. (April, 1986) *African Theatre Review*. (p.1), Vol. 1, Number 2. Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books, Nigeria.

It can be said, that advocacy for sustainable national cohesion towards development in Ghana, can be enhanced through a forum of interaction which includes the theatre. As already defined by earlier scholars including Brockett (1964) and Wilson (1994); theatre is an avenue where real-life situation is relived, to allow audiences the opportunity to compare themselves with characters portrayed during performance. Hagan (2009. p.1-2) is convinced that:

If education involves the acquisition, dissemination and transmission of knowledge to an individual to enable that individual to live a worthwhile life and serve community, then, in organization, form and content, a nation's system of education should not only embody the values, ideals and intellectual heritage of the people. Most importantly, it must but also *manifest as a product of their culture*. That is, the system must be deliberately devised and constructed as a tool for acquiring knowledge and understanding culture to equip them to preserve that culture and advance and transform it in a way that affirms their identity and collective consciousness, and assures the individual and collective good of society.³⁷

A critical analysis of Hagan's view places greater emphasis on the need for education to manifest largely as a product of culture. The theory of an African Performance Theatre, which is repository of culture, is established as criteria for analysis in this study. The African theatre system of performance as a platform for cultural education has already been propounded by earlier scholars including Nketia (1965) and Kerr (1986). This system of theatrical representation, according to these authorities, is reflective of life situations, experiences and expectations of the African people through dramatic enactment of different life situations. Hagan (2009) further propounds that even though education is clearly linked with the transmission of cultural ideals, ethics and values of African societies through a gradual process of enculturation there is the need to put one's *cultural determinants or identifiers* into artistic practice through creativity. Dance Theatre practice

³⁷ Hagan, P. G. (2009) "The importance of Culture in formal Education System and Preparation for Life." Culture and Education: Report of the National Conference on Culture (NCC) and Education at the Elmina Beach Resort. (p.1-2) Ed. Ben Abdallah. Accra. Sub-Saharan Publishers.

in this respect falls in place as one major outlet that allows for the dissemination of Ghanaian ethics, beliefs, convictions and values through the best practical medium of movement, mime and gesture.

The theory of an African performance theatre, in my opinion, is largely influenced and determined basically by societal and cultural considerations. This is to say that audiences' understanding of a dance theatrical presentation is largely influenced by the individual's ability to properly interpret dramatic messages embedded in movements and gestures. Just like most other African countries, movements and gestures in Ghanaian dances is reflective of community life and accepted standards of what constitutes, for example, "respect for authority, willingness to serve others and responsibility to collective social development."³⁸ The theme and purpose of dance presentations, in this regard; can be said to be heavily influenced by socio-cultural factors.

In considering these socio-cultural factors, we would make mention of belief systems, ethics, accepted norms, progressive custom and traditional practices of a particular people. In choreographing the *Asipim* Dance Theatrical piece³⁹ (a dance theatre production which is a case of study for this research) for Ghanaian audiences, the choreographer Francis Nii-Yartey disclosed that "his creative works are meant to speak on contemporary socio-political issues in Ghana, by employing movements from indigenous Ghanaian dances that give meanings to selected themes of a particular dance performance."⁴⁰

According to Kerr (1986, p.3) "the study of pre-colonial African theatre must include a wide group of the performing arts like ancestral rituals, funeral rites, initiation ceremonies, spirit-possession dances, entertainment dances, tragic and comic masquerades, praise-

³⁸ Gyekye, K. (1996) *African Cultural Values*. (p.112-115) Accra, Sankofa Publishing Company.

³⁹ *Asipim* is a dance theatre piece embedded with political themes and issues. It is the case study for this research and documentation.

⁴⁰ This is a submission given by Francis Nii-Yartey, the choreographer of the *Asipim* Dance Theatrical piece. This submission was granted on the 13th of March, 2015.

songs and oral narratives; many of which contain elements of plot and characterization.”⁴¹

This eludes, that in structuring and developing any theatrical presentation with Ghanaian specification, keen attention is to be given to choreographic units that fall in line with the practice and cultural orientation of the Ghanaian audience.

There is also the need to consider Nkrumah’s theory of *African Personality Consciousness* during an analysis of dance theatre as means of discourse in Ghanaian politics. Nkrumah’s (1964) *personality awareness* clearly prescribes, that:

Social revolution must have standing firmly behind it, an intellectual revolution, a revolution in which our thinking and philosophy are directed towards the redemption of the society. Our philosophy must find its weapon in the environment and living conditions of the African people. The philosophy that must stand behind this social revolution is referred to as philosophical consciencism. Consciencism in this regard is the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African societies to digest the Western and Islamic and Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality.⁴²

In juxtaposing Nkrumah’s assertion to make meaning within this study, dance theatre as a medium of communication can be employed as an intellectual platform in speaking out citizens concern and worries. Most importantly, the quotation stresses the application of art through dance theatre in instilling acceptable morals and ethics into a particular people. The surge for moral uprightness, based on an African consciousness in thought, sense of judgment, character and attitude of an individual, makes meaning in Nkrumah’s *philosophical consciencism*. Nkrumah clearly theories:

Philosophical consciencism in its political aspect is faced with the realities of colonialism, imperialism, disunity and lack of development.

⁴¹Kerr, D. (April, 1986) *African Theatre Review*. (p.3), Vol. 1, Number 2. Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books, Nigeria.

⁴²Nkrumah, K. (1964). *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonisation* (p.78-79) London, Panaf Books Ltd.

Singly and collectively these four militate against the realization of a social justice based on ideas of true equality. (Nkrumah, 1964, p.98)

Gyekye (1996, p 175) notes that “communalism is expressed in the sharing of common social life, commitment to the common good of the community, appreciation of mutual obligation, caring for the others, independence, and solidarity.”⁴³ The National Dance Company of Ghana, as a state owned institution is expected to act as an instrument of discourse on issues of governance, transparency, and accountability amongst politicians and public office-holders. Gyekye (1996, p.116) further opines that “there is the need for pre-colonial traditional systems (which also include indigenous artistic forms of dance and music) to evoke a sense of personal commitment to the affairs of the state in the individual citizen, a conviction that any harm done to the state as a whole directly harms the individual.”⁴⁴ Relatively, Nkrumah (1964, p.98) cautions that “in order for politics to become actual, state institutions need to regulate the behavior and action of men in society, so as to conserve the fundamental ethical principles of each individual.”⁴⁵

Concurrently, the concept of *Participatory Democracy through the Arts* is another criterion used in determining the role and effectiveness of dance in political discussion for this research. The term Participatory Democracy in my view, presupposes a dual-consideration based on both the *medium of dance and its effectiveness* as a means of public education.⁴⁶ Nkrumah (1964, p.78) makes meaning by stating- “whilst practice without thought is blind; thought without practice is equally empty.”⁴⁷ The Concept of Participatory Democracy through Arts in this regard takes into consideration the theories of *African Personality Consciousness* and *African Performance Theatre System*.

⁴³ Gyekye, K. (1996) *African Cultural Values*. (p.175) Accra, Sankofa Publishing Company.

⁴⁴ Gyekye, K. (1996) *African Cultural Values*. (p.116) Accra, Sankofa Publishing Company.

⁴⁵ Nkrumah, K. (1964). *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonisation* (p.98) London, Panaf Books Ltd.

⁴⁶ Any example of such a medium is the dance theatre system and its associated practices.

⁴⁷ Nkrumah, K. (1964). *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonisation* (p.78) London, Panaf Books Ltd.

According to Prah (1998, p.26) “Democracy is a system of government in which the necessary conditions are created to enable people to take part in political process.”⁴⁸ Most of these people, who primarily form the ranks of state institutions like the Ghana Dance Ensemble are tasked by professional responsibility to dramatize relevant issues that borders on a whole range of topical events. In such situations, the exhibition of professionalism through the creation and staging of dances remains paramount, if the desired results are to be achieved.

Kolb (2011) has noticed that “choreographers across the globe are propelled unto artistic creativity based on happenings or issues that characterize daily activities within their country or region.”⁴⁹ These daily happenings, which have their roots in economic, social, political or religious situations are basically exploited and restructured for presentation on stage for varied reasons. An understanding of these contexts provide the choreographer a first-hand explanation of cultural underpinnings that defines the creation of a particular piece. Thus, in order for any audience to have a deeper understanding of a particular context within which specific movement are being performed, there is the need for increased education regarding indigenous performance styles and pedagogic knowledge embedded in them.

Nkrumah (1964, p. 42) is of the view that “since theory and practice are always connected, there is the need to have a supporting ideology as part of a new social order.”⁵⁰ Advocacy for active involvement of state institutions (such as the National Dance Company of

⁴⁸ Prah, I. K. (1998) Government for Senior Secondary Schools (p. 26) Takoradi, Harp Consult.

⁴⁹ Kolb, A. (2011) “Cross-Currents of Dance and Politics: An Introduction.” *Dance and Politics*. Ed. Alexander Kolb. Bern. Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers.

⁵⁰ Nkrumah, K. (1964). *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonisation* (p.42) London, Panaf Books Ltd.

Ghana) in national politics; posits them as instruments of public sensitization. The Cultural Policy of Ghana (2004, p. 3) clearly states, that:

Culture is a dynamic phenomenon. It is established by our concept of Sankofa, which establishes linkage with the positive aspects of our past and the present. Culture affirms the co-existence of the past and the future in the present. It therefore embodies the attitude of our people to interaction between traditional values and the demands of modern technology within the contemporary international cultural milieu.⁵¹

2.2 Varied Contexts of Indigenous Ghanaian Dances and their relatedness and application

Primus (1996, p.4) discloses that “dance in Africa is not a separate art, but part of the whole complex of living.”⁵² Within the Ghanaian perspective, earlier dance scholars including Younge, Bame, Nketia and Adinku have given accounts of varied contexts within which indigenous Ghanaian dances are structured and performed. According to Adinku and Nketia in particular, Ghanaian dances are categorized into numerous contexts including historical, political, social/communal, religious/ritualistic, recreational, professional/occupational, as well as festive/occasional. In addition, these authorities further specify, that dance in Ghanaian communities finds place during child naming ceremonies, during puberty rites for both sexes, at festivals and funerals, during ancestral worship, and ritualistic ceremonies involving a selected few individuals, or the entire community.

⁵¹ National Commission on Culture. (2004) The Cultural Policy of Ghana (p. 3) Accra, GPC/Assembly Press.

⁵² Primus, P. (1996) African Dance: An Artistic, Historical, and Philosophical Inquiry. (p.4) Ed. Kariamu Welsh Asante. Africa World Press.

As a lecturer and principal supervisor for this thesis, Dr. Sylvanus Kwashie Kuwor⁵³ once stated “that analysis and discussion on the various contexts of Ghanaian dances and their application into new forms cannot be adequately addressed without paying keen attention to historical antecedents or connections defining these dances.”⁵⁴ This is to say, that in view of the different contexts under which Ghanaian dances are partitioned, it would be proper to consider historical accounts surrounding the emergence (context) of dances, in allowing for a proper understanding of their appropriation in political context. Green (1996, p. 13-14) categorically states:

African dance, based upon the spoken language is a source of communication through which it is possible to demonstrate emotion, sentiment, beliefs and other reactions through movement. Therefore, one can conclude that African dance is about everyday experiences or happenings or events in their lives which they choose to remember. The event could be of great historical significance, such as war, famine or the independence of African nations, or of everyday significance such as birth, puberty or the pounding of maize to make a meal. The themes of the dances can be drafted from many sources, such as legends, war, politics, cult, ritual or history.⁵⁵

Green’s submission implies that since African dances are governed by themes. There is a link between the context of a particular dance and historical antecedents surrounding the emergence of that particular dance. Atongi (2005, p.162) further asserts that “culture is intangible and unseen. It culminates from one’s interactions with his total physical, psychic and interpersonal environment and all that it contains.”⁵⁶

⁵³ A renowned dance anthropologist who is currently a lecturer at the University of Ghana, Legon. He also happens to be my lecturer. He made this submission during a seminar presentation by the Department of Dance Studies, Legon.

⁵⁴ This submission was made during a departmental seminar at the Seminar Room 2, of the School of Performing Arts, Legon. This happened on the 16th of September, 2015.

⁵⁵ Green, D. (1996) “Traditional Dance in Africa.” *African Dance: An Artistic, Historical, and Philosophical Inquiry*. (p. 13-14) Ed. Kariamu Welsh Asante. Eritrea, Africa World Press. Inc.

⁵⁶ Atongi, E. B. (2009) *Some Approaches to Teaching Culture: Culture and Education: Report of the National Conference on Culture (NCC) and Education at the Elmina Beach Resort*. (p.162) Ed. Ben Abdallah. Accra. Sub-Saharan Publishers.

Since this thesis looks at the practicality and benefits of dance theatre system in Ghana, the concept of contemporary African dance is worth recognizing at this point. This is relevant because contemporary African dance as a dance performance type/genre falls within categorization as dance theatre. Nii-Yartey (2011:6) notes that “contemporary African dance explores artistic and cultural elements of both the African past and the experiences of the present.”⁵⁷ Hence, in analyzing the relatedness of Ghanaian dances in political perspective, there is *re-contextualization* of our traditional dances as experimental resources (which Nii-Yartey refers to as elements) for the creation of new dance forms provides audiences the opportunity of associating themselves with these dances for better understanding of various themes embedded in a particular production.

In discussing the relationship of Ghanaian dances to political perspectives there is the need to make mention of indigenous political institutions such as *Asafo*⁵⁸ groups, priesthood and traditional courts. The traditional court in Ghanaian society is a very important socio-political institution. Within our traditional courts, there are several court attendants, drummers, women groups, singing ensembles, dancers and musicians who serve as bedrock of indigenous wit, and an archival source of knowledge. Nketia (1965, p.3) notes that “there is the traditional royal court with its special repertoire of songs and instrumental music generally performed by trained musicians, as well as its own style of dancing.”⁵⁹

The Adowa dance among the Akans of Ghana, which is originally associated with and performed in the traditional court, is widely performed these days as a social dance.

Younge (2011, p. 180) opines that,

⁵⁷See Pascal, Y. Y. (2011) *Dance and Music Traditions of Ghana*. (p. 6) Jefferson, North Carolina, and London. M.C. Farland & Company, Inc., Publishers.

⁵⁸ Asafo is a terminology given to *warrior groups* which existed during the pre-colonial era. They basically formed the ranks of the army, which were tasked with the responsibility of defending the state/community in times of war.

⁵⁹Nketia, J. H. K. (1965) “A Review of the Performing Arts of Ghana”. *Ghana-Music, Dance and Drama*. (p. 3) Accra, Institute of African Studies. Legon.

Adowa is by far the most widespread and frequently performed social dance-drumming of the Akan-speaking people, especially the Asantes/Asantis of Ghana. The symbolic movements associated with the dance are believed to be from the gestures and movements made by the antelope, hence the name *Adowa*. This classic dance is featured mostly at funerals.⁶⁰

Even though *Adowa* is originally a court dance reserved for entertaining royalty, its current social context places it directly within the community. In view of its social context, there is meaning in situating *Adowa* into a socio-political context. In choreographing dance pieces with political message, there is enough response for one to employ a social dance like *Adowa*. Even though movements, gestures and mime in *Adowa* are performed at most social gatherings to pay homage to chiefs, there is the possibility of using this dance form through choreography to communicate (chastise/caution) to people in authority. Through movement development based on traditional dances, the choreographer is able to develop dance motifs that are expressive of themes of a particular dance presentation. Hence, movements characteristic of the *Adowa* dance can be developed further through exaggeration (movement extension) and diversification of movement to give meaning to political thought.

The religious context of some Ghanaian traditional dances also allows for re-contextualization into political perspective. Sarpong (1974, p. 17) believes “the need for priest and priestess is an exigency, which no change of environment can take away.”⁶¹ During pre-colonial period, priests and priestesses occupied very important positions within our indigenous communities.⁶² Across various communities in Ghana, priests and priestesses continue to serve as spiritual mediums between the physical and the spiritual worlds. The *Akom* dance, which is associated with priesthood, is performed by priests and

⁶⁰ Pascal, Y. Y. (2011) *Dance and Music Traditions of Ghana*. (p. 180) Jefferson, North Carolina, and London. M.C. Farland & Company, Inc., Publishers.

⁶¹ Sarpong, P. (1974) *Ghana in Perspective: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture*. (p. 17) Accra-Tema, Ghana Publishing Corporation.

⁶² Sarpong, P. (1974, p. 17) Accra-Tema, Ghana Publishing Corporation.

priestesses as a channel to commune with the spiritual world. During the *Asipim* dance performance, the Akom dance is performed by the priest as a curative measure in seeking treatment for the king's daughter who suffers from mental instability. Diligence in professional duty is highlighted through the Akom performance. Nicholls (1996, p, 46) notes that "members of professional organizations- hunters, farmers, and fishermen guilds perform specific dances which reflects the economic life of the community and include mimetic re-enactments of occupational gestures."⁶³ The political connection of occupational dances, in this regard, is to give recognition to contributions made by various professional and career groups towards progress. Thus, dance is applied to stress the intellectual, physical and artistic contributions of various career groups towards the development of Ghana.

Festive/occasional context of Ghanaian dances also make meaning in political perspective. For example, a perfect example of such dance is the *Damba-Takai*.⁶⁴ In the *Asipim* dance piece, the choreographer employs the *Damba-Takai* dance in a recreational, but political context. The *Damba-Takai* is a festive dance performed among the Dagombas in honour of the birth and life of the great Prophet Muhammed. The choreographer uses *Damba-Takai* in a recreational but political context, as eight dancers perform in adoration of King Agor upon his ascension unto the throne. Reflectively, the *Damba-Takia* highlights the autocratic demeanor of King Agor within the *Asipim* dance performance, as he leads an entourage of dancers who perform specifically to glorify him irrespective of the murderous means by which he attained power.

⁶³ Nicholls, W. R. (1996) "African Dance: Transition and Continuity." *African Dance: An Artistic, Historical, and Philosophical Inquiry*. (p. 46) Ed. Kariamu Welsh Asante. Africa World Press. Inc.

⁶⁴The *Damba-Takai* is a festive dance performed among the Dagombas in honour of the birth and life of the great Prophet Muhammed

*Adzogbo*⁶⁵ ritual dance also provides a clue in understanding the application of Ghanaian dances in creating new dances with political perspective. According to Younge (2011) “Adzogbo would be performed to summon the warriors to take up arms and get ready for impending battle.”⁶⁶ Even though Adzogbo is ritualistic in context, it could be used in a much more communal scenario during choreography. The choreographer Francis Nii-Yartey, in his *Asipim* dance production allowed six male dancers to perform Adzogbo as a celebration dance, during a durbar scene within the performance.

The occupational context of some Ghanaian dances also give meaning to political perspectives. For instance, a perfect example of such dance is *Agbekor*.⁶⁷ During the beginning section of the *Asipim* piece, there is a power struggle between two dancers over a throne. The choreographer in his artistry allowed these dancers to perform the *Agbekor* dance to depict his perspective of a *power struggle* in a contemporary performance context. The philosophy of Agbekor dance as a warrior dance among the Anlo Ewes of the Volta Region, was borrowed by the choreographer in his portrayal of a struggle scene. Hence, there is a connection in meaning between the choreographer’s choice of Agbekor movements and his choreographic attempt to give a dramatic interpretation of a struggle scene.

2.3 The Place of Dance in the Political Discourse of Ghana

Asiama (2006, p. 5) defines education as:

The process of being prepared for greater responsibilities towards one’s kin and kith, one’s community and state. It is the process of increasing

⁶⁵ According to Pascal Yao Younge’s *Music and Dance Traditions of Ghana* (2011) p.33-Adzogbo is performed in the night to summon the warriors to take up arms and get ready for impending battle.

⁶⁶ Younge, P.Y. (2011) *Dance and Music Traditions of Ghana*. (P.33) Jefferson, North Carolina, and London. M.C. Farland & Company, Inc., Publishers.

⁶⁷ Agbekor is a warrior dance of the Anlo-Ewes of Southern Volta in Ghana. In pre-colonial times, the Agbekor was performed by warriors of Anlo before they engaged in any war. Due to modernity, Anlo is now performed by both males and female, even though it used to be strictly masculine.

one's perception, appreciation of things and people around him or her to enhance a higher degree of acceptability, integration and receptiveness.⁶⁸

As a dramatic medium, dance is blessed by aesthetic proficiency not only for its representation as state heritage and artistry, but more importantly for its practicality in serving as an instrument (language) for deliberating on various issues which includes of politics and state affairs. In taking cue from the above, it can be said that there is proficiency in dance as an artistic venture to express meaning and significance in national discourse. Published works of known scholars including Alexander Kolb, Paul Schauert, Katharina Schramm, Yonca Altindal and Katharina Schram are very important documentations. Yonca Altindal (2008, p. 539) is of the view that "the responses of those that are looking for answers to the political phenomenon are directly affected by their points of view on politics, the social, economic and cultural of their community and their expectations of politicians."⁶⁹ The logic behind this assertion is that, dance creations (on politics) for the Ghanaian theatrical stage must be firmly entrenched in the daily activities and behaviors of politicians who are the in helm of state affairs.

Ghana as a democratic state is one amongst numerous countries across the globe that accepts dance not as mere entertainment, but as a serious medium of communication through movements, expressions and gestures. Contributions of artistic institutions in Ghana, such as the National Dance Company of Ghana and the National Commission on Culture become institutions of relevance in ascertaining the place and efficiency of dance to contribute to knowledge and development. Gyekye (1996, p. 178) reiterates that:

The growth of human culture, its capacity to avoid decadence and dysfunction and to adapt itself to new situations and demands, its capacity to constitute itself into a credible and viable framework for

⁶⁸ Asiama, E. (2006) Legongon Dance Drama As A Medium of Culture Education. (p. 5) Accra, Jac Multi-Media Centre, 2006.

⁶⁹ Altindal, Y. (2008) *Powerless Duplicators of Masculine Politics* (p.539) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43293291> Accessed: 25-08-2015 21:35 UTC

human development- would be achieved through reinterpretation and critical re-evaluation of a cultural tradition as it moves through history.⁷⁰

Cultural traditions in this respect, refer to artistic institutions that have existed since post-colonial periods as dramatic mediums, through which dance theory and practices can be applied in “commenting on the interrelated ambiguities of social cohesion, governance and tolerance.”⁷¹ Öztürkmen (2001) recollects that:

Folklore and nationalism have a well-established historical connection, which dates back to the nineteenth century when the old regimes began to be replaced by new political orders. It is a continuous process of exclusion and inclusion of the formerly existing aspects of culture, a process of redefinition or reinvention of the "old" as the new national symbols.⁷²

Historically, Adinku has already mentioned that theatrical performances were employed during the early years of post-independence as a unifying tool by the late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, and his fellow political compatriots from other African countries. Theatre in this sense served as a major catalyst in encouraging collective citizenry participation in matters of national affairs and national interest. Kerr (1986. p.1) believes that:

There is practicality in indigenous theatre to be considered a cultural correlative of modern politically motivated ideologies. The various theories of “African Socialism,” whether Senghor’s *Africanite*, Nyerere’s *Ujamaa*, Kaunda’s *Humanism*, Mobutu’s *Authenticite*, Nkrumah’s *Consciencism* or Sekou Toure’s *Cummunocracy*, despite very wide local differences, are alike in their insistence on classless, co-operative, community oriented basis of pre-colonial African society. Hence, in these post-independence ideologies, theories of the performing

⁷⁰ Gyekye, K. (1996) *African Cultural Values*. (p.178) Accra, Sankofa Publishing Company.

⁷¹ Maloutas, T. (2004) The Glass Menagerie of urban Governance and Social Cohesion: Concepts and Stakes/Concepts as Stakes (p. 450)
http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Thomas_Maloutas/publication/4761423_The_glass_menagerie_of_urban_governance_and_social_cohesion_concepts_and_stakesconcepts_as_stakes/links/55367fd10cf218056e95239c.pdf Retrieved on: 11 September 2015.

⁷² Öztürkmen, A. (2001) Politics of National Dance in Turkey: A Historical Reappraisal (p. 140) Accessed: 20-06-2015 06:48 UTC <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1519638.pdf?acceptTC=true>

arts tend to reinforce the notion that African theatre expresses the almost changeless, egalitarian nature of communocratic society.⁷³

It is worth reiterating, that after Ghana attained independence in 1957, focus on collective and harmonious citizenry behavior was optimum priority for the ruling C.P.P⁷⁴ at that time.⁷⁵ It is for this reason that during the early beginnings of Ghana's self-rule, dance became one of the major unifying elements that instilled a sense of nationalism, and patriotism amongst a greater majority of the populace who were uneducated at the time.⁷⁶ In effect, dance became a potent mouthpiece for the less educated, since they identified themselves with dramatic performance and also participated in them.

Adinku (1994, p.6) indicates that "Nkrumah believes that future developments for Ghana should be linked with traditional achievements, and that traditional achievements should be thoroughly examined, interpreted and recreated for modern use."⁷⁷ The Ghana Dance Ensemble, has since the days of Albert Mawere Opoku⁷⁸ experimented with Ghanaian dance types purposely for the dance stage. During the reign of Albert Mawere Opoku as artistic director, indigenous dance forms were remolded to meet acceptable criteria that defined dance theatrical practices. This means that even though Ghanaian dances maintained their authentic form within various villages and societies across the state,

⁷³Kerr, D. (1986). African Theatre Review. (p. 1), Vol. 1, Number 2, Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books (NIG.).

⁷⁴The Convention Peoples Party founded by the first president of Ghana. It was the first political party to attain governing power after Ghana attained independence.

⁷⁵ According to Mereigah Salifu, who happens to be one of my respondents whom I interviewed on the University of Ghana campus. This discussion was conducted on the

⁷⁶ According to Professor Francis Nii-Yartey, the choreographer and former Artistic Director of the National Dance Ensemble, the Ghana Dance Ensemble in Accra. He gave this submission during an interview with the researcher at the University of Ghana campus at Legon. Legon is situated in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

⁷⁷ Adinku, W.O. (1994). African Dance Education in Ghana. (p. 6) Accra, Ghana University Press.

⁷⁸ Albert Mawere Opoku is regarded as the Father of Dance in Ghana. He is the first ever Artistic Director of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, responsible for the re-structuring and arrangement of Indigenous Ghanaian dances for presentation on a dance theatrical stage. He is also responsible for establishing the School of Performing Arts (comprising of dance, music and drama) as an educational venue for both theoretical and practical teaching and learning of dance.

models of these dances were fashioned out purposely for presentation on the modern dance theatre.⁷⁹

The Ghana Dance Ensemble in this regard, has for the past fifty-four years stunned audiences both locally and abroad as a representative of state cultural heritage. Irrespective of these achievements, little has been seen of dance theatre in terms of enhancing democratic governance and political education within the country. Schauert (2014) reiterates that “in opening up to new possibilities, there is need for the Ghana Dance Ensemble to manage its multi-layered identities and surrounding political matrix by reconsidering its duties to the nation.”⁸⁰ In support, Gyekye (1996, p. 151) further insists that “communalism as a feature of collective action practiced in the traditional African society does not absorb individuality, but rather accommodates it and makes it co-exist with individuality.”⁸¹ The National Dance Company of Ghana, by virtue of this, calls into question the position of the group in playing a vital part as a political forum through theatre.

Dance as theatrical engagement entails a total synthesis of identifiable practices, beliefs and ethics of a society, which is perfectly fused with theatrical elements including scenery, lighting, and properties. This is meant to convey didactic messages through movements, mimes and gestures on a dance performance stage. Francis Nii-Yartey (2011, p.6) believes “that the seed of an established dance theatre system is already germinating as a dance

⁷⁹ This submission was granted by David Tawiah Akushey Amoo. He is one my respondent from whom information was gathered. This discussion took place at his residence at North Kaneshie in Accra.

⁸⁰ Schauert, P. (2014) *Managing Culture: Discipline, Artistry, and Alternative Education in Ghana's State Dance Ensemble*. (p. 21-22) Accessed 02-06-2015 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday/60.3.3>

⁸¹ Gyekye, K (1996). *African Cultural Values*. (p. 151) Accra, Sankofa Publishing Company.

phenomenon referred to as contemporary African dance, which is a genre of theatrical performance which is sweeping across Africa today, with Ghana included.”⁸²

According to Alexander Kolb (2011) “current political concerns of immense importance to state development is being addressed across the globe through theatre.”⁸³ A dance performance with politically related themes, in this perspective, is intended to open new horizons regarding dance theatre practice in Ghana. Gyekye (1996) agrees that:

Innovation emphasizes the conviction that modernity is in many respects compatible with tradition and that it therefore does not represent a break with tradition as such. An innovative spirit is the most outstanding feature of modernity; but the foresight to perceive which aspect of the cultural life of a people should be brought within the scope of the innovative enterprise is equally important. The far reaching consequences of the activity of a dynamic innovative spirit will be the attainment of new stage of cultural development, characterized by advanced forms of human knowledge, techniques and socioeconomic structures.⁸⁴

The Ghana Dance Ensemble, as the epitome for dance theatre presentations in Ghana, needs to extend its scope beyond the frame of mere entertainment and recreation, to increasing political awareness and sensitization. Dance Theatre in this sense is expected to take up the challenge and opportunity of commenting on critical political issues including dictatorship, embezzlement of state funds by politicians, character assassination of political opponents and active participation of women in politics. The Ghana Dance Ensemble, in this regard, is positioned as a linguist for all citizens within the country. Hence, the company has to play a major role as an eye-opener, for all citizens to identify administrative shortcomings of politicians for redress. Schauert (2014) theorizes that:

⁸²Pascal, Y. Y. (2011) *Dance and Music Traditions of Ghana*. (p. 6) Jefferson, North Carolina, and London. M.C. Farland & Company, Inc., Publishers.

⁸³ Kolb, A. (2011) “Cross-Currents of Dance and Politics: An Introduction.” *Dance and Politics*. Ed. Alexander Kolb. Bern. Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers.

⁸⁴ Gyekye, K (1996). *African Cultural Values*. (p. 172-173) Accra, Sankofa Publishing Company.

The prospects of politics through dance has proven the Ghana Dance Ensemble to be a legitimate and powerful sites of social action and change, wherein national, ethnic, and global (cosmopolitan) identities are reshaped and the goals of individuals and groups achieved. Following the general discourse on the performance of nationalism, the specific discourse on state dance companies has, however, largely focused on the ways in which such groups have participated in nation building. That is, such ensembles are primarily analyzed as implements of the state, employed to cement government legitimacy and propagate nationalist ideologies.⁸⁵

2.4 Towards the Development of Dance Theatre in Ghana: Audience Perception and Place of the National Dance Company

In an article titled *The Politics and Poetics of Dance*, Reeds (1998, p. 510) submits that “since at least the 19th Century, dance and music have emerged as a potent symbols of identity for ethnic groups and nations worldwide.”⁸⁶ This statement stresses that artistic practices and engagements concerning the arts, from around this period, began to gain prominence as credible determinants of state philosophy and character.

Philosophy by definition refers to guiding principles of objectivity that allow for strategic reasoning on issues, and for clear understanding of individuals actions and thoughts. In the case of Ghana, Adinku recollects as saying “the first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah; saw the need to infuse the arts and especially dance as an approach in educating the populace on indigenous philosophy, ethics and wisdom needed for social cohesion and growth of Ghanaian societies”⁸⁷ It can therefore be said, that Nkrumah’s philosophical choice of approach through *arts and culture* was for its immediacy to the life of the ordinary

⁸⁵ Paul, S. (2014) Managing Culture: Discipline, Artistry, and Alternative Education in Ghana's State Dance Ensembles(p.4-5)Accessed: 20-06-2015 06:47 UTC

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.2979/africatoday.60.3.3.pdf?acceptTC=true>

⁸⁶ Reeds, S. A(1998) *The Politics and Poetics of Dance* (p.510) Accessed: 06-06-2015 12:00 UTC

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/223381>

⁸⁷ This is a submission given by William Ofotsu Adinku during a discussion on the University of Ghana campus. This submission was given was given on the 7th of November, 2014.

Ghanaian. Thus, during the early periods of Ghana's post independent era, citizens needed a departure from colonial aggression that relegated folk artistry to the background.⁸⁸ Dance and the arts in general, became a major source of group identity upon which respect for indigenous ideals, professional ethics, cultural believes and corporate responsibility was to be upheld.⁸⁹ Thus, dance across the Ghanaian social frame was used by Nkrumah because of its indigenous dramatic expressions and aesthetic value which are in consonance with preferred attitude, belief, perception and conviction of the ordinary Ghanaian. Robert, W. July (1983, p. 119) recollects, that:

Post-war nationalist movements preached political independence and economic modernization, but there was also the urge for a concurrent reaffirmation of Africa's own values as expressed in its arts, its literature, its philosophy, and its history. Political freedom was to thrive best; it was said, when accompanied by a parallel autonomy of cultural expression.⁹⁰

This posits that in our current age of globalization and institutional specification, the power of dance and theatre in the developmental process of emerging countries like Ghana ought to be included in the surge for sustainable unity towards development. In achieving such autonomy, Hagan indicates that as a country:

There is the need to take broader of the dimensions of culture in school education and set aside the narrow view that takes the syllabus of music, dance and drama, art and craft activities in schools as the cultural complement of our educational system. Concurrently, the broader view of culture would restore pride in the study of such subjects as important part of the total development and qualitative refinement of the social personality of the educated person.⁹¹

⁸⁸ This submission was given on the 7th of November, 2014 by William Ofotsu Adinku on the university campus (legon).

⁸⁹ This submission was given on the 7th of November, 2014 by William Ofotsu Adinku.

⁹⁰ Robert, W. J (1998) *Toward Cultural Independence in Africa: Some Illustrations from Nigeria and Ghana* (p.510) Accessed: 16/09/2013 11:01 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/524165>.

⁹¹ Hagan, P. G. (2009) "The importance of Culture in formal Education System and Preparation for Life." (p.1) Culture and Education: Report of the National Conference on Culture (NCC) and Education at the Elmina Beach Resort. Ed. Ben Abdallah. Accra, Sub-Saharan Publishers.

In view of this research, Ghana as a country remains positioned as a perfect example of an African country that holds it obligatory in ensuring the recognition and steady development of dance theatre as a potent medium of communication. Just like other African countries including Burkina Faso, Guinea, South Africa, Senegal and Mali that are equally equipped with state owned art companies including *Guinea Ballet* and *Umoja of South Africa*, not much has been seen from the *National Dance Company of Ghana* in terms of staging dance theatrical performance to heighten socio-political awareness among the citizenry. The situation in Ghana is much worrying, in the sense that, even though there have been dance theatre presentations by the National Dance Company of Ghana over the last four decades, audience perception, appreciation and patronage of theatrical dance performances have least been encouraging. Furthermore, given the improved standards of dance education within the university system in Ghana, as well as the artistic exploits of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, there are persisting misconceptions that dance as an academic curricula and as a profession is unworthy as a discipline of substantive import in today's age of globalization. The Cultural Policy of Ghana (2004, p. 1) which is a reference document that stipulates modalities of operation for the arts, cautions that:

In the era of globalization and contemporary technological challenges, the people of Ghana must recognize that their culture is the basis of, and the most important factor in the nation's human and material development. Thus, our history, cultural values and institutions must continue to exercise a deep influence on the nation's destiny and play a key role in governance and national growth.⁹²

The National Dance Company of Ghana, which epitomizes established systems for practical and artistic standards for theatrical dance creativity, has been quite dormant in recent years spite of the endless prospects and resources available at their disposal. I do not

⁹²National Commission on Culture. The Cultural Policy of Ghana. Accra, GPC/Assembly Press, 2004.

mean to reiterate that the Ghana Dance Ensemble over the past four decades have been dormant. Rather I agree with the prolific choreographer *Francis Nii-Yartey's* submission that “there is an assortment of social engagements⁹³ which find meaning in dramatic expression, and which dance theatre is of no exception.”⁹⁴

Ghana as a politically democratic state is a haven of numerous dramatic forms (music and dance) that find meaning in the cultural orientation of different ethnic groupings. Since the Ghana Dance Ensemble was instrumental in Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's employment of arts for citizen education during our post-independence era,⁹⁵ today's multi-dimensional expectation of citizens posits dance as a vessel with the capability of awakening citizens' consciousness on matters of governance and social administration. This eludes that in maximizing attitudinal change for development through dance theatre, uprightness towards responsibility of social institution such as the *National Commission on Culture*⁹⁶ and the *Ghana Education Service*⁹⁷ become indispensable in such engagements. Cultural awareness, cultural reawakening and education in this context remain indispensable if the individual Ghanaian (including both politicians and citizens) is to be sensitized on the import of dance and the arts towards development. Awareness through education in this regard falls on the premise of communication, which the Ghana Dance Ensemble must strive to attain. Crosby (1997, p.75) is convinced that:

⁹³ This refers to interactive fields on human living such as health, sport, education, trade, etc.

⁹⁴ He happens to be one of my respondents. This submission was granted during a discussion with the Choreographer Francis Nii-Yartey. This was held at the School of Performing Arts, of the University of Ghana at Legon.

⁹⁵ Adinku, W.O. (1994) *African Dance Education in Ghana*. Accra, Ghana University Press.

⁹⁶ The National Commission on Culture is the sole institution in Ghana tasked with the responsibility of superintending over all cultural and artistic engagement within the country. They are basically tasked by constitution to oversee the implementation of all cultural engagements.

⁹⁷ The Ghana Education Service is the sole institution in the country responsible for coordination and supervising the educational system in Ghana.

The dialogue between the social sciences and the performing arts provides unusual perspectives from which to understand the larger phenomenon of the human mind while contributing to the growth of the individual. Combining the social sciences and the performing arts yields a dynamic interplay of two paradigms of humanistic endeavor. Valuable insights arise from the conversation of disciplines: one attuned to the constructs of meaning within culture and subculture, one attuned to the constructs of meaning within an individual.⁹⁸

The above quotation posits that in order to ensure the development of dance theatre in Ghana for audiences' consumption there is the need for diversification in dance productions in terms of subject matter. Diversification in this regard, proposes the inclusion of dance into other fields of public interaction such as politics, health, history, sports and education. The National Dance Company of Ghana as a store house for artistic exploration in the country, is supposed to step out of its comfort zone as mere entertainers, and be transformed into artistic instruments of education. The practicality of such advocacy lies heavily on both the National Dance Company of Ghana and National Commission on Culture in coming up with creative works that finds meaning in political thought towards state progress. Nkrumah states, that:

Revolution has two aspects. Revolution is a revolution against an old order; and it is also a context for a new development. Artistic revolution is not merely negative. It is not a mere conceptual refutation of a dying order, but a positive creative theory, the guiding light of the emerging social order.⁹⁹

Audience perception in terms of attendance to dance theatre performances can be positively impacted, only when the National Dance Company of Ghana stands tall as an artistic haven that is charged with the task of instilling moral and professional values amongst Ghanaians.

⁹⁸ Crosby, J.F (1997) *The Dancer's Way of Knowing: Merging Practice and Theory in the Doing and Writing of Ethnography*. (p.75) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25757908> Accessed: 16/09/2013 11:02

⁹⁹ Nkrumah, K. (1964). *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonization* (p. 34) London, Panaf Books Ltd.

2.5 Conclusion

These sources that have been reviewed provide an understanding into a phenomenon where artistic expression and enactments relying basically on Ghanaian dance movements and gesticulations can be employed as a means to highlight socio-political matters and feelings. Theatrical dance practicalisation, as a means to education and public discourse in this sense, becomes a very important facet of citizens (Ghanaians) total enculturation.

Another understanding that can be deduced from these reviewed sources is that, dance theatre (productions) as a practice can serve as a lens into the political sphere of life in Ghana, only if a well-strategized and sustainable approach by the National Commission on Culture seeks citizens' enlightenment as a key objective. The effort of choreographers¹⁰⁰ in such consideration becomes extremely vital, as they are supposed to distinguish themselves as Ghanaian artistes who share a sense of commonality with their people.

Based on these reviewed sources, it could also be reiterated that there is the need for creativity based on indigenous artistic expressionism, even though current trends in technological advancements affects theatre in terms of presentation. It is only when such considerations are adhered to, that the individual audience (Ghanaian) would have proper understanding of theatrical dance presentations and their contextualization within the political. As the mother of theatre arts in Ghana, the late Efua T. Sutherland states that:

There are many years of pioneering effort ahead of the Theatre Movement in Ghana. Most especially, there is a pile-up of issues in relation to creator-consumer interdependence which must be cleared, if the Theatre Movement is to proceed through proper care towards its fulfillment for the benefit of the whole nation. (Sutherland, 2000, p. 45&52)

¹⁰⁰ Both the acclaimed and upcoming choreographers in the country.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The significance or purpose of methodology within this documentation discloses the varying procedures employed in gathering data relevant for this documentation. Since this thesis is focused on a theatrical dance presentation titled *Asipim*,¹⁰¹ interviews with participants (both crew and cast) were conducted as a major means of accessing data. Also, document sources, internet publications, as well as audio-visual analysis of the production were employed.

Since this thesis is grounded on the *Asipim* theatrical dance performance as its scope of study, I found it appropriate to apply the qualitative method of research as opposed to other approaches. Lester and Lester, Jr. (2002, p. 79) notes, “within research documentation, correspondents respond directly to central issues raised by the researcher, which invariably becomes a written record for the research.”¹⁰² In this regard, prior notices were sent through drafted letters to my respondents from the 5th-10th of January, 2015. Hence, in establishing the didactic benefits of applying dance as a medium in granting commentary on political issues, a more participatory mode of research approach towards data collection was adopted. It then became imperative to employ the purposive sampling approach. Thus, I thought it wise to interview key artistic contributors¹⁰³ to the production, who’s expertise in one way or the other contributed to the successful development and staging of the production.

¹⁰¹ *Asipim* is a theatrical dance production performed and staged by the National Dance Company of Ghana, Ghana Dance Ensemble. It was created by Professor Francis Nii-Yartey, a prolific choreographer in Ghana. He worked with the Ghana Dance Ensemble as Artistic Director for more than two decades. He is highly acclaimed and respected across some countries in Africa, and the world at large.

¹⁰² Lester. D. J. & Lester. D. J. Jnr. (2002) *Writing Research Papers: A Complete Guide*. (p.79) Tenth Edition. New York City, Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers. Inc.

¹⁰³ Theatre personalities like the Scenic Designer, Costume Designer, and Light Designer who contributed to the successful staging of the productions.

On one occasion, a respondent reiterated that the authenticity of data collection would have to be finally verified by the choreographer,¹⁰⁴ since he wields the sole prerogative in deciding in the *form* and *style* with which the piece was to be created. Subsequently, another respondent also insisted that there was the need to interview the Lighting Designer¹⁰⁵ and Scenic Designer¹⁰⁶ of the production, because of the import of his stage creation in giving meaning to the performance. There was the need to take critical interest in the technical aspect of the production, by unearthing the relationship (meanings) of these theatrical components to the philosophical and thematic (political) underpinnings of the production.

In achieving the best results from this research, I desisted from interacting solely with respondents based on their level of contribution to the realization of the production. In this sense, I took critical interest in documenting every bit of information obtained from both cast and crew. Most importantly, I desisted from restricting my respondents in using the English language as the sole medium for conservation. Discussions and interviews conducted during this research focused more on retrieving data from resource persons irrespective of a respondents' choice of language.¹⁰⁷ Translation of data from these languages was not difficult since I am proficient in most of the dialects used by my respondents.

¹⁰⁴ Professor Francis Nii-Yartey is the choreographer of the *Asipim* piece. He has choreographed many dances for the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

¹⁰⁵ George Kartey was the lighting designer for the *Asipim* theatrical dance production. Since 1986, George has been involved in the art. During his early days at the Art Centre in Accra, and also after he moved to University of Ghana in 1984 as a resource person; he has been designing and setting up lights for numerous stage performances within Ghanaian Art circles. He is most at times highly recommended by various directors as a reliable repository of wisdom when it comes to lighting theatrical presentations.

¹⁰⁶ David Tawiah Akushey Amoo is one of the most prolific stage creators in Ghana. He has worked and toured with the company for more than thirty years. He is the Scenic Designer who designed and constructed stage sets and props for the *Asipim* Dance piece staged by the Ghana Dance Ensemble in Accra.

¹⁰⁷ This refers to the use of *Ga*, *Twi*, *Fanti*, etc.. during my interviews and discussions.

In the inception of this research, a respondent disclosed that most of the lead performers involved in the production are still resident with the National Dance Company.¹⁰⁸ In view of the notification received, I quickly drafted a questionnaire for the research with the assistance of my supervisor. Questions addressed in this draft were targeted at uncovering the inspiration and artistic approach employed in developing the production. This approach was employed to streamline the scope of discussions with my respondents from whom data was gathered.

Preliminary investigation for this documentation began after contact was made with my respondents who had agreed to participate in discussions concerning the production. In this regard, ethical concerns including consent statements were resorted to, for the purpose of observing confidentiality in submissions granted by the respondents.

3.1 Interviews and Discussions

As I stated earlier in chapter one of this thesis, gathering of data for this research is sourced by analyzing audio-visual recording of the *Asipim* dance production, engaging participants in discussions, relying on written materials, as well as internet publication by various scholars on the topic.

In the area of discussions, the Choreographer, Set/Props Designer, Lighting Director, as well as some selected members of the productions were contacted as respondents for the research. In this effect, prior notices were sent through drafted letters to my respondents from the 5th- 7th of January, 2015.

Even though a formal approach was maintained during the interview, my respondent's enthusiastic approach (character) towards discussions was very commendable.

¹⁰⁸ This was disclosed by Mariama Alhassan, a female dancer with the Ghana Dance Ensemble whom I coincidentally met on the 27th of December, 2014 during a wedding ceremony held at Commonwealth Hall, of University of Ghana, in Legon.

Respondents contributed whole-heartedly to questions put before them based on their understanding and experience attained from participating in the production. It therefore became very easy in collating various views of respondents in order to derive an appropriate response to question posed.

Since respondents were notified before interviews were conducted, it could be ascertained that there was ample time for respondents to cast their memories back into the past; in recollecting their experiences and impressions regarding the production. Through these interviews, the various characters developed by the choreographer is discussed and ascertained. The relationship between these characters to the political perspective of the production became of prime interest. Hence, enquiries were made into various roles developed by the choreographer and their significance in heightening the political themes of the production.

Discussions with respondents were also grounded on important points concerning the background of the performance. In terms of background, there was the need to establish the cultural and philosophical connections defining the production. The style of presentation, selection of various characters, artistic resources employed, and moral implication involved in the creation of a dance theatrical production are heavily influenced by an understanding of background within which a particular choreography is set.

Respondents were basically allowed to voice-out their personal impression and perspective concerning the performance. This is not to say that selected choice of questions within the questionnaire was not employed. In the case of the *Asipim* production, technical expertise including the Lighting Designer, Scenic Designer and the Choreographer were allowed to give details of their artistic creations and its philosophical (political) bearings on the various themes of the performance.

3.1.1 Words of Caution: Some Brief Pronouncements by Peace Simons.¹⁰⁹

Research publication by writers both within academia and outside is often undertaken for the purpose of unearthing relevant information to educate readers. Unlike most professional writers¹¹⁰ who above all things engage in research works with the uppermost target of yielding profits (money) from their works, lecturers and students in universities and colleges in the country place primary interest in unearthing data as reference sources for future researchers. What I mean is that, in as much as there is the possibility for a final publication of any research work conducted by university students; prime emphasis is usually placed on fulfilling one's study (course) requirements. Thus, even though there is prospect of publishing this thesis after completing school, this research basically aimed at disclosing relevant information to serve as a yardstick upon which future research works would be conducted.

In view of the above, a respondent states that there is the tendency for some respondents¹¹¹ to demand money before granting interviews even though prior notifications (letters) were sent informing them of a purely academic venture. There was the need therefore to lay hands on other document sources such as brochures and fliers in buttressing submission granted by respondents. Conscious effort was therefore made to have access to documented and visual records of the production as material proof of synopsis of the *Asipim* performance.

Accessing documented and visual records of the production provided an opportunity for verification and analysis of data retrieved from discussion with resource persons. There

¹⁰⁹ She is one of my respondents, who has toured extensively with the National Dance Company for the past twenty five years. She also happen to be one of the most experienced individuals in the company, who has influenced the progress of the company; by mastering all requisite dances expectant of best performers in Ghana, and within the company. She performed the character *Awo Din*; who was wife of *Ataa Din* and mother of twin male sons (*Oko* and *Ate*).

¹¹⁰ Authors or Publishers who are basically outside academia.

¹¹¹ A number of whom form the cast for the *Asipim* dance production.

was the need to employ these secondary mediums of data collections as complimentary mediums in buttressing submissions of respondents.

3.1.2 Personal Interview with the choreographer- Professor Francis Nii-Yartey at the Dance Department of the School of Performing Arts in Legon

Since I had been engaged extensively with the Ghana Dance Ensemble as a props and set construction crew for past fifteen years I tirelessly arranged a meeting with the choreographer and former Artistic Director of the Ghana Dance Company. An extensive discussion was convened with the choreographer to allow him shed his perspective regarding the inspiration, creative process and purpose for *Asipim* theatrical dance production. It is worth reiterating, that Professor Francis Nii-Yartey is the originator and creator of the *Asipim* Dance production. Over the years as a choreographer, he has choreographed and staged numerous dance theatre pieces during his tenure as the Artistic Director of the National Dance Company of Ghana. This creative ability according to him, springs from years of experience and encounters with divergent cultural traditions across Africa, and the world at large.

In casting back on his early childhood years as a young and enthusiastic person of dance, the choreographer sheds light on his personal experiences when he categorically stated:

I grew up in one of the most important areas in this country, which is *Accra*, and specifically in the heart of *Bukom-Jamestown*. Proximity to the seat of government and other social activities at the time I was growing up affected most of my dance creations. Also, the presence of foreigners including Yorubas and Hausas gave me a wider spectrum of other cultures and art forms associated with them.¹¹²

¹¹² This is a submission the choreographer gave, with respect to his personal experiences as a young art person who was growing up in Accra. This information was gathered during an interview with the choreographer at the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon. The discussion was held on the 13th of March, 2015.

As a follow up to his account concerning his earlier experiences as a young and upcoming artist, the choreographer claimed to have been inspired by a number of personalities. Prominent amongst these people was his grandmother, who inspired him immensely. He further claims to have been inspired by his elder siblings and friends, from whom he learnt a lot from in terms of culture and social affairs. He further stated that one has to be able to see the good things in life, develop the capacity to absorb them; and be able to use them.

Within academia, my respondent claims to have been inspired by the late Professor Mawere Opoku¹¹³ who introduced him to Ashanti culture. Mawere Opoku, according to my respondent was a man who saw good things in other ethnic groups. Mention was also made of Professor Nketia, the late Dr. Ephraim Amu, and the late Madam Efua Sutherland as mentors who helped inspire his interest in the arts, and from whom he learnt a lot as an upcoming choreographer. Since he schooled in the United States, he also noted that he was affected immensely by exposure to foreign choreographers, dancers and musicians who had different perspectives on dance choreography and its application in various communicative ways.

Before he entered academia, my respondent disclosed that he had worked as a bailiff with the Income Tax Service (currently known as the Ghana Revenue Authority) in *Sunyani*¹¹⁴ where he gained enough insight into diverse cultural practices of people. Furthermore, the choreographer attests to seeking inspiration from other art forms such as poetry, which is heavily embedded with knowledge. Such arts forms especially poetry, comprise basically of selected words which are employed in commenting on divergent issues and topics from a wide range of social interactions.

¹¹³ He is regarded as the *Father of Dance* within academia in Ghana. He was appointed by the first president of the Republic of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah to begin the concept of an *African Personality Consciousness* through the establishment of a School for the Performing Arts, at the University of Ghana, in Legon. He later became the artistic director of the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

¹¹⁴ The capital city of the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana. Brong-Ahafo is one of the ten regions of Ghana.

The choreographer by his submission is seen to have been influenced by a number of personalities and issues bothering the country. Nii-Yartey was precise in his submission about *Asipim*, when he stated that the production is a total theatrical experience about life. “It is a story about mismanaged leadership in Africa. It recounts incidents of power play and misuse of political power on the continent.”¹¹⁵

Even though the performance is characterised by Ghanaian features, in terms of dances employed and scenic creations; the choreographer asserts that *Asipim* is more than a political dance. *Asipim* is about Africa, the unity of Africa, and the dispersion of Africa. It is about the African story of division, through authoritative leadership over the years. It is an African story about our inability to form an existing African union, even though by our existence as a race we are one people. *Asipim* is not about the physical things you see, but rather; what occupies the mind of the people. *Asipim* is a dance performance on the political situation amongst most underdeveloped countries in Africa.

During his creative process, the choreographer believed he was influenced by his feelings, perceptions, and his level of thinking regarding all that he saw and lived with whilst growing up as a young boy. He agrees that the process involved in the creation of *Asipim* was of a new concept that sought to utilize indigenous Ghanaian dance styles in creating a dance piece with political themes. According to choreographer:

I wanted the audience to see the African story. I wanted the audience to see the aesthetics of an African event on stage. I wanted to expose Ghanaians to political issues affecting Africa. I wanted Ghanaians to experience political misgivings of murder, corruption, authoritativeness, and injustices.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ This is a submission the choreographer gave, with respect to his personal experiences as a young art person who was growing up in Accra.

¹¹⁶ This information was gathered during an interview with the choreographer of the piece at the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon. The discussion was held on the 13th of March, 2015.

According to the choreographer Francis Nii-Yartey, the dance *Asipim* has positioned Ghanaian dance theatrical presentation on new pedestal. Creative philosophy in his terms involves the breaking of new grounds, where the performer is seen as a creative partner in the choreographic process. In the case of *Asipim*, the choreographer insisted that he never imposed movements on his dancers, but rather; tickled his dancers to be creative.

The choreographer insisted that any choreographer who yearns to achieve the best result before his audiences ought to allow his dancers an avenue for self-expression and creativity during the process of choreography. Hence, the imposition of movement is minimized, whilst a collaborative effort by both choreographer and dancers toward movement development (based on specified concepts) is maintained. In a discussion with the choreographer, he stated that:

With my dancers, with my actors, with my singers, in other words with my performers; I go inside you, and bring you from inside you out; and hand it over to you.¹¹⁷

He encouraged and exploited movements developed through the process of improvisation in line with the purpose of the piece. More importantly, he opined that the dance *Asipim* was not based or developed out of any existent literature. It is an artistic representation of happenings in the politics and governance, which speaks through movements and gestures.

In appearance and structure, the choreographer states that the production is patterned in the artistic consideration of an African performance theatre. It is for this reason that indigenous Ghanaian dance types are seen in the production. In detail, various Ghanaian dances that give meaning to the political themes of the piece were carefully selected and re-

¹¹⁷ This information was gathered during an interview with the choreographer of the dance piece at the School of Performing Arts, at the University of Ghana, Legon. The discussion was held on the 13th of March, 2015.

contextualized to give meaning. During the performance, dances including Agbekor,¹¹⁸ Fontomfrom,¹¹⁹ Damba-Takai,¹²⁰ and Akom¹²¹ are seen in the choreography. It is for this reason that at the beginning of the performance the Agbekor dance is performed by all dancers on stage to depict the resistance Europe faced in its quest to colonise Africa. The Agbekor dance by description is a war-dance of resistance that is performed by the people of Anlo during their annual Hogbetsoto festival in remembrance of their great trek from *Notse*.¹²² Hence, the choreographer used indigenous dances based on their context and meaning.

Through this research, it was disclosed, that section of the performance evolved during the choreographic process, and it was for this reason that the final script for the production was written after the piece had been finally choreographed.¹²³ Significantly, he allowed co-contributors an opportunity to apply their personal philosophy and expertise that had meaning to the concept and themes of the production.

3.1.3 Intimate Discussion with the Scenic Designer: David Tawiah Akushey Amoo¹²⁴ in Perspective

Born into a notable family of dancers, priests, and drummers; David T.A. Amoo happened to have been immersed into the arts from an early age in life, by witnessing and

¹¹⁸ *Agbekor* is a war dance among the Anlo Ewes of Southern Volta in Ghana. The dance depicts battle scenes which have their origin in combat experience the Anlo Ewes went through whilst trekking from Dahomey.

¹¹⁹ *Fontomfrom* is a series of warrior dances which form a suite. It is a suite for showing prowess as a valiant fighter, and has symbolic gestures that depict combat motifs. It is usually performed mostly by the Akans, Gas, and Ewes.

¹²⁰ *Damba-Takai* is a festive/ceremonial dance among the *Dagombas* of Northern Ghana. It is performed in honour of the *Holy Prophet of Allah*, during celebration of his birth day.

¹²¹ Akom is a ritual dance associated with the most tribal groups in Ghana.

¹²² Notse according to earlier scholars including Pascal Y. Younge and William Adinku, can be found in present day republic of Togo.

¹²³ This information was gathered during an interview with the choreographer of the dance piece at the School of Performing Arts, at the University of Ghana, Legon. The discussion was held on the 13th of March, 2015.

¹²⁴ He is responsible for designing and construction of varied scenic developments for the *Asipim* dance production. He has worked with the company for more than two decades, and has many awards to his credit.

participating in *Ga*¹²⁵ traditional music and dance performances involving members of his extended family during communal and family engagements. Notable amongst his role models were the distinguished *Mustapha Tetteh Addy*,¹²⁶ *Obo Addy*¹²⁷ and *Yakubu Addy*¹²⁸ who extensively toured and performed in the United States and Germany in the late 1980's.

At the University of Ghana where he was tutored, David claims to have been inspired to greatness by ace author and director Mohammed Bin Abdallah¹²⁹; who gave him an opportunity to feature in his plays due to his proficiency in drumming, dancing and acting. After successful completion of his academic work, he was then officially invited by Francis Nii-Yartey to join the Ghana Dance Ensemble in 1986. After working with the company for two years, he was elevated to the position of Stage Manager due to his relentless dedication to the company.

During his active days with the company, David claimed that he was particularly empowered by his colleagues and the entire membership of the company, in attaining an incredible recognition in the area of scenic design and construction. Over the years, he has designed and constructed scenery for dance productions including *Nkulukuulu*, *The King's Dilemma*, *Obaapa*, etc.. which were staged and performed by the Ghana Dance Ensemble at the National Theatre in Accra.

In designing and constructing scenery for *Asipim*, the designer asserts that there was a prior meeting that involved all technical personnel of the company. During this meeting,

¹²⁵ People of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, who are the indigenes of this particular area. The Ga people are basically located along the coastal area of Ghana, stretching precisely from Accra to Tema. The Ga people comprise of groups like *Teshie*, *Labadi*, *Tema*, *Nungua*, *Osu*, etc...

¹²⁶ Who is an uncle of David T. A. Amoo, my respondent.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ The author of famous plays like *The Trial of Mallam Illiah*, and *the Song of a Pharaoh*. He was a lecturer at the School of Performing Arts, in Legon with the Drama Department. He happens to be one of the choreographer's mentors.

the choreographer Francis Nii-Yartey charged him to develop scenery which is characteristic of African countries, south of the Sahara. In this regard, the designer's constructions were to emphasise an indigenous political ambience that is identifiable to the Ghanaian situation. He further claimed to have borrowed ideas from other countries including South Africa, and the Central Africa republic in developing scenery and props. This means that scenic and properties developments for *Asipim* are a fusion of ideas from different African countries. He further noted that the scenic units were constructed with caution on its portability. Since the production was scheduled to be staged in the United States after it was premiered in Ghana; care was taken in constructing lighter units of scenery which could be carried easily.

Scenic development for the *Asipim* dance production is regarded by the scenic designer as *hybrid*, since it involves artistic considerations from other African countries. The introduction of high pillars as part of scenery for a palace scene is adopted from neighbouring Nigeria; according to the designer. Since the philosophy of the production is focused on commenting on political issues in Africa as a whole, there was the need to establish scenery that depicted infrastructural constructions of other African countries. Hence, the construction and use of high pillars further emphasizes the posturing (attitude) of King Agor as an intolerant African ruler who believes he is above the law.

The designer disclosed that there is a relationship between characters in the production and impression created by scenic developments for the piece. An example of these scenic creations is *high platforms and risers* on which the character *King Agor* climbs back and forth in expressing his authority over his subjects. Thus, through these stage risers on which *King Agor* climbs; the audiences are able to identify the behavioural traits of the King as a self-conceited and authoritative leader who disregards the opinions of his subjects.

During the construction of stage units, materials including *plywood, white glue, grey-baft,* and *polystyrene* were employed. Constructions of stage units for *Asipim*, according to the scenic designer were done in parts. Backdrops, pillars, circular golden balls, risers, platforms and a polystyrene based African map was constructed in parts and mounted together as a complete unit. By categorization, scenic creations basically comprised of *an inner palace scene, an outer palace scene, a durbar scene and a shrine scene.*

3.1.4 Interview with the Lighting Desinger: Personal Testimonies of George

Kartey¹³⁰

George Kartey asserts that he was appointed as a tutor at the University of Ghana in the late 1980's where he was charged with teaching students basic rudiments of lighting and its application in the theatre. Prior to this period, he claimed to have been working at the Art Centre in Accra as a Lighting Technician from 1978. By virtue of his experience and expertise within the group, he travelled with the Dance Company for the first time to Germany in 1988, while in Legon. Through this exposure, my respondent claimed to have gathered enough insight regarding the fundamental processes, and techniques involved in providing quality stage lighting.

At the *East Bay Centre for the Performing Arts*,¹³¹ where the *Asipim* dance production was staged in the *United States*; George emphatically claimed to have been the first African to have ever operated an existent Lighting Operation System within that particular theatre. He further asserts to have worked extensively with the choreographer Francis Nii-Yartey; as light designer for a number of choreographed dance pieces including *Musu, Atamga,*

¹³⁰ Since 1986, George has been involved in the art. During his early days at the Art Centre in Accra, and also after he moved to University of Ghana in 1984 as a resource person; he has being designing and setting up lights for numerous stage performances within Ghanaian Art circles. He is most at times highly recommended by various directors as a reliable repository of wisdom when it comes to lighting theatrical presentations.

¹³¹ This can be found in the city of California, in the United States.

The Legend of Okoryoo, Asipim, etc... which he impacted positively by creating an ambiances through his employment of appropriate stage lights.

He diligently claimed, that in fashioning-out the choreographer's choices of light; artistic consent was sought from the choreographer Francis Nii-Yartey, as well as his three collaborators, including C.K. Ladzekpo from Ghana, Sano Kemoko from Guinea and Malonga Casquelourd from Congo. These distinguished artistes infused their cultural perspectives and experiences in line with the themes of *Asipim*.

During our discussion, he made it known to me that his choice of lighting gels for *Asipim* were primarily in correspondence with Ghanaian traditional impression (perception) of categorizing various colours. Thus, in accordance with his choice of colours for *Asipim*, my respondent claimed to have relied strongly on acceptable traditional preferences governing the selection and usage of colours in our indigenous Ghanaian setting. During the performance, *Ate* is arrested by the king's guards and placed under custody. The colours red and blue are employed to stress on the mood of the situation. The use of the colour red in the prison yard where *Ate* is confined is meant to give a deep impression of a state of captivity which *Ate* found himself. Subsequently, the colour blue is used to grant aesthetic relevance to the dark era that characterized the ambience of the production. This asserts, that various corresponding colours of traditional import were selected and employed based on the themes of each scene.

3.1.5 Abubakar Salifu Meirigah's¹³² Personal Account Regarding the Conception and Birth of Asipim

Abubakar Salifu Meirigah is currently the oldest serving male member of the National Dance Company of Ghana. Since joining the company in 1979, he claimed to have been introduced to the arts by an elderly brother, who happened to be a colleague of the choreographer Francis Nii-Yartey.

As stated in the discussion, the above respondent opined, that upon joining the Ghana Dance Ensemble, he found an attitude in likeness with that of the choreographer who he deems as his role model. He agrees that the choreographer has an in-built sense for credible innovation, which usually characterizes his relentless surge for quality during his creations.

My respondent noted,¹³³ that the choreographer and his three other co-choreographers¹³⁴ ascribed to experimenting and developing dance movements motifs based on their indigenous traditional dance orientations. Thus, within the *Asipim* dance production, a myriad of movements and gestures emanating from four different cultural backgrounds¹³⁵ were carefully fused in creating an artistic tapestry that culminates into *Asipim*. In developing his character as *Chief Priest* in *Asipim*, Merigah confessed, that he understudied a chief priest in Accra, who tutored him through selected dance movements associated with *Akom*¹³⁶ dance.

¹³² He is a respondent from whom I gathered enough data. He performed the role of Priest within the *Asipim* dance production. As the eldest amongst male dancers within the company, he has travel extensively both home and abroad with the company. He happened to have joined the company in the late 1979.

¹³³ In a discussion with him on the 24th of January, 2015. This took place at the Dance Department of the School of Performing Arts, Legon.

¹³⁴ Including Prof. C.K.Ladzekpo (*University of California at Berkeley*) together with Kemoko Sano (*Ballet Merveilles de Guinea*) and Malongo Casquelourd (*Fua Dua de Congo*).

¹³⁵ Involving Ghanaian, Congolese, Guinean and ‘‘Ghanaian-American’’ inspired collaborations.

¹³⁶ *Akom* is a ritual dance associated with the most tribal groups in Ghana.

Thematically, the *Asipim* dance production according to my respondent¹³⁷ represents a clear reflection in dramatic instances of the cruelty, authoritativeness, as well as dubious schemes associated with evil machinations of political office aspirants. My respondent believes that the *Asipim* dance production further seeks to comment on the autocratic position taking by political leader both within Africa and the International fronts.

He is also of the view, that in achieving quality in terms of movement performance, the choreographer to some extent allowed dancers the opportunity to develop movement motifs based on their personal conception in line with the story line of the production. This means, that even though the final authority with regards to movement selection was the sole prerogative of the choreographer the dancers to some extent were allowed to develop their own set of movement that had didactic correlation with the purpose and theme of *Asipim*. This invariably means that casting of roles for the production was both prescriptive and optional.

My respondent attested that rehearsals were held early in the mornings. Also, all technical aspects including light, sound, scenery, as well as props; were diligently employed during rehearsal schedule to allow the performers' the opportunity to wholly acquaint themselves with all requisite facets of the production.

3.1.6 The Choreographer as an Africanist: Caroline Yeme¹³⁸ and Tahiru

Mohammed¹³⁹ in perspective

Caroline believes that the choreographer seems to have been inspired by identifiable institutions of indigenous Ghanaian political system such as chieftaincy, which finds

¹³⁷ This is in reference to my respondent, Abubakar Salifu Merigah.

¹³⁸ She played the role of queen within *Asipim*. She also happens to be the mother of twins sons (Oko and Ate). She made this submission on the 8th of January, 2015.

¹³⁹ One of my respondents who performed in the *Asipim*. He issued this statement on the 6th of January, 2015.

expression in our current political dispensation, based on an established democratic system since 1957. In as much as Democracy is grounded on some laid down structures¹⁴⁰ Caroline believes that long before the arrival of Europeans, our indigenous Ghanaian political frameworks provided for legitimacy and tactfulness in terms of community leadership.

She further accepts that under the code of chieftaincy, royal families were recognized by some identifiable totems and artifacts that distinguished royalty from subjects. What Caroline meant was that, as a proof of traditional authority in the case of most Ghanaian communities, specially crafted regalia served as showcase of power. Caroline in this regard claims that political legitimacy happens to be one of the many themes evident in *Asipim*. This is seen in *Asipim*, when after a power struggle between King Agor¹⁴¹ and Ataa Din¹⁴² at the beginning of the *Asipim* piece, the stage floor is left virtually empty with sole emphasis on a fallen necklace¹⁴³ from the neck of Ataa Din; discarded after a power struggle with Agor.¹⁴⁴

Stressing more on the concept of Africanism within the piece, Caroline further asserts, that a critical assessment of the dance *Asipim* reveals specific behavioral traits that characterize some spectrum of community life in Ghana, which extends as far as placing value on the concept of traditional or indigenous medical knowledge.

She opined that long before the advent of a western approach to prenatal monitoring of pregnant females in pre-independent Ghana, the traditional prenatal system by most indigenous medical practitioners in the country devised some clinical methods through

¹⁴⁰ For instance, the practice of undertaking elections in democratic countries.

¹⁴¹ The unrightful heir to the *Asipim* throne.

¹⁴² The legitimate heir to the *Asipim* throne.

¹⁴³ This is made of cowries. It represents the legacy of Ataa Din's dynasty.

¹⁴⁴ One of the lead characters in *Asipim* dance production. Agor happens to be king. He is the usurper of the throne, who forcefully and illegitimately occupies the seat of leadership.

which expectant mothers could be assessed, and even shown the sex to which their unborn babies belonged. Thus, by merely observing the shape of an expectant mother's¹⁴⁵ pregnancy, our ancestors were able to identify the nature¹⁴⁶ and content¹⁴⁷ of an expectant mothers' pregnancy. This attest that even though the choreographer was largely focused on throwing light on topical political issues that militate against progressive political dispensation, emphasis was also placed on shedding light on indigenous knowledge that characterized pre-colonial Ghanaian societies.

Another respondent by name Tahiru Mohammed¹⁴⁸ agrees that the dance piece *Asipim* has some major resemblance or likeness to our chieftaincy system, and its attendant quarrels and litigations. Tahiru¹⁴⁹ believes that the choreographer might have been inspired by Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame*¹⁵⁰ which unveils similar dramatic happenings in relation to *Asipim*. This is vivid in a power struggle between King Agor and Oko¹⁵¹ over the rightful ownership of the *Asipim* stool which the choreographer tactfully employs.

It has to be reiterated, that even though the production stands basically as a dance performance, the choreographer used other artistic African theatrical elements¹⁵² in communicating his themes to the audiences.

¹⁴⁵ Expectant mothers who lived in the era before colonial rule.

¹⁴⁶ Whether the baby would be male or female.

¹⁴⁷ Whether the pregnancy is made up of twins, or a single baby.

¹⁴⁸ A male dancer who performed in the *Asipim* dance production.

¹⁴⁹ A male dancer who performed in the *Asipim* dance production.

¹⁵⁰ A play written by Ola Rotimi, and set in an African situation.

¹⁵¹ The eldest of the twin sons of Awo Din, who fell in love and later, married King Agor's only daughter, Tetele.

¹⁵² These would include the use of mimes, chants, songs, poetry, local knowledge through practices, etc.

3.1.7 Personal Discussions with Alidu Alhassan¹⁵³ and Isaac Kwesi Ansah Owusu¹⁵⁴:

At Labadi and the National Theatre Respectively

i. Discussion with Alidu Alhassan at Labadi-

Since joining the company in 1997, Alidu Alhassan¹⁵⁵ has developed steadily with experience and discipline into a senior male dancer who commands respect amongst members of the company. This reverence granted him owes credit to long years of dedication and hard work not only in his accomplishment as a prolific performer with the group, but also with his involvement in some specific technical aspect¹⁵⁶ for the company.

In voicing out his general perspectives on *Asipim*, Alidu Alhassan stated that:

Asipim is a direct reference of real-life happening and events common among people, especially with political figures across the country. He claims that *Asipim* speaks on the issue of greediness. Thus, what one doesn't deserve, is what one forces to acquire; and once this precedence is set, the end results becomes miserable. But in the long run, legitimate owners would eventually take over what belongs to them.¹⁵⁷

In commenting on the issue of casting for this particular production, my respondent disclosed, that roles or characters were chosen on a dual approach. Thus, even though some lead roles were selected and chosen for; by the choreographer, options for other supporting characters were picked-up by the dancers themselves, based on their standard of competence and delivery during rehearsals. In effect, this means that storylines were

¹⁵³ One of my respondents who participated in the *Asipim* dance production.

¹⁵⁴ One of my respondents who participated in the *Asipim* dance production.

¹⁵⁵ His first encounter with the company was in 1996. Even though he wasn't officially part of the company, he got the opportunity of training with the group on several occasions. He was allowed to train as part of the cast for Musu, a choreographed dance piece by the same choreographer; which revisited events that characterised the days of Danish participation in the Trans-Saharan slave trade from the third quarter of 16th Century to the early periods of 18th Century. In 1997, an audition was held for him by David Tawiah Akushey Amoo, who happened to be the stage manager at that time. He also claims to be involved in the designing and construction of costume for both Musu and *Asipim* dance productions.

¹⁵⁶ He is mostly involved in the construction of leather works and costumes for many production staged by the company. He was charged to produce some leather costumed for the staging of *Asipim* dance production. He further disclosed that he was introduced into the arts by his mother, as a means to ward off his timid behaviour; which had characterised him since infancy.

¹⁵⁷ This information was granted during an interview with the performer on the 26th January, 2015 in his residence at Labadi; a suburb of Accra.

provided by the choreographers; upon which dancers were supposed to develop their characters. Alidu Alhassan reiterated that the creative process during *Asipim* involved collaborative efforts from the creators' and performers' of *Asipim*. He again opined, that dance productions involving the choreographer Francis Nii-Yartey, scenic designer David T.A. Amoo, costume designer Grace Djabatay, as well as Light Director George Kartey always received a high patronage of teeming audiences; who troop to the National Theatre in search of psychological, and emotional relief.

My respondent was also of the view, that in as much as the *Asipim* piece is built on a purpose of audience theatrical appeal, he¹⁵⁸ believes that much concentration was given to thematic concerns that criticized ailing political attitudes of some African leaders of the past and current regimes. He cited a thematic concern as saying that one has to “give to Caesar what is due Caesar”.

In a final submission, my respondent asserted, that rehearsals for the *Asipim* piece involved several hours of training and development of individual characters, movements and gestures. This involved a fusion of abstract and indigenous Ghanaian traditional dance movements, alongside selected movement motifs from some notable francophone countries including Congo and Guinea.

ii. Short discussion with Isaac Kwesi Ansah Owusu at the National Theatre in Accra-Born in Gomoa Feteh¹⁵⁹, the above respondent has since 2001 made waves with the Ghana Dance Ensemble both locally and across the globe. My respondent was of the view that the *Asipim* piece is meant to portray envious behaviours associated with most political

¹⁵⁸ This is in reference to my respondent Alidu Alhassan. The interview was granted on the 26th of January, 2015 at Labadi.

¹⁵⁹ Is situated in the Central Region of Ghana. The Republic of Ghana is divided into ten different regions, with regional capitals.

personalities. This piece, he stated, inculcates a restructuring and development of motif movements' from across varied Ghanaian dance performance backgrounds. .

He disclosed that the choreographer adopted a more participatory approach during his creation, with the aim of charging his performers to be participative, whilst contemplating on thematic concerns embedded within *Asipim*. Isaac categorically stated that Agor happened to be a servant with the royal household, before he cruelly annexed the throne of power. He believes that this portion of the piece has some resemblance to pre-colonial and colonial African-European relations.

What my respondent meant was that, after European settlement on the African region, they sought to take absolute control of the life and destiny of its inhabitants. Over time, they took outright control of the lives of the people by replacing African values, ethics, and practices with foreign values and conceptions. The end result was centuries of slavery, poverty, disrespect and unforgettable tribulation in the lives of Africans. Thus, by my respondents' submission, there is a great deal of likeness with regards to European's emergence in Africa, and the harm inflicted on Africans of the centuries.

3.1.8 Time with a Prolific Drummer: Alphonse Kumla Ahumani's¹⁶⁰ Perspective on Musical Composition for *Asipim* Dance Production

Alphonse discloses, that he hails from a town called *Avemeh Gorhmeh* which is closest to *Kpando* in the Volta Region of Ghana. Born in 1982, he claims to have been inspired into the performing arts by Mr. Johnson Kemeh,¹⁶¹ who formed the then famous Brotherhood

¹⁶⁰ He is currently the lead master drummer for the National Dance Company, Ghana Dance Ensemble. He has toured extensively with the group for more than a decade. With a credible background within the performing arts; Alphonse has grown over the years in mastering various musical forms that characterises divergent spectrum of Ghanaian performance societies.

¹⁶¹ A senior instructor with the Music Department, University of Ghana, Legon. He formed the Brotherhood Cultural troupe in the late 1980's where he trained most of the youth in most Ghanaian traditional dances. Most of his students are scattered round the world teaching and training individuals in the arts.

Cultural Troupe widely acknowledged and cherished throughout *Alajo*¹⁶² and its environs. As a product of such a noble performance group,¹⁶³ he believes to have found his rudiments in drumming at a much tender age. Upon his entry into the performing arts, Alphonse took to dancing instead of drumming, as he was directed by the director to dance.¹⁶⁴

Alphonse insists that he joined the Ghana Dance Ensemble in 2005, after series of involvements in numerous dance performances created and showcased by the choreographer Francis N. Yartey, and the Ghana Dance Ensemble.¹⁶⁵ Alphonse accepts that theatrical dance performance in Ghana has over the years attracted an increasing share of recognition and appreciation through the hard work of Professor Francis Nii-Yartey.

My respondent claims that *Asipim* is built on an artistic educative purpose. Thus, mannerisms and actions associated with political aspirants and office holders are depicted in the dance piece. The choreography in regard re-enacted identifiable issues of greediness and cruelty amongst politicians, through movement dramatization on a Ghanaian theatrical stage.

Alphonse opined that the musical ensemble for *Asipim*, witnessed an application of diverse musical forms from across the length and breadth of Ghana. He further said that since traditional dances embedded in the *Asipim* performance determined the kind of musical types played, musical compilation for the production was easily achieved. Apart from traditional musical forms employed, my respondent also mentioned that a myriad of recorded rhythms was also infused into the musical compilation for the entire production.

¹⁶² A suburb of Accra, in the capital of the Republic of Ghana.

¹⁶³ BrotherHood Cultural Troupe at Alajo. It was formed by Johnson Kemeh.

¹⁶⁴ A personal submission I need to disclose, because I was in the same group at that particular time with him. I have known Alphonse for the past twenty six years.

¹⁶⁵ A notable example of such pieces is Musu- a theatrical dance piece concerning Danish involvement in the trans-Saharan slave trade.

3.2 Literary Source

Published works of distinguished Ghanaian scholars including William Ofotsu Adinku, J. H. K. Nketia, Pascal Yao Younge, and Kwame Gyekye were factored into discussions. These earlier scholar, with specific reference to Adinku and Nketia have written extensively on Ghanaian dance, and the place of the Ghana Dance Ensemble in dance education. Scholarly documents of these individuals were consulted for a broader understanding of the origin, purpose and prospects of the National Dance Company, both as an academic and educational institution. Similarly, documentation by the famous Kwame Gyekye and Bame was equally factored in this study to shed perspective on issues of ethics, embedded in dramatic forms which includes dance. Hence, since this thesis is geared towards citizen sensitization, there was the need to deliberate on ethics as an important ingredient towards moral uprightness.

The Cultural Policy of Ghana was also cited in buttressing various points raised in this documentation. Since the Cultural Policy of Ghana is the most credible document that streamlines artistic and creative ventures within the country, portions of it that stipulates the code of operations of the National Dance Company were highlighted as guiding principles for this research.

Publications by Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of the Republic of Ghana were also cited. Nkrumah's documentation on *African Personality Consciousness* was resorted to as a principal publication in this thesis. In this publication, Nkrumah outlines the various component of the African personality that needs to be developed in other for a total transformation of the individual African. Personality Consciousness in this context refers to an overall awareness by the individual African that he/she is an indispensable part in the developmental process of his society.

3.3 Internet or On-line Sources

Research work within any field of study is conducted on the basis of an existing problem. Such problems, for which investigations are carried out are equally matched in magnitude by similar publications that comment on a related topic, and for which various submissions by earlier researchers have been given. In view of this, there are related topics with similar interest that have been made available via internet. These literary sources, for the purpose of this research, grant perspectives on relevant contributions and insights surrounding a particular field of interest.

The internet as a medium to information in today's diversified world can be seen as a technological forum which provides easier (convenient) access to scholar publications on numerous fields of study within academia. In the case of this documentation, supporting theories and submissions relating to dance practices, politics and theatre was sourced from authentic internet sites preferably from *JStor.com* and *Googlescholar.com*.¹⁶⁶

Published works of known scholars including Alexander Kolb, Paul Schauert, Katharina Schramm, Yonca Altindal, Katharina Schramm, Deidre Sklar and Susan A. Reed was employed in deliberating on substantive issues in relation to this thesis. These scholarly submissions, buttressed my claims by giving detailed understanding of the practicality of dance as a channel for political sensitisation and education. Hence, through the above publications, there is juxtaposition of foreign perspectives on dance theatre and its practices across the globe with the "Ghanaian situation that allowed for ethnological comparison in clarifying further how perceptions may be differently shaped in different cultural circumstances."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ During a seminar presentation at the School of Performing Arts, Dr. Samuel Benagr, a lecturer of the school prescribed that all students should access the above internet sources for credible publications and articles relating to their research. This seminar was held on the 14th of October, 2014. According to him, these sites host an appreciable number of related articles, literary books and journals on a wide array of research subject/areas from notable and distinguished scholars across the globe.

¹⁶⁷ Bull, Cohen. J. C. (1997) "Sense, Meaning, and Perception in Three Dance Cultures" Meaning in Motion (p. 278) Ed. Jane C. Desmond. Durham & London, Duke University Press.

3.4 Assessment and Interpretation of *Asipim* Video Recording

Video is increasingly used in broad areas of research throughout the social sciences.¹⁶⁸ It allows for a rich recording of social processes and provides a completely new kind of data.¹⁶⁹ In order to gain a clearer understanding of the entire piece, there was the need for a careful analysis of video recording of the production. Thus, since data was sourced from participants (both cast and crew) personal testimonies with divergent submissions, there was the need for me to undertake a personal and detailed enquiry into the performance by assessing video coverage of the performance. Thus, through an official approach, initial permission was first sought from the choreographer concerning my intention to gain access of his artistic work. In this direction, a drafted letter was sent to the choreographer on the 14th of January, 2015 to solicit his consent regarding my intent to assess audio-visual recording of the production.

One of my respondents reiterated that the benefit of undertaking visual analysis in any research lies in the quality of commentary which such sources give as a complement to other research mediums including document and internet sources. Video recordings of theatrical presentations exist as captured proof of successful artistic accomplishments that speaks on the nature and appeal of a particular piece. It is worth reiterating, that even though video recording of the *Asipim* dance performance is strictly secluded from public reach on the basis of copyright regulations, I was granted a copy of the *Asipim* video recording with approval from the Artistic Director.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ BMS: Bulletin of Sociological Methodology. (2009) VIDEO ANALYSIS: METHODOLOGY & METHODS (p. 79) Accessed: 20-10-2015 21:42 UTC <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23931701>

¹⁶⁹ BMS: Bulletin of Sociological Methodology. (2009) VIDEO ANALYSIS: METHODOLOGY & METHODS (p. 79) Accessed: 20-10-2015 21:42 UTC <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23931701>

¹⁷⁰ Nii-Tete Yartey is the current Artistic Director of the National Dance Company. He is a young and upcoming choreographer who has a lot to achieve with such a dynamic group. This video was made available to me on the 14th January, 2014, at the National Theatre in Accra.

Even though I had the opportunity of witnessing the company perform the *Asipim* dance piece at the national theatre in 2010 it is worth reiterating that video recordings of theatrical productions serve as concrete evidence and a reminder of the actual performance proceedings experienced by the audience. Recorded visuals of the *Asipim* production in this regard, served as point of reference upon which I verified (cross-checked) various submission granted by my respondents.

In achieving this, I obtained a copy of *Asipim* video recording from the archival section of the National Dance Company of Ghana with the aid of the choreographer Francis Nii-Yartey. After obtaining the video, I carefully analysed the performance with the aid of choreographer, scenic designer, lighting designer, and a few selected members who formed the cast for the production.

After series of video scrutiny, I collated and analysed visual impression of the production with data collected from interviews. Through this approach, various theatrical elements that characterised the presentation were clearly established. Apart from studying the actual movements, gestures and mannerisms employed in the choreographing and structuring the piece, there was an extensive analysis of other theatrical elements components which culminated in the successful staging of the production. It also provided an appropriate platform upon which I was able to decipher and assess distinctive contribution of various artistic facets that characterised the performance. Schnettler & Raab (2009) are of the view that such an endeavour “encompasses sequentiality, complexity and naturalness of video graphic data, and extends to the respective methodological challenges for transcription, analysis and presentation of results.”¹⁷¹ The import of resorting to video analysis as a means of data collection for this research is entrenched in its effectiveness to induce

¹⁷¹Schnettler, B. & Raab, J. (2009) Interpretative Visual Analysis Developments: State of the Art and Pending Problems (p. 265) Accessed: 20-10-2015 21:43 UTC <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20762366>

appropriate value judgment regarding a particular production. Value judgment on artistic dance creations shed relevant perspective on structural arrangement of movements and thematic concerns underlining the creation of the piece.

Furthermore, video recordings of the performance served as an account of events that unfolded chronologically in view of the choreographer's choice of movement selection. Since the basic medium of communication in Ghanaian dances deals with selected movement (which make up a particular dance) employed within particular context, video recordings of the performance allowed me an opportunity to juxtapose (for clearer understanding) various movements employed and their relation to the theme of the piece. In view of this, the recording became the only substantive means of ascertaining audience participation and reaction during the performance. Since this research deals with enhancing dance theatre as a medium for political and national development, there was the need to critically evaluate such sources as a means to evaluate performer audience relation during the performance.

More importantly, the availability of visual recording of the production existed as *back-up* to submissions given by my respondents during my interviews. Hence, there were instances when the video recording of the performance had to be played for the respondents as a reminder of various sections of the performance which had escaped them.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHOREOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE ASIPIM DANCE PRODUCTION

4.0 Introduction

This portion of the documentation tackles in totality the various performance components' of the *Asipim* dance theatre production as presented by the National Dance Company of Ghana in Accra at the National Theatre of Ghana. There is a vivid account of the entire production, which gives clear commentary on various elements which speaks on the efficiency of dance as a political medium in commenting on political issues towards unity and development. In totality, a general account is given on the various characters involved in *Asipim* theatrical dance presentation and their relation within the political sphere of Ghanaian politics.

Information given in description of *the performance* was disclosed to me during the period of the research. This specifically involved a written account of the choreographer's personal description and structuring of the entire performance. Subsequently, enough data was also gathered from the scenic designer, lighting set-up, and various resource persons involved in the creation of the production. From these substantive sources, the philosophical representation and meanings of various characters, and their relation within political discourse are identified for clearer understanding of the varied political themes underlining the production.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Apart from personal testimonies from both cast and crew of the production, the National Dance Company of Ghana at the National Theatre in Accra served as major point from which enormous data is sourced in analysing the entire production. From the National Dance Company of Ghana, enough data was gathered in understanding the various choreographic components of the performance. This was necessary because of the undeniable contributions from various theatrical units which culminated in the realisation of the production. The philosophical meaning of the various theatrical components is given as additions commentary on the political.

4.1 A Detailed Description of the Entire Asipim Dance Performance

Scene One (1) -Journey unto an Unbefitting Power

The Asipim Dance Production commences with a Poetry Recital by Professor Kofi Anyidoho¹⁷³:

The Drums guide our feet, in this forwards-backwards dance.

This Husago dance. This Misego Dance.

This Dance into a Future, that ends in the Past.

Two steps forward to where Hope rises like Rainbows.

One step backwards, to where Sorrow falls like Storm.

And Africa leans against the Winds

Africa leans against the Future

Like a tired Warrior from History's Battlefields.

Husago Husago Husago

Husago Husago Husago

Husago Husago

Husago Husago Husago

Husago KinDin Husago

Husago Husago

Misego Misego Misego

Misego GonGon Misego

Misego Misego

Husago Husago Husago

¹⁷³ A Professor of the English Department of the University of Ghana, Legon, which is situated in Accra. He is a well-known poet who gives a poetry recital to begin the performance. He grants commentary on the purposes behind the creation of the *Asipim* piece. He laments the political past of African hardship and slavery, whilst indicating the prevalence remnants of these concerns in the 21st Century African politics.

Husago KinDin Husago

Come with me across the birth of Time

Come with me to the Old garden, where seeds of Time were nursed to Life.

Husago Husago

Misego Misego Misego

Misego GonGon Misego

Time was born on laps of sound

And time was troubled with loneliness

But silence came and put time to shame

And time rose in rebellion against sound

And clash of time and sound became thunder

Husago Husago

Misego Misego Misego

Misego GonDon Misego

And thunder gave birth to anger

And anger rose in rebellion against silence

But patience came and put anger to shame

Silence became such boredom to time and sound

And time and sound pushed and pulled each other's pulse

Again they pulled and pushed and hit and beat

Till order came and put them both to shame.

And so the union of time and sound gave birth to Silence

And Silence gave birth to Rhythm

And Rhythm gave birth to Pleasure

And Pleasure gave birth to Life

And Life gave birth to Death

And Death gave birth to Dance

And Dance became Journeys into Ancestral time....

Husago Husago

Misego Misego Misego

Misego GonGon Misego

Misego GoGonGoGon Misego!!!

The Performance Commences:

Performers maintain steady posture on stage, while holding unto a *polystyrene-based African Map*¹⁷⁴ at Upstage position.

With the Throne of Africa positioned at down stage left, the rightful heir to the Throne, Ataa Din, enters from upstage right passing behind the African map. Ataa Din performs selected movement from *Agbekor dance*¹⁷⁵ as he moves to take a backstage right position. Agor enters from down stage left to challenge Ataa Din to the Throne of Power.

Intense fighting occurs between Ataa Din and Agor. The encounter is characterised by a show of spiritual prowess from both parties. Agor succeeds in defeating Ataa Din. Awo Din pleads sorrowfully with Agor to spare the life of Ataa Din, after entering abruptly to witness a crawling husband. This happens as Awo Din is in her advanced stage of pregnancy.

Awo Din slowly escorts a limping husband offstage, as Agor struggles to take possession of a necklace¹⁷⁶ that has fallen during a confrontation with Atta Din. After several failed

¹⁷⁴ The African Map was constructed out of polystyrene by the scenic designer. This information was sourced from the research himself, since he was part of Set and Props construction crew for *Asipim*.

¹⁷⁵ *Agbekor* is a war dance among the Anlo Ewes of Southern Volta in Ghana. The dance depicts battle scenes which have their origin in combat experience the Anlo Ewes went through whilst trekking from Dahomey.

¹⁷⁶ Made of Cowries. Cowries were used in the pre-colonial times as a credible means of payment.

attempts, Agor abandons the necklace and surges offstage carrying the Throne¹⁷⁷ in an unfulfilled demeanour.

An old man of wisdom enters the stage, in regret of the ensuing misunderstandings between the rightful heir, and a usurper to the Throne of Power. He¹⁷⁸ exits stage after picking up the necklace¹⁷⁹ that fell from Ataa Din.

With a sense of joyfulness, performers¹⁸⁰ executes *Fontomfrom*¹⁸¹ and *Agbekor*¹⁸² dance movements in a linear pattern, but scattered all over the stage. The performance is characterized by a lot of jumps, which occurs after an abrupt burst of the African map by both male and female dancers.

All performers seat in a circular formation, whilst singing and clapping loudly. This happens after Awo Din¹⁸³ enters stage abruptly to announce the death of her husband.¹⁸⁴ As she cries and mourns the death of her life partner, a town crier raises solemn songs that are responded to by the performers. Awo Din falls into labour, as singing is maximised. The men assist the womenfolk in carrying Awo Din in preparedness for delivery.

Cries of a baby are heard, as the *first twin male*¹⁸⁵ is born to Awo Din and the bereaved Ataa Din.¹⁸⁶ There is an increase in excitement by the populace, as the *second twin*¹⁸⁷ is

¹⁷⁷ The Throne of Africa. It represents the Throne of Power and a seat of challenge upon which some individuals would want to sacrifice serene communal life; for a threatening combination of mistrust, insecurity and disrespect that corrupts the human mind-set in catastrophe.

¹⁷⁸ The Wise old man.

¹⁷⁹ That had fallen from the neck of Ataa Din during a misunderstanding with Agor at the beginning of the piece.

¹⁸⁰ Both male and female dancers.

¹⁸¹ *Fontomfrom* is a series of warrior dances which form a suite. It is a suite for showing prowess as a valiant fighter, and has symbolic gestures that depict combat motifs. It is usually performed mostly by the Akans, Gas, and Ewes.

¹⁸² *Agbekor* is a war dance among the Anlo Ewes of Southern Volta in Ghana. The dance depicts battle scenes which have their origin in combat experience the Anlo Ewes went through whilst trekking from Dahomey.

¹⁸³ Awo Din is the mother of twin male boys (Okoko and Ate). She is also the wife of the rightful heir to the throne of Africa. Ataa Din is the rightful heir to the throne of Africa.

¹⁸⁴ Ataa Din is the rightful heir to the Throne of Africa. He is the husband of Awo Din, who happens to be the mother of two male twins (Okoko and Ate).

¹⁸⁵ Okoko is the first/elder of the twin males.

¹⁸⁶ The rightful heir to the Throne of Africa, and husband to Awo Din.

born. The town crier continually encourages Awo Din in her labor. He further performs the naming ceremony for the twins.

The old man of wisdom, who joins the celebrations uninvited, presents Amulets¹⁸⁸ to the twin male before they are carried offstage by Awo Din who is escorted by the womenfolk. The entire assemblage disperses just after Awo Din exits stage.

f. The Chief Priest leads an entourage¹⁸⁹ to a sacred grove to commence ritual purification for Agor. In accompaniment, a large metallic pan/bowl meant for the purification is carried unto the stage by an attendant to the Chief Priest, and placed centre stage. Three other attendants escort Agor unto stage. Agor is ordered by the Chief Priest to enter the metallic pan to begin his ritual cleansing. Agor intensely walks around on stage, before finally jumping into the metallic pan to cleanse himself.

After his installation as *King of Africa*, Agor exits stage with the Chief Priest. The metallic pan is carried by five attendants offstage, in a spiral movement form towards stage right. The Chief Priest enters stage for the second time with Agor, followed by two attendants who carry royal paraphernalia on to the stage.

Agor is made King. He moves unto the stage, in the company of six *Takai*¹⁹⁰ dancers who enter from stage right.

Scene Two (2) -Celebration and Protection of Attained Political Height

Celebration commences as the new King, Agor is ushered unto the Throne of Power, accompanied by the performance of *Kete*¹⁹¹ dance. Four female dancers from stage right

¹⁸⁷ Ate is younger of the twin males.

¹⁸⁸ Fallen from the neck of *Ataa Din*, during his confrontation with *Agor* at the commencement of the piece. *Ataa Din* is the rightful heir to the Throne of Africa, whilst *Agor* is the usurper of the Throne.

¹⁸⁹ Comprising the Chief Priest, Agor, and the chief priest's attendants.

¹⁹⁰ *Takai* is a dance performed by the *Dagombas* of Ghana. The *Dagombas* are basically situated in the Northern sector of Ghana. It is performed during the *Damba* festival, which is in celebration of birthday of the Prophet Muhammed.

and left, enter stage to pay respect to the King by performing a *Guinean* dance. In turn, eight male dancers also enter to perform the male version of the same dance. Both sexes take turn in performing together, after which female dancers sit on the hands of the males; held together in a circular file.¹⁹² Female dancers then get down from the hands of male dancers, before both finally exit from stage.

As a master drummer takes centre stage to play *Djembe* rhythms for the King, dancers move unto stage to continue performing.

Subsequently, *Gota*¹⁹³ dance takes prominence as the grown up twins¹⁹⁴ perform a duo. The excitement is heightened as Ate is seen performing solo, to Gota rhythms. His display is extremely exciting; to an extent that Princess Tetele is propelled to participate in the performance. She completely falls in love with Ate, after this intriguing display.

Agor sees Ate's behaviour as a means to seducing his only daughter. In reaction, King Agor descends from his Throne and orders the arrest and detention of Ate, as he sees praises and hailing of Ate by the town people as treacherous behaviour. King Agor disregards Awo Din's plea to forgive Ate. Rather the King orders the arrest of Ate. Awo Din is disturbed by this development.

In a related development, King Agor attempts to take hold of an amulet on Ate's neck; but Ate resists and pushes Agor away. Two royal guards protect the King from falling.

Two royal guards rush to the scene, and arrest Ate. Tetele, in turn, pleads with her father to pardon Ate. In refusal of this, her futile attempt threw her into a state of shock. She instantly loses her sense of reasoning, and becomes mentally unstable.

¹⁹¹ Adowa is a graceful dance that employs mostly the feet; in correspondence with rhythmic patterns. It is exclusive to the Asante court, a is performed mostly at state gatherings.

¹⁹² The circular formation moves in an anti-clockwise direction.

¹⁹³ Gota a social dance amongst the Anlo Ewes of Ghana. It is usually performed by the youth and is expressive of affection towards one's lover.

¹⁹⁴ Oko and Ate are twin male sons.

King Agor at this point expresses great interest¹⁹⁵ for Awo Din, even though Awo Din seems less interested. The entire populace desert the ceremonial arena; as most of them look surprised and disturbed at the entire scenario. King Agor casts a spell on Awo Din, before they both retire from the durbar ground.

Due to her condition, Princess Tetele goes about misbehaving in public. Tetele runs away at the sight of her father. The King then orders a search, as Tetele is captured by two guards.

Oko is alarmed and confused at the behaviour of her mother, as she looks overwhelmed by Agor's spiritual enchantment. Oko in retaliation; challenges King Agor for his attitude. Thus, he confronts the King to test the potency of his spiritual powers. King Agor proves too powerful for Oko. Oko then flees for his life.

Tetele continues with her weird demeanour in public, as she attacks the Wise Oldman and chase him away. King Agor confronts the Chief Priest to find remedy for his daughter's mental condition. An attempt to cure Tetele proves futile, as she escapes from the sacred shrine unattended to.

Spiritual power¹⁹⁶ is siphoned from Ate to King Agor, with the aid of a spiritualist. *Ritual dance*¹⁹⁷ is performed by attendants' of the priest. An amulet, which serves as a source of protection for Ate is maliciously annexed by King Agor. Ate is finally rendered powerless.

In order to express his displeasure towards King Agor's actions, Oko succeeds in massing up the youth to protest against the King's intent to banish Ate from the state. The *Asafo*¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ With the intent of making her his wife.

¹⁹⁶ In the Ghanaian society, twins are believed to possess special powers that protect them from spiritual attacks.

¹⁹⁷ These dances have their origin from *Akom* and *Tigari* dance types, which are associated specifically with the *Ga* people.

dance is performed by dancers at this point, and is correspondent to the affection the youth expresses in solidarity with Oko's plight.

Scene Three (3) -The Abdication of an Autocratic Political Leader

This section of the performance begins with a marriage scene between King Agor and Awo Din. Prior to the actual ceremony, dancers are seen on stage with pieces of white cloth which they *blow up and down in thin air* to signify the driving away of evil spirits. Four of these performers then place their cloths on the performance floor; and then exit afterwards.

Twelve young ladies then enter in groups of three with calabashes. They dance to rhythmic patterns from xylophone, whilst they move unto stage to perform *Nmani*¹⁹⁹ dance. After several rounds of movements to xylophone rhythm, the young ladies then pour down *wood ash* from their calabashes, simultaneously unto the white clothes. They then go ahead to perform *Nmani* music.

King Agor and Awo Din move unto stage, escorted by their royal entourage. To grace the occasion, performances involving *Tora*,²⁰⁰ *Jera*,²⁰¹ and *Atsea*²⁰² dances are performed in succession.

¹⁹⁸ According Pascal Yao Younge in page (173) his book *Music and Dance Traditions of Ghana*, states that Warrior dance-drumming activities are associated with *Asafo*, groups that are closely associated with court of chiefs. The *Asafo* group were traditionally regarded as the defenders or the protectors of the community. They defended the state during aggression; and basically form the ranks of most armies in pre-colonial Ghana. The *Asafo* dance is performed mostly with the use of the feet and arms.

¹⁹⁹ A calabash dance and musical ensemble from Northern Ghana. It is mostly performed at social gatherings and at weddings.

²⁰⁰ *Tora* is the female version of the *Takai* dance, among the Northern people of Ghana. *Takai* is performed during the *Damba* festival in celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammed.

²⁰¹ *Jera* according to Pascal Yao Younge in his book titled *Music and Dance Traditional of Ghana*, is described as a ritual dance performed before and after hunting expeditions. It is specifically performed by *Dagbambas*.

²⁰² *Atsea* is usually performed in groups in accordance with sex. The dance is performed among the *Ewes* as a means to bringing the youth together.

After Awo Din and King Agor are united by the Chief Priest, Ate and his accomplices then enter stage to disrupt proceedings. King Agor immediately reacts by casting spiritual incantations over Ate's followers. Fighting then ensues between Ate and King Agor. King Agor eventually overrides Ate, and further orders his arrest and execution. Awo Din, in the company of the womenfolk confronts the King to plead for Ate's release. King Agor ignores the plea, and this angers the entire populace. The womenfolk express their displeasure, as they fearlessly confront the king.

Princess Tetele unexpectedly enters stage and disrupts the entire ceremony. In effect, she causes hysterical pandemonium and destroys everything in her path. Tetele also mistakes Oko for Ate, as she chases him all over the stage²⁰³ leading to a messy and chaotic scene.

In granting reflection on the above incident, Professor Kofi Anyidoho²⁰⁴ once again continues his poetry recital:

And the garbage mounts upon our land.

Between the Wind and the Palm

The garbage grows upon our sacred groves.

Piles and piles of fallen Royal leaves.

And the Future grows anxious and tired.

Waiting, still waiting for the Dawn.

Who will sweep the pile of fallen leaves?

After Royal Pride is stripped of stolen amulets

Who will sweep the pile of fallen leaves?

²⁰³ Because of her mental impairment, she isn't able to recollect anyone. She is not in her right state of mind.

²⁰⁴ A Professor with the English Department of the University of Ghana, Legon in Accra. He recites poetry to begin the performance, whilst granting commentary and placing emphasis on the purpose behind the creation of *Asipim* piece. The poetry also has some correlation in meaning, to the thematic concerns of *Asipim*.

King Agor relents, having realised the extent of damage caused by fear and greed towards his people, his daughter, himself, and the entire people of Africa. The King then overturns his spell on Awo Din, and also orders the return of Ate from exile.

The poetry recital finally ends as saying:

*Agor, the Royal Palm complains he does not know
Why the world is angry.
Angry because he the Royal Palm talks too much?
But does the world not see
How the Wind will just not let him rest?
The Wind is truly angry. Angry because
He the Wind was there long before
The Royal Palm raised his head above the ground.
The Wind was there long before
The Royal Palm grew
Too tall too proud for his own good.
The Palm in his Royal pride thinks
He can break the Wind.
And now he complains, because the Wind howls into his face.*

With an embrace from Ate, Princess Tetele is cured of her mental impairment and is reunited with her lover. The entire community rejoices in celebration of this achievement.²⁰⁵ King Agor, who is totally overwhelmed with guilt and grief; willfully hands over power to Oko. King Agor is distooled by the Chief Priest, as the womenfolk symbolically bury him by pouring dry leaves over him to signify the end of reign as King

²⁰⁵ Because they can now rejoice and move on in life.

of Africa. Agor finally abdicates his position, when he runs from centre stage and jumps to cling unto a spider-web positioned backstage.

4.2 Role Differentiation and Characterisation in *Asipim* Dance Production

Introduction

Within any given performance, characters play major tasks of communicating the intent of a particular performance to an audience. In as much as I am familiar with various roles within the *Asipim* dance production, there was the need to establish clearly; the main characters that featured in the performance. In this regard, some of my respondent gave me variant lists of characters which they classified as prime characters within *Asipim*. Finally, I had the chance of authenticating a list of all the major characters involved in *Asipim*, during a discussion²⁰⁶ with the choreographer.

The Main Characters or Roles within *Asipim*:

1. The Poetry Narrator.
2. An Oldman of Wisdom.
3. Ataa Din (*The Rightful Heir to the Throne of Africa*).
4. King Agor (*Usurper to the Throne of Africa*).
5. Awo Din (*Wife of Ataa Din, the Rightful Heir to the Throne of Africa*).
6. High Priest (*The Spiritual Leader of Africa*).
7. Tetele (*The only Daughter of King Agor*).
8. Oko & Ate (*The Twin male sons of Ataa Din and Awo Din*).
9. Royal and Prison Guards.

²⁰⁶ This interview took place at the School of Performing Art, in Legon. It was a discussion with the choreographer, geared towards retrieving his perspective and motivation for the creation of *Asipim* dance piece. The discussion took place on the 3rd of March, 2015.

1. The Poetry Narrator

In a solemn and reflective ambience, the *Asipim* dance production commences with a poetry recital by *Professor Kofi Anyidoho* as outlined in the beginning section of this chapter. The *Asipim* dance production, which is an hour (1) and a half (30 minutes) performance,²⁰⁷ is interspersed with poetry delivery that laments the African story of colonialism and slavery on the continent. More importantly, the poetry reiterates the contributions of several African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Thomas Sankara, and Nelson Mandela whose contribution towards Africa independence and freedom remains crucial in the historical archives of the continent. Within the poetry, the poet employs words that comments on colonialism, slavery and black struggle within the continent. It is an account of how Europe and the West usurped and colonised Africa for over three hundred years.

In another dimension, the submissions given by the poet can be viewed as the voice of concerned (patriotic) African who often laments the slow progression of the continent in the midst of globalisation and technological advancement. The beginning verse of the poetry reads:

The drums guide our feet, in this forwards-backwards dance. This *Husago* dance. This *Misego* dance. This dance into a future that ends in the Past. Two steps forward to where Hope rises like Rainbows. One step backwards to where Sorrow falls like Storms. And Africa leans against the Winds. Africa leans against the Future, like a tired warrior from History's Battlefield.

In stressing the importance of the above verse, there is the need to pay keen attention to words selected in drafting the poetry. Hence, in commenting on the word *Husago*, Adinku (1994, p. 24) in his book titled *African Dance Education in Ghana* notes that “the

²⁰⁷ This is the entire duration of the *Asipim* piece. This is in relation to the *Asipim* dance piece, which is the case study for this documentation.

traditional *Husago* is a ritual dance for deceased members of the *yeve cult*.²⁰⁸ Noted in academic circles as *the father of dance*, Mawere Opoku borrowed the idea of bereavement from the *yeve cult* society, upon which he created his personal repertoire titled *Husago-Atsia-Husago* or the dance of lamentation for freedom fighters.²⁰⁹ The use of the word *Husago* within the poetry is geared at proclaiming the achievements of these leaders whilst taking lessons from their exemplary leadership qualities. This implies that Kwame Nkrumah's proclamation that the independence of Ghana is meaningless, unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent²¹⁰ is a good indication that the problems of Africa can be best solved when addressed collectively as a single unit.

The poetry narrator is an artistic instrument employed by the choreographer in giving forecast on the political insights of the performance. The poetry narrator can be described as a dramatic medium infused into the choreography to comment on the woes of ordinary African citizens. The poet recollects past ordeals of African colonization and aggression by foreign powers on the continent, in times past. It warns against remnant (effect) of such ordeals on the advancement of the continent. Hence, within the poetry, the misuse of political power for personal gains by politicians and public office holders at the detriment of greater national development; is highlighted by the poet. At the latter section of the performance, the poet further submits saying:

Agor, the Royal Palm complains he does not know why the world is angry. Angry because he the Royal Palm talks too much? But does the world not see how the Wind will just not let him rest? The Wind is truly angry. Angry because he the Wind was there long before the Royal Palm raised his head above the ground. The Wind was there long before the Royal Palm grew too tall too proud for his own

²⁰⁸ Adinku, W.O. (1994) *African Dance Education in Ghana*. (p.24) Accra, Ghana Universities Press.

²⁰⁹ Adinku, W.O. (1994) p.24.

²¹⁰ This is a submission he gave during Ghana's independence declaration; on the 6th of March, 1957 at the independence square in Accra.

good. The Palm in his Royal pride thinks he can break the Wind.
And now he complains, because the Wind howls into his face.²¹¹

Within this verse, the use of the word *Royal Palm* recollects colonial or foreign rule (direct) on the African continent. The character *Agor*, as king within the *Asipim* dance performance is a metaphorical representation of politicians and public office holders across the continent. More importantly, the verse emphasises the worries of African citizens over unfulfilled promises by government appointees and public officials across the continent. It also emphasises the misdeeds and arrogance of some politicians in the discharge of their ministerial duty as the poet states that *the wind was there long before the Royal Palm grew too tall for his own good*. Hence, citizens of Africa, who are described within the poetry as the *wind*, express their displeasure towards pretentious characters of politicians when the poet submits that “Agor, the Royal Palm (which represents government appointees and public officials) complains that he does not know why the world is angry at his behaviour.” Thus, the citizens of Africa are angry because the Royal Palm (which represents government or public officials) as seen by their people as not living up to their tasks and responsibility as agents of social change and development within the continent. Rather, these officials, who are usually entrusted with public funds for national businesses and developmental projects, usually end up amassing wealth for themselves at the detriment of the larger population mostly through corruption. In addressing the disgust of the ordinary African citizen the poet declares saying “the wind (which refers to citizens) are truly angry. Angry because the wind was there long before the Royal Palm raised his head above the ground. The Wind was there long before the Royal Palm grew too tall too proud for his own good.”

²¹¹ The above quotation is included in the final section of the poetry recital, which precedes the entire performance.

This means that there is the need for public office holders and government appointees (who the poet refers to as *Royal Palm*) to reassert their offices as platforms for the betterment of citizens livelihood, rather than amassing wealth (which the poet refers to as *growing too tall for their own good*) for themselves. This means that the choreographer employed this character as a vessel in commenting on mismanagement by public officials, who by virtue of their position are entrusted with state resources for the advancement of national life, but which is rather amassed for personal satisfaction.

2. An Oldman of Wisdom

There is an old African adage that states old age is a repository of wisdom and knowledge. The emergence of a wise Oldman unto the performance stage in *Asipim* is a clear reminder of our indigenous Ghanaian cultural values and practices that holds our societies together. Amoo, D.T.A (2003, p. 18) in his assessment of the above character, states that:

The perception of life by the aged, usually antithetical to the exuberant youth, is registered in the Oldman's response when he takes *Ataa Din's* amulet which symbolizes the end of his rule. The dramatic gesture with which the Oldman takes the amulet and turns to the audience with a smile sends a deep signal that directly links the present to the future of the dramatic action. Although he seems to be a social outcast, the Oldman has the foresight into the future of the fate of the people under the rule of *King Agor*. Symbolically the Oldman presents the amulet beyond *Agor's* reach; to the second twin child of *Awo Din* as a manifestation of transfer of power indirectly from *Ataa Din* (deceased rightful heir to the throne) to his first child.²¹²

Thus, the role of an Oldman within the *Asipim* piece highlights the contribution of our indigenous chieftaincy in addressing matters of political upheavals which arises within Africa. It is worth recalling, that after the 2012 general election the National House of Chiefs was tasked by the Peace Council of Ghana to assist in the amicable settlement of

²¹² Amoo, D.T.A (2003). *Challenges of Using Some Unorthodox Materials in Contemporary Ghanaian Stage Design: A Case Study of Ghana Dance Ensemble's 'ASIPIM' Dance Presentation*. (p.18) Legon, Unpublished M.F.A Thesis, University of Ghana.

post electoral disputes that followed declaration of results in favour of the ruling National Democratic Congress. Chiefs within the country were tasked with the responsibility of sensitizing their people on the need to respect the verdict that was to be given by the Supreme Court of the land. Hence, even though Ghana as a nation is governed by democratic principles of rule of law and justice with a President as head; contributions from chiefs in times of upheaval are highly respected in Ghana as instruments of dignity whose pronouncements convey words of consolation for disputing parties. Amoo (2003, p.17) in this regard, further stated that “old age in the indigenous context is not considered a curse but wisdom from the gods as reward for good life led by the individual.”²¹³ In Africa, and Ghana to be precise; old age is credited with respect due to the belief that such status in life has been characterized by years of experience in the realities governing mans’ existence and social interaction.

Within the production, the inclusion of an oldman which represents cultural and moral values of respect, professionalism and patriotism; are emphasized as crucial factors in developing one’s social well-being. This implies that our cultural values and practices should be employed as ethical tools in inculcating discipline into the youth, with whom the destiny of the country is dependent. The issue of uprightness in behavior then falls to bear in discussing issues of truthfulness, justice and loyalty of state institutions (including the judiciary and legislature) and their role in administering law. During the performance, an oldman appears at the naming ceremony of twin male sons *Oko* and *Ate* (who are rightful heirs to the throne of power) and presents two cowry necklaces to the newly born babies as a means of authenticating their position as rightful heirs to the throne, after the demise of their father, Ataa Din who was murdered by King Agor. The oldman, is in this case,

²¹³ Amoo, D.T.A (2003). *Challenges of Using Some Unorthodox Materials in Contemporary Ghanaian Stage Design: A Case Study of Ghana Dance Ensemble’s ‘ASIPIM’ Dance Presentation*. (p. 17) Legon, Unpublished M.F.A Thesis, University of Ghana.

represented as a figure of traditional political authority that sees to the legitimisation of political positions across the country.

3. Ataa Din

Ataa Din is the rightful heir to the Throne of Africa, as represented in the *Asipim* theatrical dance performance. Within *Asipim*, *Ataa Din* is highlighted as an indigenous representation of a prospective chief who engages in a power struggle with Agor, a usurper of the throne of Africa.

Ataa Din happens to be the father of twin male sons; *Oko*²¹⁴ and *Ate*,²¹⁵ both of whom at the climax of the performance challenged *King Agor* over the right to ownership of the Throne of Africa, which he cruelly usurped from their father. As husband, *Ataa Din* is seen to have unexpectedly left his wife *Awo Din*; after he died during the power struggle with a usurper²¹⁶ to the throne.

Metaphorically, the choreographer contracts this character as a mechanism in acknowledging the contributions of African leaders who devised and attained independence for the continent from colonial rule. Mention could be made of great African freedom-fighters like *Nyerere*, *Nkrumah*, and *Mandela*; whose resilience towards attaining independence and quality of life for their people were subjected to varying degrees of intimidation, which eventually claimed the lives of these great individuals.

Reflectively also, the character *Ataa Din* also gives a clear representation democratically elected African leaders who through unwarranted means (political schemes) have been denied of political authority by colonialist powers who usually align themselves with opposition elements of countries. Most regrettable among such incidents is the toppling of

²¹⁴ The eldest of the twin male sons of *Ataa Din* and *Awo Din*.

²¹⁵ The younger of the twin male sons of *Ataa Din* and *Awo Din*.

²¹⁶ King Agor murdered *Ataa Din*, in order to ascend the throne of power in *Asipim*.

Kwame Nkrumah and Muammar Gaddafi's governments by foreign powers and their domestic counterparts. Hence, the selfish collaborative efforts of both internal²¹⁷ and external²¹⁸ forces against constitutionally elected African governments; accounts for unproductive years of bloodshed and under-development that has bedevilled the African region.

4. King Agor

Agor is a key character emphasized in the *Asipim* dance performance. The character *Agor* within the piece is a direct opposite of Ataa Din; the rightful heir to the throne. In characterization, *Agor* is portrayed as a usurper of a throne who unwarrantedly attains power by murdering a rightful heir.

Agor's inappropriate and unlawful means of attaining power from Ataa Din, the rightful heir, falls in line with political figures across the continent who through unwarranted means of defaming and unjustified criticism; have caused the demise (topple) of democratically elected leaders. Mention can be made of Gen. Kotoka, who in 1966 masterminded the overthrow (through a military coup d'état) of the then Nkrumah's government with assistance from CIA of United States. Through such an undemocratic precedence, Ghana's developmental agenda under Nkrumah was heavily affected since his developmental plans for the country were overlooked.

In characterization, *King Agor's* relationship with his people is also a reminder of the authoritative posturing of some African leaders over the years. Most of these leaders, who are democratically elected by their own people usually resort acts of intimidation and victimization in dealing with individuals whom they consider as enemies or rivals. Hence,

²¹⁷ With regards to what Kwame Nkrumah refers to as Neo-colonialist elements. These individuals are continually present, and usually team up with foreign power to siphon Africa of our development resource.

²¹⁸ Colonialist elements in modern times that appear as friend of Africa; but on a broader spectrum deny Africa of our right to progressive and sustained developmental advancement.

they tend to be intolerant towards the same people who propelled them into positions of authority. In most cases, all kinds of atrocities are meted on citizens, political figures and media persons who venture in upholding the principles of rule of law. The famous Ugandan President *Gen. Idi Amin Dada*, who is regarded by most scholars as a dictator, is believed to have committed various atrocities during his tenure of office.

The character *King Agor* in much clearer terms is representative of what is referred within Ghanaian political circles as *Nation Wrecker*. These individuals, who find themselves in political positions, usually seek to satisfy their personal aspiration at the expense of a greater national good. Within the *Asipim* performance, *Agor* defies laid down tradition by disregarding²¹⁹ acceptable means by which rulership is instituted. More authoritatively, he disregards the opinions of his own daughter and people by wrongfully imprisoning *Oko* and *Ate* (who are the only living heirs to the throne) against the will of his people. Regrettably, the consequence of such unlawful attitudes of these leaders usually ends them imprisoned, or exiled in other countries. This is represented in *Asipim*, when at the climax of the piece *King Agor* abdicates his position by jumping to cling unto a spider-web placed at the backstage position.

In another perspective, the character *King Agor* reiterates the exploitation (invasion) of Africa by colonial powers. These colonial powers which includes the British, Dutch, Portuguese and French, drained the continent of substantive human resource for over three centuries during the era of Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Thus, through the exploits of these powers, our African Political System was heavily attacked and relegation to the background as instruments of indirect-control over African populations.

²¹⁹ By murdering the rightful heir to the throne of Africa. Ataa Din is the rightful heir to the throne of Africa.

5. Awo Din

Awo Din is the wife (prospective queen) of the rightful heir to the Throne of Africa. As prospective queen, she would have provided her husband²²⁰ with emotional and psychological assistance required for a fruitful and successful reign in power. Just like all other supportive female partners of political office holders, *Awo Din* is a clear representation of the African and Ghanaian woman's status and position in contributing to political discourse towards the development of their countries. The character *Awo Din* basically represents the female population across Africa.

Within the *Asipim* dance production, *Awo Din* is a widow²²¹ and mother of twin male son; *Oko* and *Ate*. In a broader perspective, the character and role of *Awo Din* serves as a reminder in reiterating issues of Feminism in politics across many political dispensations. This means that even though she represents a mother and a wife within the *Asipim* dance production; issues of equal female representation concerning politics are highlighted.

In the *Asipim* dance performance, *Awo Din*; with the assistance of the womenfolk are ignored by King *Agor*, when they confront him to plead for the release of the male twin²²² from prison. This incident within *Asipim*, speaks on an existing situation where the female population in Ghana are usually side-lined in times of political deliberations.

6. High Priest

Spirituality in Africa is believed to cut across almost all sectors of communal life. Earlier African scholars including Mbiti, Kumordzi and Gyekye have written extensively on spirituality with specific regards to Africa. Spirituality according to these authorities finds

²²⁰ Ataa Din happens to be the rightful and legitimate heir to the throne of power.

²²¹ She lost her husband, Ataa Din, during a political confrontation with a usurper to the throne of Africa.

²²² This refers to *Oko* and *Ate*. They are the sons of Ataa and *Awo Din*.

place within both secular and sacred undertakings. It is in this regards that during all social engagements; reverence to an existing Almighty divinity is usually given.

Priesthood, which is the main profession upon which spirituality is practiced in indigenous Ghanaian setting; is a major socio-political traditional institution that is largely associated with the activities of governance. Nketia has documented, that priests across Africa are acknowledged as intermediaries between the physical world and the spiritual worlds. The position of the priest within Ghanaian socio-political stratification can be said to be very instrumental.

The role of *High Priest* in *Asipim* is an exact representation of priesthood in our indigenous setting. Within the *Asipim* dance performance, *Agor* sought the assistance of the priest in confirming him as king; after he usurped the throne of Africa from its rightful heir. The *Chief Priest* within the *Asipim* dance piece is a metaphoric representation of different religious denominations (whether of African-Traditional, Christian or Islamic faiths) in Ghana. The position of religious leaders as non-partisan (not expected to openly declare their political stance) figures, is built on the premise that religion as opposed to politics is entirely distinct in character and approach.

In a much broader dimension, the role of the priest in political business can be likened to the supervisory role of international bodies including the United Nation, ECOWAS and the African Union. These multi-national corporations are by virtue of holistic responsibility tasked to ensuring international political peace, and tranquillity amongst nations in the world.

7. Tetele

Tetele is the only daughter of *King Agor*. She also doubles as the princess of the land, who coincidentally falls in love with *Ate*, a son of a rival; who had been killed in power struggle with her lovers' father.²²³

Tetele becomes psychologically impaired after her father; *King Agor* objects to her relationship with *Ate*. Her ordeal within the *Asipim* production; serves as a recapturing moment in speaking on the unattended plights of many adolescent female individuals worldwide. Adolescents should be guided in times of taking critical decisions in their lives, in order to set some level of decorum between the counselor, and the counseled. This is evident in a Ghanaian proverb which states that *when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers*. Thus, innocent individuals usually become those who suffer during political instability.

In the case of *Asipim*, *King Agor*; the father of *Tetele* ignores the plight of his daughter and hurriedly takes a decision to imprison *Ate*, because of hatred towards the sons of his gravest rival; *Ataa Din*.

The relationship between *Tetele* and her people is a direct opposition in character to that of her father, *King Agor*. In her capacity as princess within *Asipim*, *Tetele* is seen to have exhibited a strong sense of tolerance and respect toward all people irrespective of her position as princess within the structural ladder of society.

²²³ This refers to King Agor, the father of Tetele the princess.

8. Okoko and Ate

Okoko and *Ate* are twin male offsprings of *Ataa Din* and *Awo Din*. As depicted by their indigenous *Ga*²²⁴ names, *Okoko* happens to be the older; whilst *Ate* is portrayed as the younger of the two.

These two characters in *Asipim* are direct representations of today's conscious, and concerned Africans; whose desires are to see the realisation of change in the political life and development of the ordinary African. This impression is visible within *Asipim*, when *Okoko* and *Ate* in their objection to the authoritative rule of *King Agor* challenge and advocate for an end to his reign as King, due to his insensitiveness towards the concerns of his people.

In another development, *Okoko* and *Ate* are represented as the children of Africa. These children of Africa, I must say, seek to atone for the mistakes of the past by holding political figures accountable for their action. This is clear in *Asipim*, when within the performance *Okoko* challenges *King Agor* over his decision to banish his brother *Ate* for publicly expressing his affection towards *Tetele*.

9. Four Royal and Prison Guards

According to R.O. Badru et al (2013, p.61) "security is defined as protection against the undesirable, risky or injurious, usually with respect to the existential continuity of a state." Security in this sense is particularly concerned with safeguarding both material and human resources which are indispensable in the realization of sovereignty of a people who constitute a nation. R.O. Badru et al (2013) further indicates that "the traditional account

²²⁴ It is the indigenous language spoken by the *Gas* (Ga people) of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

of security renders it as a mechanism established and maintained by the state for self-defense, and also as an instrument of force against external treat or internal dissention.”²²⁵

The pre-colonial political institution of Royal and Prison guards have been associated with chieftaincy amongst most Ghanaian societies, since time immemorial. The presence of the Royal and Prison guards within *Asipim* is a vivid representation of our traditional political personalities who stand as protectors and defenders of chieftaincy and its interest.

The duty of the royal and prison guards within the *Asipim* dance performance arises when upon orders from the King, arrests are made. During the dance performance, two guards are brought into action to arrest *Ate* and *Oko*, who on different occasions were engaged in confrontation with *King Agor*. This asserts that the principal tasks of these individuals are strictly tied to respecting the authority of Kinship; as and when they are demanded.

In juxtaposition to current political dispensation, the royal and prison guards are representative of security services within the country. In this perspective, the Police Service, Military, Prison Services, and all other security units are empowered by the constitution of Ghana to defend the country (rule of law) by diligently performing their professional duties towards the development of the state. Prah (1998, p. 2) posits saying, “it is the responsibility of the government to maintain peace, law and order in a state.”²²⁶

In achieving this, government resorts to the police and the army.²²⁷

²²⁵ R.O. Badru et al (2013) “Philosophical Thinking and the Concept of Security in the Contemporary African society” Contemporary Journal of African Studies (p. 62) Vol. 1, No 1. Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana.

²²⁶Prah, I. K. (1998) Government for Senior Secondary Schools (p. 2) Takoradi, Harp Consult.

²²⁷Prah, I. K. (1998) p. 2.

4.3 Thematic Concerns Embedded Within *Asipim* Dance Production

Introduction

Themes or Thematic Concerns in artistic creations are the main building blocks upon which choreographers, composers, and playwrights transmit their intents for the creation of works of arts.

In the case where we take Ghana into consideration with regards to these themes, one would arrive at a conclusion; that the peacefulness of the nation could only be undermined if any of the characteristics listed below find place within the fabric of Ghanaian society.

This section of the analysis is in two parts. This has been necessitated, because even though this documentation is geared primarily towards unearthing and disclosing the *political import* of *Asipim* dance production to its readers, other thematic concerns which I would outline as part of the *miscellaneous category* would also be disclosed. Hence, the themes in relation to *Asipim* are in two parts: the Political and Non-Political thematic concerns.

a. Political Themes or Issues Addressed

i. Dictatorship or Extreme Power Obsession in Africa

Most African countries have over the years since independence been headed by either military or civilian governments. Military governments or regimes in most cases, sprung up as a result of failure on the part of either a civilian regime, or another military group in governance.

Over the years, civilians across Africa have witnessed an upsurge of heads of states who transformed themselves from *friendly fellows* into *autocratic rulers*. These political

leaders tend to see themselves at par with the laws of their state; and are most often criticized for manipulating judicial systems for parochial benefits.

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2010, p.404) "dictatorship is defined as government by a dictator or a country that is ruled by a dictator."²²⁸ The term in this regard refers to a situation where parochial interest of a leader or regime suppresses or disregards the rights and freedom of its people and their state institutions that are established to maintain law and justice. Robert T. Deacon (2009, p.241) is convinced that "under dictatorship political power is concentrated among a small fraction of the population, while democracy spreads political influence more evenly."²²⁹ Badru states:

Many of the military or civilian dictators that we have experienced in Africa used both covert and overt force to oppress and suppress their political opponents, due to the activism of such opponents. In most situations, these dictators claimed that all they did was meant to maintain the existential continuity and stability of their states (so as to remain in power). (Badru et al 2013, p.66)

African heads of state including Charles Taylor, Gen. Idi-Amin Dada and Nyasemgbe Iyadema of Liberia, Rwanda and Togo respectively; have been referred to as dictators both in Africa and across the international community. Neuberger reports:

The personal power of dictators was absolutist and not limited by secondary power centers. Bokassa, Nguema and Amin ruled in an "imperialist style" by personal decrees and treated state and society as a "private domain of the dictator. Nguema, Bokassa and Amin ruled without any significant social base. No regional or ethnic group, religious community social class, economic sector or institutional corporation supported them in any way. They ruled with the help of lieutenants and cohorts tied to them by patronage, opportunism, plunder, complicity and fear. (Neuberger 1989, p. 146)

²²⁸ Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary *International Students' Edition* (2010) p. (404) Oxford University Press.

²²⁹ Robert T. Deacon (2009) *Public Good Provision under Dictatorship and Democracy*. (p.241) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40270756> Accessed: 04-02-2016 17:12 UTC

The choreographer addresses the theme of dictatorship within the *Asipim* dance theatrical presentation. King Agor is depicted as a tyrant and dictator who pays heed to no one. As a usurper of the Throne of Africa, King Agor forcibly ascends unto power, after murdering the rightful heir to the throne. Against the wish of the people, he is impatient and intolerant in his dealings with his subject. This is evident in the dance performance, when on separate occasions he unwarrantedly orders the arrest and banishment of *Oko* and *Ate* against the wish of the entire community. King Agor as ruler has the final word in the society. He possesses the sole right to command, and immediately, the command is executed. He disrespects the affections and feelings of the greater majority, over whom he ruled.

In Ghana, former Presidents Kwame Nkrumah and Jerry Rawlings have been referred to as dictators by some elements in opposition; with no concrete evidence in backing their claims. Regardless of this, pockets of accusations have been leveled against some public officials who, over the years, become instruments of abuse on citizens, sometimes with the help of foreigner expatriates. These politicians, who are most times strongly tied with security services; usually indulge in acts of intimidation and injustice against their own citizens as portrayed through the character of King Agor. What this means is that, even though office holders ascend unto political heights on verdict from their citizens, these politicians most times end up wrongfully persecuting the same people who voted them into power against the laws of their states. The choreographer as an educator reiterates the evils of dictatorship through his *Asipim* dance performance.

ii. Heroism in African Politics

Heroism is evident as a theme in *Asipim*. Heroes across the African continent have been adored and celebrated for their resilience and valour depicted during times of turbulence and struggle against oppressive rule. In Africa, personalities including *Dr. Kwame*

Nkrumah of Ghana and *Nelson Mandela* of South Africa are acknowledged as heroes who stood the test of valour during Africa's pre-independence struggle from foreign rule.

Leaders like Julius Nyerere and Kenneth Kuanda were prepared to sacrifice scarce resources to provide military assistance to guerrilla movements in Zimbabwe in the 1970s and in Namibia for close to two decades. These and other states have provided relief to Namibian and South African refugees. In support of the African ideological opposition to colonial rule in southern Africa, Zambia at one stage was prepared to pay the high price of having its copper shipped out through longer and more expensive routes to the north rather than going through white controlled Rhodesia and South Africa. (Liebenow J. Gus 1986, p.367)

The choreographer, through his artistic representation employs *Oko* and *Ate* as progressive individuals who sought for justice and freedom from a king's tyrannical rulership. These characters were employed as freedom fighters against oppressive and unworthy rulership. Within the performance, *Oko* and *Ate* physically challenge King Agor to the rightful ownership of the throne of Africa. As direct offspring of murdered rightful heir (Ataa Din) to the throne, the twins sought to reinstate the wish of the people by rebelling against the atrocities committed by King Agor. Thus, the actions of the twins are exemplary in character to the likes of courageous Nkrumah, Sankara, and Mandela who defied all odds through their in seeking for an African political identity that addressed the aspirations, and needs of their citizenry. In the case of Ghana,

Nkrumah had ideological and philosophical background towards African liberation and development, unlike many of his contemporaries. His studies in the United States had opened his mind to critical ideological thinking and theories that were flourishing among academia in the 1940s. While studying in the United States, Nkrumah questioned the outlook that regarded the history and civilization of Africa as non-existing or unworthy. (Fosuaba 2014, p.36)

In averting this situation, Nkrumah resorted heavily to Ghanaian culture and heritage as a major determinant of his philosophical standpoint. He found proficiency and practicality in our customs and practices which formed the bedrock upon which an independent

Ghanaian society was built. The political system of state centralism practiced by Nkrumah during the early periods of Ghana's post-independence era attests to the many successes chalked by his administration in sectors of social and economic advancement.

Currently in Ghanaian political dispensation, there is the need to take a clue from the experience of these great political leaders in structuring social and economic policies that guard against the exploitation and misuse of national resources by foreign elements; and their local collaborators whom Nkrumah refers to as *Neo-colonialists*.²³⁰

Heroism, in context of this documentation, reiterates the need for inclusiveness of citizens' contribution towards national development. Professionalism in all fields of occupation becomes a core ingredient, if an appreciable level of economic and financial advancement is to be reached by developing countries. Respect for professional duty becomes indispensable in achieving progress. The choreographer reiterates the need for citizens to sacrifice personal ambitions for greater national well-being. Hence, it is only through such attributable characters that they would earn titles as heroes of the nation.

iii. Turmoil in Africa's Political Dispensation

The choreographer raised issues of political crisis across the continent after our independence from colonialist rule. At the beginning of the performance, dancers burst out in excitement and are scattered across the stage after being positioned in place (back stage left) whilst holding an African map²³¹ in place. Fragments of the African map are held by performers on stage who represent all African countries across the continent. The choreographer employs the African map in emphasizing Africa's shared years of political aggression, crime and underdevelopment that has plagued the continent.

²³⁰ Nkrumah, Kwame. (1964) Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonization. p.(102) London, Panaf Books Ltd.

²³¹ This is made out of polystyrene, and covered with canvas with the aid of white-glue. Each performer had a fragment of the map, which they performed with as a hand-prop.

The choreographer also uses the character King Agor as dictator and a focal character who through selfish possession of power committed various atrocities against his own people. Even though incidents in *Asipim* make reference to specific cases of political atrocities committed by King Agor against his people; there is a deeper sense of thought that the choreographer reiterates in terms of publicizing the various offenses committed by African leaders in their quest to either attaining or maintaining power. Such atrocities usually range from abductions, to murder of political rivals/opponents, wrongful imprisonment of political opponents, and persecution of opposition members.

Sawyer (2004, p.439) accounts, that “African intrastate conflicts typically reveal complex patterns in which issues of identity, greed and the consequences of a changed global order may all be interlinked in a contexts laden with injustice, predation and repression.”²³² In *Asipim*, the actions of King Agor led to an acute mental distress on his daughter Tetelee, who had fallen in love with Ate.²³³ Equally within the performance, the twin male brothers went through grievous trauma at the hands of prison guards who regularly monitored them in cell. Furthermore, King Agor disregards a plea by his queen *Awo Din* and the entire womenfolk of the society when they approached him to seek the release of Ate from detention. Thus, through the misgivings of King Agor; atrocities committed by politicians toward Africans over the years are re-enacted in the dance performance. Arthur, Peter (2010, p. 3) indicates saying that even though:

Positive developments have occurred on the African continent in the last decade, but there have at the same time been “interesting but difficult times” in the lives of the citizens of a number of African countries. There

²³² Sawyer, Amos (2004) *Violent Conflicts and Governance Challenges in West Africa: The case of the Manor River Bason area*. (p. 439) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3876340> Accessed: 15-01-2016 18:03 UTC

²³³ Ate is arrested for publicly expressing his affection for Tetelee, during a durbar at the King’s palace. the King was against their union.

are the cases of countries involved in civil wars and ethnic conflicts, the effects of which are wreaking havoc on their citizens.²³⁴

Ghana as a country over the past five and half decades has been under the rulership of many leaders, most of whom attained power through military coup d'états. Leaders including former president Nkrumah and Rawlings have over the years suffered defamation from some rivals in opposition who refer to them as dictators during their tenure. In the case of Ghana, concerns about human right abuses have so far not been levelled by both state and international human rights groups against Ghana. As juxtaposition, Adewale Banjo (June, 2008, p. 37) speaks, that in neighbouring Republic of Togo:

Sylvanus Olympio ruled the country until Gnassingbe Eyadema seized power in a bloodless coup in 1967, after attaining independence from France in 1960. Following the coup, Eyadema dissolved all political parties and governed unchallenged through the military, which he kept loyal through a system of patronage, for almost three decades. Torture and extra-judicial killings were common under Eyadema, and an estimated one million Togolese left the country since he came to power in 1967.²³⁵

In taking a clue from the above quotation, the choreographer intends to caution politicians and the civilians about the evils associated with political turmoil of Africa's development.

iv. Abdication of post by the African Leader: The unwillingness of some African rulers to peacefully hand-over power

Specifically in Africa, there have been many instances when head of states or political officials of countries have been torn between the decision of either stepping aside or persistently clinging on power.

²³⁴ Arthur, Peter (2010) *ECOWAS and Regional Peacekeeping Integration in West Africa: Lessons for the Future*. (p.3) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday.57.2.2> Accessed: 15-01-2016 17:36 UTC

²³⁵ Banjo, Adewale (2008) *THE POLITICS OF SUCCESSION CRISIS IN WEST AFRICA: THE CASE OF TOGO*. (p. 37) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20752832> Accessed: 15-01-2016 18:02 UTC

Not long ago, neighbouring Ivory Coast was thrown into a state of civil unrest and violence after the incumbent Laurent Gbagbo refused to accept defeat to opposition candidate Alasannie Ouatarara during national election. The repercussion of Gbagbo's hold onto power was an escalating bloodshed which resulted in the death of thousands of people.

Within the *Asipim* dance performance, the choreographer allows the character *King Agor* to willingly hand over power to the twins, after his people dejected him to his fate for atrocities committed against the state. In drawing meaning from this, it could be said, that the choreographer meant to resound a message of caution to African politicians to cultivate the sense of dignity in accepting electoral results, when declarations do not go in their favour. Hence, there is a need for political office holders to respect verdicts of election in order for peace to prevail.

In Ghana, there have been a few instances when incumbents in elections have been accused of rigging/manipulating electoral results in favour of themselves. After the 2012 general elections in Ghana, the ruling National Democratic Congress and the major opposition New Patriotic Party were drawn in tussle for power after the Electoral Commission of Ghana declared John Dramani Mahama as winner. The findings of the Supreme Court revealed that in-deed; there were cases of over voting and unsigned election sheet during the election. But notwithstanding these discrepancies, the incumbent was in the position of remaining in power because he had been declared victorious by the electoral house of Ghana.

The choreographer, as a vessel for education, cautions Ghanaian leaders to respect our electoral process and the institution tasked with responsibilities of ensuring fairness.

v. The incident of Political Injustice on targeted Individuals

During the last quarter of the twentieth century (1975-2000) incidents of political atrocities and misdeeds plagued most African countries south of the Sahara. Citizens in countries including Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Ivory Coast have in the past suffered a fair share of political murders, tortures, and maltreatments at the hands of their heads of states and high ranking political office holders. These atrocities committed against defenceless populations²³⁶ are linked either to military or civilian governments.

Asipim as a didactic dance piece is fused with the theme of injustice and misappropriation of power. Throughout the performance King Agor is continuously depicted as a fellow whose action is characterised by unwarranted prosecution of individuals he saw as treat to his rulership.

In one instance, King Agor orders the arrest and detention of Ate for his expressive public admiration of Tetele, during a durbar ceremony. The King, in another instance orders the arrest and banishment of Oko for expressing solidarity²³⁷ towards his brother's arrest. The King's treatment of these twin brothers was directly linked to the fact that they happen to be the only surviving heirs eligible as King to his usurper throne. Hence, incident of injustices against targeted individuals (referring to Oko and Ate in *Asipim*) is characteristic of King Agor.

In a much broader perspective, the actions of King Agor can be likened to the demeanour of some African politicians whose actions and inactions have led to unpleasant development against citizens they are supposed to be governing. Henry Bienen (1993, p.272) reports saying:

²³⁶ The citizens of the African countries, who are usually affected by political misdeeds and injustice.

²³⁷ He mobilises the youth of the town against the King's decision to imprison his brother, Ate.

Zaire is a clear example. Mobutu has been in power since 1965. During this time, Zaire saw insurrections, invasions, and violence from below as well as state mandated violence against political opponents and targeted groups.²³⁸

In a similar instance, Fiss (2009, p.61-62) denotes:

The Rwandan genocide in the early part of 1994 was responsible for deaths of some 800,000 persons which consisted mainly of Tutsis; and Hutus deemed sympathetic to them.²³⁹

Even though the incidence of political injustices on targeted individuals is not characteristic of Ghanaian politics, there has been recent emergence of such bad behaviour in our current political landscape. The murder (beheading) of the former Overlord of Dagbon- *YaaNaa Abudu Andani* during the presidency of John Agyekum Kuffour, has not been fully investigated. Such incidents are quite disturbing because concerned Ghanaians are forced to believe that these atrocities are politically motivated, since state institutions tasked with the responsibility of insuring justice have so far failed to bring those responsible to justice.

vi. Place/Role of Women in African Politics

The issue of Feminism²⁴⁰ and role of the African woman are fervently addressed within *Asipim*. Through the choreographer's employment of three major female characters including *Awo Din*, *Tetele* and the *Women folk*, the Afro-Ghanaian perspective on a woman's role in socio-political discourse is resounded. Prah posits that:

The analysis of the trajectory of women's participation in the political, intellectual and cultural life of Ghana would follow a uniform, straight path, characterized by clearly defined steps and phrases. However, since

²³⁸ Bienen, H. (1993) *Leaders, Violence, and the Absence of Change in Africa*. (p.272)
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2152012> Accessed: 15-01-2016 18:09 UTC

²³⁹ Fiss, Owen. (2009) *Within Reach of the State: Prosecuting Atrocities in Africa*. (p.61-62)
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20486737> Accessed: 15-01-2016 17:45 UTC

²⁴⁰ Duncan, Lauren E. (1999) *Motivation for Collective Action: Group Consciousness as Mediator of Personality, Life Experiences, and Women's Right Activism* (p. 615) Accessed: 16/06/2011 (08:48)
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3792164>

history is not linear, the course of the feminist's agenda may better be viewed as a meandering path than one that moves in a regular pattern of progression. (Prah, 2004:27)

Across the globe, human right activists as well as women's groups and organizations have continually been advocating for gender equality for women and girls. In Ghana and across some African countries, it was just until recently that females were allowed full participation in affairs of state governance and politics. The choreographer in this regard, advocates for equity in governance through his fusion of *Awo Din*, *Tetele* and *Women folks* as feminine elements in the *Asipim* dance performance. These feminine characters within the *Asipim* are clearly depictive of the plights, concerns and aspirations of women in Ghana and Africa at large. During the performance, these feminine characters *challenged the autocratic rule* of King Agor, due to his malicious approach in addressing issues.

Fortunately with increase in education and modernisation, some successes have been chalked with regards to women participation in state politics in today's 21st Century Africa. Worth commending are countries including Ghana and Liberia that have made strides in promoting women participation in political and state administration. According to the choreographer, the former first-lady of the Republic of Ghana, her Excellency *Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings*²⁴¹ as well as the current president of Liberia *Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf* are exemplary of individuals who are acknowledged as distinguished female personality contributing immensely to redressing the ill-perception of women in Ghanaian politics. In agreement with this assertion, Hooks theorizes, that:

A shift that will undoubtedly emerge as the struggle to end sexual oppression progresses will be decreased obsession with sexuality. Sexuality will no longer have the importance attributed to it; in a society

²⁴¹ Nana Konadu Agyemeng Rawlings is the wife of Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, the former president of the 4th Republic of Ghana. During her days as first-lady, she founded the famous 31st December Women's Movement which heralded women activism in girl child education, and national affairs.

that uses sexuality for the express purposes of maintaining gender inequality, male domination, consumerism, and the sexual frustration and unhappiness that deflect attention away from the need to make a social revolution. (Hooks, 2000:158)

Currently in Ghana, administrative positions that have been entrusted into the helm of feminine personalities including *the Chief Justice of the Republic*; Her Ladyship Theodora Georgina Wood and *the Electoral Commissioner* Madam Charlotte K.S. Osei are positive indications that Ghana as a country is making some head-way in addressing issues relating to the Ghanaian woman and her place in state administration and politics. The position and exploits of these individuals is a test case for girls and women to aim higher to achieve their goals irrespective of gender.

vii. The Place of Religion in Ghanaian Politics

The eminent Ghanaian scholar, Gyekye, is of the view that:

Religion has a central place in the life of the African. The religiosity of the African implies recognition of the limitation and inadequacies of humankind and the need for dependence on God. The awareness of human limitations leads to humility, which is a religious value but which has implications also for relationships amongst human beings.²⁴² (Gyekye 1996, p.18)

Spirituality is highlighted as a theme in *Asipim*. King Agor is given protection as custom demands by the Chief Priest upon his ascension to the throne. Agor is spiritually cleansed and fortified with traditional charms and amulets which are meant to shield him from spiritual attacks.

The failure of the priest in illegitimizing authority is expressed on two occasions. Foremost, the chief priest failed as an authority by conniving and wrongfully performing

²⁴² Gyekye, K. (1996) *African Cultural Values*. (p.18) Accra, Sankofa Publishing Company.

purification rights for Agor, a usurper of power. Secondly, the priest is corrupted by King Agor to siphon power from Ate, against his desire.²⁴³

The above posturing of the priest is referent on the responsibility of various religious faiths in safeguarding the freedom and democratic rights of Ghanaians. Since religious leaders are regarded as personalities of moral uprightness and truth, there is the need for them to maintain a non-partisan posturing in guarding their credibility as neutral instrument in the resolution of political upheavals.

Yirenkyi, K. (2000, p.334) indicates that “according to the church, its two educational goals, namely, the political education of the masses through seminars and its political role as the conscience in society, are inseparable.”²⁴⁴ Yirenkyi further reiterates:

The church has a two-fold educational objective. The first is to prepare Christians for national elections, make them aware of their civil rights, and educate them about government programs and policies. The second is to act as the moral conscience of the society. (Yirenkyi 2000, p.332)

The indication is that, even though involvement of Religion in Ghanaian politics has not been woeful, there is much to be done by terms of public advocacy and state education. This is highly imperative, because churches and mosques would cease to exist in a situation when Ghana is faced with a state of anarchy. People would be forced to escape for their dear lives. The involvement of various religious groups in state education is advocated for, in the production.

²⁴³ Ate had been arrested by King Agor, for expressing his love for the king's only daughter, Tetele.

²⁴⁴ Yirenkyi, K. (Autumn 2000) *The Role of Christian Churches in National Politics: Reflections from Laity and Clergy in Ghana* (p. 334) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3712582> Accessed: 15-01-2016 18:19 UTC

a. Non-Political Themes Addressed

i. The Concept of Life-Cycle Event

There are many conceptions that influence and define the Ghanaian way of life. In Ghana and across most African countries, the concept of life-cycle is highly acknowledged. At birth, during puberty, marriage, oldage and eventually death; the recognition of an attained status of an individual is very sacred. Mostly importantly, the periods of *birth* and *death* are usually revered in view of their association with balancing of the natural order.

Balancing the natural order, in this respect, refers to replacement of those dead with new life through birth. Hence, as older generations die and fade away, posterity of life is maintained through the process of birth.

In the *Asipim* dance production; there is the replacement of Life with Life just after the demise of *Ataa Din*.²⁴⁵ Twin male sons, *Oko*²⁴⁶ and *Ate*²⁴⁷ are born to replace *Ataa Din* who died as a result of a power struggle with Agor.²⁴⁸

The importance of life-cycle event (with specific regards to *life* and *death*) as theme within the performance is found in the assessment of individual contribution of every citizen. The dramatization of a death and birth scene is meant to conscientize audiences (Ghanaians in general) on the need to impact society positively by contributing their quota to the development of the nation. The choreographer in this respect used these concepts as means of enlightening citizens to channel their expertise towards securing a better future for unborn generations.

ii. Themes of love, hatred and greed as a part of Human Character

²⁴⁵ Ataa Din is the rightful heir to the Throne of Africa. He is the husband of Awo Din, the father to two male twins, Oko and Ate.

²⁴⁶ The elder of twin male sons of Ataa and Awo Din.

²⁴⁷ The younger of twin male sons of Ataa and Awo Din.

²⁴⁸ The usurper of the Throne of Africa, who forcefully and maliciously paves his way onto power after murdering the rightful heir to the throne.

Dramatic happenings within *Asipim* is also characterized by themes of love, hatred and greed. Even though the performance is highly concentrated with political actions and happenings, the actions and inactions of the various characters employed in *Asipim* are propelled by sentiments of love, greed and hatred.

At the beginning of the dance piece, Agor is consumed by greed and hatred. The actions of Agor over the murder and forceful annexation of the throne is meant to highlight character of greed and hatred. As juxtaposition, the theme of love is also established as Ate and Tetele express affection for each other. The disapproval of the relationship by the king results in mental distress on Tetele after her father orders the arrest and imprisonment of her lover, Ate. Ate is arrested for publicly expressing his affection for Tetele during a durbar organized by the king.

The character Oko, also shows solidarity for his imprisoned twin brother Ate, when he solicits assistance from the youth to fight against the tyrannical rule of King Agor. The youths of the society in this regard; acted out of love and sympathy for Ate. Thus, from the above instances in *Asipim*, thematic concerns of love, hatred and greed are highlighted in the dance performance.

Since Ghana is a multi-tribal nation united on the principles of love and respect for one another, national cohesion and progressive development can best be assured when divisive characters such as greed, favoritism and hatred is granted no space in our socio-political life.

iii. The Triumph and Down-Fall of Man

The *Asipim* dance performance is also embedded with thematic concern on success and failure of man in life situation. The choreographer in speaking on this theme reiterates the rise and eventual fall of man in the midst of conflict and desire.

The character King Agor within *Asipim* is a clear representation of a political figure whose desire and greed for undeserved power eventually leads to his short-lived reign in authority, into exile. At the climax of the dance performance, King Agor abdicates into exile after being leveled as a dictator by his people who rose against his authoritative rulership. Through this theme, the choreographer seeks to unveil to politicians; the repercussions of their actions on themselves and the country as a whole.

4.4 Some Artistic Impressions Characterising *Asipim* Dance Production

The *Asipim* theatrical dance production falls in line as one of many successive performances presented by the Ghana Dance Ensemble at National Theatre in Accra. Dance choreographies including *Musu*, *Nkulukuulu*, *Solma*, *Nkulukuulu* and *Bukom*,²⁴⁹ which were created by the choreographer, Nii-Yartey, exists as samples (forming a repertoire) upon which young choreographers could depend on in developing similar pieces which address pertinent socio-political issues.

According to the choreographer, the word *Asipim* as the title was initially captioned *Kusum*. The choreographer, in view of his native *Ga*²⁵⁰ background took inspiration from the word *Kusun* for its didactic references in terms of interpreting Ghanaian culture and tradition. The word *Kusun/Kusum* refers to laid-down traditions and practices which defines society in terms of acceptable norms and moral standards of Ghanaian society.

The *Asipim* theatrical dance production is a dramatic performance which talks about bad moral standards regarding freedom and justice in African politics. *Asipim* talks about the woes of African political life. The performance revisits the untold plights of African

²⁴⁹ These titles were retrieved from archival sources of the National Dance Company.

²⁵⁰ *Gas* are one of the ethnic groups found in Ghana. They are located along the coastal belt of Ghana, stretching from Accra to Tema.

citizens, suffered at the hands of politicians²⁵¹ after independence was attained from colonist rule. *Asipim* brings to bear the obsession of man (some African leaders) with power drunkenness, and its repercussions on the lives of Africans. The choreographer selected dances from the traditional repertoire in communicating his themes to audiences.

Asipim in a broader perspective mirrors political incidents through choreographic movement representation on a Ghanaian dance stage. *Asipim* is a choreographic result of ingenuity, exploration and creativity which is based on a contemporary dance concept rooted in African performance tradition. *Asipim* speaks about the bad aspects of political life in Africa. It also addresses concerns about ultimate traditional African spirituality, and the need for cultural resilience in the face of globalization. Hence, in reaching out to a wide audience (especially of those who are less educated) the choreographer employed an indigenous chieftaincy scenario-approach in creating his piece.

At the beginning of the performance, there is a massive African map held in place up-stage; before performers later scatter about on the stage. Philosophically, the fragmented part of the African map according to an editorial within the *Spectator*²⁵² dated 25th of May, 1996:

Explains why America is great and Africa is not. It is slave labor that built the developed world. It also reminds the world that Africa's present woes are in part the product of long years of the continent's plunder from the 16th to the 19th Century which was crowned by the portioning and fragmentation of the continent, colonialism and today neo-colonialism.²⁵³

In giving meaning to the above quote, *Asipim* represents a dance-dramatic enactment of a pre-colonial situation of political indecency. The choreographer re-collects the periods

²⁵¹ After most African colonies gained independence, power was restored back into the hands of Africans. Most citizens of these countries, at a point in time in their political history have suffered several degrees of injustice; which has affected the progress of these countries to some extent.

²⁵² The *Spectator* is another notable newspaper in Ghana. It is published in Accra, the capital city of Ghana.

²⁵³ *Spectator* (1996, May 25) *Our Woes Revisited* (Editorial).

when the continent was partitioned by foreign powers for selfish gains. It sheds perspectives on the need for Ghanaians and Africans at large to be concerned with the administration of their countries. It allows the Ghanaian audience (citizens) an opportunity of ascertaining both good and bad behaviors of individuals we elect as our leaders. Most importantly, advocacy for increased-personal contribution of Ghanaians towards the realisation of a favourable economic environment (by both the ruling class and citizenry) is heavily represented in *Asipim*. This impression is enacted in *Asipim*, when King Agor is challenged by the womenfolk and the entire community as they resist the injustices perpetuated by King Agor against his people.

Technically, there is a sense of logic that borders around the creation of *Asipim* with regards to theatrical elements²⁵⁴ involved in establishing the mood and ambience of the production. In conveying his political themes, the choreographer depended heavily on the artistic creativity of his co-creators in achieving his impression of an African dance story which has the likeness of a native African scenario. The *Daily Graphic*²⁵⁵ captures:

One person who is seldom seen but without whom much of what is seen on stage would be without reference and perspective is David Amoo, an ECRAAG award winner for versatility and utility. His sense as a set designer is responsible for the huge and imaginative backdrops that transported the audience back into time and culture.²⁵⁶

In designing sets for *Asipim*, artistic inspiration is borrowed from *Adinkra Symbols* in designing stage sets.²⁵⁷ According to the designer Nkonsonkonson and Nyamedua symbols were employed in his scenery because of philosophical connotation embedded in them.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ This includes elements like *Scenery and Props, Light, Costume, Make-Up, etc.*

²⁵⁵ The Daily Graphic is one of the widely patronized newspapers in Ghana. It is a reputable state owned print-media situated in Accra, the capital city of Ghana.

²⁵⁶ Musu: Saga of the Slaves (1996, June 3). *Daily Graphic* p. 5.

²⁵⁷ This was disclosed by the scenic designer during a discussion with him at his residence in Accra.

²⁵⁸ Amoo, David. T.A. (August, 2003) *Challenges Of Using Unorthodox Materials in Contemporary Ghanaian Stage Design: A Case Study of Ghana Dance Ensemble's 'ASIPIM' Dance Presentation*. (p. 11) University of Ghana Unpublished M.F.A Thesis Project. Legon

Ablade Glover (1969), in his definition on *Nkonsonkonson* refers to two words “*link* or *chain*.”²⁵⁹ He explains that these words mean “we are linked in both life and death; those who share common blood relations never break apart, a symbol of human relation.”²⁶⁰ The philosophy embedded in *Nkonsonkonson*, in respect of the above quotation; reiterates the need for sustainable social cooperation as premise in achieving and sustaining better standards of living.

In a submission within his Master of Fine Arts thesis, the scenic designer recounts that “the *Nyamedua* and *Nkonson-Nkonson* symbols are placed in vertical plane of the performance stage to emphasize their communicative value.”²⁶¹ Reiterating further, he makes meaning in citing a definition of *Nyamedua* by Alfred Kofi Quarcoo (1994, p.2) which states that:

Nyamedua literally refers to *the tree of God*, which is a protective mechanism from evil. The symbol which symbolises the acknowledgment of chiefs and kings who are under the protection of God. (Quarcoo, 1994, p.2)

Relatively, the *Nkonson-Nkonson* symbol according to Quarcoo (1994, p.11) connotes “Virtues of responsibility, interdependence and unity. It gives importance to every individual as a vital component in the realization of collective success.”²⁶² Didactically, these symbols were specifically used on the stage to resound the conviction that:

Communal life is held as natural to human being. At the same time, the claims of individuality are recognized. African ethic, however, urges the avoidance of extreme individualism, which is seen as

²⁵⁹ Glover, A. (1969). *Adinkra Symbols*. Artistic Alliance Gallery, Omanyeh House, Accra-Tema.

²⁶⁰ Glover, A. (1969). *Adinkra Symbols*. Artistic Alliance Gallery, Omanyeh House, Accra-Tema.

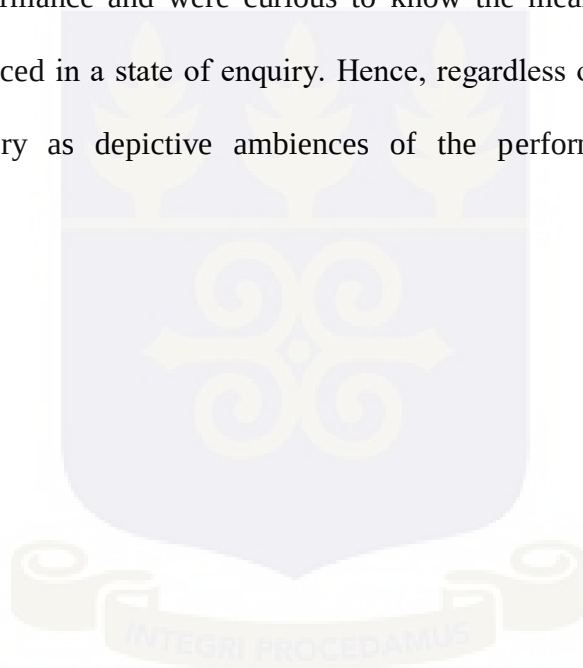
²⁶¹ Amoo, David. T.A. (August, 2003) *Challenges Of Using Unorthodox Materials in Contemporary Ghanaian Stage Design: A Case Study of Ghana Dance Ensemble's 'ASIPIM' Dance Presentation*. (p. 11) University of Ghana Unpublished M.F.A Thesis Project. Legon.

²⁶² Quarcoo, Alfred. K. (1994) *The Language of Adinkra Symbols*. (p. 53) Legon, Sebewie Ventures.

potentially destructive to human values and of the whole meaning and essence of a human society.²⁶³

The balance in meaning to these symbols is that; every man is in a capacity as a development agent of change. Since King Agor is a usurper of power who ruled against the will of his people, he was not under the protection of God, and thus was destined to be overthrown.

The ordinary citizen in this case; would have to see him or herself as part and parcel of a change process. The meaning behind this is that audiences who have the opportunity of witnessing the performance and were curious to know the meanings of these symbols; would have been placed in a state of enquiry. Hence, regardless of audiences' admiration of the entire scenery as depictive ambiances of the performance, knowledge was deductively shared.



²⁶³ Gyekye, K (1996). African Cultural Values. (p. 175) Accra, Sankofa Publishing Company.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

If the aim of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah²⁶⁴ for the art was to harness the power embedded in Ghana's dramatic forms in order to instill tolerance and unity amongst Ghanaians after attaining independence,²⁶⁵ it can also be agreed that today's age of technological advancement (which includes the sophisticated nature of the theatrical stage) and diversity (dance application in other areas of human endeavor such as politics) positions dance in an advantageous pedestal where its educational benefits can be wholly tapped, as a means to citizen enlightenment.

It is important to note that, in Ghana today, the perception and respect towards dance development as an educational and professional pursuit, has improved progressively over the years. Dance theatrical productions, staged by the National Dance Company of Ghana predominantly at the National Theatre in Accra, during the tenure of Nii-Yartey as artistic director, saw a paradigm shift in terms of movement exploration, presentation and patronage. In addition, dance performances by the *Noyam African Dance Institute*²⁶⁶ as well as semester productions by both staff and students of the Department of Dance Studies²⁶⁷ at Legon, have been focal in spearheading dance development as a discipline in the country.

Over the years, the National Commission on Culture, as sole supervisory body in charge of promoting dance and theatre in the country, has borne the responsibility of ensuring that misconceptions bedeviling dance are gradually tackled through a process of enculturation.

²⁶⁴ The first President of the Republic of Ghana, who gained independence from British-colonialists rule on the 6th of March, 1957.

²⁶⁵ According to earlier scholars including Adinku and Nketia.

²⁶⁶ A dance institute in Ghana founded by the late Francis Nii-Yartey. It is situated at Dodowa.

²⁶⁷ Of the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon.

Even though enrollment into Dance studies and African studies programs at the university level have resulted in enlightenment of some Ghanaians on the value of dance, there are majority of citizens who are still ignorant of its educative and philosophical role in national development. This phenomenon, which could be referred to as a *cultural deficit*, stems from inappropriate attention granted to cultural studies (dance, music, drama, etc...) within the nation's educational curricula, and for which the Ghana Education Service is to blame. Klah clearly submit:

It has been observed that the manifestation and expansion of the human consciousness is reflected in five areas-which include (Religion, Philosophy, Symbolism-Art, Science and Technology) which also constitute the foundation of a people's heritage. It appears the Ghanaian is not trying to develop his/her own heritage. The Ghanaian ignores her Religion, Philosophy, Music, and Symbolism-Art relegating them to the background or describing them as primitive. It is only when these four areas of culture of a people come to be refined and expanded that the fifth dimension- Science and Technology can become manifest. (Klah, 2009, 240)

In respect of the above, it could be said, that the means to Ghana's development as a country is also grounded on improved cultural proficiency programs within her educational system. The Ghana Education Service is of the view that "development will certainly occur if people know their customs and how to apply the positive ones in their day-to-day activities and also have knowledge of their achievements and how to build upon them to accelerate growth."²⁶⁸ This is extremely vital, since dance as a worthy profession and a study in academia (which the GES considers as achievements), has the capacity of tickling thought and understanding for both individual and collective (national) transformation. The choreographer, Nii-Yartey prescribes:

Theatres and community centres suitable for performances are needed at district, regional, and national levels; choreographic festivals and competitions should be organized and the mass media should be involved in extended discussions of the issue as to the role of dance in

²⁶⁸ Ghana Education Service (2009) *Culture and Female Education in Ghana. Culture and Education: Report of the National Conference on Culture (NCC) and Education at the Elmina Beach Resort.* (p.233) Ed. Ben Abdallah. Accra, Sub-Saharan Publishers.

society. Courses on dance should also be included in the school curriculum. (Yartey, 2000, p.128)

Through the process of cultural advocacy based on appropriate cultural orientation programs, enthusiasm for dance practicalisation, participation and appreciation is attainable. Most importantly, theatre, in this case, becomes a unique haven for audience-performer interaction.

By relying on the *Asipim* dance production as case, the study allowed for scrutiny into the usage of dance in giving relevance through *non-verbal political-talk* on the contemporary Ghanaian theatrical stage. The *Asipim* dance production, performed by the National Dance Company is assessed in establishing (unearth) the practicality of movement and gestures (based on Ghana's traditional dance) to shed lights on political thematic concerns. Hence, this study attests to the power of dance theatre to give meaning to political discussions, through what Kerr (1986) refers to as performative speech.²⁶⁹

5.1 Challenges

The following are some challenges encountered during the period of research and documentation.

- i. There is limited publication on dance theatre as medium of political discourse in Ghana. With the exception of documentations by Adinku, Nketia, Opoku, Amegago, Younge, Kuwor and Iddrisu, as well as newspaper reports by print institutions such the *Daily Graphic* and *New Times*, not much has been written on dance and its relevance to Ghanaian politics. In view of this, I had some difficulty at the beginning structuring topics which were to inform discussions

²⁶⁹ Kerr, David. (April, 1986) *African Theatre Review*. (p.1), Vol. 1, Number 2. Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books, Nigeria.

within this thesis. The Literature Review initially proved difficult, since little information was available in terms of written data.

- ii. Even though there is a lot of secondary data available for this study, very few scholars²⁷⁰ focused on the political dimension of dance theatre. It then became imperative for me to rely heavily on theories propounded by distinguished scholars like Nkrumah, Gyekye and Adinku in building a strong case for this research.
- iii. There were instances where some respondents were expecting to be paid, after granting interviews. In such cases, I was personally depressed, since they were pre-informed of a purely academic exercise. As a measure in ensuring truthfulness within this research, great deal of effort was taken in authenticating submissions of my respondent²⁷¹ with the assistance of the choreographer. This is to say, that I always sought the assistance of the choreographer whenever I needed clarification.
- iv. The research was also affected by lack of substantial financing. Money allocated for this research by the Graduate School,²⁷² was not sufficient for the study. During the period of this research, I had to purchase a video recorder to conduct interviews. In addition, substantial amount of money was spent on lorry-fare, since I frequently visited members (respondents) of the National Dance Company to have discussions with them. Furthermore, lots of money also went into the printing of copies (thesis) for my supervisors, in other for them to be abreast of the state of thesis progression of the thesis.

²⁷⁰ Of Ghanaian origin.

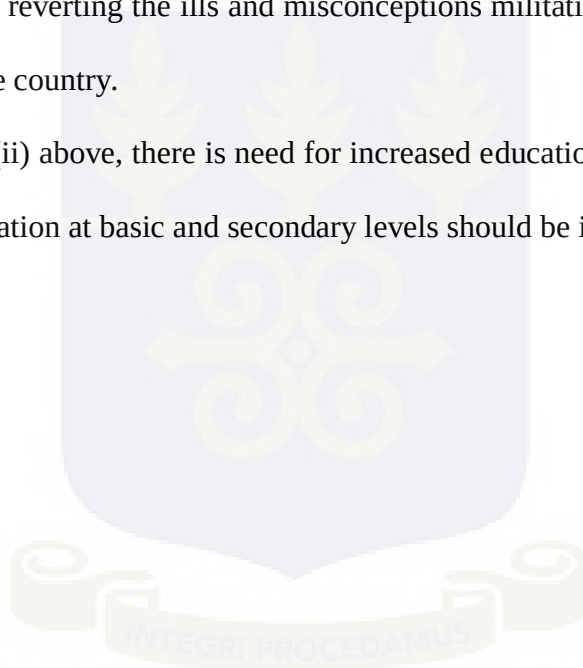
²⁷¹ Who were sometimes reluctant in giving their submissions.

²⁷² Of the University of Ghana, at Lagon.

5.2 Prospects/Recommendations

The following are a few recommendations for consideration:

- i. There is more to be done in the area of research regarding dance and the humanities in Ghana. Hence, adequate funds should be allocated by government for enquiry and documentation on the arts and its relativity to other disciplines of social interaction.
- ii. The National Commission on Culture and the National Theatre of Ghana should liaise effectively by structuring periodic dance performances for Ghana audiences as a means to reverting the ills and misconceptions militating against dance and its practice in the country.
- iii. In achieving (ii) above, there is need for increased education on dance and the arts. Cultural education at basic and secondary levels should be intensified.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: The document below provides a miniature of drafted letters sent to my respondents.

Lenny Asharku Amoo

P.O.Box AN 19006

Accra, North.

5th January, 2015.

Professor Francis Nii-Yartey

P. O. Box 341

Legon, Accra.

Dear Professor,

SOLEMN REQUEST TO CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW

It is with optimum respect and reliance that I write to your high office concerning the above matter.

Sir, I respectfully wish to conduct an interview with you on the 8th and 9th of January, 2015. This initiative happens to be in line with my methodology process, aimed at gathering data for my thesis research and documentation.

This request is necessitated; since you happen to be the choreographer of “*Asipim*” and “*Images of Conflict*” which are two dance productions representing the scope of study for my research. I strongly believe that through this discussion, I hope to unearth credible information aimed at augmenting relevant literary sources. My fervent hope is that; you would solemnly consider this request.

Thank you very much and hope to see you soon.

Yours faithfully,

.....

Lenny Asharku Amoo

APPENDIX 2: TECHINICAL DETAILS

Musical Instruments Used

Scene One

1. **Agbekor:** Agbekor Set (5 Musicians)
2. **Nawia:** Two Fontom from, Two Atumpan, Petia and Daworo (5 Musicians)
3. **Congo:** Two Jembes, Junjum, Kpanlogo (4 Musicians)
4. **Takai:** Two Brekete, Two Dondo (4 Musicians)

Scene Two

1. **Kete:** Boba, kpanlogo, Kangan, Bells (5 Musicians)
2. **Sohu:** Boba Kpanlogo, Patia, Kpanlogo (4 Musician)
3. **Agbekor/Kadodo:** Agbekor Set (5 Musicians)
4. **Kinka:** Boba, Temple blocks, Kpanlogo (Musicians)
5. **Otofo:** Boba, 2 Kpanlogo, Kagan, Bells (Musicians)
6. **Gota & Kunde:** Agbadza Set (5 Musicians)
7. **Mad Music:** Balofon, Rattle, Boba (3 Musicians)
8. **Asafo:** Bobo, Sogo, Kidi, Kagan, Bells (5 Musicians)

Scene Three

1. **Kobina:** Xylophone/Balafon (2 Musicians)
2. **Thunder Music:** General percussion instrument: Boba, Balafon, Bells, Rattles, Kpanlogo, Slit drum, Temple Bells (4 Musicians)
3. **Aduro:** Bokia, Kpanlogo, Rattle, Bells (4 Musicians)
4. **Takai and Jira:** Two Dondo, Two Brekete (4 Musicians)
5. **Congo/Guinea**
6. **Africa:** General percussion instrument: Boba, Balafon, Bells, Rattles, Kpanlogo Slit drum, Temple blocks (5 Musicians)

APPENDIX 3: OTHER MUSICAL AND SOUND EFFECTS

Sound Effect (S.E.) 1 **Album: All music of the world**

Title: *Blue Labelia / Bamile Rhythm* “

sound
Composer: A collection of ambient music remixes with native

Copyright: Rainbowel.com

Sound Effect (S.E.) 2 **Title” thunder on the Coast “**

Recorded by Joshua Trebi

Sound Effect (S.E.) 3 **Album: All music of the world**

Title: *“Bamileke Rhythm /Blue Labilia”*

sound
Composer: A collection of ambient Music remixes with native

Copyright: Rainbowel.com

Sound Effect (S.E.) 4 **Album: Toumani Diabate with Ballake Sissoko**

Title: *“Bi Lambam”*

Composer: Toumani Dibate

Copyright: Ryco Dise L. M. T.

Sound Effect (S.E.) 5 **Album: Spirit of African**

Title: “Warriors Return”

Composer: AF/W Productions

Copyright: The Hit Lable Limited

Sound Effect (S.E.) 6 **Title: “Abola Beach Sound**

Recorded by Joshua Trebi

APPENDIX 4: ASIPIIM COSTUMES

1. **Agbekor girls:** 6 short slits and 6 tops
Agbekor boys: 6 shorts and 6 tops

2. **Installation scene ladies & gents**

9 blue sheda dress & waist cloths
30 wavers assorted
4 L /s assorted smocks
4 L / s assorted pantaloons
6 pairs Northern Boots
6 straw leather hats

War Scene

10 pair red shorts (Boys)
10 red cloths with black binding
9 red ladies cloths

3. **Sohu Girls-** 8 Grey Baft skirts and Tops

Adzogbo Boys: 12 Grey baft down,
25 assorted ladies cloths
6 pairs Raffia, Armlet & Anklets

Twins: 2 satin down & foam waist band
2 leather

Brekete Ladies : 4 girls Raffia brown
4 sheda light brown braziers

Brekete: 6 Raffia Green skirts

Latern Ladies: 10 scarves black lades cloths
1 supper Natural Being
4 white sheda ladies cloths

6 King Palace Guards

6 Indigo ladies cloths
12 Brass Anklets

Princes' costumes

2 ladies Ashioke cloths
Gold ornaments & beads

1 wine cloth & brazier

1 wine torn cloth

A rag sack skirt and top

WEDDING SCENE

12 ladies Northern Kente

12 assorted scarves

12 pairs shell earrings

6 Nmani calabashes

Jira Dancers

6 Pair white pantaloons

6 cowries pillows

6 cow horn hats

6 pairs cross belts

8 caskets

King's Costumes

2 small & large Size Kent Combination

1 medium size Kente cloth

Gold anklets, armlet, bracelets & rings

A pair of local Sandals with gold decorated on it

1 extra ordinary Talismanic smock & pantaloons

1 Mirror Hat

APPENDIX 5

<u>PERSONS INTERVIEWED</u>	<u>PLACE OF INTERVIEW</u>	<u>CONTACT NUMBER</u>
Professor Franics Nii-Yartey	Legon Campus, Accra	0244256349
David Tawiah Akushey Amoo	North Kaneshie, Accra	0244287141/0262287141
Alidu Alhassan	Labadi, Accra	0541163569
Abubakar Salifu Meirigah	Legon Campus, Accra	0274483831
Caroline Yemeh	National Theatre, Accra	0244640346
Peace Simons	National Theatre, Accra	0244717576
Alphonse Kumla Ahumani	Weija	0277180247
Isaac Kwesi Ansah Owusu	National Theatre, Accra	0274903294
George Kartey	Dansoman, Accra	0277732122/0203723848
Tahiru Mohammed	National Theatre	0244255232

