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REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN GHANAIAN HIGHLIFE MUSIC (1940s-1960s)

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original and independent work produced under supervision. This thesis is the result of my independent research conducted at the Department of Music, University of Ghana, Legon. All authors and creative material and resources that have been quoted have been acknowledged fully, and that neither in half nor its entity has this thesis been published in any form or submitted to another University for the award of a degree.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents Angelina Benyarku and Albert Takyi Donkor and my sister Josephine Takyi Donkor, for their love and support throughout my academic journey.

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis examines the diverse representations of women in Ghanaian highlife music from the 1940s to the 1960s. It engages a historical analysis of the representations of women in songs as well as how their roles as dance partners (*nwuraanom*), dancers, musicians and their representation in media can be read as evidence of their participation and contribution to the early developmental phase of the highlife music tradition.

It is framed within the lens of post-colonial feminist theory, under which the constructivist approach to representation is applied in making meanings out of the diverse representations of women and reading these meanings as evidence of their contribution. Prior studies on women in highlife and highlife music have focused on their negative representation or the invisibility of women's roles during this period. This study explored women's invisible roles as alternative means for understanding their involvement in developing highlife music in Ghana. It also engaged a thematic analysis of selected highlife songs. towards meaning creation from how women were represented in these songs.

It further engaged a discussion of the experiences and contributions of Edith Norteye (Adorable Adorant), a popular singer of the 1950s, who, until this study, remained undocumented, except for pictures in newspapers of the period. The methodology used was influenced by the social constructivist worldview towards meaning creation through archival data, interviews and the internet, given the historical nature of the study. The study confirmed that women actively participated in the popular performance space, and their participation impacted the compositions of writers and musicians of the period. These songs are a rich source for understanding women's activities within highlife-performance spaces of the period under study.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Highlife music emerged on the Gold Coast now Ghana and has developed into multiple forms across diverse social and cultural contexts (Collins 1978, 1994, 2018; Plageman, 2013). Plageman indicates that it first emerged amongst locals within the hinterlands in the early 1800s and spread to the coast among the youth as a way of negotiating their gendered and generational status in colonial society. However, he further suggests that the popularity and patronage of prototype bands relegated the position of women to audience status.

Moreover, by the early 1900s, missionary-sponsored schools were introduced, predominantly for men who, upon completion, occupied top administrative and professional positions. Similarly, Abass-Füsun and Döşkaya (2017) refer to Smock (1970,) who identified that the effects of colonial education on men over time-limited access of women to higher education. This resulted in men holding most of the top professional and administrative posts. Some of these men set up social and literary clubs. They referred to themselves as *Akrakyefo* (Plageman 2013: 72). Essential to the activities of the literary clubs was highlife music contextualised as ballroom dances that engaged the services of colonial bands on Saturday nights (Plageman, 2013:79).

Plageman also mentioned stereotypical gender roles associated with highlife ballroom dances. While the men played highlife musical instruments, majority of the women danced with other male partners. According to him, such male/female dance partnership created a great avenue for romantic relationships, which became a major characteristic of women in ballroom highlife music. The growing popularity of ballroom dancing and highlife music led to the development

of much smaller bands, with membership makeup being men of the middle class and status within society. These occurred around the late 1940s into the 50s and beyond. The activities of the new bands appealed to diverse social classes, devoid of restrictions. Unlike the theatres and some hotels, which were appropriated for ballroom dancing, the emerging smaller bands and growing interest in highlife music happened at night clubs that had sprung up in the major cities and towns due to migration and increasing urbanisation. While Plageman claims that women's roles within these new commercialised leisure spaces were that of prostitutes, Mutt also alleged that solo women within these spaces were not respected and received unwanted attention (Sunday Mirror:1955). These representations of women are problematic and become even more challenging when prostitution is an act between males and females. Why should women be marked as prostitutes? Perhaps this notion of women's prostitution confirms Allman, Greiger, and Musisi's (2002) statement that "Western feminist scholars construe African women's daily lives, struggles, relationships with families, and community experiences as "hapless victims" (p.1). Such negative representations of women may have dismissed the contributions of women in promoting highlife music in the early 1940s – 50s.

Apart from women's roles being conceptualised as prostitutes a few were featured as singers of some highlife bands (Collins, 2007). Amongst these women were Akosua Bonsu (William Aingo's Fante Guitar and Accordion Band), Aku Tawia (Squire Addo's Band), Lady Wilmot (Axim Trio), Julie Okine, and Agnes Aryittey (Tempos Band).

Unlike the ballroom context, where women were negatively represented as prostitutes, these female highlife singers were somewhat highlighted in writings compared to the male members of the bands. On page 3 of the Sunday Mirror (1995), Panford, a writer for the newspaper, describes a performance by the Tempos band: "Crazy at it here are E. T. Mensah and two of

His Tempos Girls." Such anchorages speak to ways in which the media capture women's participation. This might further substantiate the argument made earlier that prostitution was solely hung on the neck of the woman but not their roles in bands. For instance, Collins (2007) reveals that Aku Tawia was a female singer in Squire Addo's band. How can such important information be missing in the musical history of highlife in the early 1920s? Even when it was highlighted in the 1950s, women's singers were mentioned alongside their male counterparts. This complementary binary role perhaps permeates the musical history of Highlife music. This discussion validates Koskoff's (2014) argument that until the 1980s, most scholarship on music, focused solely on men's activities, presenting a male-centred view of music-making and history. This is evident in how Plageman represents women as prostitutes.

By the 1960s, modernisation and increasing urbanisation 'created the opportunity for women to take up more responsibilities' (Annan et al., 2020: 11). Cole (2001) refers to Margaret Quainoo (Araba Stamp), Adelaide Boaben, Esi Kom, and Akua Dampo taking up female characters in concert parties that impersonators otherwise played. While most women served as singers or dancers, others, including Efua T. Sutherland and Vida Rose, set up their concert parties (Collins, 2007). Vida's status as a guitarist is essential as it creates the imagery of the changing roles of women in popular music and entertainment within the period under study. She subverts the stereotypical gender roles of women as singers and dancers within most African cultures.

The roles of women, stereotypical or otherwise, have been discussed by some authors; Collins (2012) Amoah-Ramey (2016). Collins's work generally references a few women within the period under review and highlights their challenges and perceptions within highlife music performance spaces. Amoah-Ramey focused on the works of female highlife performers of the

1970s. Her study focused on the works of female highlife performers of the 1970s. She argues that women's roles within the developmental years were invisible. The women of her focus from the 1970s remained alive during her research period. She could, therefore, engage with them about their navigation of the performance space, which she presented in the form of oral histories. In a review of Ramey's work, Bowles (2020) notes how Ramey fails to explain how female dancers and vocalists emerged in the developmental years of the music tradition. She further iterates Amoah Ramey's statement on the rarity of women being afforded leadership roles within this period. Amoah-Ramey's work almost dismisses the essential roles played by women in the developmental years of highlife music until the 1970s. Perhaps her arguments were meant to foreground her focus on women as solo vocal performers, not in men's shadows. Regardless, the invisible roles played by women, whether as dancers, vocalists, or audiences, were essential to shaping the culture of the music tradition. They provide evidence of women's participation in the highlife performance space and a broader understanding of the perception of women within the period under study.

My interest in this research stems from a general interest in the activities and representations of women within the popular music performance space in Ghana, particularly the period before the 1970s where Amoah-Ramey was silent.

Moreover, my research on gospel music from the 1980s raised even more questions about women's roles and representations in the early years of popular music's emergence in the country. This study consequently presents the seemingly invisible roles of women in the developmental years of highlife music. It argues that female singers and their songs may also be an essential component of highlife culture and can tell us more about women's representation. For example, Viljoen (2014:1) states that "the musical text, in all its richness

and ambiguity, is often a contested site of constructing meaning and deserves close and critical scrutiny." Her statement affirms the importance of engaging musical text and, in this case, highlife music to understand how inherent representations of women speak to their contribution to the music tradition.

This study examines women's diverse representations in the highlife music tradition of the 1940s to the 1960s in Ghana. It explores how these representations serve as landmarks for understanding the contributions of women to shaping and sustaining the highlife music tradition in Ghana. It focuses mainly on the mode of representation within the period under study as Collins (2007), indicates that this period characterised the nascent development of Ghanaian highlife music.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Recent literature on women and Ghanaian popular music have highlighted their contribution to developing and sustaining the musical art (Amoah-Ramey, 2016, Kyere, 2012). The discourse has centred mainly on their challenges as they straddle the hegemony of a maledominated musical tradition, the negative portrayal of women in songs, and how society perceives them. Adomako and Asiedu (2012) have observed these actions as harbingers of patriarchal practices, thus advocating for an increase in the physical representation of women in Ghanaian popular music to harness how they have positively exemplified women in songs. Similarly, Amoah-Ramey (2016; 2018) highlights how a few female highlife musicians from the 1970s have laid the foundation for the ever-present female activities in Ghanaian popular music today. However, pioneering as they may be, these discourses pay little attention to the emerging periods of the country's popular music genres and styles. This thesis situates itself within the early periods of Ghanaian popular music, particularly highlife music, to examine and

understand how women were represented in the music tradition and for what they represented. These representations foreground our appreciation and understanding of how their representation contributes to developing a continuously evolving music tradition and culture where previous research has favoured their physical contributions as performers.

1.3. Research Objectives

This study seeks to:

i. examine the issues that surrounded women's patronage of highlife music and their exclusion from the popular performance space.

ii. examine and analyse the changing roles of women in the different contexts of highlife music as evidence of their representation.

iii. to systematise and document the experiences and contributions of female highlife legends like Edith Norteye as ways of preserving their legacy.

iv. investigate the representation of women in highlife songs of the period under study and explore how their representation contributed to shaping the highlife music tradition.

1.4. Research Questions

The following key questions guided the study:

How have women been represented in the Ghanaian highlife music tradition?

i. What issues surrounded women's patronage of highlife, and why were women excluded from popular music performance spaces?

ii. How do the changing roles of women in the developmental years of the music tradition speak to their representation?

iii. What are the experiences and contributions of female highlife legends like Edith Norteye and what strategies can be employed to preserve their legacy.

iv. What does understanding their representation in songs suggest to their contribution to developing highlife music in Ghana?

1.5. Significance and Scope of the Study

This study adds to the literature on women and their diverse representations in Ghanaian Highlife music and African musicology. One mode of inquiry does little to comprehensively understand women's representations. It has been taken for granted the fact of women's existence in highlife music and how such existence can be explored as an alternative way of understanding their contribution to the growth of the tradition. The gap this study fills is how the presence of women and their related themes within highlife songs have and continue to shape the music. This is done by exploring the representation of women in highlife music of the period under study. The exploration provides an alternative model for understanding the contributions of women to the music tradition, where literature has either focused on their physical presence or negative representations.

The study focuses on the representation of women in highlife songs from the 1940s to the 1960s. This period was characterised by a bustling popular music scene, emerging from the Second World War and its aftermath. It resulted in increased urban migration, prostitution, and new economic opportunities, especially for women. The 1960s signifies an increase in the number of women on the popular entertainment scene influenced by government policies after Ghana's independence, resulting in new and emerging song narratives about women within their newfound space and beyond. Also crucial to this period was the emergence of

commercialised bands whose patronage became the highlight of nightlife. Highlife emerged in the Gold Coast and later Ghana out of this context.

1.6. Literature Review

1.6.1. Highlife music

The body of works of John Collins provides contextual information on the music tradition under study. His works highlight the socio-cultural context within which highlife music emerged. In "The Early History of West African Highlife Music" (1989) and *Highlife Time 3*(2018), Collins provides a historical background to understanding the development of highlife music in Ghana. It mainly focuses on the early emergence period, examining socio-cultural contexts that led to the creation of highlife styles. These writings provide a basis for discussing the development of highlife music within the period under study, given its specific focus on contexts and the three main streams of the genre. Highlife songs that form the basis for analysis are sourced for analysis. In his paper on Ghanaian popular performance and urbanisation, Collins (2004) discusses the effects of rural-urban migration on highlife music and performance, particularly concerning a prostitution tag that came to be associated with women within these spaces. The paper further explores the relationship between urban spaces and highlife music and how women's representation in songs reflected their new and emerging statuses within urban centers. Collins (2007) explores the challenges affecting women's participation in popular entertainment in Ghana. His work provides insight into the perception of women in Ghanaian society before and after independence. This paper serves as a basis for further examination into how societal perceptions of women were incorporated into highlife songs of the period under study.

Asante-Darko and Van Der Geest (1983) explore gender roles and how both genders were represented in highlife songs. The representational themes that formed the basis for their

analysis cut across the various facets of life and how society perceived them. The paper provides a background in exploring how women were represented in highlife music within the period under study.

Nate Plageman's (2013), *Highlife Saturday Night: Popular Music and Social Change in Urban Ghana* explores how different urban residents used highlife music to express newfound identities and resistance against dominant social constructs in colonial and postcolonial Ghana. He contextualised these expressions within the ever-emerging urban recreational spaces of the Gold Coast, where both men and women had fun and used these spaces as mediums for "altering their gendered and generational standing" (p. 32). His work is relevant in discussing how the social construction of gender within colonial and early postcolonial Ghana played out within highlife performance spaces.

1.6.2. Women's Representation in Ghanaian Popular Music

Amoah-Ramey (2016) provides a historical and biographical study of the contributions of female highlife performers to the music's development. Her book provides ideological backgrounds for interrogating women's performance experiences in male-dominated careers. Citing examples from authors who have studied the contributions of women to world music, she explores how an ethnographic and biographic study of female highlife performers contribute to a historic bridge in the narrative of highlife music performers in Ghana. This research takes cognizance of the critical void this work fills. However, the period that precedes her focus remains to be examined. She foregrounds her choice of the 1970s onwards as owing to the lack of visible roles played by women within the popular performance space, seeming to suggest that women's roles within these spaces were invisible. However, accounts by Collins and Plageman have continuously reiterated the presence of women as active participants and

audiences of highlife music, much as their representation in songs. This thesis, therefore, explored how these seemingly invisible roles feature loudly as dance partners, performers, audiences, and in the songs of the period under study as a point of divergence. Amoah-Ramey's work provides a socio-cultural and historical background for this thesis towards understanding the challenges of women.

The presence of women within the Ghanaian popular music space attracted the interest of scholars who have explored their role and contributions to music in the country, particularly from the early 1970s. Amoah-Ramey (2016) examined the contributions of selected female highlife performers from the 1970s onward, focusing on how gender roles, challenges, and the perception of women within the music industry and society helped shape their careers as musicians. Her work highlights that female highlife performers have significantly contributed to the genre's evolution and survival in Ghana.

Adomako and Asiedu (2012) based their paper on a project exploring women's gendered stereotypes in popular music. The aim was the creation of alternative empowering representational narratives about women. Like any other art form, they affirm that music thrives on stereotypes and relies on them to create and convey messages. Highlife can reproduce or subvert gender constructions, especially among women. However, the tendency has been towards disempowering lyrics. They observe that although local songs praise women, there remains a persistence in the negative portrayal of women in the Ghanaian popular music scene. Notwithstanding their focus on disempowering lyrics, their paper presents diverse themes for examining women's representations as urban popular culture continues to shape and influence popular music narratives in Ghana.

These works advance arguments and provide academic knowledge, and literature on the presence of women within popular music spaces in Ghana. While Amoah-Ramey's seminal work focuses on the physical presence of women within highlife music, other narratives have focused on agency and women empowerment, highlighting the negative/stereotypical lyrical/textual portrayals of women within popular culture in Ghana and the quest to change such narratives. The background to such research and discourse has been that highlife songs have constantly been inundated with lyrics that portray women negatively. Such narratives have become even more crucial due to the popularity of music videos, which have become a prominent feature of popular music worldwide. The Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA) of the University of Ghana's project between 2007 and 2011 highlights the need for a change in how women have been represented in popular musical forms of the country, premised on the assumption that they have been negatively portrayed. Likewise, Anyidoho et al.'s (2016) report on women's roles, representation, and perceptions in contemporary Ghanaian society also highlights the common negative perceptions in the creative works of popular women musicians.

The continual presence of women-related themes within highlife music cannot be overemphasized. While the presence of women within the popular performance space may be conceptualised as restricted, their roles within traditional music performance spaces present otherwise. Several authors have explored the critical issues of gender and feminist concepts in traditional African musical practices. Nzewi and Galane (2005) explore the role of women within traditional African music practices, citing examples from Nigeria and South Africa. They "draw a critical version of the marginalised, suppressed, and idle Western woman, regarded as a mere rib, therefore, a mere fractional substance of the product of her gestation and lactation" These authors contrast this ideologised version of feminine identity with African

conceptualisations of feminine sensibilities grounded in traditional African music. Here, "gender attributes give meaning to societal action and discourse. Women predominate in musical creativity and music-making from childhood to advanced age." Considering the dominant role of the female spirit and force in the African psyche and worldview about music, these authors imply that music is a woman to the traditional African.

These worldviews lead to a conclusion on the perception of women within these cultures as being feminine, evident in music-making and performances. Idamoyibo (2008) notes that culture, dance, and drum ensembles are considered feminine even though men are responsible for playing the drums. While arguing on the demystified situation in contemporary Okpe culture, he notes that such restrictions for the women were for their protection, given the rigorous nature of drum playing and its effect on the women's bodies. The synonymous relationship between music and women cannot be over-emphasized within the mentioned culture. This paper, examine the gendered dimensions of musical activities within the African continent and their influence on its sustenance.

Viljoen (2014) explores how musical text confronts issues of gender and sexuality by redefining gender stereotypes. She refers to musical text as a contested site of constructing meaning that deserves critical scrutiny. She situates her work in a historical narrative to explain how the works of scholars like Susan Maclary (*Feminine Endings*: *Music, Gender and Sexuality*,1991) questioned the reliance on elite Western ideologies regarding music. She further refers to Kramer (1990), who captures her ideas as follows

> Cultural and critical musicology subscribe to the belief that works of music have discursive meanings, which may support critical readings comparable to interpretations of literary texts and cultural practices, that these meanings are not extramusical but inextricably bound up with the formal elements of

> compositions, and that these meanings are constructed as a part of the regulated practices and values of any particular production of culture.

This assertion lends credence to examining the musical text and, in this context, lyrics and how such examinations contribute to understanding musical cultures. Viljoen furthers her discussion by analysing how diverse ways musical texts offer alternative, subverted, and resistant narratives about women, which was crucial to understanding the representation of women in the selected songs for this study.

Koskoff's (2014:xiv) work explains ethnomusicology's interdisciplinary nature, referencing disciplines such as gender studies, literary criticism, women's studies, postcolonial studies, and anthropology. According to Koskoff, all these disciplines continue to influence discussions, causing us to rethink basic concepts such as music, man, woman, gender, and fieldwork (Koskoff: xiv). She further advances the narrative toward Feminist Ethnomusicology. She explains how questioning the lack of women's representations as performers, creators, and musicians' experiences led to what Norchiln (1971) called 'compensatory' 'or 'women's worth history.' She continues to offer insights into how gender roles and constructs are highly influenced by culture and the risk of superimposing her Western ideologies in researching other non-Western cultures. Koskoff's work helped situate my research within ethnomusicological studies with questions about how a society's gender ideology and resulting gender-related behaviours affect its musical thought and practice. These are realised in the songs representing women and the actions surrounding women's patronage of highlife music. Furthermore, it helped answer the question of how music functions in society to reflect or affect intergender relations, which she explores further in specific cultures. All of this literature shows the gap in

the writings about women and representation in Ghanaian popular music for which this dissertation explores.

1.7. Theoretical Position

This study is broadly framed within the representation theory proposed by Hall (1997). In speaking about language, he establishes that representation is an essential element that helps create meaning and exchange between cultural members. Similarly, Emielu (2011) discusses highlife music as a cultural phenomenon with texts having culturally embedded meanings. It is common knowledge that culture is dynamic and in constant change which Emielu affirms. He further notes that among the factors that defined highlife music as culture was social stratification, linking it to the ballroom context, out of which the term emerged and its patronage by people of a high class. However, the continued expansion and interest in ballroom activities will lead to the spread of highlife music beyond the confines of the ballroom. The implication was that highlife music now appeals to people of diverse social classes. Quite apart from this was the presence of women and their impact on the development of this culture. Women's representation in the music tradition is, therefore the focus of this study.

1.7.1. The Concept of Meaning

Meanings are constituted by what is present in representation and what is absent (Cannizzaro and Gholami, 2018). The representations of women in highlife music may not always reflect the realities of women's activities, behaviours, characters, and societal expectations. The reason is that such representations may be based on experiences and diverse relationships that may have been built between musicians and composers, men and women, within the period under study. Albertazzi and Cobley (2009:393) reiterate that "representations are never straightforward presentations; rather, they are illustrations of the world and the relationships

between people in it." Thus, meaning can be contested. The contested possibility in meaning creation allowed for songs to be analysed based on the possibility of a song's intention but, importantly, the meanings that can be inferred from them based on societal happenings and how these influenced the songs.

Butler (1993) shares these with the perspective she presents on the non-binary nature of gender. She argues that "culturally constituted genders are performed into being through enactment and repetition." This statement stresses the importance of the non-definitive nature of what is presented within the context of representation. Therefore, inferring from Butler's assertion, it becomes clear that as much as representations emanate from diverse experiences and perceptions, whatever is being presented becomes liable for further inferences based on who is at the receiving end of what is presented. It is thus possible to infer meanings from the themes and roles of women in highlife music based on their repetitive presentations.

Additionally, the polysemic nature of messages limits the total acceptance of preferred meanings and empowers the decoders, on the other hand, to interpret the message differently (Hall, 1980; Leve, 2012; du Gay et al., 2013). This idea has been foregrounded by Hall (1997) and Foucault (1980), noting that the production and exchange of meanings are ever-changing within historical, social, and cultural contexts, and representations enable the depiction of these changes.

My study reflects the constructionist representation approach, which acknowledges language's public and social character. It further acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. Thus, things do not mean; we

construct meaning using representational systems - concepts and signs- and give things meaning by representing them (Hall, 1997: 3).

1.8. Methodology

The research embraces the qualitative inquiry approach in its research design and analysis. Creswell (2013: 43 & 44) in his definition of the qualitative mode of inquiry argues that;

> Qualitative research is a situated activity the locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves and interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3).

Therefore, qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Planning a study requires the researcher to consider the philosophical assumptions they bring to the research and the choice of methods that make up the research design. Guba has defined the philosophical assumptions, also known as world views (1990:17), as "the basic set of beliefs that guide action." The beliefs guiding this research are based on the constructivist worldview or social constructivism.

Authors who explored this approach include Berger and Luckmann's (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality* and Lincoln and Guba's (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. More recent writers include Lincoln and colleagues (2011), Mertens (2010), and Crotty (1998), among others. Social constructivists believe that individuals seek an understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences, meanings

directed toward particular objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas (Sagepub.com). These ideas fit into the theoretical framework which influences this research.

Based on the above meanings, the thesis sought to understand the diversity of women's representations in Ghanaian highlife music from the 1940s to the 1960s. This focus makes the study a historical one and thus requires methods that can lead to accessing the relevant historical data needed for analysis. These methods include data collection through fieldwork, which involves archival search, interviews, and library resources for secondary data collection, leading to data analysis and interpretation.

1.8.1. Archival field Collections

Archival fieldwork for this study was conducted on a physical archival site and from online archival resources. Making the conduct of archival research for this study a twofold phase. – The focus archives for this study were the Nketia Archive of the Institute of African Studies and the Newspaper Archive of the University of Ghana. I conceptualise the use of the archive from an experiential perspective, which also forms a component of coursework for my doctoral studies. Experiential learning requires being attached to an organisation or institution, which can potentially become a resource site for the thesis. In this capacity, I chose to be attached to the Nketia archive because of its potential to expose me to song records from the period's under study. The historical nature and scope of the research make the archive an essential source for gathering data. Lambrecht (2012) cites Harris Berger (2002:161), who considers the archive a primary raw material source to produce history. The two assertions are important for

understanding that an archive is where information can be gathered and analysed to understand history and make meanings out of historical occurrences.

The experiential phase is also considered my preliminary data collection and survey phase. During this period, I was introduced to the musical records in the archive's holdings. Therefore, I explore experiential learning as a methodological approach.

1.8.2. Experiential Learning as a Methodological Approach

Per discussions with the Senior archivist of the J.H. Kwabena Nketia Archives Mrs. Judith Opoku-Boateng, my learning was tailored towards exploring the archive as a site for data collection and knowing about the archive's operations. After the introductory tour of the archive, I was attached to one other Research Assistant, Mr. Nathaniel Worlanyo, who was responsible for digitizing records, taking interns and National Service Personnel through archival processes, and treating and restoring damaged records. From interacting with him, I understood the processes and equipment used by Prof Nketia during his many field recordings, all of which have been digitized for easy access by researchers.

Subsequent weeks after the introduction (mid-February to the end of March 20201) were dedicated to the listening area of the archive. In this section, I was taken through the digitized recordings of Prof. Nketia. These records are digitized according to their catalog style, mostly a combination of alphabets and numbers. Examples include AWG W 11 a; this catalog number has several recordings, including King Onyina's Band performance recording. Onyina's band was one of the popular bands of the 1940s and 1950s; thus, locating a recorded performance made for essential listening to identify relevant songs for my research. Other examples include

AWG W 14 - Bob Cole, AWG W 06 a- E K Nyame's Band, AWG W 07 a - E K Nyame and Onyina's Band in performance. AWG W 17a- Guitar Band concert.

Cataloging was an essential means of locating records in the archive. Catalogs starting with 'AWG' also represent recordings from the Ashanti Region of Ghana. 'W' stands for catalogs with highlife recordings. A catalog book helped identify records with highlife music performances as part of the recordings. Identification of records was necessary because one catalog may have a combination of *adowa*, *kete*, *borborbor*, *nwonkoro,* and highlife recordings. Because of this challenge, I mostly had to forward play to avoid listening through long hours of recording to get to what was relevant. This process was one means of identifying bands and songs of the period. The cataloged books included titles of songs and sometimes the names of band members, which was also crucial for identifying if there were any women as part of the bands. This process highlighted the challenges in the recording process as researchers had to exhaust one record before moving on to the next. Researchers maximized the opportunities for exhausting the space on a record side before turning to the other. As a result, different musical genres exit on one recording and have been cataloged and digitized as such. Perhaps further cataloging and digitizing to reflect specific genres might make researching easier. However, given my position as an experiential learner, it was worth understanding the process because it also led to new insights toward data collection.

Through the listening sessions, I could identify some women-related song titles and narratives from guitar bands/concert parties and dance bands. An example is a concert party recording by the Ahanta Trio bordering on marriage and the woman's role. In the play, a father parades his daughters for a possible suitor who had returned from the big city searching for a wife, which was common in colonial Ghana in the early half of 1900. Within this narrative, several themes

are realized, such as prostitution, wealth, and misogyny, amongst others, out of which emerged such songs as "*deɛ ehuo*," a cheap version of the white man's cloth (gabardine). Women preferred their men to wear white men's clothes, showing their disdain for local clothes (*deɛ ehuo*) represented in the song. Linking such narratives to the songs helped analyse the diverse ways women negotiated their roles within the period under study and how these were represented in songs.

Themes/findings that emanated from the diverse concert party and guitar band listening are:

1. The use of Fante Language in most songs and dialogues
2. The relationship between marriage and the chief's court was that unmarried young women of colonial Ghana received fines and sometimes imprisonment until a suitor claimed them
3. The thin line between marriage and prostitution, especially among women
4. Men's marital prospects were influenced by their wealth
5. The concept of "women are everywhere" (*mmɛsiafo wabudo* concept) is commonly used by male suitors
6. Araba (a popular name in many concerts)
7. Good time girls (as referenced by Collins)
8. "I have given you into marriage" concept ("*Mede wo ama aware*" concept)

These findings formed a critical component of the song text analysis chapter. While Nketia's recordings resulted in some data, expanding the research beyond his recordings was needed. His recordings are limited to and revolve around specific bands like the Ahanta Trio, Fante Trio, Onyina's, Newton's guitar, and a few dance bands like the Tempos Band.

Since the archive is not entirely digitised, the second phase of Experiential Learning and data collection at the archive required a hands-on approach. This phase started between October and December 2021. The process involved taking records out of their holders and cleaning them with gloved hands in a circular motion by positioning the middle or forefinger at the record's centre and the thumb at the edge to avoid scratching. Cleaning is done with a soft wipe and water.

I also learned how to operate a turntable for playing records. Most records have never been played at the archive; cleaning them maximized the chances of hearing. Having been taken through these procedures, I had the task of sorting through over a hundred highlife records and making a selection for later listening. The task of sorting through records was also to arrange them on their shelves according to the cataloging style, as all the records were mixed up.

Despite the exposure to a few songs from the period, there was the need to sample from a wide variety. Therefore, I had to employ various means of selection to maximize the possibilities of getting songs with women-related themes. The selection process was through purposive sampling by year and name of the record label. The method was also used for the titles of songs. A random sampling of records was also adopted as the possibility of a song having a woman-related theme is not always obvious. They had to be listened to before a decision could be made. Several records were selected as part of the delimitation process through these diverse sampling methods; the number of selected songs was kept in a records box provided to me by the archive technician.

November and December 2021 were dedicated to listening to the selected records to ascertain their relevance to the research. About three hours were spent twice a week each day listening to and writing out the lyrics of the songs, which I thought would be beneficial to my research.

Several pauses had to be made in the listening process to think through what was being heard, and sometimes, it took several listening to make meaning in writing. About ten songs were transcribed, and tentative themes are explored in chapter four of the thesis. Amongst these themes are:

1. Women as housekeepers
2. A thin line between marriage and a woman's worth in society
3. Barrenness and its attendant challenges in marriage from family and society
4. The worth of the mother
5. Women's love for money

1.8.3. Archival Newspaper Resources

Newspapers at the Archive are an essential source for information on highlife besides books and articles reviewed. A preliminary search provided evidence of advertisements about places for highlife patronage (within these spaces, women could patronize for free) and a newspaper dedicated to the coverage of women-related issues of the period under study: Sunday Mirror. These advertisements provide evidence of women's patronage of highlife music and the perception of women within this period as imageries into how their patronage/perception was represented in songs.

Among the advantages of the archive is discovering something unexpected that may save time and provide much-needed information about my research. In my situation, using the newspaper archive at the Institute of African Studies library led to the discovery of a popular female radio singer of the period under study in the Sunday Mirror. The paper started on the Gold Coast in the early 1950s and catered to women-related news and entertainment. Employing the snowballing methods of sharing my research work led to a meeting and subsequent series of

interview sessions with this woman. While exploring the newspaper archive is essential, the anchorages accompanying specific pictures, like that of the woman in question, provide little information, hence the importance of using the sources as evidence for further questions and research that can provide meanings to the newspaper source. In this light, I explored the ethnographic approach through interviews of older people who experienced highlife music during the period under study.

1.8.4. Interview Sessions

Kathari (2004) asserts that the interview method can be used through personal and sometimes telephone interviews. This interview format is a qualitative data collection technique that aided in collecting needed information (Tates et al., 2009; UXalliance, 2020). The need for interviews in this study was to seek ethnographic perspectives from older persons who had some experience with highlife music and could share their perspectives on women and highlife music performances of the period under study. Such persons are well between the ages of 50 to 80 years of age. The snowballing technique was relevant in contacting such persons by sharing my research ideas at the early stages of writing. The method was also deployed to interview a female performer of the period who remains undocumented but was popular on radio and in performance circles of the period under study.

I employed the semi-structured interview guide or schedule. It enabled me to address a defined topic while allowing the informants to answer on their own terms and to discuss issues and topics pertinent to the phenomenon (Choak, 2012). The interview guide also allowed other relevant themes to develop throughout the interview (Blandford, 2013).

1.8.5. Exploring the Online Archive

Exploring the British Library music archive, which is accessible online, was highly beneficial to my research, given the music records that are of focus for this study. A partly free online database made it a readily accessible space for sampling and listening to records that could be included in my population. While these sources are available, it is essential to note that most highlife records of the early period of the music tradition are in the holdings of foreign organizations and institutions with limited physical access. Thus, as much as this database is essential, I continued to explore other avenues of accessing highlife records that fit into the study period and capture women-related themes.

1.8.6. Data Transcription and Data Analysis

The data collected was carefully analysed to reflect the objectives and answer the study's research questions. According to Bailey (2008), data transcription is the first step in data analysis, playing an essential role in research on spoken discourse (Edwards and Lampert 2014). In this context, the transcription of selected highlife songs speaks to women-related issues from the period under study. Transcriptions of recorded interviews were also done; all these constitute data for analysis or sense-making. According to Ngulube (2015:1), data analysis transforms raw data by searching, evaluating, recognising, coding, mapping, exploring, and describing patterns, trends, themes, and categories in the raw data. The process of analysis helps in the classification of themes and deducing inferences towards meaningmaking from the collected data (Flick 2014:5).

The forgoing statement makes thematic analysis an essential component of the data analysis process. According to (Braun & Clark, 2013:177), the process is vital for identifying themes and patterns of meaning across a data set concerning a research question. With this, a thematic analysis based on content aided in responding to one of the study's research objectives to

explore the diverse representations of women in highlife from the period under study. Conceptualizing women's roles as evidence of their representations, which are then explored by situating them in the period under study in terms of their participation as audiences, as performers, dance partners, and in songs.

Sampled songs were listened to and transcribed into English as songs of this period were predominantly in either Fante, Twi, or Ga and English. These songs were then thematized based on issues inherent in them and subjected to analysis based on the theoretical underpinnings of the study.

1.9. Chapter Outline

This thesis has six chapters, the introductory chapter examined the reasons behind the need for a study that focuses on the representations of women from the early periods of highlife music's development. It provides a background to the study, noting the gap in research on women concerning highlife music from the early period and the need to focus on their diverse roles as evidence of their contribution to the music tradition. It also examined the various methodological approaches that led to collecting relevant data for the research. As part of the method, I explored the experiential phase of my studies as a methodological approach. I capitalised on the experience in sampling highlife records, which formed a part of the larger population of songs from which final songs were delimited. My experience at the archive also brought to bear the need for continuous digitization of highlife records and the need for restitution of records in the holdings of Western Institutions with limited access.

Chapter two engaged a theoretical discussion on postcolonial feminist theory and its use as the broader framework around which the thesis revolves. Chapter three provides a historical

exploration of the different contexts in the development of highlife music and the roles of women within these spaces. This leads to chapter four which engages an analysis of selected highlife songs as ways of alternatively understanding women's roles and contribution to the development of highlife music. Chapter five emphasises the discussions in chapters three and four by presenting an ethnographic narrative of the contribution of Edith Norteye (Adorable Adorant) who was a female performer on radio in the early 1950s. Chapter six provides a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for possible future research.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STUDY

2. Introduction

This thesis is broadly framed within the theoretical framework of postcolonial feminist theory. This theory encompasses the concept of representation and meaning creation, which is the core focus of the study. In this study, I examine women's representation in highlife music in terms of their roles as musicians/performers, audiences, dance partners, print media, and songs. The diverse representations are examined from the contexts within which the different highlife music styles[1] emerged and were performed through selected songs of the period under study. The development of highlife music within a colonised society makes women's roles in such a tradition an even more important site for examination since colonialism connotes a sense of patriarchy evident in the highlife music and in other writings by scholars in feminist scholarship around the world Adomako and Asiedu (2012), Spivak (2013), and Omibiye-Obidike (1987).

Gunjate and Shivaji (2012) refer to the work of Spivak (1988), who contests Western feminist ideologies about women. In 1892, the Governor General of British India passed a legal act banning the practice of Sati[2]under British rule. This act was characterised as barbaric and brutal and viewed by the British as murder. This act was an attempt at speaking on behalf of people who could not speak for themselves against the aggression of a Hindu male. According to Spivak, the act was presented as the case of "white men saving brown women from brown men." Spivak further argues on the fact of an ulterior motive undergirding such an act where the justification of the Sati as barbaric made it legitimate to embark on a civilising mission.

[1] As mentioned in the previous chapter thus proto highlife, dance bands, military (brass) and guitar bands. [2] A historical practice by widowed Hindu women in India where they burnt themselves to death on the pyre of their husbands.

Contrary to the views of the colonialist, the woman did not need saving from a barbaric custom or male-imposed practices, but she "mounts the pyre of her husband out of her desire."(p, 93) She addresses such issues of coloniality and the subordinate role it invariably imposes on the people, especially women, and unravels how such subordinate people can achieve a voice. Western feminist writers assumed that all women shared a common identity based on a "shared experience of oppression" (Gunjate and Shivaji, 2012). Thus, postcolonial feminist critics argue that the concerns of Western feminist writers are not necessarily the concerns of all women because of the difference in the social position of women in different geographical contexts, which invariably produce different problems and responses. For example, Chattopadhyay[2] (2019), in a lecture on Spivak's paper, affirms that one of the agenda of postcolonial criticism is to "dismantle the Eurocentric world view which colonialism has normalized and marginalized numerous indigenous cultural and epistemic traditions across colonised parts of the world."

This thesis interrogates some Western perceptions about women and music-making concerning the early periods of highlife music to highlight the metaphoric presence of women in highlife music in line with Chattopadhyay's view of the dismantling of Eurocentric views through textual analysis of songs. The song *Yaa Amponsah* and its rhythm present a typical example of the metaphoric presence of women in highlife songs. It reverberates in many highlife songs of the period under study and beyond. It is a woman's name and has been recorded by several highlife bands while the rhythm continues to be incorporated into contemporary compositions and recordings. This influence is evidence for re-examining the role of women in highlife music from a postcolonial feminist perspective to understand whether or not the woman had a voice.

[2] He has a YouTube channel called Postcolonial Literature where he uploads lectures on the theory. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IoSLD5C8RVQ&t=36s

Other examples of women's metaphorical presence include the use of female impersonators in guitar bands and concert parties. Much as the woman's presence is eliminated in the concert party space, her representation signifies a metaphoric presence that cannot be taken for granted. Within this context, men dressed as women mimicked women's voices and acted to their audiences' amusement; the woman was, therefore, never absent. Amongst the reasons given for the absence of women in concert parties and guitar bands is the rough life on the road for bandsmen, which involved sleeping on the floor sometimes.[3]

Culturally, women's participation has always been high within the traditional music context. Still, there was a gap in the transition to the popular performance space. What caused these gaps and led to writings about women not participating in popular music? In a culture where music is a communal affair with the existence of all traditional female ensembles like *Adzewa*[4] *and Adenkum*[5]*, Nsuie*[6]*,* what caused a break in terms of women's participation in popular music? How did music-making become a solely male affair in popular music?

My thesis takes cognizance of the relationship between feminism, gender, and music. It combines the ethnographic approach with historical data in exploring through the postcolonial feminist lens the representations of women in highlife music from the nascent years of the music's development. Koskoff (2014) iterates that there has always been a historical intersection of feminism, gender, and music, which she discusses in her book *A Feminist Ethnomusicology - Writings on Music and Gender (2014)*. Koskoff privileges the ethnographic

[3] Interview with John Collins at his residence on 14th Dec, 2023.
[4] An all-female ensemble found mostly in the Central Region of Ghana.
[5] Adenkum is an all-female gourd ensemble found in the Ashanti, central and Eastern parts of Ghana. Its origin is traced to the Asantehene's court amongst his wives and to an all-female voluntary association in the Eastern Region of Ghana. There are several narratives on its origins.
[6] Nsuie is made up of elderly women who cry and eulogize the dead whiles they are laid in state.

approach to data collection, which, according to her, "offers direct interactions with living people which results in more satisfying pictures than those of more critical and interpretive studies where one is often distanced by time and spaces" (Koskoff 2024:4). In line with the above, the thesis presents an ethnographic discussion of the life and experience of a female musician who, apart from the newspapers, has been undocumented in the writings of women musicians from the period under study.

2.1. Postcolonial Feminist Theories

Mishra (2013) refers to postcolonial feminism as a “critique of the homogenizing tendencies of Western feminism” (p.129). He asserts that its activists seek to bring the problems of once colonised third-world countries to the fore, which also connotes an Other. In this sense, he conceptualises postcolonial feminism as an intersection between colonialism and neocolonialism with issues of gender, class, race, and sexuality in different contexts of women's lives (Schwarz and Ray, 2005). Mishra (2013) further reiterates that it behooves feminists of postcolonial origins to share these contextual experiences of difference. As mentioned earlier, Mishra further highlights the concept of the Other, constituting the starting point of feminism within a postcolonial frame. This frame focuses on the "ordinary woman in a particular place" (p.130). Her situation in this place is conceived with other broad issues to give her the "powerful basis of a collectivity" (130). This assertion in perspective gives the women within highlife music of the 1940s to the 1960s an opportunity to be situated within the developmental phases of the genre of which focus has either been on their invisible presence or their negative representation and how all of these diverse representations contribute to an understanding of their roles in the development of the music tradition. It probably makes the focus on a female musician influential since her experiences, concerning broader issues of women and the highlife space of the period under study, are discussed. Mishra thus cautions on the need to

move away from seeing postcolonial literature as writings "coming after empire, postcolonial literature" (p130) to that which engages scrutiny of the relationship, aimed at resisting colonial perspectives and reshaping dominant meanings. Postcolonial feminism, according to Mishra, emerged out of the gendered history of colonialism fostered by an overlook of the oppression of women in colonised countries.

Key to this theory by its writers is the issue of representation. There is a joint disagreement by postcolonial feminist early writers with US women of color about the idea of a universal woman. These writers have, therefore, called for a focus on the specifics of this woman concerning race, class, gender, and sexuality, amongst others. Within this call has been the aim of getting such supposed first-world women to recognise the difference and "the historical specificity of women in other places and times" (Mishra 2013:131).

Postcolonial feminist theory thus recognises that subordination that the subaltern suffers occurs in different forms and places, with women enjoying different levels of power and being victims of subjugation (Krishnaraj, 2002, cited in Mishra 2013). From the Ghanaian perspective, it becomes essential to understand women's roles in music-making and performance and how such roles became a contested space with the influence of foreign music and the emergence of popular music (highlife music).

Tyagi (2014) affirms, much like Mishra, that postcolonial feminist theory is "concerned with the representation of women in once colonised countries (45). Its theorists focus on the gender difference in colonial discourses aimed at critiquing the misrepresentations of women. Tyagi notes that postcolonial feminist theories raise some questions that border on the methodological, conceptual, and political issues that essentially come into play in studying

gender representation. He further argues that while the postcolonial theorists struggle with his misrepresentation, the postcolonial feminist suffers from a "double colonisation." Kirsten Holst Peterson and Anna Rutherfold coined this term. They refer to the term as women's simultaneous experience of the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy from their state as a colonised subject and as a woman (45). This definition affirms the role of the colonised male as an accomplice to the coloniser, for which examples exist in newspapers of the Gold Coast predominantly controlled by men and probably other scholarly writings. Their assertion, however, almost seems to suggest that all feminists may be women, perhaps also because of the concerns raised about postcolonial theory being a male-dominated space that does not consider women's issues. It is these misrepresentations that post-colonialists are accused of that concern postcolonial feminist theorists to correct such presentations within national discourses.

Highlife music is Ghana's foremost popular music genre, and its influence continues to reverberate in terms of lyrics and rhythm in many contemporary genres. Discourses, especially about its early development, have always focused on the men as leaders of bands with references to women as mere participants whose roles as audiences and dancers are the most mentioned. Such projections do not offer enough representation towards understanding women's role in the genre's development. This reason necessitates an examination through the postcolonial feminist lens of such misrepresentations in song lyrics, which have been chiefly analysed for their negative portrayals of women.

Riyal (2019), writing on *Postcolonialism and Feminism*, states that the most crucial disagreement between postcolonial theorists and feminists has been "over women in the third world" (Riyal 2019:83). The author argues that postcolonial theorists' focus only on racial politics dismisses the "double colonization situation of women under imperialist rule." He

affirms the dual victimisation women suffer due to indigenous and alien ideologies. He references the work of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, who further explains what a third-world woman means amongst Western postcolonial feminists and how such labeling affirms colonisation. Mohanty writes that "the third world woman" connotes two layers of meaning, which is colonialism's nature. These two layers are explained by Ghandi (1998:cited in Riyal 2019) as “Eurocentric myopia that disregards the material and historical difference between real third-world women and so referring to them as an Other becomes a self-consolidating project for western feminism.” This statement by Gandhi provides a different explanation for the concept of double colonisation, which the third-world woman suffers arguing about the supposed immaturity of the third-world woman against her forward-thinking Western counterpart. Such labelling has allowed for references to the third-world woman as ignorant, poor, and uneducated, all of which aim at providing privileges for the Western feminist who deems it her job to represent this woman. In this scenario, the Western feminist presents herself as educated and having control over her family, sexuality, and body while misrepresenting the African woman. Such ideas about the third-world woman have led to her misrepresentation based on her 'inability' to reproduce or represent herself. Such misrepresentations concern this thesis, especially regarding highlife music and women's metaphorical presence, which has been taken for granted as a space for exploring women's contributions to the genre.

Gunjati and Shivaji (2012) bemoan the challenges the "postcolonial woman" faced. They address how such terms have led to the oversimplification of this woman's experiences regarding her position in postcolonial feminist discourses and as a colonised woman. Such challenges necessitate an exploration of how Africans perceived the concept of feminism and how their narratives negate Spivak's assertion of the subaltern not being able to speak. This concerns the question of representation, as the authors raised in the preceding pages.

In Spivak's essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” she asks whether the subaltern can speak. The term subaltern did not originate with Spivak, but her contributions to theorising the term link her to it. It was Ranajit Guha who first introduced this term in his article titled "On Some Aspects of Historiography of Colonial India”. In this article, he talks about the subordination in South Asian Society, out of which it became a part of postcolonial studies. This term subaltern was picked on by Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), a communist imprisoned by the fascist Mussolini police in 1926. The term here connotes different meanings: In postcolonial studies and critical studies, it refers to "a group of people subordinate to the hegemonic group or classes," where hegemony connotes an exercise of authority with brute force. Guha defined the term as connoting all classes of people that do not fall under the elite category. For Spivak, the characterising feature of this Subaltern Position is that "no speech is possible from here." This statement ties in with the work of other postcolonial feminist writers who are obliged to represent third-world women but also with the critique of such writers and their Othering of the third-world woman. In the case of Highlife, speeches were possible here.

From the three definitions provided, it becomes clear that the Ghanaian woman of the colonised period was not brutalised or suppressed in the proportions suggested, even though the British also colonised Ghana. Women were not people who did not fall within the elite class as the term highlife emerged amongst a high class. Plageman (2013) refers to ladies (nwuraanom)[7] without whom a gentleman (Okrakyeni)[8] would not dance in the ballroom. Women thus contributed to the realisation of highlife music within the ballroom. Plageman further references how men were supposed to cater to an invited lady's refreshments and provide her

[7] Nwuraanom refers to educated women of the Gold Coast who came from reputable families and were considered as dance companions and marriage prospects for unmarried Akrakyefo of the literary clubs as discussed in chapter 3.

[8] Okrakyeni is an educated man of the Gold Coast who belonged one of the many literary clubs within whose performance spaces the term Highlife emerged.

with seating throughout an event. The conscious efforts made by men to include women within their all-male entertainment functions speak to women's importance in realising such events.

Despite women's minimal presence as performers, their metaphorical presence is affirmed in terms of their names being used in highlife songs, for example, *Obaa B* by Yamoah's band, *Augustina* by Ani Johnson, and the Black Santiago's band, *Doris* by Akumanis's guitar band, *Auntie Christie* by Somuah's band and *Mansah* by K. Gyasi's guitar band. Others with women related themes include *Cedi Special* by K. Yamoah and his band *Yaa Yaa anwo Ba* by the African Brothers band, Moon *Die Love* by the Africa Brothers band, *Gyantra Nye Adwuma* by Fanti's Star Band, and *Kumasi Aketesia* by Somuah's band. In a few instances, women's voices seem to be heard in this period, reinforcing their wants and needs regarding love and relationships, like the song *Nothing but a Man's Slave* by Julie Okine and the Tempos Band, one of the few notable female highlife musicians of the period under study.

In many other aspects of women's lives from the period under study, authors have spoken of women's resistance and contributions to other aspects of life, like in print media history in the Gold Coast and the activism of elite women of the Gold Coast (Akurrang Pare 2004, Gadzepo 2005). However, when it comes to music from the early period of Ghana, the narrative has been subsumed under broader male hegemonic happenings of which the women were observers/participants in the Ghanaian context whose voices do not add anything towards an understanding of the music tradition. According to Aidoo (2022)

> A proper history of Ghana, that is, one showing the position, role, and contribution of women to the country's development, has yet to be written. Standard works by historians and other social scientists of the country show very

> little appreciation for women who in the past participated in the events which shaped our history (187).

I agree with Aidoo's statement as it reflects the need for this study, given that the place of women in contributing to the development of highlife music from its early period has not been explored for the diversity of such representations. As discussed in chapters three and four, these representations feature prominently in songs and the different contexts of the music's development. Perhaps this has led to the question by Fenton-Smith (1989) of what a feminist history of music might look like. With Smith's question in hindsight, I question the lack of narratives that explore women's contribution to the development of highlife music during the nascent years of its development.

While some works by Collins (2007) recount some of the stories by women of their encounters trying to join highlife bands, Fenton Smith asserts that there cannot be one feminist history of music. Reference is made to Collin's work as comprising an example of works that capture women's experiences within highlife spaces of the period under study. Thus, although this thesis focuses on the lyrics to offer glimpses of how colonialism impacted women's representation in songs, the narrative of the experiences of hitherto unheard voices of female performers is crucial as it foregrounds an attempt at a historical ethnography that may legitimise their representation in songs. The non-existence of a study exploring women's involvement with music in its early period is a subaltern state that necessitates research. This study is critical because of the voice it offers to women and the continuous repercussions of the subaltern state on women and contemporary music engagements. These are manifested in performance, women in music education, and as performers. Perhaps the exception will be for gospel music, where the impact of colonialism through Christianity may have "liberated the "colonised African woman to perform freely."

2.2. African Feminist Research and Women's Representations in Popular Music

The previous narrative has focused on the works of postcolonial feminist writers from outside Africa. Given the positionality of the thesis within an African context, it becomes essential to have insights from African postcolonial feminist writers. According to Gqola (2001:15), the spaces within which black women with a feminist consciousness congregate are about breaking new ground, making new meanings, and redefining the terms of our participation in all discourses". This statement captures the objective of the thesis, aimed at making new meanings out of the narratives about highlife music of the 1940s to the 1960s and women's representations within it. These representations create meanings from their passive presentation as musicians, dancers/dance partners in media texts and songs. The thesis does this while acknowledging the conflicts and challenges accompanying these representations and how these challenges legitimise women's roles and participation in highlife music.

Colonialist texts, such as the songs that form the basis for analysis in this thesis, "present the cohabitation of a multiplicity of contradictions "(Nfah-Abbenyi,1997:261). These contradictions offer the opportunity for alternative readings of such text. Nfah-Abbenyi iterates on the need to acknowledge that postcolonial women's writings require a different form of theorising since these women are burdened by "a twice disabling discourse" (p.262). In this sense, the woman is burdened by the forces of colonial narratives, the homogenising tendencies of postcolonial feminist discourse, and the Othering of the third-world woman. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994), in Gqola (2001), describes these forces as "metaphorically six mountains," which are not overwhelming although strenuous, but affirms the fact of the non-passive existence of the African woman. African feminist writers thus provide a contextual discussion on issues of

feminism, which works at affirming the idea of difference that characterises the work of postcolonial feminist writers while challenging the tendency to homogenise such differences. Oyewumi (1997) does this in her book "*The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourse*. She does this by arguing that gender within Yoruba society is intertwined with the process of colonial rule in Nigeria. She analyses the family organisation, labor, language, religion, and oral tradition in forwarding her argument of the concept of gender as not constituting a "Yoruba conceptual framework for making sense of the social world" Coetzee (2018:2). Oyewumi uses the idea of the relational concept of subjectivity which is dominant in African philosophy. This idea was based on Kwasi Wiredu and Masolo's relational notion of subjectivity. According to Masoslo (2010) in Coetzee (2018:4), "the fact that the metaphysics of individual identity is almost unimaginable without a community to make it possible is a crucial and distinguishing point between Africa and other philosophical traditions, especially the Western variety." In simple terms, the subject in the African sense exists in relation to others, making the African a communal subject defined regarding an embodied existence and interaction with other subjects (Coertzee 2018:5). Oyewumi thus relates this to the Yoruba precolonial Oyo culture. She writes

> In the Yorùbá world, particularly in pre-nineteenth-century Oyo culture, society was conceived to be inhabited by people in relation to one another. Social hierarchies were determined by social relations. [H]ow persons were situated in relationships shifted depending on those involved and the particular situation (1997:13).

In this sense, subjectivity was not determined by body type, as there is an inherent relationality that makes the question of the subject a fluid one. Oyewumi disregards "woman" in the colonial gender system, which is based on physical attributes as a determining factor of what one can do. This idea resonates with Menkiti's (1984: 172) idea that the "African subject is defined by the community rather than an isolated quality." While Oyewumi's work has received much

acclaim, there have also been criticisms, amongst them the dismissal of the non-existence of gender in the precolonial community by Mama (2001). Others like Bakare-Yusuf (2003:122) criticize her "oppositional and rejectionist attitude towards influence from elsewhere." Essentially, Oyewumi rejects the imposition of Western categories on non-Western cultures and the projection of such categories as natural. However, such naturalisations characterise women's participation in popular music on the Gold Coast. Women always played significant roles in traditional music making and performance; however, the popular performance space presented a break furthered by the colonialist perception of women in relation to music performances and the acceptance of such ideologies by local elites who actively assisted in sanctioning the popular performance space for women.

Galane and Nzewi (2005) share the philosophical underpinnings for understanding gender roles in the African context. However, they do this from a musical perspective. They bemoan the adverse effect of modernism on traditional gender roles and power play. They argue that the issue of power play in the West leads to a silenced Western woman who looks to a place away from home to garner the visibility she was denied. Much like the Western man, Galane and Nzewi (2005) argue that the Western woman sets her sights on Africa, having been colonised already by her male counterpart. Within this space, the Western woman "elects herself as the champion of the emancipation of fully emancipated African womanhood" (p.72). The result is the imposition of Western social, cultural, and gender problems on Africa's cultural practices, leading to discourses that border on empowerment, discrimination, and marginalisation of which elite men and women were accomplices. In this context, therefore, the idea of the subaltern does not apply to the African context since there were women and men in elite positions.

Furthermore, the term highlife music emerged from an elitist context where both men and women attended ballroom dances. However, perhaps it is the fact that women's participation contributes to shaping the highlife tradition, which has not received much scholarship, that poses the most concern for this research. Plageman (2013) acknowledges the participation of these elite women, known as "nwuraanom"; however, his discussion focuses on their role in serving the interests of single Akrakyefo who viewed these women as prospects for marriage. However, beyond the marriage prospects, women's participation in ballroom dancing was crucial to realising performance without whom a male would not step on the dance floor.

Having set the background, Galane and Nzewi discuss the issue of gender and power within Africa. Here, they emphasize the relevance of philosophy and metaphysical roles played by both men and women such that no gender roles suffered any form of "repression nor the attendant socio-emotional stresses" (Galane and Nzewi 2005:73). While the male spirit manifested physically, the female spirit manifested as discreet but with the ultimate power; “the man ordered the woman; the woman managed the house" (p.73). The woman was respected as the processor of life, given the high premium of their ability to bear and nurture. They continue to link these roles and music-making in the African context.

They argue that "music is accorded sacred regard similar to the reverence paid to the Mother Earth Deity as a fecund and effective metaphysical force that sustains human existence" (73). Therefore, musicians who create and perform music types conceived and deployed to transact social, religious, and political mandates in African cultures are accorded priestly regard in performance circumstances. They do this examination using the Kiba musical art theatre of the Pedi and Igbo people, describing how the set-up and instrumental makeup for performance signifies the people's worldview. The innermost circle for the drummers symbolises the womb

and the source of life from which all offspring will emerge and play the drum. The middle circle comprises men who play single-pitched pipes, which symbolize individuality and temporalness, unlike the womb, which connotes a sense of permanency. The outer circle protects all of its circles and is represented by a senior female citizen who stands for "wisdom and an "embodiment of history, guardians of the present and the seers of the future (74).

Amongst the Igbo, they reference how a "creative genius," irrespective of the gender of the musician, is regarded as the "mother of music" (*nne egwu*), where the concept of mothering connotes giving birth to new musical ideas. The prominent role of the woman is also felt in the naming and musical roles of instruments. Female instruments are more prominent, have a deeper tone, and play the mother instrument's leading role in directing the ensemble. These reasons, amongst others, like women having to play instruments like the drum in the absence of men due to migration for the sustenance of the music tradition, led to their conclusion of music being a metaphysical woman. Consequently, the role played by the woman went beyond her physical attributes to the philosophical and psychological role she played within society. The above reviews of Nzewi and, Galane, and Oyewumi reinforce the woman's role in African society as going beyond her physical presence to an understanding of her philosophical role within specific contexts. Such philosophical roles guide an understanding of their everpresence in music making and performance and inform this study's need.

Chinouriri (2015), writing on *The Place of Women in Zimbabwean Musical Arts*, adds her voice to the abovementioned authors. She dismisses the question of the woman being only worth a man's rib by presenting it as a question in her topic. To the question, she answers that men and women in Zimbabwean society had "well-defined roles and obligations that were specific and exclusive to their respective genders (Oyekan Owomoyela, 2002:91). Her answer, however, is

contrary to the roles of men and women within Oyo culture which Oyewumi discusses as having fluid roles regardless of gender. The difference realised lends credence to acknowledging the differences even within African cultures and avoiding the risk of generalisations. Such risk of generalisations is the focus of postcolonial feminist writers, even though concerns have been raised about the tendency to assume a general difference that does not reflect in the specifics of cultures on the continent.

Chinourir examines her question from an Africana womanist perspective, where there is a collectivist liberation struggle and a focus on the family. She argues that because of the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society, its music presents gender stereotypes. This, however, begs the question of whether matrilineal societies do not produce music stereotypes. She explores how musical arts represent these gender roles and their conformity to acceptable or deviant behaviors. Women within the Zimbabwean indigenous society were seen as the first teachers of the musical arts from the time of conception to the time of death. Women composed lullabies and found ways of minimising tension within polygamous marriages through their songs. Such songs in public may call attention to ill-treatment by a first wife and eventually lead to resolutions. She also calls attention to certain derogatory traditional verbal expressions found in everyday expressions that affect women's self-esteem. An example is a Shona maxim: "A woman who plays the mbira cooks raw sadza[9]." This maxim reinforced the specific roles of women where they were not allowed to move from their home and family space into the male creative space of mbira performance.

Within the Shona society, women were not allowed to play musical instruments and only played the role of singers and dancers because of the myths associated with traditional musical

[9] Sadza is a Shona name for a Zimbabwean dish made of corn.

instruments. These instruments were considered sacred, and pregnant, menstruating, or breastfeeding women were especially prohibited from touching them. According to Chitando (2002:25), the mbira was associated with ancestral beliefs, hence women's lack of access to it. This is further affirmed by Jenje-Makwenda (2000:10), who confirms the mbira's deep rootedness in ancestral traditions. In this society, pregnant women were required to work in the fields much like everybody else because they believed that pregnancy was not in one's hands; therefore, the woman must work like everybody else (Chinouriri 2015:399). Such beliefs and practices have become accepted, and anyone who deviated was considered uncultured. Contemporary scholars have argued that such restrictions were only made to instill good behaviors in society. Chinourir's work recognises the effect of colonialism on the musical arts in Africa and women's role within it. The effects of this have been the dominance of men on the popular music scene and industry in Zimbabwe, with most women stilled in their position as backing vocalists and dancers Zindi (1997). However, the situation may not be wholly blamed on colonialist activities but on established traditional norms where men played musical instruments and women sang and danced in the Shona culture. Such practices do not occur all over Africa in the same vein since women from Saharan Africa among the Berbers played the skinned calabash. Reference can also be made to the likes of Stella Chiweshe challenging gender stereotypes regarding the playing of the mbira.

"Women constitute a hidden yet sizeable force in the popular music industry in Zimbabwe" (Impey 1992:17). Based on this statement, Viriri (2014) examines the several factors that led to the increase in the numbers of women in post-independence popular music in Zimbabwe. She does this from a feminist perspective to shift the narrative to a focus on the positive experiences of women in the popular music industry. She notes the focus on the underrepresentation of women despite their continued existence in the popular music industry

in Zimbabwe. References are made to such women as Laina and Evelyn Juba, who were female pioneers from the 1930s and remained largely unmentioned in their writings. The situation, as noted by Viriri of Zimbabwe, aptly reflects the situation with women in Ghanaian popular music where, according to Whitley (2000:12)," direct established codes of feminised representations become more explicit in the 1980s".

A classic example is the work of Kyere (2012), who argues on the underrepresentation of women in the literature on music in Ghana. She thus proposes to contribute towards filling this gap by focusing on a comparative study of women's lives in popular music in Ghana from the 1980s to 2010. Such women as Julie Okine, perhaps the most mentioned woman from the early periods of highlife music's development, remain undocumented. Amongst the reasons provided for this is the "blaming of the methodologies that were used by early ethnographers and anthropologists who tended to focus on music by men because of a gender bias (1989:1). Other reasons may have been a lack of information on these women or a non-interest in documenting the lives of female popular musicians beyond the mention of their names. Such happenings make the focus on Edith Norteye (Adorable Adorant) essential to this research as it contributes towards documenting the lives and experiences of unmentioned female performers from the period under study.

A publication by Onyefuosaonu (2021) refers to twelve women from the 1980s who contributed to changing the Nigerian popular music industry. Women like Uchedu Nelly, Martha Ulaeto, and Salawa Abeni are mentioned. As noted earlier, such numbers of women gaining popularity and acclaim in the 1980s are similar to situations in Ghana and Zimbabwe. Even though the periods do vary, it suggests similarities in terms of the increase in the number of women in the industry from this period. Despite this seeming increase, she continues to stress the numbers

being a handful and bemoan such situations as "sad." This publication was for the celebration of "Women's History Month,". Having stressed the minimal number of women, it discusses women's contributions as musicians, dancers, producers, video vixens, and managers to the growth and sustenance of the Nigerian music industry. She notes the impact of the "Fela Girls" on his performances and rise to fame. These girls served as dancers, and makeup artists, all prominent features at Fela's performances. The writer further references the use of backup singers in 1972 by Fela; however, a January 16th 1955 picture in the Sunday Mirror captures the Ogunde concert party from Nigeria performing on the Gold Coast with their "chorus girls" in a play. Although these girls may not have been as popular as Fela's singers, they received notable acclaim to the extent of travelling to the Gold Coast and being captured by the newspaper. The roles of such silent women necessitate mention in building on the history of women's roles in developing the popular music scene in Nigeria.

References are also made to the Lijadu Sisters, a group of female singers from the 1970s who presented a break in a stereotypical male-dominated Nigerian music industry. She draws the narrative to more contemporary examples by referencing the importance of music videos and the presence of women as video vixens, which has become a standard feature since the emergence of music videos. Onyesuosaonu's writeup in the celebration of women calls attention to the diversity of roles played by women in the popular music industry and the importance of exploring these roles as evidence of their contribution to the industry. While the forgoing discussions have focused on feminist research and popular music across Africa, the next subtheme focuses on similar research within the Ghanaian context and the diversity of research within the space.

2.3. Situating the Research on Women and Highlife Music in Ghana

Similarities are drawn from the work of Collins (2007) in his work titled "The Entrance of Women into Ghanaian Popular Entertainment". The title of Collin's paper reinforces the argument of a break in women's performance from the traditional performance space to the popular such that they required an entry. According to Collins, there were only a few women until the 1960s as popular stage artists, a statement supported by Omibiyi-Obidike (1987) from Nigeria. Aicha Kone reiterates this statement in Harrev (1992:237), who states that "not all families will accept a woman as an artist and embrace her as a bride…they think an artist cannot be serious, that she is never at home". Such perceptions reinforce traditional roles and expectations of women and the transfer of such expectations to the popular performance space. However, the colonialist focus on men of the Gold Coast in building the economy and education played an important role in reinforcing these traditional notions. Collins provides accounts by women such as Vida Oparebea and Adelaide Boabeng.

According to the band leader, Okutieku's band refused Vida's membership because of her natural disposition to menstruate, which would bring bad luck to the band. Such reasons, regardless of the spiritual connotations, may also be read as means of maintaining the image of the band and protecting the image of the woman, who, according to Collins, was being called a prostitute (*ashawo*) by the people of her community. Invariably, the reason provided by the band leader can also be read from an economic gains point of view were having a woman onboard may affect the band's patronage even though no narratives exist of such happenings. In the Gold Coast, there were a lot of traditional groups and ensembles that featured both men and women in performances and those designated for either gender. As indicated in the first chapter examples of women-only performances include the Adenkum, Adzewa, and Tora,

which signify women's participation in traditional music-making; none of such existed in the early period of highlife music's development and required some exploration.

Adelaide, the other lady mentioned by Collins, faced family challenges in her quest to join the Workers Brigade band in 1965, a period when colonialism no longer existed but its repercussions. The reasons provided by Collins for these ladies' challenges were based on the derogatory status gained by African popular entertainers, of which women were no exception. Amongst the reasons for the disrespect were their youthfulness, itinerant lifestyle, low class in society, and their association with the guitar and drunkenness. Interestingly, drunkenness evokes disrespect, as many traditional musicians aid their performances with alcohol.

The reasons provided by Plageman (2013) for such sanctions faced by women seem to have stemmed from the relationship created between the British and local rulers and elite, which invariably aimed at sanctioning the place of women in these processes. Collins refers to women's challenges as emanating from traditional carryovers further influenced by the colonising mission. There is, therefore, a silent agreement of women's sanctioned space not being a colonisation factor but a combination of colonial/modern and traditional processes. Such factors, especially urbanisation, had increased prostitution and, thus, the need to sanction women because they could not find jobs in the urban centers. They resulted in prostitution as a means of survival. The emergence of modern African towns featured male migrants who left their families and wives to work in the urban centers, leading to an imbalance in the number of males and females in these areas. The result of which is prostitution.

This is where the works of feminist writers become crucial in arguing about the woman being in the position to determine what she could do with her body and, by implication, issues of

sexuality as it pertains to women. The relationship between prostitution and music was their meeting point at town squares, ballrooms, bars, hotels, and nightclubs. It becomes crucial to explore the participation of women in highlife music from these contexts. The contexts legitimise women's representation regardless of the negative attendant connotations. Such connotations make it more imperative to explore women's representations metaphorically, especially in the early days when only a few women musicians, such as Akosua Bonsu mentioned on the Zonophone West African catalog records, Aku Tawia and Lady Wilmot, have been documented. While Collins recognises these women's presence, he emphasizes their roles as singers and dancers rather than instrumentalists. Still, it is these representations through which women contributed to the realisation of the recordings and performances.

These challenges will propel the need for government intervention in whipping women's interest in popular music and entertainment. Among such women of the late 1950s and 1960s was Edith Norteye (Adorable Adorant), who featured in Highlife Saturday Night as a female actress and singer with no documentation in scholarly writings except for sections in the Sunday Mirror and later the Ghana Radio and Television Times[10] newspapers. A chapter of the thesis discusses her narrative as a performer growing up and performing in the period under study. Such narrative becomes necessary as no such accounts exist that can project an understanding of the challenges and feats achieved by women of the period despite the challenges outlined by Collins.

Another activity by African governments was the setting up of bands. In Guinea, for example, Les Amazons, an all-female band, led to the career of such musicians as Sona Djabete. Fatu

[10] This was a magazine established in the period after independence. It captured both radio and television programs for its readers.

Gayflor rose to fame through the Liberian cultural group and the likes of M'Pongo Love and the Denesie Choir of Dinah Reindorf, which performed at the 1977 Festac.

Such opportunities emerging from the late 1960s into the 1970s may have propelled Amoah-Ramey (2018) to situate her work on female highlife performers in Ghana. In her work, she discussed how female highlife performers navigated a male-dominated industry with its attendant challenges. She does this from a black feminist perspective using the oral history of selected female performers. She highlights the changes that occurred after the inauguration of President Nkrumah's *National Council of Ghana Women*. The inauguration signified an influx of women as performers, leading her to refer to the 1970s as a period of the "Queens of Highlife." She references highlife music in Ghana as reaching its peak in the 1970s, affirming the many changes the music tradition underwent and the need to understand women's contribution to the genre. She analyses women's songs and the issues they discuss and focuses on understanding their challenges as they navigate the popular performance space. Ramey's work is important for its insights into women's histories from the 1970s, leaving the period before an unexplored area of research.

Adomako and Asiedu (2012) examine how a discussion was generated between popular music stakeholders in Ghana. These discussions resulted in a realisation of the need for songs that empowered women based on the argument of the presence of stereotypical representations of women and their potential to disempower them. They draw their meaning of empowerment from the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), which defined empowerment as "women's active involvement in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision making."(p.260). They argue that the use of theatre as a "space for developmental work" has led to a theatre for development. In contrast, music does not receive much attention regarding its potential for empowerment in the Ghanaian context.

According to them, their focus on popular music is because of its potential to reach many people and the meanings and inspirations drawn from it. Reference is made to several works where women have been represented as "decorative, fetishist, manipulative and fragile or in need of rescuing in contemporary popular lyrics…Hobson and Barlow (2008) in Adomako and Asiedu (2012:260). Collins reinforces these representations in the lyrics of contemporary highlife music as being romantic love and full of sexual innuendos. They argue that these themes connote a macho flavor and the need to subvert such representations through advocacy. Contrary to this thesis, their study was not limited to highlife music but popular music in general, with their song selection spanning from old to contemporary popular music.

It is important to note that their research combined research and advocacy aimed at changing representations of women and focused on popular music. Their research is essential for the depth of knowledge it provides on women's representations and their disempowering potential. This is important to my work as it builds on the argument of women being represented in Ghanaian highlife music as evidence of their presence in the music tradition. Thus, this thesis's analysis of women's representations does not focus on their disempowering potential or otherwise but on how such presentations are evidence of their continued influence on popular music in contemporary times. The thesis takes cognisance of the effect of colonialism and its impact, which cannot be taken for granted, but the fact of its effects' continued influence in shaping the music tradition (or not).

2.4. Towards a Postcolonial Feminist Theoretical Approach to Women and Highlife Music in Ghana

From the ongoing discussion in this thesis, the relevance of paying attention to women's experiences within specific contexts becomes essential. A difference is realised between how

postcolonial feminist writers from different geographical contexts perceive and present women's issues. While some writers question the Othering of the African woman, others focus on its importance and how it emphasizes the difference in women's experiences and their representations. This thesis uses the perspectives of postcolonial African writers who take cognizance of difference, especially concerning issues of gender and how it plays out in specific African cultures. Their perspectives help examine women's representations in the selected highlife songs toward an understanding of how colonialism and traditional carryovers influenced such presentations.

The goal here aims at meaning creation, as stated in this chapter's early beginnings. I refer to Nketia's (1954) chapter on the "Concept of Meaning" in his *Ethnomusicology and African Music*. In this chapter, he references MacAllester (1954), who raises concerns about what music means, especially to those who make it. His statement ties in with African postcolonial feminist writers' disposition towards the specifics of African cultures in understanding their concept of women, the question of gender, and, by extension, its presence in music-making and performance. Nketia argues that the quest for meaning is why Merriam defines Ethnomusicology as "the study of music in culture." However, the dent to this definition was its focus on all of humankind irrespective of geographical location. Nketia thus suggests a multi-dimensional approach borrowed from closely related disciplines on methodology. The extent of which is dependent on the research problem. He recognizes the close identification of music with the social life of the people (Nketia, 2005:23). This statement is important because it suggests the need for examining how the social life of Ghanaians in the 1940s to the 1960s influenced women's representations in highlife music and songs. This is explored in chapter three of the study, which focuses on the different contexts/venues where people interacted with music toward understanding women's roles within these contexts and how they can be understood as evidence of their presence and contribution to the music genre. While

acknowledging meanings from the maker's perspective is essential, there is always the opportunity to construct meanings, especially when the research subject is historical and secondary sources become the best available sources. However, in this thesis, secondary sources are combined with the ethnographic experiences of a female performer who lived in that period towards meaning constructions about women and their presence in highlife spaces of the period under study.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter examined the theoretical underpinnings of the study, which is postcolonial feminist theory. The choice of this theory is based on highlife music developing out of a colonised society and a transition to independence, considering the impact of colonialism on women's roles within these spaces and the need to understand their roles from an African feminist perspective. The chapter engaged an interpretation towards dismantling Eurocentric world views about women from once colonised countries, of which the Gold Coast, which later became Ghana, is one. It builds up the arguments by presenting views from a global perspective where different authors explain postcolonial feminist theory and its application to their specific contexts. Essential to this theory is representation, which is the broad focus of the study towards having a contextual understanding of women's experiences within once colonised countries, arguing against the subaltern state of women based on colonialism's experiences being different in all these countries.

The chapter further delimits the discussion to a focus on African feminist research. This section discussed the concept of gender from the African perspective, drawing on examples focusing on different cultures within the continent. There is a conclusion on the concept of music within

the African context being a woman despite both genders playing significant roles towards the realisation of performances, especially in traditional music making.

Unlike traditional music, the popular performance space posed the most challenges for women. This challenge necessitates a focus on the seemingly invisible roles played by women while noting their challenges occasioned by the impact of colonialism.

The last section of the chapter situates the research on women and highlife music in Ghana. It draws on the examples of different writings that engage discussions that highlight the roles and challenges played by women in highlife music.

The chapter ends with a proposition towards a postcolonial feminist approach to women and highlife music where there is a focus on meaning creation within specific African cultures aimed at understanding their concept of gender and its relationship to music making and performance while noting the impact of colonialism inherent.

CHAPTER THREE

A HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF WOMEN IN GHANAIAN HIGHLIFE MUSIC

3. Introduction

This chapter presents a historical narrative that explores women's role in highlife music within the period under study. It traces women's participation from the early days of the genre in the 1800s to the 1960s to help understand the trajectory of the music's development and map out the diversity of women's representations in the music tradition. Their roles are situated within the broader discussion of the various contexts within which highlife music emerged and was performed. The exploration of women's roles is conceptualised as constituting their representation in the music tradition. These focused representations present themselves as audiences, dance partners, love interests, prostitutes, and musicians. The period 1940-1969 was characterised by large-scale rural-urban migration due to the economic boom that accompanied the Second World War. Other factors were the increase in the number of highlife bands and venues for performances, the transition from colonial rule to independence, and the emergence of a significant number of women in the popular music scene in the country. I present the historical context of highlife by situating highlife within the larger Ghanaian traditional context, exploring gender roles and traditional music culture within which highlife emerged in the Gold Coast. This is to serve as useful information to demonstrate how early writings of highlife contested existing gender roles.

Within traditional music performance spaces, women have always played complementary roles, much as there are gender-specific performances. To this end, writers like Nzewi and Galane (2005) and Abass and Doskaya (2007) have alluded to the concept of gender, connoting men and women being absent from Africa until contact with the West (Oyewumi 1997). While there were women-only performance spaces, there were also a lot of traditional music

performances that involved the participation of both genders. Amongst the Akan, *Adowa* performances feature women primarily as singers and dancers while the men play the drums. In Djedje's article "Women and Music in Sudanic Africa", (1985), she refers to female praise singers who accompany drummers at feats in the royal palace. There may be social and religious reasons why women may not play specific instruments in African cultures. However, these reasons may not necessarily suggest a subordinate role but one in which everyone contributes towards realising a performance.

Within most communities on the Gold Coast, women's roles within traditional music-making have been linked to such activities as birth, initiation rites primarily for girls, marriage and domestic work-related activities, and social and religious-related activities. For example, initiation rites are considered training spaces for girls into adulthood and should be carried out by adult women. An example is the *bragoro* amongst the Akan, during which young girls who have experienced their first menstruation are presented before the queen mother and other women elders of the community. These girls are taken through several rituals in which music plays a key role. Through these songs, the girls are introduced to proper behaviours as adults, essentially preparing them for marriage. Similar rites exist for girls from the Volta Region of Ghana, for which their mothers and female elders play vital roles. These girls are kept in a designated compound where they are taught how to care for themselves as emerging adults, as well as music and dance techniques. A similar situation exists among the Sande, a girls' initiation society in Liberia. Within these groups, girls will be secluded for months at a time while receiving training in music and dance (Hunt:1993:42). Schmidt (1989) also cites examples from amongst the Kpelle of Liberia, where girls are taught songs that are embedded with lessons for adulthood as well as learning to play the gourd rattle. While some communities focus on singing and dancing, there are others where women are taught to play instruments,

like in Sierra Leone, where a girl learns to play the sandebii (a medium-sized drum often played with one hand and a stick). The songs revolve mostly around childbirth, pregnancy, and lullabies for their future children.

Another example of an instrument played by women is the Adenkum. The history of the Adenkum traces it from Mampong through Kumasi to Cape Coast and Akwapem areas. It is an instrument played in the Asantehene's court by his wives for recreational purposes. Amongst the Akwapem, it emerged out of women's welfare organization. Within these organisations, women learned to play the Adenkum, a gourd-like instrument with a protruding end. The performances of Adenkum cut across the various social activities where members benefitted from a group performance during any of the life cycle events. The themes of Adenkum songs revolve around praise songs and rivalry between wives and non-providing husbands (Aning, 1965).

Work activities and women's roles were due to the means of subsistence. Within the precolonial Gold Coast, women contributed to work on the farm during harvesting periods and would sing to accompany their work. Amongst Liberia's Kpelle rice farming community, women play a crucial role, especially in rice cultivation, since they own most of the rice farms within the community. Even within this context, aspects of the harvesting and cultivation process are done by men. These ideas about performances within the traditional settings may have been reflected/ replicated within the proto-highlife performance spaces where women's roles as singers and dancers were essential to the performance.

3.1. Development of Early Proto Highlife

Since its emergence, several forms of highlife music have developed in different contexts on the Gold Coast (Collins, 1978, 1994, 2018; Plageman, 2013). According to Plageman (2013),

the earliest of these, which one might call proto-highlife, occurred among young men recruited into the colonial army and consequently into the colonial bands. He asserts that it first emerged amongst locals within the Gold Coast and then spread into the hinterlands in the early 1800s. Colonialism under British rule brought with it "extensive alterations to the pattern of social life in African countries which affected women within the African societal context" (Abass and Doskoya 2017:145). The effects these had on women were made possible by the cultural changes imposed by colonial administrators and the threat it posed to traditional gender dynamics in the Gold Coast. The cultural changes threatened the traditional power of women. According to Abass and Doskaya (2017:145), this situation led to marginalisation and political subordination. One such space was recruitment into the colonial army, consisting of men. However, women within the African context have always held positions equal to their male counterparts. Machakanja (2015) attests to the non-existence of inequalities in traditional African society.

Politically, women served as queens and queen mothers and, in some instances, political chiefs in the many towns and villages of the Gold Coast (Abass and Doskaya 2017:149). An example was Yaa Asantewaa, who served as the queen mother (Ohemaa) of Ejisu. Her role as a queen mother placed her at the highest level of state organisation (Akyeampong and Obeng 1995). Her status per the Ashanti political system made her the state army leader, in which capacity she led them to war against the British in 1901. Other examples can be drawn from Dahomey, where women served as warriors. However, within most precolonial African societies, women stayed home and catered to the household while men went out to war. Such instances of women in traditional armies bring to the fore the importance of understanding women's roles within cultures, especially by researchers. Yaa Asantewaa's leadership represents women's critical roles in colonial Ghana. I reference the recruitment of only males into the colonial army and

bands as the starting point of excluding women from popular musicmaking and performance, which within the context of this thesis is referenced as highlife music.

Between the late 1800s and early 1900s, most young men played in the Band and Fife and the castle bands alongside recruits from neighboring Nigeria and the British West Indies. While the drum and Fife served ceremonial purposes, the Castle bands played polkas and quadrilles for entertainment. Women were absent in the military and colonial bands, serving as passive audiences during state functions or Empire Day celebrations on the Gold Coast. This was within the "manly" context of the British army.

Another context within which new popular music emerged was within the "circle of mixed parentage male individuals" (Plageman, 2013). They were the children of European men and local women of the Gold Coast. These groups thus constitute the first group outside the military to come into contact with European instruments, perhaps apart from the church. These individuals formed companies, mostly all-male military-like *asafo* ensembles that maintain communal order. Beyond the focus on protection, they engaged in competitive displays, which Plageman describes as aimed at self-presentations. Their status above their non-mixed counterparts possibly offered privileges amongst them access to musical instruments. By the second half of the 19th century, the *asafo* companies fused musical and visual elements of the colonial military band ensembles closely modeled on the drum and Fife of the military into their public exhibitions. With growing urbanisation and the expansion of waged labor, more migrant residents to the Coast gained access to European instruments and music styles.
Although these bands were not official military bands, their affinity to security limited their members to only men. The growing access to European musical instruments and resources led to sound localisation in terms of rhythm and aesthetics (Plageman 2013: 46).

Out of these localisations emerged several bands locally known as the brass bands. Their growing popularity within Cape Coast and its environs made them a popular source of urban entertainment. By the 1880s, many of these bands played for festivals and holidays. A more localized version of the brass band called Adaha (which means Sleep here) evolved out of these. This version combined the drum and Fife elements, military bands, and local rhythmic elements. An essential feature of the adaha was its resonance with both men and women, mostly looking for entertainment and relaxation away from colonial scrutiny. The localisation of these performances opened the space for women to participate in performances actively. Traditionally, even though there are women-only performance ensembles, groups also involve the participation of both genders. Within these contexts, there are specified roles for each. Women within most traditional music performances would either sing or dance. The reason for this, as noted by authors like Nzewi (2005), is the protection of women by the imposition of menstrual taboos, which prevented women from playing specific instruments because of their gender. Apart from the gender dynamic, Adaha performances fit into the recreational aspects of traditional music making, where there is active participation by both genders. It is, therefore, not surprising that Adaha's appeal for entertainment predisposed it to the interest of both men and women. Within the adaha context, women played the roles of dancers and singers while men played the accompanying brass instruments (Plageman 2013:47).

The spread of adaha from the Coast to the interior of the Gold Coast led to the style moving from recreation to formal commercial bands. Wealthy men within these areas purchased instruments because the instruments were not readily accessible beyond the Coast. They then hired male instructors and employed local musicians to be trained. These men founded the bands and engaged them in performances to enhance their statuses within their societies and

communities. While these bands became more established, the participation of women became relegated to that of audiences.

3.1.1. The Fisherman's Context

Adaha became more established away from the Coastal towns, and a new form of popular music emerged called Osibisaaba. According to Collins (2018), the term emerged from the 'osibi,' a Fante recreational fishermen's dance. This style emerged from combining local fishers' harmonies, percussions, the guitar, and the accordion. Key to the performances of Osibisaaba was the pairing of males with females who engaged in a "sensuous display purposefully choreographed to delight other dancers and the assembled crowd" (Ibid: 49). The performances also happened in the center of the town, unlike its adaha counterpart. However, these performances were avenues for rebellion and negotiations of youthful statuses within colonial societies. Central to the osibisaaba performances was the guitar, whose players may have learned the two-finger picking style of Kru Sailors, which spread to the hinterlands.

The result was the Palmwine style of highlife music, which emerged within the contexts of palmwine drinking spots where men told of their woes and trials after a hard day's work. Several bands emerged out of this context. Kwame Asare and the Akan Trio, Appiah Adjekum, and William Aingo, all men. Interestingly, the most popular of songs emerging from such bands is Yaa Amponsah, whose lyrics, melody, and rhythm continue to resonate in many highlife music. Men's dominance of this highlife style is further compounded by the concert party component associated with the guitar bands. Although the concert party themes were replete with songs and narratives about women, their parts within the performance were imitated by men. For this, authors like Collins have alluded to specific reasons that influenced women's parts being performed by men; amongst them are humor, jealousy, and myths concerning menstruation.

Thus, within this context, women's participation was presented in reverse through impersonation.

Another level of women's participation is gleaned from their role as audiences at the receiving end of impersonation. One's environment highly influences song texts and narratives; therefore, the positive response received from the women as audiences could influence the continued impersonation. Ultimately, the traditional society's perception of the role of women may have prevented the women themselves from seeking such roles. However, continued modernisation and urbanisation influenced women like Adelaide Buaben in her pursuit of becoming a part of the Okutieku Concert party (Collins, 2018). Despite her family's disapproval, all else may have succumbed to similar pressures and reclined themselves to audience statuses. Adelaide's persistence speaks to women averting stereotypes that had come to be associated with them in terms of presentation on the popular performance space. The challenge to women as popular performers becomes prominent. Unlike the traditional performance setting, the popular performance space presented a stage and a focus. The focus here was on the woman. Although Collins explains why men impersonated female roles, he does not mention anything associated with sexualisation of women except for jealousy. Adelaide represents the new woman of the Gold Coast who will not be limited by society's perception or traditional rules, becoming a symbol of female performers through her presentation of herself.

3.1.2. "*I have been to*" - The Migration Factor in Highlife Music

Another popular music style that developed was the *ashiko*, which was more prevalent in Accra and was more popular amongst men than women. It originated in the late 19th century among freed slaves of Yoruba descent in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Western Nigeria. It became a Pan-West African Coastal popular music that spread in the port towns of anglophone West Africa. This style was spread at the hands of the "*akwantufo*" (travelers), who were primarily

men (Plageman 2013). It was a way of sharing their travel experiences in the urban centers upon their return to their communities. *Ashiko* performances were occasions for travelers to showcase their new experiences, clothes, and other acquired items from their travels.

Migration and popular entertainment within the Ghanaian context have focused on the prospects for men but, for women, the detrimental effects of such encounters. Collins (2004) mainly refers to a prostitution tag that will come to be associated with women who would not stay home, get married, and take care of their families. The perception of women in this period may have significantly influenced why they were expected to keep a home and husband while men went out to work. Collins (ibid), in a section of this paper, discusses some of the relationships between popular entertainment and urban socialisation, citing the benefits and disadvantages. One such socialisation function was the warnings of the urban danger of prostitution, and drunkenness as the primary focus. Reference is made to Waterman (1986: 135), who states that among the subject matters of inter-war Yoruba Palmwine were "marital conflict, economic uncertainty, the duplicity of prostitutes and city women and other stresses faced by male wage migrants" (Collins, 2004:210). This statement clarifies the perception of women within urban and popular entertainment spaces within the period under study. According to Twumasi (1975:53), the high ratio of men to women is an assertion that almost presupposes that most women within urban centers were prostitutes. However, interview sessions with a popular female singer of the 1950s, Edith Norteye[11] (Adorable Adorant), suggest differently. Prostitution was a choice and a perception that would characterise certain clubs, hotels, and, by default, the women who patronised such spaces as the Lido nightclub and Hotel Cassanova, amongst others.

[11] Edith Norteye was a popular singer of the 1950s and 60s. She performed on the Program Highlife Saturday Night. Her life and work as a singer is explored further in chapter five towards having an ethnographic understanding of the experiences of women of the period under study.

Such assertions abound in the guitar bands and their accompanying concert parties. According to Collins (2007), these bands mostly traveled the length and breadth of the Gold Coast, performing songs and plays with context as a binding force of the urban pull. As early as the 1930s, these bands traveled into the villages, enacting such plays as the "Coronation of King George VI" by the Axim Trio and the Two Bobs. Their songs and plays served as a means of information transmission, fashion, and a source of urban enticement. Within their themes were issues of prostitution aimed at cautioning future migrants about such. Among the various names used to reference such women were "good time girls," "high time girls," the "*Ashawo*," or "*gyantra*". The activities of these women may have resulted in such songs as "*gyantra nnye adwuma*" (prostitution is not work) by Fanti's Star Band. As discussed earlier, the hesitance to employ females in the bands was also due to the itinerant lifestyle of these bands (Collins 2007). Other factors, such as referring to such women as sexually loose and immoral or the reluctance to embrace such women as wives, are some of the reasons (Omibiye-Obidike 1987; Harrev 1992).

Within the Ghanaian context, issues such as menstruation, the ambiguous lifestyle of popular performers, their youthfulness, the relationship between the guitar and drunkenness, and the generally low status of such performers within society have been cited by Collins (2007), Omibiyi-Obidike (1987) as accounting for the low regard of women performers. These perceptions were further compounded by modernisation and increasing urbanisation, which Collins asserts threatened traditional male authority. The result of this is the restrictions that accompany proto-highlife performances. Since most of these popular entertainments were carried out by the youth for recreational purposes and as sites of rebellion against colonial and local rulers, such spaces were promiscuous avenues, and women were targeted as the prime

culprits. The relationship between migration, music, and women positioned women as prostitutes within fast-evolving urban societies like Accra.

3.1.3. "*Whom are you going with?*": Highlife in the Ballroom

This section focuses on the ballroom contexts within which the term highlife emerged and was associated with all these musical styles and women's roles. Having received several queries from the commissioner of the central province on the desire to set up a band, a group of educated, salaried, unmarried middle-class men will go on to form literary clubs (Plageman 2013). By the early 1900s, missionaries sponsored schools, predominantly for men who, upon completion, occupied positions with status above their migrant labor-waged men. These men established social and literary clubs and were referred to as the Akrakyefo (Gentlemen). Essential to the activities of these clubs was highlife music contextualised as ballroom dances that engaged the services of colonial bands on Saturday nights (Plageman, 2013). Ballroom dance requires a female partner, and coupled with that was the unmarried status of many Akrakyefo. Invitations were thus extended to women with good family backgrounds and education, which was in short supply during this period. The invitations allowed women to be groomed in these literary clubs for prospective men. To cater to the music accompanying these ballroom dances, local musicians began to set up dance orchestras, the earliest of which was the Accra Excelsiors orchestra, an initiative of the Akrakyefo. Others included the Secondi Optimism Club's philharmonic members, who played at all club events. Beyond club events, these groups performed at private parties and staged public performances.

Music performed by these orchestras included ragtime, sambas, and ballroom numbers. Members of these bands were all male, with a level of education much as their club counterparts.

> These orchestras incorporated local rhythmic patterns and elements, mostly four-time structure, heptatonic scales, and the triple rhythmic effect common

> to proto-highlife styles. The music's flexible format found further resonance in its corresponding dance style. It featured male-female couples who moved together in a basic pattern of side-to-side steps interspersed with periodic hip rotations and circular movements (Plageman, 2013:77).

The music that emerged from these was highlife, used mainly by people who gathered around the dancehalls to watch the high-class people enjoy and have fun. Adherence to strict social etiquette was of prime importance to the clubs, as highlife music was beginning to appeal to larger audiences. A master of ceremonies was delegated with an outlined program of activities. Such programs are distributed to members as they enter the ballrooms, and they are supposed to guide proper behavior for the duration of the program. These dance orchestras even composed songs that spoke to the proper behavior of a member. Even though women were excluded from membership positions, Plageman (2013: 80) describes their attendance as crucial to the couple dancing component of ballroom dancing, without whom a male member will not dance. Interview sessions with Mrs. M[12] and Mrs. Edith Norteye speak to the importance of attending ball dances and essentially all entertainment-related activities of the period with a partner, hence the expression “whom are you going with?” Both women were from the upper class of society, having attended Achimota School and gone on to colleges outside of the country. Coupled with this was their marriage to men from the Akrakeyfo category, even though they may not have necessarily been a part of the original Akrakyefo literary group. They recount numerous dances they attended with their partners after marriage. Mrs Norteye especially notes how she had gotten used to "going out with a partner” to the extent that she had questioned her friend about her going out alone. Although the accounts by the two women could refer to any partner, ballroom dances required a male and female partner. While women were absent from the music-making process, their prominent feature in the dance

[12] Mrs. M. is one of my interviewees. She didn’t consent to her name being used. Hence the use of Mrs. M. She played the violin and was a member of a Quartet Group in the 1950s.

component speaks to the critical role they played without whom the akrakyefo would be bored, and some possibly remain unmarried. As mentioned earlier, marriage was one of the critical reasons beyond dancing for inviting women to ballroom dances.

The presence of women allowed the akrakyefo to engage in conversations during dance sessions and possibly enter into a courtship with their invited female counterparts. Marriage during this period was a vital status definer (Allman 2005). Men of a certain age were required to have the prospects of getting married; for these men of the literary clubs, they hoped not to attract any woman but one with some level of education and from a respected family. Such women they referred to as Nwuraanom (ladies), a Fante term for an educated, well-respected woman from a reputable family. From the early beginnings of colonialism, girls had been exempted from attending schools, thus making access to educated women quite challenging (Abass and Döskaya 2017). Women's education, according to them, was tailored towards home management. However, many women had the privilege to attend Western colleges and specialise in male-dominated fields.

Between the late 1920s and mid-1950s, there were conscious attempts to increase the prospects of club members by introducing young women. This exposure was achieved by "socialising them into their regulated environment of decorum, respectability and highlife creation" (Plageman, 2013:80). Such women received considerable attention, with men having to bow to them, providing them refreshments and introducing them to other gentlemen. The gentlemen were responsible for providing a seat for their invited lady so they could take a seat when there were breaks between dancing. In a speech in May 1934, Mr. Sylvanus Wartenburg of Sekondi's Optimism Club stated that the club's achievements contributed to increasing the number of women residing in Sekondi. This statement is essential for understanding the role of migration

in developing popular entertainment. To enhance their statuses, women, like their male counterparts, travelled from their hometowns in search of more significant opportunities, which their club socialisation made possible. The ongoing narrative shows that women's representation in the ballroom highlife context was intentional. The dancing component of highlife within the ballroom made the participation of women an indispensable component. These men, however, capitalised on the dance to increase their marriage prospects, reinforcing the stereotype of men being at the forefront of sexual initiations of the period under study. However, the fact that such activities attract women's attention and migration into the cities is indicative of reciprocation by the women.

The popularity of these social clubs and their orchestras led men of lower education and employment to form similar clubs with their accompanying dance bands and orchestras. Despite the growing interest, most of these bands still catered to the middle class. The increasing number of bands by the late 1930s resulted in performances outside the ballroom context. Places like open-air nightclubs and hotels will come to be repurposed for popular entertainment. The popularity of ballroom dancing led to the establishment of dance competitions[13] with five categories for dancers at different levels of experience (Sunday Mirror 1955: 13). Women and men who could not join bands established dance associations. The Yaa Amponsah story, as told by Koo Nimo in an interview, admits that she was a teacher of ballroom dancing at Kyebi Apedwa[14] and was discovered by Kwame Asare and his Kumasi Trio on one of their performance treks. Koo Nimo recounts that Yaa Amponsah was a very hospitable and beautiful woman. However, despite her hospitability, her profession as a dancer predisposed

[13] Under the title 'Classification of Ballroom Dancing" L.V Solomon (the writer) explains the five categories and then proceeds to describe the variations. Such attention to dance was evidence of its importance and popularity within the Gold Coast.

[14] Kyebi is located in the eastern part of Ghana; then the Gold Coast. It was one of the booming cocoa towns and featured a lot of migrant workers .

her to be referred to as a loose woman. This is because she danced very intimately with men (Interview session in Kumasi, May 6th, 2023).

According to Collins[15], Yaa Amponsah bridged the gap in Osibisaaba dances between men and women where there was no form of touching. Given that she was located within the hinterlands of the Gold Coast, she may have also learned the art of dancing from the many dance schools that emerged in the country. She could, therefore, not have been the first, but the fact of her being documented, given the popularity of the song Yaa Amponsah, may have led to such. Regardless, her popular figure makes her notable as one of the women in dance circles who broke stereotypes that accompanied dancing with a man, thus demystifying the act. Dancers learned the intricate movements and steps of ballroom dances, which they showcased at events. Increasingly and with the opening of performance spaces, people's intentions for accessing popular performance spaces will change. Men no longer accessed these spaces seeking courtship possibilities but rather opportunities for independent amorous relationships like the women.

3.1.4. Highlife Beyond the Ballroom (Dancehalls do not make nightclubs)

The 1940s and 50s emerged with a new context for highlife music that appealed to diverse social classes, devoid of restrictions of the ballroom. Highlife music occurred in the nightclubs that had sprung up in the major cities and towns of the Gold Coast. The Second World War influenced the opening of entertainment spaces within the Gold Coast. The stationing of the Allied West African military operations in Accra made a tremendous impact on the city. Developing harbors, airports, and military operations bases meant more employment. So many people would move from rural areas to urban centers seeking employment. Another effect of

[15] This is from his inaugural lecture into the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences on 25th May, 2023.

the war was that it increased the opportunities for wage labour, giving the need for people to work on the railways and trading companies in the city harbors in Accra and Takoradi. The increasing opportunities for work within the cities would eventually lead to the expansion of city centers. People accessing the cities were not just for work but for the intrigue and excitement accompanying such places. In addition to the ballrooms and theatres catering to the ever-expanding desire for leisure and popular entertainment were the contexts of nightclubs. Examples of these places include the Kalamazoo, Coleman's Yard, Lido, Kit Kat, Havanna, Paris Garden, Metropole, Hyde-park, and Tiptoe (Carl Mutt in the Sunday Mirror 1955:8).

Large dance orchestras would become downsized, and several of these emerged in the Gold Coast, amongst them King Bruce and the Black Beats, Tommy Gripman and the Red Spots, Joe Kelly's band, Spike Anyako, and the Rhythmic Aces, Eddie Quansah and the Star Gazers. Despite the predominance of men in the bands, a few notable women were members. An example is Agnes Aryitey, who worked as a trumpet player with E.T. Mensah's band in the 1940s and 50s. Another woman is Julie Okine, a lead singer and composer with E. T. Mensah's band. Another woman who worked with the Tempos band was Christina Mensah, who recorded the song Ngele Waewae with the band in 1958 under the Decca Record yellow label series.

However, not much exists on her but her name on the record label. E.T. Mensah traveled worldwide and may have been influenced by other bands to accept women into his band. The presence of these women in the bands was symbolic of the changing role of women within the popular performance space. Further influenced by government policies which, after independence, contributed to opening up the popular performance space, especially for women.

Figure A. Julie Okine and Agnes Aryeetey in performance with E. T Mensah and the Tempos Band. Picture J.O Panford of the Sunday Mirror, 1955, sourced from the Institute of African Studies Newspaper archive.

Another band that worked with women was the Uhuru Dance band working with Charlotte Dada, who became popular in the early 1970s for her role in the 'Soul to Soul concert. Other bands like Nana Ampadu and His African Brothers Band also trained women and made their band space an opportunity for women to join or train as popular band musicians. Neighboring countries like Nigeria also had similar situations for women in popular entertainment spaces. Bobby Benson's band had a female vocalist. Accepting women into their bands allowed women

to participate as performers within the popular performance space. Symbolically, they represented women in the performance space as performers and not just as dance partners, which within the ballroom context was crucial for dancing.

3.1.5. "If I had a sister like that"

The effects of the growth and expansion of popular entertainment were the attendant delinquent practices of some patrons. Measures were put in place for the prosecution of such unruly persons. Amongst these were gambling, thievery, and prostitution, which, according to the colonial government, was against the state's promotion of "hard work, civilisation, and stable families (Allman 2005). According to Allman (ibid), the first point of the call was to pass antiprostitution laws to remove immoral women from the capital and other significant towns. Women were now seen as prostitutes in the new commercialised leisure circles. Like their male counterparts, women could also patronise highlife music for entertainment. However, women's access to these spaces was not without restrictions owing to the rise in prostitution. Solo women within these spaces were not respected as they received unwanted attention.

Allman (2005:202) further iterates that the reason for focusing on women and prostitution was "often articulated in the language of moral crisis in terms that spoke of women's uncontrollability, of prostitution and venereal diseases." In her paper titled "Rounding up Spinsters: Gender Chaos and Unmarried Women in Colonial Asante", Allman laments the lack of documentation that captures the treatment of unmarried women in Colonial Asante. She bases her discussion on evidence she had gathered that spoke to laws and policies Ahenefo (Chiefs) implemented to control immorality within their communities. The focus was on women as the cause and starting point for reinstituting civilisation in terms of delinquent behaviors of the youth. She provides examples of an entry into the District Officer's Quarterly

report for the Mampong District, where the chief was becoming increasingly concerned about the spread of veneral diseases and unmarried women being the presumed cause. In this entry, the chief had published an edict commanding all unmarried maidens to provide themselves with husbands. This directive was met with shock by the Wesleyan Missionary stationed in Efiduase at the time over its futility. It is then quite ironic that such measures will be deployed in the phase of increasing urbanisation and growth in urban population centers.

By this proclamation, unmarried women were arrested and imprisoned at the Ohene's palace (Ahenefie) until a prospective husband claimed them. The reason for such action by the chief concerning immoral behaviors was that "these women were embarrassing the chief" (Allman 2005:202). Such statements speak to multiple narratives of this chapter, where men have set out to make decisions to fulfill their desires, whether at the personal or social level. This issue is, however, two-dimensional as such rules did affect not only women but also their male counterparts. When a man's name has been pronounced as the suitor, he is supposed to bail out the woman by paying 5 shillings. This money affirmed his decision, and he subsequently presented a marriage fee of 7 shillings with a bottle of palmwine to the lady's family. When a man refused to affirm a lady's proclamation, he was fined 5 shillings, after which they could go free while the women remained to be claimed. Such periodic declarations mounted pressure on women, making it difficult for men to refuse their proclamations (Allman 2005). Allman further refers to one P.A. Roberts who, in 1929, had discovered some information on the arrest of two unmarried women from Sefwi Wiawso. The information was titled "Free Women's Marriage Proclamation," “ordering the arrest of the two women until they were claimed by a husband or any other man who would take charge of them” (Allman 2005:201). Such acts raise questions about the perception and roles of women in Colonial Ghana. It also brings to light the perception of marriage and the man's prominent role in "taming the woman" or asserting their domination over women.

To assert their freedom, one Afua Buo, a defendant, sought judicial relief to explain her reasons for not being obligated to the plaintiff, Kwaku Afram. In her defense, even though the plaintiff had paid her release fee, he was not assisting her with "chop money." She, therefore, was not obligated to any marital duties. Afua's explanation again raises the question of what constitutes marriage, which is conceptualised as a "process…tenuous and fluid in nature (Vallenga in Allman 2005:202). By this assertion, Afua could navigate between being a wife when her economic needs were met and which, by colonial tenets, were considered prostitution.

One of my listening sessions at the archive involved a concert party play. The play presents a man who has returned to his hometown searching for a wife. This prospective suitor visits the household of a father with unmarried maidens. Upon his visit, the father calls on his daughters and brings the suitor's request before them. The first daughter pays no heed to her father, stating emphatically her desire to continue with prostitution. While the first daughter's action can be viewed from a disempowering and negative point of view, she also calls attention to the need for freedom of choice in the decision to be married or not and to whom. She further asserts her sexual freedom by choosing to commodify her body for income and subsistence but also for gratification. Although colonial encounters predisposed women to the prospects of prostitution, the decision to follow through is subjective and influenced by factors such as the economy and migration. The concert party bands from the early 1930s embarked on tours across the Gold Coast. According to Collins (2004), they introduced foreign fashion, language, and lifestyle to the rural centers. I further argue that the ideas that informed the narratives of their acts and songs were influenced by their experiences.

The experiences of performers or musicians evident in songs about women may have been generated from their encounters with them as their mothers, wives, girlfriends, in-laws, and sisters. Such representations may be seen as a reinforcement of what is evident about women, what is imagined or perceived concerning traditional roles of women, and exaggerations and imaginations of what women are and do. In this sense, prostitution, as stated by Allman (2005) and Plageman (2013), and its relation to women were both beneficial and detrimental. Prostitution happened in popular entertainment contexts. Women traveled for "dance," and per the accounts of one of the women Allman refers to in her work, such women were considered prostitutes. This story is further reinforced by the concert party narrative where the eldest daughter was getting ready to travel to Kumasi for such a “dance”. It was an opportunity for these women to navigate their participation within such performance spaces.

To further affirm the claim to prostitution, Araba refers to her suitor as poor because of his cloth *"dee ehuo"* (a cheap cloth worn in the colonial period). Increasingly and with such outbursts, she reiterates her quest to elevate her status above her proposed suitor by navigating the popular performance space. Even though she resolves not to marry, her father insists until his last daughter eventually agrees to get married. However, she also subjected her suitor to the "rock dance." It tells of all three sisters' exposure to the popular entertainment circle and their assertiveness about their wants, especially concerning the choice of whom to marry. These narratives speak to women's active participation in highlife performance spaces with their attendant challenges. Their participation within these spaces forms part of the themes of selected songs, which are analysed in chapter four.

3.1.6. Changing Perception and Role of Women in Highlife Performance from the 1960s

The 1960s was a crucial period in the narrative of women's role and participation in popular entertainment in Ghana. Ghana's independence characterised this period from 1957 to the early 1960s. According to Collins (2007), several changes began to take place during this period, influencing women's participation in popular entertainment. As stated by Collins, examples of the changes are setting up state and parastate bands and theatres and projecting the local performing arts through the media. The projection of the performing arts through the media was not necessarily peculiar to the activities of Ghana's independent government. However, such acts opened up the media, especially newspapers, as a space to examine or understand women participation in Ghana's highlife music history. References to such government activities are also noted from countries like Guinea, which established the Les Amazons dance band, an all-female band, in 1961. The formation of concert party groups was also a significant opening for women in the popular performance space. The following paragraphs thus explore the Sunday Mirror, a media outlet for representations of women within the highlife music performance space.

3.1.7. Sunday Mirror: A Lovely Paper

Representation is conceptualised in different fields, including ethnomusicology, as how aspects of society, including gender, ethnicity, and age, are presented to an audience. These presentations can influence the knowledge and understanding of an audience about a particular issue. This section thus explores how media, such as the newspaper, portrayed women in relation to highlife music making and performance.

While the narratives about women's representation have been captured in the broader discussions of highlife music performances, the far-reaching potential of newspapers becomes an essential medium for constructing meanings about the pictorial representations and the anchorages concerning women and highlife music. The paper of focus for this section is the Sunday Mirror, a media outlet under the West African Graphics Company established in 1953 on the Gold Coast. The paper captured most of the popular entertainment-related activities of the Gold Coast and later Ghana. A significant feature of the Mirror was its dedication to highlighting women's activities in varied positions and roles. An example is the Sunday Mirror Beauty contest, which invited applications from women from as early as 16 years to about 36 years old across the colony. These pictures served as front-page highlights, with many more on their pages. Such representation of women in the newspaper may have led to E. T. Mensah and his Tempos Band referring to it as a lovely paper.


Sunday Mirror

ARE OUR CUSTOMS OUTMODED?

BEAUTY WITH A BIG AIM

Figure B. Mrs Smith is one of the many Gold Coast women featured on the front page of the Sunday Mirror for their achievements and beauty. Picture by the Sunday Mirror, April 1955. Sourced from the Institute of African Studies Newspaper archive.

The importance of the newspaper to the entertainment industry is evident in a recording titled "Sunday Mirror" by E. T. Mensah and the Tempos Band. The song recounts the intriguing narratives and pictures the paper presents and urges everyone to buy. While the ideas behind

the spotlight on women within Sunday Mirror are unknown, it is possible to construct meanings from the diversity of women's representations they project through their media. In a message from the US embassy in Ghana in (2020), Naomi Mattos emphasized the embassy's interest in supporting a project highlighting the importance of women "at the forefront both behind the pen and in the story itself." This message was made about Ghanaian women in journalism. The message lends credence to the importance of women's participation in media text production, constituting what is represented. Women served as writers and editors in the Sunday Mirror with names like "Aunty Eva," Lizzy Fosu, and Hilda, who offered relationship-related advice. While the early years of education in the Gold Coast focused on male education, the education of females was focused on "introducing women to a respected and respectable domestic sphere of proper female activity" (Sil 2010 in Asare-Danso 2017). Women's education was twofold: women were taken through an apprenticeship at the houses of missionaries and, later, the emergence of the boarding school system, where the curricula expanded in the 1800s. They were taught Housecraft, cooking, sewing, needlework, and House Cleaning within the boarding houses, which marked the beginning of female education on the Gold Coast (Knispel and Kwakye 2006: 49).

These activities prepared women for their roles as wives and mothers in the home. Sunday Mirror newspaper captured the activities of these women and their counterparts who travelled outside the Gold Coast and were educated in other fields. The diversity of representation in this paper may be suggestive of intentionality aimed at highlighting the feats being achieved by women, where references to men were mostly within the context of marriage or broader societal functions where both genders may be present and are captured as such. Such representations also serve the symbolic purpose of showcasing women's activities within the country and beyond.

Women's representation in the media has developed and changed with time to reflect society's cultural and sociological changes. The paper becomes an essential source of accessing pictures and narratives that speak to the ever-emerging roles of women within highlife music performances in Ghana, especially within the period under study in this thesis.

3.1.8. The girl with the Mandolin: Media text representations of women in Highlife Music

Figure C. Mrs. Gladys Bekoe with a mandolin at the beach. Picture by A.D Ocansey of the Sunday Mirror, January 1959. Sourced from the Institute of African Studies Newspaper archive.

On the front page of the Sunday Mirror (1959) is a picture of Gladys Bekoe playing the mandolin. This picture was taken by the paper's photographer on the beach of Accra on New Year's Day. According to the narrative accompanying the picture, Gladys "with a radiant smile

strums the strings to pick up a tune" while enjoying a sunny New Year at the Accra beach. Like many others, this picture presents varied pictorial representations of women in the Sunday Mirror. Clad in a swimming costume, the photographer could have focused on capturing her body instead of the musical instrument she was playing. This picture symbolises women learning and performing popular instruments in Ghana's popular performance and entertainment space. The policies of Nkrumah's government aimed at increasing the numbers of women within the arts were paying off, with some women joining the numerous states and parastate bands (Collins 2007). Playing such a popular instrument like the mandolin by a woman is significant, especially per its relation as a string instrument to the guitar. As noted by Collins, the guitar was associated with drunkenness and palmwine music making, which affected women's association with such music and, by extension, instruments. The representation of a woman playing a similar instrument to the guitar and at the beach was evidence of the changing perception of women playing popular instruments.

The other meaning that can be constructed from this representation is women's assertiveness, especially in the period leading up to independence and afterward. A woman dressed in swimwear and playing the mandolin was a classic representation of the new modern woman. She takes control of her body and poses for the camera while entertaining herself and the people around her with a musical instrument. One can only imagine the stares of onlookers, which may have drawn the cameraman's attention to her. To be captured on the front page of the popular entertainment newspaper of the period speaks to the intentionality of the picture taken while serving the symbolic purpose of perhaps changing society's perception of women's roles in popular music. Although Gladys may not be an avid instrument performer, the picture represents women's feats during this period regarding society's perception of the guitar and women's association with men who perform it. The various beauty contests captured by the

Sunday Mirror also speak to women's continued participation in social activities and, within such activities, the performance of highlife music.

Concluding the short story—DON'T MARRY IN HASTE

ONLY THE BEST IS GOOD FOR US

By Richard McMillan

"YOUR sister's not a thief" Mamma Mensah admonished. "She's just borrowed it. And you know she means well. But I do hope she doesn't throw herself at this young man."

Dawn's lips were tight as a razor's edge. "Well I do I hope she marries him and we have some peace at home —at last."

And that's just what Grace did—get married to him. She didn't return home that night and next morning a telegram arrived from Lome. It read: "Whooppee stop great news stop were wedded stop having a whale of a time love grace".

"Crazy!" was Dawn's candid comment.

But her mother was worried "After all the warnings I gave her " she lamented "I just hope she doesn't come to harm."

"Harm — Grace!" Dawn scoffed. "She's the one who knows how to look after herself. In fact, it seems to me she's landed on a bed of roses, marrying the son of a millionaire. Bet I don't have that kind of luck with my pen-pal — if he ever appears".

The thought reminded her that she would need to get a dress to grace the one Grace had surreptitiously taken. She went over to a corner of the room where she kept her money-box with her savings. Opening it she gave a cry of dismay.

"Now what's the trouble?" Mrs Mensah sighed.

"Trouble!" Dawn wailed in anger. "Your precious elder daughter!

As if it's not enough to take my dress she must have my money, too—every penny of it is gone. Thiefed my dress, thiefed my money — I surpose if my boyfriend had come she'd have thiefed him too!" She sobbed unashamedly. 'Oh, I'm the unlucky one. Oh I'm the ugly duckling.'

'Ugly duckling? When the next caller came — that very afternoon — she learned otherwise.

"My" he remarked — or rather whistled — "you're even prettier than I expected! A real smasher!"

"You're not . . don't say you're my pen-pal?"

The elegant athletic-looking young man grinned. "That's it! All set to go out, I hope. I'm taking you to a night spot — dine and dance, champagne, caviar—the works. Only the best is good enough for us!"

Excited

Almost too excited to think, the lovely girl, her face flushed with eagerness, dashed off to her room. Her second best dress would need to do. When she appeared, the boy-friend acclaimed her "My what a vision!" he murmured.

Saying good-bye to her mother, now herself too befuddled by all that was happening to do more than throw up her hands and sich helplessly, Dawn went off in a taxi with her pal.

At the end of the evening at the Casa Bonita Night Club there were stars in Dawn's eyes. Her toes still itched from the last rumba.

"Tired?" her partner asked, his voice soft and caressing.

"I could dance all night" the girl confessed.

"Why not? Come to my hotel and we'll put on some records. Your mother won't mind."

Dawn did not need much persuading. Not only did she want to be near him, so much had he captivated her, but she wished to know more about him. In his room they drank more bubbly and danced and talked, until they knew everything about each other. They knew something more, too—they had fallen deeply in love. He wanted to marry her —soon.

"Darling" Dawn kissed him, "there's an adage my mother wields like a wand over my sister and me. 'Marry in haste . . .' My sister's just done it, so I should take time. Let's say next week. Meanwhile, you're my lover, my fiance. Now will you see me home?"

When they reached her house, the place was in commotion. Grace and her husband were there.

"What's the matter? We thought you were on your honeymoon". Dawn remarked.

"You should be enjoying yourself — in a seventh heaven — deliriously happy."

"Enjoying myself! Happy!" Grace wailed. "Nothing but trouble. I'm in misery—married to a skinflint—a miser".

Glance

She paused as her husband came into the room. She gave him a baleful glance. "Just think of it—he borrows money from me — the son of a millionaire. We had to come back to get some from mum and he was in such a hurry he wrecked the car."

"The son of a millionaire — wrecked the car — what's all this about?" It was Dawn's fiance's turn. His voice was glacial. Grace's husband looked crestfallen.

"Let me tell everything." His tone was abject, crestfallen. "I tried to explain to Grace here that I had not been writing to her at all. She wouldn't listen." He faced Dawn's fiance.

"You see, boss, I had

● Contd. on Page 12

BUNDAY MIRROR, January 8, 1967. Page 15

GO, GIRL GO!

Make no mistake, readers, for she is not a member of any pop group. She is only in the New Year mood.

From what we have, this year's New Year activities were celebrated in a most fitting manner and for a truth of this, our roving cameraman met this girl stringing out a nice tune from her guitar.

Her name is Gladys Asiedu, a telephonist at the Sunyani post office.

With her guitar, Gladys seems to sing the old tune "Old Laungsayne."

Figure D. Gladys Asiedu, a telephonist from the Sunyani Post Office, playing the guitar. Picture by the Sunday Mirror, January 1967. Sourced from the Institute of African Studies Newspaper archive.

The chapter has established that women were featured as performers in some highlife bands. The pictures of women, as captured in the newspaper, speak to the individuality quest of women in musical performances. Rightly captured by the writer, the woman in the above picture is not a band or group member but has learned the instrument either way. Her picture is also symbolic of the growing quest by women to become commercialised solo performers. The result becomes evident in Julie Okine, a singer, and Agnes Aryittey, who played the guitar. These acts by the women were evidence of the shifting gender roles where such European stringed

instruments would be associated with men. Butler (1988, 1999) discusses how gender may be produced by one's day-to-day acts, which may often be unconscious. The realisations of these acts may happen in the shape of acts, gestures, postures, clothes, and embodied acts (Madison and Hamera 2005, xviii). According to Gartner (2020), such acts have an ambivalent potential.

The above narrative on performativity can be associated with the women's guitar and mandolin performance. These women embody a deconstruction and subversion of accepted stereotypes regarding playing musical instruments in the Gold Coast. On one hand, they can function to maintain norms and power relations; on the other hand, they can deconstruct, subvert, and reshape them (Butler, 1999; Madison and Hamera, 2005). Guitar and mandolin performances among women within these contexts did not necessarily take over the performance space or assume a different gender. However, they were gradually catching up to their male counterparts. Apart from playing instruments, the paper also captures the activities of some of the period's female singers, including Edith Norteye, of whom no reference had been made in scholarly writings despite her role on the popular *Everybody Likes Saturday Night* radio show. Chapter five of this thesis discusses her role and experience as a performer in the period under study and how her works highlight the importance of a contextual understanding of women's experiences in previously colonised contexts.

3.2. Conclusion

This chapter examined women's roles within highlife performance spaces historically. It notes the impact of colonialism on the social life of Africans through cultural changes imposed by colonial administrators, amongst them the absence of women from early proto-highlife bands occasioned by their absence from colonial armies where traditionally women served in political leadership positions, which included military leaderships. Despite the absence of women, the chapter notes that the localisation of these bands opened up the spaces for women to begin to

participate in performances like Adaha, which served recreational purposes. However, notwithstanding women's involvement, the gradual commercialisation of these bands will further impact their participation, making them an audience. On the other hand, is the palmwine context, whose musicians were mostly male, even though the name of a woman Yaa Amponsah will come to characterise the style. Perhaps the concept of the earth "Asaase[16]" being a woman and designated by Yaa[18], which was the name of the woman, resonates with palmwine music, which continues to thrive given the birthing role of the woman typically known by the Yaa Amponsah rhythm. While women may have been absent as performers, their representation in name and as a style is worth noting as a contributing factor to the development of highlife music as a whole. The association in later years of concert parties with guitar bands further provides a space for women, although metaphorically by their representation in the narratives of concert parties and their impersonation by male actors.

The chapter further focuses on the ballroom context within which the term highlife emerged. Within this context, it emphasizes the role of nwuraanom in the realisation of a dance at the ballroom without whom a gentleman Okrakyenii will not dance. It further notes the gradual increase in the participation of women as performers with names like Christina Mensah, Agnes Aryittey, and Julie Okine, all of whom worked with the Tempos band at different times of their career.

The chapter also highlights the prostitution tag amongst other delinquent practices associated with performance spaces and the woman's role in fostering the practice. It notes attempts by colonial and local rulers to control the practice and the resistance of women to such control. The chapter finally highlights the representation of women in relation to music making by the

[16] Asaase is the Twi (local)name for the earth and it goes with the name Yaa. [18] Yaa is the Akan name for a woman born on Thursday.

Sunday Mirror, one of whom is discussed in chapter five with a focus on her experiences as a performer of the period under study.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN SELECTED SONGS

4. Introduction

This chapter analyses some selected songs from the period under study. These analyses are done through the lens of post-colonial feminist theory, especially from the African perspective, highlighting the importance of a contextual experience of the narratives about women. According to Hall (1997), representations help create meaning between cultural bearers through language. The core focus of post-colonial feminist theorists has been on how women are represented primarily by Western feminist writers and the quest to change such narratives. By changing the narratives or presenting issues from specific cultures and contexts within Africa, these writers contribute to making new meanings about African women. These new meanings consider colonialism's effects on women's role within society, their traditional roles, and the relevance of acknowledging these transformations and how they inform her new role. The chapter analyses the selected songs to understand how the influence of colonialism impacted women's new roles and their representations of such roles in songs. The chapter discusses women's pre-colonial and post-colonial roles in the Gold Coast and Ghana. Such a discussion helped in analysing how the changing social systems impacted and influenced how women were represented in highlife songs of the period under study.

4.1. Pre-and-post-Colonial Traditional Role of Women in the Gold Coast

In order to have an understanding of the new role of the women from the period, a cursory look at their roles within the traditional society is needed. It begins with a critique of Westerners' writings about the role of the Ghanaian woman by Western writers, one of which is Agnes Klingshirn (1973). She states that the woman has a clearly defined place within the traditional society with rights and obligations. However, she engages her arguments from a comparative

perspective, arguing about the disadvantaged role of women within the traditional system. Despite such distinctive roles, she claims an inequality of the traditional systems while emphasizing how this did not pose any problems within its social context; perhaps this has led to arguments about the complementary nature of gender roles within the African context.

According to Prah (2004: 2), the variety of women's roles in pre-colonial Ghana depended on "social organization and historical circumstances of their society". These roles were determined by several factors: succession, inheritance, paternity, descent, affiliation, residence rules, and succession (Aidoo 1995 in Prah 2004). Prah refers to matrilineal Akans, where women had a high economic and legal independence level and played complimentary roles in politically related issues. Others had the patrilineal system, amongst them the Konkomba, Ewe, and Dagomba. Some of these groups had a profound Islamic influence, and the restrictions on women were more noticeable.

Scholars such as Mikell (1985) and Manuh (1991) have discussed the conflicting status of the Akan woman in pre-colonial society, arguing about the erosion of the complementary role of the male and female between the 18th and 19th centuries in Ashanti. To allude to an inequality suggests that Klingshirn (1973) presents women's roles from a comparative perspective against their male counterparts, suggesting a disparity. A disparity that African feminist writers have noted.

Klingshirn continues to discuss how the Ghanaian woman is taken care of by her parents, husband, and, in later years, her children. The woman always finds a place in her father's house except when she is traditionally married and birthed children for her husband. On the issue of marriage, she argues that the causes of divorces in the early period after independence emerge from spouses being chosen for and not from the personal interest of the parties involved.

Klingshirn further reiterates the underprivileged position of the Ghanaian woman in marriage, given that it was the only means through which she was accepted to procreate. References to accounts from several towns in the Ashanti area captured by Jean Allman (2005) suggest that a woman was expected to be married as early as fifteen years. However, not all women succumbed to this rule, with much resistance against the rule to be married because one was a woman. The resistance to such arranged marriages was occasioned by women considering their interests in choosing whom to marry. She argued that even the traditional divorce system favored men because they had better economic opportunities and the prospects to remarry, while a divorced woman reclines in her father's household. Accounts by African writers, such as Aidoo (2022), disprove such assertions.

Again, she laments women's social discrimination regarding sexual behavior, referring to how puberty rites aided such repressions. According to her, she was being suppressed because the woman was not supposed to get pregnant before the puberty ceremony. The suppression before puberty is a typical example of a Western feminist perspective on the experiences of African women. She alludes to the lack of "sexual enlightenment, pregnancy preventive measures" (p. 290), except amongst the Krobos, suggesting that such measures did not apply in other areas of Ghana. However, *bragoro*[17] among the Akan can be cited as one of the instances where girls in puberty undergo rituals that prepare them for the final rites and adolescent life. While the plight of such young women is bemoaned from a Western perspective, there is no acknowledgment of the roles that older women and queen mothers play in the puberty rites process. To present such a narrative cast the traditional role of Ghanaian women in a dim light and fosters a regressive culture where women have no rights.

[17] Puberty rites for girls typically found in the Akan areas of Ghana. These rites are mostly led by elderly women of the town where muisc making plays an important role in informing girls about their rites as they enter into adolescenthood.

Contrary to these assertions, such sanctions that women encountered when they got pregnant before puberty were a means to prevent teenage pregnancies and lose sexual life. It is why women were not expected to get pregnant before they were taken through the process. On the role of women in the life cycle processes, Aidoo writes

> The key role they play in life cycle rites for birth, puberty, marriage, and death emphasizes their importance as guardians of our social and religious values. In Ga religion, only women can be mouthpieces of the gods (dzemawodzi) and of the ancestors. These are the female mediums (wɔyei) who alone are possessed by the gods and relate their wishes to men (Manoukian, 1950:96-7). In Akan, the female nnwonkor and adowa musical bands contain some of the best poets and historians in the society. Certain important elements of our national culture, such as found in dances, songs, folklore, and traditional dress can now only be obtained through these women (Aidoo:210).

This statement affirms the critical role played by women in certain rites of passage and affirms the positive impact on both the young girls involved and the women responsible for enabling the process. On the issue of sexuality, Klingshirn further compares the sexual expressions of the Ghanaian man to the woman, where she refers to polygamy as providing leeway for men to satisfy their desires with other unmarried women. This situation, however, could not be replicated by the woman. Although the author provides conflicting (because she does not explain why women will be sanctioned) accounts of the traditional role of the Ghanaian woman, she acknowledges the effect of colonialism and the transition to modern society in terms of the effects it had on women becoming more assertive about their wants and need.

4.1.1. Impact of Colonialism on the Woman's Role in the Period under study

In line with the above, the following paragraphs explore some factors that resulted in these changes but, more importantly, how these changes inform the new role of women in colonial and post-colonial Ghana. These changes are essential because they extend to music making and

the woman's role in it because of the emergence of the popular music component and, with it, the attendant challenges of women, as has been discussed in some aspects of chapters two and three. Aidoo (2022) discusses the activities of Asante and coastal women and queen mothers of the Gold Coast regarding their resistance and fight against colonial rule. She references Nana Yaa Akyaa[18] (The mother of Prempeh I (1888-1896) and Nana Yaa Asantewaa of Edweso, who led the kingless Asante armies to their last fight against the British.

Yaa Asantewaa became the Chief of Edweso after the British deported its chiefs Afrane and Prempe. Aidoo recalls how Nana Yaa Asantewaa had declared her intentions to exchange her sex with any man who feared to face the British in defense of the Asante nation. In the ensuing war, the then-governor, his wife, and escort were imprisoned in the Kumasi fort. Although she continued to fight, she was captured and sent to the Seychelles Island, where she was forcefully converted and named Victoria until she died in 1922. Aidoo provides several accounts of women's resistance to British rule. She describes the capture of British missionaries Fritz Ramseyer, his wife, his son, and some traders and their march to Kumase. On this journey, they encountered several armies of angry *mmobomme* [19] women who threatened the missionaries while "brandishing knives in their faces" (Boule 1874:47-50 in Aidoo 2022:207). Despite women's critical roles, they found no place in the colonial system. Aidoo posits that their activities were "deplored or misunderstood; their extraordinary activities were defeated" (210). They were systematically left out of the "new forms of power and prestige" (Aidoo 2022:210). Aidoo adds her voice to the changing role of the African woman. She writes

[18] She was the mother of Prempe I. She made no secret of her dislike for the British.
[19] Institutionalized military-religious ceremonies of women under the leadership of the Queen Mother who painted themselves with white clay and paraded through the streets when their men had gone out to war. During their parades, they sing songs of war, invoking the gods to protect their men at the war front.

> Confusion about the role of African women further arose from the fact that Europeans set up a supposed Western ideal of the status of women and tried to judge Africans by it. An encounter with a hardworking African woman who planted her farm, head-loaded the produce home and to market, cooked her meals, cared for her husband and many children, shared her compound with cowives, and kept out of men's social activities in the village, was bound to shock the eighteenth or nineteenth-century traveler. (Aidoo, 2022:188)

Such astonishment, as was experienced by Westerners, resulted from their women being relegated to the domestic space where they were wholly dependent on men; men were considered responsible for building empires and economies. As a result, it was difficult for them to understand the division of activities amongst both genders of African cultures. The result was discrimination regarding education, colonial administration, and economic policies of women where they previously had rights in their own cultures.

The result is the gradually changing roles of the Ghanaian woman occasioned by the shift from agrarian societies to urbanised and industrialised societies. Coupled with this was the gradual disintegration of the external family unit into smaller family units. Klingshirn argues that these factors led to the limitations women experienced in traditional and public settings. Manuh (1991;110-113) affirms this situation of the colonised woman of the Gold Coast. According to her, colonialism imposed Victorian values and morality on the traditional system. By these values, men were seen as the heads of households, women were allowed limited access to education, and workplace discrimination emerged. According to Prah, this situation led to few spaces where women could freely operate, especially within the new and emerging towns of

the Gold Coast. Women served as retail traders of cocoa; however, they became apprehensive about the monopolisation activities of European traders, which led them to mobilise behind the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and later behind the Convention People's Party (CPP). Such restrictions extend beyond economic and educational possibilities to participating in music making.

Both men and women could freely patronise highlife music at the many performance venues and contexts available on the Gold Coast. However, the presence of women participating as musicians and performers was minimal. Even at the level of participation as an audience, there were requirements for the woman. For example, a woman needed to be in the company of a man to be allowed entry into a performance, and in the case of ballroom dances, a woman's patronage was at the invitation of a gentleman. Although such restrictions gradually gave way to free participation, it is essential to note that, unlike the traditional music space where women actively participated in music making, their role in the popular performance space posed many restrictions. Such restrictions necessitate the need for alternative spaces in arguing on the representation of women in highlife songs as evidence of their metaphorical presence where their physical presence has been limited.

4.2. Selection Process and Thematic Discussion of the Selected Songs

The focus songs for this chapter were selected from a sample population of fifty songs from the 1940s to 1969. Out of the population, eight final songs were selected based on the dominant themes evident in them. The main themes for the song selection were beauty/love, marriage/childbirth, and prostitution.

4.2.1. Thematic Analysis

This chapter engaged a thematic analysis of selected songs from the selected period. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method of data analysis used for identifying and reporting patterned themes in data (Braun and Clark, 2006). This method involves four phases: immersion, code generation, theme identification, and theme confirmation. The immersion stage involved familiarising myself with several songs and determining which would make it into my sampled population for further delimitation. As discussed in Chapter One, the songs were obtained through the Nketia Audiovisual archives, the British Library Sound Archive, the Daniel Langlois Foundation Collections, and YouTube. The songs accessed from these spaces were listened to, and notes were made. The next phase involved the generation of codes. The coding was based on references to prostitution, women's activities in highlife performance spaces, love, marriage, childbirth, and beauty. The third phase involved merging some of the themes, reviewing the relationship between themes, and categorization of significant themes. The themes are then subject to discussions and definitions using the selected songs.

4.2.2. Analysis of Highlife Song Texts

The relevance of analysing highlife song text has been explored by authors who argue on the importance of such analysis as much as the musical structure. Owusu-Brempong (1986) writes that highlife music is for dancing and listening. Listening could focus on the instrumentation and other music components as could be on the lyrical component. Asante-Darko and Van der Geest (1980) engage in a textual analysis of highlife songs. They mention that among the themes in highlife songs are marriage and divorce, love affairs, inheritance, witchcraft, and death. They reference these themes as problems, almost seeming to suggest that highlife songs were meant to address problems only. Interestingly, no mention is made of the "problem" of

prostitution, which featured prominently in concert party narratives and recordings by popular musicians of the period under study, such as E.T. Mensah.[20]

The mention of E. T. Mensah suggests that men dominated the music tradition and its songs, and because of the situation, the songs that were composed and recorded were from a male perspective, thus connoting an ideological character where culture comes to play, and there is a conscious effort at maintaining male supremacy (Asante Darko and Van der Geest 1987). Their assertion lends credence to understanding the activities of colonialism and its favor of men over women. Interestingly, however, a few women like Julie Okine, who recorded with a highlife band in the 1950s, dared to assert their freedom and own their new role resulting from Western influence. An analysis of her song in the chapter highlights more on the meanings of her song "Nothing but a Man's Slave." Analysing the themes in highlife songs aims to understand how the themes were impacted by colonialism and how the discourses that surround the impact are reflected in songs.

4.3. Song Transcriptions

4.3.1. Club Girl (Calypso) by E.T Mensah and His Tempos Band

Vocal by Bob Veale 1950s

First Verse
Girls, you want to know the meaning of this melody
Then you will realize how beautiful it is to be
The fashion of the day
A club girl, people say

[20] I refer to E.T Mensah as a popular musician of the time since he featured prominently in the newspapers of the period under study.

The importance of good marriage

Second Verse

What a beautiful,

One of these days, you used to be a club girl

Oh yes! The work is good

I cannot stop and go to sell

It is economical

No waste of energy
It is professional

So please forget about marriage

Third Verse

I continued to understand professional and economics

She said to me, my gentleman, you want to know the price is fixed

But when you want to go

I steal another dough

In different ways, of course

So please forget about marriage

Fourth Verse

She said to me

I want to add the business front, so we go on trek

So you've got to know the arrangement of your sleeping place

But when you want to rest,

You loose a lot of dough

That's how the business goes

So please forget about marriage

Fifth Verse

I told her, then I understand

But how on earth you came to be

A club girl

My beautiful, you should have then belonged to me

A broken has the cause, from some department false
But if you swear today,
We shall be wed together in May

4.3.2. Analysis of *Club Girl*

The introduction to this song creates the imagery of E. T. Mensah and his Tempos Band in a live evening performance. As an introduction to the performance, he calls for the attention of his female audience with the question, "Girls, you want to know the meaning of this melody?" then refers to "club girl" being the "fashion of the day'" and how these girls realise too late the "importance of good marriage." The second stanza creates the imagery of Mensah engaging with one of such club girls in conversation. In the discourse that ensues, she tells of the benefits of being a club girl, its economic benefits, and how little effort was required. She could, therefore, not stop and possibly become a market woman or seller. She continues to dignify her profession as a club girl and reinforces her stance against marriage. By this, she urges Mensah, whose aim for approaching her was for the prospects of marriage, to forget about it. Despite her resolve, Mensah continues to engage her in conversation to understand the professional and economic prospects of being a club girl. She explains that her rates are fixed and non-negotiable therefore even when he refuses to pay, she will find other means of making the money.

This is followed by the proposition of a business deal to Mensah where they travel around and earn more money. The lady emphasizes the importance of "not sleeping on the job" as money will be lost. Regardless of her relentless resolve, Mensah continues to question how she ends up as a club girl and bemoans his plight for not being able to have her. He tries to persuade her with the offer of marriage regardless of what she does.

4.3.3. Thematic Analysis of *Club Girl*

A "*club girl,*" as the title of this song suggests, has an inherent meaning: that of a prostitute. The early periods of the development of highlife music were one in which nightlife was important. The continuous spread of nightclubs, spots, and dance halls meant an everexpanding array of bands that performed in these spaces. The rippling effects of colonialism resulted in more men being educated and increasing their chances of being appointed in the industrial sector. The movement to the urban centers was carried out by men and women, all seeking better conditions of life within the new society that colonialism had created. Many women in the urban centers worked as sellers in the markets like *Makola* and *Kotokuraba*. Other women were lucky to be sent abroad for further studies, while many more began emerging as Shop clerks. One space that both genders patronised after a hard day's work was the nightclub or dance hall.

Within these circles, the term *club girl* refers to some women who hang around the bars seeking a man to accompany them inside. Such women were not seeking the performance by any band but the possibility of meeting a man through a *pilot boy.* Plageman (2013) refers to such boys as "go-betweens" for women in their quest to meet with men. In a write-up in the Sunday Mirror, Carl Mutt references the need for the proprietors of night spots to be cautious of the bands they present and the charges they make. According to Mutt, mediocre bands were supposed to be patronised by "pilot boys and girls; charge them two schillings each man or woman and let them have a fling; on the big nights, that is when you have the good bands playing, you may charge your 4 shillings and of course see that no woman comes in unaccompanied by a man" (Carl Mutt in Sunday Mirror, May 8, 1955:8) This excerpt suggests that the avenues available for highlife performances at night also served other interest and woman are singled out for the role they played in these spaces. Whether it was for their

protection or to avoid being tagged as club girls, the woman's role in this space cannot be overlooked. Carl's statement also speaks to the low status that accompanied the life of *club girls* and *pilot boys* within the performance spaces.

The musicians who performed at these clubs were not immune to the happenings in the spaces they performed, and the idea behind this song about a club girl might have evolved out of such. However, even more intriguing in the song lyrics is the club girl's affirmative stance despite society's perception of her trade. The song raises questions about marriage, prostitution, and love at an intersection. Though the restrictions of her tradition burden the woman, she finds herself at the crossroads between tradition and colonialism's effect and, within this, the need for her to navigate the new role within which she finds herself. This she does by reaffirming her stance on prostitution, which goes contrary to society's perception of the woman having to get married and become economically reliant on her husband.

4.3.4. Nothing but a Man's Slave By the Tempos Band (recorded by Decca West African Records) 1957 (Featuring Julie Okine on vocals)

Introduction
I went downtown one Saturday night just for a bottle of beer
I met a lovely Cape Coast boy looking so nice and sweet

Refrain
He wants to know my name,
He wishes to know my game
If I died of a man's love, I am Nothing but a man's slave

Second Verse
We stepped into a taxi cab, heading straight to me
We stepped into a busy nightclub, and we asked for table for two

Refrain

He wants to know my name,

He wishes to know my way

If I died of a man's love. I am Nothing but a man's slave

Third Verse

We went into a private saloon, and he asked for gin and lime

I searched into my breast pocket, nothing was left for me

He didn't ask my name,
Still wants to know my game

Refrain

If I died of a man's love, I am Nothing but a man's slave

4.3.5. Analysis of Nothing But a Man's Slave

In this song, the singer, Julie, presents herself as a "club girl" who goes out on a Saturday night to have a drink and happens to meet a man. In the newspaper excerpt presented by Carl Mutt, he stresses the need for unaccompanied women not to be allowed into nightclubs and spots. Julie's solo night outing affirms Mutt's statement of women going out alone for a "bottle of beer." Such acts by women present clear evidence of resistance at the level of women patronising highlife spaces and a female performer representing women at the front of performances. With Mutt's assertion, the conclusion can be drawn that she knew she would chance on a man and not have to spend her evening alone. In an interview with Mr Amoah, he recounts his memories from Swedru in the 1950s, where his brother was in charge of the town hall. According to him, women were interested in dancing at the town hall. Therefore, they purchased their tickets and entered the space, hoping to strike up a conversation with a prospective dance partner, a man.

He, however, refers to another category of women, the club girls, who did not pay for tickets. Such women liaised with men, "pilot boys," at the gate and gained entry into the performance spaces. The gains from finding a man for the night were shared between them. His answer to the question on prostitution suggested a misogynistic response where "if a man was lucky, he could get a woman for the night." His responses suggest the man's control in the process and non-recognition of the woman at the forefront of presenting her body and asserting her needs. Women going out alone was a common thing during this period, and perhaps it is as a result of the number of women that go out alone at night which necessitated the need for them to enter the performance spaces with a man, probably to avoid being called a club girl or prostitute. Even though there were calls for restrictions on women and attempts at their implementation, women actively patronised performance spaces for diverse reasons.

The song reflects the happenings in society and is even more prevalent in the period's many concert party storylines. In a concert party listening from the archive cataloged AWG-W-18, which featured the Fanti Trio Guitar Band, the story unfolds of two women who dismiss a suitor's request. In the opening scene, a man returns home after traveling to Takoradi, seeking a wife to marry. He visits the household of a man and his wife, seeking to get married to one of their three daughters. The man then calls on his daughters and presents the suitor's request before them. Araba, the first daughter, does not heed the request, telling her father she is traveling to Kumasi for a dance. In her words, *"gyantra na mo'obo"* (I will continue to be a prostitute), reiterating her resolve to continue with prostitution. She also represents the imagery of women or girls traveling beyond their homes to attend what they called "dance" in the period under study.

Another meaning that the song raises is one of a woman knowing her worth and being ready to assert her freedom and independence regardless of the tag associated with her in the performance space. She is well aware of man's intentions and ready to march him at his own pace. The Sunday Mirror newspaper provides evidence of women participating in most of the social functions of the Gold Coast, for which highlife and nightlife were a critical component. Pictures abound that speak to women patronising horse Races, participating in beauty pageants, going to the beach, and attending parties. All of these provide evidence of the Ghanaian woman being an active participant in her new role brought upon by colonialism.

4.3.6. *Gyantra Nnye Adwuma* – (Prostitution Is Not Work) by the Fanti Star Band on the Decca Yellow Label Series in 1952

Chorus
Besia bi se ɔnkɛyɛ adwuma
Gyantra n'ɔbɛyɛ
Besia bi se ɔnkɛyɛ adwuma
Gyantra n'ɔbɛyɛ

First Verse
H'om mma yɛnhwehwɛ adwuma nyɛ.
H'om mma yɛnhwehwɛ adwuma nyɛ
Adwuma nyɛ na oo
Gyantra nyɛ adwuma
Adwuma nyɛ na oo
Gyantra nyɛ adwuma
Me jole adwuma nyɛ na oo Gyantra
yɛ adwuma?

Translation
Chorus

A woman says she will not work
She will be a prostitute
A woman says she will not work
She will be a prostitute

Verse
Let us look for work to do
Let us look for work to do
Work abounds
Prostitution is not work
Work abounds
Prostitution is not work
My love, work abounds Is
prostitution work?

4.3.7. Analysis of *Gyantra Nnye Adwuma*

This song feeds from the ideas raised in the first two songs analysed. This song talks about a woman who has resolved not to 'work' but to engage in prostitution. While the women in the concert parties, like Araba and Julie, are well aware of the business and economic prospects of *gyantra* (prostitution), the Fanti Star Band debunks this idea of prostitution as work and urges this woman to seek "proper work." Much like the rest, the song may have also emerged from the musicians' experiences with women in the spaces they perform. Such pronouncements, however, suggest a negative connotation for women patronising nightlife performance spaces. This reason may have deterred women from wanting to be a part of bands. It could also be why bands refrained from admitting women into their fold, possibly to protect them from such name tags.

On the other hand, it could have been the issue of "wild bands men," as one of my interviewees mentioned. According to him, some men in the bands were wild and could also have been a

deterring factor for women wanting to join bands. Intriguingly, the woman could not access the performance space as freely as the man could. The diverse implications for prostitution raise several questions about society's perception of the woman's role and how these women defied it through such acts as prostitution.

4.3.8. Cedi Special by K. Yamoah or Yamoah's Band

Vocalists Agyaaku, Yamoah, and Owusu (1967)

Introduction
Ɔno na Ɔba no
Nsa yaa Ɔnim bɔ
Mpanimfoɔ wɔ mu
Adwuma yi ɔte aseɛ papa papa

First Verse
Memeneda anwumere bi, mekɔ kurotia abonten
Mekɔ kɔhuu besia bi
Besia no neho yɛfɛ paa
Ɔse ɔpɛ m'asɛm menso mepɛ n'asɛm
Mede no kɔɔ fie
Adeɛ kyee anɔpa no memaa no cedi miɛnsa sɛ ɔnfa nnyɛ aduane mma me, meekɔ adwuma aba oo

Second Verse
Mefiri adwuma baae a, ɛdan si hɔ aa nnipa nnda mu
Mekɔ hwɛɛ Jamboree, mekɔɔyɛ a manto no
Mekɔɔ Atomic, mekɔɔ y'a osi hɔ yi
W'agye club baako
Ɔgye Star beer baako
Kantamanto bottle
Ogye ne kosua bi nso da so
Mmerɛ a mehuu no no ɛnyɛ Nyame a mesuro no a ka asotrɔ ara na ɛsɛ no

Nanso asem a meka kyerɛɛ besia no ara ne sɛ me Cedi oo me Cedi oo

Me cedi ara na mere hwehwɛ

Mmerɛ a meebɔ no attack no, Owura Acheampong duruu hɔ a

Asem a ɔka kyerɛ me ne dɛ mmeranteɛ a moaba, ɛmma no bi wɔhɔ a ahoɔfɛ nsɛ hwee Suban papa na ohia

Translation

Introduction

There she comes

She knows how to drink

She is a Pro

She understands the work

First Verse

One Saturday night, I went to the outskirts of town

I saw a lady

This lady was beautiful

She said she likes me and I like her too

We went home

The next morning, I gave her 3cedis to prepare food for me, then I left for work

Second Verse

When I returned from work, my room was empty

I went to Jomboree, but I didn't find her

I went to Atomic and found her

She had one bottle of club

She also had one star beer

Kantamanto bottle

When I saw her, I wanted to give her a slap but for the fear of God

All I told her was to return my Cedi

My Cedi is all I am looking for

Whilst I was attacking her, One Mr Acheampong was passing by

He advised against men going for looks instead of character

4.3.9. Analysis of *Cedi Special*

This song talks about a man who meets a girl at the club and takes her home to spend the night. The next day, this man gives her three cedis to prepare food for him while he goes to work. Upon his return from work, the woman was nowhere to be found. Therefore, he searches for her at popular spots, possibly in the neighborhood or area. He finally finds her at Atomic, a popular club where she has an array of beer bottles at her disposal. A similar scene is recounted by one of my interviewees. As part of the interview session with Mr Amoah, he recounts the following:

> I remember going out with my cousin to the club in the 1960s. He bought me a bottle of beer, but I couldn't drink much as I was not much of a drinker. In the course of our conversations, a lady moves to my table with her glass and pours my beer into it' then starts drinking. She proceeded to sit beside me and engage, to my surprise. She finished the first glass and went on to the next glass whilst I was still on my first. He relates the scenario to the song titled Cedi Special. (Interview with Mr Amoah at the Department of Music)

Amoah's story tells of the experience's men had with women in entertainment spaces and how such experiences may have influenced Yamoah in the writing of this song. Yamoah continues to express his anger upon finding her and would have slapped her if not for one, Mr Acheampong, who intervened. In the ensuing banter, Mr. Acheampong advises this man to focus on the character of a woman and not her beauty. Regardless of this advice, he insists on getting his Cedi back from the lady.

On a literal value, this lady will be judged as a prostitute who follows a man to his house on the first date. However, from the example of the afore-discussed songs, women during this period patronised prostitution as a profession for which they earned their living. For a man to think that a woman is supposed to prepare him a meal after spending the night speaks typically

of the misogyny of men during this period. The song cuts both ends of the sword where the women may have been selling cheaply and are patronised as such. It also brings to bear the idea of the men seeing themselves as saviours of the women; a typical example is the discussion between Mensah and his love interest about marriage and her resolve to continue as a club girl. In the song Cedi Special, a similar situation ensues, where the man thinks he can save the woman from her "wayward ways," and she makes away with his money. All of these happenings between "saving men" and women in distress make for delving into the perception concerning marriage in the period under study to understand how men perceived marriage and, most times, disregarded the interests and wants of the women involved.

4.3.10. *Kumase Aketesia* by Van de Cargo and His Strings (1950)

Kumase Aketesia w'abaa
Kumase Aketesia w'abaa
Ɔse ɔrekɔ dance w'abaaa
Ɔse ɔrekɔ dance w'abaaa
Ɔkɔ ka ne nans ease oo oo
Ɔde notma fia pe abaaa

Translation
Kumasi lady has come
Kumasi lady has come
She says she is going for a dance
She says she is going for a dance
She is going to dance
And come back with a piece of cloth

4.3.11. Analysis of *Kumasi Aketesia*

This song talks about a lady who bids goodbye to her family or friends, telling them she is going to Kumasi for a dance. Kumasi had a booming economic status during the 1950s and

early 1960s. It was the Asante Empire's capital and the Asantehene's home. It was also home to a lot of prominent highlife musicians. Kumasi also hosted several popular hotels and clubs catering to diverse audiences. Amongst these hotels and bars were the City Hotel, Lido and Grand Hotel, and Star Night Club. These places and the ever-increasing number of bands in Kumasi made it a hot spot for weekend and nighttime entertainment. In Jean Allman's "Rounding Up Spinsters: Gender Chaos and Unmarried Women in Colonial Asante" in 2005, she references one Jean Asare from Effiduasi, who remembered the capture of unmarried women for misbehaving. In her words, "Women were not just roaming about, attending dances, sleeping everywhere…some went as far as Kumasi to sleep with boyfriends…" (Allman 2005:203). This statement by Jean lends credence to Kumasi's important role in highlife music. However, the women who patronised such long-journey entertainment spaces came to acquire the perception of being prostitutes (*atuutuufo*).[21] The reason was that married women did not have the time to move about attending dances, and this idea was solidified by Mensah's love interest in the song *Club Girl* by E. T. Mensah and His Tempos Band. Her rejection of a marriage proposal and desire to extend her 'trade" by going on a trek represents Asare's statement.

4.4. Thematic Analysis of Prostitution in Pre-colonial Gold Coast

Owusu-Banahene (2010) discusses prostitution in the pre-colonial and post-colonial periods as part of his broader thesis. He cites examples from different Regions and refers to accounts by local and Western travelers on the subject. Amongst the focus areas were Esuma, Nzema, Evakue, and Ahanta towns, and these documentations date as far back as the 17th century. Prostitutes, or "Public women" as they were called, were "conscripted public women coerced into what was definitely a social institution designed to alleviate sexual pressures amongst

[21] This is a Twi term for prostitutes or so-called club women.

unmarried men" (Owusu-Banahene, 2010: 55). Reference is made to the Axim area, where every village was required to maintain about two of such women. These women were initiated by Kabaseros (headsmen) of the village in the presence of a crowd (Acheampong, 1997). Their initiation involved slaughtering a chicken and allowing drops of blood from its beak to drop on the woman. In the process, she had to declare her willingness to accept lovers of more than four, which equaled the worth of about three suitors at the time. The woman's role as a "public woman," according to Acheampong (1997), was not one by which she could make earnings or wealth; her earnings went to the village chief.

Acheampong again cites Gadot (1704) and Bosman (1702) concerning their descriptions of such women in Assini (present-day Ivory Coast). They tell of the Assini king maintaining about six of such women who were mainly in the services of unmarried men, and such women distinguished themselves from other women and mostly lived on the outskirts of town. These women could, however, not be patronised by married men, and culprits were fined. Such women could also not demand payment but were free to accept gifts. These women had been purchased through wars. Sarpong (1977) claims a spiritual connotation behind prostitution and argues that it is why promiscuity was a sanctioned space for women.

Because of the spiritual implications of sex and marriage in pre-colonial Gold Coast, it was important for prostitutes or public women to be taken through rituals. These rituals were said to minimise the dangers the women might invoke on society. The rituals established the woman's role in society, where she is considered to heal society psychologically (OwusuBanahene 2010: 58).

In other Akan societies, prostitutes were referred to as the *etiguafo,* primarily found in the precolonial Gold Coast in Elmina and Fetu Asebu areas. These women negotiated their sexual activities at a fee. Their pleasing appearance and clothing distinguish them from other women. It tells of the individualised nature of prostitution in this part of the Akan areas compared to other areas discussed. Although fathers would generally not force their daughters into marriage, they quickly withdrew their support when their daughters rejected a proposed suitor. This idea permeates many concert party story narratives, further compounded by colonialism. An example of such a narrative exists in a concert party listening session at the Nketia Audiovisual archive catalogs (AWG-W-18). The story unfolds of a man who returns from Takoradi to his hometown seeking a wife. He visits the household of a man with three daughters. He presents before this man his intention of marrying one of his daughters. The father then relays the information to his daughters. Araba[22], being the firstborn, was first consulted, but she was adamant in her resolve to remain a prostitute with the intention of not stopping. Araba's stance raises the question of whether every woman who rejected a proposition was considered a prostitute.

On the other hand, she seems to have accepted her fate as would come to be because she refuses her father's suggestion. The other reason for refusing her suitor was because he was poor, which is realized when she references the cloth he wore as "*dɛɛ ehuo*" (cheap cloth). Such references bring up the issue of wealth related to prostitution, which is also discussed. Her reference to the cheap clothes her suitor wore is further replicated in the song "dɛɛ ehuo." In this song, a lover admonishes her suitor to wear expensive cloth, "garbadin," to be able to associate with her. In response to Araba, her suitor reiterates that both *de3 ehuo*[23] and *garbadin* were brought

[22] Araba is the female Fante name for a woman born on tuesday
[23] This song originally titled Ropopo was recorded by Joe Mensah, accompanied by The Star Dandies of Ghana on the Philips West African Records

in by the steamship and that she required a man to buy her a cloth, to which Araba asserts her stance, thereby taking autonomy of her life and choices.

The father then calls on his second daughter, Paulina, who also takes her sister's stance in her resolve to remain a prostitute. In her words, *"obebo life… obebo gyantra* (She will live life…she will remain a prostitute until ready for marriage). To this, her father admonishes her with the song "*ma w'ani nso wona*" (be respectful to your mother) to be respectful of her mother who would not have had her if she had lived her life as a prostitute. The third daughter agrees to marry this man but requests that he be able to dance "rock." The requests by the three daughters tell of the exposure of all these ladies to the social life of their city and the need for the man to be able to keep up with them. At the end of the play, the first two daughters find themselves in debt and trouble and have to declare their willingness to marry so that their husbands will help them out. They were also to consider their father's suffering and get married so they could name their child after their father.

The need to consider the father's sufferings speaks of the influence of fathers in their daughter's decisions to get married or not. On the other hand, it presents women who resisted such forceful marriages. Women's involvement in prostitution may not necessarily have been from the pressures of their fathers but their quest to assert their independence and choice of a partner, which invariably implied that they were considered prostitutes. That a woman who was not ready to get married already accepted the "only" other option of making a living, that is prostitution?

4.4.1. Thematic Analysis of Prostitution in the Colonial Period

The onset of colonialism, which led to the emergence of towns, a monetary economy, and industries, changed power relations (Owusu-Banahene 2010: 61). For women, it was an opportunity to move into the urban centers and attempt to make some wealth for themselves. Conceivably away from the prying eyes of their parents who insist on them getting married as an opportunity to acquire wealth. Although not the only available space for women, it provided an alternative means of making money instead of selling in emerging markets like Markola and kotokraba. However, for other women who had received some form of education, the 1950s saw the avenue for more women to be employed as clerks, cash girls, teachers, air hostesses, telephonists[24], and participating in beauty pageants. The ideas from the songs discussed above speak to women taking ownership of their trade regardless of what society made of it. Numbers for a 1900's census in Sekondi were 3,469 for men and 626 for women. Akyeampong (1997) argues that the desire for sex by rail workers may have accounted for women taking up roles as commercial sex workers.

> Although the colonial urban economy was essentially a male economy (male dominating jobs), the willingness of the colonial state and capital to provide for the social reproduction of their labor force, and the sexual imbalance in working-class towns, created economic opportunities for women in the interest of the colonial system (Owusu-Banahene, 2010:62)

These women catered to the needs of the workers at the ports, harbors, and railways sites and their colonial employers. The meager accounts of these workers sometimes could not afford them a place to live, and there are accounts of men going in for prostitutes to secure a roof over their heads for the night. Such circumstances also affected the potential of some of these young workers to be able to afford marriage.

[24] Refer to the Sunday Mirror 1957 and 1967.

4.4.2. Prostitution as work in the Gold Coast

Per the forgoing narratives as discussed above, it becomes apparent that despite the attempts at admitting women into male-reserved workspaces, prostitution was another alternative by which women negotiated their stay in urban centers of the Gold Coast. Women found residence with other women of similar trade. For these women, their 'profession,' as Mensah's love interest mentions, did not require a startup capital but perhaps a few dresses and makeup to appeal to their clients. Regardless of the status of these women as 'Rejected souls' as Owusu-Banahene asserts that these women took charge of the opportunity and situation to make the most of their lives regardless of society's perception regarding their trade. Akyeampong (1997) provides accounts by Busia in 1950 of complaints against some women from Nigeria practicing prostitution in the Gold Coast.

> Venereal disease is too common among my people. Unless a law is enacted by you or the authorities enforcing the repatriation of all Hausa women without husbands to their homes, immorality will be on the ascendancy and indubitably defy the praise–worthy endeavors of the Health Officers (Busia 1950, cited in Akyeampong, 1997).

Per this assertion, it can be argued that the spread of such venereal diseases may have led to the rounding up of unmarried women in some parts of Kumasi. Regardless of the challenges, the benefits of prostitution for the women who engaged in them, as evidenced by the song Club Girl, cannot be dismissed. Prostitution in some parts of the Gold Coast before colonialism was a public service, and women could not accumulate wealth through it. However, the individualised nature of prostitution in other areas, further compounded by colonialism, influenced the prospects of engaging in such a profession for economic gains. Working as prostitutes did not require starting up capitals and was a means by which women could secure places of residence. Per the disowning of daughters by their fathers, Owusu-Banahene refers

to them as "rejected souls," which connotes an Othering of these women, as discussed in chapter two. Given their situation, it is imperative to understand the situation of women who engaged in prostitution during this period. As people who did not fit the accepted traditional norms of behavior for women, their voices could easily be lost; however, some of the songs analysed in this chapter provide evidence of prostitutes accepting and owning their act. Such songs about prostitution, regardless of whether they cast women in bad light or not, present avenues for understanding the lived experiences of these other women.

Prostitution revolved mostly around spots, bars, and hotels with guitar and brass band players with mannerisms such as chewing gum popping introduced by Kru women (Owusu-Banahene 2010:67). Prostitution, therefore, became a medium for female autonomy and nonchalance. Women were said to earn not less than ten pounds monthly, charging about two shillings per session and four shillings for a whole night (pg. 67). The charge of two shillings by these women in the Gold Coast led to the label two-two women, another of the popular names by which prostitutes were called. Some prostitutes owned houses, and Owusu-Banahene reports that some women had as much as 40 to 900 pounds sterling, which they typically deposited in the post office's savings. Such amounts may be viewed as evidence of some prostitutes perhaps making more money than men in some fields of work. As mentioned earlier, prostitutes in the Gold Coast comprised women from other parts of Africa, including Kru and Nigerian women. The older Kru[25] and Nigerian[26] women were called UAC (United African Company)[27], and the much younger group of prostitutes were called Leventis.[28]

[25] Kru women were especially interested in prostitution because of the life they had been associated with in Liberia due to slaves being returned to such places.

[26] Nigerian women traded several parts of Ghana and most became interested in prostitution due to their business and travel activities(trade)

[27] This is an expatriate company that existed in the Gold Coast during the period under study. This name was associated with these women because they were not originally from Ghana but were found in places like Liberia and Nigeria

[28] Leventis was a company known for the sale of general goods. The name was associated with women because the women were compared to a store with the sale of their bodies as was done by the Leventis stores

4.4.3. Marriage in Pre-colonial Gold Coast

Marriage in pre-colonial Africa has been cited as the most enslaving of women, especially those of a polygamous nature. Such issues as the lack of conjugal intimacy and jealousy amongst co-wives and their children have been referenced as some of the problems women face in polygamous marriages. The challenges such a marriage may pose for the new wife cannot be overstated. However, it is traditionally accepted practice for men, especially in some African cultures, to get married to more than one wife. On the other hand, is the thrust of monogamy imposed by the Western world. Aidoo has argued that this mode of marriage does not guarantee conjugal intimacy or trust between spouses. Aidoo furthers her argument by stressing the importance of elderly co-wives in polygamous marriages and their strategic role in determining the selection of a younger wife for their husband. Amongst the Akans, for example, all co-wives receive some compensation called *mpata*[29]. Such compensations show that polygamy was an accepted social institution of marriage and that wives who ended up in such situations were well aware of what to expect.

The imposition of monogamy by Europeans attests to their teaching on the superiority of their marriage system without any recourse towards understanding the woman's role in marriage within the African context. Marriages are a reflection of the culture and values. Polygamous marriages reflected the economic position of the economic system and had a bearing on issues of wealth and position within society. The marriage of more than one wife to a man was evidence of his affluence and power. Women who entered such marriages served as a source of labor for their husbands. However, the responsibilities which this brought on the polygamous man were enormous. Such acts would, therefore, typically be carried out by chiefs and men of

[29] Twi word for compensation given to the existing wives of a man who intends to marry again.

high status within the society. An example is cited by Bowdich (1819; 289-290) of King Osei Tutu as having 3,333 wives, with only six of them residing at his residence (Aiddo, 2018: 191).

Indeed, Aiddo (2018) references that men of lower status had only one wife, and the understated lends credence to this assertion

> In fact, most accounts show that polygyny in Africa was not as common as is generally supposed. In northern Ghana, the anthropologist Meyer Fortes discovered in the 1940s that "the incidence of polygyny among the Tallensi is only about 40 per 100 married men, and two out of three polygynists have only two wives. The modal number of wives is one. Polygyny was closely related to social status. Commoners and ordinary young men rarely obtained more than one wife. Fortes again noted this among the Tallensi. "Plurality of wives," he wrote, "is mainly the privilege of older men because they have both more resources and a longer marital history than the young men. Threequarters of the married men under 45 have only one wife each" (Fortes, 1949:124 cited in Aidoo 192)

4.4.4. Role of Women in Marriages

Women, just like men, had rights and responsibilities expected of them within the home, and these differed in the Ghanaian context depending on whether they followed a patrilineal or matrilineal lineage. Ewe and Dagomba women became a part of their husband's household. Amongst the Ga, women lived away from their husbands, giving them some freedom. Such was the situation in most Akan marriages. Women in Akan marriages followed the matrilineage with their children, and she had a close relationship with her mother. She would visit her husband's home with food and return to her home to take care of her kinsmen. Such women kept their names, and the produce made from their family lands did not go to their husbands. Regardless of this situation, the woman was the man's responsibility thus

> No matter how wealthy a wife was independently, her husband was ••obliged to maintain her and her children. (Very often, the woman made quiet but substantial contributions to the upkeep of the household). A husband had no ultimate legal control over his wife, and her acceptance of a marriage depended, to a large extent, on the kind of treatment she got from the man (Aidoo 2018:193)

Such independent rights of women in most Akan societies may have accounted for women not being interested in getting married or opting out of marriage. Being a divorced woman among the Akan came with no fear or societal stigma, as she could always return home to her maternal family. She was never bound by marriage since her children had the right of inheritance. While the woman maintained some level of autonomy in the house, such women could acquire such names as *obaa barima* (woman-man). The reference of such women as *man-woman* is because regardless of the woman's freedom, the man held the authority figure in the household. Though the woman would talk to her children, the father was responsible for issuing punishment and correcting children.

4.4.5. Marriage in Colonial Gold Coast and Ghana

Contact with the West affected marriage rights and procedures in several ways, including women's rights to initiate divorce. Rattray (1927:97) suggests that "the unfortunate predicament of coastal women may have been due to the position and status of women having deteriorated owing to contact with Europeans." While women in other areas of the Gold Coast could initiate divorce, there were decrees by local men that restricted the rights of women of the coast who had earliest contact with the West to divorce initiation

> Notwithstanding the vague ideas in the coast towns about divorce of native marriage, there is no doubt that, save and except the competency of a native tribunal to decree the dissolution of a marriage, the right to divorce is marital

> only. The wife cannot declare her marriage void ... nor can her family give her permission to remarry in the absence of the consent of her husband ... For adultery or witchcraft on the part of the wife, a man can divorce his wife and claim from her family the consavment and other expenses. But the wife cannot enforce divorce or discontinue marriage on the ground of her husband's adultery or on his marrying more wives. (Sarbah, 1897:52).

Inland women were observed to be more independent, but even in these areas, the rampant spread of prostitution led to specific rules forcing women to get married. These rules, however, came with resistance from the women, while others found ways of manipulating the system to suit their needs. The effect of this contact was that these women attended the churches and, through that, were able to secure monogamous marriages, but this also came with its repercussions. Women would eventually be bound by the indissolubility of Christian marriages, eventually creating challenges for the Ghanaian woman.

From the ongoing discussion, it becomes increasingly clear that despite the social expectations for women to be married, they were not bound by tradition to remain married. The impact of colonialism posed the most significant challenge to women regarding the decision to marry and divorce.

4.5. *Sokoo na Mmaa wɔpɛ* by Kwaa Mensah and His Fante Trio in 1952

First verse

M'akoto srikyi ahoma,
Med'aama ɔdɔ eee
Ɔdɔ yewu ee
Sokoo na mmaa wɔpɛ
Mo'nua me d'aama ɔdɔ oo
Ɔdɔ koro ma ei
Ɔdɔ yewu ee

Sokoo na mmaa wɔpɛ

Second Verse

M'akoto srikyi duku a,

Med'aama ɔdɔ eee

Ɔdɔ koro eei

Ɔdɔ yewu eei

Sokoo na mmaa wɔpɛ Srikyi

duku eei

Med'aama ɔdɔ Ɔdɔ

yewu ee Sokoo na

mmaa wɔpɛ

Third Verse

M'akoto srikyi duku a,

Med'aama ɔdɔ oo,

Mmaa nyi ayɛ eei

Med'aama eei

Ɔdɔ yewu eei

Sokoo na mmaa wɔpɛ

Translation

First Verse

I bought a silk for my love

My love

Women love good things

My love, women love good things

Second Verse

I have bought a silk scarf for my love

My love

Women love good things

Silky scarf, for my love

Women love good things

Third Verse
I have bought a silk scarf for my love
Women lack appreciation
My love
Women like good things

4.5.1. Analysis of *Sokoo na Mmaa Wɔpɛ* By Kwaa Mensah

This song talks about a man buying silk thread for his love because 'women love good things.' Silk was acquired on the Gold Coast through trade and harvested from cocoons in the forest. Silk was a cherished item dating back to the Ghana Empire. Its most popular form is the Kente, woven from cotton and silk yarns imported from Europe and Asia. Silk yarns were considered very prestigious and of high value. Given the high value placed on yarns, it was treasured by those who could purchase one. Therefore, to be able to purchase a silk scarf for one's wife or lover meant that the person was well-to-do. It also symbolised the worth that a man placed on his love. In the song Yaa Amponsah, Kwame Asare references his lover's hair as made of silk in the lyrics "*wo tirinwii tesɛ srikiyi*[30] *ahoma*." In the song, he bemoans the loss of his lover through divorce and praises her beauty.

While such items as yarn project the worth of a woman who receives it, it also projects a denigrating representation of women where they are seen as wanting only good things. This concept is highly influenced by traditional roles and beliefs and by the activities of colonialism by which women were expected to rely on men for their wants.

[30] Is the corrupted twi name for silk

4.5.2. *Comfort* by E. T Mensah and his Tempos Band in 1959

Will you love me, Comfort, won't you love me?
Your charming eyes always piercing my heart
Will you love me, Comfort, won't you love me?
Your charming eyes always piercing my heart

Oh, Dear Comfort, will you love me? Please
do love me at this time of my life Oh, dear
Comfort, won't you love me?

Please do love me at this time of my life

4.5.3. Thematic Analysis of Comfort

This song is about a man obviously bemoaning his lost love, Comfort. He praises her beauty to possibly coerce her into falling in love with him. The use of women's names in highlife songs was a common phenomenon amongst musicians of the period under study. According to Collins (2000), singing about love is peculiar to both genders and not one in which men did more than women. The use of names in songs may talk about lost love and the beauty of a woman, as is evident in Comfort. Other songs like *Maame Ama* by the Tempos Band talk about a long-lost love, similar to the song *Juaben Ama Serwaa* by the Twumasi band. This song talks about *Ama Serwaa* of Juaben, who has traveled away from her lover. The lover bemoans the state of his loneliness and admonishes Ama Serwaa that she might meet his absence if she tarries.

Perhaps the most classic of these songs is Yaa Amponsah[31] by the Kumasi Trio. According to Korankye[32], this particular song generated much controversy because it asked a married woman

[31] This song was recorded in 1928 at Kingsway Hall in London for Zonophone Gramophone company's EZ series
[32] Korankye was interviewed for his views on the song and its meaning

to leave and enter a relationship. Per the discussion on women being able to leave their marriages, especially amongst the Akan, it is unsurprising that Kwame Asare would come to write such a song. As much as it went against society's expectations of women in marriage, it offers a glance at the unspoken realities of women being able to divorce their husbands and still make a living for themselves. Korankye in an interview, further mentioned that despite its controversy, it still received widespread appeal, given that it was one of the earliest popular music recordings dating back to 1928. The song talks about the beauty of a woman with her hair as fine as silk.

When interviewed about the story behind the Yaa Amponsah song, Koo Nimo recounts that Amponsah was a woman from Apedwa in the Eastern Region of Ghana. She was referenced as a beautiful woman with a round neck. Kwame Asare and the Kumasi Trio used to visit Apedwa, a busy cocoa area on the Gold Coast, in the early 1900s. They were hosted by Yaa Ampnsah, who was well known in the music performance spaces of Apedwa as a good host. Her position as a ballroom dance teacher also speaks to the principal role of women in the realisation of ballroom dancing[33]. Collins (2018) mentions that because she had to hold men when teaching them the dances, a bad name was earned from her career. Perchance a typical example of what Edith Norteye will call "girl about town," which references a girl who is widely known within her community and is assertive about her wants and need. Edith mentions that although such women were perceived as prostitutes, they were not. Such might have been the circumstances surrounding the popularity and beauty of Yaa Amponsah. Apart from this is the controversy that surrounds the origins of the song. While it is credited to Kwame Asare for the popularity

[33] The popularity of ballroom dancing led to excerpst in the Sunday Mirror being dedicated to teaching the steps both for the men and women involved.

his band brought to the music, reference is also made to one Asante Kwapong, who arranged the song after hearing a melody from an unidentified lady (Collins 2018:92). A teacher from Achimota School W.E Ward who also recall hearing the song played in Kibi in 1924. Despite the controversies surrounding its origin, it did not stop the song from catching on with musicians in the years following its recording. Musicians like E. T Mensah and his Tempos Band, E.K Nyame and the African Brothers Band. All of these bands also provide different interpretations of the song. In another development, Paul Simmons had requested the services of two Ghanaian guitarists for his song "Spirit Voices," which also incorporated elements of the Yaa Amponsah rhythm. Copyright issues emerged, and money was sent to Kwame Asare. However, his song authorship had expired, and he died years before this incident. The money was thus used to establish the National Folklore Board of Trustees. The benefits of this song speak to the role of the woman in being able to procreate. Given that the royalties generated from it were used in setting up a board, this song is an important asset that transcends multiple generations regarding its relevance and continued sampling.

4.6. *Yaa Yaa Anwo Ba* by African Brothers Band 1967

Introduction

Yaa yaa anwoba m'anya yafunu anwo ba
Aoo yaa yaa anwo ba
Yaa yaa anwo ba mesoma abiba a ɔse ɔnkɔ oo

First Verse

Yaa yaa ee awoɔ newo yam
Nesɛ mayɛ baakofoɔ yi
Awisia m'ayɛ baakofoɔ
Yaa yaa anwoba menya abi na masoma no
Sɛɛna dua koro gye mframa a ebu oo

Tikoro nkɔ agyina

Yaa yaa adeɛ ahia me oo

Aoo Yaa yaa anwo ba

Second Verse

Eno nti abusua ayi me ama oo

Ama m'aka nsensɛn mu

Meyɛ biribiara a ɛnyɛ yie
Esan dɛ ɔbaako yɛ ya oo

Tikoro nkɔ aguina ɛno nti

m'ayɛ moboro eeii Afia

Ampomaa ayɛ mmoboro

Afia ee ne yafunu adi me abrɔ

Third Verse

Yaa yaa anwoba yaa na awerɛhoɔ aka me oo

Menya obi na m'asoma no

Nkɔmɔdifoɔ abɔ me oo

Mewɔ hɔ yi me nni ofutufoɔ

Yaayaa m'ayɛ mmɔbrɔ oo

Translation

Introduction

Yaa Yaa did not give birth, she didn't get stomach to give birth

Yaa Yaa couldn't give birth

Yaa Yaa couldn't give birth. I send someone's child, and they refuse to go

First Verse

Yaa Yaa, giving birth is in your stomach (birth means having your own child)

That is why I have become lonely

An orphan, I am lonely

Yaa Yaa couldn't give birth; I have no one to send

It is true that the lonely tree will give in to the wind

One head cannot think or make decisions

Yaa Yaa, I am in need

Aoo Yaa Yaa, I couldn't give birth

Second Verse

My family has neglected me

I am in limbo

I cannot do anything

Because being alone is difficult

One head cannot make decisions

This has made me sad

Afia Ampomaa, I am sad

Afia, my stomach has been wicked to me

Chorus

Yaa Yaa, I could not give birth, I am sad

I have no one to send

I have no one to talk to

I have no one to go to for advice (worth of children to their mothers)

Yaa Yaa, I am sad

4.6.1. Thematic Analysis of *Yaa yaa Anwo ba*

This song talks about a woman bemoaning her childlessness. Childbirth amongst many cultures, like the Akan, was essential to a woman's identity. In this sense, a woman's child may sometimes be referred to in relation to her mother's name. The Ashanti understanding of the nature of human beings (*ɔdasane*) is important to examine in the discussion of fertility related issues. Amongst the Akan every human being has a threefold nature; the ɔkra (soul), which God gives, the *sunsum* (spirit) given by the father to protect the child and the *mogya* (blood) given by the mother. The father's role is to protect, while the woman's is to replenish the family. Women are significant to Ashanti society because of the matrilineal system. Hanninen and Ofosu Budu (2020), in a study conducted on fertility amongst women in

Southern Ghana, attest to the fact that women were at the receiving end of the responsibility to have children. Women who could not have children were said to be bewitched or cursed, while others may be perceived to have had abortions or lived questionable lifestyles (Hanninen and Ofosu Budu 2020:1).

Abena Kyere (2012:116), in a thematic discussion of songs about women, mentions the challenges women go through to become mothers. Women are at the receiving end of the blame because women in most African cultures are raised right from childhood to accept the responsibility of procreation. The effect of the inability of women to procreate may result in stigma, mental health issues, depression, and sometimes even divorce. These effects influence Afua's lamentations in the song about her state as a woman without a child. Children are an essential asset to families and serve as "intergenerational social security" (Dyer, 2007 in Hanninen and Ofosu-Budu 2020:2). The social and cultural constructions around childbirth are evident in the song where she refers to not having someone to send. In this instance, a woman who has not given birth does not have the right to send another woman's child. Children may sometimes be stopped from running errands for such a woman, which compounds her situation. In a concert party by the Ahanta Trio in catalogue AWG-W-19a dated March 4, 1961, the youngest daughter of a family of three daughters had gotten married and given birth to a child who would care for her in old age. However, her two siblings, who had not married or gotten pregnant, had no child to care for them in their old age. Her inability to have a child of her own in old age tells of the importance of children, especially at this time of life. The song provides evidence of women's challenges when they cannot bear children.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter has engaged a thematic analysis of eight selected songs to understand women's representation in the period under study. The chapter started with a discussion of the pre- and post-colonial traditional roles of women, focusing on the impact of colonialism on these roles. The chapter further highlights the importance of engaging in textual analysis of highlife songs towards understanding how women are represented as an alternative way of understanding their contribution to the development of the music tradition. In order to understand these contributions, eight songs were analysed from the period under study. Emergent themes from these songs were prostitution, marriage, childbirth, barrenness, love, and beauty. A typical characteristic of highlife music was its association with urban migration and the need for entertainment as one of the strategies for dealing with the new environment. Performance spaces provided such opportunities, and associated with this was prostitution. The chapter confirms that prostitution had always existed before contact with the West and was an integral part of keeping society together and appealing to the desires of unmarried men. However, within the context of the development of highlife music, prostitution will become individualised, with women engaging out of their own will, the need to make ends meet, and as ways of defying and taking control of their sexual desires. The reality of prostitution being captured in songs speaks to its pervasive nature in performance spaces, warranting the need for male musicians to express their encounters and thoughts about it through songs like "Club Girl by ET. Mensah."

Contrary to his thoughts on prostitution and the woman's insistence on the economic benefits, Julie Okine presents the trade more sublimely, creating imagery of women's encounters with men at performance spaces. Her song represents one of agency and affirms

the stance taken by the club girl in E.T. Mensah's song. On the contrary, the Fanti Star Band calls attention to prostitution as a vile practice and urges women to look for more decent and respectable means of making an income by shaming the prostitute. Another song that called attention to such acts was "one pound no balance." This song announces the coming of prostitutes and urges men to be locked in their rooms because these women bring trouble. They charge one pound and do not give any change. The song probably also warns married women to keep an eye on their husbands because the "*gyantra* women were coming" (prostitutes were coming). It is also recognised in the chapter that women from Nigeria and Liberia also practiced prostitution on the Gold Coast. In an interview with Mrs. Benyarku, she recalls how women, mainly from Nigeria, brought some special eggs to sell in Ghana and were known for prostitution, leading to such names as UAC (United Africa Company) in reference to prostitutes from these countries. Probably, their acts on the Gold Coast may have resulted in the song mentioned above since their arrival meant more than the sale of eggs.

Other emergent themes, as mentioned, bothered on marriage and the role of women within it. Songs like Cedi Special and Club Girl expose the thoughts of men concerning women. The narratives from the songs suggest how men thought of women. Thus, the thought of women to remain in the household while men went out to work. It also brings to bear the idea of marriage being a "saviour" for women regardless of whether they resisted the responsibility of marriage. Other themes were bareness and the attendant challenges it brings to women. Additional themes were those of beauty, which plays out in the use of women's names in highlife songs. Most importantly, the themes of prostitution dominate the selected songs and speak to the diverse ways women engaged with highlife performance

spaces and how such engagements are represented in songs that tell of the crucial roles played by women within these spaces.

CHAPTER FIVE

The EXPERIENCES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF EDITH NORTEYE (ADORABLE ADORANT)

5. Introduction

This chapter presents a report on the life and works of Edith Norteye Francois (stage name Adorable Adorant). Edith was discovered through the newspaper data collection process for this thesis. It was insightful to learn about a female performer of the period who had not previously been mentioned in any scholarly writings about female highlife performers of the period under study.

My bid to locate elderly persons who experienced highlife music and its spaces in the period led to discussions with a colleague working on old age, wellbeing, and music. I decided to go out with her on her interview sessions, and one of her interviewees happened to be Edith Norteye. Upon meeting her, it became even more essential to consider devoting a chapter to her as a female popular performer who experienced the highlife music scene of the period under study since such accounts from female performers remain a mirage. Edith was the only living female highlife performer of the period I could locate at the time of this study.

5.1. Biography of Edith Francois (Norteye)

Mrs. Edith Norteye was born on 28 June 1936 as the third of twelve children. Her parents were Mr. A. E Norteye and Mrs. Kate A. Norteye, both of blessed memory. Her early years were spent with her grandmother at Nsawam due to her father's constant travels as a civil servant. It was also an opportunity for her to have stability regarding education and friendships. Edith attended Nsawam Methodist School and was a member of the Methodist church. While in Middle school standard five, Edith sat for the Common Entrance examination, passing and gaining admission into Achimota School at the age of eleven. Her admission came with a

scholarship awarded by Cadbury and Fry.[34] According to Mrs. Edith Norteye, she would not have attended Achimota School without the scholarship. This is because her father had more children to take care of and so could not afford to send her to a school out of town.

5.2. Early Experience with Music

Edith first experienced music and devotion at Nsawam Methodist Church, where she sang as part of the annual Children's Day celebrations. At the age of six years, she was selected as the lead singer in her primary school. She recalls her first song as being in the Ga language. According to her, she enjoyed singing and acting from childhood. Even as a female child growing up in the Gold Coast, she recounts her parent's unyielding support for her interest in the arts at church and school. She narrates how a choir robe was sewn for her at the early age of six so she could join the choir in the 1940s. Her accounts lend credence to the assertion of the church becoming an avenue through which women accessed the popular performance space, as has been established by Collins (2007) and Emielu and Takyi Donkor (2019).

While in Achimota, Edith continued to harness her interest in music and the performing arts by participating in plays like Gilbert and Sullivan, the Mikado, Patience, and Pirate of Penzance and Shakespeare. She also learned to play the piano with Philip Gbeho[35] and Robert Kwame as her tutor. Her education at Achimota, made her a "total person," She mentioned that her education at Achimota prepared her for the world with the introduction to other skills for which one could earn from after school. Upon completing her studies at Achimota School, Edith worked as a Clerical Assistant in 1954 at the Public Service Commission. Edith continued to pursue music as a hobby at the Gold Coast Broadcasting Service, where she was scripted to

[34] This was a company that manufactured chocolate and other consumable products in the Gold Coast

[35] He was the composer of the Ghana national anthem and a music teacher at Achimota School

perform on the radio program *Everybody Likes Saturday Night,* which was a live broadcast with studio audiences. The live broadcast with a studio audience exposed her to a large audience, becoming a popular female figure as far as popular music performance on the radio was concerned. The popularity of this program and her acts were captured in several publications of the Sunday Mirror newspaper. The excerpt below is of the Sunday Mirror Introducing Edith Norteye (Adorable Adorant), her name on the show, to readers who may not have experienced her live performances. She is captured with Mr. Mallet, who introduced her to the show.


SUNDAY MIRROR 12th AUGUST 1956

She's a radio star in the making—

ADORABLE ADORANT

A girl you've heard often on the air

TODAY, the "MIRROR" introduces you to a girl whose voice you have heard very often on the air. She is popular and lovable ADORABLE ADORANT — one of ZOY's leading artistes in the programme "Everybody Likes Saturday Night". ADORABLE ADORANT is a singer who keeps you on your toes with her voice. She is really a radio star in the making. Can you spot out a would-be star if you happen to meet one? Meet this charming girl from Christiansborg, Accra, and you bet you can never be wrong. ADORABLE ADORANT is shown in the picture on the left with John Mallet, another radio artist in last week-end's programme.

Figure E. Edith Norteye (Adorable Adorant) and Mr John Mallet in a live broadcast performance. Picture by Sunday Mirror August 1956. Sourced from Edith Norteye's personal archive, April 2023.

Figure F. Edith Norteye with two Everybody Likes Saturday Night program members. Picture from the personal archive of Mrs. Edith Norteye, April 2023

This radio program featured a radio band and a trio in concert with music provided by the band. The above picture is of the trio in performance. On days when there were no scripts, Edith joined the radio band for their private performances, where she sang popular songs from quickstep to foxtrot and highlife music in venues like Lido nightclub. When asked about her experiences performing at Lido, she responded that although Lido was a known entertainment spot for prostitutes, the bandsmen treated her as a respectable lady. Edith was about her work and did not engage with audiences or band members in flirtations. Performing within that space, therefore, did not dent her reputation, given that she was a female and a performer.

(Interview with Edith Norteye). Her statement provides evidence supporting women's activities within performance spaces and the story told by one other interviewee, Mr Amoah, concerning his experience with a club girl and her forward flirtatious approach to him.

5.3. Adorable Adorant: Reflections of Edith Norteye

While working on radio and as a clerical assistant, Edith applied for a scholarship program rolled out by the government in preparation for Ghanaians to take over the administration, education, and other leadership positions in the country after independence. She got a scholarship to study domestic science at the Bath College of Domestic Science[36] in the United Kingdom.

Figure G. Pictured second from right is Edith Norteye and Janet Boadu in a meeting at Bath College with Rotary Club Members. Picture from the personal archive of Mrs Edith Norteye,April 2023.

Edith's application to do domestic science resulted from her wanting to pursue a career in education with music as a hobby. In preparation for her travel, she was featured in the Sunday

[36] This is now called Bristol University in the United Kingdom

Mirror on 2 September 1956. The paper describes how her absence would be missed with two other radio band musicians who had also received scholarships to study music in the United Kingdom for three years.[37]

The Sunday Mirror describes her name, Adorable Adorant, as having become a household name in the following excerpt

> Adorable Adorant, whose voice thrills hundreds of radio listeners, started singing within the Radio Band in April this year and, within just five months, has made such a tremendous success that her name has now become a household word throughout the country. (Sunday Mirror, 2 September 1956).

RADIO STARS TELL THEIR STORY

by Oscar Tsedze

Lively memory

BUSY AT THE STUDIO

Figure H. The Sunday Mirror introduces Edith and some members of the Radio band to its readers, Sept 1956. Sourced from the personal archive of Edith Norteye, April,2023

[37] Their areas of study were harmonium and piano playing and music theory

Edith recounts how her experience with the Radio Band lasted actively for barely one year but notably impacted her popularity as a female performer in the Gold Coast and later Ghana. She also promised to continue her singing while in the United Kingdom. The newspaper writer Oscar Tsedze mentioned that Edith had promised to "sing popular Gold Coast highlife tunes for BBC transmission." The picture below from Sunday Mirror 1959 captures Edith in performance at the BBC.

SUNDAY MIRROR, February 1, 1959. Page

In London, thousands cheer Ghanaians as—

'HI-LIFE VISITS BBC'

VERY Saturday, thousan.is of Londoners throng the enter- nment studios of the British oadcasting Corporation to oy a new special variety ogramme produced by Ghana- students in U.K. and trans- tted in the "Calling Ghana" ies.

The programme, which is com- tely Ghanaian in character, is titled "Hi-Life Visits B.B.C.". is an adaptation of Ghana's pular radio feature, "Every- dy likes Saturday night."

Every Saturday, the scene is brilliant one with the many colours of the kente cloths worn by the Ghanaian performers. Then you hear the exciting rhythm of the Ghana Cultural Union Drumming Group and the more sophisticated melodies of Rans Boys' Hi-Life Band.

☆

The 45-minute variety pro- gramme features Ghanaian nar- rative songs and many popular European spirituals.

On this page today, we bring you pictures from the scene of these Saturday entertainments.

ABOVE: Leo Riby-Williams, Producer, Ghana Broadcasting System, who is now in London, introduces the programme. Mr Riby-Williams (he's popularly known by his radio fans in Ghana as "Leo") was in charge of radio entertainments and dance music. He will re- turn home next March.

EXTREME LEFT: The Ghanaian Cultural Drumming Group playing at the enter- tainment. On the front row are two of the drummers— Kobina de Heer (left) and Isaac Eshun, both students in London.

LEFT: Miss Edith Norteye (left), popularly known in "Everybody Likes Saturday Night" programmes in Ghana as "My Adorable Adorant" seen singing a European song. With her is Miss Eileen Mills, a Ghanaian student who likes singing.

Figure I. Edith Norteye in performance at the BBC. Picture sourced from the Institute of African Studies Newspaper archive.

Her performance at the BBC in England was a Christmas performance to which she had been invited by the producer from radio Ghana, Mr. Leo Riby-Williams, who also featured in the picture in the far upper right corner. This program was filmed in England and beamed to Ghana.

Thus, even though she was away, she still actively performed. Her work as a soloist saw her performing with groups like the Bath College Choir, London, and the Ghana Police Church Choir. She continued to receive media coverage, and the picture below captures her in a handshake with the president of the Rotary Club of Bristol during an entertainment session for students in Bristol.

Figure J. Norteye in a handshake with the president of the Rotary club of Bristol College at an entertainment for Ghanaian students. Sourced from the personal archive of Edith Norteye, April 2023.

Figure K. Edith Norteye photographed with Grace Takyi Donkor (the researcher) at her residence in April 2023. Picture by Grace Takyi Donkor.

5.4. The radio star returns?

Despite the newspaper feature and announcement of Edith's trip to study in a different field, she recalls how the media captured her return with the question of whether Adorable Adorant was back. Her continued performances while in the United Kingdom may have influenced this coupled with leaving in the company of two musicians. Thus, even though she was going to pursue a Home Science course, people had assumed that she would come back to continue as a performer. The speculations of her coming back as a performer were further compounded by the picture of her performance at the BBC, which, according to her, created the impression of her embarking on a performance tour with the two other musicians. Below is an excerpt that captures their return

Figure L The Sunday Mirror, 1959 captures the return of Edith Norteye and two other members of the Radio band who had also been in the United Kingdom for further studies. Picture sourced from the personal archive of Edith Norteye, April 2023.

5.5. Beyond the persona: Challenges of female popular musicians

Her persona, Adorable Adorant, was a stage name she had acquired on the radio program and was widely called as such. However, despite this seeming popularity Edith planned to become a teacher and would not consider pursuing singing as a profession. She is, however, quick to reiterate how publicity could have influenced her decision. According to her, female singers did not last long in the industry as audiences always wanted a fresh face. This could be read as a concern that most female performers must contend with the need to keep up their appearance. This becomes even more the case when, over time, younger female musicians emerge on the music scene, especially now in the phase of music videos. The other reason was that most female singers were attached to bands, and their constant travel did not appeal to her, and possibly to the others concerning sleeping and hygiene situations while on the road. This

assertion affirms Collin's statement concerning the itinerant lifestyle of bandsmen and the negative perception that accompanied women who worked with them. Edith also talks about, her days with the radio band coming with no form of payment. When asked about whether other colleagues were paid, she mentioned that she was unaware of that and did not bother to ask. This brings to mind a statement by Mariam Makeba in an interview on BBC Radio Four where she mentioned that female musicians could be paid with such items as a stiletto; a statement to which she continues to laugh satirically. Although the circumstances that surround Makeba's statement may be different, the similarities that exist in reference to the treatment of women performers is not lost in the narrative. Although she seemed not bothered by the absence of remuneration, her admission speaks to the attitude towards female musicians. It speaks to the producers of the program's dismissive attitude to her craft, given that it was sponsored by the government and aimed at improving female participation in the performing arts. One need not complain about such monetary issues to warrant payment, especially for women.

Perhaps her privileged position as an educated woman with experiences from the United Kingdom may have influenced the decision to stay out of the entertainment circles. Despite the government's attempts, the attendant challenges of non-payment and society's perception of women within popular bands may have further influenced her decision. Marriage may have also hindered women from pursuing a music career within the secular space. Edith recounts how her husband had alluded to her voice not being suited for the kind of songs she did, which may eventually have influenced her; limiting her abilities to teaching and singing in her upscale orchestra and the church. Although women were increasingly from the 1940s venturing into more outer spaces in terms of careers and social activities, most women were essentially housewives. The excerpt below is from the Sunday Mirror 1955, and it tells of a woman's change of behavior concerning how her beauty warrants being on the stage.

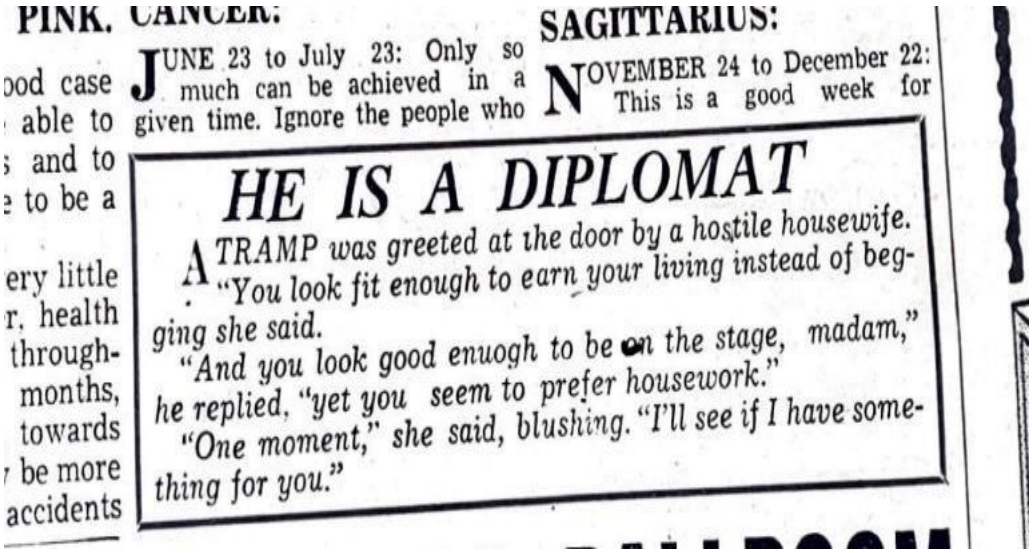
PINK. CANCER:
ood case able to and to e to be a
ery little r. health through- months, towards be more accidents
JUNE 23 to July 23: Only so much can be achieved in a given time. Ignore the people who
SAGITTARIUS:
NOVEMBER 24 to December 22: This is a good week for
HE IS A DIPLOMAT
A TRAMP was greeted at the door by a hostile housewife. "You look fit enough to earn your living instead of begging she said.
"And you look good enuogh to be on the stage, madam," he replied, "yet you seem to prefer housework."
"One moment," she said, blushing. "I'll see if I have something for you."

Figure M. The above picture captures an exchange between a beggar and a woman in relation to women being on stage.

Because such outward expressions of love and affection were not commonplace within society, highlife songs and the dance floor became an avenue to engage in and express one's thoughts, feelings, and emotions, especially to the opposite sex.

According to Edith, although some of the bands had female singers, they were not necessarily a part of the bands for long periods. This makes the women's appearances one of the guest or visiting singers but not as professional singers. She references Julie Okine as one of the few females who joined the Tempos Band in 1953 although not much is known about how long she spent with the band. Julie Okine's short stay, as much as Edith's story, affirms the challenge of women sustaining themselves on the popular music scene compounded by family expectations, marriage, and possibly personal interest.

5.6. Becoming a Church Soloist

Leaving the popular performance space was not the end of Edith's performing activities. In the years following her return, she began to focus on her family and eventually ventured into solo

singing at church, birthday parties, memorial services, and weddings. In the process, she married a young lawyer, Mr. R. M. Francois. Her husband was also a composer and pianist known for compositions like *Kyere me Kwan*. She gained employment at Achimota School, where she taught home economics. Leveraging on her popularity as a performer, Edith continued to be featured in newspapers where she showcased her works as a housecraft tutor.

Sup Producer (P. A.)

Ghana Radio & Television Times

VOL. 10. No. 30 PRICE: 5np. SEPTEMBER 12, 1969

NEW LOOK FOR THE HOME: Good embroidery work could add extra beauty to a sitting room arrangement. And with this in view, these three housecraft tutors (pictured above) discuss and demonstrate to viewers, embroidery work for armchairs on the popular TV 'Home Makers' programme. They are (from left to right) Mrs. Charlotte Brew-Graves of Labone Secondary School, the hostess, Mrs. Edith Francois of Achimota School and Mrs. Irene Randall-Bull of Accra Polytechnic. 'Home Makers' offers tips on good housekeeping; and it's on the screen at 7.00 p.m. every Thursday.

For the maiden broadcast of Dr. K. A. Busia, the nation's new Prime Minister — see page 3. Turn to page 21 for what the world says on Ghana's General Elections.

RADIO & TV PROGRAMMES SEPT. 14 — 20

555 by State Express

THE KING SIZE FILTER CIGARETTE OF INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS

Figure N. Edith Norteye pictured in the middle with other housecraft teachers in the period after returning from the United Kingdom. Picture sourced from the personal archive of Edith Norteye, April 2023.

She also taught at several other secondary schools and retired as a senior lecturer at the University of Ghana. Most of the people who patronised her 'work' were within the spaces of her church. When asked why she did not join the church choir, she mentioned that it was not convenient for her, and she enjoyed being able to sing as an individual and would sometimes

feature as a guest with the choir. Her church of affiliation is the Police Church, which is essentially a Methodist church.

According to Gyimah (2018), women comprise a large percentage of active church members and are a sustaining force in all congregations. The evidence lies true for mainline churches, Charismatic and Pentecostal churches. While women experienced restrictions in several aspects of their lives due to colonialism, the church provided a space where men and women worshipped God. However, some authors have noted that there were restrictions to allowing women, especially in the mainline churches, to serve in leadership positions. In an opening sentence to her paper *"Discuss and Critically Evaluate the Role of Women in the Church in Ghana,"* Gyimah (2018) laments how the percentage of women in the church continues to exceed that of men while bemoaning the church's uncertainty about the leadership role of the women. She references the bible in arguing her points on what constituted the woman's role within the church. Gyimah further notes that the different denominations in Ghana responded differently to the roles women played within the church.

The varying responses, therefore, have implications for what the woman could do within the church. From the 1940s to the 60s, the Methodist church had become established and run mission schools that admitted both boys and girls. Music was an essential component of the curriculum within these schools and was not restricted only to men. Women, as much as their male counterparts, learned to play musical instruments, with some serving as organists within the church. An example of such a woman was Eunice Francesca Stephanie Nana Efua Addison. Mrs. Oboh is referenced as one of the pioneers of music making and the gift of songs in the Pentecost church. She is said to have sold her jewelry through a revelation to help in the upkeep of the church of Pentecost.

In a documentary by the Church of Pentecost YouTube Channel, Eunice recounts how she moved away from the Methodist church into the Pentecost church, where her gift of songs continued to expand the repertoire of the church. This led to her being ordained as a deaconess in the Pentecost church by Pastor James Mackeon, the church's founder. Within the church, she served in diverse positions supporting Gyimah's (2018) statement about the different denominations responding differently to women's roles within the church. Apart from these were the African Independent Churches (AICs), Mwaura (2004) states that giving the church the impetus for women to become "bearers of the freedom of the Spirit, thus reducing the sharp divide along the lines of gender, age and religious status" In all these churches women played diverse roles including leading worship and praise sessions.

Eunice and her mother's story of their role concerning music in the church provides evidence for why Edith Norteye (Adorable Adorant) would want to focus on performing only within a church context. This gave her the laxity to focus on her career as a teacher and a young mother. In a conversation with her at her residence, she mentioned that her husband had always insisted that her voice was not suited for the kind of music she did and always admonished her to stick to the performance of classical and art songs, given that her husband was a composer. According to her, she never sided with her husband on his assertion and was always open to performing any kind of music she wanted to.

5.7. The Church as a safe haven?

Per Edith's biography and music experience, it becomes clear that the phenomenon of popular female musicians in Ghana starting their careers by performing in the church is not one that just started. Much like the story of Edith, many girls at a young age join the singing band or choirs in their church and serve as soloists in their church bands. Some women then venture

into recording and become commercialised gospel musicians through these processes. Others build on their performance practice and may eventually start writing songs or performing within secular spaces. Such is the story of Edith, although she may not entirely have left the church. In contemporary times, similar cases exist of female popular musicians in Ghana who started from the church. Examples include Irene Logan, Eno Barony, and Becca. In this regard, the church can be referenced as a starting point for helping women to build on their experience with music-making and performance, given the leadership roles that women play in the music spaces of the church.

Over the years, Edith has performed at several events, including birthday parties and funerals, and with several choirs at the Ghana Police Church, where she worships. On 11 November 2022, the Worship Arts Academy Ghana honored her at the Garrison Methodist-Presbyterian Church in a ceremony titled "Christian Music Legends: Featuring Mrs. Edith Marjorie Francois, A lead Singer for over 70 years". During the ceremony, she performed her first ever solo work at six years, as mentioned earlier in the work. Rev. Newlove Annan and the Garrison choir accompanied her. She also performed the piece Holy City by Michael Maybrick[38] with a younger generation of pianists, including a teenage girl. The feature of this young girl on the piano symbolises an interest in the younger generation of females pursuing instrumental performance beyond the comfort of their homes and school rehearsal spaces.

Despite the church's accommodating space, Edith dedicated her time to her career as an educationist, teaching in most of the prominent institutions of the country.

[38] He was a popular British composer and singer with the *Holy City* as one of his most popular composition

Figure O. Edith Norteye in performance with the Garrison Choir, November, 2022

Figure P. Program Outline for honoring Edith Norteye

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter has engaged a discussion of the contributions and experiences of Edith Norteye (Adorable Adorant) through systematization and documentation processes to serve as preservation and resource materials for educational purposes. The reason for focusing on her as a performer for the period was because, despite her popularity and feature on Ghana's popular radio program, she had not received any mention in any of the works on women performers of the period under study and beyond. Focusing on her leads to realising that women were not necessarily prevented from participating in popular music-making and performance spaces but that society's perceptions might have influenced most women of the period under study to leave music to pursue other career paths.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the thesis. It summarises the application of postcolonial feminist theory towards creating meanings about women's representations in highlife music of the 1940s to the 1960s.

6.1. Summary

Chapter One examined the reasons behind the need for a study that focused on the representations of women from the nascent periods of highlife music's development. It provided a background to the study, noting the gap in research on women in relation to highlife music from the early period and the need to focus on their diverse roles as evidence of their contribution to the music tradition. It also examined the diverse methodological approaches that led to collecting relevant data for the research. As part of the method, I explored the experiential phase of my studies as a methodological approach and capitalised on the experience in sampling highlife records, which formed a part of the larger population of songs from which final songs were delimited. My experience at the archive also brought to bear the need for continuous digitisation of highlife records and restitution of records in the holdings of Western Institutions with limited access.

Chapter two examined the theoretical underpinnings of the study, which is postcolonial feminist theory. The choice of this theory is based on highlife music developing out of a colonised society and a transition to independence, noting the impact of colonialism on women's roles within these spaces and the need to understand their roles from an African feminist perspective. Thus, the chapter engaged an interpretation towards dismantling Eurocentric world views about

women from once colonised countries, of which the Gold Coast and later Ghana is one. It builds up the arguments by presenting views from a global perspective where different authors explain postcolonial feminist theory and its application to their specific contexts. Crucial to this theory is representation, which is the broad focus of the study towards having a contextual understanding of women's experiences within once colonised countries, arguing against the subaltern state of women based on colonialism's experiences being different in all these countries.

The chapter further delimited the discussion to a focus on African feminist research. This section discussed the concept of gender from an African perspective, drawing on examples which focus on different cultures within the continent. Out of these examples, there is a conclusion on the concept of music within the African context being a woman despite both genders playing significant roles towards the realisation of performances, especially in traditional music making. Unlike traditional music, the popular performance space posed the most challenges for women. This challenge necessitates a focus on the seemingly invisible roles played by women while noting their challenges occasioned by the impact of colonialism.

The last section of the chapter situates the research on women and highlife music in Ghana. It draws on the examples of different writings that engage discussions that highlight the roles and challenges experienced by women in highlife music. The chapter ends with a proposition towards a postcolonial feminist approach to women and highlife music where there is a concentration on meaning creation within specific African cultures aimed at understanding their concept of gender and its relationship to music making and performance while noting the impact of colonialism inherent.

Chapter three examined women's roles within highlife performance spaces historically. It notes the impact of colonialism on the social life of Africans/Ghanaians through cultural changes imposed by colonial administrators, amongst them the absence of women from early protohighlife bands occasioned by their absence from colonial armies where traditionally women served in political leadership positions, including military leaderships. Despite the absence of women, the chapter notes that the localisation of these bands opened up the spaces for women to begin to participate in performances like Adaha, which served recreational purposes. The gradual commercialisation of these bands will further impact women participation, making them an audience. On the other hand, is the palmwine context, whose musicians were mostly male, even though the name of a woman will come to characterise the style. Perhaps the concept of the earth "Asaase[39]" being a woman and designated by Yaa[42], which was the name of the woman, resonates with palmwine music, which continues to thrive given the birthing/producing role of the woman typically known by the Yaa Amponsah [40] rhythm. Although the number of women as performers was not in comparison to their male counterparts, their representation in name and as a style is worth nothing as a contributing factor to the development of highlife music as a whole. The association in later years of concert parties with guitar bands further provides a space for women, although metaphorically by their representation in the narratives of concert parties and their impersonation by male actors.

The chapter further focuses on the ballroom context within which the term highlife emerged. Within this context, it emphasizes the role of nwuraanom in the realisation of a dance at the ballroom without whom a gentleman *Okrakyenii* will not dance. It further notes the gradual increase in the participation of women as performers with names like Christina Mensah, Agnes

[39] Asaase is the Twi (local)name for the earth and it goes with Yaa [42]
Yaa is the Akan name for a woman born on Thursday.
[40] The lady from Kyebi who became the "muse" of highlife music

Aryittey, and Julie Okine, all of whom worked with the Tempos Band at different times of their career.

The chapter also highlights the prostitution tag amongst other delinquent practices associated with performance spaces and the woman's role in fostering the practice. It notes attempts by colonial and local rulers to control the practice and the resistance of women to such control. The chapter finally highlights the representation of women in music-making by the Sunday Mirror, one of whom is discussed in chapter five, focusing on her experiences as a performer of the period under study.

Chapter four engaged a thematic analysis of nine selected songs to understand women's representation in the period under study. The chapter started with a discussion of the pre and postcolonial traditional roles of women, focusing on the impact of colonialism on these roles. The chapter further highlights the importance of engaging in textual analysis of highlife songs towards understanding how women are represented as an alternative way of understanding their contribution to the development of the music tradition. Eight songs were analysed from the period under study. Emergent themes from these songs were prostitution, marriage, childbirth, barrenness, love, and beauty. A typical characteristic of highlife music was its association with urban migration and the need for entertainment as one of the strategies for dealing with the new environment. Performance spaces provided such opportunities, and associated with this was prostitution. The chapter confirms that prostitution had always existed before contact with the West and was an integral part of keeping society together and appealing to the desires of unmarried men. However, within the context of the development of highlife music, prostitution will become individualised,

with women engaging out of their desire, the need to make ends meet, and as ways of defying and taking control of their sexual desires. The reality of prostitution being captured in songs speaks to its pervasive nature in performance spaces, warranting the need for male musicians to express their encounters and thoughts about it through songs like "Club Girl by ET. Mensah. Contrary to his thoughts on prostitution and the woman's insistence on the economic benefits, Julie Okine presents the trade more sublimely, creating imagery of women's encounters with men at performance spaces. Her song represents one of agency and affirms the stance taken by the club girl in E.T. Mensah's song.

On the contrary, the Fanti Star Band call attention to prostitution as a vile practice. They urge women to look for more decent and respectable means of making an income by shaming the prostitute. Another song that called attention to such acts was "One Pound No Balance." This song announces the coming of prostitutes and urges men to be locked in their rooms because these women bring trouble. They charge one pound and do not give any change. The song probably also warns married women to keep an eye on their husbands because the "*gyantra* women were coming" (prostitutes were coming). It is also understood in the chapter that women from Nigeria and Liberia also practiced prostitution on the Gold Coast. In an interview with Mrs. Benyarku, she recalls how women, mainly from Nigeria, brought some special eggs to sell in Ghana and were known for prostitution, leading to such names as UAC (United Africa Company) in reference to prostitutes from these countries. Probably, their acts on the Gold Coast may have resulted in the song mentioned above since their arrival meant more than the sale of eggs.

Chapter five engaged an ethnographic examination of the life and experiences of Edith Norteye (Adorable Adorant), now Mrs. Edith Francois. The reason for focusing on her as a performer for the period was because, despite her popularity and feature on Ghana's popular radio program, she had not received any mention in any of the works on women performers of the period under study and beyond. The chapter focused on her early life and experience with music. Focusing on her leads to realizing that women were not necessarily prevented from participating in popular music-making and performance spaces but that society's perceptions might have influenced most women of the period under study to leave music to pursue other career paths.

6.2. Findings

The study discloses that although women traditionally were active participants in music performances, the popular performance space presented a break in their participation. The break resulted from colonialist efforts to equip men for administrative and military roles. These were a result of the misogyny of the C 19th British male colonialists in respect to the status of their own women professional performers.

It was realized that women actively participated in the proto-highlife bands modelled on colonial period bands like adaha, ashiko and osibisaaba at the recreational level. However, with the commercialisation of these bands, women's roles will become more of an audience.

Styles like palmwine music predominately featured men only as part of its performance, while women participated as audiences. Women's participation as an audience is against the backdrop of the Yaa Amponsah guitar style being the predominant style of palmwine music. Whereas Asaase Yaa (mother earth), linked with fertility and procreation, has kept the sustenance of the

music tradition for decades. Such linkages between women and music-making have resulted in authors like Galane and Nzewi (2005) referring to music within the African context as a woman despite Oyewumi's (1997) resistance to the idea of gendering. However, the issues they present speak to the specificity of the experiences of women and the need to be cautious of generalizations, as is the focus of post-colonial feminist writers.

The history of the development of highlife music presents a class structure that the woman was not immune to. Per this class structure, the ballroom context of highlife emerged in literary clubs made up of Akrakyefo (educated men of the Gold Coast). The entertainment activities of these men involved the invitation of Nwuraanom (Ladies)who had some level of education and served as prospective wives for the gentlemen who invited them. Only at the invitation did a woman attend such dance; without them, a gentleman would not dance.

On the other end of the performance space were the "club girls" whom the tag of prostitution came to be associated with because of their activities in the popular performance space. However, not all women patronising these spaces were "club girls." Women found ways of negotiating this space to suit their economic and sexual needs while also helping to fulfil the needs of urban males who found work in the fast-emerging cities of the Gold Coast.

Women's activities within highlife performance spaces of the period led to compositions by musicians of the period under study. These songs tell of the experiences of musicians with women in performance spaces. The lyrics of these songs represented the women's activities in performance spaces much as there were songs about other things like love and beauty. The study unveils that notwithstanding the negative stereotypical representations associated with women's activities within the performance space, these representations provide the lens through

which women's roles in developing the highlife music tradition are explored. Women navigated this space to cope with the new and emerging urban environments they found themselves in. Also, the fact that their activities make it into songs speaks to the prominence of their presence. Notably, the presence of women in songs negates the idea of traditional containment as maintained by Arthur (2013), who notes that "women are perceived by male hegemony to be difficult to handle and hence the need to contain them through traditional factors". The conversation that ensues between E. T Mensah and the "club girl", although it can be read as evidence of an attempt at containment, is negated given the presence of the "voice" of the woman who is assertive and unashamed by her profession as a prostitute. Her voice also presents ways such women were perhaps allowed to speak their minds on what they did to understand them. It is evidence of prostitution being a significant factor in the highlife story with women at the forefront of "steering the profession". This is fundamental evidence of their contribution to the development of highlife music in the period under study.

The study also affirmed that some female performers of the period remained undocumented as ways of understanding women's roles within highlife spaces. The focus on Mrs. Edith Norteye Francois reveals that even though women struggled with the negative perception concerning the popular performance space, they found ways of engaging with the space while maintaining the respect of male band colleagues. It also recognized the pressures society put on women of a certain age to be married and have children, which significantly changed the trajectory of Edith's life as a performer, moving her away from the popular to the "sacred" space.

The study also affirmed that the association of women with male-owned highlife bands were a way of highlighting the women in these bands, given the fact that not all members of bands of the period under study were named except for the leader and any other that may have distinguished themselves or left to form other bands.

It also disclosed that the few female performers of the period did not kowtow to the pressures of society's perceptions and stereotypes. Women like Julie Okine with the song "Nothing but a man's slave" has been referenced as the first popular feminist song owing to the unashamed way, she presents her experience with the Cape Coast boy and her stance of not falling victim to his "lovely charms."

6.3. Conclusion

The thesis acknowledges the enormity of research undertaken by such authors as Adomako and Asiedu (2012), Kyere (2012), Amoah-Ramey(2018, 2016) and the many writings by Collins. This work builds on their research by offering alternative ways of viewing the roles and representations of women in Ghanaian popular music through songs. Amoah-Ramey (2016) notes the contributions of women to the highlife culture per their roles as composers, performers, backup vocalists and industry executives. While these roles are important, there remains a gap in analysing songs to understand the roles women played as a contributing factor to the growth of highlife music and popular music. Although the "Changing Representations of Women in Popular Music project uses songs, their conclusions were on the stereotypical representations of women and a call for empowering and more positive representations.

The songs of choice for this study have been analysed using the postcolonial feminist theory, where the specific experiences of colonised women are examined through the songs written about them from the 1940s to the 1960s. It affirmed that though there are songs that praise and adore women and their beauty, there also exist representations about women and their activities within highlife performance spaces. Whether these representations are stereotypical or not, these are the realities of women's participation in highlife music and should be read as crucial

to understanding women's presence in the popular performance space, especially in. the early nascent years of the genre's development.

6.4. Recommendations

This thesis aimed to redefine women's participation in highlife music by focusing on how songs of the period are the medium for achieving such. These songs subvert accepted stereotypes by presenting these stereotypes as a means of understanding women's contribution in the nascent years of the development of highlife music. This study affirms that further studies could be done on the contributions of women, especially in the developing years. Through archival research, data could be collected and developed into a biography that captures the lives and work of women in the early years of the music's development to supplement what has been done in this thesis and earlier works. Given that gender studies, especially at the Department of Music, is a budding one, there could be a conscious effort by lecturers to introduce the works of female composers and writers in the diverse courses they teach as ways to influence the interest of students in music and gender studies at the graduate level. African music studies across Africa could also take similar initiatives.

Further research could also be carried out to examine the changes in lyrics about women, especially regarding their activities in the popular performance space. It will be intriguing to know how the changes in government and political system, especially in the 1970s, impacted the popular performance space and possibly influenced what constituted songs about women.

Discography

Julie Okine and the Tempos “Nothing but a Man’s Slave” 1957, Decca Records Yellow Label Series

E.T. Mensah and the Tempos “Club Girl”, Decca Records Yellow Label Series

E.T. Mensah and the Tempos “Comfort” 1959 Decca Records Yellow Label Series

Fanti Star Band “Gyantra Nnye Adwuma” 1952 Decca Records Yellow Label Series

K. Yamoah (Yamoah’s Band). “Cedi Special”. 1967, Decca Records.

Van De Cargo and His Strings “Kumase Aketesia” 1950

Kwaa Mensah and His Fante Trio. “Sokoo Na Mmaa Wope”.1955, Decca Records

African Brothers Band. Yaa Yaa Anwo Ba. 1967, Ghana Films Studios

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Archival Catalogue

AWG W 14 Bob Cole

AWG W 06a- E. K Nyame's Band

AWG W 17A-Guitar Band Concert

AWG W07a -E. K Nyame and Onyina's Performance

AWG W 11a- Onyina's Band

AWG W 18- Fanti Trio

AWG -W-19a – Ahanta Trio

Pictography of selected songs

Disc label, side A, Decca WA 930

CLOSE ✕

Disc label, side B, Decca WA 653

CLOSE ✕