CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE MUSICAL TRADITIONS OF
THE AVATIME OF GHANA

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by

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This thesis studies the continuity and change in the musical traditions of the Avatime people. The Avatime are a minority ethnic group in the Volta Region of Ghana whose musical heritage has evolved for over two hundred and fifty years. During this period, various factors such as migration, affinity with other ethnic groups, contact with Christianity, and the introduction of Western education system contributed to the abandonment, retention, modification, assimilation, reinterpretation and creation of various musical traditions in the Avatime society.

The study looks generally at the evolution of musical traditions in Avatime, and focuses on aspects of songs that the Avatime people perform in their indigenous Siyase language, as well as languages of the Akan and Ewe groups, to reveal how the various aspects of their musical traditions affect social order, benefit the children educationally, and shape the entire culture. This thesis also identifies historical antecedents that influence the musical traditions and serves as basis for assessing the musical heritage of other Ghanaian ethnic groups.

Chapter one includes an introduction to the study and ethnographic data regarding the Avatime. Chapters two and three focus on the musical traditions. Factors that have contributed to continuity and change in the Avatime musical traditions are discussed in
the fourth chapter. Chapter five concludes the discussion with analysis of selected transcriptions as well as concluding remarks, summary, and projection.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This research investigates the continuity and change in the musical traditions of the Avatime people of Ghana since they migrated to their present home for over three centuries ago. The Avatime are a minority ethnic group presently located in the Volta region of Ghana. This region is dominated by the Ewe ethnic group; hence the Avatime people are often mistakenly referred to as Ewe, although they actually belong to the Guan ethnic group of Ghana.

The name Avatime in this thesis evokes a dual designation: the citizens and their current home. There are three main schools of thought as regards the etymology of Avatime, all of which agree that it is derived from the Ewe language: 1) Avati\(^1\) + me (Avati + people/followers) = followers of Avati; 2) Ave + ati + me (forest + tree + people/dweller) = those who inhabit the forest; and Ava + tsi + wo + me (war + remains + in/inside them) = warriors. While the last two meanings credibly fit the social, geographical, and political description of the Avatime, the first one raises uncertainties because the name Avati is Ewe in origin. For the leader of the Avatime people hailing from Ahanta-land, which is very far from the Ewe-land,\(^2\) to go by the said name makes the assertion even more complex. Furthermore, the indigenous language of the Avatime people and the Ewe language are not mutually intelligible. It is, however, possible that a leader of the Avatime may have adopted that name or the Ewe people may have

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\(^1\)Avati is the purported leader of the Avatime from their Ahanta home.

\(^2\)The distance between these two groups is approximately 600 miles, and no historical evidence of any prior contacts between them has been recorded.
conferred that on him as a title to distinguish him as the leader of “warriors” (the Avatime).

In the course of their migration and settlement, the Avatime people encountered various ethnic groups such as the Adangbe, Ewe, Baya, Nyagbo, and Tafi, and thus have gone through different phases of transculturation. Music, around which most of their cultural practices revolve, has also been greatly influenced. The Avatime people speak and sing in the indigenous language, Siyase/Siya/Sideme, as well as in neighboring Ewe and Akan languages. This diversity is a testimony to the extent of the cultural change under consideration.

Besides the aforesaid multilingual paradox, the coming of German missionaries to Avatime in the nineteenth century also brought changes to the Avatime culture in various ways. While the Avatime have maintained some aspects of their cultural heritage, they have also adopted new forms of expression and other facets of social life. The culture of every human society changes from time to time as dictated by the behavioral changes of the culture owners. Although it can be argued that animals and insects have societies, only man visibly uses language, performs music, owns art, religion, and other characteristics of culture. Existing researches reveal a changing trend in the Avatime

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2 The Cuban anthropologist, Fernando Ortiz, defines transculturation as a set of ongoing transmutations; it is full of creativity and never ceases; it is irreversible. It is always a process in which we give something in exchange for what we receive: the two parts of the equation end up being modified. From this process springs out a new reality, which is not a patchwork of features, but a new phenomenon, original and independent. According to Ortiz, transculturation describes the process at the center of which can be found a "native culture" and a "conquering culture" and the creation of a new form which is a fusion of the “native” and “conquering” cultures. Transculturation is used in this thesis to mean the evolution of musical forms, genres, and instruments in Avatime culture through the processes described by Ortiz.


culture in general, and the language, history, and music in particular. However, there is no explicit and comprehensive work in this direction from an ethnomusicological perspective.

This thesis, therefore, asserts that the aforementioned influences and changes have, to a very large extent, twisted the knowledge of young Avatime people about their cultural heritage. The thesis further advocates for the need to analyze various factors that have contributed to making the Avatime culture what it is today. The diverse nature of the musical heritage in Avatime not only reveals historical antecedents in the continuity as well as changes that have occurred, but also provides pointers to the causes and effects they have on the entire culture.

Kofi Agawu asserts that “African cultures are not frozen in time, but are in a constant state of evolution.” Any attempt to assess the continuity and change within these cultures, especially since they have oral traditions, must consider various components of the culture and ascertain the extent to which they reflect the recorded change in course of history. As Bascom and Herskovits rightly recommend, “If culture changes, if culture is dynamic, it must be studied in its historical dimension as well as in terms of the relationships among its components.” By so doing, one can establish “how much of the preexisting body of custom and belief is discarded, how much is modified,

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and how much is retained.” From the history, language, religion, and more importantly the musical traditions, one can measure the extent to which the entire Avatime culture has evolved within any time frame.

The following questions are, therefore, worth considering in relation to this research. What factors have contributed to the retention, modification, or transformation of the entire Avatime culture? What are the musical traditions in Avatime and their places of origin? If any changes have occurred, how and why did they occur and what aspects of the musical traditions in Avatime show that evidence of continuity and change? How effectively has music, as “humanly organized sound,” blended with other aspects of the culture to bring about continuity and change? Answers to these and other relevant questions are what this thesis will attempt to answer.

Existing literature on this subject offers significant and credible precursors for the research. Continuity and change in cultures have always caught and engaged the attention of scholars since time immemorial. Different opinions have been expressed on the subject from diverse perspectives. For example, the various authors in the book, *Continuity and Change in African Cultures*, by Bascom and Herskovits, have identified several significant factors that have contributed to continuity and change in respective aspects of African cultures. Their contributions cover linguistics, religion, art, marriage and kinship, occupation, politics, and in particular, music. The causes and effects of stability and change in African cultures due to Euro-American influences are enumerated in their contributions. The extent of continuity or change, however, varies according to ethnicity, context, and form. For example, James Christensen, writing on the adaptative

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10 Ibid.
functions of Fanti priesthood in Ghana, observes that contact with European culture and conversion to Christianity has brought about many changes in the cultural practices of the Fanti people. In terms of religion, he reveals that even though people profess to be Christians, they still indulge freely and comfortably in traditional religious practices. Christensen attributes this attitude to the polytheistic and pluralistic concept of Fanti religion.\(^\text{13}\) Simon Ottenberg’s contribution to the receptivity to change by the Ibo people of Nigeria reveals the rate at which various areas of a people’s culture changes. He points out that while elements of the social, religious, economic, and political structure, such as lineages, family groups, age grades, and secret societies have been modified through culture contact, many patterns of social behavior, such as emphasis on alternate choices and goals, achievement and competition, and the lack of strong autocratic authority, have survived and are part of the newly developing culture of the Ibo.\(^\text{14}\) In the area of music, Alan Merriam similarly observes in his contribution on African music that although music in African cultures has to a very large extent maintained its form, Western and Islamic idioms are two major outside sources that have had influence on it.\(^\text{15}\)

Kwabena Nketia argues that the process of creation and re-creation of new musical forms is continuous.\(^\text{16}\) He further states that although societies create their own recreational music, there is much evidence of borrowing and adaptation of musical forms


in various parts of Africa. This form of interchange not only occurs among societies of the same language group, but also among different language groups. Nketia again explains that the interchange is significant in areas that have experienced prolonged and great social interaction.\textsuperscript{17} Nketia also identifies three types of changes that may occur in the traditions of folk music in Ghana.\textsuperscript{18} They include, (1) the change that emanates cumulatively from creative efforts of groups or individuals (mostly anonymous) within the groups in a given society especially among groups that stay close together; (2) The change that occurs as a result of constant interaction among African societies through geographical contiguity which facilitates economic or other pursuits, through religion, or in the past, through war; (3) The change that results from the impact of alien culture (Western or Oriental) on the practice of African folk music. In Nketia’s view, the changes in the folk music traditions must be viewed against the background of social change.

Kofi Agawu, in \textit{African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective}, analyzes musical types of the northern Ewe including \textit{bobobo} (a socio-recreational dance), \textit{adabatram} (a warrior dance), \textit{asafo} (a warrior dance), \textit{avihawo} (female songs of lamentation), and \textit{totoeme} (a puberty rite dance), all of which are performed in Avatime. Agawu contends that there is evidence of pervasive influence of Akan culture in some of the Ewe musical types such as the \textit{asafo} warrior dance, musical instruments like \textit{atumpan} (talking drums of Ghana), and, indeed, the entire Ewe popular culture, as evident in names (Asamoah, Yeboah, Appiah, and Owusu), and the institution of chieftaincy (paraphernalia, music, and rituals).\textsuperscript{19} Alexander Agordoh\textsuperscript{20} also stresses the influence of Christianity on the

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., pp. 10-11.
performance of *bobobo* socio-recreational dance in terms of repertoire, performance context, costume, and even dance movement.\textsuperscript{21}

Emil Funke, a missionary who wrote papers in the German language on the language and customs of the Avatime people, is perhaps the first to produce a scholarly work on the Avatime culture. His linguistic publications on Siyase, according to Brydon, include the semantic and syntactic structures of the language.\textsuperscript{22} Paul Wiegrébe, another German missionary, follows suit and comments on the impact of Christianity on the religious life as well as the introduction of Western education system in Avatime.\textsuperscript{23} Lynne Brydon’s research, “Status Ambiguity in Amedzofe Avatime: Women and Men in a Changing Patrilineal Society,” examines the gender roles in the Avatime family system and how they affect the social status of the respective genders.\textsuperscript{24} Russel Schuh\textsuperscript{25} and Ronny Watkins\textsuperscript{26} have also written on linguistic aspects of the Avatime language. While Schuh examines Avatime phonology, Watkins focuses on noun classes in the Avatime language. Nobert Segbedzi traces the history of the Avatime people from their original Ahanta home to their present settlement. He documents that their present language, Siyase, is influenced by other languages like Ewe and Baya (from which “Siyase” is derived) due to the Avatime people’s contact with these groups.\textsuperscript{27}

Similarly, some ground-breaking work has been done on music in the Avatime society. Adzanku’s research on *Apasemaka*, a warrior musical organization of Avatime

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 129.
\textsuperscript{22} Funke (1909, 1910), as quoted in Brydon (1976).
\textsuperscript{23} Wiegrébe (1936), pp. 39-41.
\textsuperscript{24} Brydon (1976).
\textsuperscript{27} Segbedzi (2011).
reveals how this genre is performed in its current context in Gbadzeme, one of the seven communities of Avatime. His thesis, however, did not juxtapose the original performance context of war and the current one, which is the honoring of deceased chiefs and elderly in Gbadzeme during their final funerary celebrations. Bertha Adom also examines the socio-cultural context of cradle songs as they are performed by women both in Biakpa Avatime and Madina, a suburb of Accra, the capital city of Ghana. She contends that although Biakpa Avatime women in Madina maintain and sing the original cradle songs from their hometown, social change nonetheless contributes to change in repertoire. Sherry Adipa-Abutiate and Pauline Adipa collected, transcribed, and analyzed songs of female and male musical groups in Avatime respectively. While the analyses of the aforementioned researches cover performance context, corpus of songs, costume, instruments, melodic and rhythmic texture, and dance, they have not examined how these genres have evolved within the Avatime culture. Obviously lacking in the existing literature again is critical analysis of musical traditions to establish their overall effect on the Avatime culture and how they complement specific aspects of the culture.

This study, therefore, seeks to establish the fact that musical practices of Avatime provide evidence of how the Avatime cultural heritage has witnessed change for over the years. Furthermore, it demonstrates the role music plays in the transculturation process to reconstruct and redefine the Avatime culture. This role is evident in the musical forms, some of which were either maintained or totally abandoned, and new ones assimilated

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29 Adom (2002).
and reinterpreted. Reinterpretation is the final stage in the process of transculturation where after assimilation into the new society, the cultural elements are assigned new roles. The elements are either retained or rejected in the new culture. The study is a contribution to ethnomusicological literature signifying why the musical heritage of a given community changes in time and space. From an anthropological perspective, this study seeks to prove that what has been learned can still go through some modification, and that institutions, social structures, beliefs, habits, and customs are all susceptible to change.

Historically, the Avatime people settled in their present home in the Volta region of Ghana about two hundred years ago. Records of a specific date of migration from their former home are not available, nonetheless, one could conjecture that this migration started around the second half of the seventeenth century. According to oral as well as written records, the Avatime people were warriors who migrated from their Ahanta home in the western region of Ghana. Ahanta is considered as part of the Akan group. In 1960, almost hundred linguistic and cultural groups were officially recorded in Ghana; the largest among them is the Akan. The Akan group spreads across five of the ten administrative regions of Ghana. They are Brong-Ahafo, Ashanti, Central, Eastern and Western regions. There are sub-groups within the large Akan group such as Ashanti, Fante, Bono, Akwapim, Kwahu, Nzema, and Ahanta. The reason for the inclusion of Ahanta and Nzema groups in the larger Akan set is more socio-political than linguistic

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and geographic. Their socio-political institutions such as chieftaincy, customs, and traditional religious practices are very similar to other Akan groups probably due to a very long period of cultural contact.

Figure 1-1: Map of Africa Showing the Location of Ghana

As figure 1-1 indicates, the group under research is located in Ghana, a country at the west coast of the West African sub-region. Formed from the merger of the British colony of the Gold Coast and the Togoland trust territory, Ghana in 1957 became the first sub-Saharan country in colonial Africa to gain its independence.

\[^{35}\text{Culled from http://www.cruisersforum.com/forums/f71/visit-the-real-africa-40240.html} \]
\(\text{(Accessed: 1/18/2012)}\)
With a total land surface area of 92,456 square miles, Ghana shares borders with three French colonies, which are Republic of Togo to the east, Cote d’Ivoire (Ivory Coast) to the west, and Burkina Faso to the north. The south of Ghana is bordered by the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean.

Figure 1-3: Map of Ghana Showing the Migration Route of the Avatime People from Ahanta to their current home

The map in Figure 1-3 above shows the ten administrative regions of Ghana with the dates and route of migration of the Avatime people from their Ahanta home in the western region, through Gbugbla in the Greater-Accra Region, Agortime in the Volta Region, to their present home also in the Volta Region.

Figure 1-4: Map of the Avatime State in the Volta Region of Ghana

The map in figure 1-4 shows the current home of the Avatime, boundaries and location of the seven towns that form the Avatime State (Vane, Amedzofe, Dzogbefeme, Gbadzeme, Fume, Dzokpe, and Biakpa) as well as the neighboring towns, which include Ewe towns (Akome and Kpedze) to the east, Nyagbo and Tafi to the west, Logba to the north, and another Ewe town (Saviefe) to the south.

38Sourced from the Survey Department of Ghana – Accra.
The cause of migration of the Avatime from Ahanta is not known, but from the historical evidence of inter-ethnic skirmishes that were rampant in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Ghana, the probability of war is very high and cannot, therefore, be ruled out. The Avatime moved eastwards and settled briefly among the Ewutu and Efutu communities in the central region of Ghana. They further moved to Ada in the early eighteenth century and settled at a place called Gbugbla (present day Prampram).

In a personal conversation with Okatsie Adolph Mahunu, he states that the Avatime were caught up in the crossfire between their host and other ethnic groups at Gbugbla, which eventually led to their further migration to the Ewe territory. They temporarily relocated to the area presently occupied by the people of Agortime. Amenuney confirms this in *The Ewe in Pre – Colonial Times* when he observes that:

> Later around 1679 and 1702, yet another group of immigrants fleeing from an Akwamu punitive expedition entered the land of the Ewe. These were Adangbe from the state of Ladoku. After stopping at Aflao they split into three – each group taking a different direction in the territory. The main group settled at Adangbe near the Ge and at Agortime.

A similar account is given on the history of the Agortime Kpetoe – Ewe by Emmanuel Ziorklui in *Ghana: Nkrumah to Rawlings, Kufuor and Beyond*: “The Agortime Kpetoe people who are essentially Adangbe in origin came from Ladoku. They were reported to

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41 Personal communication with Okatsie Adolph Mahunu (Interview: 7/13/11, Vane Avatime, Ghana).
have fled and settled there in freedom when Ladoku was attacked the second time…by the Akwamu."^{43}

It can be deduced from the above accounts that the Avatime people migrated alongside other groups including the Agortime and the Gafe, who now reside in the Republic of Togo. The similarity between Siyase and the indigenous Agortime language is proof that the two groups once cohabited.^{44}

The inter-ethnic wars in Ghana which characterized the sixteenth century persisted till the nineteenth century. The wars were fought purposely for territorial expansion in order to gain political and economic power. According to Segbedzi, the Avatime were yet to know peace even though that was the reason for leaving Gbugbla. He further observes that:

By 1707, the Akwamu had conquered several Krepi communities, including Peki, Kpando and Asogli (Ho) under the leadership of Akonnor. The Guan communities of Bosso, Anum, and Tosen were all made vassals of Akwamu. Again, the Akwamu had made advances and defeated the Kwahu, who were then the overlord of Avatime. The defeat of Kwahu brought Avatime under the control of Akwamu. The Krepi communities including Avatime were controlled indirectly through Peki. Avatime was to supply slaves to Akwamu via Peki, and provide men for Akwamu wars. According to the Avatime, it was this aggression of Akwamu invasion of Krepiland that pushed them out of their Agortime home to Matse.^{45}

\(^{43}\)Ziorklui op. cit. p. 17.  
\(^{45}\)Ibid.
The stay of the Avatime people in Agortime was, therefore, short-lived as they were again forced to leave the area for a safer and peaceful abode. They moved northwards and settled on the summit of a mountain near Matse. Œkatsie Cephas Akortia reveals in a personal communication that civil war broke out between Avatime and their host, the people of Matse, which led to the former’s defeat and consequent premature exit from that territory. Having wandered in the plain for some time, the Avatime reached their present home at about the middle of the eighteenth century. They initially settled at a place called Oxulosu on the mountain range.

Akpafu, Gbefe, and Baya or Bamakliba were the three groups the Avatime encountered at this location. While the first two groups were easily forced out, the Baya, who were giants and fearsome warriors, remained. It was believed that one of these warriors possibly could crush a human head with his bare hands. According to oral accounts, the Avatime initially lived at peace with their Baya neighbors and even formed a combined army, but in course of time, the Baya army began bullying, cheating, and humiliating their Avatime counterparts. Coexisting with the Baya thus became extremely difficult for the Avatime as the former used their stature and early occupancy to intimidate and terrorize the later. In addition to fighting and killing the people of Avatime at the least provocation, the Baya also plundered crops in Avatime farms with impunity. In their quest for freedom, the Avatime, according to Norbert Segbedzi, hatched the following plan to annihilate their foes:

Since the Avatime could not stand the Baya army in warfare, an Avatime offered to poison the drink meant for the combined army. He did this

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46 Personal communication with Œkatsie Cephas Akotia (Interview: 8/12/2011, Biakpa Avatime, Ghana).
47 See Ghana National Archives, ADM. 39/1/235.
because he knew well that the Baya as usual will steal the drink to their camp and deny them [Avatime army] a share. As custom demands, he who provides the drink must drink it first to indicate that the drink has not been poisoned. Thus, an Avatime offered to have the first drink though he knew the drink was poisoned. Following that, the Baya people took the rest of the drink to their camp as usual and all of them drank the poisoned drink. The Baya thus lost their army and the Avatime took advantage to kill the rest of the Baya able bodied men, married their women and absorbed the young and aged into their midst. They therefore replaced the Baya as the occupants of the range. 48

Although the Avatime defeated their tyrannical Baya neighbors, they were yet to gain full independence. The inter-ethnic wars in Ghana have not yet ended, but rather assumed another dimension. The coming of Europeans to the Gold Coast and their promotion of slavery 49 escalated the already existing conflicts among the ethnic groups as they [Europeans] supported one group against another by supplying ammunition to the favored group. 50 The Danish-Anlo war of 1784 and the British-Ashanti wars are examples. The Avatime were expected to pay homage to their overlords, the Ashanti people, through the Akwamu people (both Akan groups) in form of slaves and men for wars. 51 This obligation on the part of Avatime led to a series of wars between them and

48Segbedzi op. cit. pp. 4-5.
49Ghana was called the Gold Coast until her independence on March 6, 1957.
50See Amenumey, op. cit. p. 30.
51Under the leadership of Akonnor, the Akwamu had conquered several Krepi communities, including Peki, Kpando and Asogli by 1707. The Guan communities of Bosso, Anum, and Tosen were all made vassals of Akwamu. Again, the Akwamu had made advances and defeated the Kwahu, who were then the overlord of Avatime. The defeat of Kwahu brought Avatime under the control of Akwamu. The Krepi communities including Avatime were controlled indirectly through Peki. Avatime was to supply slaves to
their neighbors. The Akan influence on Avatime continued until 1869 when the Asante were finally defeated in a series of fierce battles in Avatime near Mountain Gemi. This victory finally gave the Avatime their much-awaited independence and assurance that the settlement was strategically secured, hence the decision to make it their permanent home.

At Oxulosu, the people of Avatime initially stayed at the same proximity in order to quickly and easily marshal forces to resist any attacks. They stayed closely together until it became obvious that that place would become their permanent home. After they secured the place and drove out all potential enemies, they moved to seven places of the land they acquired. The seven locations were initially tactical military wings for protection of the land and security posts to ward off attacks of enemies from various directions. These seven settlements eventually became the seven towns of Avatime: Vane, Amedzofe, Biakpa, Dzogbefeme, Gbadzeme, Fume, and Dzokpe.

As established above, the current Avatime home is located in the highlands of the Akwapim-Togo ranges in the Volta region of Ghana. Five of the seven Avatime towns (Amedzofe, Vane, Gbadzeme, Dzogbefeme, and Biakpa) are clustered on and around this high terrain at altitudes varying from 400m to 850m above sea level. Amedzofe also occupies the highest point of human habitation in Ghana at 677m above sea level. The remaining two towns (Fume and Dzokpe) are located at the northwestern foot of the

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52 See Wiegräbe (1936).
53 See http://avatime.org/index.php/tourism/69-mountain-gemi
mountain range. Avatime covers a surface area of about 30 miles square and shares borders with Ewe-speaking groups such as Dzolokpuita and Kpedze to the south and east respectively, Logba to the north, as well as Tafi and Nyagbo to the west. Below are the altitudes of various Avatime towns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Altitude (ft./m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amedzofe</td>
<td>2224ft (677m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biakpa</td>
<td>1689ft (514m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gbadzeme</td>
<td>1604ft (488m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dzogbefeme</td>
<td>1049ft (319m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vane</td>
<td>1049ft (319m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fume</td>
<td>780ft (237m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dzokpe</td>
<td>649ft (197m)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ecologically, the Avatime-land is part of the tropical semi–deciduous forest zone of Ghana. The land is well drained and fertile and the water from the springs is crystal clear. The imposing topography of surrounding areas is always enhanced by the contrasting vegetation types when viewed from the highlands of Avatime. Also located in Avatime near Amedzofe is the second highest mountain in Ghana, Gemi (Mt. Gemi), which is 840m above sea level.\(^{55}\) Gemi is noted for a metal cross fixed on it since the turn of the twentieth century by the Germans missionaries.\(^{56}\) Descent to the surrounding plains from Gemi and other ranges in Avatime,\(^{57}\) are frequently steep and marked by abrupt cliffs.

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56 The cross was erected on November 11, 1939, by the Reverends Eric Voehringer and R. S. Kwami, with permission from the Chief of Amedzofe to commemorate the fiftieth Jubilee of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, which was celebrated at Amedzofe Avatime.
57 Other ranges include Gayi and Abame.
The presence of other natural features\textsuperscript{58} like caves, canyons, waterfalls, mountain forests, and game reserves in the area give impetus to the freshness of the atmosphere coupled with the equable and relatively cool climate of the Avatime home. The average temperatures in Ghana are, average low: 20.5°C (69°F) and average high: 26°C (79°F).\textsuperscript{59} Temperatures in Avatime however range from 15°C (59°F) to 25°C (77°F), thus making this place one of the human habitations in Ghana with the coldest temperatures.

The climatic and ecological conditions are very favourable for subsistence farming, which is the main occupation of the people of Avatime. The presence of hunters’ associations and warriors’ music confirms the oral historical accounts which suggest that in the past, the people of Avatime were also great hunters and warriors. The soil is rocky and thus makes farming activities much more difficult and laborious as it does not promote mechanized forms of farming. Despite this challenge, the area was noted for the cultivation of cash crops like cocoa and coffee until these farms were destroyed by the infamous bushfires of Ghana in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{60} Additional crops including cotton, oil palm trees (for palm oil and palm wine), coconuts, and cashews are very visible on Avatime soil.

The Avatime, like most subsistence farmers in Ghana, engage in indigenous farming systems, practices and knowledge. Conspicuous among them are shifting cultivation,\textsuperscript{61} mixed farming and mixed cropping. Food crops such as cassava, plantains,

\textsuperscript{58}These include Ote, Tordiamu, Wordome, and Ordido waterfalls; Kulugu canyon; and onuga cave.


\textsuperscript{60}In 1983 and 1984, Ghana experienced the most intense and prolonged drought in history. This culminated into bushfires which swept through farms, forests, villages, sacred groves, and catchment areas, and destroyed the environment, life, and property in the country.

\textsuperscript{61}The plot of land for farming is usually left to fallow for between five and seven years before it is cultivated again.
yams, and corn are also grown. *Amu* (rice),\(^{62}\) the main staple and the most valued traditional food crop, is also cultivated, and the celebration of *Amunaliwe* (Lit. rice day/festival), the annual rice festival attests to the importance of this food crop to the people of Avatime. Furthermore, planting of citrus fruits, mangoes, pineapples, bananas, and avocados is one of the agricultural legacies inherited from the German missionaries.\(^{63}\) The various farm produce are sold in an open market\(^ {64}\) at Vane or sent to markets in surrounding towns and cities.

The people of Avatime have also benefited from the Western system of education introduced by the colonial masters and missionaries.\(^ {65}\) Some of them have consequently joined various professions such as teaching, accounting, architecture, medicine, engineering, journalism, surveying, science, social work, and information technology, just to mention a few. While a selected few ply their trade in Avatime, the rest are found at different places of employment within and outside Ghana.

In Avatime, local education also includes the performance of traditional rites, such as *kusakɔkɔ* (puberty rites for young women), which lead to employment as well. As a vital and intrinsic part of this ceremony, the neophytes are taught how to spin *deti* (cotton)\(^ {66}\) with a spindle and distaff.\(^ {67}\) The cotton yarns are then sold to local weavers who produce specific patterns of *kugosa* (locally woven cloth) and *asaba* (shawls) for the young women for use on their day of graduation and thereafter. Like their Agortime counterparts, the people of Avatime developed the skill of weaving on *agbati*

\(^{62}\) *Oryza glabberima* is the commonest type of rice cultivated in Avatime.

\(^{63}\) See Adipa Abutiate (1999), pp. 13-14.

\(^{64}\) The open market system is common in Ghana, and that of Vane comes off every five days. People from surrounding towns and cities visit the market to either buy or sell different items.

\(^{65}\) The impact of missionary activities on Avatime is discussed in chapter four.

\(^{66}\) The locally produced cotton is processed by women into yarns for the weavers.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., p. 12.
(handloom), which they used to produce their cloths. The British capitalized on this expertise and set up a commercial weaving enterprise in Avatime during the Second World War. According to Charles Djorborson Gbagbo, they [British] introduced broadlooms which were used to produce a kind of heavy twill for uniforms and towelling. The industry, which ceased to function after the war, eventually served as a vocational skills learning centre for students in middle schools/junior high schools.

The Agortime area, which was once a domicile for the Avatime, currently has a very vibrant and prominent kente industry in the Volta region of Ghana. The people of Agortime annually celebrate agbamevɔza (loom-cloth festival) to showcase the impressive collection of their products. The festival gives opportunity to the weavers to sell their kente cloths, and to the community to raise funds to complete various community-initiated development projects in Agortime. The agbati (handloom) and the designs in the cloths produced in Avatime are similar to that of the people of Agortime. These similarities once again attest to the claim that the people of Avatime and Agortime have coexisted in course of history.

Linguistically, the Avatime language (Siyase), as it is spoken now, is a hybrid of the many languages that they encountered in the course of history which include Ahanta, Adangbe, Ewe, Akwapim-Twi and Siya. The original language of the Avatime people is called Sideme or Sidemese, which according to oral accounts, was spoken by their ancestors who migrated from the ancestral Ahanta home. This language was to a very

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68 Charles Djorborson Gbagbo, a graduate from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), is a specialist in industrial art and owns a small scale weaving industry at Vane Avatime.
69 Personal communication with Charles Djorborson Gbagbo (Interview: 6/6/2011, Vane Avatime, Ghana).
70 Kente, a popular African textile, is now a generic name for a locally woven fabric in Ghana. It was and still is a royal and sacred cloth worn by the citizens only in times of extreme importance.
large extent maintained and spoken by the Avatime until they began to encounter other ethnic groups on their journey. Although much of that language is extinct, words such as *kùnì* (water) and *ɔma* (community) are still used in both the Avatime and Ahanta languages.\(^7^1\) Furthermore, there still exist in Avatime several names of Akan origin such as *Appiah, Agyemang* (Adzima), *Asempa, Asempasa, Baku, Obidie*, and *Adorsu, Adjei* (Adzei), and *Asare*.

The close and intimate interaction among the people of Avatime and Baya at Oxulosu manifested in a joint military force, intermarriages, and later, the absorption of the remnants of Baya into the Avatime community. The aforementioned interaction affected various aspects of Avatime culture including their language. The current form of Avatime language, which is a synthesis of many languages including that of Baya people, is also referred to as *Siya* or *Siyase* (Lit. language), an adoption from the language of Baya. It is worth stating that while Adangbe and Agortime languages are mutually intelligible, that of Avatime contains only a few words which are found in the other two languages, for example, *bá* (come).

The current version of Avatime language is, however, closely related to that of their neighbors, Tafi and Nyagbo. The Avatime assert that when they migrated to the area, the people of Tafi and Nyagbo were already there.\(^7^2\) The Tafi who claim to have migrated from Notsie in the republic of Togo were first among the three groups to have settled in the area. The second group is Nyagbo, who also migrated from Winneba in the central region of Ghana. The Avatime, the last to have arrived, therefore adopted the

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\(^{7^1}\)See Adipa-Abutiate (1999), p. 4.
\(^{7^2}\)Ibid., p. 2.
name *Kedanima* (Lit. back people) to confirm this assertion.\(^{73}\) There is, however, another opinion that the name *Kedanima* also means “those who back or give support to others,” as the Avatime are well known to have always lent support to their allies during the period of inter-ethnic wars in Ghana. The many years of close affinity that exist among these three groups leads to various forms of transculturation, the most significant being the mutual intelligibility of their languages. These three languages, *Siyase* of Avatime, *Tigbɔ* of Tafi, and *Tutrugbu* of Nyagbo, are classified under the *Togorestsprachen* or *Togo Remnant languages*,\(^{74}\) now referred to by the geographic term of the area: *Ghana-Togo Mountain languages*.

The following are examples of words whose meaning and usage are the same in the three aforementioned languages of Avatime, Tafi and Nyagbo:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>enyí</td>
<td>names</td>
<td>inyí</td>
<td>firewood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kɔ</td>
<td>give</td>
<td>feke</td>
<td>lift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kede</td>
<td>behind</td>
<td>kabha</td>
<td>top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awulakpa</td>
<td>leaves</td>
<td>oni</td>
<td>soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kikù</td>
<td>yam</td>
<td>agɔ</td>
<td>years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gà</td>
<td>walk</td>
<td>ye</td>
<td>kill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŋà</td>
<td>eat</td>
<td>ɔma</td>
<td>town</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, there are other words that are very similar in these three languages, but register slight linguistic variations as evident in the following examples. The variations are mostly noticeable in pronunciation and or change of an alphabet in a word:

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\(^{74}\)Fourteen languages constitute the *Togorestsprachen* or *Togo Remnant languages*. They are also referred to as "Central-Togo" languages in Kropp Dakubu and Ford [1988]. These languages were first recognized as a group by Struck [1912], who referred to them by the term "Togorestsprachen" (rendered in English as "Togo Remnant Languages"). Most of the "Central-Togo" languages are spoken in the Volta region of Ghana, though several, including the largest, Kposo, are spoken in Togo, and one, Basila, is spoken in Benin.
In the next examples, the greeting response “Yawœn” runs through all three languages, a confirmation of the linguistic affinity of Avatime, Tafi, and Nyagbo states. Note that the one who initiates the greetings must conclude the dialogue by another response.

**Avatime**
Greeting: Ayé! (Good afternoon)
Response: Yawœn wɔlɔ kpasi? (Yawœn, How is your place?)
Greeter’s Response: Kpasi! (Very well)

**Tafi**
Greeting: Ayenõ o! (Good afternoon)
Response: Yawœn, wɔkõnye? (Yawœn, Is your place fine?)
Greeter’s Response: Nɔ lɛ mɔ o. (It is fine)

**Nyagbo**
Greeting: Ayigbõ o/ Ayimõ o! (Good afternoon)
Response: Yawœn wɔkɔ o / Wɔpamë o. (Yawœn, House is your home?)
Greeter’s Response: Kpasi o. (Very well)

The aforementioned examples of mutual intelligibility in Siyase, Tigbɔ, and Tutrugbu languages prove not only the geographical proximity of Avatime to Tafi and Nyagbo communities, but also the social interaction they had for over two hundred years. The strong, intimidating, and domineering influence of the Baya people on the Avatime people may have as well been extended to the Tafi and Nyagbo groups.

There are a number of borrowed words from the Ewe language in the Avatime language. Ewe influence on Avatime dates back to the eighteenth century when they

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Note: The table below lists some words in Avatime, Tafi, and Nyagbo languages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Avatime</th>
<th>Tafi</th>
<th>Nyagbo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>days</td>
<td>éwè</td>
<td>éwi</td>
<td>éwìè</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>ónúgú</td>
<td>ónugbụ</td>
<td>óługbụ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iron</td>
<td>olá</td>
<td>ọdá</td>
<td>ọdáa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>kùní</td>
<td>'ùní</td>
<td>bùlée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beard</td>
<td>ɔtamí</td>
<td>ɔtomí</td>
<td>kifufu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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[Avatime] left Gbugbla, moved eastward, crossed river Volta, and were hosted by the Ewe who have already settled in this area.\textsuperscript{76} Apart from the extensive interaction between the people of Avatime and their Ewe neighbors, the Ewe language also serves as lingua franca in the Volta region of Ghana.\textsuperscript{77} The people of Avatime therefore speak Ewe as their second language, especially in schools and church services. Besides the adoption of Ewe names like Agbeko, Agbesi, Edzeani, Asigbe, Amedzie, Agbemafle, and Egbe, many other Ewe words exist in Siyase, some of which have been twisted in pronunciation to meet the linguistic exigencies of the Avatime language. The following are examples of such words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ewe</th>
<th>Siyase</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>doku</td>
<td>dıkue</td>
<td>turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awu</td>
<td>awula</td>
<td>dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agbeli</td>
<td>agbelie</td>
<td>cassava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sɔlime</td>
<td>sɔlime</td>
<td>church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tó</td>
<td>litó</td>
<td>mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>afɔkpa</td>
<td>afɔkpe</td>
<td>footwear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suku</td>
<td>suku</td>
<td>school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Avatime language remained unwritten until 2010 when the Joshua Project,\textsuperscript{78} a Christian organization translated the Bible into Siyase and in addition published some primers. Although the language is spoken only in the various towns and at social gatherings exclusively for Avatime citizens, these written materials are valuable tools and

\textsuperscript{76}The Ewe also migrated to this area from Notsie which is located at the present day Republic of Togo.

\textsuperscript{77}Out of about hundred different languages spoken in Ghana, nine of them are government-sponsored languages. These chosen languages serve as lingua franca in the ten administrative regions in Ghana. They are supported by the Bureau of Ghana Languages, which was established in 1951 and publishes materials in them. The sponsored languages include Akan, Dagbani, Dagaare, Dangbe, Ewe, Ga, Gonja, Nzema, and Kasem. Every student is expected to read and write in at least one of these languages.

\textsuperscript{78}See http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php?rog3=GH&peo3=10496 (Accessed: 1/30/2012)
resources for learning of Siyase. The translation of the bible is based on the existing standard system of spelling and orthography of the Ewe language.

The Avatime society, like their neighboring Ewe, is patrilineal. As indicated in Figure 1-5 above, the smallest social unit of this ethnic group is the kepame (household or home) which consists of the nuclear family – husband, wife and children. In spite of this organization, the extended family system is also maintained, thus making all Avatime citizens related in one way or the other. The various kupe (families), who usually trace their descent to a common ancestor, form the oku or okuno (lineage). Oku is thus the smallest recognizable political unit in Avatime headed by okunoɔke (father of the
lineage). Usually, the oldest male in the lineage is appointed the head and his primary responsibility is the amicable settlement of disputes among members of his lineage. He is also in charge of arrangement of marriages and funerals, distribution of lands among individuals, and any other matter that is likely to affect and undermine the unity and peace among his sons and daughters.

Several *ikune* (lineages) form patrilineal and patrilocal clans called *akpola* in the various Avatime towns. Like lineages, all clans are headed by *akporakaba* (clan fathers/clan heads) who again are the oldest males in their respective clans. The clan heads are automatic members of the council of elders in Avatime towns. In addition to the clan heads, various clans have also enstooled *akpoleon* (clan chiefs). This trend of clan chiefs has gained currency only in recent years to satisfy the political imbalance that exists in Avatime as chiefs are elected from particular lineages only. It is observed however that royal clans from which town chiefs emerge do not again enstool clan chiefs.

Every Avatime *ɔma* (town) is formed by a conglomeration of several clans, and is headed by a *okusie* (chief) who is selected from the royal clan in that town. It is worth mentioning that the *Baya* whom the Avatime defeated constitute separate clans in each Avatime town except Amedzofe, where they have been absorbed into existing clans.

All *kedame bekusiba* (chiefs of Avatime), on behalf of their subjects, owe allegiance to the authority of the *okusividie* (big/paramount chief), Osie Adza Tekpor, who rules the Avatime state. Vane, being the residence of the paramount chief, thus

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80 This trend has gained currency only in recent years probably to satisfy the political imbalance that exists in Avatime of chiefs been elected from particular lineages.
81 Every town in Ghana has a traditional leader called a chief. The various towns belong to traditional areas which fall under the jurisdiction of paramount chiefs.
serves as the political capital of the Avatime state. Every chief has a title conferred on him as soon as he is enstooled a chief. The following are the titles or stool names of the various sub-chiefs in Avatime:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amedzofe</td>
<td>Okusie Akyemfoli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biakpa</td>
<td>Okusie Takyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dzogbefeme</td>
<td>Okusie Dzapraka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dzokpe</td>
<td>Okusie Kponuglo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fume</td>
<td>Okusie Adzesi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gbadzeme</td>
<td>Okusie Agyemang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vane</td>
<td>Okusie Akoto</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In times past, especially when wars were rampant, the primary criterion for selection of traditional leaders in Avatime was bravery and ability to take decisions that would ensure victory in war. He was supposed to motivate the Avatime army in times of war and also expected to ensure that his citizens were always safe and enjoy peace. Any leader who therefore showed the least sign of cowardice risked immediate destoolment. The humiliation that characterized such acts was intimidating as it literally became an albatross perpetually hanging on the neck of the victim as well as the royal family.

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82 See [http://www.avatime.org/](http://www.avatime.org/)
Figure 1-6: Current Paramount Chief of Avatime, Osie Adza Tekpor VII, Seated in State in his Royal Regalia

With the days of tribal wars long over, the benchmark for selection of leaders has consequently changed. Chiefs in recent times are expected to be development-oriented leaders who mobilize their subjects to undertake projects that will benefit the respective communities. They are also expected to provide the kind of leadership that will bring infrastructural development to the area, raise and maintain good educational standards in the schools, promote economic activities that will give jobs to the citizens, and also provide basic amenities which are still lacking in that community. Educational background therefore ranks very high in the selection of chiefs as this is considered a prerequisite and potent tool for development-oriented leadership. The elders will therefore want to pick the brightest, strongest, economically and educationally successful person as their chief.

Every Avatime town has a cabinet referred to as ɔmatsitsino which is the highest decision-making body of the community. This cabinet is chaired by ɔmanokusie (the chief of the town), who presides over all meetings. Other sub-chiefs in every town perform different complementary roles within the chieftaincy hierarchy and are members of the cabinet together with the clan leaders or clan chiefs. The ɔdzene (queenmother) is responsible for organizing the women and advocates for and on behalf of them as regards matters that affect their gender. Her consent to the choice of a town chief is also very crucial, if he will be successfully enstooled. Asofoakye is the commander of the army. Prospective candidates to this position are usually those that show acts of bravery in times of war or calamity. The sɔheokusie is in charge of the youth. He mobilizes them to
undertake clean-up exercises and development projects in the town in close collaboration with the council of elders and the development committee\textsuperscript{84} in the town.

Adipa-Abutiate, observes that other positions of trust within the chieftaincy hierarchy that are not military in function but are nevertheless very important include the tsiam\textsuperscript{i} (the chief’s spokesman).\textsuperscript{85} The chief speaks to his subjects through his spokesman even if he [the chief] is there in person. Eloquence and good oral communication skills are thus prerequisite to this position of spokesman as his voice represents that of the chief. Mankrado is another sub-chief enstooled to constantly remind the chief of important decisions taken and their deadlines. He is a special advisor and confidant to the chief, so all matters that the chief should hear about must be routed through the Mankrado. Abu (messengers) are attached to every court to run errands for and on behalf of the chiefs. They disseminate information from the town chief to the sub-chiefs and also to chiefs outside his [the chief’s] jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{86} With the creation of the aforementioned positions, decisions of the chief and his cabinet are easily implemented as action is quickly and responsibly taken by respective officials.

The Avatime state is divided into three pasu (subdivisions) for administrative and political expediency. Based on proximity, Vane and Dzogbefeme belong to one subdivision, Amedzofe and Gbadzeme to the second, while Biakpa, Fume, and Dzokpe form the third one. Coming from a military tradition, political hierarchy in Avatime is organized to reflect this reality. Figure 1-7 below shows the divisional positions of Avatime chiefs, which is reminiscent of a tactical and strategic warfare plan. The first

\textsuperscript{84} Town development committees in Ghana are responsible for the initiation, supervision, and completion of projects in their respective towns.  
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
subdivision (Dzogbefeme and Vane) act as vanguard and rear guards respectively, while the right and left wings belong to the second (Amedzofe and Gbadzeme) and third (Biakpa, Fume and Dzokpe) subdivisions respectively.

The Avatime Traditional Council (ATC) which consists of chiefs, queenmothers, and selected elders from various Avatime towns constitutes the highest decision-making body of the Avatime state. The council meets to arbitrate disputes, amend or abolish obsolete customary practices, and take decisions of interest to the development of the entire Avatime state. The diagram in Figure 1-7 below indicates the military and political structure of the Avatime state as was previously established.

![Figure 1-7: Political Structure of the Avatime State](image)

Aside from socio-political life, religious and customary practices form an integral part of life in Avatime. Like most African societies, the Avatime people believe in the
existence of a Supreme Being called *Aya*.87 Regarded as the High God, Aya is the creator of all things including the lesser gods and deities who derive their powers from him. *Aya* in *Siyase* literally means distinguished or set apart. As the Supreme Being who is set apart to oversee his creation, *Aya* is believed to inhabit the space above, hence the sky is called *ayaemɛ* (Lit. inside aya), signifying that even the sky is sited inside him. There are pantheons of gods in Avatime cosmology. *Ayapɔ* (Lit. aya has given birth) is the *ɔbui nyime* (male god) whose shrine is at Biakpa. The female god is ayapɔ’s wife whose shrine is located in Gbadzeme.88 The indigenous creative view of life that is an “essential component of Africanity,”89 is thus exhibited by the spousal symbolism of these tutelary gods, ayapɔ and his wife. Other deities are *gadzeto, ayimata, gbɔgbɔale, gbɔgbɔaba*, all of which are duly acknowledged in the libation prayers during important gatherings by the people of Avatime. Significant rivers, streams, and mountains such as the rivers *kulugu, owlidze, onimie* and mountains *Gemi* and *Gayi* are also deified in Avatime. There are earth shrines in each Avatime town responsible for the fertility of the soil and also linked to the cultivation of rice. The official in charge of the earth shrine is known as the *ketsitsaliaonete* (earth owner).90

Belief in the power and existence of *bakaba/batretreba* (ancestors) forms an essential component of religious life in Avatime. Not every deceased Avatime citizen is regarded as an ancestor. To be venerated to the status of an ancestor, one must have died

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90 See Brydon (1976), p. 33.
an adult and of “natural” causes\textsuperscript{91}, must have left behind offspring as a sign of responsibility, must have lived a morally upright life, and must have made some impact in the community worthy of commendation. No special rituals are needed for one to be acclaimed an ancestor; the aforementioned qualities qualify the deceased automatically as one.

There are rules and regulations in every society that are put in place to control social behavior. In Avatime, taboos are such an unwritten code of ethics for members of the community. These taboos are meant to restrain people from flouting social norms with impunity and also help to protect the vulnerable in the society. Examples of taboos in Avatime include incest, hitting someone with a cooking utensil or underpants, spanking a child for bedwetting, and deliberately pouring food on the ground in protest. Any person who falls foul of a taboo is said to \textit{kpe ogu} (Lit. plant a taboo). Such an act can incur the wrath of the pantheon of gods and can result in death of the victim and in some cases, multiple deaths in the family of the reprobate. The offender is, therefore, fined and made to go through a series of rituals to \textit{bu ogu} (Lit. remove/save the taboo), lest it causes more havoc.

Various traditional beliefs and customary practices formed the mainstay of religious activities in Avatime until the introduction of Christianity at the turn of the twentieth century. Although Christianity enjoys a very large following and consequently weakens traditional religious practices, some of the aforementioned beliefs and customs are still observed.\textsuperscript{92} Christensen’s observation about the impact of Christianity on \textit{Fanti}\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{91}All those who die through accidents are not considered ancestors since the cause of their death is not considered to be natural.
\textsuperscript{92}See chapter three for more information on the impact of Christianity in Avatime.
\textsuperscript{93}Fanti is one of the ethnic groups in the central region of Ghana.
priesthood is not different from what exists in Avatime. He remarks, “Generally speaking Christianity has resulted in a weakening of autochthonous religion, but Christianity has only partially succeeded in imposing its own code of ethics and behavior.”

The journey of the Avatime people from Ahanta, their present geographical location, constant affinity with their Baya, Tafi, Nyagbo, and Ewe neighbors, influenced how various aspects of the entire Avatime culture were formed, abandoned or maintained, and modified. Knowledge of this ethnographic data will, therefore, give a better meaning to musical styles, genres, forms, as well as idioms, as they exist and are practiced in the Avatime society.

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CHAPTER TWO

MUSICAL TRADITIONS OF THE AVATIME: CONCEPT, INSTRUMENTAL
RESOURCES, AND CHILDREN’S MUSIC

THE AVATIME CONCEPT OF MUSIC AND DANCE

The concept of music and dance in Avatime is similar to that of other ethnic groups in Africa. Music is conceptualized among various ethnic groups in Africa as a holistic art form, which according to Kofi Gbolonyo, evokes “other socio-cultural and philosophical concepts besides its aesthetics and artistic relevance.”95 Music is thus an expression of life in its entirety that spans from the cradle to the grave. It also reveals the personality of the African as it relates to the political, religious, historical, moral, and other aspects of life that are valuable to the culture. Kwabena Nketia reiterates this point when he says, “A knowledge of traditional African music in its social context is, therefore, a prerequisite for both understanding the contemporary musical scene in Africa and for gaining some insight into the musical experience as it relates to the African in his or her personal and social life.”96 Music thus is a vehicle par excellence for the transportation of socio-cultural values in all African societies in general and in the Avatime society in particular.

This chapter traces the musical traditions of the Avatime people before their migration from Ahanta, and discusses selected musical traditions as practiced by the Avatime people today. The discussion also focuses on instrumental resources that are found in Avatime and how they function in the respective genres, as well as children’s

music and how it brings to the fore the Avatime concept of music. Information in this chapter is largely based on personal observation and experience as a citizen who was born and bred in Avatime. Reference is, however, duly made to interviews conducted as well as available written materials consulted.

The Avatime language, like many other African languages, does not have a single word for ‘music’ that equally matches the same expression in Western conventional sense. Instead, expressions like za ɔdzi/kpe ɔdzi (Lit. sing a song/plant a song), ve livu (Lit. play a drum), and yo livu (Lit. dance a drum), are used to describe the act of singing, drumming, and dancing respectively. The use of different vocabularies to describe the performance of singing, drumming, and dancing in the Avatime language buttresses the prominence given to each aspect of musical expression. They are regarded as block puzzle pieces, and each of them fits into the aforementioned conceptualization of music as a holistic art form in Avatime.

MUSICAL TRADITIONS OF THE AVATIME IN AHANTA

African societies express themselves as a people with a common identity through music. Since music forms a functional aspect of life in African societies, it is performed at various levels of the social structure. Kwabena Nketia observes that to the African:

Music and life are inseparable, for there is music for many of the activities of everyday life as well as music whose verbal texts express the African’s attitude to life, his hopes and fears, his thoughts and beliefs. Music is said to “sweeten” his labor, to comfort him when bereaved, to keep up his

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97I had my education from kindergarten to high school in Avatime; precisely, Vane Avatime and Amedzofe Avatime).
morale at the battle front, to assist him in the worship of his gods. In short, music in his culture has a utilitarian function.\textsuperscript{98} Fela Sowande made a similar observation on the role of music in traditional African society that organization of sound occurs at several levels in the traditional African society. He identifies the five categories of music in Africa as ritual, ceremonial, social, functional, and recreational.\textsuperscript{99} The abovementioned observations prove that the Avatime people also had a musical tradition even before they left their Ahanta home at about the mid of the seventeenth century.

There are no records (oral or written) on specific musical types that the Avatime people practiced in Ahanta prior to their migration, but as Bascom and Herskovits put it, “The historical component in culture, or in social institutions, cannot be simply rejected simply because written documentation is not available. The challenge of probing the past so as to understand the present remains.”\textsuperscript{100} There are, therefore, certain pointers to the direction of the probable musical traditions of the Avatime people in Ahanta. First, the Avatime people believe in and faithfully worship Aya, the Supreme Being, and other tutelary gods, especially, Ayapɔ, thus they attribute every accomplishment to the providence of these pantheon of gods. In view of this, the Avatime priests perform the required rituals for the pantheon of gods and music to accompany them. The Avatime people therefore had practiced religious music. Second, being warriors and hunters, they performed hunters’ dances and also chanted war songs. The Avatime people’s impression and conviction, to the present day, that warrior dances such as apasemaka/apusumaka

\textsuperscript{98}Nketia (1962), p. 4.
\textsuperscript{100}Bascom and Herskovits (1970), p. 8.
originate from Ahanta cannot, therefore, be erroneous. The fact that that corpus of songs, until recently, was in the Akan language gives further credence to this opinion. Third, music associated with funerary celebrations forms an essential part of the Avatime musical tradition. *Afeti* songs, performed by adult males in Avatime, are traceable to Ahanta origin. Furthermore, singing of lullabies is a tradition that is common in most African societies.\(^{101}\) The Avatime women have practiced and maintained this tradition. Although the indigenous language has changed over the period, there are many such songs in *Siyase*. Last but not least, musical types associated with different forms of work such as grinding, pounding, mowing, sawing, and weeding abound in African societies. In the recent past, Avatime people sang special songs to accompany corporative rice farming, “floor beating,” and “wall plastering.”\(^ {102}\) This singing is a tradition they have maintained for a long time, specially, since they cultivate rice, which is labor intensive.

It is worth emphasizing that the musical traditions of the Avatime people before their migration from Ahanta, as conjectured above, are not mere assumptions but based on the current trend of musical practices in the Avatime society. The above revelations have consequently set the tone for an in-depth discussion of how music has evolved in the Avatime culture for over two hundred years.

**GENRES AND TAXONOMIES**

The Avatime society abounds in many musical types due to the historical and cultural connections that exist among it and other ethnic groups in Ghana including the Ewe and Akan.\(^ {103}\) The musical genres in Avatime doubtlessly are similar in form and structure to

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\(^{101}\) See Agordoh (2005), p. 46.
\(^{102}\) Adom (2002), p. 35.
\(^{103}\) See Agawu (1995).
these two ethnic groups. Bertha Adom mentions the use of the heptatonic scale, Twi texts, musical instruments, and choral organization as evidence of the traces of Akan and Ewe musical practices by the Avatime.\textsuperscript{104} Avatime musical taxonomy, like that of their Ewe neighbors,\textsuperscript{105} takes various forms. First, the taxonomy takes into consideration the focus of performance, that is, whether the genre is accompanied with drumming and dancing or not. Secondly, it is based on the social class of the performers as well as function of the genre in the society. Examples include inuʋɔdzi (Lit. children’s songs), ibemidzi (Lit. crying songs/songs of lamentation), abuʋu (Lit. drums for divinities/music for deities), enyimewawu (lit. drums for the valor/music for warriors), and eʋeʋevu (Lit. drums for hunting/hunters music). Every musical type that exists in Avatime is thus described within the context of the abovementioned taxonomies.

INSTRUMENTAL RESOURCES

Musical instruments do not only produce musical sounds, but also perform other socio-cultural functions. These functions vary from one culture to the other, and can be uncovered through a thorough research into the origin of the instruments, their role within and outside of the performance context, the musicians and the way they play these instruments, as well as the socio-cultural values of the instruments within the community in which they are used. In \textit{Ethnomusicology: An Introduction}, Vol. 1, Geneviève Dourmon makes this same point by stressing that:

\begin{quote}
Instruments are not objects like any other: they are artifacts which both produce sounds and convey meaning. In fact, the musical instrument has an
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{104}Adom (2002), p. 20.  
\textsuperscript{105}See Gbolonyo (2009), p. 104.
extra dimension determined by its functional and symbolic role in society. Its use is frequently linked to beliefs, to the spiritual or temporal power, the institution, the cycle of life, the various other circumstances, some codified and some not. Hence the specific ceremonies accompanying the consecration of an instrument, the unwritten rules defining its part in a ritual, the taboos presiding over its making and its use, and the myths (written or orally transmitted) about its origin (natural or supernatural), which are evidence of the importance the social group attributes to it…the musical instrument…is never insignificant.

Dourmon’s assertion raises the awareness that musical instruments evoke layers of significance which can only be understood within their respective cultural contexts. Instrumental resources in Avatime music similarly possess unique socio-cultural values and functional connotations other than their fundamental sound-producing roles.

The musical instruments used in Avatime music fall under three categories of the Hornbostel/Sachs classification of musical instruments, which are idiophones, membranophones, and aerophones. Examples of instruments in the idiophone category include *kulakpa/kumasa* (bells), *aga* (rattles), and *kusekpe* (wooden clappers). All membranophones are referred to as *evu* (drums). They are also designated according to their size: *evu+sisami* (small drums) and *evu+vidi* (big drums). The specific ensemble in which a drum features can also be used to label it, for example, *livevevu* (drum for hunters’ music), *linyimewavu* (drum for warriors’ music), and *libuvu* (drum for pantheon

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of gods. There are, however, drums that have specific names such as agɔrɔbra/agɔrɔwa/agɔrɔba (signal drum played in front of chiefs), atompanie/evuvidi (talking drums of Ghana), govu (gourd drum), and ododo (dondo/hourglass drum). Ligasia (animal horn) and kakuklui (ivory horn and Western wind instruments) are the aerophones that are prominently used in Avatime.

Instrumental resources in any given culture are acquired through various means. According to Nketia, institutions such as chieftaincy and religion attract more musical instruments. He further explains that:

Whenever similar institutions are found, musical types associated with one institution in a given area may be adopted for similar one in other areas. This is particularly true with chiefship. The occasional music of the Akan court – the music of heavy drums, signal drums and horns – is also used by other Ghanaians.108

In the Avatime culture, some musical instruments are part of ensembles while others are attached to religious and political institutions. Musical instruments that are part of ensembles which the Avatime people purportedly brought from Ahanta such as apasemaka have been maintained and occasionally replaced as and when they wear out. Although the ecology in Avatime supports the production of membranophones, that art of carving drums has never been part of the Avatime culture. The making of instruments is a special art that requires some level of expertise. Only those who have mastered this art can produce musical instruments of the accepted quality. The Avatime people, therefore, get their musical instruments from such master craftsmen elsewhere. Repair of instruments, especially the replacement of worn-out hides on drums, is however done by

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the Avatime people themselves. Another means by which these instruments were acquired in the past was through raids in wars. Ṣkatsie Cephas Akotia, in a personal conversation, discloses that the horn blown on special occasions in the court of the chief of Gbadzeme Avatime, Okusie Agyeman, was captured during the Ashanti-Ewe war of 1869, which spilled over to the mountainous terrain in Avatime. This horn is believed to have been part of the war paraphernalia of the defeated Ashanti warriors. “The horn text is therefore composed precisely to boastfully echo the bravery, sagacity, valor, and competence of the Avatime state. It is used at the same time to denigrate the strength and power of the Ashanti,” stresses Ṣkatsie Cephas Akotia. Below is the horn text which is performed in the Akan language:

**Text in Akan Language**
Agyeman pè ku a,
Agyeman pè ku a,
Wopè ku, nya ku,
Wopè ku, nya ku,
Do, do, do!

**Literal Translation**
Agyeman you chose death,
Agyeman you chose death
You chose death, you got death,
You chose death, you get death,
By all means!

In his book, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility*, John Chernoff vividly captures a similar incident between the Dagomba and Gonja ethnic groups in northern Ghana:

Atumpan drums, originally acquired from the Ashantis, are used by major Dagomba chiefs. My friend said that during a recent fight between the

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109 See also Wiegrabe (1936) and Ansre (1997).
Dagombas and their Gonja neighbors, the Dagombas had managed to “capture” the Gonja State drums – a set of two atumpan – and had carried them off to Kumbungu, where the chief who traditionally heads the Dagomba army sits. He told me that any time his Gonja classmates would try to assert themselves over his Dagomba classmates, the Dagombas would taunt them by saying, “If you feel so strong, go and collect your drums.”

In times past when alliances were formed among various ethnic groups for the purposes of war, visits and exchange of gifts were used to strengthen these relationships. Such exchanges, which included human beings, chieftaincy regalia, and musical instruments, served as constant reminders and living proof of the mutual commitment the cordial relationship. Musical instruments that have been used for such purposes included talking drums, signal drums, and horns. For instance, under the rule of Osie Adɔbɔ Adzatekpo III, he established a diplomatic relationship with the chief of Boso, Nana Nyaku. Ackuaku explains that “Nana Nyaku presented a state sword, a drum, and a stool as souvenirs to the Avatime stool.” Similarly, Ōkatsie Sam Mahunu confirms in a personal conversation that one such exchange was made between Togbega Dagadu, paramount chief of Kpando, and Osie Adzatekpor IV of Avatime when the later paid a courtesy call on the former at Kpando in early twentieth century. Osie Adzatekpor IV received a special umbrella in exchange for a signal drum.

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113 Personal communication with Ōkatsie Sam Mahunu (Interview: 5/28/11, Vane Avatime, Ghana)
Furthermore, the Avatime acquired musical instruments through their constant interaction with the Akan and Ewe ethnic groups in the course of history. Migrating from Ahanta, where Akan influence is significant, it was easy for the Avatime people to maintain Akan institutions like chieftaincy and musical forms. The maintenance of musical instruments of Akan origin in the Avatime culture is a confirmation of Akan influence on the entire northern Ewe musical culture. Membranophones of Akan origin include *atompanie* and *agɔrɔbra*, which are called *atumpani* and *mpebi/nkrawiri* in Akan language respectively. Locals refer to them as talking drums because “rhythmic and tonal patterns of spoken language are produced” on them. Leaders rally all citizens of Avatime to important meetings by playing special texts on *atompanie* drums. In the olden days, such messages were meant to subpoena all able-bodied men to prepare for war, but in recent times citizens are called to be given messages related to accidental deaths, the loss of a citizen, or an outbreak of epidemic. The drum texts of *atompanie* remain in the original Akan language, but, since only a few people understand the language, the people are responding to sound signals of the drum patterns rather than the speech texts the drums play. The following text is the most essential and crucial as it places all citizens on high alert and they respond instantaneously.

**Atompanie Text**

Avatime Kotɔko!
Avatime Kotɔko!
Avatime Kotɔko!
Mommra! Mommra! Mommra!
Ntem! Ntem! Ntem!

114 See Nketia (1962), and Agawu (1995).
**Literal Translation**
Citizens of Avatime!
Citizens of Avatime!
Citizens of Avatime!
Come! Come! Come!
Quickly! Quickly! Quickly!

Drummers play *atompanie* also on other occasions such as the installation of new chiefs, festivals, as well as during funerary celebrations of chiefs and elderly citizens of Avatime. On such occasions, the *atsirime* (drummer) plays the appellation of a chief or an elder, and the leader responds by raising both the index and middle fingers in acknowledgement. The leader whose appellations have been sounded can go a step further and give money to the *atsirime* as a gesture of appreciation. The measure of a good and competent *atsirime* is his ability to know very well the appellations of all the chiefs and elders in the town and render them dexterously on his instrument.

*Agɔρɔbra*, another drum of Akan origin, plays a role similar to that of *atompanie*. In a procession, drummers who preceded the chiefs, slung the *agɔrɔbra* over their shoulders and played to acknowledge their presence. But unlike the *atompanie*, the text played on a particular *agɔrɔbra* does not vary. In other words, *agɔrɔbra* is clan-bound and so plays only the designated drum pattern associated with the respective clan. Again, most of these drum texts are in the Akan language and the messages they disseminate espouse valor. The following is the *agɔrɔbra* drum text of the royal clan of Biakpa Avatime:

**Text in Akan**
*Yekiye ri agɔrɔ dʒi,*
*Yekiye ri agɔrɔ dʒi,*
*Kua, kua, kua!*
Literal Meaning
We detest lightheartedness,
We detest lightheartedness,
No, no, no!

Another important membranophone of Avatime is the abozokpoelivu (leopard drum), which is also found among their Ewe neighbors, who mainly use it in the courts of their chiefs. Its function in Avatime is not different from how Ewe groups use it. Kofi Gbolonyo describes and summarizes the function of abozokpoelivu, which is called laklevu among the Ewe, as follows:

*Laklevu* is a drum that takes its name from the leopard skin used for its drumhead. It is a friction drum that is played with a curved or hooked stick by rubbing or drawing it across the surface of the powdered membrane—a playing technique that produces sounds very similar to that of the leopard’s cry which is actually meant to strike terror in the enemy (during war times)… Usually owned by kings and chiefs (or, for that matter, the community), *laklevu* is a military, royal, and state drum. Nowadays, it is played in the context of royal and military processions and gatherings, especially during festivals and funerals of kings, chiefs, executioners, warriors, accomplished hunters, and other prominent members of the society (who occupy or are affiliated with political or military positions and institutions).\(^\text{117}\)

The traditional instruments discussed so far are not the only instrumental resources found in Avatime. The coming of missionaries paved the way for the introduction of Western instruments such as the harmonium, accordion, piano, violin,

\(^{117}\)Gbolonyo (2009), pp. 107-108.
trumpet, trombone, and other aerophones into the Avatime culture. Many citizens have since availed themselves of the opportunity of learning and playing such instruments, especially at church services. In fact, these instruments were originally restricted to church-related events only, but nowadays, brass bands like the Vane Avatime Nazareth Brass Band are not related to any specific Christian denomination. Autonomous musical groups in the community perform music during important events in the communities such as durbars, funerals, and weddings. Unlike the autochthonous musical groups, brass bands charge service fees to compensate the musicians for their time and for maintenance of musical instruments.

**INUVDZI (CHILDREN’S MUSIC)**

The traditional processes of music education among most African societies show the socio-cultural importance of music. Parents and other concerned family members use music as a tool to impart knowledge, philosophies, and values to the African child. Acquisition of musical skills, therefore, begins at birth and continues throughout the formative years of the child. Gbolonyo makes a similar observation about the philosophy of traditional Ewe music education and remarks that:

The musical life of *Ewevi* (an Ewe child/an Ewe) begins at infancy when she/he learns to listen and move to music as she/he is carried on her/his mother’s back. While the mother sings, claps and dances, the child is perched on high in the midst of the musical performance, literally learning to play, sing, dance, and interpret music in her/his own way, even before learning to walk and talk, but most of all, virtually acquiring the
knowledge and culture of her/his people and learning their history, traditions, socio-cultural, moral, and aesthetic values.\textsuperscript{118}

It is obvious from Gbolonyo’s observation that every Ewe child, and for that matter, African child who is brought up in a traditional setting or spends his or her formative years in an ideal traditional society will reap the full benefits of childhood music education. It is worth remarking that contrary to the notion that all children in Africa are well-versed in African music,\textsuperscript{119} children born in the cities and urban areas are often deprived this chance to learn music very early, and therefore grow up to become complete (or near complete) ‘illiterates’ in African music and dance.

Children’s music in Avatime includes a corpus of songs, which locals perform in various languages such as Avatime, Ewe, Akan, and Ga. This likely means that while some of the songs and the games they accompany are as old as the Avatime state, others are borrowed from other cultures. In addition, there are quite a few songs whose texts singers have so corrupted that the meaning has become unintelligible. Because such songs are often performed by children themselves to accompany their games, the focus is on the rhythmic patterns that the song provides to the act of play rather than the text itself. The following is an example:

\textbf{Text in Unintelligible Language}

Gbolo, gbolo:
Kayisa!
Gbolo, gbolo:
Kayisa!
Titi naa ma le, naa ma le kli
Kli lo busalo, busalo munya
Munyamunya kosi mate tete

\textsuperscript{118}Ibid., pp. 114-115.
\textsuperscript{119}It is a fallacious notion, at least from my experience, which is often carried by some people in Europe and the United States about every African who is born and lives in Africa.
Woya dzakuma kosi makɔ liko.

This song accompanies a leg-touching game. In this game, children spread out both legs as they sit on the floor and appoint a leader (usually the oldest) who touches both legs of each child as he or she moves methodically to the rhythm of the song from one leg to the other until the verse ends. Whichever leg receives the last touch in each round of singing must be folded. A child is eliminated from the game when he or she has both legs folded. This continues until a winner finally emerges. According to my maternal grandmother, Martha Adiase, who lived from 1901 to 1989, this very game song was sung in her childhood, but no one could ever explain the meaning. No researcher has yet to discover any Ghanaian language that approximates the verse. Some believe, however, that there are traces of Adangbe names in the song such as Tete, Makɔ, Naa, and Mate, which suggests that the Avatime people may have adopted this song from the Adangbe when the two interacted at Gbugbla in the early eighteenth century. This Ewe version of the same song has a completely different textual meaning, but children in Avatime perform it interchangeably with the unintelligible version because their focus is the rhythmic pattern of the song.

**Text in Ewe**

Gblolo, gblolo:
Kayisa!
Gblolo, gblolo:
Kayisa!
Titi yile tsi, yile tsi le tsilefe,
Gbɔgɔ mele o, ‘tsia?
Ya woyia, woyia? Ya woyia, woyia?
Amenunɔlawo fe beble kume,
Beble kume,
Adzaku, (ê) menya Adzaku keŋ.

120Personal communication with Martha Adiase: 1979, Vane Avatime, Ghana.
Literal Translation

Gblolo, gblolo:
Kayisa!
Gblolo, gblolo:
Kayisa!
You were long gone to bath, to bath in the bathroom,
No trace of your return, won’t you come back?
Are you sure of your mission?
Are you sure of your mission?
Some leaders’ strategy of deception,
Strategy of deception,
Adzaku, (yes) I known Adzaku too well.

Songs are performed for or by children in Avatime, hence the reference to *inuvɔdzi* (Lit. children’s songs), form a recognizable portion of the area’s musical repertoire. Songs that children themselves perform at play, during storytelling, and other times help sharpen their aural and musical skills.

**CRADLE SONGS**

Cradle songs are lullabies or songs sung for children when they are not old enough to sing themselves. Adom’s research on cradle songs in Biakpa Avatime focuses on their social-cultural context at home and in Madina, Accra. Her research places emphasis on songs mothers perform for very small children or babies. Adom observes that cradle songs, which form part of *inuvɔdzi* (Lit. children’s songs) in Avatime, are very:

soothing songs that serve as channels for verbal communication to excite the baby or lull it to sleep. They are also associated to women who express their sentiments or emotions towards their babies. The themes of these

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songs vary from mother’s love to food, nature and norms of society.

Envious rivals and double-tongued sisters-in-law are also not spared in the mother’s allusions to enemies.\(^\text{122}\)

Furthermore, cradle songs serve as means of introducing the baby to basic vocabularies in its mother tongue, the Avatime language. In view of this, mothers perform these songs in Siyase more than any other category of songs in this tradition. Women usually compose these with very short, catchy, and repetitive phrases to attract the attention of the child. The following song in Siyase, for instance, praises the baby and admonishes it to stop crying.

**Text in Siyase**

Wuki bemi lo,
Ônè gba, wuki bemi lo.
Wuki be mi lo,
Ọka gba, wuki be mi lo.
Wuki bemi lo,
Obi gba, wuki be mi lo.

**Literal Translation**

Do not cry,
Good woman, do not cry.
Do not cry,
Good man, do not cry.
Do not cry,
Good child, do not cry.

The role of mothers in caring for children from feeding them to inculcating in them moral values is one essential quality of motherhood as conceptualized in the Avatime society. Breastfeeding the baby is very important as breast milk is believed to serve as a good, healthy, and well-balanced source of nutrition for the baby. The act of breastfeeding also bonds the mother to the child. The Avatime also believe that

\(^{122}\text{Adom (2002), p. 2.}\)
breastfeeding contributes psychologically to the decent and appropriate behavior of the child. Any trace of maladjusted behavior is consequently questioned thus: *Wɔmua wone limuane lo?* (Lit. Did you not suck your mother’s breast?) Below are two examples of cradle songs in Siyase that reinforce the importance of a mother as the source of reliable and satisfying nourishment. It is worth noting that the second example is usually sung by men whose role as responsible fathers is also well cherished in Avatime.

**Text in Siyase**

Dada ‘tra, wɔamua;
Wone ‘tra, wɔamua;
Wɔamua popopopopo,
Wɔake!

**Literal Translation**

Mother is coming, you will suck;
Your mother is coming, you will suck;
You’ll suck continuously,
Until you are full.

**Text in Siyase**

Wu bemi, wu bemi,
Wuki bemi lo
Onyime menu
Menu ɔdZe
Wuki bemi lo

**Don’t Cry**

Don’t cry, don’t cry,
Don’t ever cry.
I’m a man, (so can’t breastfeed you)\(^{123}\)
I’m not a woman
Don’t ever cry.

Mothers are expected to make time for their children, especially the newborns, even if they are hard-pressed with other duties. The measure of a good mother is,

\(^{123}\)This song is particularly sung by men.
therefore, the provision of security for her baby. In times past when wild animals were a common threat, any neglect of a child which caused it to cry attracted these animals to the spot and at times resulted in the eating of that baby. The text of the following cradle song reminds the mother of the consequences of leaving a child unattended.

**Text in Ewe**

Nana yee, yee yee yee,
Wogbɔ loo,
Woyi loo,
Kasia wɔbe nɛ yeagbɔ,
Haviwo ɖu viwo vo na wɔ loo!
Ata tsɛ, abɔ tsɛ,
Eya koe susɔ na wɔ loo.

**Literal Translation**

Oh mother,
You are coming,
You are going,
Before you come back,
(Wild)Piglets have fed on your child.
The thigh and arm,
Are the only parts left for you.

It is worth stating that although music is a communal event in Avatime, and the child begins to hear different genres as soon as he or she is born, cradle songs are very significant since they relate personally to the child. These songs and the texts they exude characterize the contemplative dimension to African music, thus helping the child to develop its sense of hearing and consequently the value of being a good listener. Cradle songs also sharpen the reflexes of response by letting the child sleep, stop crying, or smile in response to the song.

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124 See Kofi Agawu (2003.)
GAME SONGS

There are many children’s games in Avatime, most of which are accompanied with songs. Games are usually played in the evening after dinner when the children have completed most of the household chores. Before electricity came to Avatime, moonlit nights were very sweet moments for children to play games until they became exhausted. Apart from being a source of entertainment, games test the aptitude of children and introduce the children to values like tolerance, endurance, attentiveness, perseverance, and learning to become a team player. Furthermore, games aid in mental exercise, increasing their stock of vocabulary, and making their memories retentive and sharp. As mentioned earlier, songs serve as accompaniment to most of these games. Knowledge of, and ability to sing, these songs is thus a prerequisite to participation in the games. Most of the games children play in Avatime are named after the songs that accompany them.

The following are two examples of such game songs.

**Text in Siyase**

Ole, ole
Ota, ota
Oné, oné
Otsu, otsu

**Literal Translation**

One, one
Two, two
Three, three
Four, four
Five, five

The game *Ole ole* (Lit. one, one), introduces children to counting in the Avatime language. The counting always begins from one up to a number the leader requests.
Anyone who mistakenly, carelessly, or absentmindedly counts beyond that number is disqualified. Children must, therefore, watch the leader carefully as he or she only shows the maximum number by raising his or her fingers. To remain in the game, a child needs to be very vigilant and brave, because anybody who lowers his or her voice while the counting is going on risks instant disqualification and consequent expulsion.

**Text in Ewe and Siyase**

Wobe: be loo,
Wobe: be loo,
Nekpɔ ‘lèvi nålé,
Nekpɔ gbɔvi nålé.
*Fayiko mayurɔ wə lo.*
*Mlakpo gagla lo.*

**Literal Translation**

They say: hide
If you see a lamb, catch it.
If you see a kid (young goat), catch it,
Don’t rush, I’m releasing you.
Hide yourselves very well.

The song above is a mixture of Avatime and Ewe languages and accompanies a game called *Wobe: be loo* (Lit. They say: Hide). In this Hide and Seek game, a leader blindfolds one child. The song, often sung by the leader before he or she releases the blindfolded seeker, is one of admonishment to both parties (hiders and seeker) to be very careful. The first four lines are the original Ewe version, and the last two lines in Siyase are rendered in a speech-like pattern.

*Kaba do vevie* (Lit. Hurry, persevere), a pebble hiding game, uses this song.

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125 The lines in italics are in *Siyase.*
Kaba Do Vevie
Kaba do vevie,  
Kaba do vevie,  
Nadi kpevi si metsɔɣla,  
Nadi kpevi si metsɔɣla.

**Literal Translation**
Hurry, persevere,  
Hurry, persevere,  
Look for the small stone that I’ve hidden,  
Look for the small stone that I’ve hidden.

In this game, every participant is expected to fold his or her robe or clothes so a pebble can be hidden in one. The leader eventually drops the pebble and the seeker must guess which child possesses it after the song is ended. Each participant must wear a very serious look and avoid every possible clue that will easily help the seeker to find out who is in custody of the pebble. Any such misconduct or compromise is considered a betrayal of trust that merits immediate expulsion from the group. This game, therefore, inculcates in children the value of keeping group as well as personal secrets.

*Ampe* is another game played by children in Avatime. It is, in fact, a very common game played exclusively by young girls throughout all communities in Ghana. This energetic game is played by rhythmic jumping, dancing, clapping, and singing by two or more girls. The players have a free hand to choose whether to accompany *ampe* with singing or not. *Ampe* promotes cooperation and compromise among the players as it also sharpens their skills of anticipation. The leader and another player she chooses jump up at the same time, clap, and thrust one foot forward when they jump up. If the leader and the player have both chosen to kick out different feet, the leader scores a point. If they both kicked out the same foot, the leader does not get a point. If the players are in a circle, the winner moves along the inside of the circle, playing against others in turn. If
they are in a line, then she moves on down the line. If only two players are playing, they keep score until a certain number of points determine a winner. After every round, the individual or group that emerges as the winner celebrates, while the spectators will humiliate the loser with songs or acts of mortification. These acts expose the children to the reality of enduring defeat with dignity. Children popularly use One Walomi, in the ampe game as indicated below.

**One Walemi**
One walemi
Two tutulia
Three latri boy
Four follow me’
Five fireman
Six Cecilia
Seven pa-ttention (pay attention)
Eight tetekpɔ
Nine nanalia
Ten sikafu
Eleven page one
Twelve page two
Thirteen mafa lantosi

This song is an example of how children, especially northern Ewe children, rhythmicize language. Kofi Agawu explains that “by rhythmicizing language, they defamiliarize it, pressing it towards the condition of music.”¹²⁶ The song has four syllables each in its first ten lines. The idea is to let the fourth syllable correspond with the clapping and simultaneous kick out of the foot. The mixture of English and Ewe texts in this song is an indication of Western educational influence on the game. Like the girls, ampe has also become part of the school system. It is the most popular game for school

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girls in Ghana during their snack and lunch breaks, which serves as a tool for socialization as well as means of physical exercise.\textsuperscript{127}

**FOLKTALE (STORYTELLING) SONGS**

*Kudzidzitata* (storytelling) times are very precious moments in the lives of children in Avatime. Like children’s games, storytellers perform when the *ɔdzidzi* (moon) is bright and full, hence the reference to stories as *kudzidzi* (Lit. ride on the moon). These moments bring families together as parents and grandparents thrill their children and grandchildren with stories, most of which they have told time and time again. The stories are full of good moral values such as truthfulness, kindness, service, integrity, and love.

Two types of songs usually accompany storytelling: first, songs that are part of the story, and second, songs that the audience sings as interlude to the stories. The phrase *meze lɛtefe* (Lit. I was a witness to the event), a form of permission from the audience, always precedes the performance of interludes. The narrator responds: *yoo*, and pauses for the performance of a song to proceed.

The concept and objective of storytelling, which is to collectively (narrator and audience) embark on an imaginary journey to a safe destination, is always paramount. Although the narrator acts as the driver, the audience also exercises control and makes sure that its interest and “safety” is maintained. Interludes are, therefore, meant for the narrator to take a short break and the audience (children), who may be falling asleep, to wake up. In view of this, songs for interludes must be well known so that every member

of the audience can easily participate. Here is an example of an interlude, very common not only in Avatime, but among many northern Ewe communities.

**Text in Ewe**
Go le mimli toli toli toli
Go le mimli
Go le mimli toli toli toli
Go le mimli
Fine ke go tso
Go le mimli toli toli toli
Go le mimli

**Literal Translation**
The gourd is rolling *toli toli toli*
The gourd is rolling
The gourd is rolling *toli toli toli*
The gourd is rolling
Wherever it comes from,
The gourd is rolling *toli toli toli*
The gourd is rolling

The imagery created in this song is the vivid juxtaposition of the story to a wandering rolling gourd, which is yet to reach its destination. Where the gourd comes from and where it is going are not as important as the systematic way in which it is rolling: *toli toli toli*. The song clearly demonstrates that the story is not ended, so the audience expects it to continue until it ends. After the interlude, the audience asks the narrator to *tre lava* (Lit. go on/continue). The storyteller marks the end of every story by the following phrase, which he or she chants rhythmically: *Kitikliyi azakliyi kunugbadome kpabu* (Lit. *kitikliyi, azakliyi* disappear on the road that leads to Logba). As explained in a personal interview with Òkatsie Apeedu, the import of this postlude is that any noticeable omission in the story or variation to an earlier version is like a moving
storm that will vanish on *kunugbadome* (Lit. the road that leads to Logba). Such disclaimers are at times necessary in oral traditions to make up for nuances that may occur when the same story is told several times over.

*Inuvɔdzì* (children’s songs) in particular and children’s games in general have seen a dramatic decline in patronage in recent years due to the increasing demands of school work on the children. The influx of technology into Ghana and the introduction of television, video games, and recently internet services have enticed the children to the extent that they have little or no time for or interest in the traditional games any more.

Discussions in this chapter have so far established that the Avatime people have a musical tradition before they migrated from their Ahanta home in the mid-seventeenth century. Their concept of music as a functional aspect of culture is not different from that of other African societies. This concept is displayed in the Avatime people’s musical taxonomy and the functions that their musical instruments perform. Apart from the musical instruments playing roles in various ensembles, they also function as symbols of authority especially to political institutions. Because music plays such an important role in the day-to-day activities of the Avatime people, children are introduced to it as soon as they are born. Music is also used to inculcate in the Avatime children moral values through various games and stories. Even though some aspects of music in Avatime have evolved, the institutions and essence of their performance have been maintained, to a great extent.

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128 Personal communication with Ṣkatsie Apedu (Interview: 8/5/11, Avatime Dzogbefeme, Ghana)
129 See Adom (2004), p. 34.
In Africa, traditional music activities are organized around social events. They are also controlled by the class or type of people who participate in them. Although music making is very often a social event, it is organized to meet specific demands of the community. Kwabena Nketia observes that: “The continuity of folk music in all Ghanaian societies depends not only on the musical demands which activities and events make but also to a very large extent on its organization in terms of participants – the men and women who meet in various situations for the enjoyment of leisure or for the performance of rites and ceremonies, and the men and women who gather in such contexts because they share common interests, common ideals, common beliefs, which form the basis of their community life.”

Adult musical groups in Ghanaian societies in general and the Avatime society in particular are, therefore, organized to meet socio-cultural exigencies. This chapter discusses selected musical genres for adults, the context in which they are performed, the institutions to which some of them are attached, and how they have evolved. The chapter also covers gender roles as they function within different musical contexts and the impact they make on the entire Avatime cultural heritage.
SOCIO-RECREATIONAL MUSIC

Socio-recreational music in Avatime is one category of music that has evolved quickly in the course of history. This rapid change stems in part from the objective of such performances, which is community participation, and for which reason the performances are tailored to suit the demands of the participants as well as exigencies of the period. Furthermore, socio-recreational music, unlike religious or ceremonial types, can be used in multiple contexts, and thus changes do occur to reflect the context of performance. The older socio-recreational musical types include gabada (a social dance allegedly noted to be flirtatious), aleke (a socio-recreational dance exclusively for women), and osiki (a socio-recreational dance for a mixed group).

Furthermore, the evolution of highlife in Ghana in the early part of twentieth century drove individuals and communities to re-create similar forms of music to replicate the highlife genre. Tracing the origin of popular music in Ghana, John Collins in his book, *Highlife Time* writes, “Highlife is Ghana’s most important modern homegrown dance-music,” and thus used generically to describe all forms of popular music in Ghana. The rural areas, in their quest for a taste of the “music of the day” formed groups to perform in the new style. *Konkoma* (sometimes called *konkomba*) is a product of this early form of highlife that started in southern Ghana but spread quickly to other parts of the country until the 1950s when its popularity waned. The Avatime also had their fair share of the “konkoma fever” under various names such as sanikoko, jәle, tuidzi, and akpese, just to mention a few. Bɔbɔ, a similar socio-recreational dance group, which arose in the northern Ewe town of Kpando in the early 1950s, has stood the test of time.

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and remains the main socio-recreational musical type not only in the Avatime society, but the entire Ewe-land from Ghana, Togo, to Benin.

Since its inception in the 1950s, ɔbɔbɔ has evolved greatly in its corpus of songs, style of dance, instrumentation, costume, and performance context, and is widely performed at funerals, weddings, festivals, and also at church services. The repertoires of songs as well as costumes change to reflect the various contexts of performance. The ensemble initially comprised one asivui (a sonorous drum played with the hand), one pati (a local version of the European military metal side-drum), one livusisami (a small drum), one havana or livuvidi (big drum which is also the master drum), prentsiwa and kamasa (bells), and aga (container rattles). As the ensemble gained popularity, some groups added ododo (a double ended hourglass drum), tamalin (tambourine), and konga (congas), which eventually replaced the pati. The use of a bugle\textsuperscript{132} in the performance process as an interlude is a distinctive and ongoing feature. Nowadays, some performers use the trumpet or cornet in place of the bugle. Additionally, in current ɔbɔbɔ ensembles, drummers may use two or more master drums with varied pitches to give the instrumentation a firm intensity and volume and maximize artistic “groove.” These master drummers play rhythmic motives either simultaneously or in dialogue with each other.

In several Avatime towns, brass bands perform socio-recreational music in a fashion similar to ɔbɔbɔ ensembles. They also lead village processions to event venues upon request. The repertoire of music performed by brass bands includes traditional songs and contemporary popular styles such as highlife, reggae, calypso, and jazz. These days, disc jockeys play all kinds of appropriate recorded music at most social events.

\textsuperscript{132} The use of a bugle attests to the fact that ɔbɔbɔ is a transformed version of konkoma.
Everybody shares in the joy that the music exudes and dances freely, even hilariously to the music expressing their sense of belongingness.

**ABUVU (RELIGIOUS MUSIC)**

Before the arrival of Christianity in Avatime, special religious musical types were performed in every town to honor the pantheon of gods and deities. Osobliso and gadze are examples of musical types performed to honor the agriculture and tutelary god, Ayapɔ.133 Since the Avatime people believe that Ayapɔ is responsible for the fertility of the soil resulting in higher crop yield, the villagers always perform osobliso ritual dance at the shrine of Ayapɔ in Biakpa Avatime to mark the beginning of the cultivation, at the same time the harvest of the local brown rice.134 The chief of Biakpa, Okusie Takyi X, who is also a music educator, confirms that the worship of this deity by the Avatime dates back to Ahanta.135

Throughout their journey from Ahanta, the Avatime people gave Aya the pride of place as the most competent, all-knowing, and all powerful Supreme Being. The name osobliso is therefore derivative of the popular song of praise for Aya performed during the osobliso dance: Aya lo, se blu, se ve, aya lo! (Lit. Aya, understands the Akan language, understands the Ewe language, Aya!). This confirms the faith the Avatime people have in Aya as most superior and all-knowing. Apart from evoking themes of praise in honor of Aya and other tutelary gods, osobliso songs proclaim and affirm the power of Aya to provide a high crop yield. The following osobliso, for instance, makes

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133See Brydon (1976)
134See Adom (2002)
135Personal communication with Okusie Takyi X (Interview: 5/30/11, Biakpa Avatime, Ghana)
special reference to bumper fruitage: *Osala yo, asala, asala, osala yo!* (Lit. There must be fruit bearing, manifold, manifold, there must be fruit bearing!)

Other deities in Avatime before the introduction of Christianity include *Gayito, Ayimata, Amuklo,* and *Onimie.* These deities are named after the main rivers and mountains in Avatime that are dedicated to them. The *Tigare* and *Dzabom* gods that all Avatime towns use to worship came into the pantheon of gods later. *Tigare,* originally a hunters’ deity from the northern region of Ghana, hunts for witches, liars, thieves, and other evil doers in the community. When the priest exposes the evil doer, usually in the *Tigare* shrine, that person falls ill until he or she confesses and repents. The *Tigari* priest, also known as *Kuwaɔke* (Lit. medicine man), is very honest, diviner, herbalist, and healer who always helps those who desire to have babies. To a very large extent, this deity addresses the health, moral, and myriad social concerns of the ordinary citizens in Avatime.

African gods love music, and manifest themselves in the performance of music that affects them. Therefore, Africans associate specific musical performances with these deities. Nketia also confirms this assertion when he observes that:

The adoption of gods worshipped in a different society sometimes carries in its train the particular form of music and worship used for them in their original homes … In Ga society, *akɔŋ* and *otu* are Akan-derived musical forms used for worshipping tutelary gods of Akan origin while the music

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137 Personal communication with Ɛkatsie Emmanuel Adzabe (Interview: 6/1/11, Vane Avatime, Ghana)
and dancing of me are used in connection with gods of Adangbe origin, usually by Gas of Adangbe descent.\textsuperscript{139}

The people of Avatime similarly worshipped this pantheon of gods in Avatime, yet only the priests and devotees may perform music for the gods, for, they alone know the type of musical performances that will invoke the spirit of the respective god.

**MUSICAL TRADITIONS FOR MEN**

Warrior music in Avatime can be classified with serious music. Kofi Agawu states that warrior dances are serious or sacred dances among the northern Ewe because of their characteristic mood. He further reiterates that:

> Serious dances are associated principally with religion, deity and war.

> Their gestures symbolize fundamental belief systems, systems that express the very basis of physical and spiritual life. Serious dances are danced on important festival occasions, at government-induced durbars of chiefs, and to mark important rituals.\textsuperscript{140}

The war factor in the organization of musical groups in Avatime cannot be overemphasized. The Avatime people generally call warrior music groups \textit{enyimewavu}, but the various towns have specific names, for example, \textit{asaf\text{o}} in Amedzofe Avatime, \textit{apusumaka} in Vane Avatime, \textit{gbedegbleme} in Biakpa Avatime, \textit{apasemaka} in Gbadzeme Avatime, and \textit{ih\text{\textae}} in Fume Avatime. In Dzogbefeme Avatime, the vanguard of the Avatime military, two pseudo-military musical groups exist: \textit{li\text{\textect}}\textit{batram} and \textit{ed\text{\textxs}xoxo}.

\textsuperscript{139}Nketia (1962), p. 13.

\textsuperscript{140}Agawu (1995), p. 92.
The designation of these musical groups as *enyimewavu*, derived from the expression *wa+kunyime* (Lit. work+manly), is due to the fact that the Avatime people only allowed men on the battlefield. Without any prejudice to female gender, the Avatime affirm that war is for men. Any act of bravery is thus given a gender twist and interpreted as an attribute of manliness. The word *enyimewavu* means drums or music of gallantry. Women sing special songs to remind potential warriors of their responsibilities as “men,” and admonish them to live above reproach by acting courageously as the women would do in this example.

**Text in Ewe**

Ame ke mede aʋa o,
Nyɔnuwoe!
Ede aʋa meda tu o,
Nyɔnuwoe!

**Literal Translation**

Anyone who does not go to the battlefield,
He is a “woman!”
He goes to the battlefield but fails to shoot a gun,
He is still a “woman!”

In the olden days, warriors performed *enyimewavu* before the commencement of war to embolden themselves. To this day, the style of dance depicts an Avatime warfare strategy. Dancers always arm themselves with guns, cutlasses, and other weapons of warfare, which they flaunt bravely while chanting war songs. Lynne Brydon observes that during the performance of the *asafo* dance in Amedzofe Avatime, “The significance of the dance is obviously war oriented; the three movements are a cautious advance, a calculated retreat, and a final rush.”

The above observation is true to the performance of *enyimewavu* in other Avatime towns. When war was in progress, the master drum was

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141 “Woman” is used in this context to mean a coward or weakling.
142 Brydon (1976), p. 34.
used to give directions to the warriors to either advance or retreat.\textsuperscript{143} Warriors commemorated both victories and defeats to honor fallen heroes through the performance of \textit{enyimewavu}.

The corpus of songs for \textit{enyimewavu} appears in Akan and Ewe languages, with a few translated versions in Avatime. Song texts depict whether a performance is pre-war or post-war. In a pre-war context, songs performed are full of encouraging words that psychologically prepare the warriors for the task ahead. Below are two examples of such songs:

\textbf{Text in Ewe}

\begin{quote}
Dzidoɔwo, dzidoɔwo, dzidoɔwoe dea ‘ʋa.
\end{quote}

\textbf{Literal Translation}

The valiant, the valiant, it is the valiant who go to war.

\textbf{Text in Ewe}

\begin{quote}
Gbe dzie, gbe dzie, kalèwɔʃe nye gbe dzi loo!
\end{quote}

\textbf{Literal Translation}

In the battlefield, in the battlefield, heroism is exhibited in the battlefield!

Of course when a battle is finally won, the songs depict the jubilant mood that characterizes such conquests. The victory always calls for celebration despite the casualties that might be suffered. The safe return of a chief from the battlefield is a major sign of victory marked with special songs in acknowledgement. Below are examples of such songs:

\textbf{Text in Ewe}

\begin{quote}
Ne wokats ‘gbe, asi míalé woe.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{143} Adom (2002), p. 27.
**Literal Translation**

If they dare us today (again), we will catch them with our bare hands.

**Akan Text**

Nana\(^{144}\) ba o, Nana ba o, ye ntem ye kɔ.

**Literal Translation**

*Nana* is coming, *Nana* is coming, hurry up let’s go.

The Avatime people have tasted defeat in wars on a number of occasions resulting in the loss of lives and greeted with agony and remorse. In the war against their northern Logba neighbors in the early nineteenth century, the Avatime were once again defeated. The war took place near the Ŋɔabi Mountain which is located at the boundary between the Avatime and Logba. Many lives were lost including the two heirs apparent to the paramount stool of the Avatime people.\(^{145}\) The death of his two sons caused the premature demise of Osie Adzatekpor II before the warriors could even return home. This historical incident resulted in the highest oath of Avatime: *Adzatekpor Ŋɔabi*, reminding the people of that indelible loss. When chiefs are sworn into office, they are asked to take the oath of allegiance to their subjects and other chiefs. The oath always ends with this invocation: *Xegi ma xua wɔ, xe monu wonui, wotu Adzatekpor Ŋɔabi*. (Lit. Whenever duty calls, and you do not respond/show up, you have broken *Adzatekpor Ŋɔabi*).

The Avatime perform songs to mark defeat in war. Below is an example of a song performed by *apasemaka* ensemble that reflects the reality of defeat and counting of losses:

\(^{144}\) Nana is the title of a chief in the Akan language.

\(^{145}\) See Ackuaku (2008)
Text in Akan
Agyae o, ye wuo, agyae oo,
Agyae o, ye wuo, agyae oo
Y’nim ayey watan,
Y’akyiri yey mɔbɔ o.
Agyae oo!

Literal Translation
Alas, we are dead (we are facing defeat), alas!
Alas, we are dead (we are facing defeat), alas!
Our face is dark (The way ahead is uncertain);
Our back is pitiable (The way behind leaves much to be desired);
Alas!

Apart from the repertoire of apasemaka/apusumaka, which is in Akan and Ewe languages and, therefore, probably brought from Ahanta, other ensembles in this category have been either established in Avatime or adopted from elsewhere. Some Ewe towns, including Dodome, Dzolo, Matse, Ziavi, Ho, Akoefe, Tanyigbe, and Lume, own aɖabatram ensembles, referred to as liɖabatram in Avatime music. The following is a description of Aɖabatram by Kofi Agawu in the northern Ewe town of Ziavi:

The drum Aɖabatram is a hollowed-out tree trunk, about four feet high, and having a single head, this last covered by animal skin. Draped around the head of the drum is a brownish cloth containing calabash-like objects believed to be human skulls obtained during past wars. Part of what is symbolized by Aɖabatram then is the military prowess of the people.

Agawu’s description of aɖabatram in Ziavi is not different from the Avatime version, liɖabatram. In Avatime, however, a special sword is always carried in front of liɖabatram. This sword signifies past conquests as well as combat readiness of the Avatime state. Given that the Ewe towns where they perform aɖabatram are mostly

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146 See Adzanku (1983).
dotted along the probable migration route of the Avatime people, the possibility that the Ewe adopted this genre from the Avatime people cannot be ruled out. More so, when the drum *lidabtram*, and not necessarily the whole ensemble, wields the greatest significance of this musical type, chances that the Avatime people originated *lidabtram* are very high. Despite the fact that it is nowadays tagged as “evil” by some Christians, probably due to the human skulls used in performance of this dance, for which reason it enjoys less patronage from the people, *lidabtram* still remains a significant emblem of the Avatime people as warriors.

From the preceding discussions, one may be tempted to conclude that male groups always accompany their music with drumming and dancing. Nonetheless, *Afeti* proves an exception to this trend. This genre consists of songs usually in “free” rhythm,\(^\text{148}\) unaccompanied by any musical instrument. *Afeti* reveals the contemplative aspect of African music, because apart from the free rhythmic style of performance, its repertoire is full of expressions of grief, lamentation, and anecdotes about death. The *Afeti* genre consequently supports Kofi Agawu’s argument in *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions*, that: “The idea that African music is functional in contrast to a contemplative European music is a myth.”\(^\text{149}\)

Various individuals in Avatime have unanimously agreed that this genre comes from Ahanta.\(^\text{150}\) Their conviction is largely based on the Akan texts of *Afeti*. Measured against the backdrop that no one sings these songs in the neighboring Ewe language, and

\(^\text{148}\) Agawu (1995) contends that “free” rhythm as opposed to “strict” rhythm in Africa music “has less to do with rhythm as such and more to do with meter and periodicity. Music lacking a specific meter and a clear sense of periodicity is said to be in free rhythm. A comparison with recitative in opera, oratorio, or cantata is not entirely inappropriate. Strict rhythm by contrast refers to the presence of a tactus, a palpable metric structure, and a resultant periodicity.” p. 73.

\(^\text{149}\) Agawu (2003), p. 104.

\(^\text{150}\) This was disclosed during interviews I conducted in Avatime from May to August 2011.
that only a few Avatime people could speak the Akan language, it stands to reason that
the Afeti musical tradition originates from Ahanta. It is, however, paradoxical that a
genre of purely Akan origin assumes an Ewe language designation, \textit{Afe+ti}
(house/home+tree). Yet, the meaning of \textit{Afeti} is not out of place when one looks at it
from the perspective of special shade trees that serve as meeting places or local
community centers are common sites in all Avatime towns. They are also used as spots
for relaxation and playing of games like \textit{itsɔɛ} (played with bamboo sticks) and \textit{atai}
(played with marble seeds) by the elderly during the day, especially when the weather is
warm and sunny. The comfort and hope \textit{Afeti} exudes in the midst of pain and devastation
is tantamount to the provision of shade and coolness of the abovementioned “home
trees.” \textit{Kpɛ Afeti} (Lit. plant the home tree), which describes in Siyase the act of intoning
\textit{Afeti} songs, therefore, connotes a process of psychological healing derived from the
songs.

In Avatime, like almost all societies in the world, death is always greeted with
mourning because the deceased physically ceases to exist. Although human beings are
undeniably mortal and death completely inevitable, it still remains a mystery and defies
the explanation of various cultural and religious traditions. Africans believe in after-life
experiences and so conceptualize death as the commencement of a journey to one’s
ancestral home. Rituals essential for a smooth journey to the spirit world are thus
performed for the deceased before the coffin is closed for burial. According to Dzobo and
Amegashie-Viglo:

Africans believe in the after-life and it is the same place we originated
from and the same place we go to. When it is the place we come from,
then it is referred to as *Bome* [in Ewe language] with God as the Great Spirit Mother, and if it is the place we go to after death, then it is referred to as *Tsiefe* [in Ewe language], the abode of the departed spirits, and so it is here that the departed join the ancestors, the illustrious dead to enjoy the beatific life forever.\(^{151}\)

Before the deceased embarks on the journey to join the ancestors, he or she must go through a series of rituals to *kpe ye gude* (Lit. construct his or her path/prepare his or her journey). One such funeral rite performed in Avatime by elders of the lineage (of the deceased) and representatives of the town elders is the final tribute and libation prayer. The following example, which is a literal translation of a prayer and tribute text for the deceased in Avatime, expresses the African philosophy of existence. The sense of belongingness among the living, and also between the living and the dead, as conceptualized by the Avatime people, is well represented in this prayer.

ωkatsie Kwami! ωkatsie Kwami! ωkatsie Kwami! (Name of the deceased)

I’ve called you three times.

You are one of us, an illustrious son of our soil.

You are hardworking and responsible for the family and the entire community.

You always show kindness and offer wise counsel to all who approach you.

You work tirelessly and sacrifice a lot for the development of this community.

A few days ago, news reached us that you took ill briefly.

When we heard the news, we didn’t sit back.

\(^{151}\)Dzobo and Amegashie-Viglo (2005), p. 44.
We visited you immediately and you assured us that you noticed much improvement.

That gave us hope that you will get well very soon.

But yesterday, a very bad wind gusted into our ears that your place of sleep became bad.

When we heard the shocking news, we were all startled.

We wished it was a joke, we wished it was false, we wished it was a dream.

But falsehood cannot be hastily imputed to matters of death.

This is why we’re all gathered here today to ascertain the truth for ourselves.

We’ve called you three times but you didn’t answer.

Have our sympathy, have our sympathy, have our sympathy.

We have not abandoned you, you have left us.

Whatever may be the cause of this death, we want you to reveal it.

This is your drink, take, drink.

If it’s a human being who caused it, when you drink water or wine, drink with him or her;

But if this is what you brought with you (If this is your destiny),

Then rest in peace.

Your journey to the ancestors should be very smooth and peaceful.

Do not forget those of us you left behind.

Cause water/rain to fall on us (Give us your blessing/Make it possible for us to be successful).

Peace, peace, peace, until we join you later.
Male elders exclusively perform *Afeti*. Women and children are not allowed to sing *Afeti* songs because warriors originally sang these songs to recount their losses. Nowadays, men perform them when they gather for the final funeral rites of a deceased member of the community. The following are examples of *Afeti* songs, each of them addressing the reality of death from various perspectives.

**Text in Akan**
Woaye bi o, woaye bi o
Owuo woaye bi o
Ayee
Owuo woaye bi o
Ayee, asem bi ara.

**Literal Translation**
You have done it again, you have done it again,
Death, you have done it again,
Yes
Death, you have done it again,
Yes, this is shocking news.

**Text in Akan**
Bue, bue, bue, Osagye Kokroko!
Akorɔma fa dee, aye;
Akorɔma fa dee ofa busu/mmusu o, aye;
Akorɔma fa dee ofa busu o qa.

**Literal Translation**
Attention, attention, attention, *Osagye Kokroko*
The hawk has taken something,
The hawk has taken something abominable,
The hawk has taken something abominable, always!

**Text in Akan**
Yen nyinaa yeso daee o,
Yen nyinaa yeso daee o,
Daee bono o!

**Literal Translation**
We are all dreaming,
We are all dreaming;
A bad dream!
Text in Akan
O, nipa nyinaa ntie amane o
Yee, o, nipa nyinaa ntie o
Yee onipa nyinaa ntie o
Megyae me fie,
Mekɔ kum maba o
Megyae me fie,
Mekɔ kum maba o
Amane o

Literal Translation
Everybody listen to the news
Yes, everybody, listen
Yes, everybody, listen
I have left my home
To kill (war), and come back
I have left my home
To kill (war), and come back
Trouble.

In the first example, the discourse of the text is confrontational: “You have done it again.” Death is personified, and the people directly attack and blame death for always taking away members of the community. In the second example, the song likens death to a hawk. It is a common sight in Avatime for a hawk to prey on chicks. Occasionally, villagers set traps to lure and catch hawks using chicks as baits. The text evokes this imagery to remind the hawk (death) that one day it will also be ensnared. The third example reveals the kind of shock, dismay, and puzzlement that an entire community deals with following the demise of a loved one. The fourth example addresses the uncertainty of survival during war. It recounts how warriors do hope for the best, and at the same time, prepare for the worst. Singers sing on behalf of the deceased could not survive the battle of life.
Even though *Afeti* is synonymous with death and funeral rites in Avatime, its repertoire consists of a few songs that connote joyous themes. Below is an example of *Afeti* song text with a joyful theme:

**Text in Akan**

Yɛn, yɛwea, yɛwea,
Yɛn, yɛwea, yɛwea
Yɛ, Agɔɾɔgyiwasaba num yɛwea,
Yɛwea yee, yɛwea yee, yɛwea,
Agɔɾɔ nɛba o, yɛwea yee.

**Literal Translation**

We are toddling, we are toddling,
We are been motivated to toddle,
We’re been urged to toddle.
Excitement has come, we are toddling.

In recent times, with the corruption of texts of some *Afeti* songs, native Akan language speakers find it difficult to decipher the message in these songs. Linguistically, the Akan language spoken over two centuries ago is definitely not the same today. It has undergone changes as would any language spoken by human beings, rather like trying to understand the “Shakespearian version” of the English language. Also, there are dialectical differences in the Akan language.\(^{152}\) Lastly, the majority of Avatime people does not speak the Akan language let alone comprehend the message in the song texts. The few people who could speak the Akan language attempt occasionally to correct pronunciations and explain the themes of these texts. The abovementioned realities about the nature of *Afeti* song texts notwithstanding, the context of performance and the import of its message greatly impact people today just as they did previously. Meki Nzewi makes a similar observation about the Igbo music of Nigeria:

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\(^{152}\) The several dialects of Akan language include Ashanti, Bono, Akwapim, Ahafo, and Fante.
In the society, music is evaluated in terms of its emotive and motive qualities as a species-specific product. These qualities, which give contemplative and mood dimensions to Igbo music, could be inherent in the text, where present; in the tempo, and the gross sonic structure. Certain moods of music are suitable for certain contexts of musical performance where others would be judged inadequate. The society prescribes music for an institutional observance and ascribes utilitarian roles to music types or categories.\textsuperscript{153}

**MUSICAL TRADITIONS FOR WOMEN**

Like their male counterparts, female groups employ different musical genres exclusive to them. Musical roles in African cultures, especially in many West African countries, are mostly gendered. Among the Ewe, Akan, and Ga of Ghana, Kpelle and Vai of Liberia, and indeed most African societies, playing of instruments is considered a male activity while singing and dancing is considered a female activity.\textsuperscript{154} Playing of drums in particular is considered a vigorous, muscular-intensive activity, which could easily cause women to lose their feminine features. Singing, while it demands the use of less muscular power, has greater power to arouse emotions, especially if performed by females.


Although this social taboo restricts them from playing drums, females occasionally perform music with drums and other musical instruments.\textsuperscript{155} Ngoma women in East Africa, for instance, accompany their songs of healing of psychological disorders with rattles and drums.\textsuperscript{156} James Burns, in his book \textit{Female Voices from an Ewe Dance-drumming Community in Ghana}, makes a similar observation:

I have seen Dzenko Tagborlo, a female member of Dzigbordi, play the lead drum \textit{atimevu} during several Dzigbordi music events, as a brief interlude within the main performance. Her playing of \textit{atimevu} was meant to be a sort of display, and attracted the attention of everyone at the event – not dissimilar to my own efforts playing the lead drum as a “white man”; in other words it was a momentary instance of an attractive variation that caused a renewal of audience interest in the music event. Dzenko comes from a family of drummers, and is actually a competent lead drummer. Despite her abilities, Dzenko chooses not to pursue drumming because, socially, drumming is a male space.\textsuperscript{157}

The gendering of song as female does not in any way diminish the role, power, and significance of musical activities by women in Avatime or does it prevent them from playing musical instruments to accompany their songs.

During festivals when chiefs are adorned in their royal regalia and move to the durbar ground, usually riding in their palanquins amidst singing, drumming, and dancing, women play a very special role by singing the praises of the chiefs. This musical type is

\textsuperscript{155}Nketia (1968), p.8.
\textsuperscript{157}Burns (2009), p. 54.
called *Oseyelo*, and comes in two forms: heightened speech and songs. Heightened speeches are usually very short and repetitive appellations chanted in praise of the chiefs. The more praises a chief receives from the women, the higher his popularity, and, for that matter, endorsement of his leadership. *Oseyelo* by women in this regard, therefore, have double inference; the musical connotation as well as serving as an approval rating tool of that chief. This form allows women a means of reversing, assessing, and bestowing political power in the Avatime state. The following is an example of *Oseyelo* with a brief commentary by Bertha Adom:

*Oklemekuku! Edo le kɔ me, kɔ gba! Ohe yee lo!* This statement literally means, ‘The mighty one! He, whose exit from the anthill causes it to collapse!’ The metaphor paints a picture of the chief as a queen bee, whose existence keeps the whole nation together. The women, in the procession, then spread their clothes on the ground for the chief to walk on.  

Another example of *Oseyelo* is *Enya kpɔkpɔ, menya wawa o; wawa enye ahe!* (Lit. You know how to watch, you do not know how to do it; doing is poor!) This text in the Ewe language, which members of the royal clan will typically chant, praises the beauty of the chief’s regalia but at the same time takes a swipe at faultfinding onlookers by placing the competence of the chief at a higher and unquestionable pedestal. *Oseyelo* are performed in Siyase as well as the Ewe language. The third example of *Oseyelo* song praises the flawlessness of the entire regalia of chiefs. In this song, women voice their approval of the chiefs’ leadership.

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Text in Ewe
Ee, efiawoe, midze ani;
Efiawoe, midze ani, dzea ni boboe!

Literal Translation
Yes, chiefs, you are beautiful;
Chiefs, you are beautiful, beautiful indeed!

As established earlier, women have long sung songs of exhilaration in Avatime. Their singing heralds every joyous event in the community as they seek to kpe ɔdzi ni iboela su (Lit. plant a song around the events). In other words, women sing to compliment and complement what their male counterparts have accomplished. A similar tradition exists among the Akan communities, observes Kwasi Ampene, where women sing *ose* and other songs to acknowledge news of joy. He further discloses that:

When the men returned victorious from a battle, the women will perform *ose* (jubilation chants), which might also be performed during the enstoolment of chiefs. Other contexts for *ose* were those annual festivals where the chiefs were carried in a procession through the community accompanied by drumming and dancing to the festival grounds. On such occasions, groups of women chanting *ose* and waving white handkerchiefs would be seen spreading pieces of cloth in front of the chiefs. Finally, *ose* could also be chanted in celebration by a victorious party after a judgment has been passed on a long-standing litigation: once again, the women would smear themselves with white clay (or powder) and chant *ose* through the village. The visitor would observe that it was middle-aged and
older women, using the heightened speech mode and without any instrumental accompaniment, who performed *ose* chants.\(^{159}\)

The difference between *ose* chants of Akan women and *oseyelo* by Avatime women is that they [Avatime women] sing in Siyase and Ewe languages and also accompany the songs with *kumasa* (bells) and *agala* (rattles)\(^{160}\) while the Akan women do not. The following song, for instance, reveals the ecstasy and exuberant jubilation that usually greets victorious events in the community. This song is particularly sung when hope is almost gone and victory comes expectedly.

**Text in Siyase**

Medi si kulila maza,
Nitepɔ kanqɔbɛ mɛ.
Medi si agbala paɛ ku,
Nitepɔ ale liko.

**Literal Translation**

I thought I was dreaming,
But this is a reality.
I thought the buildings have collapsed,
But they are still standing intact.

The fact that men go to battle and women stay at home does not make the male role superior to that of the female. Gender roles in the Avatime culture are always seen as complementary rather than contrasting and unbalanced. Women acknowledge and reinforce the importance of this gender balance by singing a special song whenever the opportunity presents itself, with the approval, though tacit, of men.

**Text in Ewe**

Nyɔnu manɔ me, Nyɔnu manɔ me,
Dutsu mateŋua wɔe o, yee yee.
Nyɔnu manɔ me,
Dutsu mateŋua wɔe o, yee yee

\(^{159}\)Ampene (2005), p.17.
\(^{160}\)Container rattles
Literal Translation
Without woman, without woman,
Man cannot do it, yes.
Without woman,
Man cannot do it, yes.

Avatime women and women in other northern Ewe communities perform Totoeme. In times past, totoeme performance in Avatime was associated with ablabezpekepe, an ancient tradition of puberty rites for young women to usher them into adulthood. This rite has been replaced with kusakɔkɔ, a current version of puberty rites. The performance of totoeme is in three sections. The introductory song section moves at a comparatively slow tempo with rattle and bell accompaniment. The cantor stands in the middle of a circle of performers as she intones the songs. The dancers in the group respond by clapping their hands rhythmically and swaying their bodies from left to right. The second section is faster and drummers accent the dance on two small drums called asieni. No singing is done during this section as the women focus and dance rigorously to the drumming. This section forms the climax to the performance as the young adult women expertly skillfully exhibit their beauty and dancing. Because women are not allowed to play drums in this performance context, male drummers, called tenu (Lit. precious and distinctive), play the asieni drums. The third and final section repeats the first and serves as a recessional performance. Young women still perform totoeme during important festivals in Avatime, but no longer in relationship with kusakɔkɔ puberty rites. A variety of musical performances by Christian choral groups, brass bands, and computer disk jockeys have edged out the totoeme. Below is a totoeme song.

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Text in Ewe
Nɔvitɔwo le dali do, nɔvitɔwo le dali do,
Nɔvitɔwo le dali do, menyɛ dalia se fe meva o.
Mina mabe dɛ mia ṣuie, ganjuke tse l’agaŋue,
Ekɛ tse l’agaŋue, ekɛ tse l’agaŋue.

Literal Translation
Siblings are having a tête à tête;
Siblings are having a tête à tête;
I am not here to eavesdrop.
Let me hide beside,
Even climbing plants do survive on steep slopes.

During Avatime men’s performance of Afeti at funerary celebrations, women do not idle about. They perform ibemidzi (Lit. weeping songs), their version of funeral dirges. Performance of dirges by woman is not exclusive to Avatime. Scholarly evidence shows that this practice cuts across many ethnic groups in Ghana.\(^{162}\) Kwasi Ampene, for instance, notes that Akan women performed nnwonkorɔ music in the 1940s during funeral wake-keeping at night or daylight as the deceased lies in state.\(^{163}\) In a personal conversation with Onetsie Vincentia Foli, she discloses that when the Avatime people first settled among their Ewe neighbors, they learned these songs from them, hence the song texts in Ewe.\(^{164}\) The evidence of Avatime men marrying Ewe women when they lived among the Ewe people must have facilitated the growth and popularity of singing in the Ewe language. It is also likely that the Avatime women comforted themselves singing their own songs during times of bereavement. Ibemidzi are sung to console the bereaved family, praise or condemn the deceased, and cast insinuations to the purported cause of death, especially when it is attributed to foul play by a member of family or someone in


\(^{163}\) Ampene (2005), pp. 37-38.

\(^{164}\) Personal conversation with Onetsie Vincentia Foli (Interview: 7/30/2011, Biakpa Avatime, Ghana).
the community. While it is incumbent upon women, especially those who are closely related to the deceased, to publicly wail and weep when *ibemidzi* are performed, men’s weeping in public by is almost a taboo. Bertha Adom observes that:

It is popular knowledge in Avatime that if a man weeps at his father’s death, it means he does not have money to bury him. He will be mocked and women can compose a song of insinuation about the incident. In the same vein if a woman fails to shed tears and only sings dirges at the death of a close relative, she is sure to be pilloried in song. Community members see weeping by women as the highest exhibition of sorrow and a means of drawing sympathy to oneself. Women who do not easily weep would, therefore, be seen faking tears just to avoid being derided by other women.

Performance of *ibemidzi* is not confined to the funeral home. The group of women announces the death to the entire community with their songs. They walk the principal streets of the town singing their sorrows away. People expect women in the bereaved family itself to lead the procession in order to draw sympathy from the onlookers. As they walk, the mourners rhythmically shake container rattles to accompany their songs. When a chief or an elder in the community dies, women add a bell to the rattles.

*Ibemidzi* are supposed to evoke the emotions of those who listen and watch their performance. The role of cantors is crucial if the performance would arouse and maintain its emotive essence. A good voice, knowledge of songs, and ability to intone the right song at the appropriate time are prerequisites. Women themselves compose *ibemidzi* in reaction to the painful circumstances surrounding them. In the following examples, the

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songs explore the unforgettable experience of permanently losing a dear one. The second example makes allusions to shooting and so its performance could date back to the period when the Avatime people were war-driven.

**Text in Siyase**
Liboe letsa liʋɔ me lo
Ligɔwoe madze le, madze le,
Madze
Ligɔwoe madze le,
Madze
Liboe letsa liʋɔ me lo
Ligɔwoe madze le, madze le, madze naa?

**Literal Translation**
This incident which has happened to me,
When will I ever forget?
I won’t!
When will I ever forget?
I won’t!
This incident which has happened to me,
When will I ever forget?

**Text in Ewe**
Nu gã gã dɛ wɔgbɛ;
Asafotua dɛ dagbɛ;
Meɖo ŋku amenyewo dzia.

**Literal Translation**
The day for the performance of great events;
The day when warriors shoot their guns;
I remember my people (departed loved ones).

Discussions in this chapter have attempted to intimate the immensely rich fields of musical traditions the Avatime people practice. The musical heritage in Avatime doubtlessly extends over a wide spectrum. It includes musical types for children, youth, and adults as well as music for female, male, and mixed groups. Furthermore, there is a musical form for every social event and each of these genres plays a significantly contextual role. There are traces of musical practices borrowed from other ethnic groups;
notable among these are the Akan and Ewe. The heavy presence of such musical practices in the larger Akan and Ewe cultures gives a strong indication that the Avatime, as a minority group, may have adopted some of these musical practices. Nonetheless, the possibility of these ethnic groups, especially the Ewe, adopting some musical resources of the Avatime cannot be completely ruled out. As the culture of Avatime evolves, the musical practices experience a corresponding transformation. This background to the music of Avatime will provide a better understanding of how other factors (not necessarily musical) have also contributed to shaping the musical heritage of the Avatime people.
CHAPTER FOUR

PROCESSES OF CHANGE IN THE MUSICAL TRADITIONS OF THE AVATIME

The entire cultural heritage of the Avatime people has undergone a myriad of changes since they left their Ahanta home in the mid-seventeenth century. This process of transformation has affected their lives and outlooks including the organization of musical traditions. As new musical styles emerge, the existing ones are replaced, abandoned or modified. Although this process of change is not entirely new, rather a continuation of an old transformational process, how it occurs in Avatime and its effects on the people is worth discussing. Kwabena Nketia identifies three types of changes that are likely to occur in the traditions of folk music in Ghana:

First, there is the change resulting from the cumulative effect of the creative efforts of individuals (largely anonymous) or groups of individuals within a given society of a fairly homogenous character.

Second, there is the change resulting from the interaction of such homogenous African societies through geographical contiguity facilitating economic or other pursuits, through religion, or in the past, through war.

Third, there is the change resulting from the impact of an alien culture – Western or Oriental – on the practice of African folk music.\(^{167}\)

In conformity with Nketia’s observations, this chapter focuses on 1) migration of the Avatime people (from Ahanta) as well as geographical proximity to and interaction with the Ewe and influence of the Akan, 2) introduction of Christianity, and 3) Western

\(^{167}\)Nketia (1959), p. 31.
education system and intrastate migration as factors or agents of change of the musical traditions of the Avatime people. It further discusses how these factors shape the existing musical traditions of the Avatime in time and space. The result of the discussion also reveals the contemporary situation of the musical traditions in Avatime.

**MIGRATION FROM AHANTA AND INTERACTION WITH THE EWE**

Although the Avatime people left their Ahanta home with their own musical traditions, the Ewe by far have had the greatest and most pronounced impact on the Avatime culture. Yet, as they traveled, the Avatime people interacted with ethnic groups such as the Awutu/Efutu and Adangbe. Regardless of the fact that there were these multiple cultural contacts, their impact on the Avatime culture is negligible. The settlement of the Avatime people among the Adangbe was short-lived due to sporadic wars that broke out between the Adangbe and their enemies. As was common practice at that time, host groups were always suspicious of and un receptive to strangers or outsiders in their territory, lest they get swooped down upon unexpectedly by this seemingly friendly and harmless group. Only after a long stay in a territory and a series of negotiations can a host allow for open interaction. This unease must also be one of the reasons why the Adangbe-Avatime exchange yielded little impact in terms of cultural contact and change.

More importantly, the Avatime-Ewe interaction can be traced back to the early eighteenth century when the Avatime people entered the Ewe territory after leaving Gbugbla in the Ga-Adangbe territory. At the arrival of the Avatime people, the Ewe, who begun occupying that land in the mid-seventeenth century, were still grappling with
incessant Akwamu and Ashanti invasions. The Ewe had migrated from Notsie in the present-day Republic of Togo when they could no more stand the tyrannical and wicked rule of their ruler, King Agokoli. They moved in three broad groups during the migration. The first group settled in the northern part of their present home, which consists of towns like Hohoe, Kpando, Matse, Ve, Alavanyo, Peki, Awudome, Agu, Kpalime, Kpedze, and Wodze. The second group, which occupies the central portion, is made up of settlements such as Ho, Akovia, Abutia, Adaklu, Sokode, Kpenoe, Takla, and Hodzo. The third group settled at the coastal region of the current home and includes settlements like Tsevie, Be, Bobo, Wheta, Anlo, Some, Ave, Klikor, Afife, and Agave.

The first and second groups are often referred to as northern Ewe and the third group as southern Ewe. The Agortime area, the initial settlement of the Avatime people when they arrived in the Ewe territory, is located at the edge of the northern and southern border of the Ewe-land.

From this strategic location, the Avatime people were able to coexist and interact with neighboring settlements like Ho and Adaklu. But for the relentless incursions from the Akwamu, the Avatime people would have made this place their permanent abode. The Avatime-Ewe interaction was more intimate at the summit of the Matse mountain than the previous Agortime settlement due to the close proximity of Matse town (less than one mile). As the historical records in the Ghana National Archives reveal, the Avatime people fought with the Matse over a quarrel of an Avatime boy eating a Matse boy’s roasted yam.

Before leaving for their current home, the Avatime people, in

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168 See Ziorklui (2004), pp. 16-18
170 Administratively, this area belongs to the northern Ewe territory.
171 Ghana National Archives, ADM. 39/1/235.
retaliation to the defeat they suffered, dammed up the Dede River, the only source of water supply for the Matse people.\textsuperscript{172} The above record suggests that, but for that incident, the Avatime-Matse interaction was very close, close enough to promote cultural exchanges between the two groups.

The larger group of neighbors, the Ewe of Ghana, has two contrasting musical practices.\textsuperscript{173} The northern Ewe musical traditions are quite distinctive from their southern counterparts whose musical traditions are legitimately similar to the Ewe groups in Togo and Benin. Features of contrast include melodic, tonal, and harmonic organization, instrumental resources, musical types, and singing styles.\textsuperscript{174} Differences in the two traditions are summarized as follows:

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<td><strong>Melodic, Tonal and Harmonic Organization</strong></td>
<td>Use of parallel thirds and their inversions</td>
<td>Singing in octaves and sporadically in fourths and fifths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instrumental Resources</strong></td>
<td>akaye (container rattle), asiwui (membranophones), havana (membranophones), pati (membranophones), vugă (membranophones), toke (castanet) dawuro (single bell)</td>
<td>gakogui (double bell), axatse (beaded gourd rattle), kidi (membranophones), kangan (membranophones), sogo (membranophones), boba (membranophones), atsimeur (membranophones)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{172}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{173}See Agordoh (2004, 2005)  
\textsuperscript{174}Ibid.
Below are examples of songs from the two traditions. The first is a southern Ewe *kinka* song in pentatonic scale while the second is a northern Ewe *avihe* song in heptatonic scale.

**Literal Translation**
The well of love never lacks water,
The well of love never lacks water.
Rain or no rain, it never lacks water,
Rain or no rain, it never lacks water.
The well of love never lacks water.
Literal Translation
The day for the performance of great events;
The day when warriors shoot their guns;
I remember my people (departed loved ones).

Contrast in the musical traditions of the Ewe could be attributed to the greater influence of Akan culture on the northern Ewe.\textsuperscript{175} Chieftaincy among the Ewe is one such institution that has experienced a substantial Akan influence in terms of organizational structure, regalia, and court music. The Ewe still play texts on the atumpani drums in the original Akan language. Other common musical features of the Akan and northern Ewe are the use of the heptatonic scale and singing in parallel thirds.

Having migrated from a sub-Akan culture, the Avatime have not given up completely on upholding traditions of Akan origin. They have taken advantage of available opportunities to strengthen and preserve the musical traditions that have roots in the Akan culture. It is common knowledge in Avatime, confirmed in a personal conversation with Okatsie Cephas Akotia, that during the Ewe-Ashanti war, some Ashanti men were captured by the Avatime warriors and have ever since remained in Avatime.\textsuperscript{176} Their presence in Avatime has revitalized and perpetuated musical traditions of Akan origin such as the proper intoning of Afeti songs as well as appropriate use of atompanie and agɔrɔbra drum texts. This is how the Avatime have preserved their musical traditions of Akan origin, which they have synchronized with genres from other sources.

Musical genres in Avatime that are found among other northern Ewe groups can be classified under different categories to establish their relationship. 1) Genres that have

\textsuperscript{175}See Agawu (1995)
\textsuperscript{176}Personal conversation with Okatsie Cephas Akotia (Interview: 7/29/2011, Biakpa Avatime).
the same name, repertoire, costume, and performance practice among the Avatime and the Ewe. They include *totoeme, gabada,* and *bɔbɔbɔ.* All the three genres perform socio-recreational roles in both traditions. The following gabada text is an example:

**Text in Ewe**
Mezu atime dĩɖe
Yee manɔ tsatsa l’atiwo f’alɔ me

**Literal Translation**
I have become a tree-ant
Yes, I will hover in the branches of the trees

2) Genres that share similar repertoire, performance practice, but are named differently in both traditions. Examples are dirges performed by women, referred to as *ibemidzi* in Avatime and *avihɛwo* in Ewe; hunters’ dance referred to as *livevevu* in Avatime and *adɛvu* in Ewe; warrior dances are known as *edzoxoxo* (Lit. it has happened already)/*ihe* (Lit. knife)/*asafoe* (Lit. warrior) in Avatime and *kalɛʋu/asafoʋu* in Ewe. The following warrior song text is an example:

**Text in Ewe (enyimewavu)**
Gbedzi miedɔ, gbedzi miedɔ,
Kalɛʋo fe nye gbedzi loo
Gbedzie, gbedzie,
Kalɛʋo fe nye gbedzi loo

**Literal Translation**
We kept vigil in the field, we kept vigil in the field,
Bravery is displayed in the field (battlefield)
In the field, in the field,
Bravery is displayed in the field (battlefield)

3) The same songs that are performed in different contexts or genres among the Avatime and northern Ewe. The following example is performed as a *bɔbɔbɔ* song by the Ewe while it accompanies a stone-passing game by children in Avatime:

**Text in Ewe**
Dzalɛlɛlɛlɛlɛlɛlɛlɛlɛlɛ!
Wohã woɖo ha keɛ me,
Yee, wohã woɖo ha keɛ me.
Osamabo, samabo, samabo, samabo!
Literal Translation
Alas!
You have also joined this group,
Indeed, you have also joined this group.
Osamabo, samabo, samabo, samabo!

4) Ewe songs texts that are either directly translated into Siyase or set to entirely new text in Siyase. In spite of the translation of text into Siyase, the songs may feature in the same genre in both traditions and occasionally are used in different contexts. The first example below is a direct translation of a bɔbɔ.song from Ewe into Siyase, while the second example is an original Ewe work song set to a different Siyase text and sung as a lullaby:

Example 1:

**Text in Ewe**
Yoo, meb’ayoo
Wònu, meb’ayoo
Dzi mekuam o
Nu ka ŋutie nèwɔm alea?

**Text in Siyase**
Yoo mesi yoo
Wòdo mesi yoo
Mazı le te
Ege loso wœbite te?

**Literal Translation**
Yes, I say: Yes.
You’ve spoken and I’ve agreed
Without malice
Why are you doing this to me?

Example 2:

**Text in Ewe**
Mìawoe le dɔ dzi mieva ḋọ lo,
Mìawoe le dɔ dzi mieva ḋọ lo,
Mìeva ḋọ lo
Dɔ neyi dzi, dɔ neyi dzi

**Literal Translation**
Well done, we are here,
Well done, we are here,
We are here,
Let the work progress, let the work progress.

**Text in Siyase**
Akaŋuyedze kporokporoxoe
Akaŋuyedze kporokporoxoe
Kporokporoxoe,
Gatre Tɔŋuiɛ, gatre Tɔŋuiɛ,

**Literal Translation**
Beautiful wife of Akaŋu,
Beautiful wife of Akaŋu
Beautiful,
Go back to Tɔŋuiɛ, go back to Tɔŋuiɛ.177

5) Songs that are composed in Siyase but featured in genres that are adopted from the Ewe. Below are examples of songs in Siyase that are performed in the bɔbɔbɔ and ibemidzi (Ewe: avihɛ) genres respectively:

**Text in Siyase**
Tɔ kepa kapɛ, tɔ kepa kapɛ;
Tɔ kepa kapɛ, tɔ kepa kapɛ;
Xe wonu kedeme obi ko,
Muni awla;
Lese si ɔkatole apɔ blɔ,
Tɔ kepa kapɛ, tɔ kepa kapɛ.

**Literal Translation**
So our home becomes better (So that we build a better home);
So our home becomes better (So that we build a better home);
If you are a citizen of Avatime,
Raise your hand;
Because we belong to the same ancestor,
So our home becomes better (So that we build a better home).

**Text in Siyase**
Όga wolie vue?
Όga wolie vue?
Agbotoe evue naa?

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177 Dzogbefeme Avatime is also called Tɔŋuiɛ in Siyase.
**Literal Translation**

What animal killed him/her?
What animal killed him/her?
Is it the hyena?

All the examples above show that the Avatime and Ewe have many musical traditions in common. Given the fact that the Ewe are the majority group and were there before the Avatime people had arrived, the Ewe influence on Avatime musical traditions would be greater, hence the many Ewe songs in the corpus of songs of the Avatime.

**THE MISSIONARY FACTOR AND IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY**

In Ghana, there are three main categories of Christian churches. The older mission churches constitute the first category, which includes pioneer Christian denominations such as Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E. Zion), Anglican, and Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA). European missionaries first introduced these churches into Ghana in the nineteenth century. Initially, these churches introduced and strictly recommended the use of only European liturgy and hymnody in their worship services.

The second group is Ghana’s Independent Churches, which are classified under African Independent Churches. African Independent Churches, also known as African Indigenous Churches, African Initiated Churches, African Instituted Churches, or just AICs, represent well over 10,000 independent Christian denominations in Africa.\(^{178}\)

Notable among them are the following: Église de Jésus Christ sur la Terre par son envoyé spécial Simon Kimbangu in Democratic Republic of Congo, *The Church of the

Lord (Aladura) in Nigeria, *Apostles of Johane Maranke* in Zimbabwe, and *The Celestial Church of Christ* in Benin, just to mention a few.

The tradition of African Independent Churches dates back to the late nineteenth century when some new converts to the Christian faith in various parts of Africa felt that the old mission churches could not adequately address or meet their religious expectations. Alexander Agordoh, discloses that the new converts “derive their creative and persistent vitality and rootedness in their traditional religious customs whose abiding spiritual values are essential for life and are not changed by humanity’s increasing control of the environment.”

Since the older mission churches in their early beginnings frowned upon even seemingly “harmless” African cultural practices, a new kind of Christianity came into vogue, one that accepted Africanisms. These new denominations met the religious expectations of those who held the view that Christianity as presented by the missionaries fell short of satisfying their spiritual aspirations. Politically, the formation of AICs was an African initiative to protest and escape white control.

Culturally, the expansion of AICs is the result of the Africans’ attempt to accommodate Christian belief within an African worldview. Examples of AICs in Ghana are Musama Disco Christo Church, Apostles Revelation Society, African Faith Tabernacle Church, and White Cross Society. John S. Pobee, in his article, *African Instituted (Independent) Churches*, published in the Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement by the World Council of Churches and the Wm. Eerdmans states:

The AIC represents first of all “a place to feel at home”. Western missionaries were largely negative about African culture and Africans were alienated from the gospel dressed in European garb. To that extent, the AICs represent an indigenizing movement in Christianity. They in effect protest the verbal and cerebral mode which puts Western Christianity beyond the reach of people’s comprehension and experience. Instead, the AICs offer a celebrative religion, making considerable use of symbols, music and dance. Thus they represent cultural renaissance in reaction to the cultural imperialism of the mission work of the historic churches.\(^{183}\)

Since coming into vogue, the AICs have modified their style of worship to meet the African standard. Music, an important tool of worship in Africa, was immediately transformed. In Ghana, new songs known as Ghana Spirituals were composed and used in lieu of the existing European hymnody.\(^{184}\) These songs use the same call and response structure as the indigenous songs. The song texts are usually very short and repetitive. Compared to the European hymns, learning Ghana Spirituals was easier for the pioneer members of AICs, who mostly could not read or write even the native languages.\(^{185}\)

Ghana Spirituals are accompanied by indigenous musical instruments such as idiophones and membranophones. The following is an example of a Ghana Spiritual.


\(^{185}\) Ibid.
Text in Ewe (Ghana Spirituals)

Mawu lolo loo,
Mida 'kpe, mida 'kpe,
Mida 'kpe na Mawu.

Literal Translation

God is great,
Give thanks, give thanks,
Give thanks to God.

The third category of Christian denominations in Ghana is subdivided into Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches. The Pentecostal churches, most of which came to Ghana from the United States in a new wave during the 1920s, include Assemblies of God, Apostolic Church, Salvation Army, Southern Baptist Convention, and Churches of Christ. Charismatic Churches also emerged from the evangelical movements in Ghana in the 1960s. Consequently, Christian fellowships were formed in the early 1970s; particularly in various academic institutions. Some of these fellowships later became churches such as International Central Gospel Church, Christian Action Faith Ministry, Fountain Gate Ministries, Royal House Chapel, and Word Miracle Church. The churches in the third category accentuate the manifestation of spiritual gifts such as healing and speaking in tongues as signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church and
individual. Although churches belonging to these three categories are found in almost every town in Ghana including Avatime, the impact the presence of mission churches had on the musical traditions of the Avatime is tremendous.

The Germans first began evangelizing the Ewes in 1847.\textsuperscript{186} The missionary organization called \textit{Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft} (The North German Mission Society) from Germany, like many others of that time, took direct inspiration from the famous Pietistic Movement and the Christian Awakening of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that spread in Europe and the United States.\textsuperscript{187} Ewe-land, which became a German colony under the name Trans-Volta Togoland, accommodated the missionaries and this obviously facilitated their work. The Church was initially called the \textit{Ewe Church}, but its name was later changed to the \textit{Evangelical Presbyterian Church} when it expanded beyond the borders of the Ewe-land. Early missionary stations in the Ewe territory worth mentioning are the following: Peki (1847), Keta (1553), Adaklu Waya (1856), Anyako (1857), and Ho (1859).\textsuperscript{188} The missionaries made steady progress until the famous Ashanti-Ewe skirmishes broke out in 1869 which put a temporary hold on all missionary activities. The Ashanti initiated this war in retaliation to the Krepiland\textsuperscript{189} for revolting against the Akwamu state which was an ally of the Ashanti. This war affected almost the entire Ewe-land until 1874 when a peace treaty was finally signed.\textsuperscript{190}


\textsuperscript{188}See Wiegräbe (1936), pp. 30-33.

\textsuperscript{189}Krepiland constitutes inland Ewe states such as Peki, Anfoe, Tsito, Kpando, Taviefe, Ho, and Agortime. The Europeans referred to these states as such in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century.

\textsuperscript{190}Ibid.
The cessation of hostilities between the Ashanti and Ewe paved the way for the continuation of missionary work. In 1890, a missionary station was opened in the Avatime town of Amedzofe. The genesis of Christian activities in Avatime is vividly captured in *The Evangelical Presbyterian Church: 150 Years of Evangelization and Development (1847-1997)*:

The people of Avatime also suffered from the Asante war and some of its citizens migrated to other areas of the country to escape the war. In exile, some of the men from Gbadzeme were baptized by the Basel Missionaries at Mayera and Abokobi near Accra. When these converts returned after the war, they established a Christian community and invited the Bremen Mission in 1876 to take over their group. Until assistance came, the adult converts used to walk to Ho regularly to receive Holy Communion. Passing through the usual pattern of local opposition from traditional religious leaders, the small congregation grew gradually and expanded. During the period of consolidation, the Bremen missionaries bought a large piece of the hilly land at Amedzofe because the climate there was cool and conducive for their health.

The missionaries started a school and posted the first Avatime teacher, Paul Ntumitse, to Amedzofe Avatime in 1889. After some initial challenges, he was able to recruit eight pupils as pioneers to the educational program. Finally, a Bremen Missionary, the Reverend Seeger, arrived in Amedzofe Avatime in 1890 to commence work at this

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191 The Ashanti people are also referred to as Asante in some records.
192 The distance between Avatime and Ho is about thirty miles.
193 Ansre (1997), pp. 43-44.
new missionary station.\textsuperscript{194} Through the ingenuity of the missionaries, some Avatime citizens acquired vocational skills such as carpentry and masonry hitherto not practiced in Avatime. Those who learned these skills helped the missionaries to put up structures that eventually housed a seminary which was moved from Keta to Amedzofe in 1894.

The presence of a seminary led to the training of more teachers, catechists, evangelists, and ministers of the gospel. Because the seminary students used the Avatime area for their practical activities, they gradually planted churches and schools in all the Avatime area towns.

Missionary activities in the entire Ewe-land, however, declined when the First World War broke out in 1914. Troops from Gold Coast and Dahomey apparently asked the German missionaries to leave. Financial support for the church from the missionary society in Germany also abated abruptly. In 1922, the consequent division and placement of the hitherto German territory, Trans-Volta Togoland, under French and British mandates in accordance with the system of the League of Nations, precipitated another setback to missionary activities.\textsuperscript{195} The leadership of the Ewe Church closed the seminary in Amedzofe in the same year. It took the intervention of Scottish Missionaries, who came to Ghana to salvage the orphaned Basel congregations and schools, to prevent the Bremen missionary work from dying on the vine.

\textsuperscript{194}See Wiegräbe (1936).
\textsuperscript{195}Ibid., p. 50; Ziorklui (2004), p. 72.
Figure 4-1: Mission Stations in Trans-Volta Togoland before the First World War

The map in Figure 4-1, reveals various mission stations, including Amedzofe Avatime (spelled Amedzowe), in Trans-Volta Togoland before the First World War. These stations were opened by the German, Basel, and Catholic missionaries when they began missionary work in the nineteenth century.

The process the missionaries used to convert Africans, especially the Ewe, to Christianity was paradoxical.\textsuperscript{197} Although every culture is susceptible to change, the type of change introduced, manner in which it enters the culture, and the existing cultural practices it affects or replaces, determines the openness or otherwise (resistance) of the culture’s owners to that new cultural influence. A people’s perception of value or importance of the change being introduced, as well as the branding, packaging, and marketing of this “product” of change will determine how it will be assimilated into the new culture.\textsuperscript{198} It is in light of the above that researchers should argue the impact of the German missionary work among the Ewe.

The early missionaries adopted a special strategy that aided their course. Birgit Meyer, in her book, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana*, remarks that missionaries who worked among the Ewe people used a strategy of “diabolization” by using existing Ewe religious concepts, while at the same time they maintained a strict boundary between Christianity and Ewe religion.\textsuperscript{199} This paradox the missionaries exhibited fits the Ewe expression: *Wotsri mankanì, woɖu kontomire* (Lit. They profess not eating cocoyam, but they eat cocoyam leaves). The missionaries used the concept of the existence of evil spirits among Ewe people and twisted it to suit their agenda. They accordingly made reference to the un-churched Ewe community as belonging to the Devil. In much the same way, they labeled practitioners of African traditional religion as agents of evil spirits and forces of darkness. Meyer further exposes the strategy of diabolization adopted by the missionaries when she states that:


\textsuperscript{198}Kazadi (1990).

\textsuperscript{199}Meyer (1999), p. 83.
The Devil was the link between the missionaries’ and the Ewe’s worldview: to state that the Ewe religion was a work of Satan made it meaningful in the light of Christianity, and subordinate to it. It also necessitated the legitimacy to evangelize the Ewe. Moreover, the missionaries used the image of the Devil in order to frighten people: those refusing to convert will end up in hell. It seems that they considered the treat of hell a more appropriate means to bring about conversion than illusion to the sweetness of heaven.\(^{200}\)

The situation that prevailed in Avatime as regards missionary work is similar to what Meyer describes above. The subtle method of coercion the missionaries adopted coupled with the Avatime people’s quest to know more about the “missionary God” favored the agenda of the missionaries. The Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe, vividly captures a similar acquiescence of traditional African forms to Western influences in his novel, *Arrow of God*.\(^{201}\)

The missionaries manifested their abhorrence of the natives’ culture in their separating the new converts from their kinsmen. New settlements exclusively for the new converts emerged in almost every town. The missionaries named these settlements Bethel, Jerusalem, Salem, and Kpodzi (Lit. hill top),\(^{202}\) following the biblical passage: “Therefore come out from them and be separate…Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you…I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the

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\(^{200}\)Ibid., p. 84.  
\(^{202}\)Lands acquired by the missionaries in the various towns were located on top of hills probably due to the cool climate of these locations.
Lord Almighty."\(^{203}\) Once a person converted to Christianity and relocated to the mission settlement, he or she maintained his or her membership by living above reproach, lest he or she faced excommunication, which was the most dreaded form of punishment at that time.

The new converts not only changed their locations, but were also given Christian names upon baptism. The Reverend Japhet Ledo, a former Moderator of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, discloses in a personal conversation that the acquisition of new names reinforces the converts’ total commitment to their new faith and denial of the former faith in accordance with the following biblical passage:\(^{204}\) "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"\(^{205}\) Absurdly, some of the names given to the new converts were German in origin, for example, Freda, Gretel, Theobald, Gerhard, and Erhard. Isaac Schapera, a South African anthropologist, observes a similar routine for Christians among the Tswana people of Botswana for almost a century (1841-1929), and the impact it made on their culture:

They have to observe special rules of conduct. Some of these are new features in Tswana life. They include, for example, regular attendance at church services (especially communion, of which a record is kept), observance of Sunday as a day of rest, marriage in church, and baptism of infant children. Church members must also pay an annual due (varying usually from five to ten shillings), should purchase and read the Bible and other religious works, and should dress “respectably,” i.e. in the European manner. Other rules prohibit certain traditional usages. Applying the moral

\(^{204}\) Personal conversation with the Reverend Japhet Ledo (Interview: 6/13/2011, Ho, Ghana)
\(^{205}\) Corinthians 5:17 (New International Version).
code to which they themselves were accustomed, missionaries of all denominations condemned as depraved and disgusting various common practices, which they accordingly insisted that converts should abandon. With rare exceptions, the prohibitions are still in force. Among the usages affected are *bogwera* and *bojale* (the initiation rites for boys and girls respectively), polygyny, the levirate and sororate, rainmaking and other forms of magic, and dancing by adults.\(^{206}\)

As Christianity gained favorable grounds in the Avatime society and more people relocated to the new Christian settlements, many traditional institutions began to crumble. Hardest hit among them were the traditional religious practices because some devoted and experienced traditional priests gave up their duties and joined their brethren to begin a new Christian life. Christianity also affected the performance of traditional music in the Avatime society as members were not allowed to participate in any form of traditional music. Alexander Agordoh, in his book *The Evangelical Presbyterian Church and her Musical Traditions*, observes that the missionaries’ blatant loathing of traditional music had negative implications on the people and their music. He further notes that:

*The condemnation of African culture adversely affected the musical life of the people, because of the vital role music plays in their life. Converts caught participating in traditional music were excommunicated from the Church. Pupils in mission schools with the same offence were given corporal punishment.*\(^{207}\)

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\(^{207}\) Agordoh (2004), pp. 11-12.
Christian parents prevented their children from watching the performance of traditional music and dance, let alone taking part in it. Most of them consequently grew up knowing little or nothing about various traditional musical practices, especially religious, warrior, and hunters’ music because their religion denied them access to such musical types. Kofi Agawu, a renowned Ghanaian musicologist today, had a similar experience growing up, because his father was a minister of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. He recounts his personal experience, when he comments on the music of \textit{Aɖabatram}:

As a child growing up, I knew of \textit{Aɖabatram}. As a minister’s son, I never saw \textit{Aɖabatram}, but heard it from a distance. Only as an adult researcher did I see and record \textit{Aɖabatram} in Ho and Ziavi.\footnote{Agawu (1995), p. 97.}

The imposition of such restrictions on Christians, some of whom were or would have been gifted musicians, gradually suppressed the passion for and interest in the performance of certain traditional musical types among the Avatime people. For instance, it has been over twenty years since the people of Dzogbefeme Avatime last performed \textit{liɖabatram}. As disclosed by Œkatsie Komla Amedze in a personal conversation, people’s interest in the performance of \textit{liɖabatram} has gradually declined in the last twenty years following the demise of devotees, some of whom were war veterans. Everybody is now a Christian and thus it is extremely difficult to get people to perform the appropriate rituals that lead up to playing the drum. Those who will show musical interest may not even be bold enough to admit it for fear that they will face stigmatization as \textit{ɔbuinete} (Lit.}
worshipper of pantheon of gods). People, especially the youth, who want to exhibit their exuberance and perpetuate the warrior identity of the Avatime people, have inadvertently embraced the performance of *edzɔxɔxo*, another warrior musical type, but with less ritualistic process and stigma as a substitute.

Other musical practices the Avatime gave up for Christianity are *abuvu* (music associated with the worship of pantheon of gods). Because the number of priests and devotees of various deities decreased, musical performances associated with their worship accordingly waned. Except for *Ayapɔ* and his wife, the tutelary and agriculture god of the Avatime, all other shrines, which were hitherto very active with musical activities of their respective pantheon of gods, have literally become pale shadows of their past.

Meanwhile, music in the church meant the singing of Western hymns, chants, canticles, and anthems translated into the Ewe language and accompanied with harmonium and brass instruments where available. This new form of musical practice in Christian worship sharply contrasts with what prevails in the Ghanaian indigenous religious musical performances as described by Alexander Agordoh:

> The Ghanaian approach to music makes movement an integral aspect of communication. In traditional worship, devotees are encouraged to express their intense feelings generated by music outwardly in movement and gestures as well as in vocal responses. These find their highest expression in the dance which also serves as an avenue of communication. Miming,

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procession, and actual choreography are important elements in Ghanaian societies.\textsuperscript{210}

In the 1950s when Ghana was gearing towards independence, various nationalist movements were formed that preached African identity. As a move towards African consciousness, the groups encouraged all citizens to patronize everything Ghanaian, including music, language, clothing, food, customs, and other traditions. In the quest to reclaim national identity in Ghana, composers of art music also “resorted to indigenization of their approach by turning to the folk tradition as the source from which they drew materials for the creation of their new works.”\textsuperscript{211}

Accordingly, the trend of singing without drum accompaniment, which lingered particularly in all congregations of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, began to revert and by the 1970s, Ghanaian choral art music composers gradually reintroduced drumming to accompany their songs.\textsuperscript{212} Eventually, worshippers sang most of the hymns in duple meters to the \textit{bɔbɔbɔ} rhythmic accompaniment, while they sang those in triple meters to the \textit{agbadza} rhythmic accompaniment.\textsuperscript{213} Notable among the Ewe choral art music composers is Ephraim Amu, who is regarded as the father of art choral music in Ghana for his pioneering role. Others are Nicholas Z. Nayo, Walter Blege, Robert Ndọ, Charles Kudzọdzi, George W.K. Dor, and Kenn Kafui. These composers draw on Ewe dance-inspired rhythmic motives like \textit{bɔbɔbɔ}, \textit{gabada}, \textit{agbadza}, a socio-recreational dance performed by Ewe of Ghana, Togo, Benin, and parts of Southwestern Nigeria.

\textsuperscript{210}Agordoh (2011), p. 15.
\textsuperscript{212}See Agordoh (2004, 2011)
\textsuperscript{213}Ibid.
gahu, a socio-recreational dance for the youth of Southern Ewe, and adevu, hunters’ dance, in their compositions. Nowadays, worshippers accompany masses in the Catholic Church with traditional dance-rhythmic patterns in much the same way as the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

In the Avatime churches, worshippers hold the liturgical order of church services in the Ewe language, a practice the missionaries started. Worshippers sing songs in Ewe and other Ghanaian languages but not in their native language. Recently, however, some choral art music composers like E.D. Avedzidah and the author of this thesis have written some works in Siyase using thematic materials from the Avatime tradition. For example, while Avedzidah bases the thematic material of one of his compositions on the expression lidze livi wo (Lit. No condition is permanent), the author rearranges the following traditional melody for S.A.T.B.¹¹⁴

⁠¹¹⁴See pp. 159-162 for the complete rearranged version. The melodic and harmonic arrangements for this work are a combination of indigenous Ghanaian-Avatime compositional skills with the acquired Western conventional composition techniques.
Another development that has recently emerged is the formation of bɔbɔbɔ groups in various congregations of the mainline churches among the Ewe. However, the repertoire for such groups is exclusively church hymns rendered with strong drum accompanying. This development has consequently changed the repertoire of even bɔbɔbɔ groups that are not affiliated to any church because the same people perform in both groups. The stigma that was initially attached to bɔbɔbɔ dance as “ungodly” has thus vanished as this socio-recreational dance acquires a Christian voice and blessing.
Traditional events in Avatime such as *kusakɔkɔ* puberty rites, which are always characterized with merrymaking and music, were formerly graced with traditional musical performances. However, choirs took over the role of providing music at such events. The way the first choral groups constituted and organized themselves expedited this change. For example, *Hadziha-ga*, the first choral group in the Vane Avatime Evangelical Presbyterian Church founded in 1919, did not confine its membership to Christians only but extended it to anybody who could sing.\(^{215}\) The choirs’ presence at any social event including the aforementioned puberty rites was, therefore, in solidarity with a member who gave the invitation. In recent times, choral groups such as *Hadziha-ga*, *Good News Choir*, *Israel Group*, and *Christian Youth Builders* (CYB) provide music during these celebrations.

The trend as revealed above re-emphasizes the Ewe expression: *Wotsri mankani, woɖu kontomire*, (Lit. They profess not eating cocoyam, but they eat cocoyam leaves), which exposes the paradox of Christianity’s impact on the musical traditions of Avatime. Even though the Church was opposed to indigenous traditions at the outset, traditional music has eventually broken the barrier and thus become the livewire between the church and the community. Literally, the crucible of Christianity refined traditional music and re-presented it to the community. What an elusive irony of continuity in change!

**WESTERN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

European contact with Africa since the fifteenth century and the introduction of Western culture has made a significant impact on the entire African culture. Africa’s characteristic

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social patterns, ideologies, and customs have since changed and will continue to change. Although African cultures accepted and absorbed some Western ideologies, this acceptance was not without modifications to their meaning and content. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, African cultures experienced constant change through migration, trade, inter-ethnic wars, and affinity. Changes experienced through European contact are, therefore, a continuation of an existing trend in Africa, even though the European approach may differ.

Introduction of Western education is part of the change that came to Africa through the coming of the Europeans. While colonial administrations opened a few schools, mainly in the larger cities, missionary activities deserve the credit for access to Western education in Africa. It is the establishment of mission schools that offered opportunity of Western education to the people in the rural areas. The primary objective of mission schools was to introduce new converts to basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Referred to as the “three Rs” (reading, writing, and arithmetic) in Ghana during the colonial era, the skills helped the new converts read the bible and other supplementary materials translated in to the local languages. Missionary schools that were established in Avatime offered a similar curriculum.

The German missionaries opened a seminary at Amedzofe Avatime from 1894-1915 which educated students in subjects such as Vernacular (Ewe), English Language, Bible Study (Old and New Testaments), Catechism, Church History (Bremen Mission), World History, Geography, Symbolics (Logic), Church Dogmatics, Homiletics,

\[216\text{See Ottenberg (1960), p. 3.}\]
\[217\text{All African languages were referred to as Vernacular in schools during the colonial era.}\]
Music (Harmonium Playing), Practical Preaching, Biblical Theology, and Agriculture.\footnote{See Wiegräbe (1936).}

The medium of instruction was Ewe, and the Reverend Ernest Burgi, a Swiss teacher and the principal of the seminary, translated a number of books from German into Ewe and cyclostyled the translated manuscripts for preservation.\footnote{Ansre (1997), p. 159.} Graduates from the seminary taught in the mission schools in addition to their theological responsibilities.

Due to the increasing demand for teachers in its schools, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, through the assistance of the government of Ghana started the E.P. Church Teacher Training College (now E.P. College of Education, Amedzofe) in 1946, to run the government’s prescribed two-year certificate “B” course. The college met that demand and Avatime people have ever since benefitted immensely from its services because students in training do their teaching practices in nearby Avatime schools.

In the course of time, Ghanaian government restructured the curriculum in the elementary, middle, and high schools to create uniformity in education in every part of Ghana. Nonetheless, the government allowed mission schools to maintain aspects of the previous curriculum that catered to their doctrinal demands. In addition to Bible Study, the mission schools management board introduced hymnody in all Evangelical Presbyterian Church schools.\footnote{Debrunner (1965), pp. 164-165} They included selected hymns in the syllabus of every class, and teachers were expected to lead the students in singing these. This singing was the only form of musical activity allowed in mission schools, except for the occasional teaching of anthems and hymns by Ghanaian art choral composers. The schools expected students to attend church services compulsorily and refrain from participating in all “pagan practices” including traditional musical activities. As Agordoh describes it,
“Traditional music was one of the so-called pagan practices, which was not allowed to filter into Christian worship much less challenge the pre-eminence of European tunes.”

While some students follow this instruction to the letter to escape punishment, others, especially those from families of traditional musicians, received a lion’s share of punishment as they could not restrain themselves from the irresistible rhythms of their families’ traditional music.

But the flame of cultural reawakening lighted at the dawn of Ghana’s independence in the 1950s will once again reverse the aforementioned trend. As part of their activities towards the reaffirmation of African consciousness, schools introduced extra-curricular activities to expose Ghanaian children to and encourage their active participation in various aspects of Ghanaian culture such as religion, history, customs, politics, music and dance. It is expected that as long as they participate in such activities dubbed sankɔfa (Lit. go back and take it), the children will develop a sense of national pride, belongingness, and patriotism. An annual festival of arts and culture, which is organized on a competitive basis at the school level to the national level for all elementary and high schools, is one such extra-curricular activity. During the festival, the Education Ministry requires each school to participate in the following events: 1) Choral music, which must feature selected works of only Ghanaian choral art composers; 2) Playing given drum texts on atumpan; 3) Poetry recitals based on a chosen theme in any of the government-sponsored Ghanaian languages; 4) Performance of Ghanaian

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222 Out of the eighty different languages spoken in Ghana, nine of them are government-sponsored languages. They are supported by the Bureau of Ghana Languages, which was established in 1951 and publishes materials in them. The sponsored languages include Akan, Dagbani, Dagaare, Dangbe, Ewe, Ga, Gonja, Nzema, and Kasem. Every student is expected to read and write in at least one of these languages.
traditional dances; 5) Staging of drama based on a given theme; 5) Exhibition of fine art works.

In the Avatime culture, the constant participation in such activities by school children for the past forty years has offered them the opportunity to learn most of the traditional genres such as *totoeme, bɔbɔbɔ, gabada*, and even warrior dances. This measure by the government has intentionally strengthened various traditional practices, especially music, not in the Avatime community alone, but in other parts of Ghana as well. Students have also used the opportunity to learn and showcase new musical practices from other ethnic groups during such events. Thus the school system, which used to oppose the traditional culture of the people, now functions as an agent of preservation and modification of musical traditions in Avatime under new management.

**INTRASTATE MIGRATION**

All over the world, millions of people are on the move - doing jobs ranging from menial labor such as harvesting of crops on farms to computer programming. Labor migration has been with human beings since time immemorial, even though the rate at which it occurs recently has increased tremendously due to increase in population and improvement in technology. Introduction of Western education system in Africa is the major factor that has aided the increase in job opportunities and eventually promoted labor migration.

Whenever people of the same ethnicity migrate to cities to work, they still maintain ethnic ties with their friends at and from home. They form associations and

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meet regularly to socialize, help one another, and raise funds for development-projects in their hometowns. Music performances are the major means by which such social identities are maintained. Many of the groups perform traditional music from their hometowns. Daniel Avorgbedor remarks that such groups sing about the difficulties of movement from the rural to the urban world. These songs thus become avenues for creative verbal expression to reflect both personal and communal experiences. The themes of such songs, according to Kwabena Nketia, “tend to center around events and matters of common interest and concern to the members of a community or the social groups within it.”

Similarly, Thomas Turino observes that in Peru, migrant workers from Andean villages, who moved to the city of Lima, use their traditional music as a symbol of identity and unity in the city. He further comments that:

Many of the middle-aged Conimenos that I knew had not touched a panpipe or Andean flute during their first ten or fifteen years in Lima. They did not simply “bring their culture with them,” as descriptions of migrants in Peru and in other societies often suggest. Rather, because of changes in the political, social, and economic conditions in Lima – primary change in power relations – and their own needs, Puneno migrants rediscovered the potency and importance of the highland musical traditions as emblems and as means of uniting, and actually creating, their communities in the city.

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Like the Puneno migrants in Peru, the Avatime migrants also use music as a unifying tool and a means of entertaining themselves in the city. Together with other northern Ewe migrants, they perform *bɔbɔbɔ*, which is by far the best-known socio-recreational music of the northern Ewe. The performance of music emphasizes the Avatime philosophy: Ṣno ni ɔdzi (Lit. human being with song/sweetness). The dual meaning evoked by ɔdzi as “song” and “sweetness” confirms the belief by the Avatime people in music as a potent provider of unity and happiness, for, where human beings gather, there is always a “song” that generates “sweetness” (happiness).

Socio-recreational groups in the cities often come across other musical traditions which they then adopt to enrich their performances. Such transculturation may include a repertoire of songs, style of dancing, instrumentation, and costume. For example, *bɔbɔbɔ* groups in Accra (the capital city of Ghana) have introduced hand-clapping into their performances, which is an obvious adoption from the *kpanlogo* 228 dance. In their turn, home-based groups including those in Avatime have eventually added it to their performances. Another form of transculturation is the inclusion of songs from Ga, Akan as well as the English languages in the *bɔbɔbɔ* repertoire. Occasionally, musical groups add songs of Ghanaian popular music that enjoy regular airplay to their repertoire, but most of these songs disappear quickly as new ones are aired and adopted. Below is an example of a *highlife* song in the English language adopted for *bɔbɔbɔ* performances:

**Come back to me**

Come back, come back, come back to me;
Come back, come back, come back to me;

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228 *Kpanlogo* is a socio-recreational dance of the Ga ethnic group which occupies the Greater Accra region where the Accra city is located.
Come back, come back, come back to me;
O school girl, come back to me.

The Avatime migrants also take advantage of the opportunity to learn other languages including the Akan and Ga. They harness this linguistic experience for the proper intoning of songs in these languages, especially *Afeti* songs, which are in the Akan language.

This chapter dealt with the various processes of change in the musical traditions of the Avatime since they migrated from their Ahanta home to date. It has been established from the discussion that the entire cultural heritage has gone through several stages of evolution for over two hundred and fifty years. Migration and contact with the Ewe has played a major role in the adoption of new genres and redefining of existing ones. The role of Christianity in the process of change has been massive. The abhorrence – rejection – acceptance – modification – absorption cycle displayed by the church summarizes the input of Christianity. In much the same way, the educational system in Ghana has sustained the musical traditions in Avatime by allowing school children to reenact traditional music through art festivals and competitions. Likewise, migration to the cities facilitates the performance of some musical types while others have been modified to suit current realities. These forces and adaptations attest that in one way or another, the musical traditions of the Avatime people have not remained static since they left their Ahanta home.
CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF TRANSCRIPTIONS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There are principles that guide composers and performers of African traditional songs. These principles are related to the nature of languages in Africa. African languages are generally tonal and the melodic contour of the music reflects it. The influence of these tonal languages on aspects of vocal music like melody, rhythm, and timbre, as well as instrumental music, is very significant. Language exercises enormous control, particularly, on vocal music, due to the socio-cultural importance of song texts in African societies. Song texts are means by which Africans disseminate important messages that cannot be given in ordinary discourse to the community. For example, among the Akan of Ghana, there are special songs of insult for the habitual bed-wetter, which other children sing as a special corrective ritual. Songs, in such instances, are performed to serve their linguistic purposes first before the musical.

Similarly, in instrumental music, master drummers draw on aspects of language to authenticate their rhythms. Often, non-lexical vocables are used in the place of rhythmic patterns. Some master drummers mimic these vocables audibly to accentuate the pattern. The vocables also serve as memory aid for the young drummers, who imitate the sound patterns to perfect their skills. For example, in Avatime, the master drummer in a bɔbɔbɔ ensemble could use the following non-lexical vocables: zin kede kede zin ke za!

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Kazadi wa Mukuna, stresses that meaning of words in African languages are determined by the sequential pattern of their tonal inflections. Two words with the same spelling could have different meanings when various tonal levels are applied to the syllables of these words. For instance, the Avatime words ókúsi (chief) and ókúsì (to beat up someone), are semantically different due to the difference in the tonal structure of each of these words. Any attempt to alter the tonal sequence of a word in African music changes the meaning of the text. Composers and performers may, however, use their discretion to determine the intervals between various pitches, but cannot change the direction of the melodic pattern. Therefore, Kazadi further explains, individual composers exercise their artistic creativity in cognizance of this linguistic direction, knowing too well that:

Language, a vehicle par excellence for the conveyance of African philosophy of existence…is crucial to the understanding of the creative process of … music. Its tonal inflections are not only vital in the process of melodic construction and heterophonic implication; they are also influential in the selection of certain musical instruments used by an ethnic group…The impact of language is also felt in the instrumental rhythmic structure. Often, a phrase or a series of vocables is formulated to an instrumental rhythmic pattern.

Analysis in this chapter will, therefore, focus more on the role language plays in determining the tonal structure, melodic and textual organization, variations in form,

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232 See Kazadi (1997).
233 Ibid., p. 240.
harmonic organization, and rhythmic structure of songs in the Avatime musical traditions.

**TONAL STRUCTURE, MEDOLIC, AND TEXTUAL ORGANIZATION**

Due to the tremendous influence phonemic tones and nature of the text exert on the melodic pattern of vocal music in African societies, it can easily be concluded that a melody begins and/or ends on any degree of the European scale as shown in the examples below.

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**Text in Siyase (ibemidzi)**

Ωga woli vue?
Ωga woli vue?
Agbotoe evue naa?

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**Literal Translation**

What animal killed him/her?
What animal killed him/her?
Is it the hyena?

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![Musical notation](image-url)
But in reality, the melody just succumbs to linguistic rules the language imposes on it. In the following song, *Siame melɔ be ne’o si ye o* (Lit. He/she who hurts others, hates to be hurt), the melodic contour of the last phrase, *mɛlɔ bè nè’o sì yè ò*, reflects the tonal sequence of the Ewe language.

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**Text in Siyase (Afeti)**  
Blɔatsaliliatsali,  
Blɔatsaliliatsali,  
Xe kule ɔmanɔ me  
Blɔatsaliliatsali,  
Xe kuli ‘bodole me  
Ani blɔatsali loo

**Literal Translation**  
We are the same people,  
We are the same people  
When we are in town (When we are home)  
We are the same people  
When we are abroad outside of town/home  
We intermingle with other people

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The significance of the message in a melody determines how it ends. Melodies which are prolonged at the end may indicate a question or an exclamation. Ibemedzi, which are often full of lamentations, fall within this category. The singer of the following song: *Liboe letsa livɔ me lo, ligɔwɔe madze le, madze le?* (Lit. This incident which has happened to me, when will I ever forget?) laments not only the loss but also the
prolongation of her grief. The lengthening of the word, *na*, at the end depicts the long search for an answer to the rhetorical question: When will I forget?

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Liboe letsa лио мэ ло
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Text in Siyase (ibemidzi)

Liboe letsa лио мэ ло,
Ligòwoe madze le, madze le?
Madze!
Ligòwoe madze le?
Madze!
Liboe letsa лио мэ ло,
Ligòwoe madze le, madze le, madze naa?

Literal Translation

This incident which has happened to me, 
When will I ever forget? 
I won’t!
When will I ever forget? 
I won’t!
This incident which has happened to me, 
When will I ever forget?

In African music, the contents of the lyrics are as important as the instrumental and dance aspects. The significance of songs texts in African music cannot, therefore, be overemphasized. Kwabena Nketia underscores this point when he observes that:

The treatment of a song as a form of speech utterance arises not only from stylistic considerations or from consciousness of the analogous features of speech and music; it is also inspired by the importance of the song as an avenue for creative verbal expression which can reflect both personal and social experiences. Accordingly, the themes of songs tend to center around
events and matters of common interest and concern to the members of a community or the social groups within it. They may deal with everyday life or with the traditions, beliefs and customs of the society. This is true not only for serious songs of the courts and songs associated with ceremonies and rites, but even of simple tunes, like cradle songs sung to children who may not have mastered their mother tongue enough to appreciate the meaning of the text.\(^{234}\)

Because of the difference between musical language and ordinary discourse,\(^{235}\) listeners pay very close attention to the textual content of the music. The voice that conveys musical messages must be of very good quality to make the desired impact. A clear tone, proper articulation of words, and accurate intoning of songs are prerequisite qualities of a good cantor, especially in group performances. Even in singing of lullabies and other children’s songs, one’s ability to sing in pitch is important. During their games, children who display capabilities of playing the cantor role in the game songs are often considered first when selecting leaders. Although pitches are relative, every cantor is expected to intone the song in his or her optimum vocal range, which must fall within the range of other singers, so they can comfortably join in the chorus.

Furthermore, literary expressions unique to each particular language serve as basis of song texts. The song texts evoke poetic devices such as repetition, auditory and visual imagery, imitation, metaphor, simile, aphorisms and allegorical expressions. These convey the message and depict the mood of the performance. An example of allegorical

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expression in the Avatime song tradition is: *Si ame melɔ be ne’o si ye o* (Lit. He/She who hurts others, hates to be hurt). The next example paints a visual imagery of death as a hyena which preys on other animals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Text in Siyase (ibemidzi)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Literal Translation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Øga wolie vue?</td>
<td>What animal killed him/her?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Øga wolie vue?</td>
<td>What animal killed him/her?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agbotoe evue naa?</td>
<td>Is it the hyena?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Avatime song tradition, some ibemidzi texts contain sorrowful exclamatory devices, which the cantor must interpret to achieve the desired effect. She is a good cantor who uses these non-lexical vocables to inflame people’s emotions and drive them to weep or wail. Such non-lexical vocables that express sorrow and pain include *hmm, ao loo, adzei,* and ãã. Below is an example of ibemidzi that ends with an exclamatory phrase, *Ao loo yoo yoo!* The song, which laments the loss of a dear one and likens it to a treasure that loses its value, ends appropriately with the non-lexical vocable phrase *Ao loo yoo yoo!*

![Ame'o fe nu veve](image)
FORM IN AVATIME MUSIC

Form in African musical traditions is based on the creative processes derived from the nature of various performance contexts. Although there are general philosophical and artistic principles that guide how music is structured and presented in Africa, each ethnic group exhibits such features in a unique way. Generally, traditional African songs are typically repetitive and use a call and response or cantor and chorus alternation.236 In the vocal traditions among the Avatime, call and response occurs between ɔdzikpe, the cantor (lead singer) and badzizaba, the chorus (participants/musical community), thus creating a musical dialog between them. Drummers and dancers exhibit similar form of dialogue, and so manifest the essence of the African philosophy of existence: “I belong, therefore, I am,” which focuses on stylistic relations. In other words, I know my attributed role in society. I have a place and responsibility to the group that I must fulfill. This sense of belongingness, togetherness, sharing, and continuity is displayed during musical interactions. As Kofi Gbolonyo states, such performances:

…replicate the way in which most traditional African communities were built and maintained, and explain vital aspects of African societies and why they work. Community cooperation and success, individual, leadership and group responsibilities are reinforced through the singing of songs and performance of many musical traditions. Through the lifelong musical training … effective

leaders and attentive and cooperative followers emerge to fill the roles that tradition and society have prescribed for them.\textsuperscript{237}

The contexts in which the Avatime people use the call and response form in songs include processions of members of warrior dance groups, processions of women singing oseyelo (songs of exhilaration), and children’s games. All these three contexts emphasize movement to which the songs complement.\textsuperscript{238} The example below: \textit{Ege kiyo}? (Lit. What is bearing fruits?) typifies the short and repetitive nature of such songs. It is an oseyelo sung by Avatime women during the installation ceremonies of new chiefs or queenmothers. Two or more cantors could jointly intone \textit{Ege kiyo}? because there are no variations to the cantor’s part. Moreover, this song is a question and answer dialogue between a cantor or cantors and respondents. The chorus response \textit{Osee yo} (Lit. A tree is bearing fruits), answers the question: \textit{Ege kiyo}? (Lit. What is bearing fruits?) This song sends a clarion call to the new leader to be incessantly fruitful by offering leadership that will sustain the peace, progress, and development of his subjects. At the same time, the song affirms and expresses confidence in the capability of the tree (leader) to bear fruits (be progressive).

\textbf{Ege kiyo?}

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\textsuperscript{237}Gbolonyo (2009), pp. 514-515.
\textsuperscript{238}See Nketia (1962), pp. 28-29.
Variations in the responsorial form serve specific purposes in different songs. Some chorus responses end statements that the cantors have begun. In the following example, the cantor begins the statement: *Meɖo lã gãwo dome* (Lit. In the midst of wild animals), and the chorus ends it: *Du vɔ l’asinye yee* (Lit. My gunpowder is finished). This song exhibits the basis for responsorial forms in African music and dance, which is complementarity. The contribution of every member of the community is important to the building of social-cultural structures. One could therefore ask for assistance from another to complete a project as demonstrated by the cantor in the example below.

**Text in Siyase**

Ege kiyo?
Osee yo!

**Literal Translation**

What is bearing fruits?
A tree is bearing fruits!

The role of leaders to motivate their followers and urge them to act in the best interest of the entire community is very crucial in African societies. For example, in the following warrior song, the text, *Asi míalé woe* (Lit. We shall catch them with our hands),
alludes to the defeat of the enemy. The leader (cantor) calls for action and the followers (chorus) respond promptly. The chorus response is, therefore, a reciprocal pledge of allegiance from members to their leader. The leader begins the performance with the phrase, *Asi mialé woe* (Lit. We shall catch them with our hands). The followers respond to affirm their commitment to that task. After another section of call and response, the leader moves a step further and calls the bluff of the enemies, *Né’o katse ko* (Lit. If they dare us). The followers again respond: *Asi mialé woe* (Lit. We shall catch them with our hands).
Asi míalé woe
Ne’o katsè ko
Asi míalé woe

Change in the pitch as well as timbre of a song can consequently change its form. Such changes occur when different voices alternately intone a song. In the opening of the following afeti song, *Akorɔma fa deɛ ɔfa busu o* (Lit. The hawk has taken something abominable), two voices alternately intone the cantors section. The second voice intones the melody in a pitch higher than the first voice. The aim of creating this pitch variation is to stress the importance of the message and highlight the effects of variations in melody and timbre.

Another feature in this song, which carries a textual connotation, is the philosophical significance of the number “three” in the Ewe language. It denotes a sense of balance, stability, or completeness.239 The Ewe expressions, *Etɔ enye agbe* (Lit. Three is life) and *Nu nɔ etɔ dzi meglina o* (Lit. A thing that is placed on three will never fall), attest to this assertion. The first cantor’s call: *Bue, bue, bue, Ṣagye Kokroko* (Lit. Attention, attention, attention, the brave ones), therefore, reveals the essence of the number three. The second cantor’s statement echoes what the first cantor had already indicated; hence, *bue*, appears just once in his statement: *Bue Ṣagye Kokroko* (Lit. Attention, the brave one).

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239See Dzobo and Amegashie-Viglo (2005); Gbolonyo (2009)
There are songs in Avatime musical traditions that are not performed in the call and response form. Examples include lullabies and children’s game songs. Songs in this category are sung by individuals or groups to accompany specific events such as games. Below is an example of a lullaby performed for a child whose mother is not immediately around.
Text in Siyase (Lullaby)
Dada tra, woamua
Wonea tra woamua,
Woamoa popopopopo, woake.

Literal Translation
Mother is coming, you will suck her breasts
Your mother is coming, you will suck her breasts
You will suck her breasts until you are full.

Modifications to musical forms will almost always occur in the musical performances among different ethnic groups in Ghana and other parts of Africa.\textsuperscript{240} The instances of such modifications as exemplified in the Avatime song tradition demonstrate the essence of change in the culture.

**HARMONIC ORGANIZATION**

Harmonic procedures in African music are directly related to the melodic organization of the music.\textsuperscript{241} In other words, the melodic contour of a song determines its harmonic organization. While Africans generally sing traditional songs in unison, they also use polarity or duplication of melodies in octaves, where men and women sing together. African societies that emphasize this style in their singing include the Azande of Central

\textsuperscript{240}See Gbolonyo (2009), p. 514.
\textsuperscript{241}Dor (2001),
African Republic, the Ancholi, Alur, Gwere, Soga and Ganda of Uganda, the Nyaturu and Chaga of Tanzania, the Luo of Kenya, the Hausa of Nigeria, and the Wolof of Senegambia, just to mention a few.\textsuperscript{242} Songs are sung in unison and octaves to reemphasize the essence of unity among members of a community. In the following example, the style of rendition is unison. It replicates the text, \textit{Blɔatsaliliatsali} (Lit. We are the same people), which evokes the theme of unity and cohabitation.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Blɔa tsali}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{music}
\begin{notation}
\begin{verse}
\textbf{Blɔa tsali tsa li, blɔa tsali tsa li, blɔa tsali tsa li, blɔa tsali tsa li,}
\textbf{blɔa tsali tsa li, xe kuli 'bo-dole me, blɔa tsali tsa li,}
\textbf{xe kuli 'bo-dole me, a ni blɔa tsali loo,}
\end{verse}
\end{notation}
\end{music}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Text in Siyase (Bɔbɔbɔ)} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Literal Translation}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textit{Blɔatsaliliatsali,} \hspace{1cm} \textit{We are the same people,}
\textit{Blɔatsaliliatsali,} \hspace{1cm} \textit{We are the same people.}
\textit{Xe kule ɔmanɔ me} \hspace{1cm} \textit{When we are in town (When we are home)}
\textit{Blɔatsaliliatsali,} \hspace{1cm} \textit{We are the same people}
\textit{Xe kuli 'bodole me} \hspace{1cm} \textit{When we are abroad outside of town/home}
\textit{Ani blɔatsali loo} \hspace{1cm} \textit{We intermingle with other people}
\end{center}

In addition to singing a melody in unison and parallel octaves, another Avatime multipart technique is singing two vocal lines simultaneously or in parallel harmony. It is

obvious that the same linguistic principle which guides melodic organization is applicable to the harmonic structure. Parallel harmony occurs because the voices sing the same words at the same time, following the same tonal inflections of the text.\textsuperscript{243} Any harmonic organization that goes contrary to the principle above may distort the semantic value of the performance. The harmony either treats the thirds as terminals of musical sentences or uses them throughout the music. For example, in the song, \textit{ Gaga woli evue?} (Lit. What animal killed him?) the two parts run in thirds sequentially from the beginning to the end of the song.

\begin{center}
\textit{ Gaga woli evue?}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Text in Siyase (ibemidzi)} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Literal Translation}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{ Gaga woli vue?} & What animal killed him/her? \\
\textit{ Gaga woli vue?} & What animal killed him/her? \\
Agbotoe evue naa? & Is it the hyena?
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Occasionally, the voices move in sequences of sixths instead of thirds. This type of harmonic arrangement happens especially if the cantor intones a song in relatively high pitch that makes it impossible for the singers to sing the second part a third above the first. The following example is an excerpt from \textit{Maso ntie} (Lit. My ears have heard):

Osagye Kọtokọ says:
Maso tie, maso tie, ayee
Agyinamo ‘kyir’ akura o
Akura ‘kyir’ agyinamo o
Mekọ makọ hye o.

My ears have heard, my ears have heard
Whether is the cat that caught the mouse,
Or the mouse that caught the cat,
I will go and find out.

Although it is expected that voices should follow the tonal inflections of the language, the harmonic organization does not always satisfy this sonic requirement. Occasionally, both melodies run in contrary motion. This type of harmonic movement is common in ibemidzi and afeti, which are genres of lamentation. In such exceptional situations, the phrases must have been sung over and over again to establish the textual meaning. The contrary motion of the harmonic movement will therefore be considered as an embellishment or a harmonic variation. From a cultural perspective, however, there is no prescribed way of expressing grief in any human society. While some people may maintain their composure in moments of grief, others may burst out sporadically to express their emotions. The contrary harmonic movement is reminiscent of this unity and diversity of emotional expression. The song, *O, nipa nyinaa ntie* (Lit. Everybody, listen), captures the aforesaid harmonic movement. Here are excerpts:
It is worth noting from the abovementioned examples that the Avatime do not base their indigenous musical traditions on the Western harmonic conventions of chords and their inversions, but on melodic movement. When two parts run concurrently, their
nature is melodic, hence the tonal inflections of the language dictate the direction of the voice parts. For this reason, the harmony is enshrined in the melodic pattern of the voice parts. The logic in African harmony is that the relationships between intervals become major variables.\textsuperscript{244}

**RHYTHMIC STRUCTURE**

Vocal forms in the Avatime musical tradition are not as rhythmically complex as instrumental music. Songs are sung with or without instrumental accompaniment. Musicians use idiophones such as bells and rattles and membranophones such *havana*, *pati*, and *asivui* to accompany the songs that are associated with dance. They include songs of warrior dances, socio-recreational dances, and religious dances. Other songs exist in the Avatime song tradition that are contemplative and therefore require little or no instrumental accompaniment. Afeti and ibemidzi, both funerary genres performed by men and women respectively, and children’s songs, belong to this category. Ibemidzi, for instance, are accompanied with *liga* (rattle) and *kamasa* (bell), to maintain a steady tempo, especially during processionals. Children sometimes use handclapping to accompany their game songs. In the following example, the song, *Ame’o fe nu veve* (Lit. People’s treasure), a dirge sung by Avatime women is accompanied with *liga* (rattle).

\textsuperscript{244}Nketia (1962), p. 61; See also Dor (2001), pp. 226-245.
Rhythmic organization of African music is also linguistically derived. Generally, the durational values of syllables have a great influence on the rhythmic structure of a song. For example, syllables, which have stresses placed on them in ordinary discourse, receive the same stresses musically to make them meaningful. The word *yoo* (yes) in Siyase is stressed in spoken language, and so requires the same stress if used in song. Occasionally though, musicians may alter the text to suit specific rhythmic patterns. The syllabic structure of words dictates the rhythmic patterns of the melodies, in much the
same way as the tonal inflections of the language influence the melodic contours of songs. Non-lexical vocables such as *aa, ayee, ao, loo, yoo*, and *hmm*, are sometimes prolonged especially when they are used in the supporting chorus to a concurrent melody. In the following example, *Ẽ, gbɔ dzi tsa nye mele ṭe* (Lit. Yes, I am walking the streets), the non-lexical vocables appear in the chorus.

![Musical notation](image)

**Text in Ewe (ibemidzi)**
- *Ẽ, gbɔ dzi tsa nye mele ṭe*
- *Ẽ, amenye die nye mele ṭe*
- *Ẽ, gbɔ dzi tsa nye mele ṭe*
- *Ẽ, amenye die nye mele loo, āā!*

**Literal Translation**
- Yes, I am walking the streets;
- Yes, I am looking for my own;
- Yes, I am walking the streets;
- Yes, I am looking for my own, alas!

Although the rhythmic patterns of Avatime songs are dictated by the linguistic structure of the text, various parts occasionally overlap to form a tapestry of rhythms. Overlapping is a significant feature at the temporal level of African music and dance, because it pulls all the parts together and moves the music forward. The effect of overlapping is pronounced in responsorial vocal music. In the song, *Mido baba na*
Dzanyie (Lit. Show remorse towards the fallen/deceased), the cantor’s part overlaps throughout the piece, literally filling in the holes created by the chorus part.

Text in Ewe (ibemidzi)

Dzanyie loo, dzanyie loo;
Mido baba na dzanyie.
Dzanyie loo, dzanyie loo;
Mido baba na dzanyie.

Literal Translation

The fallen, the fallen;
Show remorse towards the fallen.
The fallen, the fallen;
Show remorse towards the fallen.
There are songs in Avatime, composed mostly in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century whose rhythms are obviously based on the European hymnody model. They are usually sung in \textit{bɔbɔbɔ} ensembles. \textit{Tɔ kepa kape} (Lit. So our home becomes better), is an example.

\textbf{Text in Siyase (bɔbɔbɔ)}

\begin{align*}
\text{Tɔ kepa kape, tɔ kepa kape;} \\
\text{Tɔ kepa kape, tɔ kepa kape;} \\
\text{Xe wonu kedeme obi ko,} \\
\text{Muni awla;} \\
\text{Lese si ɔkatole apɔ blɔ,} \\
\text{Tɔ kepa kape, tɔ kepa kape.}
\end{align*}

\textbf{Literal Translation}

\begin{align*}
\text{So our home becomes better (So that we build a better home);} \\
\text{So our home becomes better (So that we build a better home);} \\
\text{If you are a citizen of Avatime,} \\
\text{Raise your hand;} \\
\text{Because we belong to the same ancestor,} \\
\text{So our home becomes better (So that we build a better home).}
\end{align*}
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Musical traditions of every culture undergo processes of modification and change. Because culture is dynamic, long-held traditions succumb to change when the need arises. This thesis, therefore, sought to establish that the musical traditions of the Avatime people have not remained static since their departure from their Ahanta home in the mid-seventeenth century. Singing, drumming, and dancing are definitely not the same as they used to be two hundred and fifty years ago. The main factors that have contributed to this process of change include migration (from Ahanta and later, labor migration), affinity with Ewe and Akan ethnic groups, arrival of Christianity, and the introduction of Western education system.

Scholars, such as Thomas Turino, John Blacking and Meki Nzewi, have engaged themselves in the subject of cultural contact and musical change. In their writings, they raised issues with regards to what constitutes continuity and change in musical traditions. Turino, for instance, argues that culture is not a thing or a system to which people belong but rather a framework by which groups identify and understand their human relations. Consequently, cultures and musics, he argues, do not change through contact, people do.\textsuperscript{245} Referring the Adrean group from Peru, Turino opines that:

Among Conimeno residents in Lima, for example, we cannot talk about cultural continuity and change, because, after twenty years in the city, there is no unitary cultural baseline – neither Conimeno nor Limeno, Adrean nor Western – from which continuity or change can be understood. Rather, we have new groups of individuals, variously self-defined, who

\textsuperscript{245}Turino (1993), pp. 11-12.
must be understood on their own terms in relation to their composite experiences, resources and specific circumstances.\textsuperscript{246}

Nzewi shares a parallel conviction in his book, \textit{Musical Practice and Creativity: An African Traditional Perspective}, when he argues that approval is a prerequisite to the study of musical change. Nzewi raises the following questions:

Who is most competent to approve the validity of musical change, i.e. who assesses and determines that a change has taken or is taking place? If the owners and users of the music say that there is no musical change, is the analyst’s or outside observer’s conclusion to the contrary, even though based on clinical data, valid?\textsuperscript{247}

Blacking also thinks innovations that strictly occur within the traditional structure of the music system do not constitute musical change, but rather, minor variations in musical style. He states that the concept of musical change should be reserved for changes that are peculiar to musical systems, and are not merely the musical consequences of social, political, economic, or other changes.\textsuperscript{248}

The fact that the aforementioned concerns and arguments legitimately probe what should constitute musical change, how that change must come about, when and where the change should happen, and who should determine change, highlights and justifies the existence of change in various musical traditions. From the perspective of this thesis, Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines change in three ways: 1) to replace something with another; 2) to make a shift from one (thing/event) to another; 3) for a

\textsuperscript{246}Ibid.
tradition or institution to undergo a modification. The processes of change in the musical traditions of Avatime fit all three of these definitions.

Firstly, there is evidence that new genres have replaced some abandoned musical traditions in Avatime. For instance, socio-recreational genres like *aleke* (a socio-recreational dance exclusively for women) and *osiki* (a socio-recreational dance for a mixed group) ceased to exist more than sixty years ago due to the emergence of new socio-recreational genres such as *tuidzi* and *akpese*, both of which were earlier forms of the *bɔbɔbɔ* genre. Currently, the main traditional musical type associated with all social and recreational activities in Avatime is *bɔbɔbɔ*. The dominance of *bɔbɔbɔ* in Avatime results from its popularity among the Ewe people. Even in the absence of a live performance, computer disk jockeys play *bɔbɔbɔ* and similar types of traditional music as well as Ghanaian popular music to meet the entertainment needs of the gathering.

Secondly, there has been conspicuous shift in performance of one musical type to another as well as a shift from one context to the other. An example is the performance of *edzɔxo xo* in lieu of *liɖabatram* by the “warriors” of Dzogbefeme Avatime; because they are unable or unwilling to perform the required rituals to enable them play the latter. Furthermore, there is a functional shift of warrior music from military (psyching up warriors) to a socio-political function, i.e. accompanying chiefs and elders to social gatherings like traditional festivals. Another evidence of shift comes in the form of church groups performing during traditional puberty rite ceremonies.

Thirdly, some musical traditions in Avatime have gone through, and are still going through various processes of modification to suit the exigencies of time. For

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example, the Avatime never performed lullabies, songs of lamentation by women, and songs that accompany warrior dances in the Ewe language until they came into contact with the Ewe and developed a close affinity. In this case, there is continuity in the lullaby singing and warrior music tradition, but the text has changed. Another modification is the translation of song texts from other languages into Siyase. Even though significant changes have occurred in the musical traditions of the Avatime, nature of change, time of change, the reason for change, rate of change, degree of change, and agent of change differ from one musical context to the other.

During a performance of a totoeme group in Vane Avatime, an elderly woman, in rage when some young girls consistently missed the chorus entries, protested: “Mlɔ abl biwa, mlamɔ ni idzin zizi kiblɔ.” (Lit. You this generation, do not spoil the songs for us). In this context, “spoil” means singing a song incorrectly. Whether the wrongful intoning transpires deliberately or out of ignorance, to “spoil” the song is to change how it is performed or deviate from the acceptable standard of performance. Elderly people and other leaders in the society, who think performances have changed from the way they used to be, often make this statement. This impression by the older generation of the Avatime people is an open admission to the reality of change in their musical traditions and, therefore, addresses the concerns Nzewi raised earlier.

The Avatime people relocated from their Ahanta home to a new settlement bringing some musical traditions and concepts about music making. For more than two and half centuries, the people’s location, language, customs, religious practices, political institutions, and musical traditions have evolved continuously. For example, the Avatime left their Ahanta home with one musical language, but through culture contact with other
ethnic groups, they currently perform music in three languages, which are semantically unrelated. Even if culture and music do not come into contact or change, but people do, any noticeable transformation in the culture (including music) of a people, due to their new experiences reflect this change. Music, therefore, reveals the extent to which cultural contact and change have occurred and affected the Avatime people. Nzewi’s observation of similar continuity and change in the musical traditions of the Igbo of Nigeria aptly encapsulates the situation in Avatime.

Although traditional music remains the most common and widely accepted genre of Igbo contemporary musical practices, many have compromised their traditional usages and socio-political implications. Others have been deprived of their institutional/contextual roles. Such roles have been transferred to modern state agencies and functionaries as well as modern communication technology. As a result, instant traditional music practices have acquired new, primary, social uses and values often of only entertainment import. The socio-psychical, ritual and mystical associations of the more esoteric types are however still effective.²⁵⁰

Finally, this thesis has analyzed continuity and change in the musical traditions of the Avatime people in retrospect. In the process of transculturation, some groups abandon, modify, assimilate, and create cultural and musical practices. I grounded my analysis in a sound cultural knowledge of the Avatime people and their music, how the various aspects of these musical genres affect social order, how they benefit the children educationally, and how they shape the future of their musical traditions. This thesis

reveals the historicity of the Avatime people and serves as case study for research into traditional music of ethnic groups in Ghana.

**PROJECTION FOR THE MUSICAL TRADITIONS OF THE AVATIME**

The consistent trend of change in the musical traditions of the Avatime people, as revealed in this thesis, confirms Louis Tyson’s reassertion of culture as “a process, not a product; a lived experience, not a fixed definition.”

African culture has a rich legacy of oral tradition, which is consistently maintained and passed on orally from one generation to the other. In the recent past, the government of Ghana has put in place prudent educational programs to inculcate in the Ghanaian child a sense of cultural reawakening and national pride. This objective is achieved, 1) through the students’ participation in the national inter-schools art festival for primary and high schools, and 2) through the compulsory learning of a Ghanaian language by students in their region of residence. The above initiative doubtlessly guarantees the continuation of cultural practices in Ghana. In spite of the government’s effort towards cultural sustainability, the following factors are bringing changes into the musical traditions of Ghana in general and the Avatime society in particular.

**Technology and Globalization:**

The wind of technological advancement blowing across the entire globe, introducing computers, cell phones, and television with a wide range of internet capabilities, has not left the Avatime society behind. For instance, the growing interest in programs on

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television is gradually replacing moonlit night musical activities. It can be asserted that technology remains a core influence on the young generation, as they derive pleasure in lieu of the once cherished socio-recreational activities such as storytelling, children’s games, and musical types associated with these moonlit activities in the Avatime society.

**Rural-Urban Migration**

Citizens of Avatime have relocated to other parts of Ghana and even abroad in quest of modern job opportunities. Consequently, some have married in these places and raised families, who seldom learn or participate in the homegrown musical traditions. They have literally become “outsiders” to their indigenous cultural practices due to their circumstantial relocations. The youth in this category identify comfortably with musical traditions that are available where they were born, live, and work. The culture of adopting new and relevant musical practices from elsewhere to modify those in Avatime is gaining popularity, as expressed in songs, dancing styles, rhythmic patterns, musical instruments, and costume brought back by the outsiders.

**Influence of Christianity**

The impact of Christianity on the musical traditions of the Avatime is a double-edged dagger. On the one edge, religious fanaticism continues to impact negatively on the continuity in the performance of some musical traditions. As this research has revealed, there are musical types in living memory, which can no longer be performed due to the stigma Christianity has placed on them. On the other edge, it is worth noting that churches have recently made traditional music part of their liturgical and non-liturgical activities. Although performances of such musical types are modified, the trend continues to inadvertently promote and strengthen the musical traditions in the Avatime society.
Accessibility to Music:

Traditional musical types are now accessible on the internet, iPods, cell phones, computers, and the electronic media, thus changing the context and purpose of their performance. Apart from serving the original purpose of giving a psycho-social satisfaction to the community through participation, this contextual shift is promoting individual listening or contemplation. Music and dance, which were hitherto confined to specific occasions and institutions, can now be electronically accessed any time and place. The choice is eventually available for individuals to participate in the performance of music as a social event and listen to the same music in the privacy of their homes.

Developing Contemporary Idioms out of Traditional Music

In recent times, computer disk jockeys play traditional as well popular music genres at social events. This coexistence between traditional music and popular styles is becoming an acceptable musical culture in the Ghanaian society. Choral art musicians are already using syncretic\textsuperscript{253} and reinterpretation\textsuperscript{254} techniques to develop contemporary idioms from the traditional music.\textsuperscript{255} Eventually, this compositional trend will be explored by musicians of the popular music tradition to create a new genre of hybrid musical works that exhibit a fusion of traditional and contemporary features.

In conclusion, the globally growing modernization of life styles, values, and customs will continue to change the Avatime people’s attitudes towards their traditional

\textsuperscript{253}Syncretic technique advocates for the sourcing of creative ideas, themes, and procedures from traditional music to broaden one’s mode of expression.

\textsuperscript{254}The reinterpretation technique enables the musician to stay within his own culture and bring contemporary relevance to its musical traditions in his or her works.

\textsuperscript{255}See Nketia (2005), p. 342.
cultural practices including music. This evolution will either reinforce or weaken the musical traditions of the Avatime of Ghana.
# APPENDIX A: LIST OF SONG TITLES

## LIST OF MUSIC TEXT

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APPENDIX B: SONG TRANSCRIPTIONS

**Text in Siyase (Children’s Song)**

 ødzidzi obi lie gi eklè

 ϴ dzidzi obi li gi eklè tsitsi, tsitsi;
 ϴ dzidzi obi li gi eklè tsitsi, tsitsi;
 ϴ ki blò ku-mòi-sa-mìne i-tre la-ba dzidzi.

**Literal Translation**
The star that is shining so brightly, brightly;
The star that is shining so brightly, brightly;
Should help us have incessant fun.

**Text in Siyase (Song of Greeting)**

 Ayema loo!

 Ayema loo! Mla-di-me si: Ya-wòen ya-wòen. Ayema

**Literal Translation**
Good day!
You should all respond: Yawèen, yawèen!
Text in Siyase (Oseyelo)

Me di si kulila maza,  
Nitepo kanogbã me.  
Medi si agbale kpè ku,  
Nitepo ale liko.

Literal Translation

I thought I was dreaming,  
But this is a reality.  
I thought the buildings have collapsed,  
But they are still standing intact.
Text in Siyase (Lullaby)

Dada tra, woamoa  
Wonea tra woamoa,  
Woamoa popopopopo, woake.

Literal Translation

Mother is coming to breastfeeding you  
Your mother is coming to breastfeeding you  
You will suck her breast until you are full.
Text in Siyase (bəbəbə)
Mlaki ozodo, mlaki ozodo.
Owitsi loso lipe yedo.
Abatsi tse, aba nu le me.

Literal Translation
Allow him/her to voice out his/her opinion.
He/she is still young, that is why he/she has that opinion.
He/she will understand when he/she comes of age.

Text in Siyase (Oseyelo)
Ege kiyo?
Osee yo!

Literal Translation
What is bearing fruits?
A tree is bearing fruits!
Text in Siyase (lullaby)
Akaŋuyedze kporokporoxoe
Kporokporoxoe,
Gatr Tɔŋui, gatr Tɔŋui,

Literal Translation
Beautiful wife of Akaŋu,
Beautiful,
Go back to Tɔŋui, go back to Tɔŋui.

Text in Siyase (ibemidzi)
Ωga wolie vue?
Agbotoe evue naa?

Literal Translation
What animal killed him/her?
Is it the hyena?
**Text in Siyase (ibemidzi)**

Liboe letsa livo me lo,
Ligowo Madze le, Madze le?
Madze!
Ligowo Madze le?
Madze!
Liboe letsa livo me lo,
Ligowo Madze le, Madze le, Madze naa?

**Literal Translation**

This incident which has happened to me,
When will I ever forget?
I won’t!
When will I ever forget?
I won’t!
This incident which has happened to me,
When will I ever forget?

---

**Tô kepa kape**
**Text in Siyase (bɔbɔbɔ)**

Tɔ kepa kape, tɔ kepa kape;
Tɔ kepa kape, tɔ kepa kape;
Xe wonu kedeme obi ko, Muni awla;
Lese si ṣkatole apo bɔ, Tɔ kepa kape, tɔ kepa kape.

**Literal Translation**

So our home becomes better (So that we build a better home);
So our home becomes better (So that we build a better home);
If you are a citizen of Avatime,
Raise your hand;
Because we belong to the same ancestor,
So our home becomes better (So that we build a better home).

---

**Kpodze etse loo**

---

**Text in Siyase (Afeti)**

Kpodze etse lo, Kpodze! Kpodze etse lo, Kpodze!
Ma ṣuname lɔsi; Mede ga sigaga; Kpodze!

**Literal Translation**

Kpodze is dead, Kpodze! Kpodze is dead, Kpodze!
My face is dark (The way ahead is uncertain);
My back is pitiable (The way behind leaves much to be desired);
Kpodze!
Blɔa tsali

Blɔa tsali tsal, blɔa tsal tsal. Blɔa tsali tsal,

Xe kulɔ manɔ me, blɔa tsali tsal,

xε ku- li bo-do-le me, an📞 blɔa tsal li loo.

Text in Siyase (Bɔɔbɔɔ)    Literal Translation
Blɔatsaliliatsali,       We are the same people,
Blɔatsaliliatsali,       We are the same people.
Xe kule ømana mɛ      When we are in town (When we are home)
Blɔatsaliliatsali,       We are the same people
Xe kuli ‘bodole me      When we are abroadoutside of town/home
Ani blɔatsali loo       We intermingle with other people
Evune ze yi

Literal Translation

Let the sound of the drums reach the summit of Dɔabie,
Reach the battlefield at the summit of Dɔabie
The horns were sounding as we march forward,
At that time, I was still young,
I cannot wear any war paraphernalia,
I cannot even fight,
But wherever Takyi will go,
I promise to be there also.

Text in Siyase

Evune ze yi tre ni Dɔabie su
Tre kigue ni Dɔabie su
Ga kudzɔtɔnɔ, kukuklɔe ze yi.
Lipoe leklɔe, mebi-tsi mu-ɔnɔ,
Matra tani agbadza sa,
Matra tani kigu ʃe ɡonĩ,
Pɔ klo gi Takyi etre,
Metsye matre ni niklo.
Text in Siyase

Lipoe le gi kiatre lifune,
Kiamo blodzedze Yesu
Ega ni sikablœ me.
Ega ni sikablœ, ega ni sikablœ,
Ega ni sikablœ me.

Literal Translation

The day we shall go to heaven,
We shall see our Saviour Jesus
Walking the streets of gold
Walking the streets of gold, walking the streets of gold,
Walking the streets of gold.
Text in Akan (Afeti)

Yen, ye-wia, ye-wia,
Yen, ye-wia, ye-wia
Ye, Agorogyiwasaba num ye-wia,
Ye-wia yee, ye-wia yee, ye-wia,
Agoro naba o, ye-wia yee.

Literal Translation

We are toddling,
We are toddling,
We are inspired to toddle,
We are toddling, yes, we are toddling
Excitement has come, we are toddling.
Akoroma fa dee

Cantor 1

A-kor-o-ma fa dee ɔ-fa bu-su-o a-yee. A-kor-o-ma fa

Cantor 2

Chorus

des ɔ-fa bu-su-o ɡaa.

A-kor-o-ma fa dee ɔ-fa bu-su-o a-yee

Bue bue bue bue ɔ-sa-gye

A-kor-o-ma fa dee, ɔ-fa bu-su-o ɡaa.

ko-kro-ko.

Bue ɔ-sa-gye

A-kor-o-ma fa dee a-yee
Text in Akan (Afeti)

Akorɔma fa dee ɔfa busu/mmusu o, aye;
Akorɔma fa dee ɔfa busu/mmusu o ḋaa!

Bue, bue, bue, Ôsagye Kokoko!
Akorɔma fa dee, aye;
Akorɔma fa dee ɔfa busu/mmusu o, aye;
Akorɔma fa dee ɔfa busu/mmusu o ḋaa!

Literal Translation

The hawk has taken something abominable,
The hawk has taken something abominable, always!

Attention, attention, attention, the brave one
The hawk has taken something,
The hawk has taken something abominable,
The hawk has taken something abominable, always!
Maso 'tie, maso 'tie, ayee!
Agyinamo 'kyir' akura o,
Akura 'kyir' agyinamo o,
Mekɔ makɔ hye o.
Osagye Kọtokọ se:
Maso tie, maso tie, ayee

Literal Translation
My ears have heard, my ears have heard
Whether is the cat that caught the mouse,
Or the mouse that caught the cat,
I will go and find out.
Osagye Kọtokọ says:
My ears have heard, my ears have heard
Agyinamoa ‘kyir’ akura o
Akura ‘kyir’ agyinamoa o
Mekɔ makɔ hye o.

Whether is the cat that caught the mouse,
Or the mouse that caught the cat,
I will go and find out.

Megyae me fie

Cantor 1

Cantor 2

Chorus

Me-gyaa me fie me-ko kum a-bao me-gyaa me fie me-ko kum a-bao
Me-gyaa me fie me-ko kum a-bao, me-gyaa me

O, ni-pa nyi-naa ntie a-ma-nee
Me-ko kum a-bao, a-ma-nee.
Text in Akan (Afeti)

O, nipaa nyinaa ntie amane\textsuperscript{e} o
Yee! O, nipaa nyinaa ntie o
Yee! O, nipaa nyinaa ntie o
Megyaa me fie,
Meko kum aba o
Megyaa me fie,
Meko kum aba o,
Amane\textsuperscript{e} oo!

Literal Translation

Everybody listen to the news
Yes, everybody, listen
Yes, everybody, listen
I have left my home
To kill (war), and come back
I have left my home
To kill (war) and come back
Trouble
Text in Ewe (ibemidzi)

1. Meɖo là gãwo dome
2. Du vo l’asinye yee
3. Meɖo là gãwo dome
4. Du vo l’asinye loo, hã.

Literal Translation

1. I am in the midst of big animals;
2. My gunpowder is finished.
3. I am in the midst of big animals;
4. My gunpowder is finished.

Text in Ewe (ibemidzi)

1. Ame’o fe nu veve
2. Ame’o fe nu veve,
3. Gbɔya si wôtsie,
4. Gbɔya si wôtsie,
5. Ao loo yoo yoo!

Literal Translation

1. People’s treasure,
2. People’s treasure,
3. Has become worthless (Has lost its value)
4. Has become worthless (Has lost its value)
5. Ao loo yoo yoo! (Exclamation of grief)
Text in Unintelligible Language
Gbolo, gblolo:
Kayisa!
Gbolo, gblolo:
Kayisa!
Titi naa ma le, naa ma le kli
Kli lo busalo, busalo munya
Munyamunya kosi mate tete
Woya dzakuma kosi makɔ liko.
Nu gã gã de wɔgbe;
Asafotua de dagbe;
Meɖo ŋku amenyewo dzia.

Text in Ewe (ibemidzi)

The day for performance of great events;
The day when warriors shoot their guns;
I remember my people (departed loved ones).

Literal Translation
**Wœ ne le za me le nyamaa**

Text in Ewe (enimewavu)

Wœ ne le za me le nyamaa;  
Wœ ne le za me le nyamaa;  
Wœ ne le za me le nyamaa;  
Du ke afevie.

Literal Translation

Did it to him/her in the night mercilessly;  
Did it to him/her in the night mercilessly;  
Did it to him/her in the night mercilessly;  
Day has broken, behold, he/she is our own.

**Mido baba na dzanyis**

Cantor

Dza nyis loo,  
dza nyis loo;  
e-mi-do ba-ba na dzan-

Chorus

Dza nyis aa.  
Dza-le-le-le-le!  
le-le-le!  
yee!

Dza nyis loo,  
Dza nyis loo;
Text in Ewe (ibemidzi)

Dzanyie loo, dzanyie loo;
Mido baba na dzanyie.
Dzanyie loo, dzanyie loo;
Mido baba na dzanyie.

Literal Translation

The fallen, the fallen;
Show remorse towards the fallen.
The fallen, the fallen;
Show remorse towards the fallen.
Text in Ewe (Kinka)

Lɔlɔvudo tsi mevɔ le me o,
Lɔlɔvudo tsi mevɔ le me o.
Ku le ɖiɖi, tsi le dzadza, tsi mevɔ le me o,
Ku le ɖiɖi, tsi le dzadza, tsi mevɔ le me o.
Lɔlɔvudo tsi mevɔ le me o.

Literal Translation

The well of love never lacks water,
The well of love never lacks water.
Rain or no rain, it never lacks water,
Rain or no rain, it never lacks water.
The well of love never lacks water.

Text in Ewe (enyimewavu)

Fine gbedzi míadɔ gbe?
Gbedzie
Fine gbedzi míadɔ gbe?
Gbedzi míedɔ.

Literal Translation

Which field (battlefield) shall we keep vigil today,
In the field (battlefield).
Which field (battlefield) shall we keep vigil today,
We kept in the field (battlefield).

Kalɛ wafe nye gbedzi loo

Gbe-dzi mie-dɔ, gbe-dzie mie-dɔ;
Ka-le wɔ-fe nye gbe-dzi loo.

Literal Translation

We kept in the field (battlefield).
We kept in the field (battlefield).
We kept in the field (battlefield).

Gbe-dzie, gbe-dzie, Ka-le wɔ-fe nye gbe-dzi loo.
Text in Ewe (enyimewavu)
Gbedzi míed, gbedzi míed,
Kalẽwɔfe nye gbedzi loo
Gbedzie, gbedzie,
Kalẽwɔfe nye gbedzi loo

Literal Translation
We kept vigil in the field, we kept vigil in the field,
Bravery is displayed in the field (battlefield)
In the field, in the field,
Bravery is displayed in the field (battlefield)

Si ame, si ame, si ame,
Si ame melɔ be ne’o si ye o

Literal Translation
He/she who hurts others,
Hates to be hurt.

Asi míalè woe

Cantor

Chorus

Ne’o ka-tse ko,
A-si mi-a-lè woe.
A-si mi-alè woe.

Asi míalè woe

A-si mía-le woe.
Text in Ewe (enyimewavu)
Asi míalé woe,
Ne’o katsë ko,
Asi míalé woe.

Literal Translation
We shall catch them with our hands,
If they dare us,
We shall catch them with our hands.

Text in Ewe (ibemidzi)
Ẽ, gbô dzi tsa nye mele de;
Ẽ, amenye die nye mele de;
Ẽ, gbô dzi tsa nye mele de;
Ẽ, amenye die nye mele loo, åã!

Literal Translation
Yes, I am walking the streets;
Yes, I am looking for my own;
Yes, I am walking the streets;
Yes, I am looking for my own, alas!
Text in Ewe (local hymn)
Mawu lolo loo,
Mida ‘kpe, mida ‘kpe,
Mida ‘kpe na Mawu.

Literal Translation
God is great
Give thanks, give thanks,
Give thanks to God.
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