

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

**A REPRERTOIRE OF TROPES: A STUDY OF FANTE-AKAN
ASAFO SONG TEXTS FROM THE CAPE COAST AREA
OF THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA**

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2002

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ABSTRACT

This study of Fante Asafo song texts from the Cape Coast area of the Central Region of Ghana was undertaken with the assumption that a close look at the texts would yield a richness of language represented by a profusion of tropes.

The areas covered include a general background to Asafo as a social organisation, as well as the form and content of sixty-five randomly selected songs. A conscious effort has been made to isolate key tropes which have been treated as features of discourse that have an almost unlimited propensity to generate various levels of meanings. In so doing, the richness of the language of the song texts has been underscored. The study has also revealed various and varied embedded messages in the songs that point or at least allude to the history, religion, culture as well as the harmonies and tensions within the society from which these songs are drawn. The study concludes by drawing attention to a prominent silence – the absence of references directly or indirectly to the slave trade, which is a well-known fact of the history and life experience of the people of the area where the research was conducted. The study therefore recommends further probing into this apparent missing link.

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To my niece, Sheila Baaba Des-Bordes, who diligently typed the manuscript, I offer my profuse thanks.

To my wife Charity and the children: Leonard Jnr, Max and Jo Ann, my appreciation for their willingness to sacrifice their quality time while I slogged away at this task. To all these wonderful people, this work is theirs as much as it is mine except of course the ugly little spots, which are exclusively mine.

DEDICATION

To Leonard Jnr, Max and Jo Ann

DECLARATION

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it
been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Name LEONARD ACQUAH Signature [Signature] Date 9th JANUARY 2003

SUPERVISORS' DECLARATION

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised
in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of theses laid down by the University
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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Not much seems to have been done by way of a serious study of Fante Asafo song texts as oral art. While a few compilations have been undertaken in the past, these seem to have been done with an anthropological focus. In her book, *Oral Literature in Africa*¹ Ruth Finnegan, for instance, only makes a passing reference to Asafo songs and even this is done within the wider context of Akan folk songs. Asafo songs thus remain marginalized only to be hinted at in more or less general terms.

Asafo is an indigenous, quasi-military organisation of the Fante-Akan group which live in the southern part of the Central Region of Ghana.² It is commonly believed that in the pre-colonial past all Akan groups had Asafo as part of their socio-political set up. As a body, the Asafo were entrusted with the defence and protection of the community. At the same time, they took up the task of prosecuting wars of conquest and expansion on behalf of the ruler. The chief – and indeed the entire community – depended on the Asafo for protection. It was therefore expected that every able-bodied young man would be initiated into the Asafo so that he could play his part in the defence of the community. Among the Fante, it was the duty of a father to ensure that all his able-bodied male children were initiated into his own Asafo group and also to ensure that they became active and worthy members of the group. In every Fante town or village, there is

at least one Asafo group. Usually, there are two or more. In some places, such as Cape Coast, there are as many as seven groups. Generally, the groups are differentiated by their colours – as evidenced by their ceremonial uniforms – as well as by other specific paraphernalia such as bell, anchor and plumbline, to name but a few, to which they own exclusive rights to parade. The groups are also distinguished by their flags. The flags, in particular, occupy a prominent place in Fante Asafo. A company's flag is usually borne by a standard bearer called *frankaatunyi* or *frankaakitsanyi* who is always flanked by body guards known as *asckanbofo*. It is believed that the spirit of the Asafo company resides in the flag and therefore everything possible should be done to ensure its safety. During wars, we are told, loss of the flag to the enemy meant not only defeat but also total annihilation. Asafo flags are also a telling communicative device. The design and art of these flags contain certain embedded messages in their symbolism. Indeed, misunderstandings have occurred and in several instances actual battles have been fought by rival Asafo companies because of the perceived provocation in the messages the flags convey. The dominant style of design of the flags is a cloth-on-cloth appliqué in the form of human figures, flora and fauna as well as other objects such as the sun, the moon and the sea. These flags serve to illustrate the fact that African art is more valued not for its own sake but for its functions within the society.

The drum is also a vital component of Asafo. The typical ensemble in Fanteland is made up of four different drums. There is, first of all, the lead drum or master drum, *asafokyen*, which directs and controls the entire ensemble. The second, third and fourth drums together with the metal gongs play various rhythms, which

combine to give the Asafo its distinctive beat. The lead drum is also a talking drum. It can be used to send messages or call people together.

Each Asafo Company has *asafohenfo* or captains and a commander who is referred to as *Supi*. The symbol of the Asafo captain's office and authority is a special leather whip which he wields each time he plays his role as captain. The position of captain is usually hereditary, and a captain is expected to groom one of his sons to inherit his whip and his position. In certain instances, however, certain individuals can have the title conferred on them and the hereditary line can begin from there.

Apart from the military function of the Asafo, they are also expected to concern themselves with communal labour of all kinds including clearing paths leading to the village, construction work and general sanitation. In addition, during emergencies or crises, the Asafo companies are called upon. For instance, when a person is reported missing or when there is disaster at sea, the Asafo companies are expected to act immediately and decisively in response to the problem. Asafo therefore was, at least in pre-colonial times, a vital organ of the community. The Asafo's own sense of indispensability and importance is reflected in the popular saying, *ɔman wɔye no hen ara*, to wit, "the survival of the state depends on us".

Asafo also have a political function. They play a major role in both enstoolment and destoolment of traditional rulers. Indeed, the consent of the Asafo is almost invariably sought in the general running of the state.

The Asafo companies have a fourth major function. Since each company has its own ensemble of drums, gongs and other accessories such as bells and rattles, these companies can, and indeed do, provide communal entertainment through drumming, singing and dancing. During festivals or on special occasions, the companies turn out in their respective outfits parading all their paraphernalia, including flags and banners. In the procession, the companies entertain the public with various antics in marching, dancing and mock combat. Indeed it is difficult to imagine a traditional festival in Fanteland without the presence and active participation of the Asafo companies. Again, during the funeral of a prominent person in the community or a member of an Asafo company, the presence of the Asafo is felt at the wake, the burial and during the other funeral rites. In recent times, the Asafo have been involved in official state functions such as launching of important social events as a means of adding local colour to such occasions. It is clear, therefore, that Asafo as a social organisation has enjoyed a prominent place in the society and continues to do so even now.

The term *Asafo* is also used to describe the singing, drumming and dancing involved in the performance. This work addresses the songs. In particular, the texts of the songs will be closely examined as pieces of oral poetry and a literary analysis of these texts will be done.

Asafo songs occur in many forms with various themes. However, the military underpinning of the songs is evident in three ways: First, there is the theme of war and its related themes of struggle, a call to arms and a demonstration of manliness or bravery. There is also the theme of appeal or supplication to a deity.

The third broad category is the theme of abuse, satire, taunt and ridicule. In addition, there are songs that are purely recreational and others that are meant for specific occasions such as funerals. There are also songs for various other occasions. The songs could be a means of stirring people into action. For example, there are songs that emphasise bravery and courage and the need to prove one's mettle when the occasion calls for it. Such songs will at the same time castigate cowardice and berate laziness, among others. The song could also be a marching or a recreational song. Basically, the song may reflect the occasion, for example, a religious ceremony, a search expedition or a funeral ceremony. However, no matter the theme and the occasion, these songs have embedded in their texts bits and pieces of the history, culture and indeed the worldview of the people whose songs they are. The song texts constitute a veritable treasure trove of tropes which this work will attempt to showcase.

The Fante people belong to the broad ethnic group in Ghana referred to as the Akan. This is a group that comprises subgroups such as Akyem, Asante, Akuapem, Agona, Assin, Bono, Denkyira and Wassa. These subgroups share mutual intelligibility of dialects to a very large extent. They also share common religious beliefs, customs and a matrilineal system of inheritance, among others. As a group, the Akans are believed to have migrated from somewhere north of the forest zone of West Africa to their present localities. There is a fair amount of speculation about their origins, but that is not the burden of this essay. What is fairly certain, though, is that in the course of migration, the Fante sojourned at Takyiman in the present day Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana for some time before

moving southwards to settle in the coastal areas and the immediate hinterlands of the present Central Region of Ghana.

The Coastal Fante were the first to make contact with Europe. In 1472, a Portuguese sailing vessel landed at Elmina near Cape Coast and that singular event is generally regarded as the starting point of Ghana's contact and interaction with Europe.³ The chief settlement of the coastal Fante is Cape Coast and it is from Cape Coast that the Asafo songs have been collected for this study. In Cape Coast, there are seven Asafo Companies. These are Bentsir, Anazfo, Ntsin, Nkum, Borɔfomba, Akrampa and Amanfor.

Unfortunately, many young people, especially those who have had the benefit of formal education, appear to have lost interest in Asafo. For this reason, Asafo is gradually losing its prominence and pride of place. The practice of Asafo singing, drumming and dancing in the Cape Coast area is now more or less restricted to the fisherfolk and the older generation. Asafo songs therefore are in danger of being ignored by the majority of the people - whose heritage it is - and eventually dying out. This study, then, is in part an attempt to rekindle interest in Asafo songs and to unearth the literary possibilities of the song texts.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Asafo song texts do not appear to have received much scholarly attention. What the songs say and how these are expressed should be of interest to students of oral literature. As folk songs, they constitute a veritable source of material for piecing together the cultural history of the people. They also reveal important aspects of

language behaviour as well as the users' manipulation of language for one purpose or the other. Again, the general corpus of such songs texts tends to open a window on the common experience of the people. Therefore, to ignore or pass over Asafo song texts, for example, is to ignore a veritable mine of information about the people whose oral art Asafo is. Consequently, this study will concern itself with a close look at the language of the songs with a view to determining the extent to which the language is enriched by tropes.

1.3 PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study aims at extracting the texts of a selection of Asafo songs from their full context of singing, drumming and dancing and analysing them from a literary point of view. In the process, an attempt will be made to determine how meaning is achieved through the manipulation of language in general, and the use of tropes in particular.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will address the following concerns:

- i. What is the structure of the Asafo song text?
- ii. How is meaning achieved within the text?
- iii. What are the literary merits, if any, of the texts?
- iv. Does the Asafo song text have any affinity with oral poetry?

1.5 HYPOTHESIS

A close study of the Asafo song text will reveal a richness of language that will qualify it as oral poetry.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is an attempt to investigate a popular oral art form which does not appear to have received enough scholarly attention. The findings, it is hoped, will provoke further investigation into the subject.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has been limited to the Cape Coast area. This means that to some extent the sampling is not extensive enough since Asafo songs are sung all over Fanteland. Again, for very practical purposes, the analysis has been limited to only sixty-five items. One can readily recognise that such a narrow sampling may not give the whole picture. It is however hoped that the result of this investigation will give, at the very least, an inkling of what is available for further mining in the area.

1.8.0 METHODOLOGY

A study of this nature naturally calls for fieldwork which involves the collection of samples on audio tape for later transcription and translation into English. One option was to record the songs within the context of the total Asafo performance, that is, to record actual live performances of the songs and their accompaniments – drums, metal gongs, rattles, bugles, bells and handclaps together with other background noise, including the sounds of motor traffic. A second option was to isolate the songs from their total surround of accompaniments for recording. This meant assembling a small group of singers for the purpose. This latter option was found more attractive for some reasons. First, since the aim of this study is not

the music of the Asafo *per se* but the language of the text, it was considered prudent to zero in on the text by eliminating the elements which, though important, are not essential for the present study. Second, it is generally easier and more practical to deal with specific individuals than with a large, motley crowd. In addition, the use of a smaller, more manageable group gives the researcher the right of inclusion and exclusion. In other words, the researcher can, through investigations, locate informants well versed in the art as well as accomplished singers with large repertoires whose skills and knowledge can be used for the purpose at hand. Again, dealing with specific individuals means, among other things, that they can be contacted at any point for further discussions or elaborations or explanations or even for reruns. The potential for further work with them is an added advantage. Finally, for all practical purposes, it is easier to establish a rapport and a good working relationship on a more personal level with a handful of people than with a large group of Asafo performers.

1.8.1 INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

It was important, initially, to locate accomplished Asafo singers with large repertoires. It was equally necessary to seek out informants well versed in the art of Asafo for information about the nature, structure, organisation and types of Asafo songs. In addition, a series of interviews were held with a well-known author of a book on Asafo. These initial contacts provided valuable insights into the subject under study.

1.8.2 PRE-RECORDING INTERVIEWS

Four groups of five members each were chosen for the work. These were people who were well versed in the Asafo songs of all the seven Asafo companies of Cape Coast. Some of them had featured in Asafo programmes on national radio not a few times. In each of the four groups was at least one accomplished soloist or lead cantor. Having explained the purpose of the exercise and their expected role and having secured their willingness and cooperation, separate recording dates were fixed for the groups.

1.8.3 RECORDING SESSIONS

In all, there were nine recording sessions, two each for the first three groups and three for the fourth. After each recording session, the material was played back for appreciation. This researcher found the use of two tape recorders simultaneously very useful as on two separate occasions one of the cassette recorders refused to turn during the recording.

1.8.4 FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSIONS

After listening to the recordings several times over, it became necessary to do a follow up. This was because, as songs, certain words tended to be assimilated or glossed over. For the meaning of the texts to be made clear, it was necessary therefore to discuss the problem with the singers themselves. In addition, the generally compressed language of the songs required some amount of unravelling, especially those songs that are rooted in historical incident, knowledge of which appeared to be crucial to the overall understanding and appreciation of the texts.

1.8.5 TRANSCRIPTION

The follow up discussions outlined above helped in no small measure in the transcription of the recorded material. It was clear from the start that the cassette tapes would have to be played several times over in the process of transcribing the recorded material. To protect the originals, therefore, copies were made and used for the purpose. This researcher's thorough familiarity with the Fante language was definitely an asset. There was, however, some difficulty with a few archaic words. These were words that have either been mispronounced for generations or words that have simply fallen out of use. Christaller's *Twi-Fante dictionary* (1936) came to the rescue in the case of words that are no longer in currency. Such words, however, were mercifully few and did not appear to obscure the general meaning of the texts.

1.8.6 TRANSLATIONS

In all, sixty-five texts were selected for this study. The translations were rechecked for their closeness and faithfulness to the spirit of the original Fante texts. Other opinions were sought over the 'knotty' portions. The final result, it is hoped, approximates the originals closely enough to retain the spirit of the Fante texts.

1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purposes of this study, the following terms will be defined thus:

Repertoire: The amount, stock, range or aggregate of a named item..

Tropes: A figure of speech that involves a “turn” or change of sense. That is, the use of words in a sense other than literal. Holman and Harmon (1986) have identified four major types of tropes:

- i. images, which in the strictest sense are literal and sensory and properly speaking should not be called tropes at all.
- ii. Symbols, which combine literal and sensuous qualities with abstract or suggestive aspects
- iii. Simile, which describes by explicit analogy
- iv. Metaphor, which describes by implied analogy

This kind of delineation by Holman and Harmon is useful for the purposes of this study because not only do these four types of tropes define the meaning of imagery, they also suggest the range of possible applications that can be found within them.

It is also possible to identify image patterns or clusters. These may operate at a more or less subconscious level and may give clues to a deeper or hidden meaning of a text or the unconscious motivations of the utterer.

1.10 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.10.1 Sankofa

In 1973 Okot p’Bitek, the late Ugandan poet, wrote:

It is important that in Africa we should have our own culture as the dominant factor in our national cultural centres, and not the reverse... Take the situation in our Universities, for example. There you have professors and lecturers who are virtually ignorant of African music and poetry and who purport to teach this subject, while in the countryside we have the real masters of the subjects. The great African dancers and singers, the carvers, the pot makers and the storytellers are in the countryside. And they are kept out of our schools and colleges and universities... break down the walls that surround our schools and universities, and let the people who know our culture teach our people.⁴

p'Bitek may have been overstating his case. Nevertheless, his contention points to the basic truth that stories, legends, proverbs and songs have always been a source of literary inspiration for budding African writers: Bernard Dadie's *Legendes Africaines*⁵, Biraga Diop's collection of Ahmadou Koumba stories⁶, Dika Akwa's compilation of aphorisms which he titled *Bible de la Sagesse Bantou*⁷, together with a host of short stories published in newspapers and magazines. It is worthy of note that this source of inspiration is based purely on oral tradition. Indeed Nketia's *Funeral Dirges of the Akan*⁸ is presented very much in the same spirit. In that ground-breaking work, Nketia presents the form, content, meaning and aesthetics of Akan funeral dirges as oral poetry in their own right. By drawing attention to the beauty of an oral art form, Nketia anticipated Ruth Finnegan who has observed that:

The great extent and richness of the oral poetry of the world is almost totally unknown to many lovers of poetry. It is often wholly unrecognised that oral poetry can offer much that, at its best, can parallel the written poetic forms.⁹

Like Nketia, other African intellectuals have drawn attention to the richness of their oral folklore literature. One of these is Ahmadou Ba. In a study of the

Fulani poetry of the Massina, he praises the diversity of literary genres, their precise codifications as well as the variety of musical instruments and dances that accompany them, all of which suggest the high level of development reached by this poetry¹⁰. This renewed interest in their folklore is not intended merely to make their people aware of a cultural heritage of which they can be proud. It should, as Claude Wauthier has pointed out, "serve to illustrate their shared similarity with other cultures of the world".¹¹

Isidore Okpewho has observed that traditional verbal art is replete with "the kind of imaginative quality which we have been taught to recognise in modern poetry"¹². This view has found support in Daniel Avorgbedor (1990) who affirms that traditional Ghanaian song texts are full of proverbs, proverbial sayings, riddles, euphemisms and personifications – linguistic manipulations that, properly speaking, belong in the domain of poetry. That the beauty and richness of traditional verbal art as identified by Okpewho and Avorgbedor is often missed or ignored has again prompted Finnegan to point out that for those brought up in a predominantly literate culture with very little oral residue, there is often a tendency to concentrate on written forms to the exclusion or even neglect of oral forms. She notes:

To look to written literature alone for one's poetic experience means excluding a vast quantity of the beautiful and perspective poetry that can be found within the field of unwritten literature. It has been common for such poetry to be ignored even by those interested in exploring the wider ranges of the poetic imagination. This lack of imagination is partly due to the common convention – I would say prejudice – that only written or respectable literature is worthy of consideration.¹³

Finnegan's contention is that there is a lot in our traditional verbal art forms that cannot be shoved aside or glossed over. This therefore makes it imperative for us to plumb our folklore for the literary wealth that is available for use. This purposeful retracing of steps which is captured in the Ghanaian idiom of *Sankofa*¹⁴ is for Finnegan, as it is for Okpewho and Avorgbedor, a vital necessity if we are to recapture our communal sense of being as a people. Chidi Amuta, operating on the same premise, has also noted that:

Either as an inexhaustible quarry of ancient myths or as a zone of decisive historical encounters, the African past has continued to exercise an irresistible fascination for the set of related practices that we have come to know as African literature. Singers and performers, writers and film makers alike in modern day Africa have been united in their endless recourse to artistic conventions, symbols and motifs from the past. Similarly, literary content has consistently explored themes, beliefs practices and values from the period before and up to the coming of the west.¹⁵

Amuta adds that there is a predictable tendency for the creative imagination to hark back to the past to retrieve values and motifs to inspire contemporary creativity. He however cautions against an uncritical predilection for the past. Tradition, he states, should be an active process of selection and exclusion, a position he shares with Fanon who wrote:

We must not be content with delving into the past of a people in order to find coherent elements which will counteract colonialism's attempts to falsify and to harm. We must work and fight with the same rhythm as the people to construct the future and to prepare the ground where vigorous shoots are clearly springing up.¹⁶

Both Amuta and Fanon therefore see tradition as a means whereby the past is questioned in order to clarify the present. Such an evaluation will enable African writers and critics to reconstruct the imperialist version of African history and literature and to do justice to the truth about the history and the literature of the

continent. In turning to the literary traditions of their ancestors, Claude Wauthier writes:

...Africans have sought to show its worth and to give it a role which far transcends a simple curiosity for things of the past. By asserting the spiritual and moral richness, the didactic value and historical interest of their tales and legends, African intellectuals have sought to reply to their detractors: to answer the charge that Africans are a people without a literature or culture, merely because they had no written records.¹⁷

This study of the imaginative quality of Fante Asafo song texts drawn from Fante-Akan folklore is therefore intended as a contribution to Wauthier's position stated above which has found support and corroboration in Finnegan, Okpewho, Avorgbedor and Amuta as also outlined above.

1.10.2 Folklore

'Folklore' as a term coined by the English antiquarian William Thoms writing under the pseudonym Ambrose Merton in 1846 has defied attempts at a definitive, all-inclusive definition. However, for the purposes of an operational definition for this study, folklore will be defined in the words of Archer Taylor as:

the material that is handed down by tradition either by word or mouth or by custom and practice. It may be folksongs, folktales, riddles, proverbs or other materials preserved in words.¹⁸

1.10.3 Folksongs

The interest of this study is folksongs as oral poetry with particular reference to Fante Asafo song texts. Holman and Harmon (1986) discuss the folksong as a song of unknown authorship, which is preserved and transmitted by oral tradition.

They also agree that there is a self-conscious effort by present-day performers to emulate or even simulate the effect of folksongs in contemporary or modern creations.¹⁹ Finnegan (1977) argues that oral poetry can take many different forms and can also occur in many cultural situations. Therefore, she maintains, oral poetry does not manifest itself in one standard model. She goes on to list some of the major forms of oral poetry as the epic, the ballad, the panegyric and the lyric. She adds that although these forms are chanted or declaimed, sung delivery is the most common characteristic of oral poetry. She therefore uses the terms 'song' and 'poem' almost interchangeably in the sense of 'lyric'.²⁰

1.10.4 Song as Poetry

There is often a certain measure of confusion between song and oral poetry. Finnegan cautions that it would be futile to look for absolute criteria. Rather, she suggests that the emphasis should be on stylistic and formal attributes like heightened language, metaphorical expression, structural repetitiveness and parallelism, among others. She concludes that distinction between 'prose' and 'poetry' in this regard is relative and that verbal definitions are not of much help.²¹

To return to the relationship between 'song' and oral poetry, Miruka's view on the matter is quite instructive. He observes that:

Song is just one way of delivering poetry. A poem may be sung, declaimed or recited. Like verse, song may be devoid of poetry. It may not convey any feelings, thoughts or ideas and may be nothing but a set of sounds set to a tune. Song is not always poetry and poetry is not always sung. As we realise even in written poetry, not everything that is centred on the page is poetry. Poetry must have recognizable forms and motifs of thematic relationships and development to integrate words and sound from their normal value to verse and finally to poetry.²²

Both Miruka and Finnegan have underscored the characteristics of oral poetry with regard to performance. Both have observed that the oral performance is at once elastic and spontaneous. In other words, they both agree that the text in an oral performance is often not fixed and may be lengthened or shortened according to demands of the situation as perceived by the performer. This means that, as the performer performs, he also creates. This view is supported by Okpewho who has quoted A.B. Lord to support the claim that "an oral poem is not composed *for* but *in* performance"²³

Finnegan and Miruka also stress the antiphonal character of African folksongs. This call-and-response structure means among other things that the lead cantor or soloist has considerable room for improvisation even though the chorus part may remain relatively fixed, a situation that validates Lord's position quoted above.

As regards style, Finnegan has underscored the technique of repetition as a prominent feature of African oral poetry in general. Okpewho shares this observation and points out that the repetitions are not merely for emphasising significant details. He argues that in performance, repetitions become a pressing need by the sheer demands of the situation. He submits further that repetitions within the context of performance "are the product of the sort of emotional excitement that music inspires"²⁴

Nketia (1955) has also pinpointed repetition as a feature of Akan poetry. Writing on the Akan funeral dirge, he notes that:

It is necessary to emphasise that (such) repetitions are to the Akan not monotonous repetitions; they are not due to barrenness or paucity of thought.²⁵

Nketia maintains that repetition may either stress the musical quality of the text or emphasise the meaning. He notes further that repetitions are used in a similar fashion in horn and drum language and can indeed be regarded as one of the distinguishing features of Akan poetry. Still on repetition, Daniel Avorgbedor examines the practice from a different angle. He contends that in song performance, repetitions should not be seen as "an element of redundancy" He states:

Even at a superficial level of consideration, there is no internal repetition as far as song texts are concerned... When, for example, a sentence (or phrase) is stated and repeated, there are temporal factors that introduce a distinguishing mark between the initial statement and its repetition. The repetition constitutes, in temporal terms, a series of sequential events. The initial appearance of a sentence will carry with it some degree of 'newness'. Such newness is also subsequently altered when the sentence is repeated. The freshness with which we perceive the initial statement is altered by the degree of familiarity that the repetition introduces.²⁶

Avorgbedor's point here is that the chirographic transformation of the text from an aural to a visual medium may give a semblance of dull, monotonous repetition. However, as he is at pains to point out, in the actual performance these repetitions are essential to the overall meaning and impact of the text.

Avorgbedor's position here brings into focus the issue as to whether in transcribing an oral performance every single repetition should be accounted for.

Okpewho's view on the matter is of interest here:

In transcription we may feel like exercising a little economy, but this in itself may not quite do justice to the full text of the singing²⁷

His recommendation is that in the call-and-response situation if the lead cantor varies his call but the response or chorus is stable, then it may be well to transcribe every line of call and indicate in the text where the chorus should be repeated.

Miruka has listed other aspects of style such as alliteration, assonance, rhythm and the use of ideophones. These are treated as mnemonic devices – resources that are available to the performer. Both Miruka and Okpewho agree that the texts draw their reference from their environment, which represents the world of the singers as they know it.

Finnegan (1977) speculates on oral poetry as either created communally or by specialists. She contends that while a good portion of oral art is communally created, special purpose poetry such as *Ifa* divination among the Yoruba of Nigeria is not of communal origin and is therefore not available to the general populace. However, as part of a society's folklore, such verbal creations can only reflect the society's world view. As Botkin has noted:

Folklore derives its integrity and survival values from a direct response to and participation in group experience, and the fusion of the individual and the communal²⁸

This communal ownership is further corroborated by Mac Edward Leach who thinks that:

All aspects of folklore, probably originally the product of individuals, are taken from the folk and put through a process of recreation, which through constant variation and repetition become a group product.²⁹

Miruka's view on this populism – specialism debate is equally significant. He concludes that:

the specialism or populism in poetic composition and performance differs with communities. In some there is overt training leading to specialization and elitisation of the poets. But in others, with many genres of poetry, there is no restriction on composers. And the fact that poems can be adopted by others tend to communal ownership. In a way, then, poetry is both specialist and populist.³⁰

1.10.5 From Oral to Written

A lot has been written about the oral performance as text-in-context. William Bascom in his essay "Four functions of folklore"³¹ argues that in the collection of folklore from the field, form alone may not be sufficient to yield critical information. In other words, he maintains, the item must not be isolated from its context or possible contexts. This view is echoed by Finnegan (1977) who pointedly states as her point of departure that:

Oral literature is by definition dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion – there is no other way in which it can be realised as a literary product.³²

Finnegan argues that the printed word alone represents only a shadow of the full actualisation. Her contention is that in reducing the oral performance to print, elements like voice quality, oral expressiveness, facial expressions and indeed all the resources of body language are lost. In addition, she maintains, receptivity to audience is also lost. This view has found support in both Okpewho and Kwesi

Yankah. This text-in-context school insists that the decontextualised, written form is an incomplete, mutilated and denatured version of the original.

Writing establishes a context-free language in the sense that what the writer has written cannot be questioned directly by the reader as in oral speech because it has been detached from its author. In any case, unlike in the oral performance where the performer and his audience are both present within the same interactive setting, the reader is generally absent at the time of the written text's composition. In much the same way, the author is usually not present when he is being read. This means that the written text merely relays utterance from a source. Writing, therefore, in the words of Walter F. Ong, is "autonomous discourse" with a somewhat distinct vatic quality.³³ The point to note here is that even though the written text may be derived from or based on an oral performance, the written text is *not* the oral text. In the act of committing squiggles to paper, a transformation takes place and the result – the written text – acquires an identity of its own. Put in another way, the text on the page is autotelic and should therefore be approached on its own terms. The written text exists on its own, free from any and all defining or restrictive contexts. However, as both Ong and Roland Barthes have pointed out, every text needs its extra textual supports. Ong puts it more starkly: 'every text builds some on pre-text'³⁴. Roland Barthes (1968) contends that any interpretation of a text has to move out of the text to refer to the reader. In other words, the text has no meaning until it is read, and the reader who reads and interprets it does so from his own experience of life in the world.³⁵

1.10.6 Translations

To bring us back to the question as to whether oral poetry can be written down, translated and presented as text, Mapenje and White think that there is little alternative because, according to them, in the absence of translation, such texts would remain unknown to larger audiences and would be kept within the narrow confines of ethnicity. But they are quick to recognize that reducing the vibrant, interactive situation of the oral performance to cold print has clear and undeniable shortcomings. What happens, they ask, when the performer can no longer look his audience in the eye? What happens when his gestures, his shifts in tone and emphasis, his use of topical allusions, for instance, have to be supplied in private by an anonymous reader?

The closest one can get to a solution to this is to use the full range of audiovisual equipment as suggested by Finnegan and other folklorists.³⁷

There is general agreement among these writers that a more imaginative reality derives from seeing and hearing the performance in a live, interactive setting. The printed text, in the words of Mapenje and White:

... is but an echo of something that happened in performance in another language in a real place at a particular moment in history.³⁸

The point being made here is that having experienced the performance in the real, oral situation it is obvious that what we have on the page as a translation represents only a minimal proportion of the total experience of the original performance. Translation itself can be a very tricky

proposition. This is because, as Okpewho has observed, all translations are at best only impressionistic approximates of the original. Okpewho notes again that:

...as editors of oral texts we have undertaken a by no means easy responsibility of reconciling two media of cultural expression... We owe at least to the culture from which we have taken something the duty not to violate our charge but to accord it as much of its integrity as the host culture will allow.³⁹

He adds that the translator must see himself as the "creative middleman". The problem of translation is further highlighted by Henderson in the Preface to his compilation of Japanese Haiku poetry. He notes:

An ideal translation should reproduce the effect of the original, but I have found that the best any translator can hope for is to reproduce the effect the originals have had on him.⁴⁰

There is also the problem of what is lost in the process of translating from one language into another. Chinweizu's position should be of interest here. He states that:

It is inevitable that translation should play a decisive role in any presentation in one language of works which were originally composed in the hundreds of languages which Africans have used to communicate with one another. This fact may cause disquiet to those who thoughtlessly bemoan what is inevitably lost in translation, and who do not give appropriate recognition to what comes through. It ought, therefore, to be noted that what gets lost in translation tends to be such language specific features as rhyme, rhythm, assonance and metric patterns which may not be reproducible in a language with different resources. On the other hand, much gets conveyed by competent translators, particularly the sense and force of a passage. A good example of this is the spectacular case of the Bible, which has been translated into virtually every language of the world. If what comes across is memorable, felicitous and moving, and if it retains the sense and

something of the style of the original, then the result, I believe, is as good as can be had.⁴¹

Basically, translation from an African language – in our case, Fante – into English requires enormous orientation. Certain concepts in Fante are simply untranslatable and may therefore require reinterpretation. Many words in English do not mean exactly the same things in Fante. Some Fante words provoke a greater variation of associations than their fixed counterparts in English. In addition, ideophones and ideophonic forms illustrate special meanings related to sound which are not available in translations into English. The same can be said for titles and praise names. However, as Chinweizu has noted above, competent translation is what makes all the difference.

1.10.7 Form, Content, Meaning.

In *The Theory of African Literature*, Chidi Amuta (1989) analyses the relationship between form and content. He sees content as the base while form represents the superstructure. He asserts that even though content often determines the form, the relationship is not unidirectional. He points out, however, that:

The conscious separation of form and content into two disparate areas of intellectual contemplation is not a natural aspect of the process of poetic composition in its realistic or naturalistic meaning.²⁶

The relationship between form and content is thus organic and dynamic. Valsov, like Amuta, underscores this relationship when he states:

Content is not just reducible to themes. Content must reveal itself naturally, or take form in order to become accessible to those who perceive art... When we perceive art we constantly move from form to content and vice versa.⁴³

Any discussion then on content must necessarily involve form and vice versa. Specifically, one cannot discuss the manifest content of Asafo songs without reference to the form of these songs.

Meaning, according to John Fiske (1984), is a process of negotiation between reader and text in which the text interacts with the personal and cultural experience of the reader. It also means that the conventions used in the text must be familiar to the user. Roland Barthes' idea of the two orders of signification, however, enables us to appreciate how this negotiating, interactive idea of meaning can be analysed. The first order of signification, according to Barthes (1968), is denotation, which refers to the commonsense, obvious meaning of a word about which there can be little or no doubt. On the second order, Barthes describes the interaction that occurs when the material to be analysed meets the emotions or feelings of the user and the values of his culture. This movement of meaning towards the subjective is what he calls connotation. This subjectivity does not operate only at the personal level. More than that, it is intersubjective in the sense that others in the culture share at least a large part of the emotions and feelings that give rise to the particular interpretation put on the text. Barthes also sees myths as powerful vehicles of meaning. A myth is a culture's way of explaining or understanding some aspects of reality or nature. For Barthes, a myth is not only a culture's way of thinking about something; it is also a way of conceptualising or understanding it. A myth then, he argues, is a chain of related

concepts. Going by this delineation, one can, for instance, examine the network of ideas generated by the term 'man' in traditional Fante-Akan thinking. Ideas of bravery, masculinity and valour, for instance, immediately spring to mind. But, of course, we know from common experience that not all men possess these attributes. Barthes' argument that connotations and myths are the main ways in which meanings work on the second order of signification can readily find application in the analysis and interpretation of the Asafo song texts selected for this study. Barthes also discusses another means through which meaning can be achieved. This is symbolism. When an object acquires through convention and use a meaning that enables it to stand for something other than itself, what we have is a symbol. Thus the Asafo drum or flag, for instance, can stand as an object in its own right or can also operate as a symbol.

John Fiske (1984) sees the metaphor as a figure of speech that exploits simultaneous similarity and difference. In other words, the metaphor works by expressing the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar. Fiske, echoing I. A. Richards, uses the terms 'vehicle' for the familiar and 'tenor' for the unfamiliar. He argues that since the metaphor works paradigmatically, both the 'vehicle' and the 'tenor' must have sufficient similarity to enable them to be placed within the same paradigm. Fiske also discusses metonymy and its relationship with metaphor. He notes that:

The representation of reality inevitably involves a metonymy; we choose a part of 'reality' to stand for the whole.²⁸

He goes on to point out that the selection of the metonym is crucial since it is from it that we are expected to construct the unknown remainder of reality. Metonyms, he concludes, work syntagmatically for realistic effect while metaphors work paradigmatically for imaginative or even surrealistic effect.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This study of Fante Asafo song texts inevitably has to involve, like the *sankofa* idiom, a retrospective look at traditions and origins. An attempt has therefore been made in this review to revisit writers and works rooted in, and drawing their inspiration from, tradition.

In addition, the Asafo song has been viewed as folksong and as oral poetry, and this has been located within the context of folklore. This review has also tried to explore the difficulties associated with transcription and translation of material from the field. Finally, issues such as form, content and meaning have been drawn into the discussion. This is because no meaningful discussion of the use or effectiveness of tropes in Asafo songs can take place without, at least, occasional references to form, content and meaning.

The issues raised here represent not only significant views in Oral African Literature as a field study. More than that, they represent useful points of departure for the study of Fante-Akan Asafo song texts.

NOTES

¹Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Nairobi : OUP 1970)

²For a detailed discussion of *Asafo* as a socio-political organisation, see for example, JEK Aggrey, *Asafo*, (Tema: GPC 1978)

³There is ample evidence that the Portuguese first landed at Shama in 1471, but did not stay there for long. See, for instance, J. van Brakel, 'Introduction' *The First 25 Years of the SMA Missionary Presence in the Gold Coast* (Nyemegan : Drukkerskollektief Geulle 1992) p.1 and Albert van Danzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana*, (Accra : Sedco Publishing Ltd. 1980) p.2

⁴O. pBitek, *Africa's Cultural Revolution* (London: Macmillan 1973)

⁵Bernard Dadie, *Le Pagne Noir : Legendes Africaines*, (Paris : P.A. 1955)

⁶Birago Diop, *Les Contes d'Ahmadou Koumba*, (Paris : Fasquell, 1947)

⁷Dika Akwa, *Bible de la Sagesse Bantoue*, (Paris : C.A.C.C. 1955)

⁸J.H.K. Nketia, *Funeral Dirges of the Akan*, (Exeter : J. Townsend Ltd. 1955)

⁹Ruth Finnegan (ed) *The Penguin Book of Oral Poetry*, (London : Penguin, 1978) p.1

¹⁰Amadou Ba, *Le Sage de Bandiagara*, (Paris : P.A. 1957)

¹¹Claude Wauthier, *The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa* (London: HEB 1978) p. 64

¹²Isidore Okpewho, *The Heritage of African Poetry*, (Hong Kong : Longman, 1985)

¹³Ruth Finnegan (ed) *The Penguin Book of Oral Poetry* p.6

¹⁴*Sankofa* is an Akan expression which means, literally, 'go back for it'. It is an expression which advises a judicious retrospective move to repossess all the good things that have been, inadvertently or otherwise, left behind.

¹⁵Chidi Amuta, *The Theory of African Literature*, (London : Zed Books Ltd. 1989)

¹⁶Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (Hammondsworth : Penguin, 1968) p.

¹⁷Claude Wauthier, p. 64

¹⁸Archer Taylor, 'Folklore and the Student of Literature' in Alan Dundes (ed) *The Study of Folklore* (Englewood Cliffs : Prentice Hall Inc. 1965) p.34

¹⁹C. Holman and W. Harmon., *A Handbook to Literature*, (New York : Macmillan, 1966)

²⁰Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context*, (Cambridge : C.U.P. 1977)

²¹Ibid.

²²Okumba Miruka, *Encounter With Oral Literature* (Nairobi: East African Pub. Ltd. 1994) p. 64

²³Isidore Okpewho, *The Heritage of African Poetry* (Hong Kong: Longmans) p. 8

²⁴Isidore Okpewho, *The Oral Performance in Africa*, (Ibadan: Spectrum Ltd. 1990) p.10

²⁵J.H.K. Nketia, *Funeral Dirges of the Akan*. (Exeter: J. Townsend Ltd.) p. 104

²⁶Daniel Avorgbedor, "Preservation, Transmission and Realisation of song Texts: A Psycho-musical approach" in I. Okpewho (ed) *The Oral Performance in Africa* (Ibadan: spectrum 1990) p. 223

²⁷Ibid. p.

²⁸ B.A. Botkin in M. Leach (ed) *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (New York: Funk and Wagnalis 1949) p. 339

²⁹Mac Edward Leach in Ibid p. 401

³⁰Miruka p. 95

³¹William Bascom, 'Four Functions of Folklore' in Alan Dundes, op. cit. P.279

³²Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* p. 2

³³Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, (London : Methuen, 1982) p.78

³⁴Ibid. p.162

³⁵Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, (London : Cape 1968)

³⁶John Mapenje and Landeg White, *Oral Poetry from Africa*, (London : Longmans 1963)

³⁷Ruth Finnegan, 'Introduction' in *Limba Stories and Storytelling* (London : Penguin, 1972) See also, Herskovits and Herskovits, *Dahomeyan Narratives*, (Northwestern Univ. 1957), G.T. Basden, *Niger Ibos*, (Cass, 1966) and Ulli Beier, 'Introduction' in *Yoruba Poetry*, (Cambridge, 1970)

³⁸ John Mapenje and L. White (ed) *Oral poetry from Africa*. (Longman 1983)

³⁹Isodore Okpewho, *The Oral Performance in Africa* p. 111

⁴⁰H. G. Henderson, *An Introduction to Haiku* (London:Doubleday 1958 p. iv)

⁴¹Chinweizu (ed) *Voices from Twentieth Century Africa* Lagos: Prestige Bks Ltd. 1987) p. xxxiv

⁴²Chidi Amuta, *The Theory of African Literature* p. 86

⁴³V. V. Vaslov, "On Content and form in Art as a Reflection of Life" in *Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics and the Arts*. (Moscow: Progress 1980) p. 271

⁴⁴John Fiske, *Communication Studies* (New York: Doubleday 1985) p. 62

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 FORM IN ASAFO SONGS

The preceding chapter provided a general introduction to Asafo as an oral art form among the Fante-Akan. This was placed within the context of oral poetry and some of the significant views relating to the nature of oral poetry were drawn into the discussion. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to examine form in the asafo song. The term 'form' literally means 'shape' and it denotes the manner in which parts of a whole are combined. In music, for instance, form refers to the plan of construction, or the arrangement of phrases, sections and movements of a song. But, for our present purposes, the term 'form' as used here refers to the general organisation of the various components of the songs in relation to their total effect. As a correlate of 'content', form here will be treated as the organisational pattern through which the content emerges. Chidi Amuta has observed that form is the superstructure when content is likened to a base.¹ This chapter will also discuss the structure of the asafo song in relation to the accoutrements employed in the realisation of the texts, together with the accompaniments and the role of drum language texts as complements to the song texts. In addition, the respective roles of the lead singer or cantor and the chorus will be discussed. In particular, the resources and techniques available to, and exploited by, the cantor will be examined. Finally, the form of tropes that occur in the songs selected for this study will also be discussed

Ɔdomankoma bɔɔ adze
Brɛbrɛ bɔɔ adze
M'abɔdzin wɔfrɛ m' Kwesi Asafua

Ɔdomankoma³ created (the world)
Brɛbrɛ⁴ created the world
My praise name is called Kwesi Asafua

This piece of drum language does two things at once: first, the drummer acknowledges that everything in creation is of God, including the wood and the skin out of which the drum was fashioned. For this reason, the drummer begins by paying homage to God. In addition, he recognizes that his talent and skill as a drummer are all God-given, for which he must make the appropriate acknowledgements. Having thus paid his homage, he then announces himself as the drummer and the reason or the message by beating out his name to conclude the text:

M'abɔdzin wɔfrɛ m' Kwesi Asafua
My praise name is called Kwesi Asafua

The drum text is tightly woven as the above example illustrates. In the case of a festival, for instance, the text may run thus:

Ɔdomankoma bɔɔ adze
Brɛbrɛ bɔɔ adze
Asaase na huntuma abɔ ngua
Woridzi asem ben?

Ɔdomankoma created the world
Brɛbrɛ created the world
Earth and dust have gathered together
What is it are they talking about?

'Earth' and 'dust' here refer specifically to the living and the dead respectively. The text therefore evokes a picture of the living and the ancestors communing together. This text is usually a preface to the main message. If it is a festival, for example, the text may continue:

Bɔ̀bɔ̀r Mfantse akan afe
Ma afe aso

Bɔ̀bɔ̀r Mfantse³ have counted up to one year.
And the year is up

The community is thus reminded that the year has come full circle and that the time is due for the celebration of the festival. In the case of a funeral announcement, the same initial formula may be used and concluded as follows:

Ifun n'abasa gu no koko
Oguan Wuda
Dasanyi wuda.

The corpse's arms are folded on its chest
The day of a sheep's death
The day of man's death

Here, attention is called to the fact of death in the community, at the same time the occasion is used to reflect on the inescapable certainty of death for all living beings. To cite one more example, the lead drummer may on occasion inform an Asafo captain or some other notable thus:

Safohen, Safohen
Yebɔ̀nom nsa
Yebɔ̀nom aborɔ̀fo – nsa

Safohen⁶, Safohen
We want to drink
We want the white man's drink

To which the addressee will usually comply good-naturedly. This presupposes that the person or the people for whom these messages are meant must 'have an ear for drums', as the local expression has it.

In the actual start up, when everything needed is ready for the performance, the lead drummer calls out in drum language to the metal gong players:

Adawura Kofi
Adawura Kofi
Ma wo nsa nko

Adawura Kofi⁷
Adawura Kofi
Let your hand begin

The *dawur* or metal gongs begin while the rest of the ensemble join in succession. It is not the intention of this writer to explore the technical details of the music of the ensemble but suffice it to say that while the various instrumentalists are playing out their respective rhythms, the lead drummer often rises above the music to either beat out a member or some other person's appellation, a proverb or one kind of message or the other. For instance, he may invite the flag bearer to display his skills on the grounds:

Tuu – akwan, Tuu – akwan
Fa wo nsa
Beka m'akoko

Tuu – akwan, Tuu – akwan⁸
Bring your hand

To touch my chest

The flag bearer responds to the message by paying the appropriate homage to the lead drummer before he proceeds to perform with his flag.

The lead drummer has a lot of room to operate while the ensemble is in progress. He can call attention to the rhythm, assist a player to achieve the correct tempo, beat out a message or signal the end of the performance. This is usually done by means of a formula. A typical one is:

Ebenadze na mbobaa wɔ m'
Bosompo na mbobaa wɔ m'

What is it that has rocks in it?
It's Bosompo⁹ that has rocks in it

Here the linguistic meaning of the text does not in any way suggest the message. However, convention and practice enable the other players to recognize it as their cue to end the performance. This discussion of the drum language of asafo may appear digressive but there is a strong link between it and the song texts, as will be seen later.

2.2 THE ROUSING CALL

A distinctive feature of Asafo singing is the rousing call. Here, usually at the beginning of the singing, a member raises his voice above everybody else's and calls out:

Call:	Asafo ko eyi hɔn!
Response:	Yeeyi hɔn!
Call:	Ebiasa e?

Response: Yetse hɔn do!
 Call: Ana dɔm bi botum hɛn?
 Response: Dɔm biara runntum hɛn!

Call: Asafo born out of war
 Response: Out of war
 Call: The three?
 Response: We are sitting on them

Call: Can any group stand us?
 Response: No group can stand us

This opening formula reminds the members that they, the asafo, were born out of war (ko eyi hɔn) which is concurred with in the affirmation 'yeeyi hɔn'. The exchange continues with the further affirmation that come the enemy three times their numerical size the enemy shall be subdued. The concluding lines pose the question as to whether any foe can stand up to them, whose obvious reply is a resounding 'No'!

With little or no variation, this formula appears to be common with all Fante asafo groups, a fact, which Aggrey¹⁰ has also recognized. Interestingly, this opening formula is more or less obligatory at the beginning of the song performance. However, the lead singer or cantor may choose his moment to bridge one song and the next with this formula. In not a few instances, this researcher discovered that the formula was used in the middle of a song where in the cantor's judgement, enthusiasm for the singing was waning. It is therefore not only an opening formula; it is also a rousing call. This is also evident in instances where the cantor sings a phrase or two and is not pleased with the response. In such as situation, he momentarily abandons that song to slot in the

formula before the song is started all over again. The formula is sometimes simplified into:

Call: Tuafu (or the name of the particular group) agoo!
Response: A mee

This is the usual way of calling for attention in ordinary situations such as a person might use to announce his presence at the door before he enters a house. In the same way, a person wishing to address a group is more likely than not to apply this formula as a preface to his delivery as a means of capturing the attention of his audience.

Another variant of the call is demonstrated by the Nkum asafo company of Cape Coast. The Nkum claims indigenous status in Cape coast with strong links to the gods of the Cape Coast pantheon. Not too surprisingly, therefore, their opening formula is:

Call: Wontwe mangya
Response: Mangya bra

Call: Strive for the stability of the state
Response: May the State stand

which is also the greeting formula for traditional priests and priestesses.¹¹

The rousing call (and the response) is a vital part of Asafo singing. Any discussion of form must necessarily recognise this feature, whether it marks the formal opening of proceedings or whether, as its name suggests, it awakens or

rouses the singers (and drummers) into renewed action in the course of a performance.

2.3 STRUCTURE OF THE ASAFO SONG TEXT

Asafo songs are meant for group singing. The dominant structure is the call-and-response format. There is a lead singer or cantor who does the solo part while the rest of the singers pick up the response or chorus. The solo or call by itself usually sounds incomplete and creates some kind of suspense, rather like a question awaiting an answer. In effect, the solo calls and the chorus responds. However, within this basic antiphonal character exist other variations. Perhaps the simplest form of the song can be illustrated with the following:

Yereye yeako o
Yereye yeako o
Yereye yeako o
Ma obi aba a
Yereye yeako o
Ma obi so abehye hen anan m'

We are getting ready to go
We are gettng ready to go
We are getting ready to go
So others can come
We are getting ready to go
So others can take our place

Here, the cantor sings through the text and the chorus merely repeat the entire text after the cantor. It is a common feature of the asafo song to be called by the cantor and responded to by the chorus three times. In the above example, the text is based on a simple observation on the transient nature of human existence. The song is realized and made to come into its own through a series of repetitions. In

this example, even though the basic call and response pattern involves the cantor singing through the text and the chorus following in like manner in an A-B-A-B pattern, the cantor has the freedom to ad lib or improvise. For instance, in the second rendition of the same text he may preface the basic text with:

Call: Yereye yeako a
Tuafo mba yereye yeako
Wonnnye wo nnkeda a
Wokyerε wo wi
(Repeat full text from beginning to end)

Call: We are getting ready to go
Children of Tuafo, we are ready to go
When they don't want to host you
They show you the setting sun
(Repeat full text from beginning to end)

The chorus then responds by singing through the basic text.

Essentially, what the cantor has done here in his preface to the main text is to indicate the identity of the group (Tuafo) and spice it up with a favourite wise saying, proverb or aphorism of his. Later in this chapter, some of the resources available to the cantor in the realization of the song text will be examined but, for the present, it is instructive to note that the third and final rendition of the text may have yet another preface such as:

Call: Nyimpa bae ako o
Nyimpa bae ako a
Tuafo mbanyin ei
Yereye yeako o
Hen ara yese yereye yeako
(Repeat basic text from beginning till end)

Call: A human being came only to go
 A human being came only to go
 Men of Tuafo
 We are getting ready to go
 We say we are ready to go
 We are ready to go
(Repeat basic text from beginning till end)

A second pattern of the song has the cantor singing the entire text while the chorus is made up of just a single line. This is illustrated in the following song as performed by the Nkum asafo company:

Call: Aborafo hom nda buronyi ase
 Edom santsen ei
 Hom nda buronyi ase
 Buronyi ayɛ bi ama hom
 Hwe mbɛ daanno Memenda anapa ndɔnsia
 Sɛ woennyɛ buronyi a
 Nkyɛ wɔdze Kwamena kɔr Esaaman
 Response: Abora ei, wɔnda buronyi ase o

Call: People of Abora give your thanks to the white man
 You hordes
 Give your thanks to the white man
 The white man has saved your dignity
 Imagine the other day at six o'clock
 If the white man had not intervened
 Kwamena would have been sent to Esaaman
 Response: Abora give your thanks to the white man

In this example, the song reveals the details of an actual historical incident. The details are sung by the cantor while the chorus merely repeats the opening line of the cantor's part. By concluding with a repetition of the opening line, a certain sense of 'roundness' or completeness is achieved. In the actual realization, the lead singer may considerably lengthen the solo part by resorting to strategies such

as those illustrated in 'Yereye yeako' above but, basically, the entire text is sung by the cantor which the chorus does a one-line response.

Another pattern is manifested by alternate solo and chorus of more or less equal length. In 'Innyim Etuei', for instance, we can see this call and response pattern:

Cantor: Owo o, Owo o
Owo innyim Etuei
Na ese eboko ei

Chorus: Owo o, Owo o
Innyim Etuei
Na ese eboko
Owo gyae

Cantor: Afrɛ wo yamu
Asafo eduasa
Yeetu apem

Chorus: Afrɛ wo yamu
Asafo eduasa
Yeetu apem
Afrɛ wo yamu

Cantor: You, you
You do not know Etuei¹²
Yet you want to go

Chorus: You, you
You do not know Etuei
Yet you want to go
You'd better forget it

Cantor: You are terrified
Of us the thirty
Who sacked the thousand

Chorus: You are terrified
Of us the thirty
Who sacked the thousand
You are terrified.

In this pattern, a certain sense of balance is achieved by the solo and the chorus by virtue of the somewhat equal length of call and response. However, this pattern is itself subject to variation. In 'Kofi Dzewa', for example, this kind of variation occurs but only after the basic pattern has established itself:

Cantor: Kofi Dzewa ei
Wo kyew nye yi
Chorus: Yee wo kyew nye yi
Cantor: Egya Dzewa ei
Wo kyew nye yi
Chorus: Yee wo kyew nye yi
Cantor: Kofi Dzewa tutu mbirika
Rutwuw ne tun adze
Chorus: Oko yi ye abanyindze o
Yenya ko a
Yenya abo a
Kofi Dzewa ei
Wo kyew nye yi

Cantor: Kofi Dzewa
Here's your headgear¹³
Chorus: Yes, here it is
Cantor: Father Dzewa
Here's your headgear
Yes, here it is
Cantor: Kofi Dzewa rushed into battle
Returned dragging his buttocks on the
ground
Chorus: This war is for the valiant
Whenever there is a war
Whenever there are bullets
Kofi Dzewa
Here's your headgear

In other instances, the basic pattern remains the same but the variation comes across in an alternate long solo, short chorus and/or short solo, long chorus form.

This is seen, for instance, in 'Obi ne mba',

Cantor: Oko ano ei
Obi ne mba na woruwu ei
Obi ne mba na woruwu
Ampa
Ansa okum abofo
Nkorofu yi wakotow daadze
Worututu mbirika
Chorus: Yoo obi ne mba
Yeama nkorofu yi anom po nsu
Yoo obi ne mba
Cantor: Ansa okum abofo
Nkorofu yi wakotow daadze
Worututu mbirika
Chorus: Yoo obi ne mba
Abora a
Worututu mbirika
Yoo obi ne mba
Abora a
Worututu mbirika
Yoo obi ne mba
Cantor: Obi ne mba wo mu ei
Chorus: Yee

Cantor: On the battle front
It's someone's children are dying
Someone's children are falling
Indeed
Ansa the killer of hunters¹⁴
These people are rolling on the ground
And scurrying

Chorus: Yes someone's children
Cantor: Ansa the killer of hunters
These people are rolling on the ground
And scurrying
Chorus: Yes, someone's children
It's Abora
They are scurrying

Yes, someone's children
 It's Abora
 They are scurrying
 Yes, someone's children
 Cantor: Yes, someone's offspring
 Chorus: Yes
 We have forced them to drink sea water
 Yes, someone's children

Sometimes the cantor's part may differ completely from the chorus' and the two parts may appear as discrete entities. However, the thematic linkage is never in doubt. Such a pattern is evidenced in 'Aso Tsie':

Cantor: Ammfa annka hen o
 Ammfa annka hen o
 Yoo me na ammfafa annka hen o
 Yoo m'egya ammfafa annka hen o
 Ammfa annka hen
 Ammfa annka hen a oye
 Chorus: Yesen wo tsir a
 Yesen wo adwen
 Cantor: Oguaa Tuafo
 Hen asem bi a yeatse a
 Chorus: Aso tsie, tsie, tsie

Cantor: If you don't provoke us
 If you don't provoke us
 By my mother, if you don't
 By my father, if you don't
 If you don't provoke us
 It's in your own interest
 Chorus: We are more sensible than you
 We have more wisdom than you
 Cantor: Oguaa Tuafo
 Something that we have heard
 Chorus: Let the ear listen, listen, listen

Another interesting pattern is realized with two solo singers playing the roles of first cantor and second cantor respectively. In its simplest form, the lead cantor

takes up almost the entire solo part while the second cantor usually takes the last line of the solo before the chorus comes in. The second cantor therefore acts as a kind of bridge between the lead cantor and the chorus. This pattern reveals itself in 'Abese nya wu':

1 st Cantor:	Abese nya wu a Kurowpon enya wu Abese nya wu a Kurowpon enya wu Anoma kakraba, nyansafo anoma
2 nd Cantor:	Hen anoma kakraba, nyansafo anoma
Chorus:	Abese nya wu a Kurowpon enya wu a Wontow edur mfre hen
1 st Cantor:	If Abese perishes It's the entire town that has perished If Abese perishes It's the entire town that has perished Little bird, wise little bird
2 nd Cantor:	Our little bird, wise little bird
Chorus:	If Abese perishes It is the entire town that has perished

This interplay between first and second cantor often attains creative heights where the solo part alternates between them in succession, which in itself constitutes another kind of call and response within the overall antiphonal structure. An example of this can be seen in 'Menye m'atamfo ehyia.'. In the rendition of this song, the usual call and response structure is followed. However, in the third stanza the singing goes:

Cantor 1:	Menye m'atamfo o yoo
Cantor 2:	Menye m'atamfo ehyia o Tuafo ei wogye hen a oye
Cantor 1:	Kuku gyansa Abora

Mpatafo yc na de
 Cantor 2: Keka dadze a
 Nkye daadze abra wo
 Cantor 1: Me na Kumwa kyee m'adze a
 Nkyo mennkeda bun yi mu
 Cantor 2: Nkwaakwaasem Egya Edu ei
 Menye m'atamfo boko
 Cantor 1: Nkwantabisa Akyeampon
 Oko ba a
 Pra hen kwan mu ifua ei
 Chorus: Nkwaakwaasem Egya Edu ei
 Menye m'atamfo ehyia o

1st Cantor: My enemies, yes
 2nd Cantor: I have met my enemies
 Tuafo, who deserve to be rescued
 1st Cantor: Kukugyansa Abora
 Peacemakers are rare indeed
 2nd Cantor: You play with iron
 Iron plays with you
 1st Cantor: Had my mother Kumwa endowed me
 I wouldn't find myself in this pit
 2nd Cantor: Egya Edu the proud one,
 I shall fight my enemies
 1st Cantor: Nkwantabisa Akyeampon
 In the event of war
 Clear the mist from our path
 Chorus: Egya Edu the proud one,
 I have met my enemies.

This kind of exchange between the two cantors creates a very refreshing effect. By setting aside for a dramatic moment the chorus, which then assumes the place of the audience, the first and second cantors engage in their own version of call and response after which the chorus resumes its usual role to complete the round. This practice readily invites comparison with the situation in jazz music where after the basic pattern of the song has been established, bassist and drummer, for instance, can engage in their own kind of dialogue in the call and response fashion while the rest of the instruments are either muted, subdued or even silent

for a while before coming together again to re-establish the song. One is in particular reminded about the artistry of Jimmy Smith who sometimes deliberately sets up such a dialogue between his favourite Hammond organ and the entire horns section of his band. It can also be observed that sometimes the second cantor simply goes to the rescue – as it were – of the first cantor, if for instance, the first cantor appears to be fumbling or having problems with the pitch. This is done in such a way that there is no perceptible break in the solo part.

What this means is that the second cantor is not necessary 'second best' Indeed he could comfortably lead as the first cantor or even as sole cantor. Again, even though there are well known and accomplished cantors, it is often the case that any member of the group with a bit of experience can play the role of lead singer or cantor.

It must be pointed out, however, that these observed patterns are not fixed, nor are they exhaustive. Committing a song text to paper tends to create the impression that every single rendition of that song will follow the observed pattern, but nothing can be farther from the truth. As Alan Dundes has noted:

Writing and, even more, printing freezes
The form and appreciably reduces
The possibility of variation¹⁵

With traditional music such as *asafo*, we cannot put a finger on any particular song realization and claim it as *the* song. The song, any song is, at best, only an

ideal abstraction, which can be realized many times over as versions. In other words, the song, any song, has a multiple existence. The proof of this lies in the fact that, more often than not, even the same song rendered again by the same set of singers shows variations especially in the lead singer's part even when the time between the two renditions is considerably brief. For this reason, the songs captured on tape, transcribed and translated only represent one particular realization at a particular moment in time. These transcriptions therefore do not and cannot represent any such ideal abstraction. At best, they are only versions. This is because as far as the performer of a traditional song in a largely oral culture is concerned, there is little, if any existence, to a song apart from its performance.

2.4 RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE CANTOR

Georg Herzog, in an article on folk music, has observed that:

In traditional music there is room for individual creation... but much of the creative process consist of recreating and remoulding the music while it is still being performed¹⁶

He further notes that traditional singers do not employ writing as a means of fixing the musical form. Consequently, the form itself appears to be in a constant state of flux and recreation. These observations are equally relevant to asafó song performance. The chorus part, as already illustrated, is relatively stable while the cantor's part shows considerable variations. This is simply because the cantor as the lead singer has certain resources that he can strategize with in the realization of his art. He builds up his song by selecting from a number of stock phrases and

formulas, both textual and musical. That is to say, in the process of improvising, the cantor does not usually create any material that is entirely novel.

For the asafo cantor, one key strategy is to play around with the theme as already illustrated in 'Yereye yɛakɔ' above. He can also insinuate, resort to proverbs and other wise sayings. His resources also include sound effects such as alliterations. Finally, there is the use of what might thoughtlessly be dismissed as nonsense syllables but which this researcher believes is either highly condensed language or cryptic forms of expression whose unravelling is an intellectual challenge worth exploring.

To appreciate the cantor's art, we can examine the full text of 'Merennkaa wo!' (#33). This song boasts about the battle readiness of the group under the able command of their leader, the versatile captain, Kofi Anamoa. The message of the song can be summed up in just a few lines. However, the song derives the beauty of its form from the call and response structure within which the creativity of the cantor reveals itself:

Cantor: Ankor ei, merennkaa wo
Yee yee merennkaa wo ara da
Yee Andɔ ei, merennkaa wo ei
Menye wo bɔkɔ
Merennkaa wo ei

Chorus: Yee merennkaa wo
Cantor: Yee Saka ei, merennkaa wo ei
Menye wo bɔkɔ
Merennkaa wo ei

Chorus: Yee merennkaa wo
Cantor: Hen safo hen ketsekɛtse Kofi Anamoa
Chorus: Onyim dadze mu suo

Cantor: Hen safohen ketsekete Kofi Anamoa
 Chorus: Onyim daadze mu so ei
 Yerennkaa wo ei
 Yenye wo beko
 Yerennkaa wo ei

Which translates as:

Cantor: Ankor, I shall not warn you
 Yes, I shall never warn you
 Yes Ankor, I shall not warn you
 I'll fight you
 There shall be no warning
 Chorus: Yes, I shall not warn you
 Cantor: Yes Saka, I shall not warn you
 I shall fight you
 I shall not warn you
 Chorus: Yes, I shall not warn you
 Cantor: Our captain, little Kofi Anamoa
 Chorus: He knows how to wield the iron
 Cantor: Our captain, little Kofi Anamoa
 Chorus: He knows how to wield the iron
 We shall not warn you
 We shall fight you
 There will be no warning

Since the typical asafo song is usually sung three times, it will be instructive for our purposes to examine what the cantor does the first time and to compare with the second and third times.

As already stated, the singers' boast is about the fact that they are ever ready to fight the enemy at any time and without notice. The song also affirms the singers' faith and confidence in the martial ardour of their captain, Kofi Anamoa, his diminutive size notwithstanding. The frequent repetition of 'I shall not warn you' underscores the battle-readiness of the group. The cantor opens the song with the names Ankor, Ando and Saka. These, obviously, are names of some of his perceived foes. That they are specifically mentioned therefore does two main

things in this first part. First, by means of repetition, he emphasizes the group's battle-readiness. Two, to give a sense of immediacy to his threat, he cites the names of some of his foes. We can now go on to examine the second part of the rendition:

Cantor:	Merennkaa wo ei yee yee Kukugyansa Abora mbogyafɔ yi Wɔso wɔso kɔ wɔbrɛ wo adze Merennkaa wo ei Merennkaa wo ara da Yee Andɔ ei merennkaa wo ei Menye wo bɔkɔ Merennkaa wo ei
Chorus	Yee merennkaa wo

Cantor:	I shall not warn you Kukugyansa these bloody Aboras They carry, they carry, You are bought down I shall not warn you Yes Andɔ, I shall not warn you I shall fight you I shall not warn you
Chorus:	Yes, I shall not warn you etc.

Here in this second part, the cantor introduces a curious element into the song:

Kukugyansa Abora mbogyafɔ yi
Wɔso wɔso kɔ wɔbrɛ wo adze¹⁷

These lines are difficult to interpret and therefore almost impossible to translate into English. One can only try to make some sense out of them that will fit the overall meaning of the text. "Kukugyansa" could well be an epithet for "Abora" which is the name of a subgroup of Fantes living in the area of the same name. "Abora" therefore refers to the people and the place where they live. "Mbogyafɔ" could well be a variant of "aboyafɔ" which means, "bloody" or

“bloodthirsty”. This then can give the clue that the preceding epithet – if that is what it is – cannot be complimentary. It is somehow safe then to assume that “kukugyansa” is probably a term of contempt for a hated foe. The next line is equally intriguing. This is, quite possibly, a mangled form of the proverb that suggests “what goes up must come down” or even “pride goes before a fall”. As already noted, the cantor can choose his moment to throw in a favourite saying or proverb as part of his improvisation and, again, this could well be an instance of that.

In the third and final part of the song, the cantor goes:

Cantor: Merennkaa wo ei
Kasa kyir kyir akorabo annso
Woso woso ko wobre wo adze
Mikyir banyin a orobo me nseku de:
Nnkoo-da ei,
Merennkaa wo... etc.

Cantor: I shall not warn you
I hate to talk about bullets that cannot fly
They carry, they carry, they bring you down
I hate the man who disparages me
You-who-have-never-fought-before
I shall not warn you etc.

Here again, as in the second part the cantor introduces a similar curious item:

“Kasa kyir kyir akorabo annso”

Again, this is open to all kinds of speculations. The sound effect produced by singing out this particular line appears to comply with the metrical demands of

the song. Its value then as sound effect is just as valid as any linguistic meaning we are able to ascribe to it. However, in the lines:

Mikyir banyin a ɔrobɔ me nseku de
Nnkoo – da ei
Merennkaa wo etc

we are brought back to the more familiar use of language. Here, the cantor insinuates about the man who indulges in idle gossip. This man he refers to as 'Nnkoo-da' used as a by-name for one who has never had the courage to experience war at first hand. It is also a pejorative term for a weak and ineffectual person. We can therefore see from this illustration the kind of strategies a cantor may adopt in the practice of his art. Quite often, a cantor may adopt a phrase, proverb or a set of praise-names that keep popping up in his singing. This rather limited pool out of which he draws may not necessarily suggest a shortage of ideas. The frequent occurrence of an expression or of a particular line may well serve as the personal signature of the cantor, which other members of the community recognize.¹⁸

Even if the language is so unfamiliar as to appear cryptic, its curiosity value alone can excite the imagination. Sometimes, it is necessary to go beyond merely unravelling the sense to determine in what way a line by means of, say, its sound effects, contributes to the overall meaning of the text. It needs to be pointed out, though, that one song alone is not sufficient to reveal the entire range of resources that will distinguish one cantor from another.

2.5 FORM OF IMAGERY

Generally speaking, the form of images in asafó songs reveals a certain interrelationship among the images. They reveal the people as being one with their environment. There are frequent references to the flora and fauna, for instance. A good number of the songs also deal with objects associated with the livelihood pursuits of the singers. Included also are asafó paraphernalia such as drums, gongs and bells. There are also objects of worship and reverence as well as references to the earth, the sky and the sea. These homely images not only represent the world as the singers know it; they also constitute the matrix of references for their beliefs, ideas and thoughts. The images are sometimes self-defining. The strong 'we-feeling' engendered by some of these songs not only defines the people whose song they are. It also serves to define the people they sing about in their threats, boasts, insinuations, taunts and abuse. There is also the occasional reference to the white men and his country. This, perhaps, is not too surprising since the people of the area under study have had a long history of contacts and association with Europeans – Portuguese, the Dutch and, especially, the British. These images and allusions will be given fuller treatment in Chapter 5.

2.6 CONCLUSION

The dominant call-and-response character of asafó singing outlined in this chapter is in itself a reflection of the character of the society whose heritage asafó is. The strong 'we feeling' as borne out by the content of the songs, the I/we dichotomy, and the self-definition (and by implication the definition of the other) all suggest a society that sees itself as bound by a common tradition and heritage. The call-and-response format is a validation of this social feeling. As Barbara Bowen has noted,

The importance of the call-and-response pattern is its continual affirmation of collective voice. As antiphonal phrases repeat and respond to each other, the singers are assenting to membership in a group and affirming that their experience is shared¹⁹

The dominant pattern of asafó singing is a positive affirmation of this position. In this chapter, we have endeavoured to examine form in asafó songs texts. While it has been made clear that form resists being frozen by means of writing, it has also been demonstrated that the lead singer or cantor has ample room for improvisation. It has been established in addition that unintelligibility of the text need not pose a problem as such scrambled words or expressions do not merely depend on linguistic meaning for their effectiveness. As has also been demonstrated, such apparently difficult portions of the song text reveal their effectiveness variously as the cantor's personal signature, or as scat, for instance. In the next chapter, we shall turn our attention to content and in the process, the

link between form and content will be examined. In addition, the manifest content of the songs selected will be discussed in some detail.

NOTES

¹Chidi Amuta, *A Theory of African Literature* (London: Zed Books Ltd. 1989)

pg. 88

²Of the seven Asafo Companies in Cape Coast only one – Anafo – has three gongs instead of the usual two

³ 'Odomankoma' is one of the several by-names of God and creator

⁴ 'Brɛbrɛ' is another by-name of the creator God.

⁵ 'Bɔɔbrɔ Mfantse' is the name of a section of the Fante population that claims to being of indigenous Fante stock

⁶ 'Captain'

⁷ Adawura Kofi! The drummer here uses this appellation for both the gong and its player

⁸Another name for the flag bearer. 'Tuu-akwan' literally means one – who – leads – the way

⁹The sea is usually conceptualised as a god (Bosom = god; po = sea)

¹⁰J.E.K. Aggrey, *Asafo*, (Accra : BGL 1982)

¹¹For a detailed discussion of greeting formulae in Fante see J.B. Crayner, *Yee hyiahyia oo!* (Accra: BGL 1975)

¹² Etuei is both the name of the god and the shrine where it is located

¹³ This is a kind of hat studded with protective talismans and other charms used as part of the warrior's battle gear. Its capture in war is both literally and symbolically a very humiliating experience for the owner

¹⁴ In asafo thinking, the hunter is the quintessential warrior. 'Okum – abɔfo' or 'The – killer – of – hunters' therefore places the one on whom this title is conferred (Ansa) head and shoulder above ordinary warriors

¹⁵ Alan Dundes in Preface to Georg Herzog, "Stability and form in Traditional Cultivated Music in Alan Dundes (ed) *The Study of folklore* (Englewood Cliffs Prentice Hall 1965) p. 168

¹⁶ Georg Herzog op cit p. 170

¹⁷ I have sampled opinions on the possible meanings of these lines. The cantor whose work used in this particular case stated matter – of – factly that this was the way his late father, himself a cantor of the Bentsir Asafo Company, sang it.

¹⁸ I happened to listen to a programme of asafo songs on Radio Central F.M. station in Cape Coast. Kɔw Egyem one of my informants who was with me at the time exclaimed, that is Egya Tandoh; 'how do you know?' I asked. 'That is how he builds up his songs' was the reply. Needless to say, the credits at end of the programme proved Kɔw Egyem right

¹⁹ Barbara Bowen in "Call-and-response in Cane" in L. Gates (ed) *Black Literary Theory* p. 189

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 THE CONTENT OF ASAFO SONGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Chapter, an attempt was made to highlight the structure of the Asafo song text. In particular, the relationship between form and content was established. It was noted that as a correlate of content, form provides the medium through which content reveals itself and that they constitute the two horns with which meaning must be negotiated. This chapter examines the relationship between form and content in asafo songs. In discussing the content of asafo songs, an empirical approach will be used. This involves assembling and categorizing objective facts from the entire range of songs selected for this study; to form a hypothesis and to explain them and, as far as possible, to eliminate any human element or bias from this process. The empirical approach is opted for because apart from it being deductive rather than inductive, it also assumes a universal objective reality for study and assumes further the possibility of devising a method for studying this reality objectively. To this end, therefore, the principles of content analysis will be applied.

Content analysis is designed to produce an objective, measurable and verifiable account of the manifest content of messages (Fiske, 1982). It operates on the assumption that chosen units in a communication system can be identified and counted and on the basis of that certain deductions and informed generalisation can be made. Thus, for example, if one examines a specified number of asafo songs and counts the number of times references are made to women, one may

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discover very few or no instance at all. It may also be discovered that the concept of 'woman' is reinterpreted as 'man not meeting the expectations of a male-dominated society in terms of courage, bravery, strength, and battle-readiness'. On the basis of this observation arrived at through content analysis, fairly accurate deductions can be made about the nature of the society, its relationship with its neighbours, its social values and so on.

3.2 THEMES

A close study of the sixty-odd songs selected for this study reveals that they can conveniently be placed in five broad categories along the lines of the dominant themes they carry. These five categories are: war, death, praise, ridicule and appeal to deity. As already indicated, Asafo is basically a warrior organisation. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of the songs should be on war or about war. Practically, each of the songs in this category is either directly concerned with preparations for war, with war itself or with the celebration of victory in war involving great feats, heroic deeds and the routing and humiliation of the enemy. The songs that deal with praise as a central theme are often about the Asafo as a group or about heroic individuals and their accomplishments, especially in war. As warrior organisations, members have to at one point or the other confront death as a reality. References to death in the songs reveal the singers' attitude towards death not only as the natural end of life but also as the price of heroism. In songs where a god or some other spirit being is appealed to, we see a practical demonstration of a people's faith in a belief system that has enabled them to order their lives as members of the same culture. The final category, ridicule, includes songs that do not merely ridicule the enemy. It also

includes songs that deal with boasts, taunts, satire and downright abuse. It is here that we see one Asafo group or the other defining another. Here, also, the boasts or taunts or insults may be about historical or current events in which, for instance, they subdued the enemy or had the edge one way or the other over the enemy. The song may also be about the enemy's misfortune or disgrace or some other kind of embarrassment. It is sometimes the case that songs of satire, ridicule or abuse may descend into obscene references to sexual organs and the sexual act itself. Here, it may well be that art prescribes polite ways for saying impolite things, or for expressing the inexpressible, as Georges Devereux once observed.¹ The point though is that in the realisation of such songs, the singers operate under some kind of licence. Such songs, notes Avorgbedor in the discussion of similar songs in Ewe oral art,

remove normal and immediate responsibility from the singer and consequently leaves the singer blameless ... The texts full of sexual references, calumny and insults would have called into question the moral status of the singer if the words were spoken plainly rather than sung.²

It would be instructive then, for our purpose in this chapter, to discuss these five broad themes in greater detail.

3.2.1 WAR

In 'No peace in the forest' (#48) we are treated to a recall of an actual battle in the forest:

I recall my forest experience
Yes there was no peace in the forest
By my mother, Abaka
By my father, Abaka
There was no peace in the forest

Afor
He-who-fights-to-disarm-the-foe
There was no peace in the forest

Here, the heat of battle is presented not as warriors engaged in combat but rather the forest itself raging. Similarly in 'We shall reveal it' (#30) we are told:

We're going to seek our fortune
Whoever looks for trouble
Will find it

The uncertainties of the war enterprise are captured in terms of going to seek one's fortune. That is, one may succeed and return victorious with the spoils of war or one may lose one's life in battle. In 'We did not come to fight' (#54) the question is posed:

We did not come to fight
Why then are you pelting us with stones?
You people of Nkum
Have toiled for nothing
We have our matter on a twig

In this song, the singers adopt a pacifist stance in the face of provocation. However, when they assert that their matter is on a twig, the message is that the provocation has been mentally filed away for later reaction. In much the same way, 'I shall not warn you' (#33) boasts of the battle-readiness of the group:

I shall not warn you
I shall fight you

because not only are they physically tuned and mentally psyched up for the purpose, their leader also inspires great confidence in them:

Our captain Little Kofi Anamo
He knows how to wield the iron

In effect the singers affirm their determination to carry the war to the enemy, confident of achieving victory. 'They are scurrying,' (#34) like 'I remember my forest experience,' (#48) describes the battle scene itself. Operating on recall, the song states:

On the battlefield
Someone's children are dying

It goes on to paint a scene of total rout and confusion:

They are scurrying
Hither and thither

and goes on to add:

We have forced these people
To drink sea water

Which immediately evokes a picture of the hapless enemy either defeated at sea or being chased into the sea. In 'We have the guns' (#38) the singers boast of a strong sense of confidence and self-sufficiency:

... We have the guns
We have the bullets

They go on to pose the question:

To whom does the state belong?
It's Safohen Asafua

Here, as in 'I shall not warn you' (#33) the singers' belief in the able leadership of Safohen Asafua is forcefully expressed. The point here is that Asafua is the recognised leader to whom the reins of state belong.

In 'We have a score to settle,' (#55) the frequent repetition of the opening line underscores the singers' determination to join issue with the enemy. In the chorus section, the attitude to the enemy is unequivocally expressed:

They have stirred up trouble
These dogs have stirred trouble with us

This song is an affirmation of the people's belief in their ability to deal firmly and decisively with their foes.

A similar feeling is engendered in 'Man', (# 32) where the punch line is:

.If you are a man
If you are born a man
Come forward when war calls

This is a strong reminder of the expected role of men in the society as the defenders and protectors of the state. This point is strongly emphasised by the lead singer in this piece when he declaims:

When the guns sounded
I was with the vanguard

thereby pointing to the way every male in the society is expected to behave.

In 'You dare not fight,' (# 43) the enemy is castigated for cowardice and hiding behind mercenaries for protection:

In the past you hired warriors
This year too
You have hired them

They go on to declare the battle joined, using the imagery of fire.

It's fire
It's our fire
It's our fire that has overwhelmed them

The point being made here is that like the bush fire which defies control, they will ravage the enemy until the rout is complete.

Another dimension of the war-like nature of Asafo songs comes across in the piece, 'Our fighting spirit is of old' (# 56) in which the singers boast:

We never saw
and balked
As of the other time
Let they who dare
- Find out

In 'Safohen Aborabor,' (# 47) the singers bemoan the loss of their war leader, Aborabor:

Safohen Aborabor
Did not return
Bring us back our headgear

Here, it is not so much the death of a gallant leader as the loss of the headgear, which represents the spirit of the army, which is being lamented. In Fante war lore, the battle headgear is studded with talismans and other potent charms, which confer protection on the wearer as the leader and on the contingent as the

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followers. Aborabor's death therefore calls for a necessary and immediate replacement. The message of the song therefore expresses the wish that the headgear be retrieved so that continued leadership and protection will be ensured. Again, the song is a grim acknowledgement that 'war never goes hungry'. The same idea of possible casualty in a war enterprise is taken up by 'We went to Kormantse' (#7) where the lyrics indicate:

We went to Kormantse
To fulfil our destiny
Someone's fallen into the sea
Should he die like an animal?
Someone's fallen into the sea
Let him be rescued for us

Here, the fulfilment of the warrior's destiny is a fifty-fifty chance of life or death. As the singers acknowledge, if it is one's destiny to fall in action, so be it, but the final respects should be paid, a process which starts with the retrieval of the body.

The theme of war looms large in several other Asafo songs. In 'We didn't allow them to sleep,' (# 8) the singers recall an episode in their fighting history where they laid a siege and engaged the enemy day and night. There is a touch of humour in the concluding lines:

We turned into ghosts
And engaged them by night
We did not allow them to sleep

Here, 'ghosts' has no connection with death. Rather, it carries with it a sense of invisibility and invincibility that, naturally enough, gives them the edge over the enemy.

In 'The Dove,' (# 10) reference is made to an actual historical incident in which the warrior group goes to the aid of their allies in battle.

We were about to give our people fire
We were moving steadily

The idea of giving their allies 'fire' can be read variously as beefing up their fire power or giving them critical support in one form or the other against the enemy. Either way, their mission is unmistakable as the following lines indicate:

One asafo has brought war to us
And we will not be appeased

In quite a number of instances, 'fire' is used as a symbol of the ferocity and strength of the Asafo company as the above example illustrates. There is a further instance in the use of this symbolism in the self-explanatory 'We have the fire' (# 57) which is a call to arms:

We have the fire
We have the fire
Make haste, lest you are left behind

In 'We shall engage you,' (# 14) the point is made that:

We shall not look at their numbers
The matter will not end
Money is valuable
We've fought and met

This piece consists of a series of statement that combine to create a situation. 'We value money' is a loaded statement that insinuates that the singers will not

waste resources to hire mercenaries or pay allies to fight for them. In other words, they believe in their own ability to contain the enemy. 'We have fought and met' appears as a difficult image. However, if one takes cognisance of the fact that the traditional Akan military formation has a vanguard (Adɔntsen), a left wing (Benkum), a right wing (Nyimfa) together with a rearguard (Kyidɔm), and also the fact that this battle formation operates in a pincer-like movement with the right and left wings curving out to encircle the enemy, the meaning of 'We have fought and met' becomes clear. In other words, the left wing and the right wing have enclosed and crushed the enemy. It is therefore a telling statement of victory.

In 'Sanka's Children,' (# 19) the boast is that:

We are harvesting them
Like palm fruits

Which immediately conveys a picture of total massacre of the enemy. The palm fruit is a very powerful image which occurs quite often in Asafo songs. This will be treated as one of the major tropes in Chapter 5 but for now we can content ourselves with the simile which adequately conjures up a picture of total rout of the enemy.

The ever-recurring theme of war and battle-readiness would be quite pervasive in any sampling of Asafo song texts. To conclude this segment, two additional examples will suffice. In 'Trouble,' (# 6) we have:

You are trying to court trouble
Once you court trouble
Trouble will be placed on your doorstep.

It is immediately clear who or what the trouble is. The message is simple: anyone who asks for trouble will have it – and plenty of it too! Finally, in ‘I have met my enemy’ (#37) we hear the voice of triumph mixed with determination. The tone is one of ‘aha, at last I’ve got you! In the situation, the cantor invokes

Nkwantabisa Akyeampon
In the event of war
Clear the mist from our path

Fortified with the belief in a positive response, the enemy will be engaged squarely until victory is achieved.

3.2.2 DEATH

We can now turn our attention to other major themes. Death is one such recurrent theme in Asafo song texts. This is not surprising since death is the consequence of war and the price of heroism. It is important to note at this point that death as a universal theme has excited the imagination of man over the centuries. Consequently, the theme of death is not strictly tied down to war. On a more universal level, it is seen as the natural end to life.

In ‘We are getting ready to go,’ (# 58) the inevitability of death and the inexorable march from the cradle to the grave is acknowledged:

We are getting ready to go
We are getting ready to go
For others to replace us

This is not necessarily linked to war with death as a direct consequence. It is rather a philosophical observation of the transient nature of this life and the unavoidable passage from birth to death. A similar scenario is presented in 'Egya Ansa' (# 59) where the cantor speculates on the time, place and manner of his death – or anyone else's, for that matter:

Egya Ansa
I don't know where
Yes, I don't know when
They have closed in
From right and left
I do not know where I will drop dead

In this song, even though the inevitability of death is acknowledged, its timing is the main point of concern here.

The same idea is carried in 'Death has been created for us' (# 51) where we are told:

Death had been created for us
Life has been created for us
We are being pursued with irons

In this case, the unpredictability of death is minimised somewhat in the implication that it is up to the people to negotiate the problem of being pursued. That is to say, they have a choice between life and death, depending on how they

handle the attack with irons. This will determine their survival or death. Placed in context, this song has compelling force in the face of enemy attack, for instance. In 'Father Death', (# 42) the obvious is stated:

Death is a tragedy
Egya Mɛnkye,
A tragedy indeed

This is clearly a mourning song. The interesting aspect of the lyrics is the reference to 'Egya Mɛnkye,' which in the star lore of Fante fishermen is the morning star. This star marks the point of transition between night and day. Its role here is to converge on and reinforce death as a process of transition. The morning star is similarly used in 'They are taking their leave' (# 18):

By my left
By my right
The people are taking their leave
Egya mɛnkye
It's nothing but
They are taking their leave
It's someone's destiny
They are taking their leave
It's time to go home

This is a parting song, often the last item to be performed. The obvious funereal overtones however make it a popular mourning song as well. Finally, we can consider 'Fosu's Crab' (# 49):

It's bitten my finger
And I'm dying
I'm dying
It's bitten my finger
And I'm dying
Fosu's crab
Has bitten me
And I'm dying

It is tempting to write this off as an unserious piece. What, one may ask, is so newsworthy about being bitten by a crab? The answer lies in the fact that Fosu is the lagoon of the Cape Coast area as well as the name of the god whose abode the lagoon is. Fosu is conceptualised as a kindly parent who freely gives of his plenitude – fish and crabs – to its devotees and non-devotees alike. To be bitten by a crab of Fosu's would then suggest an unexpected turn of events. It raises the question, what could one have done to incur the displeasure of this kindly god to warrant this experience? It is obvious therefore that the piece is operating at some symbolic level. This and the other examples cited above clearly illustrate the theme of death which is without doubt one of the major concerns of Asafo songs.

3.2.3 PRAISE

Another prominent theme is praise. Again, this is not surprising since heroism in war is highly recognised just as heroic death is equally extolled. A salient feature of the songs in this category is the profuse use of titles and praise names such as:

Safohen	=	captain
Sabanyin	=	war hero
Okunyin	=	brave warrior
Okum-abofo	=	killer of hunters
Odzii-ako	=	accomplished warrior
Okoo-gye-atuq	=	he who fights and disarms the enemy

It is important to note also that the subject of praise can be addressed to mortals, gods and in certain instances artefacts that have been accorded the status of sacred objects. A few examples will suffice to illustrate this. In 'Wise little bird'(#35) we have an aspect of traditional belief in evidence.

Majestic bird, majestic bird
Wise little bird
Kwesi Dadze the hunter
Take us to the battle front

The bird is pictured as the manifestation of a kindly spirit that directs and guides the army into battle. The bird is 'majestic' for its ability and importance, its size notwithstanding. It is at the same time a 'wise little bird' under whose care the army will prosecute its war successfully. A second possible interpretation is that Kwesi Dadze is the able war captain who, like a wise little bird, is successful in leading his men into battle and back.

In 'Nana Sapreku'(#60), the praise is directed at the god of the same name:

Nana Sapreku
What's he doing
In the midst of battle?

He is there doing something
Nana Sapreku
Awer Sapreku
Here we are, your children

Here, as in the first example, the singers give expression to their belief that the gods are capable of helping them in all aspects of life including wars. All that is required is devotion and submission to them.

A third instance of praise to a god-figure is seen in 'Adwoa Ndaawa'(#61), a goddess and according to local belief, the wife of Nana Fosu, the god of the Fosu lagoon:

To Fosu's wife Adwoa Ndaawa
Let the gongs sound
We are celebrating this goddess
Who is bound to come
We are sounding the gong
The twin gong
The triple gong

In this piece, the expectation of the singers is that in playing in honour of the goddess, she in turn will smile with favour on their supplications

Apart from the gods, praise is often addressed to mortals. In 'Valiant One'(#41) we have:

Valiant one
Well done!
Valiant one
It was you who said
Nothing terrible would happen
If you fight on behalf of the state
Raise your head
Because it can happen one day

This piece celebrates the heroism and self-sacrifice of the warrior who, unmindful of possible danger to his own safety, fought till the very last when raising his head by way of a little caution on his part could well have saved his life.

The theme of praise is taken up further in 'Abaka' where Abaka the leader is contrasted with a less-likeable person and Abaka is held up as the popular choice:

It's Abaka we're calling
Our chief Abaka
Elder Kwesi the hyena
If we follow you
This state will break up!

The strength of this piece lies in the contrast between Abaka and Elder Kwesi with the obvious choice of the former. The choice is an affirmation in the virtues of Abaka as their leader. A similar vote of confidence is expressed for the leader in 'Awambra Kwesi'(#20):

Awambra Kwesi
Daylight has met us in the dew
We were spoiling for a fight
We were denied the chance
Everyone knows

The indispensability of the leader, Kwesi, is strongly expressed here. The people, as it were, are stymied due to the absence of their leader. They may have been ready for action but the absence of their leader means the action has to be stayed. One more example of songs in this category ought to clinch matters. In 'Safohen Kow Edu' (#62) we are informed

The man says
Let the men come forward
The man says
It will happen

Here, in confident voice, the people affirm their battle-readiness under their leader who dares the enemy to approach if they can, asserting that certain defeat or rout awaits them.

The links between war, death and praise are so strong as to be unmistakable. Indeed, there is considerable overlap in the categorisation. That is to say, a song may have war as its central theme but in the realisation of the theme, elements of praise or death or suggestions thereof often commingle.

3.2.4 APPEAL TO DEITY

Aggrey has observed that Asafo was born out of traditional religion.³ The point he is at pains to make is that religion and Asafo cannot be divorced from each other. A practical manifestation of this is the frequent mention of and appeal to gods and other spirit beings in asafo songs. In other instances, sacred objects such as drums are equally appealed to and revered. The following examples will serve to illustrate this point. In 'Akyem Kweku' (#63) the text is self-explanatory:

Kweku, Akyem Kweku
The cannons are booming
Let the people rise
Osee yee
When Kweku comes
The hordes will be scattered
Whether it's Tufafo today
Or Bentsifo tomorrow
We shall not be cowed
Even if Tufafo pick up heir irons
At the break of day
We shall not be cowed

This song is a direct appeal to the god, Akyem Kweku, for protection at the outbreak of war. The people will rise and respond to the call to arms not only because they have confidence in their ability as a fighting force to deal with the enemy, Tũafo. More than that, they know they can trust in the guidance and protection of their god, Akyem Kweku.

When Kweku comes
(that is, when he is involved)
The hordes will be scattered

An obvious occasion for such a song is during preparations for a battle. One may therefore question the relevance of such a song in the present day when internecine wars are largely a thing of the past. Chapter 4 will in part attempt to evaluate this situation from the standpoint of a uses and gratifications theory.

Another example of appeal to deity can be seen in 'Itwi Kɔbena' (#64) where the cantor sings:

It's Kɔbena we look up to
It's Kɔbena we look up to
It's Kɔbena we are calling
Itwi Kɔbena
We're looking up to you

We are told that this god manifests itself as a leopard ('itwi') and its adherents and devotees can depend on it for protection if it is properly invoked.

A third example is 'Obo' (#65):

Ɔbo,
Ancient rock of my Fathers,
Lead us into battle
Ɔbo, make haste,
To meet with us in battle

This piece addresses a god that inhabits a rock and by virtue of that has acquired the name 'Ɔbo' (rock). Here, the god is being invoked to accompany the singers into battle. This particular song was performed on two separate occasions as a coda to two different songs. It would seem therefore that any song that deals with battle or preparations for one can conveniently have this song tagged on to it as a coda.

As has already been noted in the discussion of the theme of praise, the songs 'Nana Sapreku' (#60) and 'Adwoa Ndaawa' (#61) may function as praise songs but they also overlap into 'appeal' and can therefore be classified with 'Akyem Kweku,' 'Itwi Kobena' and 'Ɔbo'. For instance, in 'Nana Sapreku' (#60) where the cantor proclaims:

Nana Sapreku
Awer Sapreku
Here we are, your children

a strong vertical relationship is established between father and children and, flowing from that, the children can expect the fatherly guidance and protection that this relationship imposes on the father-figure.

Interestingly enough, certain sacred objects are treated similarly. The lead drum or *asafokyen* is one such object. Aggrey has detailed the various stages that the *asafokyen* passes through from the felling of the tree out of which the drum will be fashioned, through the hollowing out and carving process, through the laying of the skin that constitutes the playing surface to the final rites of confinement and outdooring of the drum.⁴ The entire process is embedded in ritual which confers sacredness on the *asafokyen*. Indeed, as Aggrey points out, there is even a naming ceremony for the drum. This explains why such drums may be called 'Kyen Kofi', or 'Kyen Kweku' for example. The name given may derive from the day of the week on which it is outdoored or perhaps the new drum may commemorate a special event in the life of the particular Asafo company. According to popular belief, the drum and its player are rendered 'bullet-proof' and invincible as a result of the rituals they go through and, by extension, the entire company is placed under the protection of the drum. Thus deified, the drum is accorded the same status as a god to which praises can be sung or appeals made to. This is illustrated in one of the songs selected for this study, 'Anobir Manso' (#45).

Anobir Manso
Our drum is called Manso
Manso, Anobir
From morning
If we fail to respond
May a tree fall on us!

Here, the singers are not merely extolling the virtues of the drum which has been personalised and named 'Anobir Manso'. They are also pledging their

unqualified allegiance to it. The message is that should they refuse to respond to the call of the drum, may they face damnation!

The tendency to appeal to nature in the form of gods or sacred objects portrays the people as being one and in tune with nature. But, beyond that, one is reminded of Jonathan Culler's view on the apostrophe as a poetic device. He writes:

The vocative of apostrophe is a device which the poetic voice uses to establish with an object a relationship which helps to constitute him. The object is treated as an 'I' which implies a certain kind of 'you' in its turn. One who successfully invokes nature is one to whom nature might, in its turn, speak.⁵

3.2.5 RIDICULE

This last broad category includes boasts, taunts and even downright abuse. The point has already been made about the self-definition implicit in songs that extol the 'we'-feeling' of a group and, by implication, the definition of the 'other'. In an essay entitled 'Race', Kwame Anthony Appiah notes that the 'we' and 'them' dichotomy is not a new-fangled phenomenon. If we care to look into the past, he observes:

We can find more or less well articulated

views between 'our kind' and the people of other cultures... We can say that every human culture that was aware of other peoples seems to have had views about what accounted for the difference – in appearance, in customs, in language between peoples.⁶

And, we might add, differences in attitudes and aptitudes. This same view is articulated more succinctly by Georges Devereux who asserts that the 'we' and 'them' dichotomy:

is logically and historically the product of the assertion that 'A' is an 'X' because he is not as 'Y' - a proposition which makes it remarkably easy to identify Xness. By the same token, the definition of Xs as non-Ys threatens to exaggerate their differences in such a way that if the Xs think of themselves as human, they may therefore consider the Ys as somehow non-human.⁷

The Asafo songs that deal with taunts, boasts, ridicule, and abuse tend to underscore these sentiments expressed by both Appiah and Devereux.

Songs in this category are more or less a throwback to the warring years of the past where petty chiefdoms and the mutual suspicions that informed such a situation held sway. Even between two quarters within the same town deep-seated rivalry gave rise to this feeling. In contemporary times, the bitter rivalry that often characterises the relationship between two political parties or even two football teams and their supporters from the same town or city often almost parallels this feeling which, as Appiah has noted, is nothing new.

Asafo with its emphasis on manliness, bravery, strength and heroism will naturally engender boasts over accomplishments. Therefore, for instance, when an Asafo group declares:

We have the guns
We have the bullets (#38)

They are not merely bragging about what they have in their armoury. They are affirming their combat-readiness and their determination to carry the battle to the enemy. In the same song the question is posed:

To whom does the control of the state belong?
It's Safohen Asafua...

The impression is thus created that the singers are ready to back their leader Asafua to assert his claim to the lordship of the state.

In 'Wanwanyan' (#5), the message is clear and unambiguous:

They say they will go
We say we will go

Here, we are taken beyond mere assertions to a supreme contest of wills. One can immediately sense an inevitable clash since both parties are determined to maintain their ground.

In 'Whitman', again the boast is unmistakable.

We are ready for anything
We are a rare breed of asafu
Like palm fruits
We are harvesting them

Boasting sometimes manifests itself as a taunt in 'Someone like you' (#40) where the tone of contempt is difficult to miss:

You
Someone like you
You Amo Eku
Someone like you

The singers pour scorn on the enemy in a manner that suggests that they consider the enemy as no match for them. They continue:

If you want to fight us
Better look for iron
If you want to fight us
Better look for powder

A similar feeling is carried in 'Asafo Kwakye' (#2) where the singers ask:

Who are these coming,
Asafo Kwakye?
Who are these coming?

The tone is far from innocuous. The question is implying whether the people approaching are any match at all. The song goes on:

The palm fruits we harvest
We harvest from among the Anafo
The heads we cut
We cut from among the Anafo

Here, the singers boast that the Anafo are no match at all. Citing historical precedence, the assertion is made that the Anafo will be slaughtered with the same ease that palm fruits are harvested.

Another instance of this attitude is provided by 'The Bell' (#12):

The bell, the bell
It's Dentse who ring the bell
The bell, the bell
The bell which we Tuafo captured!

The point of this taunt comes through when we take cognisance of the fact that among the various Asafo groups, there is an understanding backed by law as to which additional objects apart from the basic ensemble each Asafo can use.⁸ The history behind this song is that the Ntsin (Dentse) company have the exclusive right to parade and use the handball. This bell, however, was once captured in a fight between them and the Tuafo Company. Consequently, each time the Tuafo Company sings this song, the Ntsin Company does not find it amusing at all.

One more example of the taunt is seen in Kofi Dzewa (#16)

Kofi Dzewa
Here is your headgear
Yes, here it is

The headgear or battle cap was captured in battle. As noted earlier in this chapter, the headgear worn in battle by the leader has strong symbolic force. Its

capture therefore is the ultimate humiliation. Again, as in the previous example, any time this song is performed, it is with a sense of triumph and achievement and is directed at the company whose loss and embarrassment is alluded to.

In 'Give your thanks to the White men' (#22) the people of Abora are ridiculed for their total dependence on the colonial administration for their protection and safety. The point of this song is that

But for the white man
Kwamena would have been taken to Esaaman

thereby implying that without the support of the colonial governor, the people would have had no leg to stand on.

Sometimes, the ridicule is directed at an individual whose prominence is such that his embarrassment or disgrace redounds on the Asafo company to which he belongs. An example of such a song is 'Nana Feyinka' (#50) in which an elder of a rival Asafo group is unable to speak for himself. His detractors read this to mean that he is so intimidated by the court ambience that all his manly qualities desert him:

Nana Feyinka
The day you went to court
What did the White man ask you?
Abora, they said you are a woman!

As can be seen, the objective of the ridicule is not Feyinka alone. His people, Abora, are by extension, also ridiculed.

The song 'The Leopard' (#13) provides us with a further example of ridicule:

Let someone grab it by the tail
This leopard
That has jumped into the thicket

The point of the ridicule is that the leopard, usually the fierce aggressor, is here escaping from a superior foe. It desperately seeks refuge in a thicket. That the suggestion can go forth that the leopard should be grabbed by the tail is a telling statement on the denatured state of this usually ferocious animal. Obviously enough, the leopard represents either a person or a group whether we read it as a totemic figure or as a metaphor.

In 'This man is useless' (#36) we are told about a man who leads his forces into battle only to turn tail and desert them:

People of Abese
This man has run away

The mental picture evoked is thus one of a shepherdless flock whose rout is only a matter of course. This escape/desertion is further portrayed in the same song as:

The leopard
Has fled into the bush

We can now turn our attention to songs of abuse. In 'Sanka's Children' (#19), the question is raised:

Whose children do we harvest
Like palm fruits?

And the response comes from the chorus:

It's Chief Sanka's Children
That we harvest like palm fruits

Here, the labelling is justified since Sanka's men were literally mowed down in that historic encounter.

Another example of this type of song can be illustrated with 'Tiny little hen' (#39)

You are a tiny little hen
If you are killed
It's of no consequence

Ideas such as weak, frail and inconsequential are captured in the choice of this image. The enemy is later in the same song portrayed as a goat with a baggage of unpleasant connotations:

What is the goat aiming to do?
The goat is planning to fuck its mother

in the same song. Here we see the use of two different images in one song to characterise two different negative aspects in the enemy.

One further instance of this type of song is provided by 'Cowardly Asafo' (#31) where we are told:

Cowardly Asafo
We know them

The song goes on to cite an instance to substantiate the claim.

That day we went to war
Their flint, they could not ignite

Which, as can be inferred, is more as a result of fear rather than a failure of equipment.

3.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has tried to outline the manifest content of Asafo songs. An analysis of the content of these texts whether as war songs, praise songs, mourning songs, songs of abuse or ridicule or appeal to deity reveals a profuse reference to the flora and fauna of the locality from where these songs have been drawn. There are equally frequent references to nature – sky, stars, sun, sea, and earth. Objects and artefacts are also heavily represented. Finally, articles of war – guns, bullets, gunpowder, irons – are given a lot of prominence. These in the main function as tropes through which the message of the songs achieve poetic and rhetoric force. In Chapter 5 these as tropes will be given fuller treatment and an attempt will be made to explain how these tropes carry the message. In the next chapter, however, we shall look at how meaning is achieved in Asafo song texts.

NOTES

¹George Devereux, 'Art and Mythology: A General Theory' in *Art and Aesthetics in Primitive Societies*, Carol Joplin (ed) (New York: E P Dutton and co. Inc. 1971)

² D. Avorgbedor, "The Preservation, Transmission and Realisation of Song Texts: A Psycho-Musical Approach" in *The Oral Performance in Africa, I*. Okpewho (ed) (Ibadan: spectrum Books Ltd 199) p. 219

³ J.E.K. Aggrey, *Asafo* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corp. 1978) p. 3

⁴ Ibid pp 18 – 21

⁵ Jonathan Culler, 'Apostrophe', *Diacritics* Dec. 1977 p. 63

⁶ Kwame A Appiah, 'Race' in F. Lentricchia and T Mclaughlin (ed) *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago: Univ Press 1995) p. 274

⁷ Georges Devereux, quoted in Werner Sellors, 'Ethnicity' Ibid p. 288

⁸ In 1902, the colonial governor authorised J. Lucas Atterbury, the District Commissioner of Cape Coast, together with E.C Eliot, Commission of the Central Province (now Central Region) to call together all the seven Asafo groups in Cape Coast to agree on who should use which paraphernalia, to avoid unnecessary friction and conflict. See William Mensah, *A Short History of Cape Coast* (unpublished). See also, Arthur Ffoulkes, *The Company System of Cape Coast Castle*. Both documents can be found among the official documents of the Bentsir No 1 Asafo company to which I was privileged to have access.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 MEANING IN ASAFO SONGS

In Chapter 3, the manifest content of Asafo songs was examined. In the process, the link between content and form was also established and the point was reiterated that neither form nor content has a separate existence of its own and that any interpretation of the text can only derive from form and content. This chapter will examine how meaning is achieved in Asafo songs. It will approach this task through the process of interpreting and making sense of the text. This will be done against the background of the concepts of denotation, connotation, myth and ideology, and how these generate meaning or affect the meaning and interpretation of Asafo song texts. In discussing the meaning of the texts, a uses and gratifications approach will be used. In other words, we shall look at what the songs mean to both the singers and their audience, and the extent to which the message affects both the singers and the audience.

Basically, the content and concerns of Asafo song texts are simple, have an immediate appeal and do not require an 'education' to understand them, as the various examples discussed in the foregoing chapter bear out. However, a close study of these texts reveals an abundance of metaphoric language, compelling imagery and a voice filled with assurance. One can also feel the passion, the energy and the cutting irony in these texts. Again, the concerns raised and the background are just as familiar as the frame of references. These pluses

notwithstanding, the scholar who approaches these texts with the interest of a student of literature needs a framework within which to operate.

John Fiske (1984) sees messages that are community-oriented, appealing to what people have in common and tending to link them to their society as 'broadcast codes'. He argues that broadcast codes are 'the means by which a society communicates with itself'.¹ Meaning then becomes a dynamic interaction between the audience and the text. What this means is that when the text and the audience are both members of a tightly-knit culture or sub-culture, the interaction is smooth and the interpretation arising therefrom is unimpeded since the connotations and myths upon which the text draws, together with the public nature of the images and symbols employed and the allusions are all familiar.

However, as already stated, in the task of analysing and interpreting the texts, the literary student needs a framework within which to operate. Steven Mailloux has suggested certain approaches, three of which I find particularly helpful in this regard.² These are:

- i. historicisation
- ii. allegorisation and
- iii. etymologisation

Mailloux contends that if a text is placed in its historical context, the context can and does generate ideas that help to arrive at the text's meaning. In some of the texts selected for this study, the songs are rooted in historical incident. Any interpretation therefore that does not take this into account may well stray off the

mark. Songs in this category include 'Nana Feyinka' (#52), 'Safohen Aborabor' (#47) and 'The Dove' (#10).

The second method, allegorisation, presumes that the text can refer to a second or more universal level of meaning beyond the particular historical reference. In this category can be placed songs like 'Fosu's Crab' (#49) 'This man is useless' (#36), 'Tiny Little Chicken' (#39) and 'Cowardly Asafo' (#31). In these songs, even though the texts were triggered by specific incidents at specific historical moments, they nonetheless find application at a more universal level.

We can also resort to etymology to help arrive at an acceptable meaning of a text. This study has observed that praise names in particular are very rich in what they reveal about the people who give them as well as the people who earn them. In quite a number of these songs names like:

Ansa a – okum – abofo (Ansa the killer of hunters)

Sabányin (war hero)

Odzii – ako (accomplished warrior)

are not only very revealing but they are also telling statements about the bearers and the extent to which they have fulfilled their social expectations and civic responsibilities as men in the society.

Another way of negotiating the meaning of the Asafo song text is to view it on the levels of denotation, connotation, myth and ideology. I shall illustrate this with a sample text, 'Ewusi'. (#17)

Ewusi, Ewusi
War hero Ewusi
It's Ewusi the war hero
The asafó captain who
Has his own guns and his own bullets
It's Ewusi who is the war hero

This appears on first sight as a simple praise text and indeed that is what it is meant to be. On a purely denotative level, the virtues of a military leader, Ewusi, are being extolled. We are informed that he is well equipped to engage the enemy. In other words, he has the resources to raise and equip a fighting force. However, beyond this simple, commonsensical, obvious meaning of the text, we can go deeper to read 'guns', and 'bullets' as metaphors for 'wealth' and 'self-sufficiency' in one respect and also for 'strength' and 'invincibility' in another regard. This is appraising the text at the connotative level. The same text can be negotiated from the perspective of our traditional myths. These include our beliefs about masculinity, martial ardour, success and social esteem. A myth, as Barthes once remarked, is a chain of related concepts. Therefore, to return to the text under review, Ewusi is the quintessence of social success and respectability. Even though the text is silent on Ewusi's other qualities like kindness and sympathy, for example, or the absence of these, the text holds him up as a model whom the society must admire and emulate. This is because the text plays on our myths about men. To return to Barthes, this chain of related concepts exists before the text. The text merely activates this chain. How then, and where, one may ask, does ideology come into all of this?

Ideology itself has been defined variously as a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group; or a system of illusory beliefs – false ideas or false

consciousness – which can be contrasted with the true scientific knowledge; or the general process of the production of meanings and ideas.³ These three definitions all have a good deal in common. However, for our purpose, the term is employed to describe the social production of meanings. Ideology then is what enables the members of the society – in this case the Fante-Akan – to respond appropriately to the connotations and myths generated by this or any other text.

How then does the text affect the singer and the audience? William Bascom has noted that even though folklore can be categorised, the boundaries are very fluid.⁴ His point is that, for instance, a work song may be sung as recreational entertainment. In such a case, the form is the same but the function is different. Similarly, war songs can double as work songs. Indeed, in the Cape Coast area, Asafo war songs have often been appropriated to match the mood of striking workers, enthusiastic football supporters or even political party supporters at a rally. This tendency is what Nketia notes when he writes:

... the themes of songs are not rigidly compartmentalised. Contextual categories and thematic categories may overlap. Songs about death, for example, are not confined to dirges or mourning songs. They may be found in other contexts, including even songs performed in recreational contexts. Songs embodying historical allusions may be found not only in the special sphere of court music, but also in the songs of warrior associations ...⁵

This, naturally, leads us to examine how the text affects the singer and the audience. We can assess this by the empirical method known as the uses and gratifications approach. The basis of this approach is that people have a complex set of needs which they seek to satisfy in the course of their interaction with

members of their society. Originally propounded to explain mass communications, this approach suits our purpose rather well. It assumes that the audience is an active rather than a passive recipient. McQuail ⁶ has established forms of gratifications as follows:

- i. Escape from the constraints of routine
- ii. Escape from the burden of problems
- iii. Emotional release
- iv. Excitement appeal
- v. Companionship
- vi. Value reinforcement.

Asafo songs serve the purposes of all these categories above whether the texts are interpreted at a purely denotative level or at a connotative level where myth and ideology are brought to bear on the meaning.

CONCLUSION

This brief chapter has tried to explore the processes of meaning generation as far as Asafo song texts are concerned. It has viewed the content of the songs as thoroughly familiar items which almost invariably have popular appeal. The chapter has also examined the methods of historicising, allegorising and etymologising as ways of arriving at 'acceptable' meanings. Finally, the way the text affects the users – be they singers or audience – has also been examined as a function of the meaning that is attached to the texts against the background of the interplay of denotation, connotation, myth and ideology. Our next chapter will focus on the tropes employed and how meaning is generated by these tropes.

NOTES

- ¹J. Fiske, Introduction to *Communication Studies* (London: Methuen 1984) p. 78
- ²Steven Mailloux "Interpretation" in F. Lentricchia and T. McLaughlin (ed) *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press 1995) p. 124
- ³R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: OUP 1977)
- ⁴William Bascom, "Four Functions of Folklore", in *The Study of Folklore* Alan Dundes (éd) (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall 1965) p. 279
- ⁵J.H.K Nketia, *The Music of Africa* (London: Victor Gollancz 1986) p. 203
- ⁶J. McQuail, *Sociology of Mass Communications* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1972)

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 TROPES AND THE ASAFO SONG TEXT

This chapter aims at a literary analysis of the imaginative quality of Asafo song texts with reference to the songs selected for this study, and is intended as a follow up to the previous chapter which examined the processes through which meaning is achieved in the Asafo song text. An attempt will be made in this chapter to pinpoint the key tropes individually and severally in terms of their effectiveness as vehicles of meaning.

Literary studies impose on us an obligation to pay close attention to language. The assumption here is that the closer one looks at language, the fuller it will come into its force. Interpretation and meaning depend to a great extent on figures of speech or tropes such as metaphors, similes, metonymy, personification, symbol and apostrophe, among others. These ultimately carry the meaning of the text. It is important to appreciate how these tropes work to bring out the meaning of the text. Indeed, an understanding of how these operate often enables us to produce various levels of meaning. The figurative process is not and cannot be limited to interpretation and meaning alone. It takes us beyond these boundaries into a theory of language and culture. As already indicated, this chapter will examine the major tropes employed in the selected texts assembled for this study. This exercise has two key aims:

- i. to discuss these tropes as features of discourse that generate further discourse, often producing an excess of meaning in the process;

- ii. to demonstrate that these tropes constitute a system of thought, rather than a mere reflection of reality.

To be able to do this effectively, this chapter will briefly discuss these tropes *qua* tropes as a jumping off point. It will also examine the notion of 'proper meaning' as against 'figurative meaning' and show also that often times texts that appear to be starkly literal and devoid of figures of speech have embedded in them suggestions that point to a figurative way of looking at the world. The tropes thus identified will be situated in their contexts or related contexts, discussed and their effectiveness demonstrated. In addition, attempts will be made to show what these tropes reveal about the people whose songs these are.

5.1 TROPES

Holman and Harmon (1986) define 'trope' as a figure of speech which involves a 'turn' or a change of sense, that is, in a sense other than the literal. Figures of speech operate by twisting the meaning of the word. Indeed, this is the classical definition of a trope which, derived from Greek, means 'twist' or 'turn'. The major tropes that will be considered here are metaphor, simile, metonymy, symbol, personification and irony. These types appear with quite a measure of regularity in the songs selected for this study. Before we proceed any further, it is important to provide a working definition of the terms:

- i. *Metaphor*: This is a compressed analogy which involves a transfer of meaning from the word that properly possesses it to another word which belongs to some shared category of meaning. Put in other words, it is the substitution of a figurative expression for a

literal or a proper one based on a semblance or an analogy. The metaphor has the tendency to reveal unexpected truths. As Aristotle once put it, 'midway between the unintelligible and the commonplace, it is the metaphor which most produces knowledge.'

- ii. *Simile*: This states in explicit terms that two things can be compared and goes ahead to give the basis for the comparison. It is thus a more controlled trope in terms of the meanings it can generate than the metaphor, which often tends to generate an excess of meaning sometimes way beyond authorial or speakerly intention.
- iii. *Metonymy*: This figure achieves its meaning on the basis of association that develops out of specific contexts rather than from a participation in a general structure of meaning. It is based on an association or relation other than similarity, for example, cause and effect, container and the contained, proper names and qualities associated with them, place and event or institution, instrument and user, and so on.
- iv. *Symbol*: This is a figure in which something represents another thing by virtue of an analogical correspondence. As a trope, the symbol combines a literal and a sensuous quality with an abstract or suggestive aspect. As an image, it evokes an objective concrete reality and usually goes beyond that to suggest another level of meaning. Again, a symbol has the quality of being either universal, where its intended meaning is more or less generally

available, or private, where its effectiveness derives not from anything inherent in itself but from the way it is employed in a given work.

- v. *Personification*: Here, we have the characteristics of a human subject passed on to an inhuman subject. Personification endows animals, ideas, abstractions and inanimate objects with a human character. These are presented as having human personalities, emotions or sensibilities.
- vi. *Apostrophe*: This is usually in the form of speech directed at an object which cannot respond or even hear what is said. It is a trope because it creates an unreal speech situation so that the very act of speech is 'twisted' or 'turned' or taken out of its proper context within a communicative event. It can also be seen as a form of personification because it assumes, for the imaginative moment, that the subject addressed shares in our human ability to hear and respond to speech.

5.2 PROPER MEANING VERSUS FIGURATIVE MEANING

The term 'figurative' invites comparison with the 'proper' meaning of a word or its supposed rightful meaning or the idea that immediately comes to mind when that word is used. For instance, in the utterance 'He's a snake', the proper or literal meaning will not work here. The supposed rightful meaning is simply nonsensical in this case. We are therefore called upon to work out the meaning which involves placing the man (he) and the snake in a certain mental category so that it becomes natural to transfer a characteristic or a set of characteristics of the

snake – cunning, dangerous, treacherous, to name a few – to the man. This is a logical process we as users of the language accomplish in an intuitive flash. The process operates at a subconscious level and happens so rapidly that we are often unaware of the mental somersault involved in its interpretation. This example is rather obvious but it helps to illustrate the distinction between the ‘proper’ and the ‘figurative’ meaning of a word. In Asafo songs, there are a lot of such ‘obvious’ use of figurative language as will be demonstrated later on in this chapter. However, it is instructive to point out that these same song texts often appear to be starkly literal without any such use of figurative language. Again, in the course of this chapter, we shall examine this supposed starkness and demonstrate how the apparent absence of figurative language in its own way constitutes another kind of figurative system.

5.3 KEY TROPES

In Chapter 3, the manifest content of the song texts under review were categorised with respect to theme as:

- i. war
- ii. death
- iii. praise
- iv. ridicule and
- v. appeal to deity

The point was made that because of the character of Asafo as a social institution especially with regard to its military preoccupations, these five broad themes are perhaps not too surprising. The point was also made that these were merely convenient categorisations adopted for the purpose of analysing the contents of

the songs, the reason being that there are no clear cut or rigid boundaries and that these broad themes flow unimpeded into each other. For our present purpose, we shall examine the key tropes employed in these songs. Since these tropes run through a good number of songs we shall, again for convenience sake, group them in cluster fashion. This will afford us two advantages. First, it will offer, on inspection, the range of tropes employed in the songs. In addition, clustering these tropes will afford us the ease of delving into each of them in the various contexts in which they occur so that their communicative power as well as their ability to generate meaning can be demonstrated. Within the song texts there are three prominent features:

- i. titles and by-names
- ii. aphorisms, proverbs and wise sayings
- iii. certain spectacular turns of phrase

all of which involve the use of tropes. These will be discussed together with the other tropes employed elsewhere in the texts.

5.3.1 GUNS AND BULLETS

One prominent feature is the frequent reference to 'guns' and 'bullets' in one regard, with 'shot' and 'flint' as a variation. For instance, in Ewusi (# 17) we are told about:

The war hero who
Has his own guns and his own bullets
It's Ewusi who is the war hero

As already discussed in Chapter 3, Ewusi's prominence derives from his possession of guns and ammunition and, by extension, his capability to raise and

equip a fighting force. This immediately confers on him a superior status. Having guns and bullets in this context means having the power to control and dominate. As metaphors for power, strength and authority, these tropes work by drawing attention to the very history of warfare. We are told – and we have no reason to doubt it – that throughout history, peoples with superior or advanced weapons invariably wielded power and control over others who were less resourced. Indeed, colonial relations were possible only by virtue of superior means of warfare and the ability or at least the potential to conquer and dominate weaker nations. Similarly, the apparent willingness of vassal states to accept that status derived from the same fact, in addition to the hope and belief that they could count on a much stronger overlord state for protection in return for loyal subservience. The gun and the bullet are certainly foreign in origin, the single-barrelled Dane gun having been introduced to our shores by the Danish adventurers of the 16th and 17th centuries. The history of our nation is replete with attempts by various ethnic groups to acquire and use guns and bullets in warfare. The more guns a people had, the better their chances were in the various wars of exploitation and/or expansion. The acknowledged warrior chief is thus measured not only in terms of his ability in battle but also by his ability to possess and kit out a loyal fighting force prepared to do his bidding. It is this background that gives meaning to guns and bullets as tropes in Asafo songs. Their frequent occurrence in Asafo songs is not surprising since the Asafo as an organisation is primarily a fighting force. And, as a fighting force, it has ample room for recognition of its heroes, its sponsors and its patrons. Any discussion of guns and bullets as tropes must move from these as mere objects and focus on their functional value. Among the Asafo, the gun is an indispensable item. The

closeness of the association between guns and bullets with Asafo warriors is strongly metonymic. In 'If Abese Perishes' (#23), the point is made forcefully:

If Abese Perishes
It's the town that perishes.

Which is to say that the safety and the defence and indeed the very survival of the town depend on the Abese Asafo. That being the case, the singers declare:

Let the gunpowder sound to summon us.

Here, the metonymic force of gunpowder working in close collaboration with the booming sound interpreted as a call to arms enables us to picture a state of battle readiness on the part of the singers.

Similarly, in the 'We Have Guns and Bullets' (#38), the singers' boast goes beyond mere possession of guns and bullets:

We shot
Who was it we shot?
Who shot someone
We shot Dadzebo ...

"Dadzebo" literally means 'rock that is as hard as iron'. There is therefore a strong sense of achievement in killing Dadzebo, even if we are prepared to see Dadzebo as a solitary foe. However, the singers' intention goes beyond a mere

individual to suggest the annihilation of a very strong, almost, invincible group symbolised by Dadzebo.

In 'Cowardly Asafo' (#31), there is a refreshing reference to guns, which delights by its sheer allusiveness. It is a song directed at a rival group who are perceived as cowardly, as the title suggests. It is sung to taunt them and remind them about their cowardice:

One day
We went to battle
Their flint
They could not ignite it ...

The reference here is to the flint gun still in common use by the Asafo. It works by means of a flint lock that ignites the gunpowder after it has been struck by means of a spring mechanism against a bit of steel. The point of this song is that the group about whom the song is sung were so frightened of battle and of their enemies that they could not fire their guns, which is another way of saying that they fled from battle, hence their being described as cowardly. In this particular instance, the flint, by reason of its connectedness with 'gun' enables us to see the point being made. This is yet another example of metonymy. In this case and in all the cases cited above, 'gun' and 'bullets' stand out as something more than mere objects. By operating as tropes they achieve a good measure of word economy. At the same time, their sheer suggestiveness encourages a profusion of meanings.

5.3.2 THE DRUM

Another item that is frequently troped upon is the drum. The drum – specifically the main or lead drum (*Asafokyen*) – is key to any performance of Asafo. As the chief instrument that directs and controls the other instruments in the ensemble as described in Chapter 2, the lead drum has acquired a certain symbolic force all its own. It is the one instrument that is played to summon or dismiss people. It is also used to relay messages in times of peace. In the heat of battle, the lead drum is the ‘voice’ that directs operations in the field. These attributes of the lead drum make it a special object in its own right. Its uniqueness goes beyond its utility value as a tool for communication. Indeed, it symbolises the spirit of the Asafo as a group and is generally treated with a reverence not too different from that accorded a god. Usually, the lead drum is given a human name. For example, it is possible to come across names like ‘Kyen Kweku’ and ‘Kyen Manso’ (kyen = drum). The place of the lead drum in the general scheme of things as far as the Asafo is concerned is such that it translates itself from a mere item in an ensemble into a ‘sacred object that is often eulogised or appealed to. In ‘Anobir Manso’(#45), for instance, the singers affirm:

Anobir Manso, Manso
Anobir Manso, Manso
A drum of ours is called Manso
Yes, Anobir ...

In this song, investing the drum with a human name not only reveals the special regard the singers have for it but, more importantly, it makes it possible for it to be addressed and appealed to. The possibilities of meaning that are engendered by a conjunction of personification in one sense and apostrophe in another makes

it possible for the drum to function as a trope. It is not enough to see the drum thus portrayed as having a purely iconic value. We must move from there to the point where we can accept a chain of connectedness involving ideas such as obedience to and reverence for the drum. In addition, the emphasis on the collective ownership ('A drum of ours ...') enforces a certain communal sense of identification with the drum, underscoring a strong group solidarity in the process. Viewed this way, then, the drum again acquires a symbolic significance which makes it possible for it to operate as a trope and as a means for producing additional meaning beyond its prosaic, everyday significance as an object.

The drum is also often placed in the context of a war situation. This is not surprising because, as already stated, the drum is a vital equipment in the war effort. The drummer enjoys a place of honour in the battle formation. At the same time, he is the one member of the fighting force who enjoys the protection of an entire cohort of bodyguards known as *asekambɔfo*. The centrality of the drum in the war enterprise is captured in the expression:

... it is our little drum
that has met blood ...

Interestingly enough, these words occur in two of the songs selected for the study. These are 'You Cannot Fight' (#43) and 'Whitman' (#50). In 'You Cannot Fight' (#43) the singers taunt their foes thus:

In the past you hired fighters
This year too you have hired fighters
It's our little drum
That has met blood ...

Here, the determination to carry the war to their opponents in spite of the latter's recourse to mercenaries is implied. The idea of the little drum meeting with blood immediately conjures a picture of a war situation with the drum and its player in the thick of things. The drum meeting blood has a very strong metaphoric force. There is a vibrant interplay of metonymy and metaphor in both 'drum' and 'blood' to produce meaning. The meaning is further enriched by personification (the drum meets blood) in one sense and the drum as a symbol in another sense.

Similarly, in 'Whitman' (#52) the singers narrate how the drum came to be:

... Is it not the white man
Who went beyond the sea
To bring iron
Which he gave the blacksmith
And the blacksmith gave the carver
And the carver carved our little drum
That has met with blood ...

The strong sense of contiguity that is created by the link between 'drum' and 'blood' makes the song's rich imaginative quality possible in both songs. In another sense, our acceptance of the drum as a sacred object makes it easy for us to associate it with the idea of ritual cleansing by means of blood. It is thus the suggestive power of this association that gives us the kind of meanings we attach to the 'drum' as a trope.

5.3.3 HAT/HEADGEAR

Yet another object that carries a great deal of suggestive power is 'hat' or 'headgear'. In 'Kofi Dzewa' (#16) and 'Safohen Aborabor' (#47) mention is made of a headgear:

Kofi Dzewa here's your headgear
Yes, your headgear
Kofi Dzewa who rushed into battle and
Came back dragging his bottom on the ground...

This song is a taunt at Kofi Dzewa – and by extension his people – who is depicted as having been humiliated in battle. This idea is forcefully presented by the picture of a man rushing recklessly into battle and returning a sorry sight, wounded and humbled. The greater humiliation, however, lies in the fact that his headgear has been captured by the enemy who now taunt him:

... Here's your headgear
Yes, your headgear ...

To reach a fuller appreciation of the humiliation, we need to understand the significance of the headgear. Traditional Fante war lore has it that people went into battle with all kinds of 'protection'. These were often in the form of charms, amulets, rings, bangles and talismans. The headgear was usually studded with talismans and worn by the captain of the group. The belief was that it conferred protection and invincibility not only on the wearer but also on the group the wearer led. To have your headgear captured in battle was therefore not only a telling loss but also a great humiliation. The point of the taunt is that the headgear, which is supposed to be the source of protection and invincibility, has

been captured. The idea that comes across is that, charm for charm, Kofi Dzewa's foes are better resourced. Like the 'drum' discussed earlier, the headgear moves from being a mere icon and becomes infused with a symbolism rich in meaning.

In 'Safohen Aborabor' (#47), we are presented with another use of the headgear as a trope:

Safohen Aborabor
Did not return
May someone bring back our headgear

In this song, the Asafo captain who wears the company's headgear is missing and taken for dead when the Asafo regroup after a battle. The song is thus at once a lament over the loss of a leader and in particular over the loss of the headgear. It is the symbolic importance of the headgear and in particular what its loss means to the singers that lends pathos to the song. The song also insinuates the likely consequences of carrying on without the headgear whose protective powers they are going to miss.

The headgear therefore operates as a metonym on one level by virtue of what is immediately associated with it. On another level, we see the same object operating as a metaphor where the loss of the headgear comes to represent the group's collective sense of loss.

5.3.4. IRON

In the songs under study 'iron' is an object that is mentioned or alluded to with a fair measure of regularity. At a purely connotative level, 'iron' among the Fante-Akan refers variously to the metal itself, an iron instrument, a tool fashioned out of iron, a weapon, a sword or, according to Christaller,¹ the barrel of a gun. 'Iron', therefore, immediately suggests an object that can be held, wielded or used and, within the context of Asafo as a fighting force, 'iron' almost automatically translates into a weapon. Even beyond this level, there is the link that is suggested between 'iron' as a weapon and 'iron' representing the might of a group. In 'Someone Like You' (#40), we see an instance of a reference to iron:

... if you want to fight us
make sure of your iron ...

Here, clearly, 'iron' refers to weapons. The song is the proud boast of a group that believes that in the matter of weapons they are very well equipped and are therefore formidable. At a deeper level, 'iron' used in this context represents not just an arsenal but the entire logistics and state of preparedness for battle. 'Iron' as an object, therefore, moves from the purely denotative to assume other meanings by virtue of its metonymic proximity to war or battle and even beyond that to acquire a symbolic significance.

In 'White man' (#52), the cantor narrates the history of the white man's contact with Africa. This is done by imputing strength to the white man:

... people ask, ' who is the mightiest?'
People say the mightiest is the white man ...

and goes on to explain why the white man is so designated:

How did he come to be the mightiest?
He went beyond the sea
And brought iron
Which he gave the blacksmith

One cannot see this act of going beyond the sea to bring iron as innocuous or ordinary. The thrust of the song is the consequence of this fateful introduction of 'iron':

And the blacksmith gave the carver ...
And the carver carved our little drum
That has met with blood...

Again, we are compelled to move from the purely denotative to a second order of meaning. The introduction of iron by the white man, according to the song, has had fatal consequences.⁴ This idea is possible because, according to the song, the smith fashioned out a tool from the iron which the carver used in making the drum. As explained earlier, the idea of the drum meeting blood immediately transports us into the middle of battle. The drummer is the commander, as it were, beating out commands and generally directing affairs on the battlefield. In a sense, the drum represents the soul of the Asafo group. Therefore, if the drum is reported as having met with blood, it is traceable to the white man who ' went beyond the sea' to bring iron. However, since Africans did not wait for the arrival of the white man on our shores to discover iron, it is clear that 'iron' used

in this context can only refer to guns that were introduced as part of the white man's package. For several years the various ethnic groups in this country did everything possible to acquire these guns with which they fought among themselves in wars of expansion or revenge or in slave raids. It also did not take long for our highly skilled and creative smiths to fabricate these guns themselves. The result of the introduction of these guns by the white man is the bloody encounters the song moans about.

Again, in 'Death has been created for us' (#51) the singers proclaim:

Death has been created for us
Life has also been created for us
We are being pursued with irons

In this particular instance, 'irons' translates into 'weapons' on first reading. However, since the song alludes to man's destiny to be born and to die, we have to pay closer attention to the idea of being pursued with irons. If the song is placed within the context of war, we can say the singers are urging one another to fight valiantly since there are only two options: to survive or to die. And it is only by being brave, strong and courageous that they can stay alive. However, because 'irons' operates as a trope here, we can move from this interpretation to a more philosophical view on life: life is a struggle and the dangers and adversities are legion where 'irons' represent these dangers and adversities.

5.3.5 FLORA

It is not only objects such as guns, drums and iron that feature variously as symbols, metaphors and metonyms. We can also turn our attention to the flora

and examine the interpretive possibilities that arise from references to plant life. Two main tropes will be discussed here. These are 'palm fruits' and 'forest'.

In 'Chief Sanka's Children' (#19), our attention is drawn to the special meaning of the utterance:

We reap palm fruit
It's Chief Sanka's children
We reap like palm fruits ...

We are compelled to examine the logic of the simile. As anyone familiar with the palm fruit bunch would agree, reaping people like palm fruits carries suggestions of total rout and slaughter. It is the nature of the bunch, studded as it is with hundreds of fruits which makes this simile possible. Just as one can cut a single bunch to obtain hundreds of palm fruits, Chief Sanka's children (men) are slaughtered in their hundreds by a single attack on them. The same idea is carried in 'Awo nyi o' (#1)² where we are told:

The palm fruits we harvest
We harvest them in Anafo

This song is sung by the Bentsir Asafo Company to deride the Anafo Asafo Company. According to Opanyin Tandoh, one of my informants and an accomplished cantor himself, this song is rooted in an actual historical incident. In a skirmish with the Anafo, the Bentsir routed them so completely that it was possible for them to liken the slaughter to the act of harvesting palm fruits. Just in case the point is not clear enough, the song continues:

The heads we cut
We cut them in Anaafo ...

The success of the trope depends on our ability to visualise the palm fruit and the act of reaping. Its effectiveness lies in the fact that it enables us to see in the mind's eye the slaughter of the enemy in their hundreds. At the same time, the figure suggests that no serious resistance is offered as their enemies meekly and passively submit to the slaughter. The mental picture thus evoked is one in which human beings by their hundreds are put to the sword without any resistance.

There are also occasional references to 'forest'. The forest as a locus holds a great deal of fascination for people. While on one hand it is – by virtue of it being their natural habitat – a safe haven for animals, on the other hand it is a full of mystery, dangers and surprises for humans. In 'This Man is Useless' (#36), the singers insinuate:

The leopard has fled into the forest ...

Here, clearly, the forest is a safe haven for the leopard. However, that is not the point of the taunt. In their collective imagination, the leopard is supposed to be a wild and ferocious beast that lives up to its reputation by attacking and devouring its prey, including human beings. This dramatic change where the pursuer becomes the pursued is what creates the satiric point. The Asafo company whose totemic animal the leopard is is collectively represented as the leopard. Seen this way, the implied lack of courage or even the cowardice of the group becomes

clear. The beast flees into its sanctuary and into safety in the forest in a rather interesting reversal of roles.

In 'No peace in the Forest' (#48), the forest is no longer a safe haven. This time, it is humans who have trespassed, as it were, to do battle there:

I remember my forest experience
Yes, there was no peace in the forest ...

Here, the forest is the battleground. All the sound and fury of battle are captured here in one brief imaginative moment. The song may well refer to an actual historical incident. The power of the forest to function as a trope by capturing the essence of battleground action is what is of significance here.

5.3.6 FAUNA

Not infrequently, animals feature in Asafo songs. These are drawn largely from the fauna of the locality. That is, they are the usual animal life that forms part of the people's everyday reality. These include birds, wild, aquatic and domestic animals. Some of these animals have totemic significance and are often presented as the embodiment of the people whose totems they are. Sometimes, too, the animals symbolise certain qualities or attributes and often operate as public or universal symbols the same way, for instance, the hare is associated with cleverness and quickness of thought and the sheep with denseness or stupidity in Fante-Akan folklore.

As already mentioned, in 'This Man is Useless (#36), the leopard escapes into the forest. This picture of the pursuer turning tail and fleeing to safety immediately brings into question the leopard's reputation for ferocity and strength. It enables a satiric point to be made about the group that has appropriated the leopard as a symbol. The situation is almost the same in 'The Leopard' (#13) where we are told;

The leopard
Has jumped into the thicket
Let someone grab it by the tail

The scenario is the same, just as the satiric intention is unmistakable. But, unlike the first example, the idea of pursuit and capture is implied in 'Let's someone grab it by the tail'. This idea sharpens the irony implicit in the situation. The ferocious beast is so weakened that ordinary folk can dare to entertain the thought of holding it by the tail. On the other hand, it could well mean that it is not that the leopard is so emasculated as to run away from a fight. Rather, it is that its pursuers have greater strength.

In 'The Eel and the Hawk' (#5) the idea of challenge is carried in the closing lines:

The eel!
The hawk!
They say they will go there
We say we will go there

The point of the challenge is clear in the 'we' and 'they' opposition. In the song, use is made of two creatures – the eel and the hawk. To arrive at their significance, we have to trace the figurative process from a comparative standpoint: the hawk is master of the skies where it roams freely and from where it surveys its prey before swooping down on it. The eel, on the other hand, has free rein in the sea. This type of eel, *wanwanyan*, is quite dangerous in the water, sometimes attacking fishermen and tearing off flesh with its fine, sharp teeth. In this song, it is the meaning and significance we attach to the eel and to the hawk that make it possible for them to function as tropes.

In 'Tortoises' (#9) we have a song that castigates the elders or leaders for their treachery:

Tortoises! tortoises!
Traacherous people
Tortoises!

The tortoise in Fante-Akan folklore is a very wily creature and is sometimes not beyond playing a low trick or two on other animals. The direct use of 'tortoise' as a figure enables it to operate as a metaphor in one respect and a symbol in another.

In 'Tiny Little Hen' (#39), a powerful picture of frailty and helplessness is presented:

The tiny little hen stands at the crossroads
You are just a tiny little hen
You are just a tiny little hen
If you are killed

It's of no consequence ...

Thus depicted, the little hen cuts a very sorry picture. Ideas like desolation, desertion and rejection immediately suggest themselves. It is instructive to note that the hapless little bird is placed as a crossroads, thereby hinting strongly at a sense of being confused or even lost. This helpless state is further underscored by the assertion:

If you are killed
It's of no consequence ...

Obviously, the hapless little bird in this song represents a lot more than itself. The use of the apostrophic 'you' compels us to consider the little hen as a metaphor for weakness, frailty, helplessness and even worthlessness. By this turn of meaning, our little fowl comes to represent a person or a group of persons that immediately assume these negative attributes.

In the same song, by means of further animal imagery, another derogatory statement is made:

What is the goat aiming to do?
The goat says he will fuck his mother ...

This may well read as a descent into vulgarity. However, it is important to remember that as in all verbal art forms the performers have a certain amount of licence, which exonerates them in the process of performing from any social responsibility for what they say. Again, while in the praise song 'nice' and positive things are said about the person being praised, a song of abuse or ridicule

almost invariably dictates its own crude or coarse ingredients. The goat in this piece comes across forcefully as a metaphor for a person or a group whose actions the singers do not approve of. As the song continues the singers declare:

Twee twee twee baa twee twee
We hate this foolishness
You goat,
We hate this foolishness
Hwee tar!

The extreme foolishness of the goat is what is being castigated here. The goat as a metaphor enables a powerful statement about the singer's foes to be made. The ideophones used here also help to convey meaning in a very pointed manner. 'Twee twee twee ba twee twee' goes beyond nonsense syllables to suggest the foolish antics of the goat that make the singers declare:

We hate this foolishness ...

This is followed with 'hwee tar' which suggests the sound that is made as a machet swooshes through the air to sever the goat's head from the rest of its body in one deft stroke. In this song, therefore, apostrophe, metaphor and ideophone converge on and reinforce each other to generate meaning.

In 'Kofi Nyane' (#11) the singers boast:

We are the – lizard – from – across – the sea ...

Even though the lizard is a fairly common sight, the kind 'that has come from beyond the sea' as an idea requires some getting used to. The idea, basically, is

to describe themselves as special, unique, exotic, mysterious and therefore invincible.

There are quite a number of other references to animals in Asafo songs in general. There is, for instance, the reference to Elder Kwesi as a hyena in 'Our Chief, Abaka' (#3):

It's Abaka we are calling
Our Chief, Abaka we are calling
Elder Kwesi the hyena
If we follow you
This state will collapse

This song depends for its success on the contrast between Chief Abaka and Elder Kwesi. The singer's respect and preference for Abaka is not masked in any way. In a similar manner, there is undisguised contempt for Elder Kwesi to whom they dare not entrust the rulership of the state. However, the direct comparison with the hyena works, like all metaphors do, by immediately transferring qualities and attributes of the hyena in folkloric thinking such as treachery, dishonesty and – because of the hyena's reputed fondness for dead animals – putrefaction. This enables us to accept the likelihood of the ultimate decay of the state should matters be left in the hands of Elder Kwesi. Perhaps one last example will suffice. In 'Your Antics do not Impress' (#26), the text by means of the use of animal imagery, expresses the singer's contempt for their foes:

Your antics do not impress
Neither do your complaints
They mean nothing
They are nothing ...

This matter-of-fact way of expressing a low opinion of the other is enriched by likening the people to animals:

... They are the antics of the crocodile
they are the antics of the iguana

Both animals referred to here are members of the lizard family. It is quite probable that folklore has conferred certain negative character traits or tendencies on these animals. These are transferred metaphorically to the foes against whom the song is directed. By equating their deeds (antics) with the crocodile and the iguana, the singer's contempt becomes clear. However, the concerns raised in the song go beyond the mere expression of contempt:

While we kill the iguana
The python waits to deliver it
To deliver it
To deliver it
To deliver it to us

The reptiles mentioned here can all be deadly on occasion. The singers, however, assert their superiority and dominance over them. The implication here is that just as the iguana is killed while the python tamely waits to deliver it, the people whose methods are equated with these reptiles' can be dealt with a similar manner. We have the same idea in a more explicit form in 'The cobra' (#26) where we are told:

The cobra
We of Nkum, we killed the cobra ...

Here, as in 'Your Antics do not Impress' (#26), the ability to control, overcome or kill a dreaded animal confers a certain measure of strength, courage and invincibility on the group whose song it is.

In all the above examples, the texts make use of animals not merely as objects about which the songs are sung. In some respects, they have a totemic significance as in 'The Leopard' (#13). In other instances, these animals symbolise certain qualities or attributes or are associated with certain ideas. Examples of these include the tortoise in 'Tortoises' (#9), the little hen and the goat in 'Tiny Little Hen' (#39). In addition, some of these references to animals such as in 'The Cobra' (#27) and 'Your Antics do not impress' (#26) underscore the Asafo company's ability to control, overcome or even to destroy their enemies. The animals thus used carry their connotations of attributes and qualities that make their use as tropes possible and this in turn makes it possible for the tropes to generate additional meaning. In this way, song texts that appear to be starkly literal are considerably enriched.

5.3.7 NATURAL PHENOMENA AS TIME MARKERS/INDICATORS

Quite often, Asafo songs make references to natural phenomena like the sun, stars, dew and mist. These, more often than not, serve as time indicators. This is not surprising since in many traditional societies the sun from its 'rising' through high noon to its 'setting' has served to define the society's waking and working hours. In a similar manner, 'dew' and 'mist' often indicate a particular time of day or night. In certain instances, a particular star may indicate the time of the

night or year. How these natural phenomena may operate as tropes is not difficult to realise. They sometimes work by contiguity to create a metonymic effect as will be demonstrated presently. In other instances, they may have direct metaphoric or symbolic force.

In 'Kofi Nyane' (#11), for example, the singers call on their leader to propel his men into action.

Our Captain Kofi Nyane
If the people refuse to move
Prod them with the whip ...

There is a certain sense of urgency in the call as they chorus:

We know the sun is going
We know the sun is going ...

The use of the 'sun' here underscores the need to act quickly before darkness sets in. The sun is thus a time referent. Beyond this, however, the sun's departure – so to speak – represents their own opportunity to act which, like the sun, is also slipping by.

Apart from the sun, reference is sometimes made to 'mist' as in 'I have met my Enemies' (#37). This song describes an encounter with the enemy and the inevitable skirmish that must follow the encounter:

I have met my enemies
I have met my enemies
I shall fight my enemies ...

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I have met my enemies
I have met my enemies
I shall fight my enemies ...

Whereupon the singers invoke their god:

Nkwantabisa Akyeampen
If war comes
Clear the mist in our way ...

Here, mist must represent a visual obstacle that needs to be removed for them to see clearly as they engage the enemy rather than as a mere time indicator even if that is also plausible in this context. Beyond this purely denotative level, however, 'mist' represents any obstacle or impediment in the way. At the same time, it suggests a plea for protection from the deity.

Similarly, in 'Awambra Kwesi' (#20), 'dew' works by means of its connectedness with the break of day:

Awambra Kwesi
Come, Kwesi, for
Daylight has met us in the dew ...

This is a song about warriors spoiling for a fight but who are restrained by the absence of their leader, Kwesi. Having encamped, they have waited out the night and eventually day has broken on them. 'Dew' in this context is indexical by reason of its proximity to night or early dawn, working as a time indicator. At the same time, it conveys a sense of lack of protection or lack of shelter and a further suggestion that it has been a rather long wait.

In much the same way, a star is used as a trope in one of the songs under study. This is a specific star the fisher folk in Cape Coast called *Menkye*. Fante fishermen have had a long acquaintance and familiarity with stars and their import.³ *Menkye* is a morning star that appears regularly around 3:00 a.m. and serves as a guiding light for fishermen who have to set off on their expeditions early enough in order to be back before the day is out. *Menkye* occurs in 'They're taking leave' (#18):

They are taking leave of us
It's someone's destiny
They are taking leave of us
It's time for us to go home ...

As a song about leave taking, it is very revealing. The idea of taking leave operates on two levels. In one sense it is the ordinary dispersal and departure for their separate homes at the end of the group's business. The fact that this song doubles as a funeral song immediately invests 'home' with another meaning recalling man's inevitable tryst with death. The chorus to the song runs:

Egya Menkye it is
Nothing else
They are taking leave of us
It's someone's destiny
It's time for us to go home

Like 'mist' and 'dew' in the earlier example, *Menkye* in this context indicates the time of the day, i.e. early dawn. The inevitability of passing on is captured in the implied certainty of the star fading as the sun rises on the horizon. The star

therefore progresses from icon through index into a symbol, making the funereal overtones possible and plausible.

In all the above instances, natural phenomena are referred to in a manner that goes beyond the merely denotative. They function as tropes to generate additional meanings

5.3.8 PLACE NAMES/TOPONYMS

Quite often, place names occur in Asafo songs. The place names mentioned may be connected with actual historical incidents and may therefore have allusive force. However, there are instances where these references go beyond mere allusion. In "Bakatsir" (#21):

Bakatsir is not difficult to find
Let the treachery cease
The head is full of secrets ...

For the allusion to be understood, its historical antecedent needs explaining. 'Bakatsir' literally means 'head of the lagoon' (*baka* = lagoon; *tsir* = head), and is located at the western end of the Fosu Lagoon in Cape Coast. Tradition has it that it was the ancient place of judgement and instant punishment, including executions for wrong doers. The song reminds potential wrong doers about the consequences of their malfeasance. Treachery against the state was a crime punishable by death or exile. As a locus, Bakatsir serves to remind people about crime and punishment. At the same time, it is what is associated with the place, i.e. its metonymic significance that is foregrounded in the song. The expression 'the head is full of secrets' is typical of the indirection one often comes across in

Asafo songs. The point being made here is that the person or persons indulging in the act of treachery may well think that no one knows. On the other hand, those who know what is really happening will keep their thoughts until the day of reckoning.

Another instance of this type of trope is found in 'Etuei (#24):

You do not know Etuei
Yet you say you will go there
You, you
You do not know Etuei
Yet you say you will go there
You'd better stop ...

Etuei is the sacred grove of the deity of the same name. Like Bakatsir above, it was a place that struck terror into the people who knew what took place there. It is the same place that the Nkum Asafo Company celebrate in 'Black Hunters' (#25):

Black hunters
Behold death
We killed the entire town at Etuei
We turned Etuei gloomy ...

In both cases, the strength of the reference to Etuei, like in Bakatsir above, lies in the metonymic association we make between Etuei as a locus and the chain of related events connected with the place.

In 'Abora' (#22), the singer's call on the people of Abora to thank the white man for his protection:

But for the white man
Kwamena would have been taken to Esaaman ...

In this song, the Aboras and their leader, Kwamena, were saved from annihilation by the intervention of, quite possibly, a colonial governor. By this intervention, their adversaries were stymied. 'Esaaman' is the place where Kwamena in the song would have met his fate. Here again as in the previous examples, Esaaman does not merely refer to a place but also to the kind of activities we are prepared to associate the place with. In all the instances cited here, these place names function as metonyms giving us a slice – as it were – out of which we must necessarily reconstruct the rest of the reality.

5.3.9 GENDER

The point has already been made in our introduction about the Asafo being a predominantly male enterprise. This, however, cannot be the whole truth since in the annals of Asafo women seem to have played prominent roles. The *Asafoakyerε*, which is the female version of the *Safohen*, can be found in all the seven Asafo groups in the Cape Coast area. However, the texts of the songs appear to relegate women to the background as the following examples suggest. In 'Man' (#32) for instance, the singers echo the society's expectation of manhood:

If you are a man
If you are a man
If you are a man
If you are born a man
Come forward when you hear the sound of war!

This song suggests that war is the sole preserve of men. It seeks to create the impression that women have no role to play during a crisis. The historical reality, however, is very different. Women have always played significant roles in wars either as fighters alongside their men or by providing the support services essential to any army's success. The song presents man as the embodiment of strength, courage and patriotism. We need to remind ourselves that 'man' in this song represents an arbitrary assignment of meaning which is upheld by the society's values and biases. This tendency is also evident in 'Tebir Ankoma'(#29) where the man of that name is lionised as:

The man who fights
To whet my appetite for fighting

And also as:

The peacemaker who takes up the fight ...

Here, as in the first example, we begin to see gender as a cultural idea rather than as a biological fact. This, perhaps, is not too surprising because in the Fante-Akan society boys and girls grow up learning that qualities such as bravery, strength and dynamic leadership belong to men and that a woman can only stray, so to speak, into these qualities only when somehow her femininity is denied her by some quirk of fate.

The same notion is carried in 'This Man is Useless' (#36) where the man in the song is unable to demonstrate the so-called manly characteristics that the society has socialised its members to expect:

This man is useless
This man is useless
People of Abese
This man has run away ...

He is then likened, by means of metaphor, to the leopard which flees in the face of danger.

The leopard has fled into the thicket ...

However, we know that biological sex does not directly or even at all generate all the characteristics associated with 'man'. It can only be a reflection of the cultural 'wisdom' of the people. We also see patriarchy at work, recalling the Marxist dictum that the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas⁴

5.3.10 TITLES, BY NAMES, PRAISE APPELLATIONS

In Asafo, one often comes across titles that are either inherited or earned which indicate status, position, character or some attribute or the other. The commonest ones include *Sabanyin*, (war lord), *Safohen* (captain)⁵ and, *Okunyin* (distinguished one). While both *Sabanyin* and *Safohen* are inextricably linked to Asafo, the title *Okunyin* can find application both within the Asafo and outside it. *Okunyin* translates as 'killer of men' (*Okum* = killer, *enyin* = men).

As already indicated in Chapter 1, the position of *Safohen* or captain is usually passed on from father to son. Occasionally, an Asafo company may decide to invest an individual with the title. It is generally regarded as a position of honour. Similarly, *Sabanyin* is a title of honour which is earned through one's exploits in war. As titles, these two serve to distinguish their holders from the non-titled members of the group. However, they are not mere labels. Both *Safohen* and *Sabanyin* connote qualities such as bravery, courage, strength and success among others. In 'Sabanyin Ewusi' (#17), for example, we have a praise song that begins by tagging the title to the name and ends by insisting:

It's Ewusi who is the war hero

Clearly, it is not just the affirmation of the title that is at work here. More than that, the title captures in its wake all the fine qualities that can be associated with a respected, likeable and successful warlord.

Apart from titles such as the ones discussed above, one often comes across a peculiar feature of Akan nomenclature: by-names. J.B. Crayner has noted that every Akan name has a by-name. He notes further that a good number of Akan names also have praise appellations.⁶ Nketia has also thrown more light on the matter. He writes:

Proper names ... are used along with their corresponding bynames (*mmane*) or praise appellations (*abodin*). The bynames and praise appellations may be used for affective reasons. Praise appellations describe in a convenient short or gnomic form the qualities or expected qualities, accomplishment or status of the holder of the corresponding proper name.⁷

In the songs collected for this study, bynames that occur include Asafo Kwakye (#1), Nkwantabisa Akyeampon, Kwesi Dadze Bɔmbɔfo and Ansa-a-okum-abɔfo. 'Asafo Kwakye' literally means 'Kwakye of the Asafo'. The byname suggests a close link between Kwakye the person and the Asafo as a group. It carries further suggestions of the holder's pivotal or indispensable role in the group. Its meaning is further deepened by the portrayal of Kwakye as the embodiment of the Asafo.

Nkwantabisa Akyeampon is a combination of a fairly common Akan name, Akyeampon and 'Nkwantabisa', the name of a plant.⁸ It is possible that the plant has certain putative qualities that are transferred to the bearer of the name. On the other hand, it is equally possible that the true meaning of the term has been lost in the mist of time. Be that as it may, the cognomen 'Nkwantabisa' carries a baggage of connotations which the bearer and the community at large both recognise.

In much the same way, Kwesi Dadze Bɔmbɔfo (i.e. Kwesi Dadze the hunter) as a name does not merely ascribe an occupation to the bearer. More than that, it carries certain suggestions embedded in the word 'Bɔmbɔfo', such as courage, spirit of adventure and fighting prowess. In Akan lore, the hunter is the quintessential warrior. Oral tradition has it that in the course of the several years of migrations, generally, the hunters doubled as scouts, surveying the terrain ahead of the main wave of migrants and reporting back to the people and also as an advance party, warding off attackers and preparing the way for the main group. These attributes are present in the term *bɔmbɔfo* (hunter). The role of the

hunter is also alluded to in the name Ansa-a-okum-abɔfo (i.e. Ansa the killer of hunters). Here, the suggestion is one of super human strength, given the perception of the hunter as the warrior *par excellence* in Akan lore. Such names can be regarded as tropes since their meanings go beyond the original denotations of the words that make up these names.

Not infrequently, some of these by names assume the character of praise appellations such as Ansa-the killer-of-hunters above. Another example is 'Okogyeatuo' (i.e. He-who-fights-and-seizes-the enemy's-gun). Like the foregoing example, the praise element in the name is self evident. Another such name is 'Odzii abanyinsem' (i.e. He-who-indulges-in-manly-activities). In all these examples cited, the praise names consist of a short, compressed relative sentence which describes the feats or achievements of the bearer or the ancestor whose name has been inherited.

5.3.11 SAYINGS/PROVERBS

One interesting feature of the cantor's art in Asafo song performance is the frequent use of proverbs or sayings in the call part of the song. As explained in Chapter 2, the cantor or lead singer has considerable leeway in the process of 'cooking' the song. He for instance has the freedom – like the solo improviser in jazz music – to stray from the basic song pattern so long as he can, with some dexterity, fall back into line. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of a good cantor is his ability to wander – as it were – and manoeuvre his way back without missing a beat. In the process of doing this, the cantor often depends on certain 'fillers',

usually in the form of a pithy saying or a proverb. Perhaps not surprisingly, all the cantors who obliged this researcher liberally resorted to three main items in this category. These were:

- i. *wɔmnye wo mnekeda a, wɔkyere wo wi*
if they are not ready to host you, they show you the setting sun
(##5, 7, 13, 25, 31, 45, 47)
- ii. *keka dadze a dadze bra wo*
if you play with iron, iron also plays with you (##5, 7, 13, 25, 31, 45, 47)
- iii. *me na Kumwa kyee m'adze a nkye mennkeda bun yi mu*
if my mother Kumwa had endowed me I would not have ended up
in this pit (## 2, 3, 34, 38, 45, 46)

As can be seen from the complete transcriptions and translations in Appendix I and II respectively, these sayings more often than not appear out of place as far as the general drift of the song's message is concerned. It would, therefore, seem that the cantor depends on these maxims as a way of moving out of the basic repetitive pattern of the song. Let us now examine these three saws and find out what interpretive possibilities they can yield. In (i) above, we have a fairly common proverb often depicted pictorially in Asafo flag art with a bunched fist whose index finger points towards a setting sun. The meaning is that they who intend to be kind or hospitable to you will show it in their attitude and in their actions towards you. As a proverb, its meaning comes into full force when it is placed in an appropriate context. It is often a statement of disappointment made

by a person or a group over the shabby treatment suffered at the hands of a neighbour from whom at least a certain modicum of kindness or fellow-feeling was expected.

The second, *keka dadze a dadze bre wo*, loosely translates as 'if you play with iron, iron also plays with you'. The translation at first sight appears to border on the nonsensical, but that is part of the difficulty one has to contend with when translating Fante-Akan sayings cast in a metaphoric mould into English. However, as already explained earlier on in this chapter, the term 'iron' as used in Asafo songs almost invariably expands beyond its denotative meaning to refer to either a tool, a weapon or even an entire arsenal. Seen this way, several interpretations readily suggest themselves. For one thing, this saying can mean 'if you provoke us, we shall return it in full measure', or 'if you look for trouble, you will find it'. The saying is elastic enough to move outside its rather negative underpinnings to suggest something more positive. One of my informants, Safohen Aggrey, suggested this interpretation: 'if you wield your implement well, you reap the benefits thereof'. As with proverbs and other pithy sayings, the particular meaning can only be determined by the context in which it is used.

We can now turn our attention to the next proverb *Mena Kumwa kyee m'adze a nkye mennkeda bun yi mu*, which translates – again loosely – as: 'if my mother Kumwa had endowed me I would not have ended up in this pit'. The lament here suggests that the speaker/singer finds himself in a difficult but avoidable situation. He is where he is because he did not receive the kind of assistance or support that would have enabled him to avoid the situation. The point to note

here is that the nominals in the expression, 'my mother Kumwa' and 'pit' readily suggest other nominals that have enough similarity to place them in the same paradigm so that other meanings can be generated:

my mother Kumwa	pit
neighbours	trouble
friends	danger
	debt

thereby taking the statement beyond its denotation into a second, much wider scope of meaning.

As already indicated, these proverbs or sayings occur frequently as part of the cantor's repertoire. It is clear then that apart from their being favourite sayings of the cantor, they also enable him to improvise and also manoeuvre in and out of the basic repetitiveness of the song.

Closely related to these terse formulations is the sheer expressiveness of some of these songs. The imaginative quality of certain turns of phrase lends further credence to Asafo song texts as a veritable storehouse of tropes. For example in 'Trouble' (#6) the singers warn:

You are trying to court trouble
Once you court trouble
Trouble will be placed on your doorstep

In this piece, the apparent starkness of language is effectively redeemed by the resort to personification, which comes across forcefully, leaving no one in doubt about the admonition.

Another instance of expressive power is captured in 'We shall fight them' (#14). In this song, the singers' intention is clear from the opening lines. It goes on to say that they have no money to waste on hiring mercenaries to fight for them and that they will not be deterred by the sheer numbers of their adversaries. The thrust of the song's message is in the last line.

We've fought and met!

Here, we are presented with a statement of fact in a pithy and a more definitive form. The idea of fighting and meeting derives from the traditional Fante-Akan battle formation which involves a vanguard (*adɔntsen*), a right wing (*nyimfa*) a left wing (*benkum*) a main body (*Gyaase*) and a rearguard (*kyidɔm*). The basic strategy involves the vanguard engaging the enemy head on. While thus distracted, the left and right wings, supported by the centre and the rear, move in pincer-fashion to engulf and crush the enemy. Fighting and meeting therefore means the enemy has been surrounded and routed after the left and right wings have closed in on each other. Left and right have, from their original starting positions, met, so to speak. The interesting feature of this song is that even though it begins with a statement of intent:

We shall fight them ...

It concludes with a *fait accompli*:

We have fought and met

In just a few words, therefore, this piece manages to capture the essence of the Asafo's battle plan and predict a favourable outcome.

The idea of the Asafo as a fighting force is foregrounded in 'Tiny Little Hen' (#39) where the singers affirm:

We tread the path of blood
Our flint is sharp ...

Here, the 'path of blood' captures the essence of the warrior's lot: it is his blood or his enemy's; he either kills or is killed in battle. There is a near-fatalistic ring to this assertion. However, the next line evokes a sense of hope and survival:

Our flint is sharp ...

The sheer metaphoric force of this image invests it with a suggestiveness which includes their ability to fight the enemy, their quickness on the draw and even their invincibility.

Similarly, in 'The Mighty One is Dead' (#41) the singers lament the loss in battle of a great leader and declare:

When you fight for the state
You must raise your head ...

thereby implying that their leader ought to have exercised a little more caution in order to preserve his life. Whether it is read as a piece of advice or as a maxim, these lines express a universal truth about the need to be careful, circumspect and

level-headed in all situations. This and the few other foregoing examples amply demonstrate that the language of Asafo songs has the potential to soar – and often does – to poetic heights.

5.3.12 THE CONCEPT OF 'SMALL', OR SMALL AS GREAT

Quite often in Asafo greatness is ascribed to smaller entities. This, no doubt, is a validation of the kind of balance that Akan folklore in general usually strives to maintain: the tiny rat rescuing the mighty lion from a pit; the little hare outwitting the hippopotamus; the fragile crab seizing the elephant's trunk in its tiny claws and causing the mighty animal endless anguish – the list goes on. Where the entity, be it a human being or beast, is disadvantaged by virtue of lack of ample body mass or size, it makes up for this deficiency by proving more versatile, more cunning, more sensible and ultimately emerges as the victor in the contest or struggle. This same tendency occurs with noticeable frequency in Asafo songs as well.

In 'I won't serve notice' (#33), the singers address their enemies and remind them that they are ready to engage them any time any day. They go on to affirm their support for, and faith in, their leader, Kofi Anamoah:

... our little captain Kofi Anamoah
he knows how to wield the iron ...

Their leader's prowess is accentuated by the fact that he is described as 'little'. In 'Mighty Bird' (#35) we are told:

Mighty bird
Mighty bird
Wise little bird
Kwesi Dadze the Hunter,
Take us to the battle front

In this song, the epithets 'mighty' and 'little' cannot be said to be contradictory because the bird's might derives not from sheer size but from its wisdom. This song is an invocatory prayer sung before battle where the 'little bird' is appealed to lead them into battle.⁹ The little bird acquires a significance beyond its tiny, frail self and assumes the stature of a divine essence capable of being appealed to and satisfying the petitions of his ardent supplicants.

In 'If Abese Perishes' (#23), there is a similar reference to:

... Our little bird
Our wise bird
If Abese perishes
It's the state that perishes ...

In both instances, the bird assumes the stature of deity. This conflation of diminutiveness and wisdom is certainly a means of attaining a natural balance. These two instances, however, invite comparison with the bird in 'Tiny Little Hen' (#39) where we are called upon to see the helpless little bird as such:

... you are a tiny little hen
if you get killed
It's of no consequence ...

Here, the little hen is made to represent or typify the enemy. Its frailty and helplessness are, in the manner of all effective metaphors, transferred to the people who are lampooned in this song. In this particular case, small is just what it says, reminding us that in Akan folklore small cannot always be mighty or great.

In 'The Whiteman' (#52) and 'You dare not fight' (#43) reference is made in both cases to:

Our little drum
That has met blood ...

The 'little drum' is the Asafo drum, the lead drum, the drum that leads the company into battle. It is also the instrument used to spur the fighters on, to give orders to attack, retreat or regroup. The drummer's role in battle is in one sense rather like that of the bugler in the western military tradition. The role of the drum is therefore without doubt a very critical one. In this case, as in the case of the 'little bird' mentioned above, in spite of its size, the little drum is invested with a certain measure of greatness.

5.3.13 THE WHITEMAN

The locale for this study is the Cape Coast area. Historically, the castle at Cape Coast served as the operating base for the various waves of European adventurers who came to our shores, culminating in the creation of the Gold Coast protectorate under the British.¹⁰ For several years, the seat of the British Colonial administration was at Cape Coast. It was not until the late 1870's that the colonial headquarters was transferred to Accra. Coming from such a background of European presence and commerce – including the slave trade they engaged in on our shores – one would expect glaring references to both the whiteman and the ignoble trade in human beings. On the contrary, in the sixty-odd songs used for this study, this researcher came across only a few references to the white man. Could we as a people have forgotten our past? Or, are the references there, but veiled in a manner that require some unravelling?¹¹

In any case, there are a few conspicuous references to the white man. In 'Abora be thankful' (#22) the people of Abora are called to show their gratitude to the white man because:

the other Saturday morning
But for the white man
Kwamena would have been taken to Esaaman ...

The time and place referents would seem to suggest that an actual historical incident gave birth to this song. However, this song defies being tied down to a specific time and place. 'Kwamena' and 'Esaaman' carry suggestions beyond themselves, thereby conferring a certain timelessness on the message of the song.

The white man is also mentioned in 'Nana Feyinka' (#50..)

Nana Feyinka
The day you went to court
What did the white man ask you?
People of Abora
They told you that you are a woman
They told you that you are a woman
Under the flagstaff ...

In this song, the Abora leader, Nana Feyinka, is so cowed by the trappings of the whiteman's judicial system and the court ambience that he is unable to speak for himself. Consequently, he is lambasted as a 'woman' who cannot speak in the midst of men. The 'court' and the 'flagstaff' are at once both metaphors and symbols of the whiteman's authority and, by extension, the intimidatory nature of his rulership. In both 'Nana Feyinka' and 'Abora be Thankful', the people's social equilibrium has been assailed by the presence of the white man in their midst through the exercise of a key instrument of his authority – the court.

The disequilibrium caused by the meddlesome presence of the white man is lamented in 'So – and – so (#53):

When so-and-so came
We were already here ...

This song decries the ingratitude of the foreigner who has not shown any sign of thankfulness for the indigenes' hospitality towards him. The Fante title 'Ankor' is very revealing. 'Ankor' is a term which is resorted to when one does not care to mention a person's name. It is used in a manner that suggests to the listener who one is referring to without committing oneself to being specific with names. The reference here is of course to the white man as the song continues:

We shall not serve the white man
We shall not serve Asante ...

In the song then we hear the voice of a proud people who are asserting their ownership of the land and their right to be left in peace. They aver that they are not prepared to be anyone's vassal.

In 'The White man' (#52) the singers trace the disruption of their pre-colonial harmony to the white man by means of a dialogue between cantor and chorus:

CANTOR: People ask: who is the mightiest?

CHORUS: *ɔyɛ a*

CANTOR: Is the mightiest not the white man?

CHORUS: *ɔyɛ a*

CANTOR: He who went beyond the sea

CHORUS: *ɔyɛ a*

CANTOR: And brought iron

CHORUS: *ɔyɛ a*

CANTOR: And gave it to the Blacksmith
 CHORUS: *ጋሃ፣ ለ*
 CANTOR: And the Blacksmith gave it to Tsotsewa
 CHORUS: *ጋሃ፣ ለ*
 CANTOR: And Tsetsewa gave it to Tsetsew
 CHORUS: *ጋሃ፣ ለ*
 CANTOR: And Tsetsew gave it to the carver
 CHORUS: *ጋሃ፣ ለ*
 CANTOR: and the carver used it to carve our little drum which
 has met blood ...

In this song, the disruption of the pre-colonial social equilibrium is attributed to the white man who introduced iron to our shores from 'beyond the sea'. Clearly, iron here operates as a trope which on one level refers to weapons such as muskets and cannons introduced by the white man. On another level, 'iron' represents the entire baggage of the colonial dispensation. The consequences are captured in the idea of the 'little drum meeting blood' which has already been discussed. Viewed this way, the term 'mightiest' as ascribed to the white man in this song assumes a negative connotation. Between the Blacksmith and the carver, names like Tsetsewa and Tsetsew are only representative stages in the disruptive process bemoaned in the song. In this and all the instances referred to, there are pointed references to the whiteman's presence. We see at the same time how language can be manipulated by means of allusion and indirection to pass telling comments about the negative aspect of the people's encounter with Europeans. By troping on familiar things like 'iron', 'flagstaff' and 'court', the

singers remind us of European presence and influence in their history. But, more to the point, the language is bent to criticize, condemn, castigate and reject the disruption of their pre-colonial harmony.

5.3.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to highlight the imaginative quality of the texts of the songs selected for this study. In the process, certain key tropes were identified and placed in their contexts or related contexts. Attempts were made to explain the figurative process involved in the profusion of meanings that these tropes tend to generate. One fact that comes across in the process of interpreting these tropes as vehicles of meaning is the link between the text and the culture of the people. The very act of producing figures is a deeply mental activity and the contemplation of these figures, more often than not, reveal their psychological underpinnings. Thought is necessarily figurative, and the way a people perceive the world around them as well as the kind of understanding they bring to bear on what they perceive is deeply rooted in language. While it is true that language shapes our perceptions, it is equally true that our perceptions are in their turn also shaped by language. This is where the culture of the people comes into play. Stephen Greenblatt has pointed out that culture is:

The ensemble of beliefs and practices that function as a persuasive technology of control, a set of limits within which social behaviour must be contained, a repertoire of models to which individuals must conform ...¹²

Greenblatt further points out that literature provides a means for enforcing accepted cultural boundaries through a system of blame for socially-unacceptable behaviour and praise for socially approved behaviour. This, he states, translates broadly into satire and panegyric. In the songs under study, we see a similar

tendency in the castigation of treachery and cowardice, for instance, on the one hand and the praise of bravery, courage and success on the other. However, care must be taken in order not to push the analysis of the texts beyond the limits of the texts themselves otherwise we would be shifting from our present purpose into cultural analysis. The texts themselves are not cultural simply because of their references to the world beyond themselves. They derive their culturalness from the social values and contexts they themselves have absorbed. In other words, the Asafo song texts under study are not merely cultural because of what they contain by way of message and style of delivery. They are, in a sense, a society communicating with itself, drawing upon its matrix of beliefs and practices that define its own cultural boundaries.

The next chapter will give a summary of the findings of this study and the conclusions drawn therefrom. It will also make recommendations for further research in this area.

NOTES

¹J.G. Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante language* (Basel: Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, 1935)

²This was originally an exclamation of traditional priests and priestesses in their phrenetic dances. The usual response of bystanders was 'Hoo, hoo!'. '*Wɔmbo hon avo nyi o*' in this context is a call to people to acknowledge and sing the praises of the Asafo members as they approach. The transfer of this greeting from traditional priests to the Asafo appears to have become possible because, usually, the Asafo procession has at the head a team of traditional priests and priestesses to whom, appropriately, this greeting belongs.

³See, for instance, S.K. Otoo, *Apokɔ Na Nworaba*, (Accra: Ghana Bureau of Languages, 1964) and Gaddiel Acquah, *Oguaa Aban*, (Cape Coast: Methodist Book Depot Ltd, 1936) for an exposition on Fante-Akan stare lore.

⁴Karl Marx, *Selected Writings in Sociology*, Holman and Max Rubel (Eds) (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964)

⁵The root of these two titles is the Fante word 'sa' which means 'war'. As Asafo titles, these two do not bear a one-to-one correspondence with received Western military ranks. The English translation, therefore, are only approximate equivalents

⁶ James Brandful Crayner, '*Yeehyahyia oo!*' (Tema: Ghana publishing Corporation, 1975). In this book, written in Fante, the author gives a comprehensive list of Akan names with their corresponding by-names and praise appellations. See also Christaller (op. cit) Appendix E. p. 601

⁷Kwabena Nketia, *Funeral Dirges of the Akan*, (Exeter: James Townsend and Sons Ltd, 1955) p. 31

^{*} See Christaller, op. cit

⁹Birds are sometimes revered as deity. In the Cape Coast pantheon of seventy-seven, at least one of the gods is said to be a bird that is found on occasion hovering over the Fosu Lagoon

¹⁰Apart from its proximity and easy access by both land and sea from Elmina where since 1482 the Portuguese had secured themselves, the Swedes had by 1653 built Fort Carolusburg in Cape Coast. Later, according to Van Danzig's *Forts and Castles of Ghana*, (Accra: Sedco 1980), this Swedish fort passed into the hands of the Dutch (1664 – 65) and afterwards came into the possession of the British in 1665. The British later expanded it into what is now known as Cape Coast Castle and set up their headquarters there till 1876 when the seat of administration was moved to Accra.

¹¹This gap in our history is discussed by Opoku-Agyemang in a paper titled ' A Crisis of Balance: The (Mis)representation of Colonial History and the Slave Experience as Themes in African Literature' presented at the Langston Hughes Festival Conference, City College of New York, November 9-11, 1989. Set against this is Henry Gates' notion of 'signifying' in his essay ; 'The signifying Monkey' in *Black Literature and Literary Theory* (H.. Gates ed) Methuen Ltd. Has the evidence always been there but shrouded or veiled by means of signifying – as Gates would have it – or by 'kasa koa' as the Akans would put it?

¹²Literary Terms for Critical Study, p. 225.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to examine closely the verbal texts of Fante-Akan songs from the Cape Coast area of the Central Region of Ghana. The focus on verbal texts was adopted because of this researcher's conviction that among the Fante-Akan, text is arguably the most important factor in the determination of the emotional effect of a song. People tend to pay more attention to the text of a song than to the musical sound whether it is a dirge, a recreational song, a contemporary highlife song or an asafo song. Adolphus Turkson has suggested that the song text is a 'functional aesthetic' since people are affected first and foremost by the text of the song before anything else.¹ Again, the song texts reflect the culture of which they are a part. They are a veritable storehouse of myths, legends, religion and history of the people. The texts also are a reflection of the harmonies and the tensions within the society. Within the texts can be found also proverbs and other gnomic forms which reflect the wisdom and indeed the world view of the people. However, the focus of our study has been narrowed down to the tropes that, more than anything else, carry the meanings and the rich suggestiveness of the texts.

The study started off on the assumption that a close study of Asafo song texts will reveal a richness of language that will qualify them as pieces of oral poetry. To be able to prosecute such a study, it was necessary to begin by gathering background information on the Asafo as an institution in general and later by locating accomplished lead singers or cantors in the art of Asafo singing. The

next stage was to assemble different groups for recording purposes. This done, the recorded material on audio tape was transcribed and translated into English.

Having thus abstracted and isolated the texts from their musical accompaniments, it was easier and more convenient to deal with the texts as written texts. This concluding chapter will concern itself with a summary of the findings of the study and make recommendations for further research.

In Chapter 1, a general introduction to Asafo as an institution was outlined. The texts of the songs were singled out as the area of interest.

In Chapter 2, the song texts were examined with respect to form. It was realised that the basic form of the Asafo song is antiphonal with a lead singer or cantor's part and a chorus part. It was also realised that sometimes two lead singers or cantors can take turns or alternate within the same song, thereby creating another kind of antiphony within the overall call and response structure. This call and response structure bears a strong affinity with the classic blues pattern of statement, variation and response. In the blues, just as in Asafo, the call/statement, the variations and the response/chorus have the effect of intensifying the meaning of the statement, thereby forcing the statement into the foreground of the listener's attention. The Asafo cantor's art together with the resources available to him – repetitions, variations of the initial statement, introduction of seemingly unrelated material into the discourse, for example, a proverb or some pithy expression while managing to return to and holding the song together again - is essentially no different from the blues pattern where the

lead singer states his case, elicits his response and varies his statement for another response. In both cases, the call and response pattern not only affirms the collective voice of the singers but also confirms the shared membership of the community. And, as songs with messages, the call and response structure enables a single idea or event to be isolated and intensified so that it does not merely catch our attention but also seize our imagination and compel us to give it thought.

The lead singer or cantor's role also has ample room for improvisation rather like the jazz soloist who characteristically wanders off, so to speak, after having helped to establish the basic pattern of the song, straying adventurously and managing to touch home base without – as the saying goes – missing a beat. Just like the versatile jazz soloist, the Asafo cantor often travels away from the basic repetitiveness of the text, introducing a favourite saying or proverb or what may appear as unintelligible utterances or even as scat. Again, like the blues singer or jazz soloist, the ability to bounce back into the basic rhythmic line of the song is a mark of proficiency and versatility.

Chapter 3 examined the manifest content of the texts selected for the study. In so doing, an empirical approach – content analysis – was employed. This involved counting items in a sampling of Asafo song texts with the basic assumption that such an investigation would provide insights into the lives of the people whose artistic creations these songs are. Specifically, the main themes in the songs selected for the study were identified as war, death, praise, appeal to deity and blame, abuse and taunts. Even though the measuring of the manifest content of

the texts yielded information at a purely denotative level, it was found that the items identified constitute patterns and frequencies that connote values and attitudes. For instance, the sheer preponderance of war as a theme in the sampling suggest a history of conflict and tension. Similarly, the over representation of attributes like bravery, courage, battle-readiness and wealth tempts one to a conclusion that these occupy a high position in the people's value system, just as the use of 'woman' as a metaphor for cowardice, fear and ineptitude point to a patriarchal ordering of the society. All of this appear to demonstrate how this particular verbal art form relates to the culture from which it emanates and to which it speaks. In addition, the analysis of the content also revealed the way song texts help the culture to nurture, propagate and consolidate its values, and cement its membership with a shared consensus. Content analysis as a tool, therefore, enabled this researcher to see the values embedded in the songs.

The discussion on 'form' and 'content' in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively also explored the relationship between these two and concurred with Chidi Amuta's view that 'form' is the superstructure if 'content' is likened to the base.² This was done to prepare the way for Chapter 4 which dealt with how meaning is achieved in the message of the songs. Meaning in Asafo songs, it was found, could be arrived at through historicisation, through allegorisation and through etymologisation. These approaches, it was further demonstrated, were not enough. The dynamic interplay of denotation, connotation, myth and ideology as means by which meaning could be achieved was also explored. Finally in the same chapter, an attempt was made to show how the message of the songs

affected both the performers and the audience. The latter was perceived as an active rather than a passive recipient. This study agreed with M^cQuail³ that from a uses and gratifications standpoint, the songs may provide an escape from the constraints of routine and the tedium of daily living while at the same time offering opportunities for excitement and emotional release. In addition, the verbal texts help to identify and define the people while at the same time providing a means for value reinforcement.

In Chapter 5, the key tropes identified by means of content analysis were given a closer look and more detailed treatment. The distinction between 'figurative' and 'non-figurative' language was held up for scrutiny. In the process it became clear that while, on the one hand, this distinction appeared to hold true, on the other hand texts that appeared starkly literal reflected another kind of figurative system on closer inspection. Again, it was observed that while tropes appeared to be a 'specialised' use of language, in reality they were so common and so profuse in the songs used for this study that in a number of cases, the logical steps we need to follow in interpreting them occurred almost unconsciously. However, a few of the tropes employed images that, by contrast, were 'difficult' to negotiate.

It was also observed that some of the tropes identified worked on the basis of association by contiguity, thereby creating metonymic relationships. Other tropes generated their meanings by sheer force of cultural habit which made certain semantic relations possible because thinking about one made it possible – even automatic – to think about the other. In other words, two items could entertain a relationship because both were part of a thought system. As tropes, it was further

observed that they required an understanding of the underlying cultural framework which involved meanings that convention, custom and history had invested them with. The ease or otherwise of negotiating a trope depended therefore on the interpreter's familiarity with this universe of content that is already organised into a network of interpretants. It was, as John Fiske has already noted, 'a culture speaking to itself'⁴

All told, this study has revealed that the language of the Asafo song text is rich by virtue of a profusion of tropes which, apart from investing the songs with various possibilities as far as meaning is concerned, also enables the language to soar to poetic heights while at the same time pointing to the Fante-Akan culture's way of looking at the world.

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The Asafo song, whether it is about war, death, taunt, abuse, praise or appeal to a deity, has elements of social commentary, culture and history embedded in it. The songs used for this study have, to a great extent, exemplified this fact. The people of the Cape Coast area whose songs these are, have dropped enough hints about their life experiences, about their beliefs, their livelihood pursuits, their myths and their religion in these songs. The songs also abound in many historical allusions about wars fought, chieftaincy matters and other facets of their lives as a people. However, one aspect of the people's history which is conspicuous by its absence is the slave trade. It is odd that given the well known history of the locale where this study was undertaken, very little is said in the songs about white men and nothing about the slave trade. Indeed, two of the seven Asafo groups

whose songs were used in the study originally had their living quarters within the precincts of the Cape Coast Castle.⁵ It is inconceivable that the Europeans living in the castle did not need the labour input of the local people, especially those who lived in their humble huts near the castle. The fact of the matter was that their labour was required in the loading and unloading of the ships. And, as Van Danzig has observed:

Canoes and surf boats formed the essential
link between shore and ship, and canoe men
- mostly freemen - were held in high esteem.⁶

He adds that local labour was routinely used for maintenance and repair work on the Castle. There was certainly no shortage of work: laying bricks, mixing mortar, carrying water, cutting firewood and sweeping, among others. Undoubtedly, their work brought them into close contact with the Europeans in the Castle and many of them were participants and collaborators in the slave trade. There must have been others too who at the very least were unwilling spectators in the horrible commerce. And, finally, there were those who were directly or indirectly affected by the slave trade.⁷ Given such a background, it is indeed odd that none of the songs used for this study even remotely alluded to the slave trade.

One of the key functions of folklore is its role as a vehicle for social protest. Thus the anger, disappointments, praise and ridicule of a people find expression in jokes, proverbs and songs, for example. These are convenient media because as communal creations, their composition cannot be linked to any one particular

individual. The singer of a protest song in this vein, for instance, cannot be held responsible since he is only giving expression to the thoughts and feelings of the folk. One would therefore expect to find in Asafo songs – which are communally created for communal use – not only as an outlet for the expression of deep feelings and strong emotions, but also recognise these as providing a socio-historical record of the people whose songs these are.

True to these legitimate expectations, Asafo songs are replete with information about the singers' successes in wars, the humiliation of their enemies and the exploits of their leaders, among others. One also expects that the everyday concerns of the people: their beliefs, fears, hopes, aspirations, their religion and their livelihood pursuits together with their joys and sorrows will all be reflected in these songs. And, to an appreciable extent, the researcher who peers through this window is not disappointed. In the Cape Coast area of the Central Region of Ghana where this study was undertaken, the people's history, religion, culture and indeed their entire worldview are reflected in their Asafo songs. However, as already mentioned, there is an inexplicable dearth of material about the slave trade in these songs. Not surprisingly, quite a number of our writers have bemoaned this silence. Opoku-Agyemang speaks of a collective amnesia that seems to have engulfed us all to the point of carrying on as if the slave trade never happened.⁸ Ama Ata Aidoo picks up the refrain in her essay, "Of Forts, Castles and Silences", positing that as a people, our unwillingness to face up to the slave trade was 'the result of either an unplanned product of collective amnesia...or a wilful conspiracy of silence'⁹. In a similar vein, Livio Sansone of the Centre for Afro-Asian Studies at the Candido Mendes University in Rio de

Janeiro bemoans what he calls 'the exorcism of slavery out of the pantheon of Black cultural productions' in a piece about the heritage of slavery in Brazil¹⁰. What, one may ask, has pushed the victims to want to delete from their collective memory something as monumental and as tragic as the slave trade? This apparent silence on the slave trade in the songs is too loud to pass without comment. Is the evidence hidden or embedded in the songs, waiting to be unravelled? Or was there a kind of general consensus among the people to remain tight-lipped over the issue? This matter, intriguing as it is, will be a very challenging task for another study.

Finally, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, this researcher is convinced that Asafo on the whole – and especially the expressive aspect of it - deserves a little more scholarly attention than it has received so far.¹¹

NOTES

¹Adolphus Turkson, *Effutu Asafo*, A doctoral thesis submitted to Northwestern University, Evanston. 1972

²Chidi Amuta, *The theory of African Literature*, Ibadan: Spectrum Bks Ltd 1986.

³J. McQuail, *Sociology of Mass Communication*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1972)

⁴John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies*, (London; Methuen 1984)

⁵The Bentsir and Nkum Asafo Companies had their living quarters in the immediate vicinity of the Cape Coast Castle until the early 70's when they were resettled at the present-day OLA Estates near the University of Cape Coast.

Danzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana* (Accra: Sedco Publishing 1980)

⁷van Danzig (op. cit) mentions a corp of artisans who worked within the Cape Coast Castle as "castle servants". These workers eventually banded up into an Asafo Company originally called *Brofo nkowa* (slaves of the white men). Their name later metamorphosed into *Brofo mba* (children of whites).

⁸K. Opoku-Agyemang, "A Crisis of Balance: The (Mis)representation of Colonial History and the Slave Experience as Themes in African Literature", 1989

⁹Ama Ata Aidoo, "Of Forts, Castles and Silences" in Gert Oostindie (ed) *Facing up to the Past*, (Kingston:Jan Randle Publishers,2001) p.30

¹⁰Livio Sansone, "Remembering Slavery from Nearby:Heritage Brazillian style" *ibid.* p.83

¹¹It is refreshing to note that quite recently a programme has been initiated between the University of Ghana and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim called the "Asafo History Programme" (AHP). The bulk of its work is concentrated at the Asafo Secretariat and Research Centre within the Institute of African Studies, Legon. See, also, Esi Sutherland Addy, "Discourse and Asafo; the place of Oral Literature" *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New series #2, University of Ghana, 1998. In this piece, Addy argues for a closer attention to be paid to the expressive culture of Asafo, among others.

APPENDIX I

These transcribed songs have been numbered for ease of reference. Where there is hardly any variations, one stanza has been made to represent the whole song. An attempt has been made to include some of the cryptic utterances of the cantor (as outlined in Chapter 2) where they occur in the songs.

1. AWO NYI OO

CANTOR: Orusu ee
Orusu ne na ee
Orusu n'egya ee
Wongye no o
Yee Tuafo ee
Yee Bentsir ee
Wombo hɔn awo nyi oo

CHORUS: Awo nyi o
Nsu o, nsu
Enam o, enam
Abowa, mbrɛana wo bo efuw a?

CANTOR: Orusu ee
Nkorɔfo yi wombo hɔn awo nyi o
Denkyemgya, Denkyemgya
Henara
Yee Tuafo ee
Yee Bentsirfo ee
Wombo hɔn awo nyi o

CHORUS:

2. ASAFO KWAKYE

CANTOR I: Yee Kwakye ee, Asafo Kwakye
Woananom na wɔreba yi?

CHORUS: Woananom na wɔreba ei

Woananom na wɔreba yi
Asafo Kwakye ee
Asafo Kwakye ee
Woananom na wɔreba yi
Awa yee

CANTOR: Abo ee yerunu o

CHORUS: Yee yee yerunu no Anaafo m'

CANTOR: Itsir ee yerutwa o

CHORUS: Yee yee yerutwa no Anaafo m'

CANTOR: Orusu ee
Kwakye ne mba na wɔreba yi
Wɔreba ampa
Me na Kumawa kyɛ m'adze a ...
Nkorɔfo yi wɔreba
Yee Kwakye ee
(Follow through till end)

CANTOR: Nkorɔfo yi wɔreba ee yee yee
Nkorɔfo yi wɔreba ampa de
Yee Kwakye ee, Yee Kwakye ee

(Follow through till end)

CANTOR: Nkorɔfo yi wɔreba ee yee
Me na Kumaw kyɛ m'adze a ...
Nkorɔfo yi wɔreba
Keka dadze a nkyɛ dadze abra wo
Nkorɔfo yi wogyɛ hɔn a oye
Yee Kwakye ee, yee Kwakye ee
(Follow through till end)

3. HEN HEN ABAKA

CANTOR : Hen hen Abaka ara na yɛrefɛ no ndɛ ee
Abaka ara na yɛrefɛ no
Hen hen Abaka ara na yɛrefɛ no
Awaya
Opanyin Kwesi Obɔnkyerefo
Awaya
Yedzi w'ekyir a
Oman yi bɔbɔ
Ansa-a-okum-abɔfo
Hen hen Abaka ara na yɛrefɛ no

CHORUS: Awaya

CANTOR: Ansa – a – okum – abofo
Hen hen Abvaka ara na yerefre no

CHORUS: Awaya
Abaka ara na yerefre no
Awaya
Abaka ara na yerefre no
Awaya
Opanyin Kwesi Obonkyerefo
Awaya
Yedzi w'ekyir a
Oman yi bobo

CANTOR II: Abaka ara na yerefre no ee ee
Me na Kumwa kyee m'adze a ...
Abaka ara na yerefre no
Yerefre no ampa de
Hen hen Abaka ara na yerefre no
Awaya
Opanyin Kwesi Obonkyerefo
Awaya
Yedzi w'ekyir a
Oman yi bobo
Ansa – a – okum – abofo
Hen hen Abaka ara na yerefre no

CHORUS: Awaya
Abaka ara na yerefre no
Awaya
Abaka ara na yerefre no
(Follow through till end)

4. WONSUO MU

CANTOR I: Meka me dabi o, yee yee
Meka me dabi o
Meka me dabi ampa
Ansa – a – okum – abofo
Meka me dabi o, ayee
Mbofra akoto ko a
Wonsuom ee

CHORUS: Mekā me dabi o, ayee
Oyee – adze ee

Meka me dabi o, awoo
Mbofra akoto ko a
Wonsuo mu ...

CANTOR II: Mbofra akoto ko ee yee yee
Me na Kumwa kyee m'adze ...
Mpanyimfo yerennda ee
Mbofra akoto ko ee
Ansa - a - okum - abofo
Mbofra akoto ko a
Wonsuom ee

CHORUS: *Repeat till end*

5. *WANWANYAN, AKROMA*

CANTOR: Wanwanyan o
Otwea, anumasa mba ee
Akroma ee ayee

CHORUS: Ee wa yee

CANTOR: Wanwanyan ee, Akroma ee
Ee wa yee
Wanwanyan ee, Akroma ee
Ee wa yee
Hen ara wose woboko
Hen ara yese yeboko

CANTOR II: Orusu ee yee yee
Keka dadze a nkye dadze abra wo
Wanwanyan ee, wanwanyan ee
Otwea, anumasa mba ee
Akroma o, ayee

CHORUS: Ee wa yee
Wanwanyan ee, Akroma ee
(Follow till end of chorus)

6. *ABO ANNDWE*

CANTOR: Orusu ee ee ee
Saka ee
Ndo dze abo anndwe o

Hen ara
Abo anndwe o, abo anndwe o
Tuafo mba ee

CHORUS: Abo anndwe o, abo anndwe o
Hen ara

CANTOR: Abo anndwe o
M'asafo Tuafo ee
Hen bo anndwe o, hen bo anndwe o
Hen ara
Abo anndwe o, abo anndwe o,
Bentsir mba ee

CHORUS: Abo anndwe a, abo anndwe a
Hen ara

CANTOR: M'asafo Tuafo
Hen ara nye yi

CHORUS: Ereye akefa amandzenya a aba
Akefa amandzenya aba a
Wodze amandze besi wo kwantsia

CANTOR: Abo anndwe o, abo anndwe o
Tuafo mba ee

CHORUS: Abo anndwe a, abo anndwe a
Hen ara

7. YEKOR KORMANTSE

CANTOR: Saka ee
Nyimpa ate nsu mu o
Nyimpa ate nsu mu o
Nyimpa ato nsu mu o
Wonyi no ma hen
M'asafo Tuafo,
Yekor Kormantse yerukotu ehun ee

CHORUS: Nyimpa ato nsu mu ee

CANTOR: Wonye wo nnkeda
Wokyere wo wi
Yekor Kormantse yerukotu ehun ee

CHORUS: Nyimpa atɔ nsu mu ee
Abowa ne nyenko nye no?
Sɔfo atɔ nsu mu a
Wonyi no ma hen

8. YEAMMA WOANNDAA

CANTOR: Nde dze yeamma woannda o
Nde dze yeamma woannda o
Yeaye nsaman yeako anadwe o
Yeamma woannda o
Hen ara
Yee Nkwantabisa Akyeampon
Nkorɔfo yi a wogu ho yi
Yeamma woannda

CHORUS: Yee yee
Yeamma woannda

CANTOR: Wɔnnye wo nnkeda a
Wɔkyere wo wi
Nkorɔfo yi a wogu ho yi
Yeamma woannda

CHORUS: Yee Yee
Yeamma woannda
Yeadan nsaman yeako anadwe o
Yeamma woannda o
Ayee

9. AKONKONSAFO

CANTOR: Nkorɔfo yi wɔmfɛ hen ewur o
Yede ewur nye yi o
Hen ara
Ewur ee ewur ee ewur ee

CHORUS: 'See a wɔaye a

CANTOR: Ewur, ewur ee
Akɔnkɔnsafo ewur ee

CHORUS: 'See a wɔaye a
Oguaa ye man panyin

Oguaa ye man panyin
Wosee o, woye o
Akɔnkɔnsafo wɔ see o
Woye o,
Ayee

CANTOR: Wosee o, woye o
Wɔkaa o, woye o
Akɔnkɔnsafo wosee o, woye o
Henara
Ewur, ewur
Akɔnkɔnsafo ewur ee

CHORUS: 'See a, woye a

CANTOR: Ewur, ewur ee
Akɔnkɔnsafo ewur ee

CHORUS: *Repeat till end*

10. EBUBUR

CANTOR: Nkorɔfo yi wɔmfɛ hɔn ebubur o
Ebubur ee, ebubur ee
Ankwaanoma dze asem bɔkɔ
Hen dze yenam nyaa, atse

CHORUS: Yenam nyaa atse

CANTOR: Oguaa Bentsir
Yereye yeakema dɔm gya

CHORUS: Yenam nyaa atse

CANTOR: Nkorɔfo yi yebu hɔn suankye

CHORUS: Yee yee
Asafo baako agye ko ama hen
Ma abo anndwe o
Ebubur ee ee
Ebubur ee ee
Ankwaanoma dze asem bɔkɔ

11. KOFI NYANE

CANTOR: Kofi Nyane ee
Yekaa de iwi roko o

Yakaa de adze resa o
Hen ara
Hen Safohen Kofi Nyane
Se nkorɔfo yi nnkɔkɔ a
Fa abaa fa kã hɔn

CHORUS: Hen ara yenyim de iwi rokɔ o ayee

CANTOR: Hen Safohen Kofi Nyane
Nkorɔfo yi nnkɔkɔ a
Fa abaa fa kã hɔn

CHORUS: Hen ara yenyim de iwi rokɔ o ayee
Hen ara yenyim de iwi rokɔ o ayee
Hen ara yeaye ketsew – bi – a – ofi – Aburokyir
Hen ara

12. ADɔMBA

CANTOR: Adɔmba, adɔmba
Oguaa Dentsefo
Wɔwosow adɔmba

CHORUS: Adɔmba, adɔmba

CANTOR: Wɔwosow adɔmba

CHORUS: Adɔmba, adɔmba
Adɔmba, adɔmba
Adɔmba a Tuafo yeagyel

13. SEBɔ

CANTOR: Wonsuo ne dua mu ee
Wonsuo ne dua mu ee
Abowa sebɔ akɔfow dɔtɔ ee
Wonsuo ne dua mu o
Hen ara
Abowa sebɔ wɔ hɔ
Abowa sebɔ akɔfow dɔtɔ

CHORUS: Wonsuo me dua mu ee

CANTOR: Wɔnnye wo nnkɛda a
Wɔkyerɛ wo wi

Abowa sebo akɔfow dɔto

CHORUS: Wonsuo ne dua mu ee
Ɔakɔfow dɔto ee
Wonsuo ne dua mu
Abowa sebo akɔfow dɔto ee
Wonsuo ne dua mu o
Ayee

14 YENYE HɔN BɔKŌ

CANTOR: M'asafo Tuafo
Yennyi sika yɛdze agye asa ee

CHORUS: Yenye hɔn bɔkŏ o

CANTOR: Nkwantabisa Akyeampon
Yennyi sika yɛdze agye asa ee

CHORUS: Yenye hɔn bɔkŏ o

CANTOR: Abese ee

CHORUS: Yenye hɔn bɔkŏ o
Yennkɔhwɛ hɔn dodow
Asem no anndwe
Sika yɛ na o
Yeako yeehyia

15. WɔAHYɛ ETUDUR

CANTOR: Wɔahyɛ etudur pentoa ma
Wɔahyɛ etudur pentoa ma
Mbreaan yerebeyɛ
Kwesi Akyirem ee
Ɔtwea Kotobonyi a

CHORUS: Wɔahyɛ etudur a
Wɔahyɛ etudur pentoa ma ee
Mbɛana yerebeyɛ

16. KOFI DZEWA

CANTOR: Yee wo kyɛw nye yi

Kofi Dzewa ee, wo kyew nye yi

CHORUS: Yee wo kyew nye yi

CANTOR: Kofi Dzewa tutu mbirika ko sa
Orutwuuw ne tun adze

CHORUS: Oko yi ye abanyindze o
Wonya ko a
Wonya abo a
Kofi Dzewa ee wo kyew nye yi

17. EWUSI

CANTOR: Hen Egya Ewusi oo
Ewusi ee, Ewusi ee
Sabanyin Ewusi ee

CHORUS: Oye Sabanyin Ewusi ee

CANTOR: Ewusi ee, Ewusi ee
Sabanyin Ewusi ee

CHORUS: Oye Sabanyin Ewusi ee ee
Safohen a owo tur, owo abo
Ewusi ara na oye Sabanyin.

18. WOREKRA HEN

CANTOR: Worekra hen o
Obi ne ndaamba
Worekra hen a
Egya Menkye,
Oato hen fie ko
Meka atabir, meka enyimfa
Nkorofu yi worekra hen ampa

CHORUS: Egya Menkye a,
Onnye biribiara

CANTOR: Me ka atabir, meka enyimfa
Nkorofu yi worekra hen ampa

CHORUS: Egya Menkye a
Onnye biribi a

Wɔrekra hɛn ee ee
Obi ne ndaamba
Wɔrekra hɛn a
Ɔato hɛn fie kɔ
Ɔato hɛn fie kɔ

CANTOR: Wɔrekra hɛn ee ee

CHORUS: Obi ne ndaamba
Wɔrekra hɛn a
Egya Mɛnkye a
Ɔato hɛn fie kɔ

19. SANKA MBA

CANTOR: Woana mba yerunu hɔn abɛ o
Kweku Sanka mba yerunu hɔn dɛ abɛ o
Hɛnara
Etsipɛn etsipɛn mba
Abɔn abɔn mba
Ɔhen Sanka ee

CHORUS: Abɛ ee yerunu o

CANTOR: Etsipɛn etsipɛn mba
Ɔhen Sanka ee

CHORUS: Abɛ ee yerunu o
Woana mba a yerunu hɔn dɛ abɛ yi
Ɔhen Sanka mba yerunu hɔn dɛ abɛ o ayee

CANTOR: Yerunu abɛ o, yerunu abɛ
Kweku Sanka mba yerunu hɔn dɛ abɛ o
Hɛnara
Etsipɛn etsipɛn
Ɔhen Sanka ee

CHORUS: Abɛ ee yerunu o

CANTOR: Etsipɛn etsipɛn
Ɔhen Sanka ee

CHORUS: Abɛ ee yerunu o
Woana mba yerunu hɔn dɛ abɛ yi
Ɔhen Sanka mba yerunu hɔn dɛ abɛ yi ayee

20. AWAMBRA KWESI

CANTOR: Awambra Kwesi, Awambra Kwesi
Kwesi ee bra o
Adze akye hen bow do

CHORUS: Awambra Kwesi ee
Kwesi ee bra o
Awambra Kwesi ee
Kwesi ee bra o
Adze akye hen bow do
Akvesi ee, ee, ee
Yereper kō o
Yennya annkō o
Aman wonyim o
Yee yee

CANTOR: Aman wonyim o
Awambra Kwesi, Awambra Kwesi
Kwesi ee bra o
Adze akye hen bow do

CHORUS: *Repeat till end*

21. BAKATSIR

CANTOR 1: Wongyaa nkankansa, ndabrabra
Tsir mu asem wo mu

CANTOR 2: Asomfo ahwehwe ee
Bakatsir ho nnyi kyerebew ee

CHORUS: Wongyaa nkankansa
Tsir mu asem wo mu

CANTOR 1: Asebu ee, Bakatsir ho nnyi kyerebew ee

CHORUS: Wongyaa nkankansa
Tsir mu asem wo mu
Wohyia beenu a, asem a
Wohyia baasa a, asem a
Oson n'ekyir nnyi abowa
Wotan hen gyan yi a
Oguaa akoto kese yi a
Wotan hen gyan yi a
Tsir mu asem wo mu

CANTOR 2: Asomfo ahwehwɛ ee
Bakatsir hɔ nnyi kyerebew ee

CHORUS: Wongyaa nkonkɔnsa
Tsir mu asem wɔ mu

22. ABORA WɔNDA BURONYI ASE

CANTOR: Aborafo ee, wɔnda Buronyi ase o
Dɔm santsen ee, wɔnda Buronyi ase o
Buronyi agye nyim ama hɔn
Hwɛ daano Memenda anapa ndɔnsia
Sɛ woennya Buronyi a
Nkyɛ wɔdze Kwamena kɔr Esaaman

CHORUS: Abora ee
Wɔnda Buronyi ase o

23. ABESE NYA WU A ...

CANTOR 1: Abese nya wu ara
Kurowpɔn enya wu
Nkumfo ee,
Abese nya wu ara
Kurowpɔn enya wu
Anoma kakraba,
Nyansafo anoma,

CANTOR 2: Hen anoma kakraba
Nyansafo anoma

CANTOR 1: Abese nya wu ara
Kurowpɔn enya wu
Wɔntow edur mfrɛ hen ee

CHORUS: Abese nya wu a
Kurowpɔn enya wu ee
Anoma kakraba
Nyansafo anoma
Abese nya wu ee
Kurowpɔn enya wu ee
Wɔntow edur mfrɛ hen

24. ETUEI

CANTOR: Owo o, owo o
Owo innyim Etuei
Na ese eboko ee

CHORUS: Owo o, owo o
Innyim Etuei
Na ese eboko,
Owo gyae

CANTOR: Afrɛ wo ya mu
Asafo eduasa, yeetu apem

CHORUS: Afrɛ wo yamu
Asafo eduasa, yeetu apem
Afrɛ wo yamu

25. EBIRMBɔFO

CANTOR: Ebir mbɔfo ee
Owu nyi o
Yeeku man nyinara ahyɛ Etuei a
Yeama Etuei aye sum a
Oman yi woye no hen ara
Wonye wo nnkeda,
Wɔkyere wo wi
Yeeku man nyinara ahyɛ Etuei
Ma woenntum ammfafa ee

CHORUS: Yee, woenntum anntwe o

CANTOR: Wonye wo nnkeda a
Wɔkyere wo wi
Yeeku man nyinara ahyɛ Etuei
Ma woenntum ammfafa ee

CHORUS: Yee, woenntum anntwe o
Ebir mbɔfo ee
Owu nyi o
Yeeku man nyinara ahyɛ Etuei a
Yeama Etuei aye sum a
Oman yi woye no hen ara
Oman yi woye no hen ara

26. W'AGOR YI

CANTOR: Owo w'agor yi onnye me agor
Owo wu su yi ara onnye me su
W'agor a rogor yi onnye me agor
Onnye agor o, onnye agor o
Kyekye agor yi a
Mampam agor yi a

CHORUS: Oye agor a,
Oye agor ben?

CANTOR: Oye agor o
Kyekye agor yi a
Mampam agor yi a

CHORUS: Oye agor a,
Oye agor ben?

CANTOR: Yeekum kyekye
Ma abowa nanka gyina ho regye aba

CHORUS: 'Gye aba o
'Gye aba o

CANTOR: Yeekum kyekye
Ma abowa nanka gyina ho regye aba

CHORUS: 'Gye aba o
'Gye aba o
'Gye abre hen
Otwea, 'gye abre hen

CANTOR: Oye agor o
Kyekye agoryi a
Mampam agor yi a

CHORUS: Oye agor a
Oye agor ben?

27. OPAMBIR

CANTOR: Opambir ee
Nkumfo yeekum Opambir a
Aboya, yereye yekoso bi ahwe
Opambir a

Wonntwar hen ano,
Nkum. yɛrɔkɔsɔ bi ahwɛ
Hen ankonam ankonam Bɔɔ-asɔ nye hen
Bɔɔ-Asɔ, Nkum Bɔɔ-Asɔ
Itwa bi, itwa bi a
Dadze bekā wo

CHORUS: Ɔpambir ee

CANTOR: Nkum, Bɔɔ-asɔ
Itwa bi, itwa bi a
Dadze akā wo

CHORUS: Ɔpambir ee
Nkum yeekum Ɔpambir
Aboɔra yɛreyɛ yɛakɔsɔ bi ahwɛ
Ɔpambir a
Woritwar hen ano

28. MBRE YETSE YI ARA

CANTOR: Mbɛɛ yetse yi ara yie
Afa – na – annwe Kwesi ee
Mbɛɛ yetse yi ara yie
Ɔpata Kwesi,
Gyengyen w'enyiwa hwɛ de nkorɔfo wo wɔreba a

CHORUS: Mbɛɛ yetse yi ara yie

CANTOR: Kwesi
Gyengyen w'enyiwa hwɛ de nkorɔfo no wɔreba a

CHORUS: Mbɛɛ yetse yi ara yie
Ɔpata Kwesi etwa aborɔɔɔ ee
Afa – na – annwe a
Mbɛɛ yetse yi ara yie

CANTOR: Yekō a yennguan o

CHORUS: Yee, Afa – na – annwe a
Mbɛɛ yetse yi ara yie

29. TEBIR ANKOMA

CANTOR 1: Tebir Ankoma a
Tebir Ankoma

Jama mo kɔn adɔ kɔ
Tebir Ankoma
Banyin a ɔbɔkɔ
Ma mo kɔn adɔ kɔ
Awa ya
Apata ko agye ko abɔ wo bo

CANTOR 2: Yeamma mbowa yi ammfɔ hɛn annkɔ o
Yeamma ntwea yi ammfɔ hɛn egyanom

CANTOR 1: Asebu ee
Yerohwehwɛ banyin a ɔbɔkɔ ama mo kɔn adɔ kɔ

CHORUS: Tebir Ankoma ee
Awa ya ee

CANTOR 2: Asebu ee
Yerohwehwɛ banyin a ɔbɔkɔ ama mo kɔn adɔ kɔ

CHORUS: Tebir ankoma ee
Awa ya ee
Banyin a ɔbɔkɔ ama mo kɔn adɔ kɔ
Banyin a ɔbɔkɔ ama mo kɔn adɔ kɔ
Awa yee
Apata kɔ agye kɔ abɔ wo bo
Yeamma mbowa yi ammfɔ hɛn annkɔ o
Yeamma ntwea yi ammfɔ hɛn egyanom

30. YEREBEKYERE MU

CANTOR: Yerebekyere mu o
Yerebekyere mu o
Nkum mba,
Yerebekyere mu o

CHORUS: Yerebekyere mu a
Yerebekyere mu a
Abo anndwe a
Yeroke ekotu ehun a
Obiara pɛ amandze a obenya
Nkumfo,
Yerokɔ yeaba a
Atɔree a
Odzii-abanyinsem ee
Obiara pɛ amandze a obenya

31. ASAFO EHUTAN

CANTOR: Asafo ehutan a
Yenyim hɔn
Sansabreku ee
Obi nnkɔ, obi mmba
Asafo ehutan
Yenyim hɔn
Wontwar no o, yee yee
Oyɛɛ – adze ee
Wontwar no o
Nyimpa nnyi hɔ?
Wɔnnye wo nnkɛda a
Wɔkyere wo wi
Dabi yɛkɔr sar mu
Twerɔbo yi wɔpaa a ɔnntɔ mu

CHORUS: Asafo ehutan a
Yenyim hɔn

CANTOR: Wɔnnye wo nnkɛda a
Wɔkyere wo wi
Dabi yɛkɔr sar mu
Twerɔbo yi wɔpaa a ɔnntɔ mu

CHORUS: Asafo ehutan
Yenyim hɔn
Sansan breku ee
Obi nnkɔ, obi mmba o
Asafo ehutan a
Yenyim hɔn
Wontwar no o yee yee
Oyɔɔ adze ee
Wontwar no o
Nyimpa nnyim hɔ?

32 BANYIN NYE WO A

CANTOR: Banyin nye wo a
Banyin nye wo a
Banyin nye wo a
Wɔwo wo banyin a
Etse kɔ a bra o
Yee yee

CANTOR 2: Asa mu banofɔ

Itur towee no
Na modom edzikanfo

CHORUS: Banyin ee
Banyin ee
Banyin ee
Wowo wo banyin a
Etse kō a bra o
Yee yee

33 MERENKAA WO

CANTOR: Ankonam merenkāa wo ee
Merenkāa wo ara da
Yee Ando ee
Merenkāa wo
Menye wo bokō
Merenkāa wo ee

CHORUS: Yee, merenkāa wo

CANTOR: Yee, Saka ee
Menye wo bokō
Merenkāa wo ee

CHORUS: Yee, merenkāa wo

CANTOR: Hēn safohen ketseketse Kofi Anamoa

CHORUS: Onyim dadze mu suo

CANTOR: Hēn safohen ketseketse Kofi Anamoa

CHORUS: Onyim dadze mu suo ee
Yerēnkāa wo ee
Yēnye wo bokō
Yerēnkāa wo ee
Awa yee

34 WORUTUTU MBIRIKA

CANTOR: Okō ano ee
Obi ne ba na oruwu

Obi ne ba na oruwu ampa
Yee, obi ne ba
Yee, obi ne ba
Ansa a okum abofo,
Nkorofu yi wakopon daadze
Worututu mbirika

CHORUS: Yee, obi ne ba

CANTOR: Ansa a okum abofo,
Wakotow daadze
Worututu mbirika

CHORUS: Yee obi ne ba
Abora a
Worututu mbirika
Yee, obi ne ba

CANTOR: Obi ne ba,
Obi ne ba ee

CHORUS: Yee, yɛama sofo anom po nsu a
Yee obi ne ba

CANTOR: Obi ne ba wɔ mu ee

CHORUS: Yee, yɛama sofo anom po nsu a
Yee obi ne ba

35 ANOMA KAKRABA

CANTOR: Okunyin anoma ee
Okunyin anoma ee
Anoma kakraba nyansafo
Awa yaa
Kwesi Dadze Bɔmbɔfo
Fa hen kɔ dɔm ano

CHORUS: Ɔyɛ hen anoma ee
Okunyin anoma ee
Anoma kakraba nyansafo a
Awa yaa
Kwesi Dadze bɔmbɔfo
Fa hen kɔ dɔm ano

36 BANYIN YI NNYE

CANTOR: Banyin yi nnye ee ee
Kuku gyansa abra
Mpatafo ye na
Banyin yi nnye ara da
Abora.
Banyin yi nnye
Dom Abese ee
Banyin yi eguan ko
Yee Owee - ne - nua Kwesi,
Womfra Adontsen mma hen

CHORUS: Abora,
Banyin yi nnye
Banyin yi nnye
Dom Abese,
Banyin yi eguan ko

CANTOR: Egya Kwa Ata,
Kofi ara nye yi?

CHORUS: Irwi ado pow mu

CANTOR: Kwa Ata,
Kobena e?

CHORUS: Irwi ado pow mu
Egya Kwa Ata,
Kobena,
Irwi ado pow mu
Amansoe a
Irwi ado pow mu

37 MENYE M'ATANFO EHYIA

CANTOR 1: Menye m'atanfo ehyia
Nkwaakwaasom Egya Edu ee
Menye m'atanfo bokō

CANTOR 2: Nkwantabisa Akyeampon,
Ekō ba a
Fra kwan mu ifua ee

CHORUS: Ankwansema Egya Edu ee

Menye m'atamfo ehyia o

CANTOR: ɔbo ee, ɔbo ee
Tsetse m'egya ɔbo ee

CHORUS: Duom o, sar mu

CANTOR: M'egya ɔbo ee

CHORUS: Duom o, sar mu

CANTOR: ɔbo, yɛ no ntsem

CHORUS: Hyia hen o, sar mu

38 YEWɔ ITUR NA ABO

CANTOR: Yewɔ itur na abo o
Hen Oguaa Bentsirfo
Yewɔ itur na abo de
Wɔso wɔso kohwe ko
Wɔso wɔso wobre wo adze
Itur na abo o
Itur na abo o
Dampadadua

CHORUS: Woana na man yi wɔ no
Safohen Anokwa na man yi wɔ no?

CANTOR: Yewɔ itur na abo o
Itur na abo
Dampa dadua

CHORUS: Woana na man yi wɔ no?
Safohen Anokwa na man yi wɔ no

CANTOR: Yeaye asomfo atow bi atow woana?

CHORUS: Yeatow bi, atow Dadzebo
Dadzebo ama dadze abra hen
Yeaye mborɔnoma
Yeama hen ho so
Kweegya nkɔnsɔw
Yewɔ nkyerema
Anomasa yenyim hon

CANTOR: Ofir tsetse

Krunyi panyin dzi abanyinsam kyere hen

CHORUS: Obir Ankoma ee
Oyee adze ee
Obir Ankoma,
Woye den ara
Oguaa man yi a
Owo hen nsamu

39 AKOKOBA

CANTOR: Akoko gyina nkwanta ee
Akoko gyina nkwanta
Akoko gyina nkwanta
Owo, akokoba nye wo
Owo akokoba nye wo
Wo ku wo a,
Wo ku wo gyan

CHORUS: Akokoba nye wo
Akokoba nye wo
Wo ku wo a
Wo ku wo gyan
Akokoba nye wo

CANTOR: Abowa aponkye reye aye den?

CHORUS: Aponkye de orikedzi ne na

CANTOR: Twee twee twee twee baa twee!

CHORUS: Yekyir mbowadze bi o

CANTOR: Twee twee twee twee baa twee

CHORUS: Yekyir mbowadze bi
Aponkye, yekyir mbowadze bi
Hwee tar!

CANTOR: Yenam mbogya kwan do
Hen twerobo ano ye ndam

CHORUS: Yenam mbogya kwan do ee
Awa yee

40 OWO DEM

CANTOR: Owo dem ee
Owo dem ee
Owo dem
Tuafo, agoo !

CHORUS: Anee

CANTOR: Owo dem ee
Owo dem
Owo a
Owo a
Owo Amo Eku ee
Owo dem owo a
Nkwantabisa Akyeampon,
Enye me bokō a
Hwehwe dadze

CHORUS: Owo o, owo o
Owo Amo Eku ee
Owo dem yi
Owo a

CANTOR: Nkwantabisa Akyeampon
Enye me bokō a
Hwehwe etudur

CHORUS: Owo o, owo o
Owo Amo Eku ee
Owo dem yi
Owo a

41 OKUNYIN EWU

CANTOR 1: Saana Okunyin ewu o
Okunyin o
Okunyin,
Woara se de asem bi nnkeba
Na asem aba yi
Ekō amankō a
Ma wo tsir do a
Dakor asem a

CANTOR 2: Okunyin o, Okunyin o,
Okunyin mbo

CANTOR 1: Asafõ kō eyi hõn

CHORUS: Yeeyi hõn!

CANTOR 1: Ebiasa ɛ?

CHORUS: Yetse hõn dõ!

CANTOR 1: Dõm bi botum hom?

CHORUS: Dõm biara runntum hõn!

CANTOR 1: Innkotum kō o

CANTOR 2: Innkotum kō o
Innkotum kō o
Innkotum kō o
Kwasea bi dɛ innkotum kō
'Fanyim nkyirma

CHORUS: Yoo see

CANTOR 1: Innkotum kō o
Kwasea bi dɛ innkotum kō
'Fanyim nkyirma

CHORUS: Yoo see
Innkotum kō o
Innkotum kō o
Nkan no agye asa
Afei so agye asa
Hõn kyen kakraba yi na mbogya ehyia no yi
Ogya o
Yeama ogya ee
Asokwafo ee
Ogya o
Yeama ogya aber do

44 OKUNYIN ANOMA

CANTOR: Okunyin anoma dabi o
Owo ebokõ ana yeako
Wonntu wo ehun
Owo ebeba aba yeayɛ
Wonntu wo ehun
Kyerɛkyerɛ nkorõfo yi
Hom mma yenkõ ana yeewu ee
Wonntu wo ehun ee

CHORUS: Okunyin anoma ee
Afa -- na -- annwe ee
Wonntu wo ehun o

45 ANOBIR MANSO

CANTOR: Anobir Manso, Manso
Anobir Manso, Manso
Hen kyen bi dze Manso, Manso ee

CHORUS: Anobir ee, Anobir

CANTOR: Anobir Manso, Manso
Anobir Manso, Manso
Hen kyen bi dze Manso ee

CHORUS: Anobir ee, Anobir
Anobir Manso, Manso
Anobir Manso, Manso
Hen kyen bi dze Manso ee
Se ofir anapa
Se yeannko a
Se yeamma a
Dua mbo hen!

46 AKWAABA

CANTOR: Yema hom akwaaba
Yema hom akwaaba
Bentsir,
Wogyehom a oye
Me na nom
Yema hom akwaaba,
M'egya nom,
Yema hom akwaaba
Adantse no we hen?

CHORUS: Yoo see, Yoo see
Yema hom akwaaba o
Mbanyin yi a

47 SAFOHEN ABORABOR

CANTOR: Fa hen kyew bra hen o
Wonye wo nnkeda a
Wokyere wo wi
Safohen Aborabor ee zamma o

CHORUS: Yee yee
Fa hen kyew bra hen
Aborabor ee
Safohen ator a,
Fa hen kyew bra hen

48 MEKAA MO POW MU

CANTOR: Mekaa mo pow mu o
Me na Abaka,
M'egya Abaka
Mekaa mo pow mu ee

CHORUS: Yee,
Pow mu andwe o

CANTOR: Me na Abaka,
M'egya Abaka
Mekaa mo pow mu o

CHORUS: Yee,
Pow mu anndwe o
Me na Abaka
M'egya Abaka
Pow mu anndwe o
Ayee
Afor ee
Oko - gye - atuo
Pow mu anndwe o
Ayee

CANTOR: Pow mu anndwe a
Bisa Kwesi a

CHORUS: Pow mu anndwe a
Bisa Kwesi

Hen na ee
Hen egya ee
Kwesi a,
Ato nkorofu yi
Ma dom eguan a
Kwesi,
Kwesi, mbo na ko a
Ato nkorofu yi
Ma dom eguan a
Wonyi no ayew a
Kwesi beba ma yeako a
Safo nnsa no ho

49 **ƆAKA ME NSA**

CANTOR: Na ɔaka me nsa ee
 Me nsa
 Na muruwu
 Nana Fosu enyinkae ee

CHORUS: Na ɔaka me nsa ee
 Me nsa
 Na muruwu o
 Na muruwu o
 Na ɔaka me nsa ee
 Me nsa
 Muruwu o

50 **NANA FEYINKA**

CANTOR: Nana Feyinka
 Da a ekor *kor*
 Buronyi bisaa wo den?

CHORUS: Abora ee
 Wosee wo de ɔbaa nye wo

CANTOR: Nana Feyinka
 Da a ekor *kor*
 Buronyi bisaa wo den?

CHORUS: Abora ee
 Wosee wo de ɔbaa nye wo
 Frankaaduase,
 Frankaaduase
 Wosuun hen a, yeannke
 Abon botoo Egya Edu ee
 Ayee

51 WƆABƆ WU AMA HƐN

CANTOR: Wɔabɔ wu ama hɛn
Wɔabɔ nkwa so ama hɛn
Wɔdze ndadze so dzi hɛn ekyir
Wɔabɔ wu ama hɛn
Wɔabɔ nkwa so ama hɛn
Yee yee

CHORUS: Yee yee

CANTOR: Etsiwa mba

CHORUS: Yee yee

CANTOR: Anumasa

CHORUS: Yee yee
Wɔabɔ wu ama hɛn a
Wɔabɔ nkwa so ama hɛn
Wɔdze ndadze dzi hɛn ekyir

52 BURONYI

CANTOR: Yee yee

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: Susu biribi
Ma ɔnnye biribi
Amamfo de opanyin nye woana?

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: Nye opanyin nye buronyi?

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: Ofir dabenda na buronyi keyee panyin?

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: Ma buronyi kor Aburokyir

51 WƆABƆ WU AMA HƐN

CANTOR: Wɔabɔ wu ama hɛn
Wɔabɔ nkwa so ama hɛn
Wɔdze ndadze so dzi hɛn ekyir
Wɔabɔ wu ama hɛn
Wɔabɔ nkwa so ama hɛn
Yee yee

CHORUS: Yee yee

CANTOR: Etsiwa mba

CHORUS: Yee yee

CANTOR: Anumasa

CHORUS: Yee yee
Wɔabɔ wu ama hɛn a
Wɔabɔ nkwa so ama hɛn
Wɔdze ndadze dzi hɛn ekyir

52 BURONYI

CANTOR: Yee yee

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: Susu biribi
Ma ɔnnye biribi
Amamfo de opanyin nye woana?

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: Nye opanyin nye buronyi?

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: Ofir dabɛnda na buronyi keyee panyin?

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: Ma buronyi kɔr Aburokyir

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: Ɔkɔbɔɔ dadze

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: Ɔdze brɛɛ tomfo

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: Ɔtomfo dze maa Tsetsewa

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: Tsetsewa dze maa Tsetsew

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: Tsetsewa dze ma 'senfo

CHORUS: Ɔye a

CANTOR: 'Senfo dze sun hɛn kyeɛn kakraba
Ma mbogya ehyia no yi?

CHORUS: Yeehyia o, yeehyia o
Yenya adze a yɛbɛye
Yenya adze a yɛbɛye
Sansaw nnkyir bogya nam
Abe ee yerunu o
Abe ee yerunu o
Onyimpa,
Osaman,
Asafo a yɔyɔ ndam
Meka mo wu da
Menye wo bɛye bi

53 ANKOR

CANTOR: Ankor oennyi aye ee
Ankor so oennyi aye de
Wɔso wɔso kɔhwe akɔ
Wɔso wɔso wɔbrɛ wo adze
Ankor so oennyi aye de
Wɔnye wo nnkeda a
Wɔkyere wo wi
Ankor ee Ankor ee

CHORUS: Ankor bae a
'Se ye wo ho

CANTOR: Wɔnnye wo nnkɛda a
Wɔkyere wo wi
Ankor ee Ankor ee

CHORUS: Ankor bae a
'Se yewo ho

CANTOR: Henara yennkɔsom mborɔfo

CHORUS: Henara yennkɔsom mborɔfo
Henara

CANTOR: Henara yennkɔsom esuantse

CHORUS: Henara yennkɔsom esuantse
Henara
Esor kuntann
Obro daadze ma henara
Esor kuntann
Obre daadze ma henara
Yennkɔsom nkorɔfo yi
Henara

CANTOR: Yee Ankor ee, Ankor ee

CHORUS: Ankor bae a
'Se yewe ho

54 YEAMMBA NO KO

CANTOR: Hen yeamma no ko bi

CHORUS: Hen yeamma no ko bi
Na mbobaa yi e?

CANTOR: M'asafo mba,
Hen yeamma no ko bi

CHORUS: Hen yeamma no ko bi
Na mbobaa yi e?
Obi nnkɔ obi ne kurow mu
Nnkeye eduwma gyan
Hom Nkumfo
Hom aye edwuma gyan

Yee yee yewo asem duaba o
Yewo asem duaba o
Yee

55 YENYE HON WO ASEM

CANTOR: Yenye hon wo asem ei
Yenye hon wo asem

CHORUS: Abese fo ei

CANTOR: Yenye hon wo asem

CHORUS: Abora e

CANTOR 1: Otwea kotobonyi
Atow sikyi
Atow Mfantse Abora ee

CHORUS: Yenye hon wo asem e
Abora e

CANTOR 1: Osee

CHORUS: Yee

CANTOR: Obo

CHORUS: Afor ee
Oko-gye-atuo
Wodze manso aba o
Ntwea yi wodze manso abeka hen

56 HEN KO YI FIR TSETSE

CANTOR: Hen ko yi fir tsetse o
Hen ko yi fir tsetse o

CHORUS: Yehunii o, yennguan o
Yehunii o, yennguan o
Daano a,
Obi mbo so nnhwe !

57 YEWỌ OGYA

CANTOR: Yewọ ogya ee
Yewọ ogya ee

CHORUS: Yewọ ogya ee
Yewo ogya ee

CANTOR: Abese e

CHORUS: Yewọ ogya ee
Yewọ ogya ee
Ammba ntsem a yerokọ o
Ayee

58 YEREYE YEAKO

CANTOR: Yereye yeako o
Yereye yeako o
Yereye yeako
Ma obi aba

CHORUS: Yereye yeako o
Yereye yeako
Yereye yeako
Ma obi aba
Yereye yeako
Ma obi so abehye hen anan mu

59 EGYA ANSA

CANTOR: Minnyim da o, minnyim da o
Egya Ansa,
Minnyim beebi a mubowu ada
Egya Ansa ee
Minyim da

CHORUS: Yee minnyim da o

CANTOR: Egya Ansa,
Minyim da

CHORUS: Yee, minnyim da o
Oato me enyimfa

Jato me abenkum
Minyim beebi a mubowu ada

60 NANA SAPREKU

CANTOR: Sapreku ee, Nana Sapreku
Ogyina sa mu reye den?

CHORUS: Ogyina sa mu reye adze
Wamma no mbo mbo
Nana Sapreku ee

Awer Sapreku ee
Wo mba nye yi o
Ayee

61 ADWOA NDAAWA

CANTOR: Fosu ne yer
Adwoa Ndaawa ee

CHORUS:: Yerogor adawur nde o aye
Adwoa Ndaawa
Yerogor adawur nde

Yerogor bosom bi a oreba
Yerogor adawur nde
Yerogor adawur nta
Yerogor adawur nsa

62 SAFOHEN KOW EDU

CANTOR: Safohen Kow Edu ee
Banyin se de dom mbra
Banyin se de obeye

CHORUS: Banyin se dom mbra
Banyin se obeye ho

CANTOR: Otwea kotobonyi a
Oko ba a osuro

CHORUS: Abora ee
Eko aba o
Ayee

63 AKYEM KWEKU

CANTOR: Kweku ee
 Akyem Kweku ee
 Tubu na orusu o

CHORUS: Orusu o

CANTOR: Kweku ee
 Akyem Kweku ee
 Tubu na orusu o

CHORUS: Wɔnsoɛr o
 Osee yee

CANTOR: Ndɛ Bentsir o
 Ɔkyena Bentsir o

CHORUS: Yennsuro

CANTOR: Adze re bɛkye ma
 Tuafo afa adze

CHORUS: Orihim o, Tuafo ee
 Orihim o, yennsuro

64 ITWI KOBENA

CANTOR: Kɔbena na yɛdan no
 Itwi Kɔbena na yɛdan no
 Kɔbena na yɛdan no
 Itwi Kɔbena na yɛdan no

CHORUS: Yee Itwi
 Yee Itwi.

 Itwi Kɔbena ee
 Yɛdan wo o

CANTOR: Adankyen mu o
 Adankyen mu o
 Kwan yi a yerokɔ yi

Adankyen mu o

CHORUS: Yee

CANTOR: Adankyen mu o
Kwan yi a yeroko yi
Adankyen mu o

CHORUS: Yee

CANTOR: ɔyɛɛ-adze ee

CHORUS: Yerema mbanyin aye adze ee
Ewayee

CANTOR: Adan mu o

CHORUS: Yerema mbanyin aye adze ee
Ewayee

65. ɔBO

CANTOR: ɔbo ee, ɔbo ee
Tsetse m'egya ɔbo

CHORUS: Duom o, sa mu

CANTOR: M'egya ɔbo ee

CHORUS: Duom o, sa mu

CANTOR: ɔbo ye no ntsem

CHORUS: Hyia hen o, sa mu.

3 OUR CHIEF, ABAKA

CANTOR: It's our chief Abaka we are calling today
It's Abaka we are calling
It's our chief Abaka we are calling
Awaya
Elder Kwesi the hyena
Awaya
If we follow you
This town will collapse
Ansa the killer of hunters
It's our chief Abaka we are calling

CHORUS: Awaya

CANTOR: Ansa the killer of hunters
It's our chief Abaka we are calling

CHORUS: Awaya
It's Abaka we are calling
Awaya
It's Abaka we are calling
Elder Kwesi the hyena
Awaya
If we follow you
This town will collapse

4 BY MY DESTINY

CANTOR: By my destiny
By my destiny indeed
Ansa the killer of hunters
By my destiny
If our children have met war
Let them join in

CHORUS: By my destiny
The Valiant One
By my destiny
If our children have met war
Let them join in

CANTOR: If our children have met war
If my mother Kumwa had endowed me

These children have met war
Ansa, the killer of hunters
If our children have met war
Let them join in

CHORUS: *Repeat till end.*

5 THE EEL, THE HAWK

CANTOR: Anumasa
You dog, children of Anumasa
It's the hawk

CHORUS: *E wa yee*

CANTOR: The eel, the eel
You dog, children of Anumasa
It's the hawk

CHORUS: *E wa yee*
The eel, the hawk
E wa yee
The eel, the hawk
E wa yee
They say they will go
We say we will go

6 TROUBLE

CANTOR: Someone is crying,
Saka,
Today there is no appeasing us
Yes, it's us

CHORUS: No appeasement, no appeasement
It's us

CANTOR: No appeasement, my asafo the Tuafu
We won't be appeased
Yes, it's us
No appeasement, no appeasement
Sons of Bentsir

CHORUS: No appeasement, no appeasement
It's us

CANTOR: My asafo, the Tuafo
Here we are

CHORUS: You are trying to court trouble

CANTOR: Bentsir of Oguaa

CHORUS: You are trying to court trouble
Once you court trouble
Trouble will be planted on your doorstep

CANTOR: No appeasement, no appeasement
Sons of Tuafo

CHORUS: No appeasement, no appeasement
It's us.

7 WE WENT TO KORMANTSE

CANTOR: Saka,
Someone has fallen into the water
Someone has fallen into the water
Someone has fallen into the water
Let him be rescued for us
My asafo the Tuafo went to Kormantse to seek our fortune

CHORUS: Someone has fallen into the water

CANTOR: When they do not want to host you
They show you the setting sun
We went to Kormantse to seek our fortune

CHORUS: Someone has fallen into the water
Is he to be likened to an animal?
Our priest has fallen into the water
Let him be rescued for us

8 WE DID NOT ALLOW THEM TO SLEEP

CANTOR: Today we did not allow them to sleep
Today we did not allow them to sleep
We turned ghosts and engaged them by night
We did not allow them to sleep
Yes, we didn't
Nkwantabisa Akyeampon,

These people over there
We did not allow them to sleep

CHORUS: We did not allow them to sleep

CANTOR: If they do not want to host you
They show you the setting sun
These people over there
We did not allow them to sleep

CHORUS: We did not allow them to sleep
We turned ghosts and engaged them by night
We did not allow them to sleep

9 TORTOISES

CANTOR: Let these people be called tortoises
We say these are tortoises
Yes, we do
Tortoises, tortoises, tortoises
Tracherous people, tortoises

CHORUS: They said it, they did it

CANTOR: Tortoises, tortoises
Tracherous people, tortoises

CHORUS: They said it, they did it
Oguaa is no mean town
Oguaa is no mean town
They said it, they did it
These treacherous people said it
They did it

10 THE DOVE

CANTOR: Let these people call the dove
The dove, the dove
The forest bird will carry the message
As for us we were proceeding steadily

CHORUS: Proceeding steadily

CANTOR: Bentsir of Oguaa
We were about to give our people fire

CHORUS: Proceeding steadily

CANTOR: We were about to give our people fire

CHORUS: Proceeding steadily

CANTOR: These people are no better than urine

CHORUS: Yes, yes
One Asafo has brought war to us
And we will not be appeased
The dove, the dove
The forest bird will carry the message

11 KOFI NYANE

CANTOR: Kofi Nyane
We said the sun was going
We said darkness was coming
Yes, we did
Our Captain, Kofi Nyane
If these people refuse to move
Prod them with the whip

CHORUS: We know the sun is going

CANTOR: Our Captain, Kofi Nyane
If these people refuse to move
Prod them with the whip

CHORUS: We know the sun is going
We know the sun is going
We are the lizard from beyond the sea
Yes, we are

12 THE BELL

CANTOR: The bell, the bell
It's the Dentse of Oguaa who ring the bell

CHORUS: The bell, the bell
The bell, the bell

The bell we Tuafo captured!

13 THE LEOPARD

CANTOR: Let someone grab it by the tail
Let someone grab it by the tail
The leopard has climbed the ticket
Let someone grab it by the tail
The leopard was there
The leopard has climbed the thicket

CHORUS: Let someone grab it by the tail

CANTOR: If they do not want to host you
They show you the setting sun
The leopard has climbed the thicket

CHORUS: Let someone grab it by the tail
It has climbed the thicket
Let someone grab it by the tail
The leopard has climbed the thicket
Let someone grab it by the tail

14 WE SHALL FIGHT THEM

CANTOR: Tuafo, my asafo
We do not have money to hire warriors

CHORUS: We shall fight them

CANTOR: Nkwantabisa Akyeampon
We do not have money to hire warriors

CHORUS: We shall fight them

CANTOR: People of Abese ...

CHORUS: We shall fight them
We won't be deterred by their numbers
The matter cannot end
Money is valuable
We have fought and met

15 THEY HAVE STOCKED UP ON GUNPOWDER

CANTOR: They have stocked up on gunpowder
They have stocked up on gunpowder
We are now ready to engage them
Kwesi Akyirem
You dog, worthless person
You have gambled
You have gambled with Mfantse Abora

CHORUS: They have stocked up on gunpowder
They have stocked up on gunpowder
We are now ready to engage them

16 KOFI DZEWA

CANTOR: Here's your headgear
Kofi Dzewa, here's your headgear

CHORUS: Yes, here's your headgear

CANTOR: Yes, here's your headgear

CHORUS: Yes, here's your headgear

CANTOR: Kofi Dzewa rushed into battle
Returned dragging his bottom on the ground
This war is for the manly
Whether it's war
Whether it's bullets
Kofi Dzewa, here's your headgear

17 EWUSI

CANTOR: Our father, Ewusi
Ewusi, Ewusi
Ewusi the warlord

CHORUS: It's Ewusi the warlord

CANTOR: Ewusi, Ewusi
Ewusi the warlord

CHORUS: It's Ewusi the warlord
The asafo captain who has guns, has bullets
It's Ewusi the warlord

18 THEY ARE TAKING LEAVE

CHORUS: They are taking leave of us
It's someone's destiny
They are taking leave of us
Father Menkye
It's time to go home
By my left, by my right
These people are taking their leave indeed

CHORUS: It's Father Menkye
And nothing else

CANTOR: By my left, by my right
These people are taking their leave indeed

CHORUS: It's Father Menkye
And nothing else
They are taking their leave
It's someone's destiny
They are taking their leave
It's time to go home

CANTOR: They are taking their leave

CHORUS: It's someone's destiny
They are taking their leave
It's time to go home

19 WE ARE REAPING PALM FRUITS

CANTOR: Whose children are we reaping like palm fruits?
It's Kweku Sanka's children we are reaping like palm
fruits

Yes we are
Children of our equals
Children of weaklings
Chief Sanka

CHORUS: We are reaping palm fruits

CANTOR: Children of our equals
Chief Sanka

CHORUS: We are reaping palm fruits
Whose children are we reaping like palm fruits?
It's Chief Sanka's children we are reaping like palm fruits

20 AWAMBRA KWESI

CANTOR: Awambra Kwesi, Awambra Kwesi
Come, Kwesi
Daylight has found us in the dew

CHORUS: Awambra Kwesi
Come, Kwesi
Awambra Kwesi
Come, Kwesi
Daylight has found us in the dew
Akwesi,
We were spoiling for a fight
We were denied the chance
Everyone knows.

21 BAKATSIR

CANTOR 1: Let the treachery cease, and the lies
The head is full of secrets
Asomfo Ahwehwe

CANTOR 2: Bakatsir is not difficult to find

CHORUS: Let the treachery cease
The head is full of secrets

CANTOR 1: People of Asebu,
Bakatsir is not difficult to find

CHORUS: Let the treachery cease
The head is full of secrets
When they meet in twos, there's a problem
When they meet in threes, there's a problem
After the elephant comes none other
They hate us for no reason
We the big crabs of Cape Coast

They hate us for no reason
The head is full of secrets
CANTOR 1: Asomfo ahwehwe
Bakatsir is not difficult to find

CHORUS: Let the treachery cease
The head is full of secrets

22 ABORA BE THANKFUL

CANTOR: People of Abora be thankful to the white man
You hordes
Be thankful to the white man
The white man has secured a reprieve for you
Imagine the other Saturday
At seven in the morning
Had it not been for the white man
Kwamena would have been sent to Esaaman

CHORUS: Abura,
Be thankful to the white man

23 IF ABESE PERISHES

CANTOR 1: If Abese perishes
It's the state that perishes
If the people of Nkum,
If Abese perishes
It's the state that perishes
Little bird,
Wise bird

CANTOR 2: Our little bird,
Wise bird

CANTOR 1: If Abese perishes
It's the state that perishes
Let the powder boom to summon us

CHORUS: If Abese perishes
It's the state that perishes
Little bird,
Wise bird
If Abese perishes

It's the state that perishes
Let the powder boom to summon us

24 YOU DO NOT KNOW ETUEI

CANTOR: You, you,
You do not know Etuei
Yet you say you will go there

CHORUS: You, you,
You do not know Etuei
You'd better stop

CANTOR: You are terrified
Of the thirty that sacked a thousand

CHORUS: You are terrified
Of the thirty that sacked a thousand
You are terrified

25 BLACK HUNTERS

CANTOR: Black Hunters
Here's death before your eyes
We have killed a whole town at Etuei
We have turned Etuei gloomy
It's us who control this state
If they do not want to host you
They show you the setting sun
We have killed a whole town at Etuei
And they could not carry their dead

CHORUS: Yes, they could not carry them

CANTOR: If they do not want to host you
They show you the setting sun
We have killed a whole town at Etuei
And they could not carry their dead

CANTOR: Yes, they could not carry them
Yes, they could not carry them
Black hunters,
Here's death before your eyes
We have killed a whole town at Etuei
We have turned Etuei gloomy
It's us who control the state

It's us who control the state

26 YOUR ANTICS DO NOT IMPRESS

CANTOR: You, your antics do not impress
Neither do your complaints
Your antics do not impress
They mean nothing, they are nothing
They are the antics of a crocodile
These iguana antics?

CHORUS: What are they?
What antics are they?

CANTOR: These antics
Crocodile antics?
Iguana antics?

CHORUS: What are they?
What antics are they?

CANTOR: We have killed the crocodile
And the python waits to deliver it

CHORUS: To deliver it
To deliver it

CANTOR: We have killed the crocodile
And the python waits to deliver it

CHORUS: To deliver it
To deliver it
To deliver it to use
You dog, to deliver it to us

CANTOR: These antics
Crocodile antics?
Iguana antics?

CHORUS: What are they?
What antics are they?

27 COBRA

CANTOR: The Cobra
We of Nkum have killed the Cobra
Abora, we are about to test our mettle
It's the Cobra
There is no stopping us
We of Nkum are going to test our mettle
We alone are the *Bɔɔ-Asɔ*
Bɔɔ-Asɔ Nkum *Bɔɔ-Asɔ*
If you cut, you cut
The iron will cut you

CHORUS: The Cobra

CANTOR: Nkum *Bɔɔ-Asɔ*
If you cut, you cut
The iron will cut you

CHORUS: The Cobra
We of Nkum have killed the Cobra
Abora, we are about to test our mettle
It's the Cobra
There's no stopping us
We of Nkum are going to test our mettle
We alone are the *Bɔɔ-Asɔ*

28 WE ARE CONTENT

CANTOR: We are content the way we are
Afananwe Kwesi
We are content the way we are
Opata Kwesi,
Peer out to see if the people are coming

CHORUS: We are content the way we are

CANTOR: Kwesi, peer out
To see if the people are coming

CHORUS: We are content the way we are
Opata Kwesi has fled from battle
Afananwe,
We are content the way we are

29 TEBIR ANKOMA

CANTOR 1: It's Tebir Ankoma who has done it
It's Tebir Ankoma who has done it
He has whetted my appetite for fighting
It's Tebir Ankoma
The man who will fight to whet my appetite for fight
Awaya
The peace maker who takes up the fight

CANTOR 2: We did not allow these beasts to take us
We did not allow them to take our fathers

CANTOR 1: Asebu,
We are looking for the man
Who will fight to whet my appetite for fighting

CHORUS: Tebir ankoma
Away yee

CANTOR 1: Asebu
We are looking for the man
Who will fight to whet my appetite for fighting

CHORUS: Tebir Ankoma
Awa yee
The man who will fight to whet my appetite for fighting
The man who will fight to whet my appetite for fighting
Awa ya
The peace maker who takes up the fight
We did not allow these beasts to take us
We did not allow them to take our fathers.

30 WE SHALL EXPLAIN

CANTOR: We shall explain
We shall explain
Children of Nkum, we shall explain
We shall not be appeased

CHORUS: We shall explain
We shall explain
We shall not be appeased
We are going to seek our fortune
He who looks for trouble will find
It's the boastful one
He who looks for trouble will find it

31 COWARDLY ASAFO

CANTOR: The Cowardly Asafo
We know them
Sansabreku
No-one goes, no-one returns
Cowardly Asafo,
We know them
Give them pursuit
Valiant ones
Give them pursuit
Is there no one?
If they do not want to host you
They show you the setting sun
Once we went to battle
Their flint they could not ignite

CHORUS: Cowardly Asafo,
We know them

CANTOR: If they do not want to host you
They show you the setting sun
Once we went to battle
Their flint they could not ignite

CHORUS: Cowardly Asafo
We know them
Sansabreku
No-one goes, no-one returns
Cowardly Asafo we know them
Give them pursuit
Valiant ones
Give them pursuit
Is there no-one?

32 MAN

CANTOR 1: If you are a man
If you are a man
If you are a man
If you are born a man
Come forward when war calls

CANTOR 2: Bɔɔ-Asɔ Bandafo
When the guns sounded
I was with the vanguard

CHORUS: If you are a man
If you are a man
If you are a man
If you are born a man
Come forward when war calls

33 I SHALL NOT WARN YOU

CANTOR: Ankonam, I shall not warn you
I shall not warn you at all
Yee Ando
I shall not warn you
I shall fight you
I shall not warn you

CHORUS: *Yee* I shall not warn you

CANTOR: Yes, Saka
I shall fight you
I shall not warn you

CHORUS: *Yee* I shall not warn you

CANTOR: Our captain, Little Kofi Anamoa

CHORUS: He knows how to wield the iron

CANTOR: Our captain, Little Kofi Anamoa

CHORUS: He knows how to wield the iron
We shall not warn you
We shall fight you
We shall not warn you.

34 THEY ARE SCURRYING

CANTOR: On the battlefield
It's someone's children who are falling
It's someone's children who are dying indeed
Yee someone's children
Yee someone's children
Ansa-the-the-killer-of Hunters
These people are rolling on the ground
They are scurrying

CHORUS: *Yee* someone's children

CANTOR: Ansa-the-killer of Hunters
They are squatting down
They are scurrying

CHORUS: *Yee* someone's children
It's Abora
They are scurrying
Yee, someone's children

CANTOR: Someone's children
Someone's children

CHORUS: *Yee* we have forced them to drink sea water
Yee someone's children

CANTOR: Someone's children are involved

CHORUS: *Yee*, we have forced them to drink sea water
Yee, someone's children.

35 MIGHTY BIRD

CANTOR: Mighty Bird
Mighty Bird
Wise little Bird
Awa ya
Kwesi Daadze the Hunter
Take us to the battle front

CHORUS: It's our Bird
The Mighty Bird
Wise little Bird
Awaya
Kwesi Daadze the Hunter
Take us to the battle front

36 THIS MAN IS USELESS

CANTOR: This man is useless
This man is useless
Abora,
This man is useless
This man is useless

Hordes of Abese
The man has run away
Kwesi who ate up his brother
Let the vanguard be summoned

CHORUS: Abora,
This man is useless
This man is useless
Hordes of Abese
The man has run away

CANTOR: Egya Kwaata, is this Kofi?

CHORUS: The Leopard has fled into the bush
Egya Kwaata, Kobena,
The leopard has fled into the bush
For fear of trouble
The leopard has fled into the bush.

37 I HAVE MET MY ENEMIES

CANTOR 1: I have met my enemies
I have met my enemies
Egya Edu the proud one
I shall fight with my enemy

CANTOR 2: Nkwantabisa Akyeampon
In the event of war
Clear the mist from our path

CHORUS: Egya Edu the proud one
I have met my enemy

CANTOR 1: Rock,
Ancient Rock of my fathers
Lead us into battle
Rock, make haste
To meet with us in battle.

38 WE HAVE GUNS AND BULLETS

CANTOR: We have guns and bullets
We the Bentsir of Oguaa
We have guns and bullets indeed
They carry you to go and see
They carry you and they bring you down

Guns and bullets
Guns and bullets
Dampadadua

CHORUS: Who is it that owns the state?
It's *Safohen Anokwa*

CANTOR: We the subject shot
Who did we shoot?

CHORUS: We shot someone
We shot *Dadzebo*
Dadzebo has brought us into contact with iron
We are like pigeons
We have soared
Kweegya's sheep,
We know who the *anumasa** are

CANTOR: For a very long time
This elderly Kru man has been provoking me

CHORUS: Obir Ankoma
The valiant one
Obir Ankoma
No matter what they do
This state of Oguaa
Is in our hands

*EJP Brown suggests that *anumasa* is a corruption of *amanse*, which means "original settlers". See EJP Brown, *A Gold Coast of Asianti Reader*, (London: A. Brown and Sons Ltd, 1922) p. 120

39 TINY LITTLE HEN

CANTOR: The hen stands at the crossroads
The hen stands at the crossroads
The hen stands at the crossroads
You, a hen at the crossroads
You are a tiny little hen
If you are killed
It's of no consequence

CHORUS: A tiny little hen you are
A tiny little hen you are
If you are killed
It's of no consequence

CANTOR: You are a tiny little hen
If you are killed
It's of no consequence

CHORUS: A tiny little hen you are
A tiny little hen you are
If you are killed
It's of no consequence

CANTOR: What is the goat aiming to do?

CHORUS: The goat says it will fuck its mother

CANTOR: *Twee twee twee ba a twee twee*
We hate this kind of nonsense
You goat, we hate this kind of nonsense
Hwee tar!

CANTOR: We tread the path of blood
Our flint is sharp

CHORUS: We tread the path of blood
Ee wa yee

40 SOMEONE LIKE YOU

CANTOR: Someone like you
Someone like you
Listen, Tuafo
Someone like you
Someone like you
You?
You
You, Amo Eku
Someone like you
Nkwantabisa Akyeampon
If you want to fight me
Better get your iron ready

CHORUS: You, you,
You, Amo Eku
Someone like you
You?

CANTOR: Nkwantabisa Akyeampon
If you want to fight me
Better secure your gunpowder

CHORUS: You, you,
You, Amo-Eku
Someone like you
You?

41 THE MIGHTY ONE IS DEAD

CANTOR 1: As it turned out,
The Mighty One is dead
The Mighty One
Mighty One
It's you who said nothing terrible would happen
But here we are
When you fight for the state
You must raise your head
Because it can happen any day

CANTOR 2: Mighty One, Mighty One
Well done

CHORUS: Mighty One, Mighty One
Well done
Mighty One
It's you who said nothing terrible would happen
But here we are
When you fight for the state
You must raise your head

42 FATHER DEATH

CANTOR 1: Father Death is irresistible
Father Death is irresistible

CANTOR 2: Death is really tragic
Father menkye
Yes, tragic indeed

CANTOR 1: Just as of old
Death has come for our leader

CHORUS: Death is really tragic
Father Menkye
Yes, tragic indeed

43 YOU DARE NOT FIGHT

CANTOR: You dare not fight

CALL: *Tuafo agoo!*

RESPONSE: *Amee*

CALL: Asafo born out of war

RESPONSE: Out of war

CALL: What about the three

RESPONSE: We are sitting on them

CALL: Can any group stand our might?

RESPONSE: No group can stand our might

CANTOR 1: You dare not fight
You dare not fight
Fool, I say you dare not fight
These young ones are even bolder

CHORUS: Yoo See

CANTOR 1: You dare not fight
You dare not fight
Fool, I say you dare not fight
These young ones are even bolder

CHORUS: *Yoo see*

CANTOR 1: You dare not fight
You dare not fight
Fool, I say you dare not fight
These young ones are even bolder

CHORUS: *Yoo, see*
You dare not fight
You dare not fight
In the past you hired warriors
This year too you have done the same
It's our little drum
That has met blood
It's fire
It's our fire

People of Asokwa
It's fire
It's our fire that has overwhelmed you.

44 VALIANT BIRD

CANTOR 1: Valiant Bird, our future
Valiant Bird, our future
You will go ahead of us
No one picks you up
You will come before we succeed
No one picks you up
Show our people the way
Let us proceed lest we die

CHORUS: Valiant Bird
*Afa-na-annwe**
No one picks you up.

* *Afa-na-annwe* literally means "you may catch but you cannot eat". As a title, it is a particularly telling statement on the power and strength of the spirit bird which is eulogised in this piece.

45 ANOBIR MANSO

CANTOR 1: Our Anobir is called Manso
Our Anobir is called Manso
They carry, they carry
They bring you down
I hate the man who insinuates against me
Our Anobir is called Manso, my father

CANTOR 2: Anobir Manso, Manso
Anobir manso, Manso
A drum of ours is called Manso, manso

CHORUS: Anobir, Yes, Anobir

CANTOR 1: Anobir Manso, Manso
Anobir Manso, Manso
A drum of ours is called Manso, Manso

CHORUS: Anobir, yes, Anobir
Anobir manso, Manso
Anobir Manso, Manso

A drum of ours is called Manso, Manso
Anobir, ycs, Anobir
If from morning
We fail to go
We fail to come
May a tree fall on us!

46 WELCOME SONG

CANTOR: We bid you welcome
We bid you welcome
Bentsir
You deserve to rest
My mothers, we bid you welcome
My fathers, we bid you welcome
Where is the mussel?

CHORUS: *Yoo see, yoo see*
We bid you welcome
You are men indeed

47 SAFOHEN ABORABOR

CANTOR: Bring us back our headgear
When they do not want to host you
They show you the setting sun
Safohen Aborabor did not return

CHORUS: *Yee yee*
Bring us back our headgear

CANTOR: If they do not want to host you
They show you the setting sun
Safohen Aborabor did not return

CHORUS: *Yee Yee*
Bring us back our headgear
Aborabor
The *Safohen* who fell in battle
Bring us back our headgear

48 I REMEMBER MY FOREST EXPERIENCE

CANTOR: I remember my forest experience
By my mother, Abaka

By my father, Abaka
I remember my forest experience

CHORUS: *Yee*
There was no peace in the forest

CANTOR: By my mother, Abaka
By my father, Abaka
I remember my forest experience

CHORUS: *Yee*
There was no peace in the forest
By my mother, Abaka
By my father, Abaka
There was no peace in the forest
Ayee
Afor,
*Jko-gye-atuo**
There was no peace in the forest
Ayee

CANTOR: No peace in the forest,
Ask Kwesi

CHORUS: No peace in the forest
Ask Kwesi
By our mothers,
By our fathers,
Kwesi,
You chased these people
And they ran away
Kwesi, who fought a good fight
You chased these people
And they ran away
All hail him
Kwesi will join us to go
The healer does not heal himself

*A title which literally translates as 'He-who-fights-to-disarm-his-enemy.'

49 FOSU'S CRAB

CANTOR: Which has bitten my finger
My finger

And I am dying
Nana Fosu's crab

CHORUS: Which has bitten my finger
My finger
And I am dying
And I am dying
Which has bitten my finger
My finger
And I am dying
And I am dying

50 NANA FEYINKA

CANTOR: Nana Feyinka
The day you went to court
What did the white man ask you?

CHORUS: People of Abora,
They told you that you are a woman
People of Abora
They told you that you are a woman
Under the flagstaff
Under the flagstaff
We were pushed but we remained steadfast
Cowards came to meet Egya Edu
Ayee

CANTOR: Nana Feyinka
The day you went to court
What did the White man ask you?

CHORUS: People of Abora
The told you that you are a woman

51 DEATH HAS BEEN CREATED FOR US

CANTOR: Death has been created for us
Life too has been created for us
We are also being pursued with iron
Death has been created for us
Life has also been created for us
Yee yee

CHORUS: *Yee yee*

CANTOR: Children of Etsiwa*

CHORUS: *Yee yee*

CANTOR: Anumasa**

CHORUS: *Yee yee*
Death has been created for us
Life has also been created for us
We are being pursued with iron

*name of Asafo group

**indigenous people

52 THE WHITEMAN

CANTOR: *Yee yee*

CHORUS: *Ɔye a*

CANTOR: Plan something
To achieve something
People ask: 'who is the mightiest'?

CHORUS: *Ɔye a*

CANTOR: Is the mightiest not the white man?

CHORUS: *Ɔye a*

CANTOR: Since when did the white man become the mightiest?

CHORUS: *Ɔye a*

CANTOR: The White man who went beyond the sea

CHORUS: *Ɔye a*

CANTOR: And fashioned out the iron

CHORUS: *Ɔye a*

CANTOR: And gave it to the blacksmith

CHORUS: *Ɔye a*

CANTOR: And the blacksmith gave it to Tsetsewa

CHORUS: Oye a

CANTOR: And Tsetsewa gave it to Tsetsew

CHORUS: Oye a

CANTOR: And Tsetsew gave it to the carver

CHORUS: Oye a

CANTOR: The carver who carved our little drum
That has met blood

CHORUS: We have met
We have met
We are ready for anything
We are ready for anything
The hawk is not averse to bloody flesh
It's palm fruits we reap
It's palm fruits we reap
Whether a human being
Or a ghost
By my dying day
I shall engage you.

53 SO – AND – SO

CANTOR: So-and-so has been ungrateful
So-and-do has been ungrateful
They carry, they carry to see
They bring you down
So-and-so has been ungrateful
When they do not want to host you
They show you the setting sun
So-and-so; So-and –so

CHORUS: When So-and-so came
We were already there

CANTOR: When they do not want to host you
They show you the setting sun
So-and-so; So and so

CHORUS: When So-and-so came
We were already there

CANTOR: We shall not serve the white men

CHORUS: We shall not serve the white men
No we shall not

CANTOR: We shall not serve Asante
We shall not serve Asante
No, we shall not
What is up that appears mighty
Will be brought down by us
What is up that appears mighty
Will be brought down by us
We shall not serve these people
No we shall not

CANTOR: *Yee* So-and-so; So-and-so

CHORUS: When So-and-so came
We were already there

54 WE DID NOT COME TO FIGHT

CANTOR: We did not come to fight

CHORUS: We did not come to fight
Why then are you pelting us with stones?

CANTOR: People of my Asafo
We did not come to fight

CHORUS: We did not come to fight
Why then are you pelting us with stones?
No one goes into another's territory
To toil for nothing
You people of Nkum
You have toiled for nothing
We have our matter on a twig
We have our matter on a twig
Yee

55 WE HAVE A SCORE TO SETTLE

CANTOR 1: We have a score to settle with them
We have a score to settle with them

People of Abese
We have a score to settle with them
People of Abora

CANTOR 2: You dog, worthless person
You have gambled
You have gambled
You have gambled with Mfantse Abora

CHORUS: We have a score to settle,
People of Abora

CANTOR 1: You dog, worthless person
You have gambled
You have gambled with Mfantse Abora

CHORUS: We have a score to settle with them
People of Abora

CANTOR 1: Osee

CHORUS: Yee

CANTOR 1: Obo

CHORUS: Yee
Afor,
Okogyeatuo
They have brought trouble
These dogs have brought trouble to us

56 OUR FIGHTING SPIRIT

CANTOR: Our fighting spirit is of old
Our fighting spirit is of old

CHORUS: We saw, but did not baulk
As of the other time
Let anyone who dare find out.

57 WE HAVE THE FIRE

CANTOR: We have the fire

We have the fire
People of Abese

CHORUS: We have the fire
We have the fire

CANTOR: People of Abese

CHORUS: We have the fire
We have the fire
Make haste
Lest we leave you behind

58 WE ARE GETTING READY TO GO

CANTOR: We are getting ready to go
We are getting ready to go
We are getting ready to go
For others to come
We are getting ready to go
For others to take our place

CHORUS: We are getting ready to go
We are getting ready to go
We are getting ready to go
For others to come
We are getting ready to go
For others to replace us.

59 EGYA ANSA

CANTOR: I do not know; I do not know
Egya Ansa
I do not know where I will drop dead
Egya Ansa
I do not know

CHORUS: *Yee* I do not know

CANTOR: Egya Ansa
I do not know

CHORUS: *Yee* I do not know
They have closed in from my right

They have closed in from my left
I do not know where I will drop dead

60 NANA SAPREKU

CANTOR: Sapreku, Nana Sapreku
What is he doing in the midst of battle?

CHORUS: He is standing in the midst of battle
Doing his thing
Nana Sapreku
Awer Sapreku
Here we are, your children
Ayee

61 ADWOA NDAAWA

CANTOR: Fosu's wife
Adwoa Ndaawa

CHORUS: We are playing the gongs today
Adwoa Ndaawa
We are playing the gongs today
We are playing for the goddess
Who is bound to appear
We are playing the gongs today
The double gong
The triple gong.

62 SAFOHEN KOW EDU

CANTOR: Safohen Kow Edu
The man says, 'Let the people come'
The man says it will happen

CHORUS: The man says, 'Let the people come'
The man says it will happen

CANTOR: This dog, worthless person
Who is scared of war

CHORUS: People of Abora
The war has begun.

63 AKYEM KWEKU

CANTOR: Kweku ee
Akyem Kweku
It's the cannon ball that is sounding

CHORUS: It's sounding

CANTOR: Kweku,
Akyem Kweku
It's the cannon ball that is sounding

CHORUS: Let the people rise
Osee yee

CANTOR: Whether it's Bentsir today
Or Tuafo tomorrow

CHORUS: We are not afraid

CANTOR: The day will break
And the Tuafo will take up arms

CHORUS: It is raging, Tuafo,
It is raging,
We are not afraid

64 ITWI KOBENA

CANTOR: It's Kobena we look up to
Itwi* Kobena we look up to

CHORUS: *Yee*, Itwi
Yee Itwi
Itwi Kobena
We look up to you

CANTOR: In the alleys
This venture we are undertaking
In the alleys

CHORUS: *Yee*

CANTOR: In the alleys
This venture we are undertaking

In the alleys

CHORUS: *Yee*

CANTOR: The valiant one

CHORUS: We shall let the men prove themselves

E wa yee

CANTOR: In the houses too

CHORUS: We shall let the men prove themselves
E wa yee

65 FATHER ROCK

CANTOR: Rock, Rock
Ancient Rock of my fathers

CHORUS: Lead us to battle

CANTOR: Rock of my fathers

CHORUS: Lead us to battle

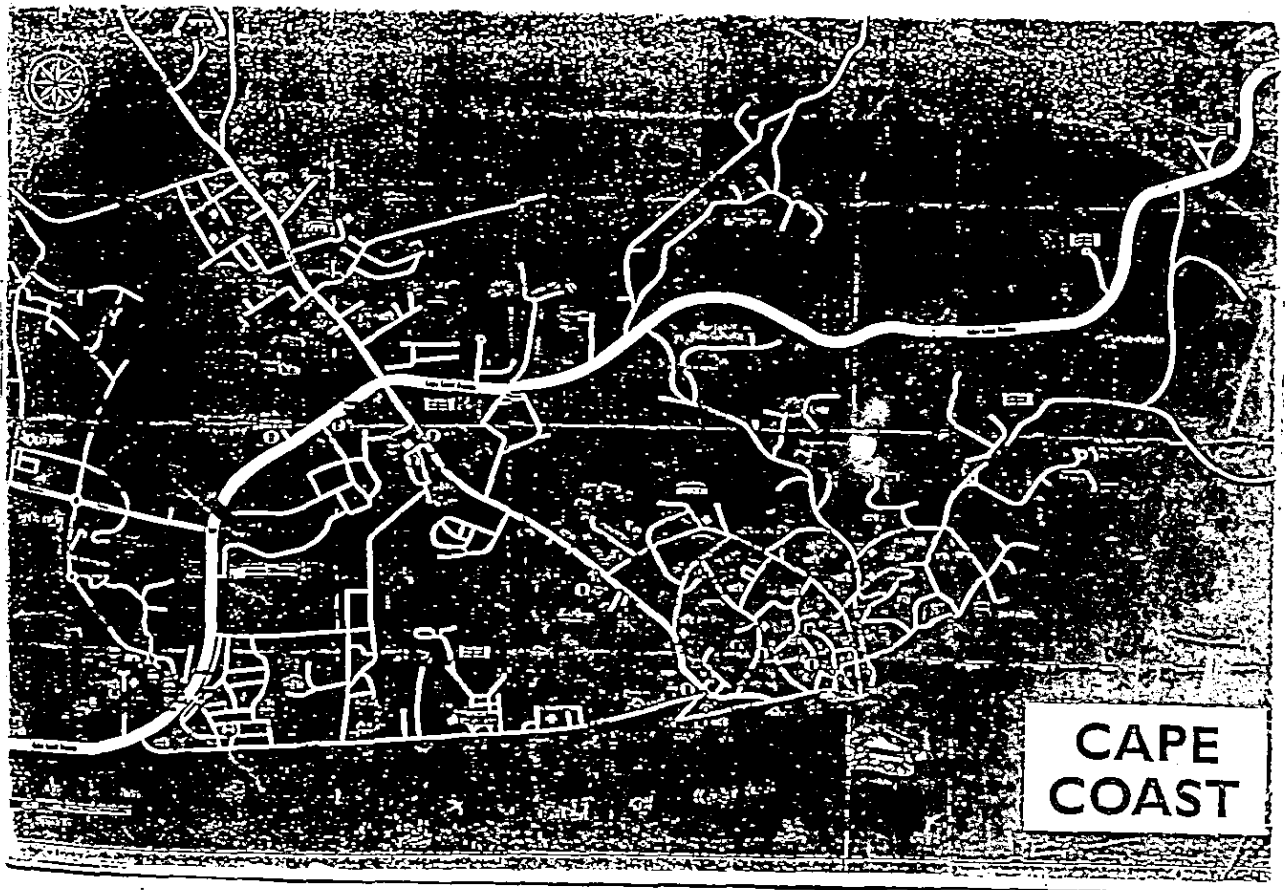
CANTOR: Make hast

CHORUS: To meet with us in battle

APPENDIX III

MAP OF THE CAPE COAST AREA

The reference to 'The Cape Coast Area' takes into account Cape Coast township proper and the outlying villages which are all part of the paramountcy generally referred to as the Oguaa Traditional Area



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