

Tobias Robert Klein (Ed.)

**Schools and Schooling
as a Source of African
Literary and Cultural
Creativity**

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Gyama Songs in Ghanaian Schools: A Note on a Student's Musical Creativity

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“The atomization of a general memory into a private one has given... gives everyone the necessity to remember and to protect the trappings of identity; when memory is no longer everywhere, it will not be anywhere unless one takes the responsibility to recapture it through individual means.” (Pierre Nora 1989: 16)

Formal Western Style Education in Ghana: An Introduction to its Genesis

The history of the progress of education, that is, the Western type of formal schooling, in Ghana, which emanates from that of the Gold Coast, transcends the expansion of facilities, reforms and adaptations pedagogical methods and theories. It is also about adaptation of students to changing conditions and their cultural creativity and inventions in the pariah space of the boarding house system, especially at the secondary school level. Thus, this study provides a history of the development of Gyama (or Djama/Jama)¹ by Ghanaian secondary school students. The study analyses Gyama as a musical genre shaped by students' cultural creativity, which was triggered by and within the confines of the boarding house and school environment. It examines its form and uses, and discusses how the performance of Gyama songs have transcended the borders of the campus into the public sphere and have influenced mainstream popular music styles like Hiplife and Gospel music in Ghana. The study, thus, brings to the fore the apparent paradox that since the colonial period African students entered the Western-style boarding house where at the same time they nurtured African musical ideas.

The establishment of boarding houses, especially for secondary schools, is a common phenomenon in Ghana. Demand for them is still growing and many parents are willing to send their wards there. Approximately a hundred years ago the situation was nearly the opposite. When the Western type of formal schooling began on the Gold Coast, some parents viewed the schools with either hostility, enthusiasm or apathy. Some parents sent their children to school because they had converted to Euro-centric Christianity or because they assumed that the

1 Orthographical alternatives are Djama and Jama.

school was a door to a “better life” similar to that of the “conquering” European. Others believed that the education at such a school would help the children to secure clerical employment and monthly salaries. Conversely, a large caucus of parents and indigenous leaders regarded schooling and the boarding houses as tools of alienation from African customs and worldviews. Hence, they were deemed to be facilitators of literacy, numeracy and Westernisation but not education in a deeper sense, or, as the Fante people will put it, “ntsetsee” (lit. ancient[ness], i.e. teaching about traditions). Many who were aware that within indigenous education younger or inexperienced persons were taught the complexities of the family, community and social systems by its older or more experienced members, opposed the school and disliked the boarding houses where pupils were incarcerated and brainwashed. In the light of this sentiment an indigenous leader later remarked:

The kind of education introduced here by our white friends was only literary. Boys’ heads were filled with stuff which they did not understand, much less apply... As we were taught, so did we teach (Adjaye 1931: vi; cited in Kimble 1963: 61).

Were such pessimistic suspicions apt? Seemingly the foundation or rationale of school education, i.e. “formal instruction in European-type schools”, on the Gold Coast was originally not one which the indigenous terrain’s comprehension of education considered as “real” education. The very genesis of it was a missionary venture and there was no pre-existing demand for it on the Gold Coast. Before European colonial political administrations or indigenous African groups made efforts to build up European-type schools and promote formal education several European Christian missionary societies – the spiritual arms of colonialism – attempted to institutionalise such structures. Some were transient and others endured. The first attempt to found a school may have started c. 1529 by Catholic missionaries who accompanied Portuguese traders and explorers to the Elmina and Cape Coast areas. It was transient at first. However, the active educational work by the Catholics later resumed around 1881. The initial experiment was intended to train some indigenes to become literates and assist the Portuguese (European) Christianisation and commercial projects.

In the course of time more missionaries from other European countries arrived at the Gold Coast. Serious efforts, thus, commenced in the littoral areas from the 18th century. The “castle schools” dating back to c. mid. 18th century operated in European-built forts in Elmina and Cape Coast. An endeavour to spread education into the hinterlands began around the first half of the 19th century with the Christian missions, especially the Basel, Anglican, Wesley and Bremen at the forefront of the work. They aimed to provide schools, in mere huts, swish buildings, churches, or in the studies, living rooms or verandas of the missionaries’

homes, as vital harbingers to their desire to spread Christianity. With time the various congregations built classrooms and standardised school buildings.

Ideological Foundations of the Boarding House in Ghana: The Missionary Factor

The expansion of education faced a paucity of teachers and suitable books in European (English) and indigenous languages. It met with local opposition, too. Missionaries begged or enticed some people to go to school with confectionaries, cloth and money. Even then, attendance was irregular, and only a handful of children went to the schools, because many were engaged in domestic chores. While some parents, as the Basel mission records tell, pledged their children in school in return for a loan, others preferred to send servants to school to be spoiled by the missionary and white ways, instead of their own children. Nevertheless, these difficulties did not deter the missionaries. Why? Was it really their aim to educate the African? Were they experimenting? Was their effort a means to an end? They maintained that their schools could instill their enlightenment in the people, and if the children were schooled, which was nothing short of giving them a huge dose of Eurocentric Christian principles, they would grow up as Christians and increase Christian communities. They would be drawn closer to Western civilisation – the best that the missionaries and their assistants knew. Moreover, the missionaries and traders were in dire need of African helpers: clerks, interpreters, teachers and evangelists. Schools and schooling could supply this need. Thus, some of the missionaries and schools also became interested in teaching crafts and trades such as bookbinding and joinery. These aims and needs which determined the educational policy of the missionaries and the colonial political administration eventually also conditioned the need for boarding houses and the emphasis on the teaching of the scriptures and European mores.

The “boarding house” tradition in Ghana was originally initiated by the early experimenters of mission school systems to separate their African students from unnecessary distractions by non-school going folks. Already Jacobus Eliza Capitein, an ex-enslaved African from the Gold Coast who was sent from Holland to Elmina in 1742 by the Dutch to help them to spread their Christian faith, advised the missionary enterprise to create separate places, prototypes of boarding houses, for the youth in order to indoctrinate them. He

...believed that the conversion... would be impossible unless...the young children were transported to a special colony or a walled town where they could be instructed in religion and other exercises by Christians from their youth up (Nketsia IV 1959: 269).

In a sixty five page memorandum to the Missionary Committee in London Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, a pioneer missionary and General Superintendent of the Wesleyan mission in the 1830s-1850s in the Gold Coast, regarded boarding houses as vital “nurseries” for the indoctrination of Christianity and Western worldviews. To the issue of the relevance or otherwise of the boarding house he wrote:

If I were asked what plan could be laid... I would say the thing most adapted to meet the case is an establishment into which the children could be taken, and kept entirely beyond the reach of demoralizing influences, allowing them no contact with the townspeople until they are capable of taking care of themselves.... By a little attention on the part of the resident Missionaries, the boys might be made to cultivate a piece of land during the cool morning and evening which would supply the establishment with plenty of corn for bread.... Thus the children could be brought to industrious and virtuous habits, daily acquiring knowledge of domestic economy [i.e. relevant to our Westernisation agenda] (*Methodist Missionary Society, Missionary Notices* 9, 1838-41, 34-40; cited in Bartels 1965: 33).

This scheme, in which he first experimented with two bright boys (William deGraft and John Martin in Cape Coast), was given wide publicity in the Church in England through the columns of the *Missionary Notes* and resembled the English one that informed the infamous “kill the native in the child”-residential schools in colonies like Canada, India and Australia. The tradition of boarding houses in postcolonial Ghana is directly related to these historical and ideological antecedents.

The first boarding houses and some opposition to the schools: 19th-20th century

By 1844 the Wesleyans had assembled boys and girls schools in about 18 coastal towns from the West Coast to Accra, the capital of the Ga ethnic group in the East, some with small boarding facilities attached. The efforts of the Wesleyans in the hinterland of Kumasi, the capital of the Asante ethnic group, were short lived. By 1876 they had started a boys’ High School (Mfantshipim) in Cape Coast. Its foundation was unsettled but local initiatives finally helped it to get more firmly established.

The Basel Mission first settled in Christiansborg Accra in 1828 and by 1847 opened schools in the Akwapim area in the Eastern region. By 1864 they had a centre in the Volta region. They also reached the Akyem, Kwahu and Asante hinterlands. By 1848 they opened the first Teacher Training College in Akropong as well as adult literacy classes and a Trade Training Centre in 1859. They introduced the boarding school, c. 1856, at first for the primary level and later

for middle schools, whereby four boarding houses were built by them in the Christiansborg and Akwapim districts.

Both the Catholics and English Church Mission also intensified their school building efforts in the 1880s. Two colonial government schools were created in 1880, while the Catholics built a girl's school and boys' school in Elmina. They built a boys' school in Cape Coast in 1885 and other schools in the interior. The Anglicans responded with a boys' secondary school (Adisadel or St. Nicholas Grammar School) in Cape Coast in 1906, which was firmly established four years later. The Wesleyans in 1894/95 also established a girls' boarding high school in Aburi in Akwapim, which was the first experiment in secondary school education for girls, and they later founded two more girls' high schools in Cape Coast and Accra in 1904 and 1908. Thus, the model of the boarding school became a core feature of the education system in the Gold Coast (later Ghana).

The government's active interest in the Gold Coast educational system as well as their efforts to find methods to guide it intensified from the 1850s onward. A Director of Education and Inspector of Schools were appointed for the first time. Eight years after the formation of the Legislative Council in 1874, the government passed its first Education Ordinance and a government technical (secondary) school and training college were both built in Accra in 1909. By 1920 the government run approximately 19 elementary schools. It must also be said, however, that all these efforts to spread the educational system met with some local opposition.

Some indigenous leaders feared that the students in these schools (including the boarding house) were unlikely to cherish or cultivate their own customs as long as European manners and institutions were continually held up as a superior example. The child's mind would be Europeanised and his/her African being would be molded in the interest of Europe and to the detriment of the cultural survival of their societies. For example, Mensa Bonsu, the Paramount Chief of Asante told the Rev. T. Picot of the Wesleyan mission in 1876 that: "We will not select children for education; for Ashantee children have better work to do than to sit down all day idly to learn hoy! hoy! hoy! (hoy was an altered elocution of holy). They have to fan their parents and do other work, which is much better" (quoted in Kimble 1963: 75).²

Such an uncharitable and perhaps even cynical resistance to schooling by a people's leader might be explained by the fact that during the latter years of the 19th century many Africans were abandoning local customs that they had been taught

2 Letter of 3 May 1876, from Picot, published in *African Times*, 1 August and 1 September 1876.

to regard as pagan and inferior, especially in schools, and were imitating, often unconsciously, Western habits and modes of thought, simply because the model was there. The school and boarding house were seen as introducing an alien form of socialisation, and denying the youth the full strengths and benefits of acquiring knowledge from the indigenous society (Nketsia V 2013: 251).

In the Northern part of the country missionaries were prevented from expediting their educational ventures. Even as recent as the first half of the 20th century many parents feared that “when their boys learn to read and write they will not be content to return to live with them again” (Departmental Reports, Northern Territories, 1911; cited in Kimble 1963: 79). They deemed schools (and boarding houses) as “whitening” institutions, which excised indigenous ecological conscience, subdued indigenous customs, encouraged mimicry of European traditions, derided indigenous epistemology and advanced the vile idea that the “black” person was impervious to logic and creativity. It must be noted that despite the government contribution, the mission involvement in the running of schools in the Gold Coast was so tremendous that by the turn of the beginning of the 20th century all types of schools, were conceived as mission-run and, thus, permeated with Christian teachings, to the extent that Christians were called *sukul-fo* (people of school) and vice versa.

The notion that schools and their boarding houses and curricula of teaching did not uphold African values compelled some cultural nationalist leaders in the 19th century to demand that the teaching curricula should make African customs, history and languages subjects of serious unbiased study. This need and demand for change would also be augmented by the percolation of West Africa and the Gold Coast by the so-called Negro education ideas from the U.S. which stressed adaptation in education, community work, female and co-education. This type of education had been established through the Hampton Institute (1868) and Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute (1881) in the U.S. to thoroughly train and equip African-American students to become holistically useful for active leadership through improving moral, educational, industrial and civil conditions in their communities. The Phelps-Stokes Commission, which was set up in 1920 by the Phelps-Stokes Fund of the U.S., assessed the state of school education in colonial Africa. Among the members of the commission was Dr. J. E. K. Aggrey, an African hailing from Anomabo in the Gold Coast who had also been a professor in a college in the U.S. The commission criticised schools for being out of touch with the social and cultural life of their localities (Setse 1974: 20). Its report recommended that the school education should be geared to integrate the indigenous children into the community, and also train them as industrialists and agriculturalists. It stressed the adaptation of school education to meet local

conditions and to develop a sense of community consciousness (Berman 1971). These local and international demands and recommendations for change were gradually implemented in government reforms in the colonial and post-colonial periods and many of the schools, especially in the 20th century, eventually incorporated “African studies” into their curricula.

It appears that the notion of weaning the African children in the boarding houses from their traditions was endemic at the beginning of 20th century. When governor Gordon Guggisberg, whose “native” home Canada had established the disreputable residential schools, yielded to agitation from African cultural nationalists and launched Achimota College in 1927 as a pioneer school which based key part of its education from the kindergarten to the pre-university level on indigenous traditions and heritage, the project faced some opposition from missionaries (Agbodeka 1977: 32). A curriculum that synthesised European culture with training and subjects like African ethnic art, folk music and dance or agriculture and, thus reflecting African cultural practices, was nonetheless consciously instated into Achimota. Agbodeka refers to an observation of Dennis Herbert (later Lord Hemingford), who was a member of the Achimota staff in the early days:

The encouragement at Achimota of tribal drumming and dancing was criticised by missionaries and the churches because they disliked Christian converts getting mixed up with what they regarded as traditional pagan practices (quoted in Agbodeka 1977: 134).

Hence, Achimota’s attempt to revitalise African traditions (and to promote technical and vocational education) was not immediately duplicated with comparable determination and effect by the other government schools (Ekuban 1973; quoted in Agbodeka 1977: 138). Thus, many founders of secondary schools in the first half of the 20th century preferred the old missionary “bookish” academic model like Mfantshipim. Examples were Accra Academy and Wesley Grammar in the East and later National College in the West or Tamale Secondary School in the North. All of them adopted the constitution of the Mfanstipim School Committee approved in 1934 (Bartels 1965: 200).

Since then successive governments and missionaries as well as private entrepreneurs have worked complementarily through the colonial period to the present post-colonial time and established many schools and boarding houses in Ghana. The boarding houses may have been originally planned to indoctrinate students and to sever their cultural umbilical cords to the indigenous mores, but in spite of this they nevertheless became centres of African cultural creativity, which produced some peculiar students’ customs. Many of such customs also developed in the boarding house after the country’s independence and particularly

reflected and responded to the students' post-colonial cultural imaginations, visions and realities.

The boarding houses spatially isolated students from their customary communities, but many students were mentally connected to their indigenous cultural ideas and internalised indigenous cultural norms. This nexus of "isolation" and "connection" at once inspired them to draw on creative thinking and creative behaviours to engineer their own customs in response to the new environment – the boarding house. They drew on ideas from a potpourri of ethnic cultural notions which the multi-ethnic student population possessed. Some of the boarding house inventions evolved from a syncretisation of European and indigenous cultural notions and practices and were adapted in a clever way to serve the linguistic, culinary and musical needs of the students. These included new languages, new foods, new dances and music. The boarding houses also produced popular monsterology such as the bizarre multidimensional stories about the beautiful but malevolent "Lady High Heel", the campus-roaming, scary, dough-nut headed night monster "Ka be we" (lit. bite some and chew), the self-propelling rolling "barrel" luminous multiple eyed monster and tales about statues on campuses that transformed into monstrous creatures at night.

Boarding Centres and Creative Thinking and Behaviour

The students' customs and items in the boarding house were acquired from creative thinking and deeds. Creative deeds involve relevant behavioural characteristics such as attitudes and dispositions that manifest from and augment the creative thinking process. The Ghanaian students' adaptation of food, music and language to new and changing conditions by way of developing new culinary, linguistic and musical items in the face of the pressures of the Eurocentric schools and cultural strangeness of the boarding houses can be considered as products of both high and low creative thinking and behaviour.³ Creative thinking is the cognitive function that generates new ideas and concepts. It assists the ability to think divergently and productively in an academic domain (Arends 2009; Papalia et al. 2008: 378-379; Nolan 2004) and to remould reality to meet human requirements and aspirations (Bronfenbrenner 1979: 9-10). It is the mental function that involves solving problems in ways that show initiative as well as developing, implementing and leading new ideas (McWilliam and Dawson 2008: 635).

3 Craft (2005: 20) asserts that there are "high" and "low" creative thinking. The former refers to something new and remarkable which transforms something(s) in a significant way. The latter is seen as ordinary thinking.

The formulation and use of such boarding house-derived cultural items, for example Students Gyama (SG) songs, did not come by chance. Characterised by novelty and imagination, application of flexible information, adding of details to information already produced and transformation of existing products into unique ones, they were consciously conceived by students, some of whom had artistic talent, in an academic milieu. However, because the “wider” culture in which individuals grow up influences their thinking, behaviour and the cardinal values or worldview of a society determines their creations (Tshikuku 2001; Rudowicz 2003), the students drew ideas from existing notions in their societies to create their cultural items in the boarding house.

Some of the student-spawned cultural items have found social currency outside the boarding house space. For example “gari soakings”, a combined mixture of gari (a couscous-like food made from cassava) and cold water with condiments like sugar, milk, and roasted ground nuts, is deemed a popular boarding house students creation – a snack – and is also popularly enjoyed in many Ghanaian homes. So is the famous “Ga-Shit” (abbreviation of gari and shito, a fried spicy chilli sauce), which is customarily sent to school by students as part of their provisions. All of these are quick-and-easy to make food prepared by students using ingredients from their chop boxes (ration boxes), which functionally satisfied their hunger occasionally in lieu of food from the regimented dining halls. Yet another food is “Feme” (fermented mashed kenkey), a sort of beverage prepared in the dormitories often from smuggled kenkey, which is a kind of corn dump-ling from the dining hall.

Ghana Students Pidgin English (SP) is a popular linguistic creation of boarding house students who merged indigenous languages and English to produce a comfortable Lingua Franca for their use. It is now spoken and used for many communication purposes both inside and outside the boarding houses, by all sexes. Kari Dako’s research reveals that:

In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, a pidgin [different from the existing Ghana and West African ones] began to be heard in the high-prestige multiethnic coastal secondary schools and from there followed its speakers into the tertiary institutions. It emerged partly as a reaction against the predominance of English in the school system, a ‘foreign’ language that was no longer adequately taught, a language the students could not identify with and a language whose informal registers the students did not master. It was also a reflection of acculturation. By being isolated in boarding schools and later university campuses, removed from traditional, i.e. family and cultural influences, the students assumed behavioural aspects of ‘marginal-deviant groups’... These groups included the military... and also the more aggressive behavioural tendencies of their urban colleagues... SP started in the prestigious, coastal male secondary schools, and a considerable percentage of the pupils ...came from the political/ administrative upper middle class... in the immediate post-independence years. In addition, in the late 1960s and again in the early 1970s,

Ghana was under military rule. Soldiers were very visible on the streets, they openly and aggressively displayed their power, and they spoke Pidgin. Student Pidgin developed in this environment (Dako 2002: 54).

Gyama (Djama and Jama) music is another enduring product of the secondary school boarding house. For clarity, I will use Students Gyama (SG) to classify this item in the discussion that follows as a distinctively school-created one in the discussion that follows. This disambiguation is imperative due to a claim that the performance of this music and the name (word) for it are a product of the Ga ethnic community. Despite this claim, I found no etymological explanation for *Jama* (pronounced *dzama*) as it is spelt in Ga. Again this claim may be correct, but what is also true and unchangeable is that students created an SG tradition in the same vein as the unique SP idiom despite the existence of Pidgin Englishes in Ghana and West Africa. SG, however, is part of Ghana's cultural heritage, yet to the best of my knowledge, extant studies that rationalise boarding houses and schools as centres of cultural creativity in Ghana have not intellectualised those hubs of education as producers of Gyama. An intellectualisation like this could therefore nourish our understanding of schools and popular music in Ghana. The literature is remarkably silent about the genesis of SG. However, as a students' creation with no real identifiable author, SG qualifies as a component of Ghana's folklore, especially as Mohammed ben Abdallah, Chairman of the National Commission on Culture, defined folklore during the inauguration of the Ghana Folklore Board of Trustees as

[All the] literary, artistic and scientific works belonging to the cultural heritage of Ghana which were created, preserved and developed by ethnic communities of Ghana or by unidentified Ghanaian authors (Abdallah 1991: 2).

What is SG?

Names of music and dances can reveal the origins, founders and philosophies behind them. Names of music in Ghana are derived from various circumstances and notions. One type may be named after the performers, hence those performed by Abofoo (hunters) and vigilante groups (Asafo) carry similar titles among the Akan. Another type may be named after a particular function it serves. Two illustrations from the Akan are the energetic "Asrayere" (lit. visiting the wives), which brings women together to wish fighting men well and the vigorous "Mmobomme" (songs of prayer) which women perform to support a person or a society in times of crisis. Sometimes a name or a proverbial saying, or a principal instrument that catches the interest of a performing group may be used to describe the music. Examples are "Ntan" (bluff), "Sika rebewu a, epere" (money struggles before it dies or ["vanishes"]) and "Ntahera" (ivory trumpets).

In some of these instances the social occasion or activity for with which music is performed or with which it is associated can lend its name to the music as in the case of “Kundum” for the music of the Kundum Festival in the Western Region of Ghana.

As for the etymology of Gyama I thought that two Twi roots⁴: “Gya” (fire) i.e. something energetic, hot and vigorous, and “(a)ma” (to give) are revealing. Additionally the Twi verb “gyam” (or lit. “gya mu” [trans. “fire inside”]), i.e. to uplift, to raise somebody’s spirits, to accompany, to support, to assist, to organise, come to mind, because the singing of Gyama calls and accompanies and uplift people into an active and organised state. A sensible contextualisation of these notions connoted a musical expression that sought to give energy, verve and encouragement. Frequently, the Twi expressions “Yen ko hye Gyama” (lit. “let’s go burn Gyama”) and “yere hye Gyama” (lit. “we are burning Gyama”) are used when people want to sing or are already singing these “fire-giving”, rousing, fiery and spirit-lifting songs. Students commonly use these expressions. The expression “wo ba shi jama” (lit. “we will pound jama”) is commonly used by Ga speakers. I have, however, found no etymology of the word in Ga.

SG is an energetic type of recreational music that incites and animates. It is a vigorous call-to-action musical performance, basically consisting of singing, handclapping, ecstatic dancing and playing of some basic musical instruments: whistle, castanets, the bell, and at times the rattle gourd and the drum. It animates people into either a joyous mood to overcome boredom or into angry protest against something such as a malevolent teacher or an antagonistic school administration. It also serves as a performance of cheerful support and celebration of the proud deeds of an individual boarding-house and its contestants in heroic, victorious and competitive activities such as sports. SG songs, depending on their themes, have many uses. They can put students into a happy frame of mind for a leisurely procession to while away dullness and/or celebrate the success of a school, student, house, dormitory or class in an endeavour. A student can vent dissatisfaction without taking individual responsibility for the expression because SG is presented collectively. Often performed by students at sports or athletics competitions, SG cheers supporters, encourages athletes and raises the morale of contestants. SG can get students to rally enthusiastically to demonstrate against something they dislike at school. The songs can serve as instruments to psychologically detach the student from home-life and to inculcate a useful degree of independence in the strenuous life in the boarding house. Be-

4 Twi is a dialect of Akan. Akan belongs to the Kwa sub-group of Niger-Congo languages. It is widely spoken in Ghana. Major dialects of Twi include Akuapem (Akuapim) Twi, Fante (Fanti) Twi and Asante (Ashanti) Twi. They are mutually intelligible.

cause of this, some SG practices are encouraged by non-student leadership in schools, while others are deemed subversive.

Questions on SG's origin, with regard to when it was started and who introduced it, cannot be definitely answered but it was created from students' experiences of indigenous musical forms and an adaptation of their styles and uses. I saw its performance some thirty years ago by students. When I went to the boarding house in the early 1990s I participated in its performance. SG's starting point must have been in the Akan coastal areas, where the historical male secondary schools started, and spread to the Accra area and then to other parts of the country through inter college/school entertainment meetings and competitions, especially sports. This can be deduced from a number of interviews: Gladys Mansa Akyea, a Senior Lecturer of Ghanaian languages and culture and past student of Kpando Secondary School, revealed that when she attended school in 1972 and even became an athlete SG was performed by the students. Martin Amlor, a Senior Lecturer of African music, also revealed that SG was in use when he enrolled in the secondary school in 1972. Students, especially leaders of SG groups in secondary schools and the university that I spoke to in 2015 understood it as students' own tradition from the boarding house. Although my other interviews revealed that SG already was an indispensable part of students' boarding house culture in the 1970s, Boadi Siaw, a Ghanaian historian, averred that when he went to Opoku Ware Secondary School in Kumasi, in the Asante Region, in 1955, the students performed SG, especially during athletic competitions. Another name by which they also called the performance was "Samanbo". Certain schools and some members of the public in Ghana especially those from the Akan communities refer to what is also known as Gyama (or Djama/Jama) as "Samanbo", "Samanmbo" or "Samanmo". In the Akan language the word "Samanbo", "Samanmbo" or "Samanmo" when broken down can give some initial connotations literally. "Samanbo" (or lit. [N]Saman bo) can be translated to mean "Stone for the ghost(s)/spirit(s) of the dead"; "Samanmbo" (or. Lit. [N]Saman mme mbom) can suggest "Ghost(s)/spirits of the dead should come and join", while "Samanmo" (or lit. [N]Sman mo) can imply "Congratulations to the ghost(s)/spirit(s) of the dead". Along with others, I had thought that perhaps the name referred to a type of post-war or pre-war songs sung by groups to praise those who will fall or fell in a battle or suffered in a noble venture – the heroes – so that people's confidence will be boosted by such exalting singing (Conversation with students; Nana Samuel Akoto Bruce, Kwadwo Adum Attah and Reginald Sackey). We also thought of it as evolving from an expression which is repeatedly chanted to encourage the singers to perform these types of songs which are popularly known elsewhere as Djama and Jama. My further en-

quiries, however, revealed that “Samanbo/mo” is a corruption of the Akan expression “Nsamubo” – “nsa” means hand(s), “mu” means inside and “bo” means hit, to wit handclapping. It was pronounced repeatedly by a cantor to the chorus to keep clapping in order to maintain the fundamental time line of the song. The Gyama or Samanbo songs fundamentally run on hand clapping but can also be accompanied by certain membranophones and idiophones when they are available. It must be said, however, that the use and recognition of the word Samanbo is not as popular as Gyama both in the students and public spaces in Ghana.

As I further inquired into the evolution of SG, I reviewed two historical studies on two pioneer secondary schools – Mfanstipim and Achimota. The sections about the social life of the students made no explicit mention of the performance of Gyama. Mention was, however, made of some students’ organised musical performances in the 1930s and 1950s which perhaps included SG or inspired the rise of SG. The works *Achimota in the National Setting* and *Mfanstipim and the Making of Ghana* written by Francis Agbodeka and Adu Boahen respectively, two eminent Ghana historians, dealt inter alia with boarding house traditions revered by past and new students. The works are enriched by the autobiographical contributions by the authors about their experiences as former students of those schools. Agbodeka, once a student house monitor of Lugard House in Achimota and member of the Class of 1952, showed that the struggle to develop an education programme oriented towards African studies and local cultural heritage in Achimota started early with the founders and at “Achimota . . . [unlike] in other schools where African music was totally absent . . . African Music took firm root.” This tolerance allowed students to enjoy themselves with tribal drumming and dancing.

In the early days lessons were given in singing, Music theory, tribal drumming . . . [and] as far as African music was concerned the aim was to get close as possible to the traditional folk-songs, etc. (Agbodeka 1977: 115)

Furthermore:

[T]he immediate post war years were great days of entertainment at Achimota. Tribal drumming and dancing on moonlight evenings rivalled cinema shows and ninoes’ night as means of relaxation for students and staff (Agbodeka 1977: 161).

On the other hand Boahen, a member of Mfanstipim’s 1974 year group, gives information about the exhibition of a musical performance similar to Gyama in the 1930s by students at his school. A story he excerpted from the autobiography of Joe Appiah, the school prefect who led the first students’ strike in 1936, mentioned that the striking students’ sung “war songs” (possibly SG) while marching through Cape Coast, similar to what students do with SG today. According

to the story – see also Tobias Robert Klein’s article in this volume – the striking students caused destruction in the dining hall and

the mob (students) rushed to the dormitories for their (mosquito) poles, chanting various ethnic war songs as they gathered on the campus square to begin to march on the sleepy town of Cape Coast (Boahen 1996: 353).

Additionally, the reminisces of an old student in Boahen’s study showed that often Old Mfantsipim boys in the universities of Accra and Kumasi arrived at Mfantsipim for Speech and Prize Giving Days with songs and chants during the 1950s (like what old students still do with SG today during school reunions) in packed buses.

Their songs and chants as the bus neared the ‘roundabout’ alerted waiting students who run down from the dormitories to meet them. Choruses of (the anthem) “Arise School” from both sides filled the air and replaced the songs (Boahen 1996: 528).

Francis Agbodeka’s *A History University of Ghana. Half a Century of Higher Education*, a major study about the country’s first university, commented on social life on campus and the so-called “profane [bawdy] songs” of the “Bacchus worshippers” which emerged on campus in Commonwealth Hall, an all-male hall of residence, after 1960. The commentary also indicated that the common practice of university students in general, who were once in the secondary school, “continuously on the beat” with singing and “marching to victory songs around campus” to enliven themselves, was in vogue by the beginning of the 1960s (Agbodeka 1998: 255). The performance of the “profane songs” and victory songs by students is thus a living tradition which is unmistakably recognisable and audible as SG today.

I pondered over the supposed Ga connection to Gyama, but I found no history or theory in any literature that made such a connection clear. Dakubu’s new Ga dictionary defines Jama as “a dance, with a stamping movement, performed especially in Accra,” and “singing and dancing in support of a team or an athlete” (Kropp Dabuku 2009: 196) This still does not make it a product of the Ga people. Whereas the dictionary for example defined Kpanlogo as “a type of Ga popular music and dance; a style of drumming” (Kropp Dabuku 2009: 117), thereby revealing the essential agency of the Ga, it did not explain Jama as a music performance and dance of the Ga people. Moreover, it is not possible to identify Jama as a Ga dance by any distinctive movements or choreographical patterns. J. H. Kwabena Nketia, the eminent Ghanaian ethnomusicologist does not mention Jama or any predecessor as one of the examples of Ga musical performances which he itemises in his widely quoted article “Traditional Music on the Ga People” (1958).

Interestingly I found in my further readings (Habekost 1993: 71), which included Claude McKay's autobiographical sketch "Boyhood in Jamaica" that an African musical retention called Jamma (or Jamal songs) exists today as part of the folklore of Jamaica, where thousands of enslaved Africans, especially from West Africa ethnic groups like the Akan, Yoruba, Ibo, Ibibio, and Ngombe speaking groups, were sent during the 16th century by the Spanish and especially the 17th and 18th century by the British. "[I]t is a folk song in Jamaica sung primarily to accompany communal field-digging (eg. when planting yams) and secondarily to accompany dancing and games at wakes etc. The singers are led by the *bomma*, and the song comments on local happenings." (Cassidy and Le Page 2002: 243) "They were . . . songs for community work . . . [and] not made in the mind of an individual intent on his individualism. They grew from a way of life". (McKay 1985: 350) Cassidy and Le Page's *Dictionary of Jamaican English* revealed that Jamma stems etymologically

probably from a number of similar or related African words referring to social gatherings, singing etc.: Bambara *jama*, an assembly, company, Mandingo *dzama* 'many'; Twi *gyam*, to condole with, express sorrow, grief or sympathy at the death of someone's relations; *edwom*, song, hymn, etc; Ngombe *jambo*, refrain; *gyama-dudu*, a large kind of drum (Cassidy and Le Page 2002: 243)

No Ga link was made.

As far as the alleged Ga connection is concerned Nketia disclosed to me in an interview that he did not know Jama in Ghana as a Ga indigenous creation or folk music. It may borrow idioms from certain Ga neo-traditional forms like Kpanlogo and Gome, which according to John Collins (1996: 97-99 and 109-111) were not indigenously Ga but popularly generated in the space of the urbanised population of cosmopolitan Accra in the 20th century.⁵ In an interview Collins stated that for about thirty years now he observed Jama, which he called a neo-traditional form, as a common part of the repertoire of song performances of off-campus non-student music groups that perform Ga songs in Accra. Furthermore, Isaac Richard Amoah, a Ghanaian professor of Music Education, described

5 It is believed that migrant fishermen and carpenters from Accra brought the Gome idiom from societies around the Sierra Leonean and the Cameroonian coast. Kpanlogo, which can be construed as rope-like twistyness (was a dance which some say was created by the young urban Accra youth to mock the so-called educated person's mimicry – caricature twist – of the manners of the colonial administrators. Collins conversely avers that Kpanlogo was created by a young Accra man called Otto Lincoln, "as a neo-traditional social music and dancestyle of the Ga". Others define it as a type of drumming and dance "that came in the wake of Ghana's independence, from the streets of Accra around 1962. It was music played by the youth, shooting from the spirit of freedom that their new found independence had brought them".

it as a “spontaneous music performance in Ghana, accompanied by dancing, popular among students, athletes, fishermen and workers when they meet or gather and the basic instruments are handclapping and the voice” but he was not sure whether it originated from the Ga people (interview).

The dance that accompanies the singing, for both the SG and public Gyama, is a free type of movement. Unlike other dances that can be easily identified, there is no dance that can be associated with Gyama through its peculiar moves. All dances, and in particular indigenous dance moves can be applied to the songs of SG if only it suits the dancer. The dancing tends to be free of formalism and ascend on improvisations. It can therefore be message bearing, full of symbolic gestures, mimicry and loose-limbed, joyous, and jogging-like movements. Their rhythm is not as tight and as carefully controlled as most traditional dancing or the “modern” Highlife or other contemporary popular styles like Azonto or Alkayida (corruption of the word Al Qaeda). The funnier the dance steps – according to an interview with Margaret Delali Numekevor – the better because the songs are meant to excite and move people.

The boarding house community as an incubator of SG groups

Nketia has rightly observed that the basis of music making is usually the community (Nketia 1974: 21). The boarding house can be considered a community, that is, it features as a section of town where a people – students – live a kind of corporate life based on a common institution, social networks, values and in-house traditions. Spontaneous response to group needs and involvement in collective activity such as the performance of music, which support social bonds, are generally expected of community members. SG is thus a musical genre of the boarding house students’ community, which gives members the opportunity to share in creative experience, participate in community experience and express group sentiments. Such expressions can be recreational, for advocacy or worship. SG has been a harbinger, accompaniment or background musical performance to other activities such as sports, processions and worship. It is integrated within the activities to set the mood for action, provide an opening for expressing the feelings they generate and heightens dramatic action. Students, coming from different ethnic groups, have been able to creatively compose and sing the songs in various languages – indigenous ones as well as Ghana Students Pidgin. Hence, SG is not identifiable with any ethnic group. It is for all students and this permits them to identify with the national character, which is multi-ethnic.

The Akan have a proverb which says “Osrane mfa da koro ntwá man mu”. The interpretation is that the moon does not take one day to cross the town. In other

words, the waxing of the moon is gradual. So too has been the development of SG by the creative capabilities of students in the boarding houses. Their creativity, a response to the encounter of school life, was influenced by their cultural background as well as musical experiences and knowledge from their ethnic communities. Another Akan philosophical saying; “Wokoto abofra bi a ote fituo mu se oreto mpanin nnwom a, na ne mpanimfoo an awu de agya no”⁶ reveals the imperativeness of the socio-cultural influence. The students are from indigenous societies where some belong to families or are associated with certain groups which mediates their experience of and expertise in musical performance. With these retentions of musical idioms/styles from their home communities the students compose SG pieces. Three examples of such indigenous styles are Kpanshimo, Sankofa Dwom and Asafo. Kpanshimo (lit. Pound the rope) is zealously sung with intermittent clapping and no drumming by Ga fishermen to make the work of pulling the net to haul their catch easy. It is also sung during festivals with themes that critique the actions or inactions of officials and members of the town (cf. also Klein 2011 and Klein 2015: 271-288). Akan fishermen sing Sankofa Dwom (worksongs) to foment esprit de corps and make the work easy when they pull the net to the shore. Asafo songs are the call to action songs of the state vigilante companies of the Akan and Ga. Furthermore, the students transform suitable traditional folk and “modern” popular songs from genres such as Highlife, Hiplife and Gospel into SG pieces.

The Form of SG Performance

SG is a group singing performance usually with a cantor and a chorus. Its first and common form is the call-and response where the chorus echoes every musical phrase by the lead singer and features a closing refrain ending in a number of such exchanges. Its second singing arrangement involves a brief introductory lead of a few notes by the cantor and the chorus joining in as soon as possible to sing along with the cantor to the end of the section or alternatively with the cantor singing an entire verse through, repeated immediately by the chorus. The singing is often punctuated through with some popular inciting phrases: “Tso-obo!” (Heave ho!), “Atwadee Atwadee” (lit. clap clap) and “Nsam[u]bo, Nsam[u]bo” (lit. handclapping, handclapping). Traditionally the cantor calls and repeats these catchwords several times as a rallying cry, especially when SG is about to begin or a new song is about to start after one has ended. There is always a big repertoire of different compositions and the songs are sung one after

6 Lit: “If you find a child in a house emptied by death singing the (classic) songs of the elders do not be surprised. The elders left that legacy in the house”.

the other in a performance that can continue for hours. New songs can be created spontaneously during the performance and added to the existing bank of songs. Such compositions eventually spread to other groups who may change or modify the lyrics to suit their purposes.

Instrumentation

Hand clapping is primary. Ululation happens at times. The use of simple whistles, and the handy castenet-like firikiyiwa (finger pod bell), slit bell, *ndawuronta* (twin or double iron bells struck with sticks, rods or small animal horns) and *akasaa* (gourd rattle enmeshed in net of beads/seeds) is common. Indigenous drums, especially the lead and support drums of *Kpanlogo*, the *tamalin* (frame drum) and the *gome* (box bass drum) feature at times. This I think was a later modification because the students originally did not have access to such heavy instruments in the boarding houses.

What about scales and rhythm?

Two kinds of diatonic scales, the heptatonic (7 note) and pentatonic (5 note), are commonly used in Ghana. Each ethnic group masters the use of at least one of them and its own arrangement in terms of sizes of intervals, modality and harmonic usages. Some, however, combine the two, due to musical borrowings from other groups. For example, the Ga sing in both, but they are more inclined towards the heptatonic. The preference for pentatonic systems prevails among the *Adangme*, *Dagbamba*, *Frafra* (Tallensi) and *Dagarba*. The heptatonic peoples include the *Akan*, interior *Ewe*, the *Kassena-Nankani* and the *Builsa* (Nketia 1958: 24 and Nketia 1961: 34-46). SG was and is rendered in both scales because of the multi-musical cultural backgrounds of the students. Melody, however, cannot exist without rhythm. The rhythm is strong and mainly rendered in duple time. Occasionally maverick instrumentalists, especially drummers, infuse some improvised patterns to briefly superimpose a polyrhythmic effect still in the duple metre, thereby introducing (in terms of Western notation) a rare hemiola effect.

Themes of SG compositions

The textual content dictates the themes. I have distinguished the themes of the songs alternately by psychological and functional classifications. Some encourage communal living in the boarding house, others talk about homesickness.

Some are comedic and deal with topical and humorous subjects persisting in schools or society. Some help the students to oratorically boast about their schools or houses or their heroes and to ridicule their rivals. This instils respect in and for the group performing it and also encourages school and house pride. Some carry religious themes and are occasionally sung at religious meetings, especially the popular Sunday evening “Church service” in most schools. Still others criticise “bad” behaviours like drunkenness, laziness, stealing, and some show contempt for failure of exams or in sports. Others encourage perseverance and courage in the face of the vicissitudes of life. Yet another group makes references and complaints about common hardships in the boarding house. While some of the themes may be deemed as respectful and encouraging, others are regarded as profane and disrespectful and therefore negative by outsiders, especially teachers.

The “negative” ones (especially in all male schools) may express a glorification of drinking, misogyny and violence against rivals in other schools and houses. Under the “negative” ones are those deemed controversial by outsiders, but viewed as fun and humorous by the performers themselves. In this subgenre we find songs with lyrics and even dance moves that graphically and explicitly portray sexual notions and manoeuvres. These are popular especially in the boys’ and co-educational schools, because the all female schools tend to be mute in such situations.

The sexual themes and allusions of SG betray the performance as “art and invention” (Wade and Tavis 2000: 478) and thus result from the sublimation of sexual urges, which are brought into sharper focus during adolescence. Although feelings of sexual curiosity, arousal or desire are manifest in many high school students in the boarding house setting, intercourse is proscribed by the authorities because the students are considered too young. Sexual instincts therefore tend to deflect into “safe” and “nonthreatening” acts of higher psycho-social valuation, e.g. battles of wit and courage and of the body in academic challenges and in sports, to negotiate relief from the tension of pent-up and unresolved sexual arousal. The lyrical eroticism that characterises some SG therefore is a form of erotic fantasy play, an exploration of and experimentation with sexual thoughts, arousal and coitus in a “harmless” and non-coital form – in song and body movement. Songs about the opposite sex reflect students’ growing curiosity and interest in the opposite sex during adolescence. Attractive physical, mental and spiritual qualities in a woman or man are explored in songs, for instance the allure of a woman’s traditional serviceableness is referred to in a popular song like “Angelina”. Descriptive lyrics of sex roles and the engagement of the opposite sex in sexual activities allows the students to engage in imaginary sex

play, which helps them to mentally experiment with opposite sex relationships and relations before the actual events. These are creative acts, art and inventions by the students, which take their sexually aroused and tense states and transmute them into therapeutic products for students' minds and bodies, so that the natural process of shaping themselves as sexual beings continues within the harsh environment of the boarding house.⁷

It must also be mentioned that existing Highlife songs, hymns and folk songs are often reworked and "remixed" into SG with the old lyrics exchanged for an infusion of new ones. Although new songs continue to be composed, there are hundreds of common existing SG that are well known in Ghanaian boarding houses. The titles and the themes of some SG collected at boarding schools in Cape Coast, Accra and Koforidua alone included:

1. *Jesus and Disciple* [This has a religious fervour]
2. *Hwana be ba? Yensuro* (lit. *Who will come? We are not afraid*) [It is about pride and bravado]
3. *Ma num nsafuo* (lit. *I have drunk palm wine*) [Comedic]
4. *Asikopapanasiko paa* (Gibberish) [Comedic]
5. *Rabana rabana* (*Ya ba ooo*) (*We have come*) [Pride and bravado]
6. *Allah ku baadu* (lit. *Allah hu Akbar*) *God is Great, Even if I don't have... He is Great* [This has a religious fervour]
7. *Akoko be kokrokoo* (lit. *The Cockerel will crow*) [Comedic]
8. *Me hye Gyama* (*ewo die me hu nti*) (lit. *I will perform Gyama, because of what I have seen*) [A kind of Gyama anthem. It is about solidarity]
9. *Abena Seiwaa* [Abena Seiwaa is a common female name in Ghana. Praising the beauty of a woman]
10. *Wa sei ne mogya* (lit. *He/She has spoilt his/her blood*) [Rebuking work done without pay]
11. *Awa wa do ben ni* (lit. *What a wonderful love*) [Love/Sexual Fantasy]
12. *Wara na meware wo* (lit. *It is you that I will marry*) [Love/Sexual Fantasy]
13. *No Size* [Praise to school or person]

7 I thank Dr. Abena Amoa Sarpong of University of Cape Coast for shedding some light on this in our conversations about SG in July 2013.

14. *God made man, man made woman, woman made the devil* [Religious/Comedic/Insult to girls schools]
15. *Ye wo nua do/Ye ye Sharp Brain* (lit. *We have brotherly/Sisterly love/We are intelligent*) [Boasting/Solidarity/Pride in School]
16. *Wo le noko* (lit. *We don't know [but we will know]*) [Religious chant and Hope/ Pride in School]
17. *Zamina matin zamina* (Gibberish) [Comedic]
18. *La illallah eh eh...Salaam Aleikum* ([Islamic religious chant of peace])
19. *La la la illallahh* ([Islamic chant of affirmation])
20. *Zaminamina abele oh* [Comedic and Animating/Gibberish]
21. *When I saw the little Bobby* [Sexual Fantasy]
22. *Araba anaa, Araba anaa* (lit. *Is it Araba, (the name of a female born on Tuesday)*) [Sexual Fantasy]
23. *Di masem ma mi* (lit. *Plead my case*) [Complaint and Solidarity]
24. *Odo wo a do no bi* (lit. *If he/she loves you love him/her too, i.e. [boyfriend and girlfriend]*) [About Love]
25. *Run away* [Boasting and Teasing opponents for their defeat or retreat]
26. *Everybody bring your calabash* (About eating together in the boarding house esp. *Koko* [i.e. porridge]) [Solidarity]
27. *Noah eeh pam hyen no* (lit. *Noah build the ark*) [Religious Fervour and Morale Booster]
28. *Cast your burden onto* [name of school or person] (Originally a Gospel song) [School Pride]
29. *On the mountain* (Originally a Gospel song) [Pride in school, students and teachers]
30. *Se me ambo* [name of school or person]... *Wo di wo akoma ma no* (lit. *I don't mention...If you give your heart to him/her*) (Originally a Gospel song) [Pride in school, students, athletes and teachers]
31. *Pii pii poo poo won shi gyama* (lit. *Pii pii...we are making gyama*) [Morale Booster and Solidarity]
32. *Duna o Duna, Duna, Duna* [name of school or person]) (Ga), lit. *Bottom/buttocks o buttocks*) [Used to insult opponents]

33. *Danu Dwoada Kaneshie market/Sukuul dan mu ho (lit. Last Monday at Kaneshie Market/In the [empty] classroom)* [Sexual Fantasy]
34. *Mogya begu famu ene (lit. Blood will pour on the ground)* [Show of seriousness, browbeating, show of anger at something]
35. *Me jolie ya (lit. My sweetheart attends [so and so school])* [Celebrating or showing pride in a loved one or school]
36. *Ma wo nan so (lit. Raise your leg)* [Sexual Fantasy]
37. *Mose je totokota (Ga. lit. Moses remove your sandals)* [Religious Fervour]
38. *Obroni wo ye abro nipa (lit. Whiteman you are wicked)* [Anti-colonialism]
39. *Tinkolon* [Insulting the parents of opponents]
40. *Fire down below* [Expressing Seriousness]
41. *Da a [name of school or person] be twa epo no (Originally a Gospel song about Moses and the Exodus)* [It valorises the deeds of a school or person in particular an athlete]
42. *Shu wa bolo to twe no ani (Originally Gospel) (lit. Testicles onto the vagina)* [Sexual Fantasy]
43. *Hwen ma le, mli, ...Sanku... (lit. When we were in heaven)* [Religious Fervour]
44. *Bob Marley nom wee (lit. Bob Marley smokes marijuana)* [Glamorising the rebellious stance of Bob Marley]
45. *Dwe dwe dwe dwe dwe* [Sexual Fantasy]
46. *Angelina (The boys are coming Angelina)* [Praising a woman/Love and Sexual Fantasy]
47. *Avuale kpo, Hewale* [Emphasising Group Solidarity and Strength]
48. *Somebody to carry me home* [Emphasising the pain of homesickness]
49. *Teacher eh wosi wo be gu [school, etc.] (lit. Teacher you say that you will stop.... stop...and let us see)* [Defiance to teacher or authority]
50. *So lo ni eho (lit. Old things are gone)* [Hope and positive visions for the future]
51. *Adenti na mu su saa (lit. Why are you crying like this/sad)* [About repentance, peace, friendship and goodwill]

52. *Obiara wobom* (lit. Everybody clap) [Group Solidarity]
53. *Power belongs to the people* [Encouragement/Opposition/Morale Booster]
54. *Lele-lele-waka-lele* [Love and Sexual Fantasy]
55. *Easyeasy-eazey-eazeey* [Comedic]
56. *Olebe-lebe-le-oya* (Gibberish) [Comedic]
57. *Meyere bi ton koko* (lit. One of my wives sells porridge) [Comedic]
58. *Alatu lebe* (Gibberish) [Comedic]
59. *Me bo me sa mu* (lit. I will clap my hands) [Solidarity/Morale Booster]
60. *We are coming ooo!* [Solidarity]
61. *Sunshine ooo! Sunshine* [Solidarity]
62. *Ade a wo aye nti* (lit. It is because of what you have done) [Complain]
63. *Azingi-zinga-chikachika* (Gibberish) [Comedic]
64. *Me ka akyere* [any person in authority] (lit. I will report to...) [Complain]
65. *Me ko* [so and so] *fie na odi ashawo* (lit. I saw so and so having sex with a prostitute in his/her house) [Insult to an opponent. Also a complaint]
66. *Mami akpeteshie me hye ntampi* (lit. Give me local gin, I will smoke marijuana) [Glorifying defiance/rebelliousness]
67. *Araba anaa, Araba anaa* (lit. Is that Araba (Araba is the name of a female born on Tuesday)) [Sexual Fantasy]
68. *Agya reko* (lit. What did father leave behind when he was leaving) [It is a riddle which supports pride in school as heritage]
69. *Aboa aponkye wa foro ne na* (lit. Stupid goat, it has mated with its mother) [Insult to opponents]
70. *Me Congo* [Contemporary global injustices and problems]
71. *Menya woo!* (lit. I have got you!) [Love and Sexual Fantasy]
72. *Condom won kye no mbra* (lit. Arrest Condom) [Sexual Fantasy]
73. *Ye asan aba bio* (lit. We have returned again) [Morale Booster]
74. *I don't fear. . .* [Solidarity and Morale Booster]
75. *Sekunde Yaayaa* (lit. Yaayaa of Sekondi) (Yaayaa is a female name and Sekondi is a port city in Ghana) [Sexual Fantasy]

76. *Aha ye de oo yaayee* (lit. *This place is lively*) [Solidarity and Morale Booster]
77. *Oyi Mama Kolonko* [Sexual Fantasy and Solidarity]
78. *Adu Boahen wo se wo betu JJ* (lit. *Prof. Adu Boahen you say you will unseat JJ Rawlings*) [Commentary on Ghana National Elections of 1992]
79. *Wo fan gbe* (lit. *We are travelling*) [Solidarity and Morale Booster]
80. *Abura Dunkwa na kube whoho* (lit. *Coconuts abound in the town of Abura Dunkwa*) [Comedic]
81. *Ogyina ho aa ne twe tuum* (lit. *There she stands with her vagina*) [Sexual Fantasy]
82. *Bo kolo* (lit. *Bang the vagina*) [Sexual Fantasy]
83. *Nnle fee mo* (lit. *I don't know her*) [Morale Booster]
84. *Obla yoo ko* (lit. *A certain lady*) [Sexual Fantasy]
85. *Ayee boboo* (*Gibberish*) [Comedic]
86. *Pepe ni Abaayiwa* (lit. *A Northern lady*) [Sexual Fantasy]
87. *Ghana money* [Complain against social corruption]
88. *Me di me sister be ma... Alomo Bitters* (*I will give my sister to Alomo Bitters [a type of local gin]*) [Misogynist/Sexual Fantasy]
89. *Yoomoo yoomoo* (lit. *Old Lady*) [Sexual Fantasy]
90. *My woman* [Sexual Fantasy]
91. *Baba-baba-shiba* (*Gibberish*) [Comedic]
92. *No tension* [Solidarity and Morale Booster]
93. *Obaa da ben?* (lit. *When did he/she [eg. an authority] come?*) [Defiance/Solidarity/Complain]
94. *I want somebody* [Friendship/Love]
95. *Kelewele* (lit. *Fried spicy plantain*) [About Food/Morale Booster]
96. *Obi awo ne ba....* (lit. *the (girl) child of someone*) [Sexual Fantasy]⁸

8 These titles were obtained from my own memory about some of the songs that I sung when was in secondary school and also from different students from some of the secondary schools in Cape Coast, Accra and Koforidua that I had conversations with. These included students from St. Augustine, Cape Tech, Mfantsipim, Adisadel, Wesley Girls, Academy, Holy Child, Accra Academy, Achimota and Koforidua Sectech.

Below is one popular SG called “Lele-lele-wonka-lele”. It is about love of a lover or school or athlete. But it also conveys a fantasy about sex. The lyrics are in Pidgin English.

Lelelelelele wonka lelelele (Call 2x)
Lele (Chorus 1)
Lelelelelele wonka lelelele (Call)
Lele (Chorus)
When I see/remember my woman/school, something happen to my body oo (Call)
Lelelelelele wonka lelelele
Lele
Lelelelelele wonka lelelele
When I see/remember my woman/school, something happen to my body oo

SG in Town: Outside-the-School Impact of SG Today

Currently, students at all levels, Primary, Junior and Senior High Schools and even those at the tertiary institutions still perform SG. However, the transmittable style of SG has spread it among non-students, footballers and athletes too. It is a common accompaniment of the morning jog in most Keep Fit and Aerobic clubs in Ghana. The Armed Forces and other security agencies commonly perform it when they embark on route marches. Some popular musicians in the commercial terrain also perform and allude to it. The performance of SG at a place and its acceptance is however dictated by the propriety of the textual content that it may be made to contain. Depending on the content, SG may feature as part of the repertoire of worship songs of some churches, especially the charismatic ones which attract many of the youth, entertainment at baptismal ceremonies, funerals and burying of corpse ceremonies, parties and sports engagements. Recently a Jama Competition, dubbed the Bukum Jama Gala, was organised in Accra through the collaborative efforts of Bentsifi Accra Convention and the Visitors Bureau Company, which offers hands-on technical PR support and consultancy in tourism, hospitality and media in Ghana and the Ghana Denmark Cultural Fund. Participation was opened to the general public. The event was initiated in 2011.⁹ Another competition also formed part of the event that celebrated Ghanaian songs at the Music of Ghanaian Origin (MOGO) Festival of March 21st to 28th, 2015.¹⁰

9 Jama Music Gala for Ga Mashie, <http://www.modernghana.com/music/16035/3/jama-music-gala-for-ga-mashie.html>. Retrieved on 1 September, 2015.

10 [Photos]: Ga Mashie jama group ‘prep’ for MOGO Festival, <http://citifmonline.com/2015/03/18/photos-ga-mashie-jama-group-prep-for-mogo-festival/#sthash.3XeO13pM.dpuf>. Retrieved on 1 September 2015.

Moreover, musicians of the popular Hiplife genre, which emerged in Ghana sometime in the 1990s and is a combination of elements of Hiphop and Ghanaian Highlife music, have introduced the infectious style and rhythm of SG into their compositions. Some of these such as “Jama” and “Siklitele” (lit. toffee) on the Siklitele Album (2003) of 4X4, a group formed in 2000, became bestsellers. The Hiplife songs “Sradenam” (lit. fatty meat) by Castro featuring the all-female trio, Triple M, “Aaye fe Notse” by King David featuring Batman (now Samini, the 2006 recipient of the Music of Black Origin Award for Best African Act), “Bue bue” by Screwface featuring Castro, and “Ayoo” by G Unit featuring Castro and Screwface also make use of the Gyama style. Ghana’s ace football striker Asamoah Gyan is known to lead Gyama sessions with the Black Stars in camp, during training and before matches to heighten the morale in camp and among the players. He even infused the popular and bestselling Hiplife song titled “Do the Dance” with Gyama when he sung as a featuring artist on that track of the popular Hiplife artist Castro in 2012. Furthermore, the popular Hiplife song “Sixteen Years” of the female singer Mzbel and Yaw P’s “No be Love & Palm” are also composed with expressions and phrases drawn from SG.

Some popular artists of the type of music called Gospel like Josh Laryea, have equally used the Gyama style in their songs and videos. Josh Laryea, who led SG groups as a cantor, during his secondary school days at Accra Academy and Apam Secondary School, sung his popular Ngboo track in the Gyama way and deliberately depicted the singers as a Gyama group in the music video. Grace Ashe has also done the same for some of her Gospel compositions such as the renowned “Wo Nuntso Yesu” (lit. Our Lord Jesus). She also invoked the SG vocabulary and expression for the cheerleading songs that she composed for the Ghana Black Stars, especially when the national football team hosted the CAF 2008 in Ghana and when the team participated in the 2006, 2010 and 2014 FIFA World Cup competitions. The most popular is Black Star’s “Ye nie” (lit. Here we are). She also created a Gyama song “Ghana at 50” for the celebration of the Golden Jubilee Celebration of Ghana.

Many other professional musicians have done Gyama for Ghanaians to sing to cheer the Black Stars. Interestingly it was mainly within the secondary school environment and the boarding houses, where SG still prevails, that many of these artists familiarised themselves with the SG tradition when they were students. Through these exposure and experiences they had the confidence to experiment with it in their commercial recording deals and performances in the non-student world where it is steadily advancing in popularity.

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Personal Interviews and Conversation

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- Ms. Gladys Mansa Akyea, Department of Linguistics and Ghanaian Languages, University of Cape Coast, interviewed July 2015.
- Prof. Isaac Richard Amoah, interviewed at the University of Cape Coast, 25 June 2015.
- Dr. Martin Amlor, Centre of International and African Studies, University of Cape Coast, interviewed July 2015.
- Dr. Samuel Y. Boadi-Siaw, past student of Opoku Ware Secondary School and Senior Lecturer of History, Department of History, University of Cape Coast, interviewed July 2015.
- Nana Samuel Akoto Bruce, Member of the University of Cape Coast Music Band and instructor of indigenous drumming at the Music and Dance Department, University of Cape Coast, interviewed 25 June 2015.
- Prof. John Collins, Music Department, University of Ghana, personal interview via telephone July 2015.
- Prof. J. H. Kwabena Nketia, University of Ghana, personal interview via telephone, 24 June 2015.
- Margaret Delali Numekevor, Lecturer of Dance, University of Cape Coast, 26 June 2015.
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