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TRADITIONAL DANCE IN GHANA: A MEANS OF PRESERVING AND RE-AFFIRMING GHANAIAN CULTURE

KANI EDITE ROMAIN

SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING
INDEPENDENT STUDY PROJECT
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ABSTRACT

My paper deals with the original purpose of traditional dance in Ghana and the modern-day purpose of traditional dance in Ghana. The paper also addresses the use of dance as a means of preserving culture and the way that dance has been used over time in social struggles in Ghana.

METHODOLOGY

My main source of data came from my participation in African traditional dance classes. These classes were conducted at the Centre for National Culture (CNC) in Cape Coast, Ghana. Basically, these classes in their teaching methods and atmosphere greatly shaped for me my focus because the class differed so greatly from what I am used to. In setting up these classes I didn't give any requirements or specifics towards what dances I would like to learn. Thus, not knowing my dance level or background it was the choice of my teachers which dances I would learn. The class set-up was very different than the dance classes I have taken in the United States. During my studies at the CNC there was never one dancer who acted as the head instructor. Instead depending on the movements any dancer could comment or interject on my learning process. This could lead to some frustration on my part and confusion on what was fact or personal opinion. Also, the sheer number of dancers present was a point of difference. At any one time there could be as many as eight other non-student dancers participating in the dance. As well, I was the only student in the class, which could be stressful in trying to learn the dance. I am used to participating in classes where there are many more students than the standard one teacher. In addition to the abundance of trained dancers there was a whole drum ensemble present. However, the drum ensemble only had one master drummer for the duration of my lessons. This was a point of relief since there were no disputes in terms of the music being played.

The method employed to teach me the dance greatly differed from the standard African dance class in the United States. While at the CNC, I was stuck in a fully choreographed dance and was expected to follow along. Over time, I was expected to know the steps, their order, and the formation changes. Unless, I asked for specific clarification or I blatantly did not understand the step, no individualized attention was given to me to break down the step. Even when I asked specific questions my answer normally came in the form of re-showing me the step. The steps were newer broken into their elements such as only arms or only legs. Also, many times the answer never came from just one dancer but came from dancers and drummers alike. During these instances, I could not help but feel there was more than one standard way to perform a move. A dancer can take a certain level of artistic liberty when performing the steps. Moreover, the way in which my questions were answered led me to believe that dance is mainly taught by demonstration and not necessary through

words. This phenomenon could also be the result of my language barrier. All the same, later this inability to express dance through words would become a point of contention because it was nearly impossible to get information or personal opinions on the dances.

I am confident in saying that my limitation in learning the dances came from my classical Western training. I was first trained in modern, jazz and ballet dance. With these types of dance specific corrections are given to each dancer. When making a mistake the teacher will speak to the part of your body that is adding to your confusion. Thus, when a new move was demonstrated to me, I had a hard time identifying for myself what I was doing wrong. All I knew is that I did not quite have the step down. Also, back at home when learning a new dance many times the moves will be taught before the formations are added, or you will learn small parts of the dance and practice that sequence before moving on. The breaking up of the whole dance gives time for separate focus between the moves and the formations. Many times in classical forms of dance the moves will be taught and then set to music. This set-up gives the dancer a rhythmic freedom that is not present in African traditional dance. In all, my difficulties came from being unable to translate the moves into a learning style I could understand.

My other limitation came form my inability to respond to the music. In my short dancing it became very apparent that these dances are reliant on the inherent responses of the dancer to the music. For instance, when switching to the next dance step the master drummer give a "break", a repeated rhythm sequence, in the music to signal the dancers to change step. Depending on the upcoming step, the step can start at anytime during the break. While the transition was apparent to my teachers, I had a hard time conveying to them that I did not know when to start the next step. Many times, my response was, "listen to the music," which did not help me understand where to start the step. Although at times, I will hear the break, I don't know when to start the step. Another difference was the dancers' ability to hear a different emphasis of the beat when I was used to. I found myself off beat from the other dancers because I would naturally begin to put emphasis on a different down beat. This was quite frustrating because my body felt off beat while my teachers were telling me to stay on rhythm.

After my week of dance classes, my information gathering changed from being almost purely participation and observation to interviewing and literary sources. Again, I was stunned because I had a hard time finding anyone with the skills to articulate ideas about

dance. Also, it is hard to find books that deal with dance and impossible to find books that deal with dance as a salient social issue. In the end, I was left finding books that deal with large social issues and that mention dance as a facet of their interactions. However, I was fortunate to get an interview with F. Nii-Yartey, the director of the National Dance Company based in Accra. In two informal interview sessions I was able to ask him the following questions:

> What are the objectives of the National Dance Company? Is there a loss/gain of meaning for traditional dances in the way they are presently performed on stage? When did you become director of the National Dance Company? What is the difference between traditional dance that is pure art and traditional dance that express the social ills of the people? Who controls the message being transmitted in a performance, the musician or the dancer? What are the characteristics of a good dancer? How much does the National Dance Company integrate other forms of dance into their repertoire? What is the average experience, formal or informal, in the National Dance Company? Do you have to be Ghanaian to be in the National Dance Company?

I also conducted one other interview once back in Cape Coast with dancer/drummer Abu Osman, who performs with Agoro Dance Company. I asked him the following questions:

> What is the background for the dances: *Kpatsa*, *Bamaya*, *Adzewa*, *Tokpe*, and *Adowa*? When are these five dances performed? Who historically performs these dances? What is the present context in which these dances are performed – staging, use of males/females, songs? Why are traditional dances performed on the stage? What are the characteristics of a good dancer? Why are you a dancer?

I also had informal conversation with the following dancers:

Ekua Mensah: a dancer/costume mistress at the Centre for National Culture.Abena Asirdua, a dancer at the Centre for National Culture. Baby Quaye, a teacher of dance teaching assistants at the University of Ghana, Legon.

In all, I was disappointed with my inability to have more interviews. Especially in the Cape Coast area there are very few dancers who have studied dance in a formal, paper writing setting. Also, due to the non-controversial nature of dance, I had a hard time initially finding an issue to focus my inquiries.

MAIN REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Dance has always brought people together, forging a place where mind and body, interacting with one another, take precedence over all other things. Dance is a time when a person may forget all of their worries and concentrate on the here and now. It is through dance when any community comes together and shows its solidarity. It is within dance that social interactions are made and where the community springs to life. It is with dance where people affirm their beliefs as a community and come together in praise of life, God, death, etc. Most importantly, it is with dance that people come together to have a good time. For dance, and art as a whole, it is a mirror that reflects the culture of the people it represents. So it has been my objective in the last couple of weeks to decipher why people come together to dance in Ghana and what purpose traditional Ghanaian dance has in modern-day Ghana. My personal studies have allowed me to witness and experience the physical aspects of four Ghanaian dances: *Bamaya, Adzewa, Kpatsa,* and *Tokpwa.* All of these dances sprang up from different geographical parts of the country due to separate social stimuli. Although their present use, they have all been appropriated to serve one main purpose: THE PRESERVATION OF CULTURE. The use of dance can be used to achieve a variety of diverse ends such as spiritual, governmental, and physical independence. Dance has the power to bind people together into one unified force.

My own personal cultural preservation came in the form dance. I grew up on a white majority island where they were very few cultural outlets for African-American children. Thus, my mother made it her objective to instill in my sisters and I a sense of pride in our African roots. We do not know exactly where our family stems from in Africa but it was still important to have a tie to our "Motherland". My mother would drag us to African dance conferences around the country in order to give us an African sense of identity. However, it was not until my freshman year of college that I began to take my mother's life lessons to heart and start to feel that it was my duty to engage myself in West African dance. I was no longer content with the standard forms of ballet and modern dance in which I had been trained. Ballet and modern dance did not serve my spiritual needs as a person. I needed a new form of dance that was representative of who I was and where I came from. As a result, I joined an African dance company re-affirming my mother's previous attempts to give me a fully encompassed sense of who I am and where I came from. My participation in my

African dance company would in turn create new bonds to African culture that were not present before hand. When making my decision to come to West Africa it was my roots in West African dance that was the deciding factor on where I would go. I knew nothing else about Ghana or West Africa except the cultural ties I had form in my West African dance classes. However, my artistic bond was enough to draw me back across the Atlantic Ocean.

So why is it so important to look specifically at traditional dance as a means of preserving history and cultural patterns? Dance tells its story in a continuum of movement. The emotions of the dancer and the story being told by the dancer are captured in the dancer's motions. The emotion is conveyed through the use of posture, facial expressions, direction of movements, physical interactions with the audience and the mimicking of daily activities. Art is no longer purely auditory or visual but physical. Dance coupled with music only helps to fully illustrate the history of the people. A. M. Opoku writes in African Dances,

> "For to us life, with kits rhythms and cycles, is Dance. The dance is life expressed in dramatic terms. The most important events in the community have special dances to enhance their meaning and significance. To us the Dance is a language, a mode of expression, which addresses itself to the mind, the heart through heart, using related, relevant and significant movements which have their basic counterparts in our everyday activities, to express special and real life experience in rhythmic sequences to musical and poetic stimuli. For a deeper insight into our way of life – our labors, material culture, aspirations, history, social and economic conditions, religious beliefs, and disbeliefs, moments of festivity and sadness – in short, our life and soul, and the realities, perceived, conceived or felt, that make us the people that we have been and are at present, and revealed to other serious seeker in our dance."[1]

PURPOSE OF STUDY

Traditional dance in modern-day Ghana gives the world a glimpse into the continuum of her people. The settings in which the dances are performed have changed but it is still necessary to pay homage to these dances. For as I paraphrase the director of the Ghana's National Dance Company, F. Nii-Yartey puts it,

[1] A.M Opoku, African Dances. (Legon: The Institute of African Studies, 1965) 1.

"Traditional dance in Ghana was created in another time but the dances are still relevant today."[2] The objective of this study is to discover the purpose of a traditional art form in today's social-cultural environment.

Traditional dance in Ghana is being re-appropriated to build a national sense of unity and pride. Each dance might be the sole product of one ethnic group, but the dances are now shared with pride under the umbrella of being a Ghanaian citizen. This re-appropriation has come to define the modern-day purpose of traditional dance in Ghana. The message is clear: We are proud of our artistic works as a people. No longer will these dances be cast aside as primitive art forms. They too deserve recognition as legitimate art.

SECTION ONE: THE TRADITIONAL SETTING OF ADZEWA, TOKPE, BAMAYA AND KPATSA.

In analyzing the modern relevance of traditional dances it is important to look at the conditions in which each dance was created. During my studies I learned four traditional dances: Adzewa, Tokpe, Bamaya, and Kpatsa. I learned these traditional dances in their modern context. Thus stylistic elements were employed to better adapt to the stage environment that were not necessarily present in the village presentation of such dances.[3] However, individually these dances give a diverse picture of the history and relevance behind traditional dance. Collectively each dance does not contain the same traditional relevance, but with the movements and history of each dance I was able to point to the traditional relevance of each dance. Nonetheless, as a unit they give a broad picture on how these diverse dances have been re-appropriated in modern-day Ghana under the label traditional dance.

Bamaya first originated in the Northern region of Ghana by the Dagomba people. The story behind how Bamaya came to be goes as such:

> There was a drought in the Dagomba community because the gods were unhappy with the people of the community. The gods were dissatisfied because the people were not offering sacrifices to them. As an apology to the gods people began to sacrifice animals as a way to rid the community of drought. In accordance with the sacrifices, the gods also demanded that a ritual take place at the river. When performing the ritual it began to rain. Out

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[2] Director F. Nii-Yrtey of the National Dance Company, interview by author, 14 November 2002, Accra possession of the author.

[3] Director Emmanuel Akotu of the Center for National Culture, interview by author, 4 November 2002, Cape Coast, possession of author.

> of joy at seeing the rain on of the men performing the ritual began to turn from side to side shouting, "baa maaya, baa maaya," which means "wet stream" in Dagbani. At this sight of the man others began to join in. Later due to the actions of the man the dance came to be known as bamaya.[4]

When first performed Bamaya was a dance for the royal clan that was only performed by men. Bamaya was performed for festival, naming ceremonies, enstroolment of chiefs, etc. In homage to the women of the community, the men performing Bamaya would sometimes dress in women's clothing. Over time the restrictions on where and who could perform Bamaya have changed. Bamaya is no longer a dance only for the royal clan. Also, women are allowed to participate in the dance.[5]

Unlike some of the other dances I performed, Bamaya's moves were the same for both men and women. Although Bamaya is a dance performed in a host of social contexts such as funerals and naming ceremonies,[6] it is a dance, which stays true to its original form. As times passes and artistic liberations are taken with the moves a dance can stray from its original structure. Each move is grounded in the twisting of the body a waist much like the original story describes. Since movement around the body's central axis is so essential to the essence of the dance, great flexibility is required of the dancer in that region. The movement around the central axis creates a great deal of opposition within the dance. The twisting of the body creates a 2-part division of the body. The movement is an exaggerated twisting naturally happens in the body when walking. Throughout the dance a fan is used as a stylistic prop. The motion created by the wrist in order to keep the fan moving mimicked the movement of the body at the waist.[7] In all, the dance demanded fluidity in movement that was stretch beyond a person's inherent opposition.

Kpatsa originates in the Ga-Adamgbe community located in the greater Accra region. The dance is performed during festivals and when there is a full moon. Mainly, the danced serves as a time when the kids in the community can come together, when there is a full moon, as a way to entertain themselves.[8] The story behind Kpatsa goes as such:

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[4] Kuubeterzie John. A Background to Bamaya. Paper part of the class Mus 105, Intensive Practical Work at the Music Department, University of Cape Coast, July 2001.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Dance class. Bamaya. Centre for National Culture, Cape Coast, Ghana. 8 November 2002.
[7] See Appendix 1: Bamaya
[8] Dancer Abu Osman with Agoro Dance Company, interview by author 25 November 2002, Cape Coast, Ghana, possession of author.

> When on an expedition, a hunter becomes very lost. As he travels deeper into the forest he happens across some dwarfs performing a dance. The hunter is able to keep himself hidden and learn the dance of the dwarfs. When the hunter returns to the village he teaches the dance of the dwarfs to the other villagers.[9]

The name Kpatsa refers to the "limping gait" movements in the dance that are thought to resemble the actions of dwarfs.[10] Over time Kpatsa has been greatly influenced by the Agbadza dance of the Ewe people. Agbadza stems from the southern Volta region. Many of the movements of the Agbadza dance have been incorporated into Kpatsa. In the performance of Kpatsa songs can be tailored to convey a specific message to the audience. Therefore, there is no standard song that is performed with the dance. It is the job of the cantor to make up the different song. If a cantor is very skillful then his skill will show through in his song abilities.[11] I learned the following song during my studies of Kpatsa:

Naki lee Naki lee
Mbi Naki lee dzendzoo

Naki lee Naki lee
Mbi Naki lee dzendzoo

Naki lee dzendzoo (2x)

- repeat the first stanza
- each stanza is sung by the cantor and then repeated by the chorus.

Translation:

If the people don't like you,
They don't appreciate what you do.[12]

This song was performed when the company at the Centre for National Culture is performing Kpatsa. However, the meaning of the song, I learned doesn't represent the expertise of a trained cantor due to the absence of a designator cantor. An equal number of

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[9] Ibid and William Ofutsu Adinka. "The Kpatsa Dance of the Dangme", In Journal of Performing Arts, Ed. N. Fiagbedzi (Legon, Accra: School of Performing Arts, 1980) 66-67.
[10] Ibid, p.67.
[11] Ibid. p.70.
[12] Dancer and Costume Mistress Ekua Mensima at the Centre for National Culture, interview by author, 5 November 2002, Cape Coast, possession of author.

men and women perform the dance. Unlike Bamaya there was a division between the choreography for the men and women. On the opening step the men's step differs entirely from the women's step. During other parts of the dance the steps for the men and women will be the same, but the positioning for the men will differ from the positions of the women. Kpatsa demanded a high level of energy throughout the dance. Each movement demonstrated a quickness of the feet and hands that did not allow for smooth transitions between moves. This quickness of the movements also made each move smaller and less dramatic. Also, unlike Bamaya the hands and feet tend to move together and there was less opposition. The lack of opposition meant the flexibility needed in the torso for Bamaya wasn't necessary in Kpatsa. In all, Kpatsa was more cardiovascular in nature and didn't require the same precision in movement or flexibility required in Bamaya.

Tokpe hails form the Volta region and was originally performed as a possession dance. Now Tokpe is performed on the stage and as a social dance. During my learning of the stage version of Tokpe, the possession elements of the dance were eliminated. The stage version of Tokpe is a way for the people to show their love for God without becoming possessed.[13] Tokpe is very similar to Kpatsa. In terms of rhythm Kpatsa and Tokpe have the same drum ensemble rhythms. The only difference between the two dances is the rhythm being played by the master drummer.[14]

Tokpe in its movements is as high energy as Kpatsa. This is probably due the similar drum patterns employed in both dances. As well as being small in its movements, Tokpe requires more isolation in its moves than Kpatsa. For instance the 6th step is repeated many times throughout the dance. The 6th move in addition to requiring isolation of the lower portion of the body requires a great deal of opposition like Bamaya. While shaking the lower portion of the body the upper part of the body is also shaking but in the opposite direction. Thus, while doing this particular move there is a need for the dancer to be flexible at the waist, move quickly, all the while isolating the upper and bottom halves of the body. A huge stylistic difference between Tokpe is the use of movements to reference specific parts of the body. For example during step number 4 the hands point directly to the heart in the sequence. Also, during the song while the women are crouched down the men touch the

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[13] Director Emmanuel Akotu of the Center for National Culture, interview by author, 4 November 2002, Cape Coast, possession of author.

[14] Dancer Abu Osman at Agoro Dance Company, interview by author, 25 November 2002, Cape Coast, possession of author.

heads of the women. These references to the body help center the quick movements of the dance and give it a more grounded feel.[15] Furthermore, the use of isolation helps ground the movements by keeping the quickness of the dance very controlled into the personal space of the dancer. Many times the quickness of the move will cause a tensing of the muscles and a desire the constriction the movement in order for the movement to remain small and quick. The constriction of the body can make the energy of the move return to the body instead of escaping into space.

The fourth dance I performed was called Adzewa. Adzewa is a dance of the Fante people originating in the Central region.[16] Adzewa is performed during the enstoolment of chiefs, festivals and the funerals of Paramount or prominent chiefs. Originally, Adzewa was a dance only performed by females but in its modern context the dance will feature men as well as women.[17] The use of men in Adzewa has predominantly been used as a dramatizing element. The dramatization of Adzewa can come as the result of the song sung during the dance. Like Kpatsa, Adzewa doesn't have one standard song associated with the dance. Thus depending on the message of the song the role of the men in the dance will change.[18] The inclusion of men in the dance is rooted in a new ways to present traditional dances. In their modern context, traditional dances are being influenced by the changes of gender roles in society as a whole. For example, in the Agoro dance company men participate in Adzewa, a traditionally female dance, while women are utilized as drummers. Historically, the role of drummer was reserved for men only.[19] In this way, dance companies are giving traditional dances a more modern social context for how the dances are performed.

Adzewa is performed by a sequence of solo dancers. There are main moves to Adzewa but a dancer may improvise during the dance.[20] When learning Adzewa, I was given a set sequence of movements and no improvisational liberties were taken during the dance. I guess that over time as my skill level increased the master drummer would give me more advanced drumming sequences for me to interpret.

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[15] See Appendix 4: Tokpe
[16] Dance class. Topke, Center for National Culture, interview by author, 5 November 2002, Cape Coast.
[17] Dancer Abu Osman at Agoro Dance Company, interview by author, 25 November 2002, Cape Coast, possession of author.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Dance class. Tokpe. Centre for National Culture, Cape Coast, 5 November 2002.

Adzewa is a very fluid dance. Each movement is much grounded but possesses a light quality. The movements are much hunched and close to the ground but the dancer are expected to contain an airy quality. The 2nd movement in particular adds to the light feel of the dance due to the birdlike quality of the movement. However, even during the second movement the body is never fully upright adding to the centered feel of the dance. During the 2nd move the arms move in the out in soft waves. When moving the arms out the elbow is never fully extended but there is care taken to elongate the movement to its outermost point and retract the arms in one fluid motion. The extension never looks like it comes to an end.[21]

Lots of improvisation takes place within the dance, especially between the 5th and 6th step. Between these steps the relationship between the dancer and master drummer is most intense. Also, this is a time when improvisational characters such as a spider and chief are acted out. Basically, whatever the dancer is moved to dance by the drums is what comes out. When coming out, the dancer is not confined to a particular style or step. In addition, it is only the responsibility of the first dancer to bow to the audience.[22] It seems that no two dancers dance Adzewa the same way.

SECTION TWO: DANCEAS A RE-AFFIRMATION OF CULTURAL BELIEFS

Since art is used as a means to preserve culture, it is no wonder that Ghanaians have used music and dance as a way to re-affirm their cultural beliefs. Ghanaians have used traditional music and dance as a source of solidarity and as a reminder of what the community holds important. The greatest example of holding dear traditional forms of art as a means of solidarity is in the emergence of independent churches in Ghana.

Christianity first came to Ghana in 1471 with the discovery of the town, now called Elmina, by the Portuguese. Originally, the objective of the European Christians was not the conversion of Africans to Christianity. In depth, missionary practices did not fully develop until 1828 with the establishment of the Basel Mission, which is a Presbyterian Church.[23] The establishment of the Basel Mission began Ghana's long held relationship with

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[21] See Appendix 3: Adzewa.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Asempa Publishers, Christian Council of Ghana. The Rise of Independent Church in Ghana. (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1990). 7.

Christianity. Prior to 1828, early missionary attempts were made in Ghana but ultimately failed. Such failure was the fault of problems such as health problems of the missionaries, the association of missions with trade (gold, slaves), and unstable political environments.[24] In the end, these early mission attempts were unable to truly root Christianity in Ghana. However, the missionaries' second effort to implant in Ghana led to deep roots that still hold strong today. The introduction of these missions also meant the gradual integration of western and African culture. With these new forms of Western societal values also came new forms of worship. These new forms of worship were very unlike the traditional forms practiced in the villages. No longer was drumming and dance acceptable ways of expressing one's love for God. Missionaries used Christianity as a means of spreading Western ideals while putting a stop to the practices of the Ghanaian "savage" cultural patterns. The new missionaries also brought formal education, western values, economy, and life-style to Ghanaians.[25]

The introduction of the new Christian missions helped to propel some people towards traditional ways to express their beliefs. This breaking away came in the form of independent African churches. The first independent African church came in 1862.[26] This first church and the others that would follow are mainly characterized by their use of traditional drumming and dancing and, indigenous languages in their worship. As is written in the book, The Rise of Independent Churches in Ghana,

> "It is not surprising that most of the people in Ghana consider the Pentecostals and the African or independent churches as 'spiritual churches', and see little difference between them. These independent churches, continually increasing in number, to a large extent adopt the same forms of worship, the same style of dancing in church, the same songs, and the same locally made double bass to accompany singing. Both the Pentecostal and independent churches are a reaction against the cold, unemotional forms of western worship."[27]

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[24] Mr. K.K. Anti. Ghanaian Religions. Lecture at the University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, 24 September 2002.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Asempa Publishers, Christian Council of Ghana. The Rise of Independent Churches in Ghana. (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1990), 12).
[27] Ibid. p.10.

These new churches were a way of preserving Ghanaian forms of culture through art while remaining Christian. These new churches also had an element of African nationalism.[28] In trying to stay true to their new beliefs, these new members still wanted to hold true to the worshipping practices that were characteristic of African culture. There was acceptance of this new Western mode of worshipping, but the independent churches were also set up as a backlash against the spread of western culture. These new churches looked to elevate traditional music and dance as important aspects of worship. In doing so, they were also elevating and preserving Ghanaian culture. Traditional music and dance was declared as unbarbaric and in the same reasoning African culture was being declared unbarbaric. By holding true the arts of music and dance the independent African churches would serve as an example for smaller movements that sought to fight against the spread of Western culture and re-affirm the legitimacy of traditional Ghanaian culture.

The establishment of music and dance in Ghana's educational curriculum is another step towards preserving culture among the country's youth. By including music and dance in the national curriculum it was the direct aim of the country's educational leaders to instill a sense of pride in the nation's arts. The Teaching syllabus for Music and Dance, Primary 1-6 states the following aims,

> **"Rationale for Teaching Music and Dance**
> The Arts, including Music and Dance, have played significant roles in society throughout history by providing pleasure, enjoyment and self-esteem. They form an essential part of **rituals, festival religion, social activities,** and **entertainment.** They provide outlets for creative expression and help to reinforce social identity and solidarity. There is evidence that the arts have the capacity for refining human feelings and have therefore been used for therapeutic purposes in both literate and non-literate cultures. They arts involve **composition** and **performance**, that is, creation and presentation. Composition and performance help to enhance the creative abilities and aesthetic sensitivities of individuals.
>
> Through Music, Dance and Drama children's capacity and potential for creative expression is more readily manifested. A good educational programme in Music and Dance hence provides pupils with greater opportunities and experiences for developing their creative skills.
>
> **General Aims**
> This syllabus is designed to help pupils to:
> 1. contribute to national artistic excellence

[28] Ibid. p.19.

2. develop the desire to participate in the Performing Arts with imagination
3. develop initiative and understanding in creativity, in the Performing arts, and in other artistic act ivies
4. perceive and enjoy the expressive qualities of Music, Dance and Drama through critical listening and observation, improvisation, composition, performance and appreciation."[29]

The national syllabus points directly to the means of music and dance as a source of cultural pride. By including music and dance in the national curriculum, educators have made culture through art a national priority. A. Babs Fafunwa writes in his book, New Perspective in African Education, "Art and music touch the spirit and the soul of the child and African art and music form the focus of African culture."[30] In the opinion of Fafunwa, without orientation towards African art and culture many kids will be left to only know European art form that don't speak directly to the history of their people.[31] Even though formal education in Ghana is the product of British colonial rule, the inclusion of Ghanaian music and dance has added an element of Africaness to the educational consciousness. The class' inclusion addresses the concern of instilling pride in Ghana's youth while trying to take a Western approach to education. In the end children in Ghana will grow to include a more well rounded approach to their place in the world and not be purely European centered. Also this increased consciousness will drive African art to be internationally recognized as valid art.

Beyond the primary level, music and dance have been included in government initiatives to create a patriotic, nationalistic consciousness. I have previously mentioned that the establishment of independent African churches had an element of African nationalism. During the transition period between British colonial rule and Ghana's independence,

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[29] Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service. The Teaching Syllabus for Music and Dance. (Accra: Ministry of Education, Republic of Ghana, 1999).i.

[30] A. Babs Fafunwa, New Perspective in African Education, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Limited, 1967), 74-75.

[31] Ibid. p.53.

Kwame Nkrumah and the new independent government employed the same culture preserving tactics used by the independent African churches. The transition into independence saw the creation of the Institute of African Studies in 1963.[32] Here was a department at the University of Ghana, Legon that was devoted to preserving and developing African culture. The introduction of the new department also meant the inclusion of performing arts as an aspect of studying African culture. The art aspect of the institute meant art was prioritized as a means towards national unity and pride at the opening of the Institute of African Studies Kwame Nkrumah addressed the audience with the following words:

> "An Institute of African Studies that is situated in Africa must pay particular attention to the Arts of Africa, for the study of these can enhance our understanding of African institutions and values, and cultural bonds that unite us…in this way the Institute can serve the needs of the people by helping to develop new forms of dance and drama, of music and creative writing, that are at the same time closely related to our Ghanaian traditions and express the ideas and aspirations of our people at this critical stage in our history. This should lead to new strides in our cultural development.[33]

Ghana's leaders were directly using Art as an avenue towards complete independence from Britain while strengthening the moral of Ghana's citizens. It was the validation of Africa's diverse cultures through Art that would give the newly independent African countries a voice on the international stage. The Institution of African Studies would also give rise to the Ghana Dance Ensemble and the National Dance Company. These dance companies were/are directly employed to take traditional dance and drumming from the village setting and present it on the stage. The groups are given new meaning to the arts while preserving the sacred aspects of the art forms. As the director of the National Dance Company, F. Nii-Yartey states, ""[You] must go back in order to go forward."[34] Inclusion of the Arts in the national consciousness do exactly that, they take elements from the past in order to create a more complete picture of the modern Ghanaian.[35] Thus the preservation of culture in opposition to western culture began with the establishment of independent African churches, continued through Ghana's quest for independence and has found its way into the minds of Ghana's youth through the national curriculum.

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[32] Institute of African Studies: Commissioning of I.A.S. New Building Programme. (Legon: Institute of African Studies.
[33] Ibid. p.25-26.
[34] Director F. Nii-Yartey of the National Dance Company, interview by author, 13 November 2002, Accra, possession of author.

SECTION 3: THE PURPOSE OF TRADITIONAL DANCE IN MODERN-DAY GHANA

The National Dance Company, located in the National Theatre in Accra, serves as a prime example of where dance is headed in Ghana. When formed the National Dance Company was charged with, "preserving promoting, and the development" of traditional dance in Ghana.[36] Currently, the National Dance Company is moving towards the development stage of promoting traditional dance in Ghana. In their development, a more integrated approach to dance is being taken to better represent the modern-day Ghanaian. This means not just performing traditional dances in their traditional context. Traditional dance must now use newer, edgier performance mediums to relate to its younger audience. There is a need to include younger Ghanaians to fully appreciate a diverse picture of what it means to be Ghanaian. This entails examining the eating habits, language, dress, etc. of the upcoming generations.[37] Also, adapting the traditional dances to a more modern context involves changing the dances to fit the social values of younger Ghanaians. The changing of social values has mainly been expressed in dances by switching the gender roles within the dances. As I pointed out earlier, Adzewa is a historically female dance but men are now given roles within the dance to expand its scope. In the same light, females are now being used as drummers, a role historically reserved for men.[38] Dance is slowly emerging as a changing art form to better serve a generation who does not think like their predecessors. On the other hand, it is not to say that traditional dance companies have abandoned the long-established importance of traditional dance. As F. Nii-Yartey believes, "The performance styles will change and the dances of today will become the dances of tomorrow but there will change be elements of Africanity imbedded in them." [39] These companies are giving the younger generations a more complete view of who they are, where they come from, and a foundation for where they are going.

The changing purpose of traditional dance has a complicated journey ahead. In trying to gain a more complete view of a young, modern Ghanaian there must be special care taken not to stray too far from the roots of the traditional dances. Many times in trying to gain

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Dance Abu Osman at Agoro Dance Company, interview by author. 25 November 2002, Cape Coast. Possession of author.
[39] Director F. Nii-Yartey of the National Dance Company, interview by author. 13 November 2002, Accra, possession of author.

international recognition there can be a quick dismissal of everything African and a blind acceptance of everything western. Especially since traditional dance has adopted the Western-based stage as their medium for delivery, there could be switching of values for what makes a good dance or dancer. As A.M. Opoku so eloquently puts it, "For effective communication facial express must be natural indications of the dancers' feelings. The ballerina's stylized smile does not convince us."[40] Ghanaians should not abandon what they find aesthetically pleasing in order to cater to a Western audience. The need for diverse views and desires should always be there and not be sacrificed for the sake of recognition. Also in my inquiries I found that what makes a person a good dancer in Ghana does not necessarily apply to western-based forms of dance. For instance in the United States what makes a good ballerina is their technical abilities and a small, non-voluptuous body type.[41] When asked what makes a good dancer in Ghana I was given the following answers:

- discipline
- commitment to dancing
- trained body[42]
- sincerity
- commitment
- discipline[43]
- understanding of a diverse range of dances
- good facial expressions
- intelligence[44]

All of these characteristics add to a more Ghanaian specific set of values. Overall, there is a need to claim the values within Ghanaian traditional dance while forging the perfect balance between the Ghanaian of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

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[40] A.M. Opoku. African Dances. (Legon: The Institute of African Studies, 1965).
[41] Personal observation.
[42] Dancer Baby Quaye at the University of Ghana, Legon, interview by author, 12 November 2002, Accra, possession of author.
[43] Director F. Nii-Yartey of the National Dance Company, interview by author, 13 November 2002, Accra, possession of author.
[44] Dancer Abu Osman at Agoro Dance Company, interview by author, 25 November 2002, Cape Coast, possession of author.

CONCLUSION

As I have demonstrated in the last two sections dance can serve as both a preserver of culture and representative of past and present Ghanaians. Dance has lasted the test of time to emerge as a constant facet of Ghanaian culture. Aside from the standard traditional dances, Hip life and Gospel dance are soon becoming prospective dance forms that better represent the younger people in Ghana. Hopefully in the future these dance forms can also achieve the same respectability of traditional dance in Ghana and help to give a more rounded picture of the world of present day Ghana. However, dance can and should go beyond the assertion of Ghanaian cultural values. Dance can be used as a way to bring people together across cultural lines, the modern purpose of traditional dance in Ghana does not have to be the affirmation of African values in opposition to western values. This power struggle can have a negative connotation and only hurt dance in the long run. Many times traditional African dances were made to bring people together and express a sense of joy. By using dance only as a tool for gaining power the fun and joy in dance could be lost. Instead, dance like other art forms can be used as a point of recognition. Previously in other works I have written about the usage of Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade tourism as a way to build alliance between African and Africans in the Diaspora.[45] This is new emerging industry that is utilizing 2-D and 3-D art to teach people about their history. In particular some of the sights are tailored to receiving and apologizing the Africans in the Diaspora for their participation of Africans in the slave trade. These gestures are all made in an effort to heal and build a worldwide community of Africans.[46] In all, with the use of art to bring people together there are no reasons that dance cannot achieve the same ends. As A.M. Opoku writes, "The African who is not dance-conscious is a rarity."[47] Thus, we as a people should take this unifying quality and use it to our disposal. Dance is assertive, unifying and fun all in the same instant.

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[45] Kani Romain. "African Art As a Way to Reconciliation". Part of the class African Diaspora Studies, School for International Training, Cape Coast, Ghana. 29 October 2002.
[46] Ibid.
[47] A.M. Opoku, African Dances. (Legon: The Institute of African Studies, 1965).

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APPENDIX 1:

BAMAYA

1st Step:

- step – together – step – hop turn (hop with non-leading leg)
- body turns over the leading leg
- fanning with the right hand continuous

2nd Step:

- step – together – step – hop repeat step leading with the leg that has been lifted for the hop)
- body still turned over the leading leg for each step-together

3rd Step:

- step – together –step – together (always in the same direction, leading over the right leg)
- right hand is still fanning from the first step
- body leans over the moving leg (body turns on axis but now the moving leg is not always the leading leg)

4th Step:

- OOOOO…jump (legs parallel together) – right leg back-left leg back
- Body rotated back towards the leg that is being kicked out
- Facing back of person in-front of you

5th Step:

- kick – ball – change (small kick-right foot leads, don't alternate which foot starts)
- face inside of the circle

APPENDIX 2:

KPATSA

1st Step:

- heel – toe – step (start right foot, repeat left)
- arms (same arm as leg): hand out (at hip level) – hand hip-hand out

2nd Step:

- right foot arched, left leg straight …repeat with left leg arched
- arms (same arm as leg): right arm straight forward (eye level), left arm forward (chest level) …repeat left

3rd Step:

- step right-step left …
- arms (same arm as leg): arm bent at waist, presenting motion…
- look right-look left…

4th Step: facing partner, going opposite directions

- second position, knees bent
- arms (start right): swing down-up-hit fingers…repeat other side
- hips move side to side with arms

5th Step:

- three stomps same side (start right)…repeat left
- arms (same arm as leg): three claps…repeat left

6th Step: in partners while everyone else is doing the 5th

- kneel
- arms: point me-point you-pointer fingers hit…repeat (point with right pointer finger)

7th Step: other partners are still doing the 5th step

- repeat 3rd step
- exit to line while doing this step

8th Step:

- run-run-jump plie (legs in first position parallel, pelvis forward, greeting partners on each side) …repeat to other partner
- arms: run-run-down in first position (hands curved at hips)

9th Step:

- run-run-grab right hand of partner-hit left shoulder twice…repeat with other partner

10th Step:

- repeat 8th step
- step in done facing in then out of the circle (repeat) instead of to partner

11th Step: song sung during this step

- kneel in circle
- arms linked with other dancers

12th Step:

- heel-toe-heel-toe…(repeat move as you shuffle along the floor, only the right foot)
- arms: arms out presenting (arms bent at waist) –arms in-arms out

SONG:

(LANGUAGE – FANTE)

LYRICS:

Naki lee Naki lee
Mbi Naki lee dzendzoo

Naki lee Naki lee
Mbi Naki lee dzendzoo
Naki lee dzendzoo (2x)

- repeat the first stanza
- each stanza is called and ooh and then responded to by the chorus.

TRANSLATION:

If the people don't like you,

They don't appreciate

What you do.

APPENDIX 3:

ADZEWA

1st Step:

- step right – touch left, step left-touch right …repeat
- arms: arms circle around each other (waist level

2nd Step: bow

- kick right (right foot flexed) – grand plie (first position parallel…3 times (same side)
- arms: arms at side – first position (arms straight out in front of you).

3rd Step:

- kick out right foot (toot flexed, left supporting leg bent) – bring in right foot plie (first position parallel) – relive (first position parallel).
- Arms: right arm bent (parallel to face, vertical), left arm bent (perpendicular to right arm, parallel to the floor) – arms at side-arms out in birdlike fashion.

4th Step:

- feet shuffle (right, left…in first position parallel, about 8 counts in each direction)…four times.
- Arms: (keeping time, improvisation)

5th Step:

- 1st step repeated

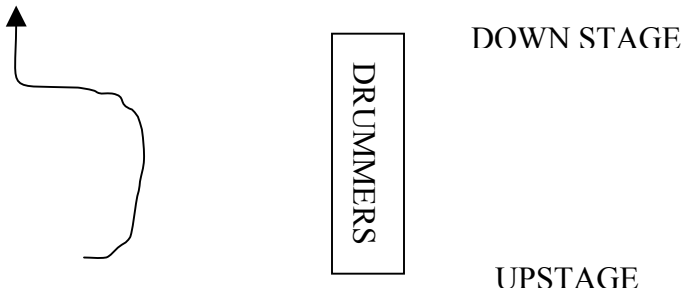
6th Step:

- kick ground with heel (left) – lift right…repeat same feet…eight times
- arms: arm (front (left) – arm back (left) …repeat
- bow to drummer after the last step

STAGE POSITION:

1st step:

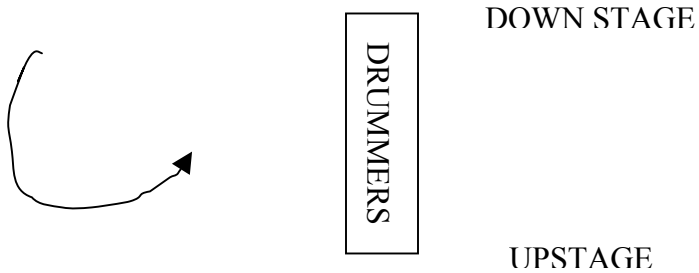
- enter upstage left, face audience the whole time.



2nd, 3rd, and 4th step: all facing the audience

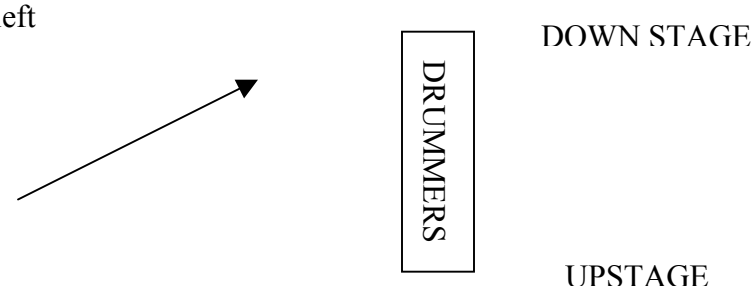
5th step:

- move upstage right
- face drummers while moving slightly left stage



6th step:

- Move downstage left towards the drummers where you will end the dance
- Exit upstage left



APPENDIX 4:

TOKPE

1st Step:

- run (right) – run (left) – jump stop
- arms: run-run-clap (2x)

2nd Step: facing the drummers

- pulse
- arms: arms relaxed at sides

3rd Step: facing the audience

- repeat 1st step

4th Step:

- pulse
- arms: arm out in front of you (right) – hand to heart (right)-arm out in front of you(left)-hand to heart(left)

5th Step:

- pulse down to crouched position(right leg out towards the audience)-pulse standing centered-pulse down in crouched position(left leg out towards the audience)-pulse standing centered…repeat to the right and left sides
- arms: arms pulse out-pulse at sides…repeat

6th Step:

- slap-shake(upper and lower body in opposition)

7th Step: 3times

- walk right-left-right-tap(3 times…right)-half turn(around right shoulder)

8th Step:

- walk three steps forward(start right foot)

9th Step:

- right tap-tap-tap-left tap-tap-tap…repeat
- arms: pulse over tapping leg(bent at the elbows and parallel to the floor)

10th Step:

- repeat 6th step

11th Step:

- in grand plie (face audience then partner – women)

- arms: clap-clap-clap-wave bye-bye…repeat

12th Step: song

- women continue in grand plie-men are standing with hand on the women's heads

13th Step:

- 9th step repeated (moving around in a circle)

14th Step:

- up (right)-step(right)-step(left)-step(right)-up(left)-step(left)-step(right)-step(left)…repeat
- arms: up(right)-twist(left)-twist(right)-twist(left)-up(left)-twist(right)-twist(left)-twist (right)…repeat

15th Step:

- 9th step repeated

16th Step:

- 6th step repeated

17th Step:

- 9th step repeated

18th Step:

- 11th step repeated
- step one twice to each person next to you in the circle

19th Step:

- 9th step repeated

20th Step:

- 6th step repeated

21st Step:

- left leg bent, right leg straight, body hunched over step, body straightens out-right leg bent, left leg straight, body hunched over…repeat
- arms: arms stretched out to the centre of the circle-step-left hand to heart, right arm stretched out to outside of circle…repeat

SONG:

(LANGUAGE – EWE)

LYRICS:

Ah denma Kode
Yesu be-tom-a bɛdayo } 2 x

Ah denma Kodɛ

Yesu be-ton-a bɛdayo

Ah denma Kodɛ

Yesu be ton-a bɛdayo

TRANSLATION: By Emmanuel Akotu

That is how it is,

God has been yesterday, today, and tomorrow

He will be the same.