

Creative Composition and the Indigenous Knowledge System in Ghana: Models from the Life and Compositions of Nana Afua Abasa

Timothy E. Andoh¹ & Joshua A. Amuah²

Abstract

This paper discusses the life and works of a Ghanaian traditional composer, Nana Afua Abasa. The musical type that she engaged in became so popular that there was a proliferation of musical groups performing them – *nwonkorɔ* songs. Through participant observation and interviews with leaders and members of performing groups, the authors seek to unravel the life and works of Nana Afua Abasa, a creative composer who, however, is virtually not known by many Ghanaians, even though she is synonymous with her type of music. The paper notes the increasing attention indigenous knowledge has received in discourse in academia, and points out that even though there is much discussion going on about indigenous knowledge; such discussion has not led to a reciprocal understanding of the concept of indigenous knowledge. It is therefore necessary to focus on the life and works of this Ghanaian traditional creative composer Nana Afua Abasa to encourage up and coming composers to study and adapt traditional music for the modern audience.

Keywords: *nwonkorɔ* songs, indigenous knowledge systems, traditional, Ghanaian, creative processes, compositions

Introduction

This paper is about a Ghanaian traditional composer, Nana Afua Abasa, her music and style of composition. This has been the focus of attention for many years in Ghanaian traditional and neo-traditional music circles.

¹ Department of Music, School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon.
Email: teandoh@ug.edu.gh, teandoh@gmail.com, Tel: 0244283503

² PhD, School of Performing Arts, Department of Music, University of Ghana, Legon.
Email: jamuah@ug.edu.gh, joshuaamuah@yahoo.com, Tel: 0208590221, 0240207400

Nana Afua Abasa was, until her death in 2002, the *NnwonkorɔHemaa*³ a title bestowed on her by the late Asantehene, Nana Opoku Ware II⁴ in 1989, for her efforts at making *nnwonkorɔ* music popular. Coming from a background where Nana Afua Abasa did not benefit from formal education, she relied on local knowledge, or what may be termed indigenous knowledge, for her education, her wit, her store of knowledge. She became very well versed in the wisdom of her traditional cultures, and made use of this knowledge in her creative composition processes.

The paper is structured in six sections. In the first section, the paper discusses Indigenous Knowledge Systems from varied perspectives and provides the characteristics in detail. The second section presents a short biography of Nana Afua Abasa whilst the third segment portrays in brief, the musical type Nana Afua Abasa engages herself in. In the sections that follow these, the styles of compositions, as well as the creative processes of Nana Afua Abasa are examined followed by the conclusions of the paper.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and their Characteristics

Indigenous knowledge has been examined from many different perspectives depending on who is looking at it and for what purposes. Some have defined indigenous knowledge (IK) as local knowledge, that is, knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. It is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural-resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities (Warren, Fujisaka, & Prain, 1991). The last part of this definition '... a host of other activities in rural communities', brings into focus such creative activities as music making, art, carving, weaving, sculpturing and other art forms. Flavier et al. (Flavier, Jesus, Navarro, & Warren, 1995:479) have also suggested that 'indigenous knowledge is the information base for a society which facilitates decision-making', further suggesting that 'indigenous information systems are dynamic, and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems.' But the question that arises is, what do we mean by 'indigenous'? Those to whom the term 'indigenous' is attributed must be indigenous people. In the same vein, that which is referred to as 'indigenous' must be indigenous whether it music, dance, art, and the like.

³Queen of *Nnwonkorɔ*

⁴Otumfuo Opoku Ware II was the fifteenth King of Asante, 1970-1999

Immediately there arise terminological difficulties because it is impossible to use indigenous in any morally neutral way, neither can anyone use it in an apolitical way. From a political point of view, people identify themselves as indigenous to establish rights and to protect their interests; Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are established to support them, and government departments to administer them. From a traditional and cultural point of view, it is the creative arts of the people which are looked at as indigenous, passing from one generation to the other by oral means. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) played a leading role in the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in October 2003, after many years of research undertaken by that United Nations (UN) body on the functions and values of cultural expressions and practices, the indigenous knowledge of the people. The many years of research opened the door to new approaches to the understanding, protection and respect of the cultural heritage of humanity, a living heritage, also known as intangible heritage of mankind, or indigenous knowledge. This intangible heritage, or indigenous knowledge, provides each bearer of such expressions a sense of identity and continuity, insofar as he or she takes ownership of them and constantly recreates them. In the light of the above, the following are some characteristics of indigenous knowledge systems:

First, indigenous knowledge is local knowledge, and it is rooted to a particular place and set of experiences, and generated by people living in those places (Domfe, 2007; Mapira & Mazambara, 2013). Second, it is orally transmitted, or transmitted through imitation and demonstration. Third, indigenous knowledge is the consequence of practical engagement in everyday life, and is constantly reinforced by experience and trial and error. This experience is characteristically the product of many generations of intelligent reasoning, and since its failure has immediate consequences for the lives of its practitioners its success is very often a good measure of Darwinian fitness. It is, as Hunn neatly puts it (Hunn, 1993: 13), 'tested in the rigorous laboratory of survival'.

In the first instance, repetition is a defining characteristic of tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), even when new knowledge is added. Repetition aids retention and reinforces ideas. Nana Abasa reinforced this characteristic by asserting that when the idea for a new composition came to her she repeated it several times to herself before teaching it to the members of their groups.

The group members repeated the new song several times until they knew it very well. To complement this Agordoh asserts that repetition is a feature which is inherent in African traditional music citing Amu as repetitive, repeating the same word, phrase or sentence several times, which is an essential part of traditional African music (Agorgoh, 2004:110). Agawu reinforces the same issue on repetition thus:

Order emanates from repetition, and [it] is from doing the “same thing” over and over again that the Northern Ewe find meaning in life. Ritual orders both “life” and “art.” Repetition gives Northern Ewes assurance of the known and the familiar, enables them to take stock of what has been achieved, and provides a forum for creative interpretation and reinterpretation of culture (Agawu, 1995:23).

Secondly, although indigenous knowledge may be focused on particular individuals and may achieve a degree of coherence in rituals and other symbolic constructs, its distribution is always fragmentary: it does not exist in its totality in any one place or individual. Indeed, to a considerable extent it is devolved not in individuals at all, but in the practices and interactions in which people engage (Warren, Fujisaka, & Prain, 1991).

It is based on these characteristics that the life of a traditional musician will be thrown into sharp focus. Nana Afua Abasa in her traditional way of life and thinking, her mode of composing, her style and usage of local materials and language her life and the activities she engages in depict many of the characteristics of indigenosity. The next sections of the paper will be devoted to the life of Nana Afua Abasa. The materials on the life of Nana Afua Abasa are drawn from two main sources: Kwasi Ampene's *Female Song Tradition and the Akan of Ghana: The Creative Process in Nnwonkorɔ* (Ampene, 2005) and interviews with *nwonkorɔ* song groups.

A Short Biography of Nana Afua Abasa (1916-2002)

Nana Afua Abasa was born at about the year 1916 at Kankyire⁵. Her father, Ado Kwaago, was an executioner at the Asantehene's palace while her mother was a market trader dealing in foodstuffs. Nana Abasa recalls that her father played the *seprewa* to accompany himself in his favourite songs including *Yerekrukru, yerekrakra* (We are running helter-skelter).

⁵a village near Kumasi

Nana Abasa later in her life and musical activities, especially in her *nnwonkorɔ* performances, recomposed this song for various occasions, in what she almost singlehandedly made very popular as a music type – *nnwonkorɔ*.

The origins of *nnwonkorɔ* lie in the spontaneous performances occurring on moonlit nights when all age groups in Akan communities come out to play. It was during such times that two or three elderly women would initiate *nnwonkorɔ* performance by singing or playing a musical game and in no time, more women would join (Ampene, 2005). At other times, they would initiate *nnwonkorɔ* performance by going round houses with songs, calling friends to come out for a musical game. Nana Abasa recalled that she followed her mother to *nnwonkorɔ* performances while very young, holding on to the end of her mother's cloth, and ended up staying late into the night with the women's group. According to her, when an audience, composed mostly of men, gathered round to listen to the performance, the women usually sang praise songs addressed to the men to acknowledge their presence. The men on their part would acknowledge this gesture with monetary gifts. The money collected would be used to buy salt and shared among those who took part in the musical games.

Nana Abasa did not go to school and thus she is virtually not literate, in other words she did not receive formal education, even though her uncle on her father's side was the first to open a modern private school at Kankyire, and she could well have been enrolled in that school. The reason she did not receive any formal education is that her father refused to send her to school because he did not want her to be whipped by school teachers, (indicating perhaps the love that he had for her). Before age fifteen we can assume that Nana Abasa busied herself learning from the court environment, from her home environment, and from her father and mother, immersing herself in the local knowledge of her people. In 1930, Nana AfuaAbasa moved to Kumasi to live with her cousin Kwame Boakye who was *ɔkyerɛmɔ*⁶. Kwame Boakye's wife, Ama Sɛewaa Nsia, was an accomplished singer and organized evening sing song sessions in her compound with her friends and peers.

Nana Abasa's musical talent as a singer was evident in her early teens, for at age fourteen she was a more accomplished singer and dancer than her peers.

⁶court drummer/linguist at the Asantehene's court

She was also a very good narrator of *anansesem*⁷ for as a teen ager she competed with friends in storytelling, always relating a new and fresh set of stories each day for a week. Story telling sessions always go with singing and so when Kwame Boakye's wife⁸ discovered Nana Abasa's talent for singing, she often invited her to take part in the evening sing song sessions, and she performed to the admiration of the entire household.

These evening sing song sessions went on until early 1944 when one Mr. Yeboa, a radio host at the new colonial radio station in Kumasi, approached Kwame Boakye for assistance in locating someone or a group who could sing traditional songs and poetry, and narrate *anansesem* for their programmes in Akan. Kwame Boakye did not look far, and introduced Mr Yeboa to Ama Sɛewaa Nsia and Nana Abasa who agreed to sing songs for the radio programme. In addition to the songs Nana Abasa agreed to narrate *anansesem* for weekly broadcasts. The programme featuring Akan songs and *anansesem* became very popular in Kumasi and surrounding areas, creating a demand for new songs. Nana Abasa was able to remember some of the *nnwonkorɔ* songs her mother and her friends performed in the old days, and fortunately, Kwame Boakye was sufficiently well educated to be able to write down the text of all these songs. According to Nana Abasa, sometimes she was able to recall only a few lines of a song and with the input of Kwame Boakye she composed additional lines to make the song complete. Kwame Boakye also provided Nana Abasa with several texts from *ayan*⁹ and together they composed new songs that were added to the *nnwonkorɔ* repertory. On her part Nana Abasa included stock expressions from other verbal art forms including *nsui* (cries), *ose* (jubilation chants), *ɛbebuo* (proverbs), *amodin* (praise singing), Ananse stories, and *nsaguo* (libation)(Ampene, 2005).

Nana Abasa and SɛewaaNsia were soon joined by Yaa Serowanya¹⁰ Yaa Baayie and Akosua Ebuaa. These five women met with Kwame Boakye, BoakyeDankwa (Abasa's brother) and Yaw Banahene (Abasa's uncle) in 1944 to formally constitute a group. They chose the name *Tete Nnwonkrɔ* and decided to rehearse every Tuesday evening.

⁷story telling sessions

⁸AmaSɛewaaNsia,

⁹drum appellations/drum poetry

¹⁰Abasa's elder sister

The name 'tete' is suggestive of going back to the past, their roots ('tete' – ancient; the ancient time) for inspiration for their song compositions. This may be the first major attempt by any traditional performing group to formerly come together.

The exploits of Nana Abasa and the *Tete Nnwonkorɔ* group generated a lot of excitement in other communities to the extent that by the early to mid-1950s there were a number of *nnwonkorɔ* groups to warrant a competition among them (Nketia 1963 and 1973). Surely, the performances by Nana Abasa and her group on the colonial broadcasting station in Kumasi was the prime factor for the formation of these many *nnwonkorɔ* groups.

Nana Abasa's eloquent display of cultural knowledge, demonstrated by her incorporation into *nnwonkorɔ* of the rhetoric of other Akan verbal arts in performance, won her local, national, and international recognition. She performed at major international festivals including the World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1977, and the African Music Village in London in 1984. At home, Nana Abasa was the recipient of several national awards, including that of the Entertainment Critics and Reviewers' Association of Ghana (ECRAG) award in 1987; she was also crowned queen of *nnwonkorɔ* and given the Asanteman Award by the late Asante King, Otumfoɔ Nana Opoku Ware II in 1989. In 1995, she received both the Bishop's Award from the Catholic Diocese of Kumasi and an award from the Musicians Union of Ghana.

NNWONKORɔ

Nnwonkorɔ is a female song/dance tradition which is confined to adult Akan women in Ghana who in the past sang to entertain themselves at night when the moon was bright in the night sky. In more recent times what was once the private musings of women (performed at night) have become a means to public expression of various local and national sentiments (see Ampene, 2005). It is seen as part of public celebrations both for mourning and for rejoicing. The contributions and innovations that Nana Afua Abasa brought into *nnwonkorɔ* will be highlighted in subsequent sections.

Secondly, Nana Abasa had a fruitful childhood, going with her mother to their evening sing song sessions, and 'learning' from her father the songs he sung in accompaniment to his playing of the *seperewa*¹¹.

It is also seen that in her early teens she moved to Kumasi to live with her cousin who also was instrumental in her becoming virtually known as a narrator of *anasesim* and a traditional composer-singer.

Again, Nana Afua Abasa had opportunity, as a child, to experience the music of her parents. Her father was a *seperewa* player, while her mother was perhaps the initiator of her peers' evening sing song activities. Nana Afua Abasa must have absorbed these musical activities to her greater advantage, using them in her own later musical activities. Even though she did not receive formal education, she had the advantage of indigenous knowledge passed down to her through total immersion and absorption.

Nana Afua Abasa had the benefit of staying with her cousin who was a court linguist, a very knowledgeable person in the court of a king, and therefore, had a rich store of wise sayings, proverbs, idiomatic expressions and drum appellations. Nana Afua Abasa certainly benefitted from such rich store of knowledge and helped sharpen her wit and store of verbal expressions which she used in her songs.

For Nana Abasa, it was possible for her to recompose, to add on to her compositions, new texts to reflect the issues she composed for. For, such systems (the indigenous knowledge systems) do innovate from within and also internalize, use, and adapt external knowledge to suit the local situation.

Style of Composition

The creative processes of Nana Afua Abasa reflect a certain reality of life that the vitality of a song tradition depends on its ability to relate to what goes on in the community and the world at large. It is suggestive therefore that 'if a song tradition does not express the experience of contemporary situations or events, interest in that particular song tradition will be lost' (Ampene, 2005).

¹¹A traditional string instrument

This explains the virtual demise of such music traditions as *akosuatuntum*, *asonko*, and *adakam*, to mention a few. Nana Afua Abasa was aware of this and therefore adapted her compositions to present situations.

A few examples from the repertoire of Nana Afua Abasa will help throw a little more light.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Nana Afua Abasa participated in two very important world cultural events – the World Black Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in Lagos Nigeria, and the African Music Village in London, respectively. These two high profile engagements helped catapult Nana Abasa to international fame to the extent that her services as a traditional composer of merit were needed both by local and international bodies. The Roman Catholic Church, Kumasi Diocese, commissioned her to form a group to sing *nnwonkorɔ* songs for worship, using biblical text adaptations. The following are a few examples:

Monhwɛ sɛɛ mmayɛ
Ehunuusɛ Yesu
Awerɛhɔ a ɛtesɛɛ,
Sɛdɛmɔgyaɛteneyi,
Na afa ne honam nyinaa,
Na mmɔborɔhunukaawɔn,
Ma wɔsuudabia
 Na Yesu kasa kyerɛɛ wɔnsɛ:
 Yerusalem mmaa e,
 Mma monsu mmame
 Na monsu mma moho,
 ɛne momma nom nyinaa,
 Me nuanom.

Yɛmawodamirifa
Damirifa due o
Yesu e,
Yɛ ma wodamirifa,
ɛnamyɛbɔne a yɛ ayɛ nti,
ɛnontina wo anyaawuo.

When the women
 Saw Jesus,
 They were filled with sorrow,
 How blood flowed freely
 All over Jesus,
 They were filled with pity,
 And they began to wail,
 And Jesus said unto them,
 Women of Jerusalem,
 Do not cry for me
 But cry for yourselves,
 And your children,
 My brothers and sisters

We offer condolences
Condolences
Jesus ee
We offer condolences
It is because of our sins,
That is why you died.

The next example is an adaptation of *nnwonkorɔ* song to declare Jesus as the son of the Virgin Mary and also to show Him as the son of God:

<i>Mary ba Yesunie,</i>	This is Mary's son Jesus,
<i>Mary ba Yesunie,</i>	This is Mary's son Jesus,
<i>εye Krɔnkrɔn,</i>	He is Holy
<i>εye Nyame ne ba e,</i>	He is the son of God.
<i>Mary ba Yesu Krɔnkrɔn,</i>	Mary's son Jesus, the Holy One,
<i>Awurade e,</i>	God,
<i>Yedi Woakyi a,</i>	If we follow you,
<i>Ye benyankwa.</i>	We will have life.

Nana Afua Abasa was also approached by the Road Safety Commission to help in educating the public, especially commercial drivers to drive safely, making use of some of the mannerisms of drivers on the road:

<i>Yee!</i>	Yee!
<i>Monhwɛyie adrɔbafɔɔ e,</i>	Be careful, drivers,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
<i>Adrɔbafɔɔ e,</i>	Drivers e,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
<i>Ye pa mokyɛw,</i>	We beg of you,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
<i>Yɛsrɛmo o,</i>	We entreat you o,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Br careful.</i>
<i>Bronya aba,</i>	Christmas is approaching,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
<i>Easter aba,</i>	Easter is approaching,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
<i>Nkrɔrɔfɔɔ mma,</i>	People's children,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
<i>Nkanka nkurasefɔɔyi,</i>	Especially the rural folks,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
<i>ɔɔkɔdwa aba,</i>	They are going to the market,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
<i>Wɔankɔamma o,</i>	They did not get back,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
<i>Yɛkwanyi nyɛ,</i>	Our roads are in bad shape,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
<i>Ayɛmfuturukwan,</i>	They are dusty,

<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
Ayɛmmonkyimɔnka,	They are full of potholes,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
Woahyia wo nua,	You meet your fellow driver,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
Woashow light e,	You flash your light,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
Wo se ɔkwan mu yɛ,	You say the road is clear,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
Apolisifoɔnnihɔ,	There are no policemen,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
Passengafɔɔguhɔ,	There are a lot of passengers,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
Entiwo pɛ ntɛm,	So you are rushing,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
Wo di amirika,	You are speeding,
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
Overload yi a,	This overload (of your vehicle),
<i>Monhwɛyie.</i>	<i>Be careful.</i>
Yaanommonhwɛyie aye e,	Be careful, my people,
Adɔɔbafɔɔ e,	Drivers e,
Yɛ pa mokyɛw,	We plead with you,
ɛyɛ a monhwɛyiepa.	You should be very careful.
<i>ɛyɛ a monhwɛyie o,</i>	<i>You should be very careful</i>
<i>Adɔɔbafɔɔ e,</i>	<i>Drivers e,</i>
<i>Yɛ pa mokyɛw,</i>	<i>We plead with you,</i>
<i>ɛyɛ a monhwɛyiepa.</i>	<i>You should be very careful.</i>

In this song example, notice how the singer-composer has used such expressions as “washowwo light” and *adrɔɔbafɔɔ e* (literally ‘you have shown your light’ and ‘drivers’) to heighten interest.

The UNESCO also commissioned her on occasions to help with their family planning and breast feeding campaigns. The following is one such song Nana AfuaAbasa composed and sung in connection with a health campaign mounted by the UNESCO to educate the public, especially pregnant women, to regularly see their doctors for checkups, and the virtues of breast feeding their babies:

*Abaatan a mowoo,
 Anuanom a mowoo,
 Abaatan a mowoo,
 Anuanom a mowo,
 Aduruyefoahweahunuse,
 obaa nyinsenfowohoyi,
 Ne gyanabrenye,
 Ntiohiakyerekyerε ne afotuo o.*
 counseling

*Abaatan a mowoo,
 Anuanom a mowoo,
 Abaatan a mowoo,
 Anuanom a mowoo,
 Aduruyefoahweahunu se,
 obaa nyinsenfowohoyi,
 Ne gyanabrenye,
 Ntiohiakyerekyerε ne afotuo o.*

*Wo nyinsen a
 Kayaresabea ma oduruyefoamfiwonhwe*

*Na hunuwobadae mu
 well and healthy
 Wonyinsen a
 Kayaresabea ma oduruyefoamfiwo nhwe
 you
 Na hunuwobadae mu
 and healthy
 Oduruyefoabemawoaduro
 Oduruyefoabhewo so yie
 you
 Na woawoafawohoafa wo ba o.*

*Oduruyefoabemawoaduro
 Oduruyefoabhewo so yie
 Na woawoafawohoafa wo ba o.
 harm.
 Wofri mu nsoso a,
 εwo se wo ma wo baaduanε pa,
 food,*

*Nursing mothers,
 Child-bearing women,
 Nursing mothers,
 Child-bearing women,
 Doctors have noticed that,
 A pregnant woman
 Is in a critical situation
 And so, needs advice and*

*Nursing mothers,
 Child-bearing women,
 Nursing mothers,
 Childbearing women,
 Doctors have noticed that,
 A pregnant woman
 Is in a critical situation
 And so needs advice and counseling.*

*When you get pregnant
 Go to a hospital for a doctor to
 examine you
 To make sure your baby is placed*

*When you get pregnant
 Go to a hospital for a doctor to examine
 you
 To make sure your baby is placed well*

*The doctor will give you medicine,
 The doctor will take good care of
 you
 And you will deliver safely, free
 from any harm.*

*The doctor will give you medicine,
 The doctor will take good care of you
 And you will deliver safely, free from any*

*After delivering safely,
 You must give your baby healthy*

<i>ɔdomankomaaduane,</i>	ɔdomankoma's food, the natural
food,	
<i>ɔbaa nufusuonayɛkayi,</i>	Is the breast milk we are referring
to,	to,
<i>ɔnonaahoɔdenwɔ mu</i>	It is the one which is full of energy
<i>ɔbɛma no anyini ntɛm ntɛm,</i>	It will make him grow fast,
<i>ɔbɛma no ahununyansa,</i>	It will make him intelligent,
<i>ɔbɛma no anyinifɛɛɛɛ.</i>	It will make him grow strong and
beautiful.	beautiful.

It is seen from the examples above that the traditional composer uses music as a form of communication, and that it embodies the experiences of the composer-performer. Composers reinforce in their compositions the fact that "indigenous knowledge is the consequence of practical engagement in everyday life activities".

The Creative Composition Process – Examples from Nana Afua Abasa

It is seen from the life of the Nana Afua Abasa that the creative process entails more than transforming text into song. The creative process involves the totality of the lifetime experiences of the composer.

Nana Afua Abasa composed for many different occasions, on each occasion composing or recomposing a song appropriate for it. Some of the occasions she composed for included the celebration of twenty-two years of Nana Otumfoɔ Opoku Ware II as the Asantehene. On that occasion she composed and sang the praise of the Asantehene, making use of set formulaic phrases:

<i>Yɛfiri Kumase Adu Ampoforo Antwi,</i>	We are from
	KumaseAduAmpɔforoAntwi,
<i>Yɛfiri Kumase Adu Ampoforo Antwi,</i>	We are from
	KumaseAduAmpɔforoAntwi,
<i>Yɛfiri Kumase Adu Ampoforo Antwi,</i>	We are from
	KumaseAduAmpɔforoAntwi,
<i>Amanfoɔ, yɛn mma no akwaaba.</i>	Let us bid him welcome.
<i>Opoku Ware aadiSantehene nana ne yɛn,</i>	Grandchildren of Opoku Ware
are we,	
<i>Osebuo aye!</i>	Osebuo aye (let us shout ose to
him)	him)

Kɔtɔkɔhenehenono, etwie a nabakɔnsɔɔ,
big arm
Nana woaba, ye ma woakwaabaebunu
welcome you,
Na ye sɛ Nyampaamawo
Kɔtɔkɔhene ye nmmɔ no oseaya, aye, aye e!
aye, aye!

Kɔtɔkɔhene, the leopard with the
big arm
Nana you have come, we
welcome you,
We ask God's blessings on you
Kɔtɔkɔhene, let us hail him, aye,

In this example the chorus only repeats a phrase from the soloist's rendition:

Ye ma woakwaaba o.

We welcome you o.

with variations to the response such as "Ose e!", "Mmm", and "Ye ma wo atenase o" (lit., we wish to be well seated/we wish you well).

On another occasion she composed and sang the following song, also to welcome the late Asantehene and to bid him well/to be well seated:

Nana e, Nana ee,
Ye mawoatenase o aye,
Nana Poku ye ma woatenase o aye,
Woanya a bedru,
Momma ye nna Nyame ase o aye
aye
Nana Poku, ye ma woatenaase o bɔkɔɔ.
softly.

Be well seated
Nana Poku, be well seated
He has arrived already,
Let us give thanks to God oo
Nana Poku, we bid you seated,

For Nana Abasa, the creative composition process includes the ability to recompose existing songs for the purposes they are intended. The following is part of another re-composition example of the *Yerekrukru, yerekrakra* song, also performed during activities marking twenty-two years of Nana Opoku Ware II becoming Asantehene:

Yerekrukru, yerekrakra,
Na yerekɔ no henenie?
Meseyerekrukru, yerekrakra,
skelter,
Yerekɔ Kumase Aduampɔforo Antwi

We are running helter, skelter,
But where are we going?
I say, we are running helter,
skelter,
We are going to
Kumase Aduampɔforo Antwi

Tare keɛɛaowiabɔɔ
 shines
Saa mere a Nana SeewaaAmpem
Atene abanhomasɔɔwɔapramo so,
 battle field
Adwoboteaseamabɔɔmtease
 peace,
ɔɔrepreko a makɔabedeɛ,
GyambibimframaaforoboɔAmpem,
 the rock,
Nana SeɛAmpemonie
Aman pinyin e,
YɛsrɛNyameama no o
Etwie a nabakɔn so o
Nana e yɛsrɛnyampaama no.
 on him.
Nana Poku Ware e,
Yɛsrɛnyampaama no o,
 oo,
ɔnonaɔmanwɔ no,
ɔmanwɔ no, naɔmanwɔ no
Me wuranaɔmanwɔ no,
 him,
ɔɔreprekona man apenenɔɔ,
 responds to him,
ɔman pinyin e,
YɛsrɛNyameama no o
 oo
Etwiean'abakɔn so o.
Aman pinyin e,
YɛsrɛNyameama no o
Etwie a n'abakɔn so o

The big lake on which the sun
 shines
 As Nana Seewaa Ampem
 Sits on leather skin in on the
 Adwobo lives and there is
 His single move brings victory,
 Gyambib the wind, has climbed
 Nana SeɛAmpem, there he is.
Head of the nation ee,
We ask God's blessings on you oo
The leopard with the big arm
 Nana, we ask God's blessings
 Nana Opoku Ware ee,
 We ask God's blessing on him
 For him the nation belongs,
 Belongs to him, belongs to him,
 My lord, the nation belongs to
 He rises, and the nation
 Head of the nation ee,
 We ask God's blessings on you
 The leopard with the big arm
Head of the nation ee,
We ask God's blessings on you oo
The leopard with the big arm

The ability to incorporate in the text of the composed song formulaic phrases is paramount in the indigenous knowledge process, and these help to enhance the quality of the song, and to bring it closer to the hearers and to those the songs are intended.

In this particular case note the use of the phrase *Etwie a n'bakɔn so o* (The leopard with the big arm), *Tare kɛsɛɛ aowiabɔsɔɔ* (The big lake on which the sun shines) and *Gyambibi mframa aforobɔɔ Ampem* (Gyambibi the wind has climbed the rock, Ampem), all epithets/appellations to praise the king and endear him to his people.

Conclusion

In this paper we have discussed the life of a traditional composer who has contributed to making the musical type *nnwonkorɔ* very popular with audiences. Nana AfuaAbasa contributed immensely to the popularity of the *nnwonkorɔ* music genre, for until the formation of her group, *Tete nnwonkorɔ*, the genre used to consist of women playing games with songs at evening or night time. On May 31, 2002, several *nnwonkorɔ* groups came together to pay tribute to a woman who was foremost in, and indeed responsible for, transforming *nnwonkorɔ* from the traditional moonlight singsong of elderly women in the village square to a commercially viable music genre suitable for performance in urban centers and villages. *Nnwonkorɔ* is now performed not by spontaneous or loosely organized groups, but by formally constituted groups.

It was in recognition of her immense contribution to making *nnwonkorɔ* a household musical type that the late Nana Agyeman Prempeh II (1931-1970) honoured her group by naming them after his palace – Manhyia. The king also became a life patron of the group, a practice that extended beyond his lifetime, obliging succeeding Asante kings to be life patrons of *Manhyia Tete*.

The life of a traditional composer reflects the contributions that indigenous knowledge can bring to bear on the world of creative composition and learning. Her works bring out some of the characteristics of indigenous knowledge systems, that it is reinforced by practical engagement in everyday life, and tested in the rigorous laboratory of survival. Her works are also reflective of the fact that if the subject matter of songs does not reflect prevailing attitudes, concerns, and feelings of the community, the song type is not likely to receive the support and patronage of the community. As noted by Ampene (Ampene, 2005:49) “the motivations for creativity are indicative of the fact that music composition has a definite social and religious function rather than [the music] existing simply as the expression of its composer”.

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