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## The Revival and Sustenance of Anlee and Kɔɔre Music among the Dagaaba Women of Sankana

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### Abstract



*This paper explores the challenges and prospects of sustaining Anlee and Kɔɔre music, two traditional genres performed by the Dagaaba women of Sankana in the Upper West Region of Ghana. Historically, these musical traditions played a pivotal role in the social and cultural life of the community. However, they have faced a steep decline in recent times. This decline raises pressing concerns about the preservation of cultural identity and heritage. Adopting a qualitative research approach, data were collected through interview, participant observation and focus group discussions. These primary sources were further complemented by secondary materials, including library resources and internet-based references. The findings revealed that, while Anlee and Kɔɔre music are at risk of extinction, the women of Sankana have recognised their cultural significance and are actively implementing strategies to revive and sustain these traditions. Some of the challenges for their decline are modernity, intertribal marriages and rural-to-urban migration. The study emphasises that music remains an integral part of the Dagaaba people's cultural identity and serves as a vital connection to their heritage. This*

research underscores the urgency of safeguarding indigenous musical forms to preserve the cultural heritage of the Dagaaba for future generations. It also highlights the challenges posed by modernisation and social transformation while shedding light on the resilience and efforts of the women in protecting their musical traditions. The study contributes to the broader discourse on cultural sustainability and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Anlee, Kɔɔre, Sontare, Sankana, Kperoo, Sawowoe, Dagaaba traditional music

## 1. Introduction

Music-making and its associated dance practices are integral to the social and cultural lives of the people of Sankana in the Upper West Region of Ghana. Music and dance feature prominently in life-cycle events, work, religious practices, leisure and other aspects of daily life, demonstrating their strong interconnection and inseparability (Nketia, 1974). Sankana is, therefore, a vibrant musical community that embraces a variety of musical traditions for men, women and children. For instance, *Mba nakpaana ntoma ya*, *Tidanba*, and *Kuwoyelle woi* are musical types for children, while *Dugu*, *Bawa* and *Benne* were traditionally performed exclusively by men but are now mixed-gender. Similarly, women perform musical traditions such as *Anlee*, *Namlemanamleto*, *Kɔɔre*, *Jaw*, *Kperoom* and *Saawowoe*. However, this study focused on *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music. Historically, these genres were performed during moonlit nights but have evolved to feature in contemporary events such as festivals, public durbars, funerals and marriage ceremonies. Sankana, a patriarchal community, operates within a male-dominant social structure where women are often regarded as subservient to men. Women have little or no say in decisions such as marriage and are excluded from traditional power structures. However, their leadership emerges in the context of their all-female musical practices and self-help associations (*sontare*).

*Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music have played a significant role in the lives of Sankana women. These musical forms serve as platforms for expressing their concerns and addressing issues affecting them. They are used to welcome newly married women, provide advice and encouragement within marital homes, regulate their husbands' behaviour and offer emotional relief. Despite their cultural significance, *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music are disappearing,

and the reasons for this decline remain unclear. Protecting these musical traditions as forms of intangible cultural heritage is imperative. These genres do not only represent essential elements of Sankana culture but also serve as powerful tools through which women assert their agency and address their challenges. The need for the revival and sustenance of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music has become a pressing concern for community leaders. This paper sought to explore the challenges and opportunities surrounding the preservation of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music among the Dagaaba women in the Nadowli District of the Upper West Region of Ghana.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The paper was grounded in the theoretical perspective of change and continuity. The theory as propounded by Rosenau (2018) explains that it deals with the exploration of how societies, cultures and practices evolve over time while retaining certain core elements. It acknowledges that change is an inevitable aspect of human existence, driven by internal dynamics (such as innovation or reinterpretation) and external influences (such as globalisation or migration). At the same time, it recognises that continuity exists as traditions, values or practices are preserved and passed down, providing a sense of identity and stability. The theory is commonly applied to fields like anthropology, history and cultural studies to understand how societies evolve while maintaining aspects of their heritage. In music and dance, traditional forms may adapt to modern tastes by integrating new instruments or styles but still preserve their cultural significance. This emphasises the necessity of understanding how *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music in the Sankana community has evolved over time. It includes its rituals, that is, life-cycle events like marriage ceremonies or funerals that may incorporate contemporary elements while retaining traditional symbols and meanings. Before concluding that these musical traditions are in decline, it is essential to examine their historical development, the transformations they have undergone, and the aspects that remain intact. This approach provides insights into whether *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music continues to play a significant role in the social and cultural fabric of the community. Kubik (1987) argues that musical traditions in Africa have experienced dramatic transformations, particularly in the 20th century. He challenges the rigid dichotomy between “traditional music” and “modern music,” suggesting instead the broader concept of musical traditions that encompasses both realms. This perspective allows for a nuanced understanding of how African music dynamically adapts to changing social and cultural contexts.

Similarly, Samuel (2009) posits that musical change is an integral aspect of cultural dynamism. He defines this change as the movement of boundaries within musical traditions that emphasise that culture is inherently fluid and ever-evolving. Following this line of thought, the performance practices of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music are not static but are subject to shifts influenced by factors such as modernity, migration and intergenerational transitions. Against this theoretical background, the paper sought to explore how these musical traditions have adapted to contemporary realities while retaining elements of their original form. It considers the role of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music in addressing societal needs, expressing communal identity and navigating the tensions between cultural preservation and modernisation. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for assessing the current state of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music and identifying strategies for their revival and sustainability. Indeed, this framework underscores that culture is a living phenomenon, and *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music, as integral aspects of Sankana's heritage, continue to adapt in response to the broader socio-cultural environment. Thus, exploring their trajectory offers valuable insights into the interplay of tradition, innovation and identity in the Sankana community.

### **3. Review of Related Literature**

Some scholars have made significant studies of music and gender in all sectors of life. Harrison (1988) for instance provides a comprehensive profile of the "blues women" of the 1920s and their important contributions to America music history. She presented the women as pivotal figures in the assertion of black women's ideas and ideals from the standpoint of the working class and the poor. She examined how the rapid changes during the Harlem Renaissance affected the lives of some of the women and demonstrated through the strong relationship between the lifestyles of these blues women and their creative mode of expressing the blues. Again, Oppong (1996) discusses general male-female role distribution at length. He noted that women and girls fare worse than their male counterparts in any kind of deprivation globally, citing India, where female infants are even weaned earlier than their male infants. Back home in Africa, women are estimated to produce and process the bulk of food crops. "As men migrate in growing numbers to cities and towns for wage labour, women are left behind in rural areas in many countries. They become the primary agricultural workers" (Oppong 1996, p.160).

About women power, Anker (1982) intimates that women may have the power to control the lives and behaviour of younger women and, to some extent younger men in the household, but they usually do not have the ability to determine their own lives and to make choices that are not endorsed by the men in the household. In this regard, the women of Sankana often rely on *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* musical genres as a powerful medium to express themselves and convey messages they might otherwise be unable to voice directly to their men. Still on male-female role distribution, Ama Ata-Aidoo, as cited in Gadzekpo (2009) describes women as having been written and talked out of all principal areas of discourse, of activity, and of thought. These assertions are indications of the existence of male-female role segregation in a number of societies, if not all the world over. Sankana being a patriarchal community, women are not regarded in any way, it is *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music that give them a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, Mora (2008) presents an article on gendering instrumental Music in the Philippines. Mora examined the ways in which gender relations are represented within the aesthetic and symbolic dimensions of musical practice among one particular ethno linguistic group from the southern Philippines, the T'boli. On the other hand, instrument in *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* musical type are played by women only. According to Stone (2008) traditions that existed in Africa since the ancient kingdoms that emerged in sub-Saharan Africa between A.D. 700 and 1900, including the ancient Ghana, Mali and Songhai empires had large retinues of royal Musicians who enhanced state occasions and provided musical commentary on events. The author further explained that it is very difficult to find in all West African languages any word that is equivalent to the Western idea of 'music', since music, dance and even drama bind very closely in West Africa. This tradition continues even today.

Chernoff (2012, p.1) also comments on the historical consciousness among the *Dagomba* of Ghana and indicates, "In their traditional state, music and dance play an important role in bringing historical meaning down to the level of participatory". Thus, *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* of the Dagaaba women also play the role in bringing historical meaning down to the younger generation, therefore if this music fades off, there would be no history for the next generation.

As a result, Merriam (1964) and Blacking (1973) mentioned that music cannot be studied outside the environment of the music makers. This

suggests that more comprehensive understanding of a particular music depends on the knowledge of the people: why, how, and when the music was created and performed. Similarly according to Catherine (2016), there are complex ways in which socio-economic concerns impact the maintenance and revitalisation of traditional musical practices in Cambodia. The scholar is of the view that many of these practices remain highly endangered, due to both the massive social and cultural disruption of the Khmer Rouge era and the ongoing socioeconomic and political challenges since that time. Her work supports the livelihoods of young musicians in contemporary Cambodia, as well as developing more effective strategies to support the viable future of that country's traditional music.

#### 4. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, with ethnography serving as the research design. As Shagrir (2017) intimated, ethnography allowed for an in-depth exploration of the historical practices of the genres, thereby uncovering their continuity and contextual significance. Like Geertz (1973) also explains, anthropologists can focus on any aspect of a culture that interests them, using symbolic forms - such as words, rituals and customs - to interpret and convey meaning. This approach was particularly suited to understanding *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music, its interpretation and its role within the social and historical context of the Dagaaba women. Data collection involved a combination of interviews, participant observation, focus group discussions (FGDs) and secondary sources. Interviews were conducted with key informants, including older women with extensive experience in performing *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music, as well as community leaders and younger women who participate in contemporary performances. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed participants the flexibility to share their personal experiences and knowledge. These conversations, conducted in the local language and later translated during transcription, explored the historical significance of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music, changes in performance practices and the challenges and opportunities for sustaining these traditions. Participant observation was another crucial method used in the study. The researchers immersed themselves in the community, attending live performances of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music at festivals, funerals, marriage ceremonies and informal gatherings. This allowed for a firsthand understanding of the performance techniques, styles, and the role of the music in various social contexts. Observations also captured

the interactions between performers and audiences, as well as the implicit cultural expressions embedded in gestures and expressions. Detailed field notes were taken to document these observations comprehensively. Again, Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with groups of Dagaaba women, organised by age to capture generational perspectives. These discussions encouraged collective reflection on the evolution of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music, its significance to the Sankana community, and strategies for its revival and sustenance. FGDs provided a platform for participants to share diverse perspectives, revealing nuanced understandings of the music's cultural importance.

To ensure a comprehensive representation of voices, snowball sampling was employed to identify knowledgeable individuals within the community. Initial informants recommended other participants who were considered well-informed about the music and its practices. This approach helped build a network of insights that enriched the study. In addition to primary data collection, secondary sources such as books, journal articles and online resources were reviewed. These materials provided valuable context and theoretical perspectives on Ghanaian traditional music, ethnomusicology, and cultural preservation. The use of these methodological perspectives ensured a holistic understanding of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music. This combination of methods captured both the explicit performance practices and the deeper cultural meanings, offering a rich foundation for the findings of the study.

## 5. Discussion of Findings

### 5.1 The emergence of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* Music

Fieldwork investigations revealed that *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music originated in the 19th century among the Dagaaba people residing in the Nadowli South District of the Upper West Region of Ghana. This period coincided with the community's resettlement following the invasions by the slave raiders Samori and Babatu. However, the exact date of the music's emergence remains uncertain. Oral tradition has it that this musical type was first performed by a group of married women in one of the communities called Charie in the Nadowli district. As one of the respondents indicated

*These women always gather the children and tell them riddles during moonlight, so one of the women thought of*



*how they would also entertain themselves after hard day's work. The woman told the other women about her intention, they were happy about it. They started by singing and clapping during moonlight, the next day of the performance they added a skill by running in a circular formation, later it was done in turns.*

It was revealed that the women enjoyed it so much that when they finished their days work, they quickly gathered at the yelkpeh (big house) for the performance. The Maakaajia (queen mother) of Charie indicated the following:

*These women created this musical tradition as a response to the social isolation many of them faced after being uprooted from their familial environments and placed in hostile settings. Others endured significant psychological and emotional trauma, which the music served to address and alleviate.*

It was noted that these challenges stemmed from practices such as forced marriages, where women were neither consulted nor given a voice in marriage arrangements, leaving them voiceless and deprived of rights to marital property as Sariata (2016) affirms.

The primary purpose of establishing these musical types was entertainment. However, performing *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music also provided women with a platform to express their emotions freely and, at times, to ridicule or criticize their husbands. As rightly observed, "Women are silenced in the public decision-making process concerning marriage" (Werner, 2011). Dagaaba women traditionally have little to no say in matters concerning marriage, a situation that becomes even more challenging for widows, who can be claimed by any of their late husband's brothers as an additional wife. However, through the performance of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music, these women found a powerful medium to make their voices heard within the society. The music not only provided them with an avenue for self-expression but also fostered a sense of belonging and empowerment.

One respondent revealed that it was through these performances that they established an association called "*sontaar*," which translates to "helping one another."



These women supported one another in farm work through their association. For instance, during harvest time, they took turns assisting each other. They would gather at one person's farm to help bring the produce home and then move to another farm to do the same. This collaborative effort significantly reduced their workload and alleviated stress. Additionally, the women mentioned that during the harvest season, mosquitoes were abundant. In the evenings, they would come together to perform *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music. This activity not only served as entertainment but also helped them ward off mosquitoes. By the time they were done with the lively performances, they were so tired that they could sleep soundly without being disturbed by mosquito bites.

## **5.2 Factors leading to the extinction of Anlee and Kɔɔre music**

A review of the history of the music revealed that *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music began to decline around 1990, coinciding with the introduction of electricity to the community. During a focus group discussion, majority of them attributed the decline to factors such as modernity, intertribal marriages and rural-urban migration. This perspective was echoed by the chief and his opinion leaders. Recognising the cultural significance of the music, the women leaders took proactive steps to revive *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music within the community.

### **Modernity**

In the modern era, Sankana is now connected to electricity, and the women are increasingly exposed to contemporary music trends through media such as television and radio. As a result, traditional forms of entertainment like *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music have been overshadowed by other media-driven forms of entertainment. For example, during community funerals, people tend to prefer playing recorded music and dancing to disc jockeys rather than organizing live performances of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music by the women. According to Nangbigne (2001, p. 115), "a lot of young men working in the mines and cocoa farms in the southern part of Ghana brought record players and radios back to the villages." Rather than the women composing songs about community issues, they began listening to and dancing to recorded music. One evening, during a funeral in Sankana, we noticed that the corpses were left unattended overnight. The men arrived with xylophones, played briefly, then set them aside and began to doze off. There was no performance, so the family decided to hire spinners to keep

the crowd entertained through the night. When the spinners arrived, the community came alive with dancing.

When we asked one of the male respondents why there was no live performance of traditional music, he explained this:

*Our culture is changing, and people are no longer interested in performing live music. The love has shifted towards recorded traditional music and popular music.*

This observation reveals that the community members themselves perceive their cultural heritage as outdated in the face of modernity. However, the growing reliance on recorded music poses a risk to *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music losing its significance for future generations. To sum up, the increasing availability and influence of recorded music through radios, televisions and other media platforms have led to a preference for modern entertainment. Traditional music like *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* has been overshadowed by popular music, reducing its appeal to younger generations.

### **Intertribal marriage**

It was also revealed that intertribal marriage poses a threat to the survival of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music. When a Sankana man marries a woman from a different ethnic group and settles outside his hometown, it becomes challenging for him to instill his culture in his family. In the past, their forefathers arranged marriages for their children to help preserve their cultural heritage. However, today's children no longer listen to their elders, and they freely choose spouses from any background. This shift has further contributed to the erosion of traditional cultural practices like *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music. Thus, when individuals marry outside their ethnic group and settle in other areas, they often lose their connection to their traditional music and culture. This intermarriage and the blending of cultures can lead to the neglect of traditional practices such as *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music.

### **Rural-urban migration.**

In the context of rural-urban migration, a young man would often marry and then leave his hometown with his wife to search for fertile land or odd jobs. In the past, however, men typically traveled alone, leaving their spouses in the village, as they believed they were going to find money and would return later. Adepoju (2010) notes that many people in Africa migrate

between different regions in search of better economic opportunities and living conditions. He adds that individuals often move from areas with fewer opportunities, particularly for employment and income-generating activities. Similarly, Nangbigne (2008, p. 85) states that “the fertile farmlands of the West Gonja in the Northern Region host many Dagaaba residents in the farming communities”. In spite of this it was revealed that the youth in the area have no choice but to migrate to cities like Accra, Kumasi and major mining towns such as Obuasi, Tarkwa and Prestea. These individuals, through no fault of their own, often make their new environment their second home, abandoning their original culture in favour of the one in which they are now immersed. They adopt the cultural practices of their new community, including the local socio-musical activities. However, contrary to this trend, Saghoe (1984) asserts that Dagaaba immigrants in Tarkwa were able to preserve their cultural practices, particularly through music. He explains that the *bewaa* musical style is performed on Sunday afternoons when most workers are off duty, allowing the community to come together to entertain themselves, drink *Pito*, celebrate and share their concerns for survival in this new setting. Indeed, as young people, especially men, migrate to urban areas in search of better economic opportunities, the cultural practices tied to their home villages, including the performance of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music, are often neglected or forgotten. The migration disrupts the transmission of cultural practices from one generation to the next.

Saghoe’s assertion suggests that Dagaaba immigrants in Tarkwa did not contribute to the decline of their music or culture; rather, they successfully maintained their cultural identity. We agree with him, as we also learnt to perform *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music in Koforidua in the Eastern Region, where we grew up seeing the music performed regularly. For instance, one of the author’s mothers was the Maakajia (Queen Mother) in Koforidua, and every year, during the Christmas season, the women gathered to perform the music. This suggests that, similar to the Dagaaba immigrants, the Sankana women have not contributed to the decline of their music.

One of the authors’ mothers was the Maakajia (Queen Mother) in Koforidua, and every year, during the Christmas season, the women gathered to perform the music. This demonstrates that, like the Dagaaba immigrants, the Sankana women have not contributed to the decline of their music.

However, one cannot completely disregard the Sankana women’s perspective, as rapid social and technological changes are affecting

cultures globally. In a conversation with the Maakajia of Sankana, she had this to say:

*The decline of the music is a recurring topic in their queen mothers' meetings within the district. Many of the women have left their marital homes, and these changes can be traced back to the younger generation's lack of exposure to traditional music, as their mothers did not experience it in the same way.*

She, again, said this:

*In the past, women faced greater challenges in their marriages than they do today. For instance, a woman who fetched food from the granary without her husband's concern would become ill. Despite this, she would still prepare food for the entire family. The deep connection to their music and the communal sensitivity to one another's well-being helped the women navigate their marriages more smoothly, creating a sense of solidarity and understanding within the community.*

The Maakajia expressed a deep sense of longing for the music and emphasised their commitment to working tirelessly to preserve it from fading away.

Another issue that cropped up was about women empowerment. Empowerment, as explained by staples (1990) is the process of enabling individuals or groups to gain control over their lives, make their own decisions, and act upon them to achieve personal or collective goals. The consequence is that it creates power in individuals over their own lives, society and in their communities. In this regard, women empowerment is about equipping and allowing women to solve their own problems.

During the colonial era, Dagaaba women were viewed as subordinate to their husbands, who often discouraged them from engaging in economic activities. The belief was that if a woman gained economic power, she would lose respect for her husband. However, during a conversation with the women, they shared that the situation has now changed. Women today can acquire wealth independently, without relying on their husbands

for financial support. Their wealth is primarily generated through trading activities such as brewing local beer (*Pito*), making pottery, selling Shea butter, *Dawadawa*, and frying *Kose* made from bean flour.

Several agencies have played a significant role in empowering Dagaaba women, including the Catholic Church, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Sun-Nutaa, the 31st December Women's Movement, the National Commission on Women and Development Plan Ghana, and the Non-Formal Education Division (NFED). These organisations educate women about their rights and provide them with the knowledge and tools to improve their lives and achieve independence. The Catholic Church, for instance, promotes gender equality and encourages girls who are at risk of early marriage to seek refuge with the priests. The Church has also built both basic and secondary schools for the entire region, ensuring that children, especially girls, receive an education. This initiative has empowered women by increasing their awareness of local and global issues, contributing to their overall development and ability to make informed decisions.

The women shared that while they are acquiring wealth, they have not completely abandoned the performance of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music. Occasionally, they still perform it. Initially, they mentioned that the only occasion for performing the music was during funeral celebrations. However, funeral grounds have now become lucrative trading ventures, with business booming, and they are reluctant to halt their sales to perform the music. This shift reflects the increasing economic opportunities they are pursuing, which have changed the role of funerals from purely cultural events to important economic activities.

In the past, *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music provided the women with a platform to express their emotions and a sense of belonging in their social space. It empowered them to navigate their way through the community and make their voices heard. However, with the empowerment provided by the agencies mentioned earlier, the necessity for *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music in the community has diminished. Small (1996, p.5) states, "When music ceases to perform its role in a given society, it begins to wane and eventually dies." This observation suggests that if *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music no longer serves its cultural or social purpose in the community, it will lose its value and gradually fade away. On the other hand, if it continues to fulfill its role, it will grow, incorporating new ideas and styles, ensuring its sustainability in the community.

The women shared that despite their improved economic status, they still adhere to the dictates of their husbands. This has led to a rise in divorce within the community, as many women, feeling financially secure, believe they can support themselves without relying on their husbands. However, they have also realised that the absence of their music has created a void in their lives and the community as a whole. As a result, they recognise the need for a concerted effort to revive the music so that it can continue to serve its cultural purpose. This clearly indicates that, despite their empowerment and the rapid pace of technological change, the women are determined to revitalise *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music. The music plays a vital role in performing both historical and social functions within the Sankana community, and it is crucial to sustain and pass it on to the younger generation to preserve its cultural significance.

### **5.3 Sustenance of Anlee and Kɔɔre Music**

Based on interviews conducted with the women in the Sankana community, it became evident that they are committed to sustaining *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music, as it is an integral part of their intangible cultural heritage. They cannot afford to lose it, as the music has been a part of their lives for generations, passed down from one generation to the next. This tradition must not be broken. The women recognise the importance of continuing this practice to preserve their cultural identity. Nketia (2005) reinforces this perspective, stating that “the music performed in any African society is cumulative, wherever tradition allows for creative innovation, for its music is passed on from generation to generation by oral or aural tradition, or learned through participation” (p.242).

They expressed the view that while modernity is challenging the relevance of their music in society, they are determined to work hard to preserve it and make it appealing to the younger generation. In light of this, the Maakajia (queen mother) and her team stated that they would implement strategies aimed at sustaining the music within the community. They suggested the following strategies to help sustain *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music in the community:

- a) *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music would be introduced in the various churches in the community, with performances scheduled every Sunday.

- b) During the celebrations of the Ganlaa and Sunbie (Bambara beans) festivals in Sankana, *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music would be performed in clan-based competitions every year. The winners would be awarded appreciable prizes.
- c) They would collaborate with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to encourage women to perform *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music at every gathering.
- d) They would also write to appeal to the district director to organise cultural festivals annually instead of biennially, and to include *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music in the selected music and dance performances for the district.

Since the introduction of Christianity in the 20th century by Catholic missionaries, many Dagaaba people have converted to Christianity, with the majority becoming Catholics (McCoy, 1985). In the Sankana community, three religions are practised: Islam, Traditional Religion, and Christianity. Christianity is the most widely practised, with the Catholic Church and the Baptist Church being the main denominations. Most of the community members belong to the Catholic Church, while a few are affiliated with the Baptist Church. The Catholic missionaries had a significant influence on the Dagaaba way of life. They introduced formal education and health in the land of the Dagaaba. That is why the majority of them are Catholics, moreover they said they would discuss it with the priests in charge of those churches to include the music in the daily and Sunday's service. According to Sagho (1982), the Catholic Church had offered the Dagaaba immigrants in Tarkwa an avenue for the performance of their tribal music. Based on that they were able to maintain and nurture their tribal cultural practices and perspectives, particularly through music. In this regard, the Sankana Naa (chief) attributes the decline of the women's music to the fact that *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music do not serve any ritualistic function in the traditional religion or at funerals, unlike men's music. He explained that men's music is performed to venerate deities and divinities, and also to celebrate the passage of a deceased person's spirit into ancestorhood. In contrast, the women's music is primarily for entertainment. This is why, despite the rapid advancement of technology, men's music continues to thrive. He believes that incorporating *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music into the church and other social events could play a significant role in preserving and protecting the music.



Nketia (1979) indicates that African music is generally organised as a social event. He again explains that on such occasions, members of a group or a community come together for the enjoyment of leisure, for recreational activities, or for the performance of a rite, ceremony, festival, or any kind of collective activity. This implies that, beyond serving as a source of leisure and enjoyment, *An/lee* and *Kɔɔre* music should also be utilised for religious purposes. Dagaaba music is deeply connected to the divine, originating from Naamwin (The Supreme God), as supported by Dankwa (2018), who highlights that the myth of the gyl's origin reinforces the idea that isolating music from the realm of the supernatural is unusual among the Dagaaba. Dagaaba music cannot completely fade away in Dagao (the land of the Dagaaba) because it is believed that God passed the music down to humans through the *kontobili*, supernatural beings with heavily bearded faces, dwarf-like features, and large testicles. This spiritual and cultural connection ensures that the music remains an essential aspect of their identity and heritage.

In the Sankana community, two main festivals are celebrated annually. The Ganlaa festival is held to honour the tendaanba (the custodians of the land) and the community elders. However, Tuurey (1982, p. 57) asserts that “the Sankana people, in celebration of their victory over the slave raider Babatu in 1887,” originally celebrated Ganlaa as a commemoration of their victory over the slave raiders. Thus, the 1887 Ganlaa festival marked a significant historical event—the community’s triumph over Babatu. On the other hand, the Sunbie festival is dedicated to the promotion of Bambara beans and the various dishes that can be made from this staple food, highlighting its cultural and agricultural significance. During these festivals, people who live in cities and other places outside their hometown return to take part in the celebrations. *An/lee* and *Kɔɔre* music is performed at the clan bases, including those outside their home community, in a competitive format, with winners receiving prizes. Merriam (1964) explains that traditional festivals provide a rallying point around which members of the society gather to engage in activities that require the cooperation and coordination of groups. This means that festivals serve as an important occasion for people to come together, fostering unity and participation. These festivals enable immigrants to hold on to their cultural heritage, as music is a core component of culture. The organization of the music performances in their second homes, makes them showcase their cultural identity and foster a sense of belonging, even in urban areas. As Stuart Hall (1990)

intimates, cultural identity is not just a “true self” but is shared by people with a common history and ancestry, helping them feel connected despite external changes. In this regard, the women have also indicated that they would appeal to the regional educational office and the Nadowli district’s education director, urging them to organise cultural festivals every year, rather than every two years, and to include *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music in the performances at these district-wide events.

One respondent commented on the Cultural festival celebrations of schools:

*Cultural festivals in schools help pupils understand their own culture. However, community leaders are not attaching enough importance to their own culture. When organizing the festivals and needing a community leader to prepare the pupils for the performance, they demand money before offering their help. Moreover, when we invite them to grace the occasion, they sometimes fail to honour the invitation. This has made the celebration of cultural festivals in our district very difficult.*

This suggests that there is a lack of interest in preserving and passing on the traditional music in the district. If there is a shift in attitude towards the music, it would make it easier for cultural workers to engage with the community and support the preservation of these important traditions. In response to the above, the Tenndaana emphasised that music is an integral part of Dagaaba life. Everything they do involves music, whether working on the farm, performing household chores, or tending cattle. For example, while working in the fields, people sing to relieve their tiredness. Women also make music while performing household tasks, and cowboys sing in the fields while herding their cattle. This view is supported by Dankwa (2018) when he commented on relevance of music for in activities:

Playing in the farms by individuals who want to flex their tired muscles, lullabies sung by mothers to put babies to sleep, or the playing of the Wulee flute by cowherds while tending cattle in the fields are all recognised as forms of performance. (p.8)

Thus, music-making for the Dagaaba is a vital aspect of their lives—without it, there is no life. This underscores the deep cultural significance of music

and its omnipresence in daily activities. Every social gathering there is music, therefore music making is part of their everyday life and is meant for the wellbeing of the entire human being.

It was also found that the timing of the cultural festivals often coincided with the farming season, making it difficult for the community members to participate. As a result, they would sometimes demand payment to hire labour to assist with farm work while they were away for the festivals, especially considering the importance of the rainy season in their agricultural activities. The rainy season is crucial for farming, and if the work is delayed, it could lead to food shortages for the entire year.

The Tenndaana proposed that the district education office review the cultural festival calendar and consider rescheduling these events to the dry season when farm work is less demanding. This adjustment would enable community members to fully participate in the festivals and help preserve and pass on cultural knowledge to the younger generation, without the added challenge of conflicting with critical agricultural activities. The women emphasised the importance of protecting their music, as *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music is uniquely their own and not borrowed from any other culture, unlike other African traditional music that may have roots in or influences from external cultures. This aligns with Onwuka (2012) who argues that every cultural dance has a traceable origin or point of origin, often influenced by the borrowing or blending of prevalent dance patterns from other communities or adopting an entire culture's traditions. Nzewi (2007) referred to this process as "musical art borrowing," explaining that musical arts borrowing in the indigenous setting bonded individuals and communities/societies, and had prescribed procedures, which implicated vast societal and human issues. According to Nzewi (2007), "musical arts borrowing occurs when a group or organisation in one community seeks to acquire a preferred musical style from another society, often generating human-cultural interests, values and relationships beyond mere musical matters" (p. 139). In contrast, *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music performed by the Dagaaba women in Sankana is unique and original, with no influences from other cultures. The pride of the community lies in its cultural heritage, as Dabaghian (1970) asserts.

## 6. Conclusion

This study concludes that the Dagaaba women of Sankana are deeply committed to maintaining and reviving *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music as an essential part of their cultural heritage. Despite the increasing influence of modern music and technology, these women still recognise the significance of their traditional music, which has long served as an emotional and social tool in their community. While the women have increasingly embraced popular music, there is a growing desire to return to their roots and restore the vitality of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music. As Schippers and Grant (2016, p. 333) observe, “While there seems to be little risk of music disappearing from our planet altogether, those who make and care for music are continually faced with choices that affect the vitality and sustainability of music practices.” This statement underscores the ongoing challenge of ensuring the sustainability of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music amidst the pressures of modernity. The study reveals that, despite the influence of Western modernity and technological advancements, traditional music practices can thrive if they are able to adapt to new contexts and trends. To sustain and revive *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music, concerted efforts are needed at the community, cultural and institutional levels. Thus, as religion plays a central role in the community, incorporating the music into both daily and Sunday services could help keep it alive in the daily lives of the people. Again, the establishment of annual cultural competitions, such as during the Ganlaa and Sunbie festivals, would provide a platform for the younger generation to engage with the music. These festivals could also serve as opportunities for people living outside Sankana to reconnect with their cultural heritage. Apart from that local cultural leaders, including the Maakaajia (Queen Mother), could work closely with non-governmental organisations to encourage women to perform *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music at community gatherings and other events. Also, engagement with schools and district cultural officers in organising annual cultural festivals rather than biennial ones would ensure more frequent opportunities for younger generations to learn and appreciate their traditional music. Finally, the district education office could work to align the cultural calendar with the agricultural seasons, ensuring that farming activities do not conflict with cultural celebrations and knowledge transmission. With these, the Sankana community can preserve *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music, ensuring it remains an active and vibrant part of their cultural identity, while also fostering intergenerational transmission and cultural pride. Despite the challenges posed by modernisation, the study affirms

that the vitality and sustainability of *Anlee* and *Kɔɔre* music can be secured with concerted community efforts and a renewed commitment to cultural heritage.

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