



## Music and Its Impact on Socio-Moral Values in Contemporary Ghana: The Case of Ashanti People of Kumasi

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v6i10.1645>

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### **Abstract**

This research paper explores the intricate relationship between music and socio-moral values among the Ashanti of Kumasi in contemporary Ghana. Music plays a significant role in shaping cultural and societal norms and its impact on societal values cannot be overlooked. This study therefore aims to explore how music affects the socio-moral fabric of Kumasi by unravelling the profound impact of music on moral values and socio-cultural practices in Kumasi. The paper employs a qualitative research method combining historical and ethnographic approaches as the research design. The paper examines the historical evolution of music in contemporary Kumasi society and its portrayal of socio-moral values. According to the study, music in Kumasi has significantly evolved from its basic forms to various genres, thanks to the influence of technology and modernity. Highlife and Hiplife music continue to be the most popular musical genres in Kumasi. Western cultures have heavily influenced their lyrics, visual elements, and the instruments used. Most lyrics of Hiplife songs portray sexual immorality, drug abuse and violence whereas the visual clips contain scenes of semi-nudity which violate the socio-moral norms of the Kumasi society. The findings of the study contribute to the existing body of knowledge on music's societal influence and shed light on the specific socio-moral dynamics of Kumasi society. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for policymakers, educators and artists in developing strategies to promote positive socio-moral values through music and media. Furthermore, it provides valuable insights into the potential of music as a catalyst for social change and moral development of the youth in contemporary Ghanaian societies.

**Keywords:** *Music; Socio-Moral Values; Contemporary Ghanaian Society; Ashanti; Kumasi*

## Introduction

Music has been an integral part of human culture for centuries, serving as a powerful medium of expression, communication, and cultural identity. In contemporary societies, the city of Kumasi stands as a vibrant hub of culture, tradition, and modernity for the Ashanti people in Ghana. Kumasi, the capital city of the Ashanti region is endowed with a rich culture and this is reflected in the numerous musical genres that abound in the place. Music, one of the vital elements of culture is an art form and cultural activity that touches on the daily life of the Ashanti people. These musical activities of the Ashanti people are guided by societal norms and principles of society. Part of these norms and principles are the values of society especially socio-moral values that manifest in traditional songs that shape societal behaviour as posited by Amuah, Adum-Attah and Arthur (2011) *music is used as a device for moral training and social control* pg. 94. In such traditional music, lyrics are geared towards moral education and are based on the socio-moral values of society. This may be in the form of frowning on wrong deeds and promoting good conduct among the Ashanti people in Kumasi. This research aims to delve into the intricate relationship between music and the socio-moral fabric of contemporary Ghanaian society with a focus on the Ashanti people in Kumasi.

Ekwuribe (n.d.) asserts that music in contemporary times deals with modern issues that satisfy the musical needs of its audience. In contemporary Ghana, it is made up of Highlife, Reggae, Gospel, Hiplife and others. A distinctive feature of contemporary music in Ghana is that some of the genres that emerged from the folk music of the people have adopted instruments from other genres from different geographical areas which is the assertion of Mukuma (2010) on the multiculturalism, hybridization and fusion of musical practices and artefacts from one location to another. All genres in contemporary Ghana fuse Ghanaian, African and Western instruments and also feature them in their rendition of both local and international idioms. This is to say that contemporary Ghanaian music is polymorphous, encompassing both foreign and local genres, due to the influence of Westernization and foreign cultures.

Foreign cultures have influenced music in contemporary Ghana and the case of Kumasi is not different. Contemporary songs promoting Western culture have undermined African values. Over the past three decades, folk music like highlife in Kumasi has evolved into the Hiplife genre, a fusion of a popular musical culture of the United States called Hip-hop. The Hiplife genre in Kumasi has undergone a metamorphosis and has now evolved into the Asakaa genre, taking inspiration from drill music in the United States. Asakaa has emerged as the dominant musical genre in Kumasi, profoundly influencing the social and moral fabric of the city's youth. This is discernible from the video clips and lyrics that accompany these modern songs. While music undoubtedly plays a significant role in shaping cultural norms and individual behaviours, its specific impact on socio-moral values in Kumasi remains a relatively underexplored area of study. As the city undergoes rapid urbanization, globalization, and technological advancements, traditional values often intertwine with emerging trends, creating a complex interplay between the old and the new. Consequently, this raises pertinent questions about how music, as a dynamic cultural tool, contributes to the ongoing evolution of socio-moral standards within Kumasi society.

## Methodology

The paper employs a qualitative research method combining historical and ethnographic approaches as the research design. It seeks to examine how music has influenced socio-moral values in contemporary Ghanaian society with perspectives from the Ashanti people of Kumasi. The historical approach seeks to critically investigate past events (Wiersman, 1986). The historical approach was adopted in the work to trace the origin and evolution of music in contemporary Kumasi. The researchers relied upon textual materials to obtain historical data on the origin and evolution of music in contemporary society. According to Sharma and Sarkar (2019), ethnographic research refers to the study of people and their culture. The ethnographic approach was also adopted to explore how music as part of

the cultural elements of the Ashanti people of Ghana has influenced their socio-moral lives in past and contemporary times. Information or data regarding the relationship between music and socio-moral values among the Ashanti people of Kumasi was gathered from an emic perspective. One of the researchers is from Kumasi and provided field reports based on interactions with locals and observations of cultural activities. The analysis was conducted on the existing literature relevant to the study.

### **Music in Contemporary Ghanaian Society: Historical and Ethnographic Perspectives**

Music in contemporary Ghana appears in various genres and has historically evolved through the influence of foreign music and culture (Albright, 2005, 2). Highlife and Hiplife remain the most popular genres in contemporary Ghanaian society. These genres dominate Ghana's music scene and are present in practically every aspect of Ghanaian society and culture. However, other genres include gospel, reggae, dancehall, and others. Hiplife, now referred to as Asakaa or drill music in Kumasi, has been heavily influenced by Western culture. According to Bonus and Adjepong (2019, 7), this musical style is a fusion of Western music, particularly American Hip-hop, and Ghanaian burgher high life. Although the lyrics are frequently sung in Twi and other indigenous dialects, the rhythm represents the Western Hip-hop subculture.

It will be exceedingly challenging to trace the origin of music in contemporary Ghanaian communities though music was an essential cultural component of indigenous Ghanaian societies. Akrong (2012) asserts that highlife music is thought to have started in the 1920s, even if it is impossible to pinpoint the actual beginning of indigenous Ghanaian music. Extant literature on the history of music in Ghana has sufficiently proven that several genres of contemporary Ghanaian music have their roots in highlife music, the country's oldest contemporary musical genre. For instance, Motenko (2011) claims that the musical exchanges that took place during the early stages of trade in West Africa gave rise to a variety of sub-styles in highlife music. Throughout the 19th century, traders brought European musical instruments to West Africa, including the guitar, banjo, and different brass instruments. Through interaction with these instruments as well as European culture, Highlife was formed. He continued by stating that highlife is thought to have originated in Ghana from the blending of three major musical genres: native African music, European music, and New World music from the Americas. More specifically, Bonsu and Agyepong (2019), trace the origin of highlife to the blending of military and regimental brass band music of the West African Frontier Forces and colonial administration, popular music from America, the guitar music of Liberian Kru sailors and Stevedores, music of returning ex-slaves, as well as music of ethnic groups in Ghana and the West African region (Bonus and Adjepong, 2019, 2). For them, highlife began to develop with the locally specific social recreational music of diverse ethnic groups in Ghana. These types of social music include *Nyomkro*, *Adowa* (from the Asante), *Agbadza* dance (from the Ewe), *Osibisaaba* and *Adaha* (by Fante), *Dagbamba's* (also known as *Dagomba's*) guitar songs, *Kokoma* and Ga's *Timo* and *Kpanlogo*, which emerged in the 1960s from dance-band highlife and local drumming (Bonsu and Adjepong, 3). It is sufficient to say that contemporary music in Ghana evolved in a sociocultural musical tradition, both local and foreign, and has been featured in what is now known as contemporary Ghanaian music, with its wide range of styles and genres.

As has been discussed in the foregoing, the early beginnings of Ghanaian contemporary music can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Emielu (2010), Ghanaian proto-highlife genres like the coastal Fanti *Adaha* brass band and the guitar music *Osibisaaba* were already in existence in the late 19th century. Thus, the Fanti coast experienced one of the earliest encounters with the Europeans, and both the pre-contact presence of indigenous dance music and the influence of European dance music, as well as the introduction of Ballads, Calypso, and Rhumba by freed Brazilian slaves, contributed to the region's development of dance band music. For instance, a local brass band music had developed in Cape Coast and El Mina after 1870, when many thousand West Indian colonial soldiers were stationed in Ghana. The Afro-Caribbean music they played in their leisure time struck a chord with Ghanaians, who

went on to develop their own local *Adaha* music (UDM, 2022). Ampomah (2013) also asserts that around the 1880s, British-trained Ghanaian troops formed their brass bands, such as the “Lions Soldiers” and “Edu Magicians,” and they performed their versions of marching songs by syncopating and blending indigenous rhythms with Caribbean music. As chronicled in the study conducted by Emeliu (2010), western education in the colonial era contributed to the development of high-life music where the majority of primary and secondary schools had military-style marching bands utilized for morning assembly, with the British Empire Day celebration being a perfect opportunity for bands to demonstrate skill on brass instruments. Many of the graduates from these schools went on to succeed as brass Highlife performers in Ghana and Nigeria. This demonstrates the degree to which colonialism and Westernization shaped and influenced the development of contemporary Ghanaian music in its nascent stages.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century ushered in a new wave of Ghanaian music from which the term high life was coined. Although there existed indigenous music whose origin cannot be traced, this indigenous music has been conflated with foreign musical elements and gradually produced contemporary Ghanaian music. As a result of the confluence of indigenous Ghanaian music and these other foreign musical cultures, highlife music was birthed. Thus, the 1920s witnessed the advent of high-life music in Ghana which was characterized by the high-class, top-hat-and-tails dance evenings that became fashionable among the Ghanaian elite, with music provided by ballroom and ragtime bands such as Excelsior Orchestra, Jazz Kings, the Accra Orchestra and Cape Coast Sugar Babies (UDM, 2022). Emielu (2010) in his study also acknowledged the important role Liberian Kru marine workers played in the rise of highlife in the West African region. As sailors, they carried around portable musical instruments including the concertina, banjo, harmonica, and most significantly, the acoustic guitar. The two-finger guitar method was first taught to Kwame Asare (also known as Jacob Sam), the first Highlife guitarist from Ghana, by a Kru in the 1920s. Yaa Amponsah, a hit song by Kwame Asare and his Kumasi Trio had come to be associated with the two-finger guitar style, popular in both Ghana and Nigeria. According to Monteko (2011), in the early 20th century, new music styles emerged in Ghana that combined traditional Ghanaian music with foreign music to create highlife music. These styles included *Adaha*, *Fanti Osibisaaba*, *Ga Timo*, and *Dagomba* guitar songs from Kru sailors. By the 1920s, these styles had spread throughout southern Ghana and were incorporated into the repertoires of local brass bands, Palm wine guitar bands, and dance orchestras (Motenko, 2011). These three musical phenomena emerged as a result of the process of assimilating and indigenizing foreign musical culture and elements into native Ghanaian music at the beginning of the 20th century and served as the foundation for the growth of highlife music in Ghana.

In the early 20th century, these three highlife models dominated Ghanaian music and were well known in southern Ghana as a result of the Akans’ earlier contact with Western civilization, particularly in the coastal towns. According to Bonsu and Adjepong (2019), a trio of guitar, percussion, and vocal known as “Palm Wine Music” was played in venues where palm wine or its distilled counterpart, known locally as *Akpeteshie*, was served (Bonsu and Adjepong, 4). The term “palm wine music” is a reference to where it is usually played in Ghanaian society. In Ghana, music is often played in bars and pubs that serve alcohol. There is a popular saying among the Ashantis that says *tintonti tintonti, yenom nsa no na yerefadwene*. This means “as we drink, then we reflect upon life.” The saying reflects the importance of music in social and moral reflections in life, as well as its emotional impact on the people of Kumasi. Many ordinary citizens in Kumasi take comfort in music and alcohol and often visit taverns where these services are simultaneously provided. Ampomah (2013) has described how the formation of the Native, Military, and Police marching bands as well as the brass bands in the Gold Coast provided the impetus for the establishment of highlife dance band orchestras, with the first group to appear on the scene being Frank Torto’s Excelsior Orchestra, which was formed by a group of Ga musicians in 1914 and another group of Ga musicians also established the Jazz Kings (Ampomah, 2013). It was customary for these bands to play ballroom, ragtime, and highlife music in cinemas and dance halls in Accra and Sekondi for the wealthy in the Metropolis. This in addition to the palm wine music vibrated the musical scene in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ampomah (2013) claims that the local brass band music, which originated from the military

bands, became known as *Adaha* Brass Band Highlife, and that the Akan coastal Fanti people used it to cap off their funeral services. *Adaha* is an extremely upbeat dancing song and as a result, after the conclusion of the funeral, mourners are encouraged to dance vivaciously in the open to *Adaha* funeral music to comfort themselves. He further mentioned that the brass band music later spread from the coastal towns and villages to the hinterland and became associated soon afterwards with masquerading carnivals among the indigenous Gã as the Emashie and among the Akan as *kaakaamotobi* because of their grotesque appearance. Since its inception, the masquerade carnival has become popular in most modern coastal towns. Festivals such as Christmas and Easter are marked with dancing to brass band music and masquerade. The discussion above underscores the importance of these three music styles in the evolution of Ghanaian music. They played a significant role in the birth of highlife music which influenced most of the contemporary musical genres in Ghana.

Around the year 1960, the evolution of highlife music as a fusion of local and imported West African and foreign music achieved its pinnacle. It has been discovered that foreign culture critically influenced Ghanaian music through interaction with the outside world, and Ghanaians successfully appropriated foreign instruments to convey highlife music in three indigenous ways. According to Akrong (2012), Ghana's palm wine music and highlife music showcase European influences, as seen in the style of highlife made popular by E.T. Mensah (aka the King of highlife). Monteko opines how the Highlife band scene changed considerably in the 1960s, stemming from the influx of a new generation of popular music from overseas and the electrification of the guitar and various organs and keyboards. Both guitar bands and dance bands began playing many of these imported pop hits and specialized pop bands popped up all over West Africa (Motenko, 2011.). For him, the period from the 1960s to the late 1970s marked an extreme diversity of musical genres and the proliferation of live music (Montenko, 23-24). Thus, the period marked a considerable advancement of music in Ghana with the influx of music produced by foreign artists and those locally produced through the utilization of foreign electronic instruments. However, the first president of Ghana, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in his bid to promote the cause of indigenous artists and music against foreign domination, encouraged Ghana's traditional arts by establishing state schools to revitalize and transmit traditional music and retraining highlife musicians in traditional idioms (Akrong, 2012, 104). Despite conscious efforts made by Nkrumah to promote the local music industry at that time, Oduro Frimpong (2019) reveals that highlife music in Ghana experienced three successive waves of decline throughout the 20th century with the first wave occurring in 1966 when Nkrumah's government was ousted by the National Liberation Council (NLC). Following the overthrow of his government, the NLC persecuted highlife band leaders whom they viewed as supporters of Nkrumah's government (Oduro Frimpong 2019). Highlife music and Ghanaian music in general, drastically and finally declined after 1970 against the backdrop of the major contributions made by Nkrumah. The massive persecution of artists by the NLC administration, which ultimately resulted in the exodus of the majority of high-life musicians from Ghana, is one of the most important politically motivated elements that contributed to the series of declines.

By the early 1980s, the live music scene in Ghana was nonexistent as a result of the problems that plagued Ghanaian music and Nkrumah's downfall. Many of these persecuted high-life artists, according to Motenko, had left Ghana in search of safety, and the artists that were left started substituting inexpensive electronic instruments for live bands whereas Burger Highlife bands primarily recorded in the studios in Germany and played via "spinners" in bars throughout Ghana (Motenko 25). The immigrants from Ghana who lived in Hamburg in the 1980s were the creators of this trend; hence, the moniker, burger highlife (Kalumbu, 2023). One of the forerunners of this genre was George Darko, who founded the "Bus Stop Band" with singer Lee Duofu, keyboardist Bob Fiscian, and bassist BB Dowuona. The group's 1983 single, *Akoo te Brofo*, was one of the first hits in the genre (Kalumbu, 2023). The Lumba Brothers, comprised of Daddy Lumba and Nana Acheampong, made waves in the music industry of Ghana during the late 1980s with their signature style of burgher high-life music. Their innovative

approach earned them a well-deserved reputation as trailblazers. Despite moving to Germany in pursuit of advancement, the two talented musicians eventually united, joining forces to solidify their status as two of the most celebrated burgher high-life musicians to come out of Ghana (GH Gossip, 2019) Despite the growing competition from Hiplife music, both their music and other highlife music by famous musicians like Kojo Antwi, Amakye Dede, Oheneba Kissi, Dasebre Dwamena and the rest, continue to exert influence in contemporary music in Ghana. Drawing upon traditional Akan Idioms, their music sought to address social and moral issues that affect Ghanaian society in the areas of marriage, death, patience, contentment, honesty, and hard work, to mention but a few.

Hiplife gained currency in Ghana in the 1990s as a metamorphosis of high-life music and a replication of Hip-hop, the most recent African-American music style to make waves internationally. According to Motenko, Hiplife is a smaller, more synthetic, and less expensive version of Burger Highlife, which was the voice of the Ghanaian youth in the 1980s (Motenko 26). Pioneered by Reggie Rockstone as his stage name in the mid-90s, Hiplife has since dominated contemporary Ghanaian music due to the youth's endorsement of it and their ability to relate to its lyrical contents. It is in light of this that Motenko attributes the factors that led to the emergence of Hiplife to the near-extinction of live music, the demotion of music education in the schools, the exile of many musicians, the breakdown of the system of transmission of music from the older generation to the younger and Hiplife finally gave the youth a voice in the absence of musical role models (Motenko 26). Akrong elaborates on how the youth drew upon the already existing indigenous music to innovate Hip-hop music. According to him, the pieces *Osibisaaba*, *Adowa*, *Boboobo*, *Kete*, *Gome*, *Kolomashie*, *Oshweboo*, *Agbadza*, *Kinka*, *Bamaya*, *Kpashimo* and *Nyomkro* were all infused with popular hybrid electronic forms to usher in the new popular music. He claims that the Hiplife/rap concept sparks debate about foreign values and their impact on Ghanaian youth (Akrong, 97). Despite the debate and music's contribution to socio-moral values, there is a paucity of research as to how Hiplife and other music genres in Ghana have impacted the moral and social life of contemporary youth in Ghana. The fusion of highlife and Hip-hop in Ghanaian music, influenced by Western culture, has had a notable impact on the younger generation and traditional values. Consequently, it has resulted in the erosion of Ghanaian culture and the propagation of Western lifestyles. This research delves into the socio-moral perspective of music and how foreign cultural influences have hurt traditional Ghanaian values. The study focuses specifically on the Ashanti community in Kumasi.

### **Music and Its Impact on Socio-Moral Values among the Ashanti People of Kumasi**

The Ashanti Empire covered around 24,379 sq miles, of which 9,700 are in present-day Ghana. The empire was prosperous from the 17th century until the 19th century when they were defeated by the British. They expanded through force and diplomacy until their annexation to the British settlements in 1901. They were among the most prosperous kingdoms in pre-colonial Africa with their capital now in Kumasi of postcolonial Ghana (Gillis and Martinez, 1979). Socio-moral values in Ashantis, like in many traditional and culturally rich societies, are a complex blend of social norms, ethical principles, and cultural beliefs that guide individual and collective behaviour. These values play a significant role in shaping the interactions, relationships, and overall societal harmony within the Kumasi community. Socio-moral values may vary from one culture to the other but some underlying socio-moral values that are commonly observed in Kumasi society may include but are not limited to respect for elders, community solidarity, hospitality and generosity, honesty and integrity, family values, work ethic and diligence and conflict resolution.

In Kumasi, respecting elders and those in positions of authority is deeply ingrained in the socio-moral fabric. This core value emphasizes deference, obedience, and humility towards older individuals and community leaders. The society places a strong emphasis on communal unity and support, where individuals are expected to contribute to the well-being of the community through cooperation and generosity. Hospitality and virtuous behaviour towards others is highly valued, including welcoming

guests, sharing resources, and providing assistance to those in need. Moral integrity and honesty are also essential traits in Kumasi society, where upholding one's word, being trustworthy, and acting with integrity are fundamental to maintaining social trust. Traditional gender roles and family structures play a significant role in Kumasi's socio-moral values. Respect for elders, strong family ties, and adherence to established gender roles contribute to the cohesion of society. Hard work and a strong work ethic are highly regarded, with positive contributions to society through one's labour seen as virtuous. Traditional conflict resolution and reconciliation methods are valued in Kumasi, where peacemaking, forgiveness, and amicable dispute solutions are essential in maintaining social harmony.

However, the influence of modernization, urbanization, and globalization have impacted these traditional socio-moral values among the Ashanti people in Kumasi. As society navigates social changes, there have been shifts in how traditional values are understood and observed among people in Kumasi, potentially leading to both challenges and opportunities in maintaining a balanced socio-moral framework within the community. Socio-moral values are not uniformly practised or embraced by everyone in Kumasi, as individual beliefs and experiences vary with the impact of modernization, urbanization, and globalization in contemporary Ghanaian societies. The advent of mass media and democracy advocate for freedom of speech and ideological diversities and this has translated into the production of music with uncensored lyrics that do not promote the above traditional values of the Ashanti people of Kumasi in contemporary times.

Evidence in Ashanti oral traditions indicates that music played a major role in their socio-economic and political behaviour (Gillis and Martinez). Music and socio-moral values form a core of the communal ethos as posited by Agawu (2007) that the performance of music enhances social cohesion and intensifies the bond among people in northern Eve communities in Ghana. This aligns with the Ashanti traditional culture where the people of Kumasi engage in musical performances and at the same time observe socio-moral values that reflect their true identity as Ashantis. With Kumasi being the regional capital where the Otumfuo (the overlord of the Ashanti kingdom) resides, it has become the home of the cultural heritage for the Asante people. The Ashanteis have a distinct musical culture that is, unfortunately, becoming lost among the younger generation in Kumasi. This is due to the rise in popularity of other contemporary music genres. However, traditional songs did not only entertain but also had a moral purpose. They served to educate and unite community members by instilling traditional moral values through the lyrics. In any socio-cultural event among the people of Kumasi, music is rife. Such socio-cultural events include naming, funeral and marriage rites. However, it is worth noting that the kind of music played in these various events and the lyrics associated with the music is dependent upon the ceremony being observed hence music is not only meant to entertain the audience but to address social and moral issues that those events bordered on.

The first event of the life cycle, the birth of a child is marked by the naming ritual which is also accompanied by outdoorings and is a special occasion for the Kumasi people, the parents of the child, and the family as a whole. The Asante and Kumasi people believe that when a child is born, it is considered a stranger and confined in a room for some days. If it does not return to the ancestral world, a ritual is performed to welcome it into the family and also to identify it with a name (Asare-Danso, 2018). As a happy moment in the lives of the parents and the family, the Kumasi people usually accompany the ceremony with contemporary and other styles of music to educate people on the essence of childbirth to the continuity of generations. As part of the ceremonial rites, a ritual of giving the child water and wine to taste is to imbibe in the child the values of honesty and integrity. The Abusuapayin performs a ritual that involves giving the child two substances to taste while holding the child in his hands. During this ritual, the Abusuapayin emphasizes that despite the substances' similar appearance, they have distinct tastes. The child is reminded not to deceive anyone about their taste based on their appearance. Even though the child may not fully comprehend or grasp the significance of the moment, the ritual serves as a symbolic way to instil values of integrity and honesty, teaching them to avoid dishonesty and deceit in all situations

they may encounter in adulthood. Such ceremonies are also normally backed by songs of *Nyomkro*, *Sikiyi*, *Ntan* and highlife as Gillis and Martinez (1979) posited that these songs are performed among the Ashanti during special occasions. Kumasi people also have lullabies in both traditional and contemporary idioms that are used to soothe, thrill and also to shepherd children into sleep.

During the funerals of the traditionalists and the Christian populace in Kumasi, music is performed to complement the ritual of bidding the deceased farewell to the ancestral world. Osei-Bonsu cited in Ndah et al. (2021) indicated that in Akan communities, indigenous music including *Adowa*, *Nnwomkro* and *Adenkum* used to accompany funerals. This is sometimes done solely or alongside the recorded popular and contemporary music. These funeral rituals inculcate into the youth the rich culture of the people of Asante as the lyrics of the songs are based on moral and social values such as kindness and hospitality towards the sick and vulnerable in society. The performance of funerals for chiefs and sub-chiefs in the Ashanti region is also different from the populace in terms of the music accompaniment and rituals. The announcement of the demise of a chief of the Ashanti kingdom is accompanied by music even though this is common to the well-to-do populace of the kingdom and that of the chiefs is different as posited by Gillis and Martinez (1979) that *Kete*, *Mpintin*, *Fɔntɔmfɔm*, *Nkofo* and *Ntahera* ensembles are associated with the Ashanti royalty. These traditional dances are used to announce and start the funeral for the royals before the other popular and contemporary genres are introduced later to supplement the court ones. The drumbeats of the court genres convey messages of novelty and praise for the royalty and prominent personalities in society which is hinged on diligence, bravery and other social values. As the funeral ritual for the ordinary Ashanti takes about two to three days to perform, that of the royals takes a week or two. There are special customs that are attached that contain socio-moral values and portray the rich cultural heritage of the Ashanti people.

Festivals are remarkable occasions in the lives of the Ashanti people. The two notable traditional festivals of this kingdom are the *Akwasidae* and *Awukudae*. Kumasi being the traditional capital where the king resides exposes its dwellers to rich and diverse cultural heritage during the celebration of these two festivals annually. Blay (2022) asserts that the chiefs and elders who go to the stool house to perform the ritual on the day of *Akwasidae* lower their clothes to make their shoulders bare and also walk barefooted to honour and respect the ancestors. During the celebration, the king's regalia is symbolic and conveys messages that are based on the socio-moral values of the kingdom. The chants, the gestures, the songs and the drumbeats give information, entertain and at the same time educate the populace in distinctive ways that are hinged on societal values espoused among the people of Kumasi. According to Gillis and Martinez, one common musical ensemble associated with the occasion is the *Ntan*, a light character of *Sikiyi* which is a form of drumming and dancing that may be performed at funerals, during the last phase of the *Odwira* festival, and on other social occasions.

Akan practice matrilineal inheritance and this reflects in their monarchical system where their ascension of the throne is through the maternal line. Due to this, the queen-mother with the help of other king-makers led by the *Kontihene* (second-in-command to the king) is in charge of selecting a king when the position becomes vacant (Anomah and Addai-Mensah, 2020). This practice is backed by the values of the Ashanti people and accepted as the means of selecting a chief or king of the kingdom to rule them. When a chief, king or queen-mother is selected by the kingmakers for a coronation, he or she is carried on the shoulder and brought to where he or she is supposed to be confined amidst chanting, the use of appellation and praise songs that contain socio-moral values of Ashanti tradition. In the days of confinement, contemporary music is interspersed with other categories of music to entertain and complement the rituals for the will-be king or queen-mother. According to Gillis and Martinez, traditional songs associated with such events may include *Kete* and *Adowa* as these songs were associated with Ashanti royals during funerals but have been extended to other royal ceremonies like enstoolment of kings and traditional festivals presided over by kings in modern times.



Another event that brings people together in Kumasi to perform and enjoy contemporary and other types of music is marriage. This institution bridges a tie between two families who agree that a son from one family and a daughter from the other should stay together as husband and wife. The process starts with *Kasasie* (the purpose) which constitutes the discourse of proposition between the would-be couple or the two families. This is followed by *Nhwehwemu* (investigation) by the two families to investigate the background of the other family to ascertain if they do not have chronic and genetic medical conditions that might affect their children in the future. Being satisfied with their checks, the family of the man would send some drinks and money to the family of the would-be bride to inform them about their son's intention to marry their daughter. Then the family of the woman would either accept or reject the items brought by the man's family. If accepted, a date is fixed by the two families for the marriage ceremony. The marriage ceremony is a grand occasion in which the people outside the families of the would-be bride and groom join the two families to witness the payment of dowry by the groom to the bride's family. Asare-Danso (2018) is of the view that the payment of the dowry by the groom gives him the uxorial right to sex over the bride as sex outside marriage is viewed as a grave moral concern among the Ashanti people of Kumasi. Music serves as a means of entertainment and education during various occasions, including marriage ceremonies. Highlife, a popular genre, frequently features lyrics that promote family values and offer moral lessons on the importance of virtuous character, particularly for women. In addition, some songs incorporate erotic themes, conveyed through metaphors and idiomatic language, highlighting the significance of sexuality and reproduction in Ghanaian marital customs.

The African values that previously promoted morality and addressed social issues for the betterment of society are becoming less prominent due to exposure to modernity, globalization, urbanization, and technology. Western music, particularly American Hip-hop, pop, rock, country, and gospel, has had a significant impact on Ghanaian culture. This influence is evident in Kumasi and throughout the country. Today, contemporary Ghanaian music incorporates elements of African and Western music, including Highlife and Hiplife genres, as well as music from other African countries. Because of the exposure to Western and other foreign music, interest in traditional music is dying out, most especially among the youth in Kumasi (Lindsay, 2005, 2). The sterling contribution of traditional music to socio-moral values in contemporary Kumasi has therefore been hampered by the exposure to Western music and culture which have made many Ghanaians dissociate from traditional socio-cultural practices where traditional music abounds. In traditional Ghanaian culture, music was a form of entertainment and at the same time means of moral education. People would gather to sing, dance, and tell stories in the evenings, but this has changed with the introduction of alternative forms of entertainment such as dance clubs, movie theatres, bars, TVs, stereos, video games, and the internet (Lindsay, 2005, 2). The purpose of these gatherings was not only to entertain but to instil moral discipline in the youth through the storytelling accompanied by songs of lyrics that inculcate good moral behaviour derived from the stories. Coming together to witness these entertaining events promoted social values such as communal life, peace and solidarity.

Given the rising popularity of contemporary music, especially Hiplife coupled with Western influence, the moral and social role of music in contemporary Kumasi appears to be paradoxical. When it comes to the moral and social roles that music plays in Kumasi society, careful listening to some contemporary songs indicates how much is lacking in these tunes when compared with traditional and folk music. In his study, Asirifi (2019) claims that semi-nudity is portrayed in some media content in Kumasi. "*Aketesia*" is a household term for women who wear decent clothing in Kumasi society, which is generally and morally acceptable because it avoids displaying bare body parts. As earlier mentioned, a man is sexually entitled to a woman on the condition of paying her bride price and therefore has sole access to her nakedness or any pubic part of her body. However, due to the influence of contemporary songs, both local and foreign, which feature inappropriate clothing in the music videos, decent ways of dressing without exposing bare body parts on the part of adolescent girls are progressively losing their

moral value in contemporary Kumasi society. The social influence that artists and other prominent celebrities have on society as role models has brought about the practice of using them as brand ambassadors for certain commercial products even in the area of fashion. Thus, musicians have a significant impact on society in a variety of ways where young people emulate their fashion choices and moral lifestyles. When these fashion choices and lifestyles conflict with the morally accepted norms of dressing and behaving in the society in question, it promotes moral turpitude among the upcoming folks who see these musicians as role models. In Ghana, for instance, Ebony of blessed memory was criticized by some sections of Ghanaians who saw her brand to be advocating nudity through her fashion choices as a musician and role model to the female youth.

Other social vices, including pre-marital sex, drug abuse, and violence, are also promoted by some of these songs, in addition to nudity. Censorship was one method of curbing the impact of profane songs on young people, but the advent of democracy and mass media which promote free speech seems to have given media outlets and musicians the freedom to express themselves without concern for the moral repercussions of their utterances in the society. For example, the rise of *Asakaa* music as the newest Hiplife music fad in Kumasi has had an impact on the city's youth that is both beneficial and harmful. In Kumasi, the genre has been a successful industry that has helped several gifted young people from underprivileged circumstances to improve their standard of living through their abilities to sing and rap. Despite this, the genre is a replica of American Hip-hop that has been adapted for native audiences. The *Asakaa* music genre, commonly enjoyed in Kumasi, Ghana, shares many similarities with American Hip-hop. The primary distinction lies in its use of the Twi dialect, while English is also occasionally incorporated. Unfortunately, *Asakaa*, along with other Hip-hop forms of music, has adopted some of the negative aspects of American Hip-hop, which include promoting deviant lifestyles and immoral behaviours. For instance, in the United States, musical beefs have led to violent situations, whereas in Ghana, it has primarily been a competition to showcase lyrical skills. However, numerous *Asakaa* tracks glorify immoral practices, such as drug abuse, pre-marital sex, cyber fraud, and violence. These themes can exert a harmful influence on the youth in Kumasi, negatively impacting their moral and social development.

## **Conclusion**

The music culture in Kumasi has undergone a significant shift, with traditional music giving way to a diverse range of genres influenced by modern technology. Highlife and Hiplife are currently the most popular genres in the region, and they have been heavily influenced by Western cultures in terms of lyrical content, visual elements, and instrumentation. Unfortunately, many Hiplife songs contain themes of sexual immorality, drug abuse, and violence, while their visual components often showcase semi-nudity, which goes against Kumasi's socio-moral values.

To promote positive moral values in music and media, policymakers, educators, and artists must collaborate to develop effective strategies. One possible approach is to establish policies and legislation that censor moral content in contemporary Ghanaian music in both audio and audio-visual formats. Another strategy is to encourage the integration of traditional music into various levels of the school curriculum, allowing students to appreciate and learn from the moral values contained in these songs. Furthermore, music associations in Ghana must educate their members on the importance of producing songs that promote good character formation among the youth and perpetuate moral values.

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