

The Intercultural Performance Activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble (1964–2014)

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the intercultural practices of the Ghana Dance Ensemble (GDE) from 1964 to 2014. Intercultural performance, often defined as an intentional artistic encounter between diverse cultural sensibilities, has become important in the increasingly globalising world. In recent decades, intercultural performance has attracted a wealth of scholarship and theoretical attempts, as theorists investigate the nature and purpose of such encounters. Such scholarship on intercultural performances has largely come from the Western world as a result of the pioneering work in ‘conscious cultural exchange’ by practitioners like Antonin Artaud, Peter Brook, Ariane Mnouchkine and others in the twentieth century and into the 21st century.

While critical interculturalism has concentrated on the need for a more nuanced and balanced view of intercultural theatre practice and scholarship, it appears to have neglected intercultural practices between cultures within a nation. By investigating the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, I set out to address the gap with a micro-concentration in this study. I argue that, since the diverse ethnic groups within Ghana have distinct cultural traditions and languages, interactions between these cultures at the level of performance, qualify for discussion as intercultural performance rather than Rustom Bharucha’s ‘intracultural’ performance.

In order to understand the nature of the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, I define the inter-ethnic performance activities of the group within the nation as micro-intercultural performance, and the international exchanges and performance activities as macro-intercultural performance. This view of inter-ethnic performance as intercultural performance at the micro-level suggests that parallels exist between discourses on intercultural practice at the macro-level, and inter-ethnic performance within the nation.

Matrixing postcolonial theory and intercultural performance theory, this qualitative single-case study adopts an interpretivist paradigm to examine both the micro- and macro-intercultural performance activities of the GDE. Through discourse analysis, I

examine the historical conditions that led to the formation of the GDE and how macro-intercultural issues of power relations, ethics of representation and cultural hegemony find resonances at the micro-level due to ethnic differences. Furthermore, the GDE's position as a postcolonial product cannot be overlooked when discussing its external relations; exchanges and festival participation, with imperialistic cultures that have a tendency of 'othering' foreign cultures.

The ethnic diversity of the GDE and its multi-ethnic repertoire of dances, and musical and vocal styles, present a utopian view of the nation as a perfect example of the concept of unity in diversity. However, the reality of ethnic difference, as experienced and performed by the members of the GDE, fractures this utopian view of the company and the nation at large.

In its fifty years' existence the GDE, with its micro-intercultural performance practices, has succeeded in bringing diverse indigenous cultural traditions of Ghana to Ghanaians for mutual appreciation, even as the members work through their own internal ethnic differences.

The study also reveals that, while the GDE exercises its own form of agency in macro-intercultural encounters, the company is not shielded from the hegemonic constructs with which its European partners approach the exchange. That notwithstanding, there seems to be a meeting ground between the GDE's focus on authenticity and that of international festival organisers. While the GDE by design promotes authentic Ghanaian cultural traditions, festival organisers ride on such authentic traditions to promote their events.

This study contributes to scholarship on intercultural performance by concentrating on micro-level encounters and drawing parallels between encounters at the macro- and micro-levels. It concludes that micro-level intercultural performance may hold the key to addressing ethical issues in macrolevel intercultural performance discourse.

Opsomming

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die interkulturele gebruike vanaf 1964 tot 2014 van die Ghana Dance Ensemble (GDE). Interkulturele performance, wat dikwels gedefinieer word as intensionele, artistieke kontak tussen diverse kulture, het in die toenemend globaliserende wêreld al hoe belangriker geword. In die onlangse dekades het interkulturele performance a magdom navorsing en teoretiese ondersoeke ontlok soos teoretici die aard en doel van hierdie tipe kontakte ondersoek. Hierdie ondersoeke oor interkulturele performances was meestal afkomstig vanuit die Westerse wêreld as gevolg van die pioniersrol van “bewustelike kulturele wisseling” van praktisyns soos Antonin Artaud, Peter Brook, Ariane Mnouchine en ander in die twintigste eeu tot in die 21ste eeu.

Terwyl kritiese interkulturalisme gekonsentreer het op die noodsaaklikheid van ‘n meer genuanseerde en gebalanseerde uitkyk op interkulturele teaterpraktyke en navorsing, blyk dit dat interkulturele praktyke tussen kulture binne die nasiestaat afgeskeep is. Die gaping van die mikro-konsentrasie sal aangespreek word deur die interkulturele aktiwiteite van die Ghana Dance Ensemble te ondersoek. Ek redeneer dat, aangesien daar diverse groepe in Ghana is met hul eiesoortige kulturele tradisies en tale, performance-interaksies tussen hierdie kulturele nie “intrakulturele” performances is soos deur Rustom Bharucha uitgestip is nie, maar eerder kwalifiseer as interkulturele performances.

Om die aard van die interkulturele aktiwiteite van die Ghana Dance Ensemble te verstaan, het ek die inter-etniese performance-aktiwiteite binne die nasie as mikro-kulturele performance gedefinieer en die internasionale wisseling en performance-aktiwiteite as makro-interkulturele performance gedefinieer. Hierdie uitkyk op die inter-etniese performances as interkulturele performance op ‘n mikro-vlak, doen aan die hand dat parallelle bestaan tussen die diskoerse oor interkulturele praktyke op makro-vlak en inter-etniese performances binne die staat.

Hierdie kwalitatiewe enkelgevallestudie neem die vorm van ‘n interpretativistiese paradigma aan deur postkoloniale teorie en interkulturele performance teorie in ‘n

matriks te verweef om sodoende beide die mikro- en makro-interkulturele performance-aktiwiteite van die GDE te bestudeer. Ek sal deur middel van diskoersanalise die historiese omstandighede wat gelei het tot die skepping van die Ghana Dance Ensemble ondersoek, asook die wyse hoe makro-interkulturele kwessies van magsverhoudings die etiek van uitbeelding en kulturele hegemonie op 'n makro-vlak weens etniese verskille resoneer. Die GDE se posisie as 'n postkoloniale produk kan nie misgekyk word waar die eksterne verhoudings bespreek word nie, asook die wisselwerking en deelnames aan feeste waar imperialistiese kulture die geneigdheid het om vreemde kulture as dié van die “ander” te sien.

Die etniese diversiteit van die Ghana Dance Ensemble en sy multi-etniese repertoire van danse, en musikale en vokale style, bied 'n utopiese beeld van die nasie as 'n perfekte voorbeeld van die konsep “eenheid in diversiteit”. Die realiteit, aan die ander kant, van etniese verskille soos dit deur die lede van die GDE beleef word, versplinter hierdie utopiese uitkyk van die geselskap en die groter nasie wat dit verteenwoordig.

Gedurende die vyftigjarige bestaan van die GDE, het die mikro-interkulturele performance praktyke dit reggekry om diverse inheemse kulturele tradisies vanuit Ghana na Ghanese te bring om te waardeer, selfs al moet die lede deur hul eie interne etniese verskille werk.

Die studie het ook getoon dat, alhoewel die GDE sy eie vorm van agentskap in makro-interkulturele ontmoeting het, die geselskap nie geskans is teen die hegemoniese konstruksies wat die Europese medewerkers in hul benadering tot die wisseling bring nie. Desnieteenstaande is daar 'n gemeenskaplike grond tussen die GDE se fokus op outentisiteit en die internasionale feeste se organiseerders. In essensie fokus die GDE op die bevordering van outentieke Ghanese kulturele tradisies, terwyl die feeste se organiseerders op die rug van hierdie tradisionele performances ry om hul feeste te bemark.

Hierdie studie dra by tot die literatuur oor interkulturele performance deur op die mikro-vlak te konsentreer. Dit trek parallels met die ontmoetings tussen makro- en mikro-vlak. Die studie se gevolgtrekkings is dat mikro-vlak- interkulturele performance die sleutel mag hou tot die ondersoek van etiese kwessies wat binne die makro-vlak- interkulturele performance diskoerse ontstaan.

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CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the main motivation for this study which examines the intercultural performance activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble (GDE) from 1964 to 2014, with the exception of the inclusion of a 2017 encounter. In order to establish the roadmap that led to the realisation of this inquiry, I will give an overview of the theoretical/conceptual foundations of the study, the research design and methodology, and a general outline of the dissertation. In addition, I also present the problem statement, list the specific objectives for the study and state the general hypothesis that started off this inquiry. In order to place the study within its socio-historical context, I furthermore present a brief historical background of ethnic conflict and differences in Ghana; leading to the main focus of the study. While ethnic conflict is not the main focus of the study, its introduction provides a strong foundation for examining the GDE as a national unifier, through inter-ethnic artistic representation.

1.2 Motivation for the Study

When I first registered my intention to pursue a doctoral degree at Stellenbosch University, my interest was in the use of technology in Ghanaian theatre performance. While I was interested in knowing why there is minimal use of technology in Ghanaian theatre performances, I soon realised that the interest was too fragile and unfounded to support a PhD research. When I communicated the situation to my chosen supervisor, with whom I had begun preliminary work towards a proposal, he was supportive and happy that it happened sooner than later. This is mainly because I was fortunate to have discovered this truth before officially commencing my doctoral study.

As I was musing on a previous research interest in intercultural performance, I had an amazing epiphany one afternoon in my office at the University of Ghana. It is not unusual for the GDE to rehearse, on a daily basis, at the Mawere Opoku Dance Hall just behind my office. I had become so accustomed to the rhythm of their instruments and the songs they sing during rehearsals, that I soon found myself

singing songs the lyrics of which I did not understand and moving to rhythms whose origins I did not have any connection with. The energy with which the group performed, could be felt by anyone who heard the rhythm, the songs, the shouts and ululations coming from the ethnically diverse members.

Interestingly, I had been aware of the fact that the group is ethnically diverse; however, it was not until that fateful afternoon during one of their usual rehearsals that I made the connection between what the group stands for and my interest in intercultural performance. This epiphany came when I listened to the group making change after change in rhythm, and lyrics which reflected the rhythms and languages of the diverse ethnic cultures of Ghana.

The foundation of this research interest in intercultural performance within the nation was laid during my MPhil research, which examined the dramaturgy of a Ghanaian playwright, Efo Kodjo Mawugbe. Mawugbe was a playwright who had a penchant for portraying multicultural Ghana through his use of ethnically diverse character names.

In my preliminary investigation of the historical foundation of the GDE, I construed that the group represented Ghanaian culture in an increasingly globalising world that constantly seeks cultural homogenisation. The group's role as a cultural reclamation machinery was identified on two fronts. Firstly, it was used as part of the cultural reclamation efforts after political independence to counteract the damaging attack on the perception of Ghanaians regarding their cultural forms. Secondly, its continuous existence constantly countermands the global cultural homogenising efforts in Ghana, by reclaiming cultural space through its activities on the global stage.

I therefore set out to design the study as a case study covering the period between 1964 and 2014, representing fifty years of the group's existence.

1.3 Summary of Research Design and Methodology

In this study a single-case study design was employed to address my main aim of studying the intercultural performance activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble. As a qualitative study, my main tools for data collection were interviews, focus group discussion, document analysis and direct observation.

The discursive approach to meaning-making was used in order to gain insight into the discourse on intercultural performance, as it relates to the GDE. This approach allowed me to examine issues that arose from a multi-ethnic work relationship and what these mean within the historical context of the case (Hall, 1997). The discursive approach is more appropriate for the study of the GDE's multi-ethnic work, as issues of power relations, identities and subjectivities are addressed within this frame of reference.

The historical specificity of the GDE's representation of ethnic dances makes the discursive approach suitable for analysing data on the case, as it is concerned with the role discourse plays on issues of culture. As discussed in Chapter 3 of this study, power plays a significant role in discourse, and this role comes through strongly within the practices of representation. The practices of representation are the embodiment of "concepts, ideas and emotions in a symbolic form which can be transmitted and meaningfully interpreted" (Hall, 1997:10).

The case-study methodology with an interpretivist paradigm was selected because, through this approach, I was able to capture in detail the subjective views of the study population within their setting. According to Yin (2003:13) "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". The single-case study design enabled me to achieve the objectives of the study, as I was able to focus exclusively on the case to study it in great depth in order to understand the problem in a comprehensive and satisfactory manner.

1.4 Problem Statement, Research Hypothesis and General Objective

The intercultural activities of the GDE began with its inception, as ethnic dances from all over the country were studied by the company and performed across ethnic boundaries. With the objective to preserve traditional dance forms of Ghana, to develop international co-operation through collaborations, and to strengthen the cultural image of Ghana, the group has played a long-standing role as cultural ambassador. The various international tours, collaborations, and participation in international festivals attest to the intercultural nature of the Ensemble.

However, research¹ on the GDE has not examined the nature of its intercultural activities from when it was established to date, in spite of its inter-ethnic representations and extensive participation in international festivals and other cultural exchanges. I therefore set out to fill this gap through this study by addressing the following question:

In what ways can the activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble be described as intercultural?

To this end, it was hypothesized that there is a certain sense in which inter-ethnic performance within the nation mirrors issues of intercultural performance between cultures geographically separate, as a result of the cultural distinctiveness of each ethnic group. I therefore established the inter-ethnic performance activities of the GDE, as micro-intercultural performance and recaptured intercultural activities between cultures geographically apart, as macro-intercultural performance.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives of the Study

1. Understanding how and why the Ghana Dance Ensemble (GDE) was established.
2. Understanding how the GDE's repertoire of dances were created and performance aesthetics established.
3. Examining how the issue of ethnic hegemony is addressed in the creation of national dances and in the practice of the GDE.
4. Understanding the organisational structure of the GDE.
5. Examining the nature of the GDE's macro-intercultural cultural exchanges and collaborations.
6. Examining the nature of the GDE's intercultural activities at the micro-level.

In order to fully understand the inter-ethnic relations within Ghana and the crucial role the GDE plays as a national unifier, it is important to explore the sociopolitical and historical conditions that created multi-ethnic Ghana. In the following section the

¹ Fabian (1996); Schramm (2000); Adinku (1994, 2000, 2004); Yartey (2000, 2006); Abloso (2007, 2013); Quaye (2006); Schauert (2007, 2014, 2015).

historical and political dimensions of the inter-ethnic situation in Ghana today are briefly discussed, while painting a picture of the inter-ethnic tensions that simmer underneath the relatively peaceful state.

1.5 Contextualising Inter-ethnic Relations in Ghana's Sociopolitical History

1.5.1 Introduction

Rooted in the focus of this study, is the importance of establishing the nature of inter-ethnic relations in the sociopolitical history of Ghana. Rethinking inter-ethnic performance as intercultural performance at the microlevel, has a broader aim of highlighting the distinct nature of each ethnic group in Ghana.

A general understanding of the processes that established the current relationship between the diverse ethnic groups will lay the necessary foundation for understanding the role of the Ghana Dance Ensemble. I will also briefly establish the fact that, even though these ethnic groups are 'united' by the 'imagined' community of the nation, they are by no means homogenous.

1.5.2 Ethnic Tension in Ghana: A Brief Historical Perspective

Ghana has generally been described as a peaceful country that has, over the years, been able to manage its multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural status as a nation. The estimated 25 million people making up the population, belong to either the major or minor ethnic groups within the country. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2010), the major ethnic groups in the country are the Akan, Mole-Dagbani, the Ewe, Ga-Adangme, Guan, Gurma, Grusi, and the Mande. The diversity of the ethnic composition of the population is widened by the fact that each of these major groups are made up of sub-groups, with further diversification in linguistic and cultural norms.

The relative peace Ghana enjoys, however, does not shield the country from occasional conflicts caused by ethnic differences, and religious, economic or political factors (UNDP and NPC report, 2012). Conflict is a major indicator of inherent differences which can be linked to ethnic, ideological, political, or religious factions.

Ghana has a history of intra-inter-ethnic tensions, which can only be understood within the colonial frame that established its foundations. Even though inter-ethnic

tensions existed before the bond of 1844², the agreement laid the necessary foundation for the inter-intra-ethnic conflict that the country records, especially in the Northern Region, today. According to a United Nations Development Programme and National Peace Council report:

The colonialists established structures which would create the conditions for deepened mistrust and tensions between ethnic groups. The fact is that colonial incursions exploited and compounded inter-ethnic relations. The divide-and-rule policies of colonial administrators assured the docility of different ethnic groups and thus shielded them [the colonialists] from the menace of insurrection. In other words, it was feasible to divide ethnic groups and pit them against each other so that they could focus their energies on fighting one another rather than overthrowing colonial governments (2012:9).

The colonial interest in the Gold Coast territories was considered more important, which explains why it was prudent for the colonial administration to pit the ethnic groups against each other, without any consideration for peaceful co-existence. Lentz and Nugent (2000:9) in the same vein, point out the fact that:

The British laid the foundation for today's ethnic identities by imposing a number of 'native states' which they imagined corresponded with established tribal boundaries. Yet, shortly after imposing their authority over what they defined as the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, the British became generally aware that what they labelled 'tribe' did not reflect the political and social realities that they encountered.

The arbitrary policies drafted by the British to achieve their aim to "divide and rule" left the country with a major problem of managing, not only the inter-ethnic conflict that existed prior to the signing of the bond, but also the intra-ethnic conflict. Canterbury and Kendie (2010) noted that conflicts in Ghana have often arisen, among other factors, as a result of ethnic rivalries and polarisation, economic underdevelopment and inequalities, and poor governance. However, they maintain that these factors are rooted in the politics of colonisation, postcolonialism, and neo-liberal globalisation.

The relative peace Ghana has enjoyed over the years is directly linked to the

² An agreement signed by the Fante States that put the signatory states under British protection. The Fante states entered into this agreement to prevent the Asantes from gaining control over the coastal areas of the Gold-Coast, now Ghana.

nation's efforts to address the inherent diversity and potential causes of conflict through: the establishment of the National Peace Council with offices nationwide; participation in the creation of the ECOWAS³ treaties of 1993 and 1999; and periodic educational campaigns on peace (especially during general elections) (UNDP & NPC report, 2012). These measures have become even more necessary in recent times as political parties in Ghana have developed along ethnic lines:

Creating latent conflicts which normally manifest themselves during campaigning and electioneering periods. For example, it is generally thought that the New Patriotic Party and National Democratic Congress, the two leading parties in Ghana are Akan and Ewe biased respectively (UNDP & NPC, 2012:2).

While this tendency to mix politics with ethnicity “predates independence and has become part of the political scene since the anti-colonial struggle” (UNDP and NPC, 2012:2; Tsikata & Seini, 2004), it paints a picture of the delicate balance on which Ghana's ethnic diversity stands.

According to Englebert and Dunn (2013), ethnic groups may be considered the most important of all the political categories in Africa, and ethnic identity the key motivations for individual behaviour in terms of politics. The importance of maintaining a cohesive relationship among the diverse ethnic groups in Ghana is well understood, which explains the existence of the National Peace Council (NPC) with offices across the nation. It is, however, surprising that in the 2012 report by the UNDP⁴ and the NPC research, the cultural policy established by Nkrumah immediately after independence to unite the country through the arts (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005), was not highlighted as a major contributor to the peaceful inter-ethnic relations Ghana enjoys today.

1.5.3 On Ethnic Diversity and Nation Building Efforts

According to Spencer-Oatey (2012:19) “ethnicity is [...] a term that is used to refer to a wide variety of groups who might share a language, historical origins, religion,

³ Acronym for the Economic Community of West African States.

⁴ United Nations Development Programme

identification with a common nation-state or cultural system.” Similarly, Nukunya (2003) describes an ethnic group or tribe as a group of people who share the same cultural beliefs and speak the same language. Thomson (2000:56) also defines an ethnic group basically as a “community of people who have the conviction that they have a common identity and common fate based on issues of origin, kinship ties, traditions, cultural uniqueness, a shared history and possibly a shared language”. This conviction about shared histories and kinship generate strong allegiance among members to their specific ethnic identity.

Ethnic allegiance and mobilisation, according to Thomson (2000), often lie at the heart of political conflicts. He cited the examples of World War II, where notions of ethnicity and nationalism created discord and conflict among Europeans. To foreground the position of ethnicity in the process of nation building, Nukunya (2003:213) pre-empted Englebert and Dunn’s (2013) argument above when he notes that the following

Of all the social groupings [...] the tribe or ethnic group is the one which provokes the deepest emotions in the process of nation-building and modernization. As the largest entity to which people belonged for the most part, before the process started, it has become the rallying point and unit of identification in opposition to the interests of the nation.

Similarly, Thomson (2000) argues that political interaction on the African continent, just as in the West, is influenced by ethnicity. As a result, political leaders consider the reactions of the various ethnic groups towards any decision made in the interest of the nation (ibid).

As mentioned earlier, the causes of conflict in Ghana are wide ranging and border on from religious differences, land and chieftaincy disputes, ethnic differences, to political and economic marginalization (UNDP & NPC, 2012; Oforu, 2013). While ethnic prejudice and discrimination manifest in various areas of the daily lives of Ghanaians, ethnic conflicts have erupted into full-blown armed violence, especially in the Northern Region. The major problem with ethnic conflict is rooted in the fact that:

These are often intractable and difficult to resolve because they border on the very existence or survival of a social group. The intractability, however, also tends to worsen with the introduction of external elements such as political interference [...] (UNDP & NPC, 2012:3).

It is therefore in the interest of the 'imagined community', the nation, to curtail any form of conflict along ethnic lines since it is the most difficult to resolve. The national cultural policy for addressing the need for ethnic cohesion has been the concept of unity in diversity, which acknowledges the ethnic diversity of the nation by adopting a more inclusive approach to nation-building. This effort can clearly be seen during national ceremonies such as Independence Day celebrations and events that require national representation.

The political symbols and emblems of the state, in some way or another, are aimed at projecting a more inclusive governance to which the ethnic diversity of the nation owe allegiance. These issues are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. In spite of these inclusive efforts, it must be noted that the manner in which the people's cultural symbols and traditions are appropriated and used for national purposes, has over the years created misunderstandings.

Culture defines a group of people in a holistic way, which makes cultural representation a practice that demands utmost sensitivity to execute successfully. The contention that usually arises in any nation-building effort through cultural representation, is a result of misrepresentation or under-representation.

1.5.4 Artistic Representation of Ethnic Diversity: The Problem of Defining National Culture through National Ceremony

Ofosu's (2013) article; 'Choreographed national dances: Transcending ethnicity, chieftaincy and politics' provides a clear example of how nationalising representations through national ceremonial dances tends to create a lot of ethnic tension.

He examines the opening ceremony of three international tournaments hosted by Ghana: CAN (Confederation of African Nations) football tournament in 2000 and 2008, and the African Hockey Federation's Cup tournament (AFHF) in 2009. In the two CAN tournaments the choreographers were specifically asked to project the culture of Ghana in artistic terms in the opening ceremony. In the AFHF tournament the artistic representation during the opening ceremony was to reflect "African culture, with Ghanaian cultural undertones" (Ofosu, 2013:39).

He also discusses the festival of cultures organised by the Ghanaian government to commemorate the oil find in Cape Three Points in the Central Region. He notes: “[T]his particular performance was crucial and its approach needed the utmost care in order to get the entire nation involved and connected, since it featured the newly discovered national resource of crude oil [...]” (Ofosu, 2013:39).

In his article Ofosu discusses the difficult position of the Ghanaian choreographer, who must take into consideration the ethnic diversity of the nation in selecting “[...] traditional dances to represent the entire country, since each dance is precise with respect to the region of its origin and symbolic associations” (2013:41). The difficulty is rooted in the fact that cultural representation through symbols relies on the “aspects of our social life that divide us” in ethno-political terms (Ofosu, 2013:40). The choreographer contracted to choreograph the opening ceremony for the CAN 2000, Francis Nii Yartey⁵, soon realised that the development of politics along ethnic lines has created layers of meaning in relation to the use of ethnic symbols.

In Ghana the use of symbols as totemic identification of family, clan or ethnic group is a common cultural practice (Nukunya, 2003). However, the development of politics along ethnic lines has resulted in the adoption or appropriation of ethnic symbols by political parties. Consequently, the use of such symbols in cultural representation often attracts political connotations. Ofosu (2013:40-41) recounts the main conflict that ensued during the CAN 2000 opening ceremony:

Nii Yartey in his wisdom decided to use a common traditional symbol, the umbrella [which is the adopted symbol of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) party], since it is used by almost every royal household across the nation. And this sparked off the crisis; Yartey’s choice of the symbolic umbrella was perceived for its political connotations. A heated controversy ensued, which nearly caused him to abandon the whole project.

The use of the umbrella was not the only bone of contention in this case; the choreographer was also attacked for selecting the majority of dance movements from the Volta Region. This is mainly because the region is the gold mine of the NDC⁶ party, which cemented the ethno-political allegations associated with the

⁵ He was artistic director for the Ghana Dance Ensemble from 1976 to 1992.

⁶ National Democratic Party, which was the ruling party at the time.

umbrella. This turn of events has proven that artistic licence has no place in ethno-political situations, which have the tendency to be volatile.

Similarly the CAN 2008 opening ceremony, which was directed by Godwin Nikoi Kotey, had the main aim of showcasing the ethnic diversity of the nation in artistic terms. The artistic vision for the ceremony was presented in the form of a festival celebration which began with an animal horn-blowing performance known as *Menson*⁷. The selection of the horn-blowing performance for the first part of the ceremony was based on the fact that the horn is a symbol, free of ethno-political associations, that could “represent the summoning of our nation’s people from all regions to converge in unity” (Ofosu, 2013:42).

However, the controversial aspect of the ceremony, according to Ofosu who was assistant choreographer for the event, was the middle section. He notes the following:

The choreographers needed to choose a few dances and a common rhythm to represent the entire nation. Six dances were selected: kete (Ashanti Region), Solma, Damba and Tora (Northern Region), Boborbor and Agbekor (Volta Region), and Kpanlogo (Greater-Accra) (Ofosu, 2013:42).

The Solma rhythm was selected, as the most suitable to bring the diverse ethnic dances together in harmony. Though the selection of dances for the choreography was based entirely on artistic and aesthetic grounds, there were controversies stemming from accusations of underrepresentation. Ofosu’s interaction with some Ghanaians after the performance revealed that people from:

[...] the Greater-Accra, Central, Brong Ahafo, Western, Upper-East and West, and the Ashanti Regions were disgruntled by [the selection of dances]. Whilst some spectators protested that their localities were not represented at all, others also felt their regions were not adequately represented in the dance, (Ofosu, 2013:42).

As the nation becomes experienced in representing the diversity of its citizens through national ceremonies, lessons are learnt in ways that serve to forestall the main triggers of controversy. The success of the 2009 AFHF opening ceremony

⁷ This kind of performance is often found among the Akans, even though horn blowing is a common practice in most Ghanaian societies (Ofosu, 2013).

attests to this fact. The choreographers and directors were successful in their representation of the diverse ethnic cultures, as “dances [...] were chosen evenly across the ethno-political divide of the country”, much to the satisfaction of all, (Ofosu, 2013:42).

Similarly, Nii Yartey’s experience in the CAN 2000 event discussed above, served as a guide in his representational approach for the festival of cultures in 2010. The festival, which marked the inauguration of the jubilee oil discovery, presented an opportune moment to sing songs of national unity. In his concept proposal for the opening ceremony, Yartey (2010:1) proposed that

[t]he celebration will take the form of artistic presentation focusing on the need to bring Ghanaians together irrespective of political affiliation, ethnic or social class to project Ghana internationally, and to bring into focus the importance of the oil find and the partnership that has brought the country thus far.

As the artistic visionary for the ceremony, Yartey envisioned a national durbar of chiefs which draws inspiration from the two main cultures of Ghana: the Northern culture and the Southern culture. These two strands of Ghanaian culture were showcased through dances such as Damba, Bamaaya, Jira and Bawa, representing the Northern culture; and Kete, Agbekor, Kundum and Kpanlogo, representing Southern culture. The main aim of the choreographer was to showcase the uniqueness of regional cultures of the country through music, dance and other forms of art (Yartey, 2010).

This approach of cardinal representation—Northern and Southern—gave Yartey the freedom to choreograph an inclusive form of representation in general terms, avoiding the pitfalls of specific representation. The success of the opening ceremony can be gleaned from Ofosu’s (2013:47) review of the final parts of the event: “[...] the unity dance transcended ethnicity and tribalism, and its resplendent, graceful beauty reassured all Ghanaians that we are one people, and that we need to co-operate as one people to achieve our common goals of development.”

The above notwithstanding, ethnic sentiments and prejudice often give rise to dissatisfaction with regard to national representation. It must therefore be understood that, even though choreographers in the end manage to give a satisfactory representation of the nation, the foregoing discussion demonstrates that “as an exercise in social engineering, the created work [does] not completely satisfy all

ethnic groups by doing full justice to each artistic heritage in full and equal measure” (Ofosu, 2013:43). This brings to the fore the role of the Ghana Dance Ensemble as a nationalising dance company, which seems to satisfy the representational demands of the ethnic diversity of Ghana.

1.5.4 The Ghana Dance Ensemble as Inter-ethnic Intermediary

As mentioned earlier, it is surprising that in the comprehensive 2012 report by the UNDP and the NPC research the cultural policy established by Nkrumah immediately after independence to unite the country through performance (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005), and the current practice of the GDE, were not highlighted as major contributors to the cohesive ethnic relations Ghana enjoys today. The GDE has played a major role in the nation-building process since its inception in 1962. Through its practice of ‘authentic’ representation, the group has, over the years, been able to satisfy the need for inter-ethnic representation in Ghana.

The problems of artistic representation of ethnic cultures, as established in the previous section, are addressed by the GDE through a practice of cultural representation that is deeply rooted in its repertoire of dances and cultural traditions. The historical development of the GDE and how its formation has served the purpose of unifying the multi-ethnic nation through performance, is a major indicator of the key role the arts play towards national development.

As national ambassadors, the GDE have succeeded in demystifying the ethnic diversity of the nation soon after independence. This was achieved by bringing together dancers and musicians from various ethnic cultures across the nation. This inter-ethnic environment enabled the dancers and musicians to learn each other’s dances, and through that, learn to appreciate each other’s cultures. While ethno-political sentiments are part of the national fabric of Ghana, the GDE has proven, through learning to perform each other’s cultural traditions in an environment of mutual respect, that Ghanaians can co-exist while performing their diversity as a nation.

1.6 Summary and Outline of the Remainder of the Thesis

Chapter 2 comprises a discussion of the methodological paradigm underlying this study, which directed my research procedure. I delved deeper into the research design and justified my use of a single-case study with an interpretivist approach.

In Chapter 3, literature on related concepts is presented and discussed, such as culture, representation, ethnicity, multiculturalism, cultural diversity, and intercultural communication, intercultural performance theory and postcolonial theory is—all of which provide a framework for the study of the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

Chapter 4 begins with a discussion of dance in the traditional Ghanaian context and its role in the postcolonial cultural reclamation strategies. This served as background to the establishment of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, within the context of nation-building. The discussion is then narrowed down to focus on the historical development of the GDE and how its formation has served the purpose of unifying the multi-ethnic nation through performance.

Chapter 5 establishes the internal structure of the GDE as a multi-ethnic site, and reveals the deliberate strategy, that brought together dancers and musicians from the ethnic diversity of the country, towards the promotion of national unity.

In Chapter 6 the micro-intercultural activities of the GDE within the nation are discussed against the background of how the group's performances have been received within the nation.

Chapter 7 presents an analysis of the macro-intercultural activities of the GDE, by situating the company as a product of the postcolonial and historical conditions of its setting, and how this influences the reception of its performances at international level. The international exchanges and collaborations between the group and visiting choreographers are also examined.

Chapter 8 ties together conclusively all the chapters and presents recommendations generated by the study.

1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the main motivation that set me on this research path was discussed and the aims and objectives of the study were spelt out. The research design for the study towards addressing the research questions, was also briefly discussed, along with the problem statement.

I also briefly touched on the sociopolitical and historical conditions that established Ghana as a multi-ethnic state, and addressed the issue of inter-ethnic conflict and its political associations. This discussion led to my review of national ceremonies and representational issues arising from underrepresentation or misrepresentation. This brief history is a prelude to the in-depth discussion of the colonial and postcolonial history, which led to the formation of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, in the following chapters.

In the following chapter the methodological approach to this case study will be presented – from data collection tools to analytical framework employed for answering the remaining research questions, viz.: What is the organisational structure of the GDE? What is the nature of the GDE's macro intercultural exchange and collaborations? What is the nature of the GDE's intercultural activities at the micro-level?

These questions will guide my analysis of the data collected, in order to address the main aim of the study, viz. explaining the nature of the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble at the micro and macro levels.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the methodology employed in addressing the research questions set forth for this study will be discussed. To this end, I elaborate on the methods and tools used for data collection as well as the analytical approach employed to engage with the data. The challenges encountered during this process are also highlighted as well as the steps followed to work around these challenges.

The theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin this study are postcolonial theory and intercultural performance. The main aim of the study is to understand the ways in which the activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble can be described as intercultural. The main assumption guiding this study, is that inter-ethnic interactions in performative terms at the micro- (national) level of performance, to some extent parallel intercultural performance at the macro- (international) level.

Taking the Ghana Dance Ensemble with its activities as case study, I examine the dynamics of intercultural performance at the micro- and macro-levels.

2.2 Research Approach and Philosophical Paradigm

No research exists in a vacuum devoid of established methodology of some sort or another. Research is hinged on a philosophy which defines its processes and analytical framework. Based on the choice of philosophical paradigm or assumptions, a suitable methodology is then employed which entails data collection tools, data analysis and interpretation approach.

Of the various paradigms in scientific research, I have selected the interpretivist paradigm on which to base this research, as it focuses on the way human beings make meaning of their lives and the world around them through subjective lenses. According to Scott and Morrison (2006:130), this paradigm essentially reveals how

[s]ocial actors negotiate meanings about their activity in the world. Social reality therefore consists of their attempts to interpret the world and many other such attempts by those still living and those long since dead. These are real and constitute the world as it is.

The basic assumption made by interpretivists is that human beings construct their experiences of life from a subjective perspective, and therefore such experiences

cannot be studied within an objective (positivist) framework. Consequently, “the data collected and analysed have qualitative rather than quantitative significance” (Morrison, 2012:27).

From the above, there seems to be a direct correlation between the interpretivist philosophy and constructivism which, according to Stake (1995), is the belief that knowledge is created through social interpretations, as opposed to the theory of an objective reality that exists regardless the meanings social actors bring to it.

The interpretivist paradigm is directly linked with qualitative research, as they both place a lot of emphasis on subjectivity. According to Stake (1995:99) “most contemporary qualitative researchers nourish the belief that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered. The world we know is a particularly human construction”. This study is qualitative and its justification is hinged on the fact that qualitative research essentially describes and seeks to understand the meaning behind social experience (Berg, 2007), such as the work of the GDE.

My choice of the qualitative approach for this study is backed by the quality of this method to delve deep into the richness, the depth, the multidimensional and the complex sociocultural context that form the focus of this study. As qualitative research celebrates the nuances of our daily lives, it has the capacity to advance knowledge that explains contextual phenomena in great depth (Mason, 2002:1).

Drawing on the philosophical tradition established above, qualitative research puts the subjective perspective of participants at the centre of the inquiry. It also aims at capturing a comprehensive view of the sociocultural frame within which the research is situated because “researchers can only make sense of the data collected if they are able to understand the data in a broader [...], social and historical context” (Morrison, 2012:27). The nature of qualitative research grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, makes it instrumental for understanding the meaning people ascribe to their experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

Relating the qualities of this method to my research, it became apparent that in order to understand the nature of the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, the research method had to be qualitative. The purpose of this research was to explore the ways in which the activities of the GDE can be viewed as intercultural through the work and social experiences of the members and artistic director. The

data collected therefore reflected the subjective opinions and views of the stakeholders, including mine as researcher/witness, with regard to their understanding of their role as dancers and musicians within a multi-ethnic dance company.

2.3 Position of the Researcher, Research Challenges and Mitigation

It is very important to establish my position as a researcher in this study in order to foreground my own biases. Merriam (1998) notes that the researcher as the main instrument of the research process, especially in a qualitative study, brings his/her own subjectivities to the research. It is therefore important to identify and establish biases and assumptions, as they affect the entire process from data collection through to reporting of findings.

As a Ghanaian belonging to a specific ethnic group from the Northern Region, I have been culturally trained with certain fallacies about other ethnic groups. The possibility of these assumptions affecting the research process was very high. However, it helped that I was acutely aware of my own conceptions about other ethnic groups before going into the field to collect data; and this awareness also guided my interpretations of the findings. Peshkin (1998:17) in his paper on subjectivity in a multi-ethnic high school, notes that

it is no more useful for researchers to acknowledge simply that subjectivity is an invariable component of their research than it is for them to assert that their ideal is to achieve objectivity. Beginning with the premise that subjectivity is inevitable, [...]. [He argues] that researchers should systematically seek out their subjectivity, not retrospectively when the data have been collected and the analysis is complete, but while their research is actively in progress. The purpose of doing so is to enable researchers to be aware of how their subjectivity may be shaping their inquiry and its outcomes.

Apart from acknowledging my ethnic assumptions and my identity as a Ghanaian being familiar with the research environment was crucial. Following Peshkin's (1998) suggestion, I was aware of my subjectivity and biases early on in the research process. I had to 'empty' myself of any assumed knowledge of the research environment in order to allow the views of the participants and the content of the collected data to speak to the research aims and objectives. This is mainly because I am well acquainted with the Ghana Dance Ensemble through my position as an assistant lecturer at the University of Ghana.

Constant awareness of my own subjectivities served as check for me, which enabled me to distance myself from the environment in order to be an objective researcher. On the other hand, my knowledge of the environment also helped define the study by setting boundaries for data collection and providing scope of analysis. This position is backed by Peshkin (1998:18) who notes that “one’s subjectivities could be seen as virtuous, for bias is the basis from which researchers make a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities, and joined to the data they have collected”.

Furthermore, my ability to speak other ethnic languages was an advantage in this particular research. During the Focus Group, for instance, I was able to switch between languages to explain concepts and questions pertaining to the research in order to elicit the necessary responses from the participants. One of my telephonic interviews was entirely in Twi (an Akan language) because the participant didn’t speak English.

The major challenge in the entire research process was lack of funding. As a result, I had to work to pay for my studies while funding the cost of the entire research. Apart from funding, it was difficult to combine a full-time job at the university with full-time studies. However, the distance studying gave me the luxury of working extensively on my research outside work hours. It also helped that the focus of my study, the Ghana Dance Ensemble, is situated within my work environment, a factor which minimised the cost involved in the research process.

2.3 Research Procedure and Approach to Research Ethics

When I decided to embark on this research project, it was necessary to follow the appropriate process for successful research by making certain ethical considerations, as required by Stellenbosch University. The artistic director of the Ghana Dance Ensemble was contacted and informed of my research project. He then directed me to the administrative artistic director of the Ghana Dance Ensemble at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. After explaining the nature and import of the project, they both granted me permission to proceed with the research.

The artistic director at the Institute of African Studies took a lot of interest in this project and recommended a number of books and loaned me books from his library.

I then provided him with copies of the interview consent form designed for the project as per the template designed by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Stellenbosch University.

As the focus of my research is the Ghana Dance Ensemble, it was necessary to interview the members, the artistic director and the surviving founder of the Ensemble. The artistic director introduced me to the leader of the group who, in turn, introduced me to all thirty-seven (37) members of the group during one of their rehearsal sessions.

I met with the members and introduced myself and my research project. After selecting the members who would participate in the study (based on their willingness to participate), The purpose and objective of the study were explained and members were encouraged to ask questions. After collecting the data through interviews – telephonic and face-to-face – and focus group discussions, I transcribed and coded the data, using grounded coding, for analysis and reporting of findings.

The standard ethical guidelines of Stellenbosch University were strictly adhered to; these include the right to confidentiality, obtaining informed consent from all parties involved and an openness about what the research will be used for. Ethical statements and legal implications of the research are necessary and must be spelt out to all involved and presented in the design of the research (Scott and Morrison, 2006). The need to protect the human subjects who participated in the research is at the heart of my ethical considerations (Yin, 2009), all the participants were therefore assured of their privacy and anonymity, and stated clearly that their participation was entirely voluntary.

The purpose of this research makes it possible to collect data and report findings without the need to match the views expressed by participants to their identity. Moreover, the assurance of anonymity and privacy made it easier, especially for the GDE members, to be more open about their opinions regarding the operations of the company. Special encryptions (see Section 2.7.3) were therefore developed for each participant in keeping with ethical standards.

2.4 Research Design

Scott and Morrison (2006) define research design as a schema or plan on which the research is established. It is the blueprint that lays out the objective and purpose of the research while outlining the process by which the objective is attained. According to Yin (2009:18) “a research design is the logic that links the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial questions of a study. Every empirical study has an implicit, if not explicit, research design”.

This study examines the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble from 1964 to 2014. It is a single-case study design, which allowed me to “devote careful attention to the case” (Yin, 2004:5) in order to understand the nature of the GDE’s performance activities and how such activities may be seen as intercultural. A single-case study design with an interpretivist approach was therefore employed in order to answer the research questions developed to address the problem.

Using a qualitative methodology makes the study an empirical inquiry which is more suitable for this kind of research, as it enabled me to begin my data collection by asking questions, extracting information from performance records, documents, interviews, and focus group discussions. The interpretivist research approach allowed me to make sense of the inter-ethnic relationship that exists between members of the Ghana Dance Ensemble through their professional interaction as dancers and musicians within the company (Walsham, 1993).

In justifying the single-case study design, Yin (2009) notes that, under circumstances where a phenomenon represents the ‘critical case’, it may be used to test a well-formulated theory. It may also be used to “confirm, challenge, or extend theory where a single case exists to test” that particular theory (ibid, 38). Yin (2009:38) further explains that

[t]he single case can then be used to determine whether a theory’s propositions are correct or whether some alternative set of explanations might be more relevant. In this manner, [...] the single case can represent a significant contribution to knowledge and theory-building. Such a study can even help re-focus future investigations in an entire field.

From Yin’s submission above, my aim to define and test the intercultural activities of the GDE against established theoretical and conceptual frames of intercultural performance, is justified. As discussed in Chapter 3, there are certain ways in which

the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble mirror what pertains at the international level. There therefore are lessons that the macro-intercultural may draw from the micro-intercultural for a more ethical representation of cultures other than their own. This may confirm, challenge, or test the existing theory of intercultural performance, especially in the area of ethics of representation.

In this single-case study design the discursive-approach to meaning making was followed in order to gain insight into the discourse on intercultural performance as it relates to the Ghana Dance Ensemble. This approach allowed me the freedom to interrogate issues that arise from a multi-ethnic work relationship and what they mean within the historical context of the case (Hall, 1997). The discursive approach is more appropriate for the study of the multi-ethnic GDE work, as issues of power relations, identities and subjectivities are addressed within this frame of reference.

The historical specificity of the GDE's representation of ethnic dances makes the discursive approach suitable for analysing data on the case, as it is concerned with the role of discourse on culture. As discussed in Chapter 2, power plays a significant role in discourse and this role comes through strongly within the practices of representation. The practices of representation are the embodiment of "concepts, ideas and emotions in a symbolic form which can be transmitted and meaningfully interpreted" (Hall, 1997:10).

According to Yin (2009:13) "[...] the case study as a research strategy comprises an all-encompassing method –with the logic of design incorporating specific approaches to data collection and to data analysis". In this study a discursive single-case design was used as a framework through which I applied discourse analysis to individual interviews, focus group discussions and document data. The single-case design ensures that the specificity of the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble is given full attention, since intercultural work of any kind is site-specific (Lo and Gilbert, 2002).

Given the nature of intercultural performance practice as encompassing several disciplines, it can be gleaned from the survey of related literature in Chapter 2 that this study is at the crossroads of culture. Consequently, using discourse analysis as the main analytical framework serves to pull resources from cultural theory,

postcolonial theory, intercultural communication theory, and history to provide comprehensive analysis of the nature of the GDE's intercultural activities.

2.4.1 Why Case Study Methodology?

As stated earlier, the main aim for this study was to examine the nature of the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble through its performances as a multi-ethnic dance company.

The case-study methodology was chosen because of its ability to capture in detail the subjective views of the study population within their setting. According to Yin (2003:13) "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". Woodside (2010:2) in reference to Yin's definition above has noted that

[...] CSR [case study research] is not limited to contemporary phenomenon or real-life contexts, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. [...] The defining feature of CSR lies in the supreme importance placed by the researcher on acquiring data resulting in describing, understanding, predicting, and/or controlling the individual case.

According to Woodside (2010), case study research is an inquiry that focuses on describing, understanding, predicting and controlling a phenomenon (process, person, organisation, group, culture or nationality). Therefore the main objective of any kind of case study research could come from a combination of any of the above-mentioned processes (ibid).

The case study researcher's principal objective is to have a deep understanding of the "actors, the interactions, sentiments, and behaviours occurring for a specific process through time [...]" (Woodside, 2010:16). The emic data received from participants becomes an etic interpretation and representation for the researcher through "description and explanation of emic meaning as well as building composite accounts of the process based on data triangulation" (ibid).

As the main aim was to describe and understand the nature of the intercultural activities of the GDE, I was able to build a composite account of the group's processes, based on the multiple data sources. I gathered information from: historical accounts of the GDE's practice written by the founders and some original

members; observation; focus group discussion; document analysis; and interviews of members, artistic director and one of the founders of the GDE.

Merriam (1998) notes that unlike many other forms of research methodologies the case-study does not utilise any particular method of data collection or analysis. As mentioned in the preceding section, both the data collection methods and the analytical frame employed for the study, emanated from the needs of the research topic and the reviewed literature.

Similarly, Yin (2003) says that the case study approach makes use of multiple methods of data collection, such as interviews, archival records, document reviews, direct participant observations and thick descriptions of the case being studied. Using multiple data collection methods, ensured a deeper understanding of the defined case (Woodside, 2010) and supported the purpose of the single-casestudy methodology, as it allowed me to devote attention to the case (Yin, 2004).

Fieldwork was started in October 2015 and ended in July 2016. After this period, I still went back to the group to seek clarification from individual members on aspects of their operations. I was also called upon by either members of the group or the artistic director whenever there choreographers visited the country to collaborate with the group. I did a lot of observation during the initial stages of the research in order to have a general idea of the relationship that existed between members of the group.

The correct procedure required by the case study design was followed in order to ensure reliability of data (Yin, 2009).

2.5 Sampling Methods

As this study is a single-case study, the case being the Ghana Dance Ensemble, the purposive sampling method was used. According to Palys (2008:697) “there is no one best sampling strategy because which is best will depend on the context in which researchers are working and the nature of their research objective(s)”.

Palys further claims that purposive sampling is primarily linked with qualitative research, as such research is much more interested in case study analysis, rather than the general tendency of a larger group. When it comes to sampling strategy in

research, the research objective often prescribes what kind of sampling will be appropriate for achieving the stated objective(s).

As the Ghana Dance Ensemble was selected to study their intercultural activities, the members, the artistic director, and the surviving founder were the respondents for the study.

2.6 Data Collection and Fieldwork Practice

At the outset of the research, information on the members from the office of the artistic director was requested. However, the information requested, was not available. I therefore had to design a simple questionnaire to collect data of the members that included name, ethnicity, region of origin, hometown, place of birth, indigenous language and frequency of visits to the hometown. This initial information, gave me a general idea of the ethnic diversity of the group and their level of attachment to their ethnic origins. This data collection method is described by Edwards and Holland (2013: 30) as ethnographic, as “ethnography is itself constructed from multiple qualitative methods, including observation and participant observation, and can incorporate the collection of demographic and other statistical data about the researched as appropriate.”.

Mixed methods for data collection was used in this single-case study. As established before, the case study supports multiple methods of data collection (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). According to Edwards and Holland (2013:40), “different types of interviews can be used in the same study, individual interviews combined with focus groups, face-to-face with telephone or email interviews, and all combined with different types of documentary and archival data”. In addition to direct observation, I used unstructured and semi-structured interviews, face-to-face and telephone, focus group discussion, and archival records to collect data for analysing the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

According to Yin (1999) using multiple data collection strategies gives adds to the weight of the collected data, as it brings the various sources into a complementary dialogue, because they share the same questions. The complementary dialogue ensures that “investigators [are able to] address more complicated research questions and collect a richer and stronger array of evidence than can be accomplished by a single method alone” (Yin, 2009:63).

Pattinson and Woodside (2007) also recommend that data triangulation should be used as a way of achieving accuracy in case-study research. Considering the fact that this study is designed as a single-case study, it is especially important to triangulate data in order to achieve a deeper insight into the study and to ensure accuracy of data collected.

2.6.1 Personal Interviews

In order to understand the inner workings of the Ghana Dance Ensemble as an inter-ethnic dance company in relation to intercultural performance, the various stakeholders involved had to be interviewed. Personal interviews represented a very rich source of information that helped me to understand the views of the stakeholders about their work, which in turn put the focus of the research in perspective.

The subjective views of the participants were vital, considering the fact that I was working within the interpretivist paradigm which focuses on how “social actors negotiate meanings about their activity in the world” (Scott and Morrison, 2006:130). Their interpretations of the activities they are professionally involved in, therefore represent a very significant aspect of the study, as it helped to answer questions about the intercultural activities of the group.

Woodside and Wilson (2003) have noted the importance of interviewing multiple participants in order to gain insight into what motivates their actions in the world. I conducted a face-to-face interview with six stakeholders: the surviving founder of the group, the artistic director, a former artistic director, the leader of the group, and two dancers (male and female).

In these interviews unstructured and semi-structured methods were used. The interviews were conducted during the initial stages of fieldwork, in order to have an in-depth understanding of the GDE as an inter-ethnic dance company, and how their micro- (national) and macro- (international) activities put the company in the frame of intercultural performance. In discussing the effectiveness of semi-structured interviews in qualitative research, Edwards and Holland (2013:3) state that it points towards:

a perspective regarding knowledge as situated and contextual, requiring the researcher to ensure that relevant contexts are brought into focus so that the

situated knowledge can be produced. Meanings and understandings are created in an interaction, which is effectively a co-production, involving the construction or reconstruction of knowledge.

Through the interviews therefore I ensured that the discussions were guided in a way that focused the interactions towards producing meaning in relation to the research questions. All the interviews were conducted mainly in English, with some local languages interspersed, as the need arose. The interviews took place within the participants' work environment in order to ensure maximum comfort and convenience (Edwards and Holland, 2013). My interview with the artistic director and the three members provided insight into the internal relationship of the members, which introduced another method of data collection—direct observation, in order to verify the information.

4.6.2 Direct Observation

Direct observation, though one of case study's strong data collection tools in terms of its ability to generate insightful data about a case (Woodside and Wilson, 2003), was not originally one of the methods chosen for this study. After my initial interview with the participants, it became necessary to observe the group in their natural environment in order to verify the claims made by some members during the interviews.

The observations served to affirm some of the claims made, but it revealed a deeper set of ethnic dynamics at play which are subtler than understood by the participants. These are discussed in Chapter 5.

2.6.3 Telephonic Interview

As a prelude to my focus group discussion, telephonic interviews were conducted involving 25 out of the 36 members of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, based on members' willingness to participate. Edwards and Holland (2013:48) observed that "in telephone interviews the researcher and participant are each in, and in control of, their own separate space, and possibly at a considerable distance, although their exchange is synchronous in time". They further highlighted some of its advantages as being faster, cheaper and more convenient when working with participants who are hard to reach.

Apart from its being cheaper and faster, the telephonic interviews helped me to contact participants during times when the dancers and musicians were on leave. It also prevented any unnecessary delay with the research, because I did not have to wait for the members to return to work to have access to them.

Another practical reason for using this method was to be able to discuss “sensitive topics, for confidentiality/privacy or convenience” (Edwards & Holland, 2013:48). Issues of inter-ethnic relations are very sensitive and this method made it easier for participants to discuss their personal views and experiences on the issue in the comfort of their own space.

The main disadvantages of this method ‘the lack of face-to-face contact and so lack of information about the other from their appearance, non-verbal communication in the interaction and the physical context’ (ibid), did not override its benefits for this study, as it provided the avenue through which sensitive issues were discussed. In addition, since the data from the telephonic interviews formed the basis of discussions in the focus group, I had the opportunity to have face-to-face contact, to see their appearance, and to read their body language.

To benefit fully from the advantages of this method, I followed the three logical categories proposed by Burke and Miller (2001) for conducting telephonic interviews: before, during and after. Before I started, the contact details of all the members of the GDE were collected; some personally gave their phone numbers to me. The telephone numbers of those who could not be reached personally, were obtained from the group leader and other members. Each time I placed a call to interview them, I revealed how their contact details were obtained before I proceeded to state my mission.

I began by outlining specific questions to ask each participant (depending on whether they were dancers or musicians), across the spectrum of the three categories. I downloaded call recorder software on my phone to be able to record the interviews. I called each participant and introduced myself, the research topic and what the information will be used for (ibid). I informed each participant that I would be recording the conversation and obtained prior consent from each participant. I also communicated the maximum length of the interview and issues of confidentiality

before starting the interview. The duration of the interviews ranged from four to ten minutes, depending on each participant's experience and my follow-up questions.

After interviewing 25 members, the collected data were revisited for accuracy (Burke and Miller, 2001). I then prepared the data for analysis by uploading the recording on my computer and labelling it by participant names. Each file was transcribed and labelled with the respondent's name for easy access during analysis.

2.6.4 Focus Group Discussions

I conducted one focus group discussion involving ten participants. The selection of participants was based on information gained from the telephone conversations, and also the number of years they have been members of the group. Both dancers and musicians were selected to ensure that the ethnic diversity of the group was reflected. There were five dancers and five musicians who were made up of: two Dagombas, four Ewes, two Gas, One Asante and one Fante.

The discussions were based on six broad areas: intercultural communication competence, micro- intercultural activities, macro- intercultural activities, costume, and work relationship with visiting choreographers and musicians. According to Edwards and Holland (2013:38), focus group discussion can

provide conditions in which people feel comfortable discussing [...] experiences, particularly shared experiences. Agreement between group members can help to build an elaborated picture of their views; disagreement may lead to participants defending their views and provide further explanation.

The information from this discussion proved very insightful and threw more light on my earlier interviews, an analysis of which will be the focus of Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

2.6.5 Document Analysis

Document review was one of my data collection methods. Documents analysed can be either electronic or hard copy and cover a wide range of materials from performance reviews, contracts, reports, letters, funding proposals, newspapers, etc. According to Bowen (2009), documents provide historical insight which can help researchers to understand the historical roots of the phenomenon under study.

The objectives of this study and the time frame specified to review the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, make it important to review documents

pertaining to international performances and collaborations of the company. Such documents proved very difficult to obtain because of poor record keeping. There were, however, published records of the group's performance activities both within and outside the country, which were produced by some original members and the founders. These documents helped to fill the gaps created by passage of time, and enabled me to draw a holistic picture of the intercultural activities of the GDE fifty years into its existence.

I was also able to obtain some documents pertaining to the GDE's participation in the 1993 London International Film and Theatre Festival (LIFT). The documents included a contract designed by LIFT, a full list of the participating members and artistic director, and five different reviews of the GDE's performances during the event. The documents were obtained from the University of Goldsmith College library in London. These documents provided a lot of insight into the power dynamics at play between LIFT and the GDE, too be discussed in Chapter 7.

2.7 Data Management and Analysis Process

2.7.1 Data Management

A data management practice was developed from the onset of my data collection. I ensured that all recorded interviews, face-to-face, telephonic and focus group, were backed up on my computer, and on an external hard drive. I also backed up the data on my computer in Drop-Box, which is hosted on the cloud to prevent loss of data through unforeseen eventualities. My computer is password-protected and I also placed a password on the data to prevent unauthorised access. The external hard drive was kept in a safe place at home.

Wiles (2013) has noted that ethical literacy in research spans the entire research process and not just at the beginning, when an ethical committee gives the researcher a green light. Issues of anonymity, informed consent and confidentiality are key to the research process, and must be observed from data collection to analysis to storage.

A file naming system for my data was also created to ensure clarity and ease of access to the data files, which saved me a lot of time. This system made the transcription and coding process less stressful.

2.7.2 Transcription of Interviews and Focus Group Discussion

From the start of my data collection, I developed a habit of playing back the recordings each day to make notes, which informed follow-up questions. I called this habit 'data meditation' and found it very useful, as it gave me clarity on issues across my entire data set.

This process was very helpful, as it helped me to become acquainted with my data. It also helped me to identify salient points in the discussions that are directly related to my research objectives, while opening up new possibilities to the core issues discussed. Having access to the participants' contact information, also made it easier for me to ask follow-up questions without logistical constraints.

Transcribing the interviews and focus group discussion personally, also helped me to be more familiar with the data relating to my research questions and objectives.

2.7.3 Coding and Theming Transcripts

2.7.3.1 Codes and Coding

In this regard Gibbs and Taylor (2010) state the following:

Coding is the process of combing the data for themes, ideas and categories and then marking similar passages of text with a code label so that they can easily be retrieved at a later stage for further comparison and analysis.

Coding the data makes it easier to search the data, to make comparisons and to identify any patterns that require further investigation.

During the transcription of the interviews and focus group discussion, initial codes were developed around the responses that came from each participant, which addressed aspects of my research questions. I had, for instance, initial phrase codes like internal ethnic tension, collaborative exchange, personal interest versus national interest, language challenges, intercultural competence, ethnic allegiance, power relations, dance and intercultural communication, etc.

I used both *a priori* coding and grounded coding methods in this process (Gibbs & Taylor, 2010). The former relied on my research questions, while the latter enabled me to put aside my previous knowledge in order to allow emerging themes into the scope of the research findings (ibid).

In order to protect the identity of the members who participated in the study, specific codes were developed which reflected their roles within the Ghana Dance Ensemble. These codes are used throughout the analysis chapters in referring to the views of the participants as they relate to the aims of the study:

GDE-D: Ghana Dance Ensemble Dancer. Therefore, GDE-D1 means Ghana Dance Ensemble Dancer 1, et cetera;

GDE-M: Ghana Dance Ensemble Musician. Where GDE-M1 means Ghana Dance Ensemble Musician 1;

GDE-AD: Ghana Dance Ensemble Artistic Director;

GDE-F: Ghana Dance Ensemble Founder.

With the exception of the founder and the artistic directors, whose identities are known by everyone who knows about the GDE, the dancers' and the musicians' identities have been protected. It must be noted that the artistic director and the founder represent those in the upper tier of power relations, while the members belong in the lower tier. The members' anonymity in this case is crucial to their survival as members of the GDE.

2.7.3.2 Themes and Theming

As mentioned before, I began the coding process with an *a priori* coding, based on my research objectives. Through the process of replay and listening (Yin, 2009), I looked out for views and key terms directly related to my research questions. This process allowed me to comb through the data for themes, ideas and categories, and label them with a phrase code as mentioned above.

In the second phase of the coding process, grounded coding was used in order to allow fresh themes to emerge towards enriching the findings. The codes generated, were comprehensive and made it easy to retrieve them for pattern identification, comparison and analysis in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

2.8 Data Analysis

As discussed in Section 4.2, this study is built on the interpretivist assumption that human beings construct their experiences of life from a subjective perspective, and

therefore such experiences cannot be studied within an objective (positivist) framework. Consequently, “the data collected and analysed have qualitative rather than quantitative significance” (Morrison, 2012:27). According to Hatch (2002: 148),

[d]ata analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern finding. [...] Researchers always engage their own intellectual capacities to make sense of qualitative data.

Employing multiple methods of data collection for this study—interviews, focus group, direct observation and document analysis— using discourse analysis, I went through the process of organising and interrogating the data in order to make sense of it. This process of data triangulation ensured a rich body of views to support patterns and themes. It also established construct validity in the analysis process by providing evidence from multiple sources to minimise issues of researcher subjectivities (Yin, 2009).

Meaning making is the sole aim of data analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) and the analytical process often begins during data collection. Creswell’s (2009) description of the analytical process as an interactive practice explains the movement of the process across and between data sources. I used Creswell’s six steps to guide my analytical process:

1. preparing and organising the data for analysis;
2. reading through all the data to gain a general sense of the information and meaning communicated by the data;
3. coding and organising the data into categories in preparation for analysis;
4. generating a description of the people involved, identifying themes from the coding and starting to look for connections;
5. describing how the themes will fit into the whole narrative of the study, and generating a report; and
6. interpreting the meaning of the data through discourse analysis.

I started the meaning-making process of the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, by reviewing literature related to the variables of the topic in

Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 1 gives a general background to the study motivations, while Chapter 2 puts forth the underlying assumptions and methodological processes by which the study objectives were achieved. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the findings from the multiple data sources, which relate to the study aim of describing and understanding the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

In Chapter 8, my conclusions focus on how the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble fit into the general practice and theory of intercultural performance at the macro-level, and what lessons the macro can draw from the GDE's micro-intercultural practice in terms of ethics of representation. I further make some recommendations that border on a more comprehensive view of intercultural performance to include theoretical and conceptual frames for the practice at the micro-level.

This single-case study design follows standard protocol to ensure reliability and validity of findings. Research design by nature represents a logical set of statements (Yin, 2009) and, as such, the quality of every research design is judged by logical tests. Concepts for such tests include credibility, dependability and trustworthiness (ibid). The various steps used to achieve this, are discussed below.

2.9 Reliability and Validity of Findings

Yin (2009) points out the main disadvantage of single-case studies by comparing such studies to multiple-case designs. According to Yin (2009:45) "the evidence from multiple cases is often more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust". Yin furthermore stated that "the rationale for single-case designs cannot be satisfied by multiple cases". As discussed in Section 2.3, the use of a single-case study design for this study is justified by the fact that it tests established intercultural performance concepts against the practice of the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

There are various ways to establish reliability and validity in single-case designs, such as reflexivity, audit trail, triangulation and others (Merriam, 2002). I used data triangulation to ensure validity and reliability by drawing evidence from interviews,

focus group discussions, direct observation, and documents to confirm themes across these sources (Merriam, 2002; Yin, 2009).

In addition, I used an audit trail to provide a detailed description of the entire research process: data collection methods, various engagements with study participants, and decisions made at various points during the process (Merriam, 2002).

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the methodological paradigm underlying this study was discussed, which informed my research procedure. I delved deeper into the research design and justified the use of a single-case study design. I also justified the use of mixed methods in data collection—interviews, focus group discussion, document analysis, and observation—by highlighting the importance of data triangulation in analysis towards the establishment of reliability and validity for the study.

In the end I acknowledged my subjective position as a researcher in this study. I drew attention to my own biases and assumptions, and how my awareness of this helped to distance myself from the process, while drawing from that capital for the benefit of the study.

The following chapter presents a discussion of the key literature that serves to provide a theoretical/conceptual framework, through which the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble could be understood.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

One of the most perverse myths invented by ethnology [...] is the myth of primitive unanimity, the myth that non-Western societies are “simple” and homogenous at every level, including the level of ideology and belief. What we recognize today is that pluralism does not come to any society from outside but is inherent in every society [...]. The decisive encounter is not between Africa as a whole and Europe as a whole. Pluralism in the true sense does not stem from the intrusion of Western civilization into our continent [...] it is an internal pluralism, born of perpetual confrontations and occasional conflicts between Africans themselves.

Paulin Hountondji

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the theoretical and conceptual basis of this study is discussed, along with discourses that define and ground the study. These include culture, representation, ethnicity, multiculturalism, intercultural communication, intercultural performance, nationalism, and postcolonialism. These concepts are discussed against intercultural performance theories and concepts, as developed and challenged since the 1970s in order to theoretically establish the framework within which the study is grounded.

3.2 Survey of Literature on Key Concepts

3.2.1 On Culture

Culture has been described by various scholars as a slippery and difficult concept to pin down in an all-embracing definition (Apte, 1994; Pavis, 1996; Botwe-Asamoah, 2005; Hall, 1997; Spencer-Oatey, 2012). It has, however, been generally defined by scholars and theorists as the beliefs and values lived or performed by a particular group of people. It informs how a group of people distinguish themselves from other groups, while binding groups with a common heritage under one umbrella.

The specificity of culture, which binds it to the particular, informs Pavis's (1996) observation of the difficulty of grasping what culture is in its fullest sense. Knowles (2010:1) has defined culture as follows: “[...] the fluid, day-to-day, lived realities of

specific peoples in specific places and at specific times [...]” If culture, in the words of Knowles, is fluid and specific at the same time, then his definition aptly describes what culture is in general –even though his emphasis is on its specificity.

The specific nature of culture is further highlighted in Camilleri’s definition of culture (as cited in Pavis, 1996:3) as an embodiment of “[...] specific ‘inflections’ which mark our representations, feelings, activity, [...] every aspect of our mental life and even of our biological organism under the influence of the group”.

On the other hand, Matsumoto (1996:16), in his definition of culture as “[...] the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”, places his emphasis on the distinctiveness of one culture in relation to another.

In the same vein, Pavis (1996:2), while explaining Geertz’s (1973) definition of culture, came to the conclusion that “[...] *human culture is a system of significations* which allows a society or a group to understand itself in its relationships with the world” (emphasis in the original).

To understand another person, is to share a certain level of meaning with that person. Hall (1997:1) shares this view when he affirms that “culture is about shared meanings”. Spencer-Oatey (2008:3) also touches on ‘shared meaning’ as key in the discourse on culture when she defines culture as “a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are *shared* by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour” (emphasis added).

What has come to be called the ‘cultural turn’ in the social and human sciences, has emphasized the importance of ‘meaning’ in the definition of culture (Hall, 1997). This turn takes the focus off culture as a “set of things—novels and paintings or TV programmes and comics” and towards a view of culture “as a process, a set of practices” (ibid:2). From this perspective culture is mainly concerned with the production and exchange of meaning between members of a particular group or society.

Hall (1997) is quick to note that this view of culture, as concerned with the production and exchange of meaning, may give a false indication that meaning is unitary when, in fact, there are diverse meanings attached to any topic or phenomenon in any given culture. Meaning is produced or constructed within a particular context and therefore meanings assigned to particular objects or things, are shared between participants of that culture, which gives each participant a sense of identity within that culture.

The ambiguity associated with the nature of culture, as expressed in Spencer-Oatey's definition above, resonates with Knowles's description of culture as fluid, though specific. Gyekye (1994:2–3) provides a comprehensive view of culture, which seems to summarize the preceding submissions when he defines culture as:

patterns of thought and ways of acting and behaving that have been created, fostered, and nurtured by a people over a period of time and by which their lives are guided [which includes the] people's religious beliefs, their methods of production and economic relations, their systems of values, manners, etiquette and fashions.

All these aspects of culture have meaning for the participants within a particular culture, as "it is the participants in a culture who give meaning to people, objects and events" (Hall, 1997:3). As diverse as the preceding views of culture are, they all agree that culture is the shared experiences, values, beliefs, etc. of a group of specific people within a specified geo-temporal space. This conclusion, however, does not pretend to confine culture within watertight geo-temporal compartments due to its fluid nature. How then does culture manifest in the historical and daily lives of a people?

3.2.2 Manifestations of Culture

Spencer-Oatey (2012:3) identified some key characteristics of culture in her writing 'What is culture: a compilation of quotations', but most important for this study is her elaboration of Schein's (1984) finding that "culture is manifested at different layers of depth". Even though Schein's research was based on organisational culture, Spencer-Oatey (2012) has protracted the findings to be applicable to culture in general. In extending it, she concludes that culture manifests itself at three fundamental levels:

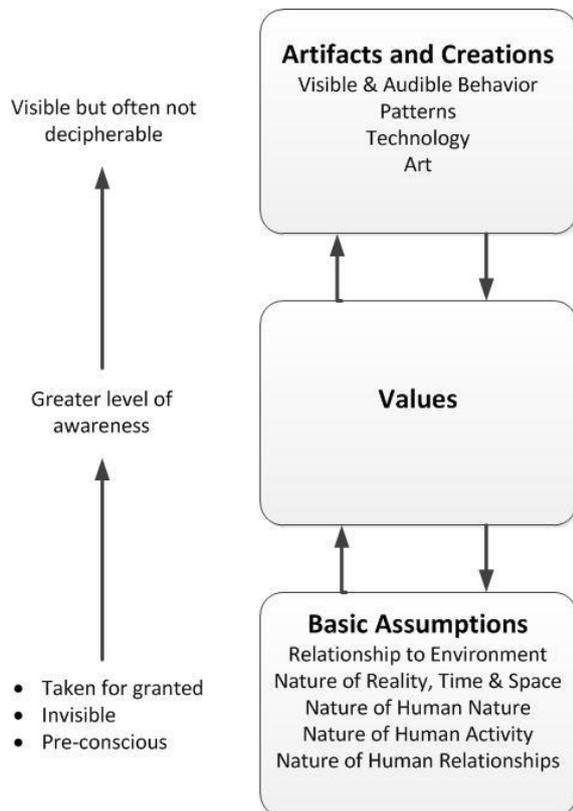
a) observable artefacts;

b) values; and

c) basic underlying assumptions.

To illustrate the three levels of culture and their interrelatedness, Spencer-Oatey (2012) adapted the following diagram from Schein (1984) in his article 'Coming to a New Awareness of Organizational Culture', which gives a clear picture of the dynamics at play between the levels stated above.

Figure 3.1: The Levels of Culture and their Interaction (Spencer-Oatey, 2012:4).



The three fundamental levels at which culture manifests itself according to Schein (1984) and Spencer-Oatey (2012), are key to understanding cultures from an outsider perspective. At the level of visible artefacts, one is immediately confronted with the superficial aspect of culture, such as mode of dressing, music, dance and behavioural patterns. However, any conclusions drawn about a culture at this level will be marginal, because:

[...] the data are easy to obtain but hard to interpret. We can describe 'how' a group constructs its environment and 'what' behaviour patterns are discernible among the members, but we often cannot understand the underlying logic – 'why' a group behaves the way it does (Schein, 1984:3; Spencer-Oatey, 2012).

The second level of manifestation gives a deeper understanding of culture, as it explains why a group of people behave the way they do by revealing the ideologies governing their behaviour. Since values are not as visible as artefacts, this information requires some level of qualitative research into the particular group of people. Even as values give an understanding of the reasons governing a group's behaviour, they only "represent accurately the manifest or espoused values of a culture. That is, they focus on what people say is the reason for their behaviour, what they ideally would like those reasons to be, and what are often realizations for their behaviour" (Spencer-Oatey, 2012:3).

However, in order to understand fully the underlying unconscious motivations for behaviour or cultural manifestation, basic assumptions –though subtle and unconscious – which are very powerful in determining behaviour, need to be taken into account (Spencer-Oatey, 2012).

Prior to Schein (1984) and Spencer-Oatey (2012), Nketia (1965) identified four aspects of culture from which some similarities may be drawn. Nketia's four aspects comprise the material, institutional, philosophical and creative. The material aspect of culture comprises the visible artefacts expounded by Schein as the superficial aspect of culture, which includes artistic creations. However, Nketia created a fourth level, the creative aspect. This fourth level, when considered under Schein's (1984) structure, is clearly confined to the level of visible artefacts. The institutional aspect of culture also seems to fall neatly under Schein's level of visible artefacts, since institutions by nature are establishments that have some physical or visible qualities.

Nketia's philosophical level of culture brings together Schein's values and basic assumptions by considering the people's ideas, values, beliefs and concepts, which includes the basic assumptions underpinning them. All these aspects or levels of culture are created, felt, lived and experienced by the people who created them and they in turn guide the daily lives of their creators.

3.2.2.1 Manifestations of Culture and Intercultural Performance

Schein's (1984) observation that organisational culture is manifested at different layers of depth, which has been extended to culture in general by Spencer-Oatey (2012), is very important to consider in relation to intercultural performance– it may hold the key to a more ethical way of representing the 'other' culture. The three

layers of cultural manifestation when considered in approaching cultures other than one's 'own', may reveal a deeper understanding of those cultures, which will influence their representation.

Problems in the ethics of representation in intercultural performance have often arisen from a lack of understanding of the other culture, which stems from an encounter with that culture primarily at the level of visible artefacts. As argued by Schein (1984), at this level information about any culture is easily obtainable but difficult to understand. Therefore, in assessing the intercultural (inter-ethnic) activities of the GDE, the process of their appropriation/representation of dances from the various ethnic groups within the country is viewed through the three levels of cultural manifestation. This is to ascertain their level of understanding of the people whose dances they have learned/appropriated/exchanged.

At the level of visible artefacts, the dance is the main point of interest for the GDE; beyond that, the process of obtaining information regarding the values of the people and their basic assumptions in relation to these dances is assessed to interpret the GDE's ethical consideration for representing the ethnic groups' dances.

3.2.3 Culture and Representation

The cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1997) describes representation as a key factor in the production of meaning within any given culture. He defines representation as the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged within a particular culture through language, images and signs. It is the process by which language is used to say something meaningful about the world to other people. It forms an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a particular culture.

Representation therefore "connects meaning and language to culture" (Hall, 1997:15). Language here is used in a broader sense to refer to any signifying practice. Hall (1997) begins his discussion of this broader view of language by suggesting that languages work through representation and that any system of representation that uses something to represent what we intend to communicate (thought, concept, idea or feeling) can be seen as working in the realm of language. Hall (1997) discusses three approaches or theories of representation—the reflective,

the intentional and the constructionist approaches—to the production of meaning through language.

The reflective approach suggests that things in the world already have a fixed form of meaning and that language only functions to reflect that true meaning, which already exists within those things. The intentional approach proposes that it is the author/speaker who imposes his or her intended meaning on the world through language. The constructionists on the other hand suggest that things don't mean anything and that meaning is constructed using systems of representation in the form of signs and concepts. All these theories suggest that the material world exists prior to meaning and interaction. It must, however, be noted that culture is what human beings do with the world around them, which includes the building of that world.

It is also interesting to note the connection between Spencer-Oatey's third level (Basic Assumptions) and the idea of culture, language and representation as always determined. It brings to the fore the reflective thinking that meaning is fixed; therefore, our interpretation of the world is predetermined, and we might not even be aware of the underlying basis of our values.

In recent years the constructionist approach has had the most significant impact on cultural studies (Hall, 1997) and has spawned two variants: the semiotic approach to representation, which is traced to Ferdinand de Saussure; and the discursive approach traced to Michel Foucault. Being the main connection between culture and representation, language provides the basis for the semiotic approach to the production of meaning within a culture, and suggests that culture exists prior to or independent of language.

According to Hall (1997) semiotics is the study of signs and their general role as carriers of meaning within a culture. As a science of signs, it is more concerned with how 'language' works than how it produces meaning. The discursive approach, on the other hand, is more concerned with the role of discourse in culture. Hall (1997:6) describes the main difference between the two approaches as follows:

[T]he semiotic approach is concerned with the *how* of representation, with how language produces meaning - what has been called its 'poetics'; whereas the discursive approach is more concerned with the effects and consequences of representation-its 'politics'. It examines not only how

language and representation produce meaning, but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or construct identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied. The emphasis in the discursive approach is always on the historical specificity of a particular form or 'regime' of representation: not on language as a general concern, but on specific languages or meanings, and how they are deployed at particular times, in particular places (emphasis in original).

The semiotic approach to representation through language is more descriptive in that it serves to explain how language works, i.e. the underlying structures of language within a culture. It is more explanatory and general rather than critical and historically specific. The discursive approach, on the other hand, provides an insight into discourse on a particular topic within a culture in relation to issues of power, identity and other subjectivities, and what these mean within a specific historical context.

With the discursive approach to representation

[...] one soon discovers that meaning is not straightforward or transparent and does not survive intact the passage through representation. It is a slippery customer, changing and shifting with context, usage, and historical circumstances...it is always being negotiated and inflected [...] (Hall, 1997:9–10).

According to Hall (1997) representation is not a one-way transmitter, but a dialogic process. This process is sustained by shared cultural codes, which enable the participants within the dialogic process to interpret the world in similar ways, thereby making communication possible. In this process there is no guarantee that meaning will remain stable forever, "though attempting to fix meaning is exactly why power intervenes in discourse" (1997:10).

The role of power in discourse comes through strongly within the practices of representation. These practices are the embodiment of "concepts, ideas and emotions in a symbolic form which can be transmitted and meaningfully interpreted" (Hall, 1997:10). They therefore serve as vehicles for effective circulation of meaning within a culture. The key phrase here is 'meaning-making'. When Hall (1997) talks about symbolic form, it goes beyond the argument that any idea is symbolic prior to transmission; it rather refers to codified ideas with specific meaning and interpretation which could be shared and exchanged.

The production and exchange of meaning within a culture are only made possible through shared linguistic codes. Here language is used in the general sense to refer

to all signifying practices or forms, including visual language. Representation, as used in this study, therefore is the process by which, meaning is produced through the language of the body—dance—and how a multi-ethnic dance company communicates, using this language.

3.2.4 Culture and Ethnicity

In discussing the relevance of ethnicity towards understanding African politics, Englebert and Dunn (2013) claim that, of all the political categories, ethnic groups may be considered the most important, and that ethnic identity is the key motivation for individual behaviour in terms of politics. This submission underscores the importance of discussing ethnicity in any discourse on culture in Africa, since ethnic identity is synonymous with cultural identity.

To support the argument that Africa is more heterogeneous than the rest of the world, they further observe that “for the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, the probability that two randomly selected individuals belong to different ethnic groups is 66 percent” (Englebert & Dunn, 2013:65), compared to an average of 36% for the whole world.

In his book, *An Introduction to African Politics*, Alex Thomson (2000) highlights the fact that, prior to the late nineteenth century, ethnic associations were more fluid and that the current regimented state of ethnicity on the continent is as a result of European colonisation. To throw more light on this historical incident, Crawford Young (1986) notes that the colonial states—particularly the Belgians and the British—rooted their administration in a ‘tribal’⁸ image of Africa. In their bid to make sense of the ethnic cartography of the continent, they created larger groups under the umbrella of a ‘tribe’ with an assigned leader through whom they ruled the people. Belonging to a ‘tribe’ enabled the members of that group to share in the resources allocated to that group, often through the lobbying of their ethnic intermediaries or leaders (Thomson, 2000). From this history therefore, Thomson (2000:61) concludes

⁸ Africanists reject the term ‘tribe’ because of the negative sentiments and images that this word connotes. Thomson (2000) argues that it is more appropriate to use the universal concept of ethnicity, than the colonially constructed ‘tribe’.

that “African ‘tribes’ should be seen as *instrumental* social constructions, and not ‘natural’ or ‘primordial’ phenomena. Africans identify themselves as belonging to an ethnic group because it is in their interests to do so”.

Ethnicity is often used interchangeably with culture. Spencer-Oatey (2012:19) observes that “ethnicity is [...] a term that is used to refer to a wide variety of groups who might share a language, historical origins, religion, identification with a common nation-state or cultural system”. She further notes that the nature of the relationship between a group’s ethnicity and its culture may vary, depending on several factors such as migration, religion and politics.

Ethnicity may be viewed as “a long standing, pre-colonial, fixed level of identity [...]”. Alternatively, one can think of ethnicity as more flexible, as an identity resource among others that people can use, or not, depending on circumstances” (Englebert & Dunn, 2013:67–68). From these two perspectives on ethnicity (fixed form of identity or flexible form of identity), sprang the primordialist and the constructivist theories on ethnicity.

3.2.4.1 *Primordialism*

Primordialism is essentially “a view of ethnicity as a deep-rooted, ancestral part of one’s identity” (Englebert & Dunn 2013:68). It presupposes that at the root of every African’s national identity lies a permanent pre-existing ethnic identity, which defines who s/he is. This primordialist argument bears some similarity with the reflective paradigm of representation, discussed under *Culture and Representation* above. Like the reflective theory on representation, the primordialist view of ethnicity also suggests a pre-existing truth that functions irrespective of social/conditioned impositions.

The primordialist view of ethnicity has blamed the issue of conflict and ill-functioning states in (postcolonial) Africa on ethnicity, hinged on the fact that Africans owe allegiance to an ethnic group or tribe and therefore act in the interest of the group and not the state (Ekeh, 1975; Englebert & Dunn, 2013). Ekeh (1975:92) asserts that postcolonial Africans operate within two realms of public life: the civic and the primordial. He defines the civic public as that which has an historical link with the colonial administration and which is associated with mainstream politics in Africa. The primordial public represents the part of the individual that is attached to

primordial groups and sentiments, and which informs their relationship with other groups (Ekeh, 1975).

Ekeh (1975) further argues that the African primordial allegiance works against the state, as resources of the state are used towards the interest of the ethnic community. He therefore comes to the conclusion that the primordial allegiance leads to alienation of the people from the state, which prevents them from building any sense of allegiance towards the state, and ultimately leads to corruption.

Primordialism, though more prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s, has not lost its currency. The relevance of the primordialist view of ethnicity lies in the fact that “it is a view often held by Africans themselves about the nature of their identity, particularly at the grassroots” (Englebert & Dunn 2013:70). The primordialist theory of ethnicity arose as a result of what Thomson (2000:61) describes as “the myth of the tribe” where “history was manipulated to give the ‘tribe’ a long and honourable past. In this manner, while the colonial authorities were busy assigning Africans to ‘tribes’, Africans were busy building ‘tribes’ to belong to”. Given the manipulations of colonial authority in the creation of ethnic groups on the continent, it is understandable that such groups would seek to create a long honourable past for themselves as natural primordial groups, in order to offer a sense of legitimacy to their members. There was a reaction against the primordialist theory of ethnicity in the late 1970s in the form of constructivist theory, which is discussed below.

3.2.4.2 Constructivism

The constructivist theory of ethnicity carries the same meaning as expressed under the section on *Culture and Representation* above. This theory was applied to ethnicity by Africanists in the late 1970s and 1980s and has replaced primordialism as the dominant approach to ethnicity in Africa. It maintains that “ethnic identities are somewhat malleable and very much the outcome of some other factors. Far from being transcendental, to contemporary life or otherwise traditional, ethnic identity can be invented, constructed, or rendered more or less salient” (Englebert & Dunn 2013:70).

The constructivists seek to resolve the multiple identities that the postcolonial African has acquired. These multiple identities and allegiances co-exist within the individual and become capital to be drawn from depending on the circumstance, so that the

individual can at any point stress one identity over the other, while maintaining allegiance to the multiplicity of identities.

The level of co-existence between subnational and national identities underscores the main point of departure between the two theories on ethnicity: while the primordialist view stresses the supremacy of allegiance to ethnic identity over that of the national, the constructivist view stresses the malleability of identity and allegiance based on circumstances.

According to Crawford Young (2012), Africans inherited three levels of subjective identity as a result of the colonial encounter, viz. racial identity, territorial identity and ethnic identity. Racial identity provided the basis for Pan-Africanist identity; territorial identity emphasizes national identity, while ethnic identity dwells in the realm of tribalism or ethnicity. Since the constructivist's point of departure is hinged on the fact that ethnic identity is an invented identity brought about by encounters with colonialism, an interesting argument arises, which seem to suggest a meeting ground between these two. This meeting ground is instrumentalism.

According to Englebert and Dunn (2013:75) ethnic identity, whether invented or not, is real: “[C]onstructed identities cannot easily be reconstructed and [...] for all practical purposes, a quasi-primordial treatment of ethnic identity as fixed in any given situation is methodologically legitimate.” Instrumentalists believe in the fluidity of ethnic identity and its sensitivity to changing political conditions as the group positions itself strategically to benefit from state resources (Englebert & Dunn, 2013).

However, it is more practical for this study to view ethnicity both within the primordialist and constructivist frames—the primordialist because it represents the general sentiments about ethnicity at the grassroots level (Englebert & Dunn, 2013), and the constructivist because it takes cognizance of a multiplicity of identities available to the postcolonial African to choose from depending on the circumstance. This understanding forms the basis of the instrumentalists' view on ethnicity.

3.2.5 Ethnicity and Multiculturalism in Africa

The salience of Clifford Geertz's (1973) statement that new nations in the postcolonial era were not only faced with diversity but competing loyalties, lies in the political arrangements and negotiations—both formal and informal—of African

governments in the process of nation building. From ethnic repression and denial in the case of Tanzania and Guinea, to ethnic accommodation in the case of Uganda, Ethiopia and several African countries that recognise some form of ethnic authority or power, the importance of ethnicity in the politics of Africa cannot be overemphasized (Englebert & Dunn, 2013).

In Ghana, for instance, chiefs play a major role at the district assembly level of governance where seats are allocated to them in addition to their traditional responsibilities such as overseeing the affairs of stool lands⁹. In addition, their involvement in the issues at traditional level through representations in the National House of Chiefs, also emphasizes the recognition given to traditional authority. Any nation that recognises the diversity of the cultures within it, can be categorised as a multicultural nation.

The multicultural state, therefore, is not made up of a homogenous culture; it pertains to a country with diverse ethnic cultures artificially homogenised by nationhood. Moving beyond describing a multicultural state as a nation made up of diverse cultures, the state policy driven multiculturalism is defined by Henry and Kurzak (2013:1) as embodying an “ethic of acceptance of, and respect for, cultural diversity, community harmony and inclusion [...] within ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse societies”. Ghana as a postcolonial African country is officially a multicultural nation in the sense identified by Henry and Kurzak (2013). The current ethnic composition of Ghana is a result of years of migration by people from various parts of the continent, which informs the efforts¹⁰ that went into nationalising these diverse cultures.

3.2.6 Ethnicity and Cultural Diversity in Ghana

Ghana is a nation that believes in the United Nations’ concept of ‘unity in diversity’.

⁹ Stool lands are lands that belong to the throne of specific ethnic groups in Ghana. Ethnic chiefs become custodians of such lands when they are enstooled or enskinned, depending on which ethnic group they belong to.

¹⁰ The formation of a National Theatre Movement rooted in the cultural traditions of the various ethnic groups in Ghana is an example of such nationalising efforts. Another example is the national policy of unity in diversity, as well as Nkrumah’s deliberate effort of using honorifics of various ethnic authorities as an indicator of national authority.

This concept proposes that “dealing with differences in a realistic manner—neither repulsing ‘the other’ nor denying his [or her] being different —is in a nation's well understood self-interest” (UN Magazine, 2012:2).

Hommi Bhabha (1995:206) in ‘Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences...’ describes cultural diversity as “the recognition of pre-given cultural ‘contents’ and customs, held in a time-frame of relativism”. He further notes that the concept of cultural diversity may be viewed as “the representation of a radical rhetoric of the separation of totalized cultures that live unsullied by the intertextuality of their historical locations, safe in the Utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective identity”. This view on cultural diversity presents a liberating environment for cultures to exist as unique entities, while acknowledging the malleability of cultures. Bhabha’s main critique of the concept of ‘unity in diversity’ is that it gives rise to anodyne liberal notions of multiculturalism and cultural exchange.

On the other hand he defines cultural difference as “a process of signification through which statements of culture or on culture differentiate, discriminate, and authorise the production of fields of force, reference, applicability and capacity” (1995:206). The relationship between cultural diversity and cultural difference can be seen in the way the former seems to provide solutions for mitigating notions of the latter—as though cultural difference is a problem to be held at bay. In the sense in which the UN views cultural difference, there seems to be a warning about the dangers of emphasizing ‘difference’ and ‘discriminatory’ discourse on culture. If difference is presented as something to be ‘dealt with’ in the interest of the nation, then it becomes a sensitive issue within the discourse on culture, which must be addressed through, as proposed by the UN, the concept of cultural diversity.

Bhabha’s (1995) argument on cultural diversity and cultural difference rests on the notion that cultures are essentially hybrids, and therefore dispenses with any notion of primordial unity or fixity in favour of a ‘Third Space’, where discourse on the meaning and symbols of culture is given transitory status, rather than a fixed, unchanging one. The ‘Third Space’, as proposed by Bhabha (1995:208), provides the necessary discursive conditions to ensure that cultural “signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew”.

In the case of creating a unifying national culture in Ghana for instance, a ‘Third

Space' was created—and continues to be created—where individual ethnic symbols are appropriated to promote the idea of a national culture. This argument proceeds in the same vein as argued by Bhabha: “[t]he changed political and historical site of enunciation transforms the meanings of the colonial inheritance into the liberatory signs of a free people of the future” (1995:209).

Ghana’s political leaders, beginning with Kwame Nkrumah, have adopted the inclusive approach to cultural difference, as proposed by the UN, which advocates tolerance for ethnic, cultural and religious differences. According to the 2010 population census carried out by the Ghana Statistical Service, the population of Ghana is made up of 75 ethnic groups. Naomi Chazan (1982:462) in the early 1980s categorised the ethnic composition of Ghana as follows:

The major Akan configuration (subdivided into Asante, Fante, Brong, Akim, Nzima, and other smaller units) constitutes 44.1 percent of the population. The Mole-Dagbani group comprises 15.9 percent, the Ewe 13.0 percent, the Ga-Adangbe [sic] 8.3 percent, the Guan 3.7 percent, the Gurma 3.5 percent, and other groups 11.4 percent.

However, Chazan’s statistics were based on the population census of 1960. In the 2010 census, there was a slight change in the percentage margins due to an increase in population. The rise in population, however, does not present an automatic rise in all the major ethnic group’s population. The Akan ethnic group moved from 44.1% to 47.5%, Mole Dagbani from 15.9% to 16.6%, Ewe from 13.0% to 13.9%, Ga-Dangme from 8.3% to 7.4% (representing a reduction), Guan 3.7% (remaining constant), and Gurma from 3.5% to 5.7% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012).

The major ethnic groups are subdivided into various subgroups, which share a common language and cultural heritage. These diverse ethnic groups in Ghana have co-existed since the formation of the nation under relative peace due to the nation’s adopted policy of unity in diversity. However, ethnic allegiance has remained strong, as “it is not uncommon to find ethnic enclaves in Ghanaian cities and even rural areas but [a] sense of ethnicity and identity is paramount in rural settings which tend to be ethnically more homogenous” (Addai and Pokimica, 2010:490).

The above view is directly linked to Englebert & Dun’s (2013) earlier argument that at grassroots level the primordialist theory of ethnicity is stronger. In highlighting the

resilience of the position of ethnicity within postcolonial Ghana, Nukunya (2003:213) argues in his book, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*, that

of all the social groupings [...], the tribe or ethnic group is the one which provokes the deepest emotions in the process of nation-building and modernization. As the largest entity to which people belonged for the most part, before the process started, it has become the rallying point and unit of identification in opposition to the interests of the nation.

Nukunya's views are a direct confirmation of Ekeh's (1975) conclusion that primordial allegiance leads to alienation of the people from the state, which prevents them from building any sense of allegiance towards the state, and ultimately lead to corruption.

Ryan (1990), on the other hand, discusses the causes of ethnic conflicts on the continent, and attributes the phenomenon to three factors, viz. unequal distribution of resources, economic or political competition, and a reactionary approach to ethnic prejudice or discrimination. Ryan's view of ethnicity, though taken from a different perspective, still has the underlying principle of ethnic distinctiveness and importance.

Cultural diversity therefore provides a bigger umbrella under which the issue of cultural difference can be managed, especially within the imagined community, the nation. However, Bhabha (1995) proposes that the articulation of cultural difference can only be possible within the Third Space, which in itself is unrepresentable but provides the discursive conditions suggesting that meanings and symbols of any culture have no primordial fixity.

As a result, cultural symbols can be "appropriated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha, 1995:208). As this argument bears some resonance with the constructivist idea, what then does this mean for cultural difference, especially within the nation?

3.2.7 On National Liberation and National Culture

The colonial period left in its wake the daunting project of liberating the nation and creating a national culture capable of managing its effect on the colonised people. Frantz Fanon (1963:209) in his famous work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, has observed that "[c]olonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip

and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it".

This perverted colonial tendency sparked a fire of longing within native intellectuals to make contact with their 'forgotten' past and "it was with the greatest delight that they discovered that there was nothing to be ashamed of in the past, but rather dignity, glory, and solemnity" (Fanon, 1963:209). The process of reconnecting with the past provides a certain foundation upon which a national culture is built.

According to Fanon, to fight for a national culture, "means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material keystone which makes the building of a culture possible" (Ibid:232).

Fanon goes on to describe national culture as a body of efforts that a people put into creating and keeping themselves in existence. Fanon's view on culture is based on his understanding of the exploitative nature of the colonisation and how it affects the colonised. Identifying the correlation between cultural emasculation and colonialist entrenchment, led Fanon (1963) to propose three stages of evolution among the colonised, both during and after the colonial era.

The evolution begins with the assimilationist phase where the native intellectual demonstrates full assimilation of the coloniser's culture. The second phase is the cultural nationalist phase where the native intellectual demonstrates an awareness of authentic identity, which gives him/her the necessary grounds to reject the assimilationist project; here the native intellectual stops at 'romanticisation' of the past due to his cultural alienation. The third and final phase in Fanon's evolutionary schema is the nationalist or fighting phase. Here the native intellectual becomes the awakener of his people, exposing the realities of the colonial project leading to democracy. The nationalist or fighting phase then becomes a consequence of the cultural nationalist phase, which is responsible for building a sense of cultural awareness and pride in the native intellectual.

From the evolutionary schema of the colonised, proposed by Fanon, it becomes clear that culture –being the main point of attack by the colonialist –serves as a tool for liberation in the fight against imperialism and colonisation. Amuta (1995) argues

that Cabral'' believes in the instrumentality of culture in the national liberation struggle. However, he is aware of the fact that culture, even within a country, is not homogenous or equally developed in all areas of society. Amuta (1995:161) argues that "[...] among the colonized, we can identify the culture of the urban Western-educated elite, of the religious leaders and 'traditional' rulers on one hand and the indigenous cultural expressions of the rural peasantry, untrammelled by the encrustations of foreign impositions and appropriations on the other".

For culture to be instrumental in the national liberation struggle, it has to be that of the rural peasantry, because

[...] it represents the authentic culture of African peoples and embraces the interests of the great majority of Africans, that can inform genuine natural liberation. It is therefore on the culture of the peasantry that the heavy accent in Cabral's position falls. Even at that, he was alive to the divergences and differences within authentic indigenous cultures arising from the intrinsic organic structures of those societies themselves [...] (1995:161).

The authenticity of the rural culture and its instrumentality in the struggle for national liberation cannot be discussed in isolation of the intrinsic diversity within the cultures of the nation. These diverse indigenous cultures, however, find a common ground in their collective fight for national liberation, which has the capacity to create a larger identity capable of putting the smaller group on the world map as belonging to the nation.

In concentrating on the cultural aspect of the Mau Mau armed struggle in Kenya against the British, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1972:30) affirms the instrumentality of indigenous culture towards national liberation:

"They (the freedom fighters) rediscovered the old songs –they had never completely lost touch with them –and reshaped them to meet the new needs of their struggle. They also created new songs and dances with new rhythms where the old ones were found inadequate."

¹¹ Amilcar Cabral was a Guinean nationalist leader who helped in the independence struggle towards the liberation of Guinea-Bissau from colonial rule. From 1965–1971, six full years, Nkrumah lived with Cabral and Sekou Toure (president of Guinea-Bissau) in Guinea-Bissau during his exile from Ghana.

Ngugi's thoughts on the progressive way in which the freedom fighters used the old songs and created new ones to serve present and future purposes, is reminiscent of Fanon's thoughts on taking inspiration from the past for the purposes of the future. Fanon (1963:209) discusses the importance of not remaining in the cultural resuscitation phase, as it does nothing to change the present conditions of the colonised: "[A]ll the proofs of a wonderful Songhai civilization will not change the fact that today the Songhais are underfed and illiterate."

Kwame Nkrumah¹² also expresses Fanon's views on the position of the cultural past in relation to the present and future of the colonised, which further informed his politico-cultural thoughts during the nationalist struggle in Ghana. Kwame Botwe-Asamoah (2005) discusses the actions of individuals and organisations –in the form of creative works, essays, and life style –towards national liberation in Ghana as predating Nkrumah's arrival on the Ghanaian political scene in 1947.

These individuals, viz. Caseley Hayford, Kobina Sekyi, J.B. Danquah, Bankole Awoonor-Williams and Oku Ampofo, laid the necessary foundation for Nkrumah's revolutionary cultural nationalist attack against the colonial administration (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005). However, most relevant to this study, is the instrumental role culture played in the political life of Kwame Nkrumah towards national liberation.

3.2.8 Kwame Nkrumah: From Cultural Reclamation to African Personality

According to Botwe-Asamoah (2005), the full force of the African cultural awakening was not felt until the end of the European World War II. This turn of events was made possible by the efforts of those who worked behind the scenes before the end of the war. But the key factor was the arrival of Kwame Nkrumah in 1947. His efforts to conscientise his people about the evil in colonialism and the need to overthrow it, led to Ghana's independence in 1957. With national unity at the core of Nkrumah's political agenda, policies developed immediately after independence were aimed at directing the people to: "think of themselves as Ghanaians first, Fante, Ewe, Asante, Frafra, Dagbani, and Gas second" (Marais 1972: 18). Nkrumah's cultural policies

¹² Nkrumah was a Ghanaian nationalist leader who became the first president of Ghana, after he had led the country to independence from the British in 1957.

pointed to the fact that, ethnocentrism had no place in the fight against the ruinous effects of colonialism on the newly formed nation and its people.

Referring back to the main arguments on the primordial view of ethnicity above, it is important to point out the colossal task involved in the process of forming one unified nation in the face of divided ethnic allegiance, which Ekeh (1975) argues is detrimental to national interest. To address this challenge in the most pragmatic manner, Nkrumah redirected the people's ethnic allegiance towards himself by adapting symbols of authority from the major ethnic groupings within the country, as his symbol of national authority over all the people.

Botwe-Asamoah (2005) discusses Nkrumah's personal use of honorifics as a major cultural policy in the decolonisation process. Nkrumah's use of horsetail, white handkerchief and walking stick is a direct replication of the secular and religious roles of traditional chiefs and queens. According to Hagan (1991), these practices reflected the kind of leadership style Nkrumah adopted during this phase of the cultural reclamation process and, by aligning his authority with that of powerful traditional priests, he earned the reverence of the people.

Another traditional practice Nkrumah adopted into the national politics of Ghana, was his 'Dawn Broadcasts' to replicate the practice whereby Akan kings and queens send very important and urgent messages at dawn (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005). In addition to these, Nkrumah "introduced African drumming, dancing, and libation at public functions, affirming clothing, aesthetics, motifs and ceremonies into Ghana's body politics" (ibid:22). Nkrumah's cultural reclamation efforts were unequivocally aimed at creating the 'African Personality' in all Ghanaians, and by extending Africans in general. African personality as envisioned by Nkrumah, is manifested in all aspects of the African life, especially prior to colonialism; and since colonisation worked to submerge it, there must be a deliberate effort towards restoring it. Nkrumah understood the African Personality as an embodiment of African value systems capable of transforming the African situation after colonisation (ibid.).

This view on bringing the past to bear on the present African situation is also expressed by Fanon (1967), who emphasizes the importance of not remaining in the cultural resuscitation phase, as it does nothing to change the present condition of the colonised. Kwame Nkrumah's vision for cultural reclamation and recovery of the

African Personality can be seen in his adaptation of cultural symbols and motifs, African art forms, and oral tradition, both during and after his campaign for national independence. His cultural policies and movements, which were rooted in the arts, underscore the importance Nkrumah placed on the power of African art forms to contribute towards the restoration of African Personality. According to Botwe-Asamoah (2005:66)

[Nkrumah's] thought on the importance of the arts in the socio-economic transformation in Ghana was based on their ability to foster unity and harmony among different ethnic groups. His view on the inability of colonialism to destroy the rich African cultural heritage in art, music, dance, paintings and sculpture was rooted in the African artistic and aesthetic values.

These qualities of African arts have enabled Ghanaians to survive the cultural emasculation efforts of colonisation and Nkrumah saw in the arts a cultural hinge upon which to build a strong nation. During the inauguration of Nkrumah's theatre group, The Osagyefo Players, on 24 January 1965, Nkrumah claimed:

Art in all its forms is expressive of the social conditions and social values of a people. The artist and therefore his creation as well were products of his time. In a series of artistic creations is mirrored the history of a people. The Akan people had no written record of their history and yet history is preserved in songs, dances, folk tales, dramas, music, and sculpture. Whenever there has been a significant change in the social attitude of a people, it has been reflected, directly or indirectly, in the mirror of art (Osagyefo Players program, 1965 as cited by Botwe-Asamoah 2005:66).

It is within this purview of creative resurgence during the 1960s that the Ghana Dance Ensemble, the focus of this study, emerged as a nucleus of the national theatre movement. The Ghana Dance Ensemble (GDE) as a nationalising dance company within postcolonial Ghana, has worked to promote the national agenda of unity in diversity since its inauguration in 1964. It is in the interest of this study to examine the multicultural climate of the nation 61 years after independence in order to ascertain the importance of the GDE as a unifying force within postcolonial Ghana.

3.2.9 Ghana at Sixty-One: Nationhood, Multiculturalism and Ethnic Hegemony in Postcolonial Ghana

The ethnic climate prior to independence can be described as full of tension,

especially in the 1950s as Ghana moved towards political independence from British colonisation (Frempong, 2001; Botwe-Asamoah, 2005). According to Frempong (2006), Nkrumah succeeded in reducing ethnic politics within the country to the barest minimum. However, ethnic sectarianism re-emerged after the overthrow of Nkrumah (Bening, 1999; Lent and Nugent, 2000).

The Asante-Ewe rivalry, for instance, has continued into the 4th republic due to the association of the two major political parties, viz. the National Democratic Party and the New Patriotic Party, and their association with the Ewe and Asante ethnic groups respectively (Frempong, 2006). Frempong (2001, 2006) extensively discusses the role of ethnicity in Ghana's politics and his findings point to the fact that ethnic-based politics are fuelled by the inherent ethnic differences and claims to superiority by the major ethnic groups. These tensions are given impetus by unequal distribution of national resources and a general feeling of exclusion in national affairs.

In 2007 Ghana celebrated its 50th anniversary amidst controversies from, on the one hand, political parties and, on the other, the major ethnic groups. This revealed the main deficiencies in the nation's efforts towards political, social and ethnic cohesion. Carola Lentz (2010:16), in her article 'Ghana@50': celebrating the nation-debating the nation', contends that

[o]ne of the basic ambiguities inherent in the Ghanaian project of nationhood is the unresolved tension between two fundamentally different conceptions of citizenship and national belonging. On the one hand, Ghana is legally constituted, and many Ghanaians share this view, as a modern nation-state with equal rights for all of its citizens, regardless of their ethnic, religious, or regional background [...]. On the other hand, Ghana inherited, and in part has also actively promoted, a colonial model of the nation as a federation of 'native states', of original, quasi-'natural', pre-political communities that are based on descent and are centered on the authority of traditional chiefs.

These ambiguities arise as a result of the multi-ethnic nature of Ghana and can therefore be understood within the constructivist framework discussed earlier. Interestingly, the two conceptions of citizenship submitted in the quotation above embody both the primordialist view and the constructivist view of ethnicity, which explains the tension inherent within the project of nationhood.

By describing ethnic communities or groups as 'natural communities', Lentz (2010:16) presupposes that the modern-nation state is fundamentally multi-ethnic and therefore has the responsibility of ensuring that "national resources are even-handedly shared among these 'natural' communities and by providing a level-playing field for their political representation" (ibid). While the nation-state strives towards a national, rather than ethnic centered, view of the nation, ethnic sentiments arise especially during national celebrations such as Independence Day, reminding the nation of the inherent differences that lie within¹³.

As mentioned earlier, the nation of Ghana subscribes to the UN's concept of unity in diversity and therefore promotes tolerance for diverse identities within the nation-state. However, a major problem that often flaws the nation's efforts at equal representation for the various ethnic communities, is the internal hegemony of the Akan ethnic group. Being the major ethnic group, representing 47.5% of the total population, the Akan culture has become the most dominant in the cultural representation of the nation. Brown (2000: 29) in his book *Contemporary Nationalism: Civic, Ethnocultural and Multicultural Politics* makes this point clear when he notes that modern Ghana "is built upon a traditional Akan ethnic core, around which non-Akan peripheries are clustered".

Over the past few decades the ethnic groups on the peripheries have become very critical of this development and continue to call for a more balanced representation of the nation where all the ethnic groups will form the core of the modern state. This delicate project of balancing ethnic representation within the nation began with Nkrumah to ensure national cohesion and put a leash on ethnic conflicts. However, the dominance of Akan cultural honorifics in the cultural representation of the nation can be attributed to Nkrumah's cultural nationalist project, which appropriated more Akan honorifics than that of the minor ethnic communities (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005). One of the main reasons for this, apart from the fact that the Akan are in the majority, could be that Nkrumah himself was Akan.

¹³ See Carola Lentz's 'Ghana@ 50' Celebrating the nation debating the nation (2010). This paper extensively discusses reactions of marginalised ethnic groups to inadequate representation during Independence Day celebrations.

In his book *Democratization in Africa: The Theory and Dynamics of Political Transitions*, Conteh-Morgan (1997) argues that the elites in power often deny the existence of ethnic inequities only to promote the interests of their own ethnic groups. This tendency of African leaders to profess ethnic equality while promoting, consciously or unconsciously, their own ethnic interests, may explain Nkrumah's actions. This notwithstanding, Nkrumah's cultural nationalist agenda stood for a unified nation rooted in the cultural traditions of the various ethnic communities within the nation.

His legacy of appropriating traditional honorifics of power from the various ethnic communities (even though a majority were drawn from the Akan ethnic group) has given the nation-state a national cultural and political identity, which has stood to this day. The two strands of national citizenship, as observed by Lentz (2010), are often more pronounced during national celebrations; the Ghana@50 celebration painted a picture of how Ghana imagines, performs and contests its multicultural/multi-ethnic status. While the majority of the Jubilee celebration activities were concentrated in the capital, there were pockets of regional activities administered by local chiefs and district administrators "to showcase regional specificities and ethnic communities" (Lentz 2010:17).

That notwithstanding, Lentz (2010) has criticised the Jubilee Celebration Committee for not creating more of what she calls 'neutral-inclusivist', 'transethnic emblems' and rituals which have the potential to promote a unified view of the nation, avoiding the pitfalls of ethnic specificity. In the committee's bid to showcase authentic Ghanaian culture, it fell into the trap of ethnic hegemony, which was set up by Nkrumah upon the attainment of independence:

Here as on many other occasions, Akan-centred symbols abounded. The 0 in the Ghana@50 sign, for instance, was clearly styled as an Akan adinkra symbol, signifying gye nyame, 'only God'. The official Jubilee cloth was inspired by a kente design, and Northerners, wearing the smock as their 'traditional' dress, felt slighted by the Jubilee Secretariat's attempt to declare the kente cloth the article of clothing constituting official 'Ghanaian' traditional dress that everybody was expected to sport on Independence Day (Lentz 2010:17).

Lentz (2010) continues to discuss the 'lack of balance' in cultural quotations under the J.A. Kufuor¹⁴ administration during which the Ghana@50 was celebrated. She describes Kufuor's administration as the "Asante moment" (Lentz, 2010:8) in Ghana's political history due to the dominance of Asante cultural symbols. She recounts her conversation with some northerners and other non-Akans who were not happy with the Akan hegemony displayed during the celebration.

As stated earlier, Nkrumah's appropriation of cultural honorifics was largely based on the Akan ethnic tradition, even though he made a conscious effort to create a balanced representation. A clear example of this conscious effort can be gleaned from his wearing of smock and hat (northern style dressing) on the eve of Independence in 1957.

The hegemony of the Akan ethnic group and the dominance of its symbols on the nation can be seen during national celebrations, much to the disapproval of the less dominant ethnic groups. When the state appears to be represented culturally by the symbols of one ethnic group, "it creates distrust and insecurity and makes it difficult for the state to be perceived as an impartial arbiter by the other ethnic groups" (Frempong, 2006:162).

One major incident, for instance, that aroused disapproval and complaints, especially from Northerners, was the relocation of the Kwame Nkrumah statue. In this regard, Lentz (2010:18) writes:

When the monument stood in front of the old Parliament House, and when it was later transferred to the National Museum grounds, it showed Nkrumah in a smock. But after the statue had to undergo repair following the breaking off of one of its arms during its relocation to Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park in 1992, Nkrumah re-appeared dressed in kente cloth – in some people's eyes a clear and rather unsettling sign of Asante 'imperialism'.

The hegemony of the Akan ethnic group is directly linked to their status as the dominant ethnic group within the nation; this also explains the pervasiveness of the Akan language across all ten regions of the country. The relevance of this discussion for this study lies in the hypothesis that the Ghana Dance Ensemble is a microcosm

¹⁴ J.A. Kufuor was the second president of Ghana's fourth republic from 2001 to 2009.

of the nation as a multiethnic/multicultural country. Therefore, an investigation into the operations of the GDE relating to their mission to unify the nation, begs a consideration of how they negotiate the problem of Akan dominance.

3.2.10 Regionalisation: Ethnic Distribution and Ethnic Enclaves

Ethnic communities in Ghana are imagined to exist within regional boundaries, and each of the ten political regions houses a major ethnic group with its subdivisions. These divisions were partly created (or maintained after settlement of the groups) for administrative purposes (Lentz, 2010). These regional divisions are: Ashanti, Central, Eastern, Western, Brong-Ahafo, Volta, Greater-Accra, Northern, Upper-East, and Upper-West Region. With the exception of the capital of Accra, each of these regions is imagined to be an ethnic enclave with 'homogenous' culture.

However, due to mobility of citizens within the country, there are other ethnic groups that have settled outside their home region. The following statistics by Frempong (2006:163) provide a clear picture of ethnic distribution across the ten regions due to migration and other mobility motivators as at 2004:

Ewe's formed significant proportions of the populations of most of the five Akan regions –15% in Eastern, 5.9% in Western, 4.7% in Central and 3.1% in Ashanti. Three out of every twenty (15.7%) of the population in Brong Ahafo, 7.7% in Ashanti and 4.7% in Western are [of] Mole-Dagbani descent. There are more Akans (39.7%) in the Greater Accra Region than the indigenous Ga-Adangbes [sic] (29.6%).

In spite of this picture, the impression is often created that with the exception of the capital (Accra), which houses the central government and has become the centre of economic activities for all ethnic groups, that all the other regions are ethnically homogenous. The political administration of the ten regions is such that there is a regional minister who is the political head of the region, supported by a regional co-ordinating council to oversee the administrative districts. The leadership of the indigenous groups within the various regions supports this political administration in order to ensure the protection and continuity of their cultural heritage (Government of Ghana, 2016). The following map (fig. 3.1) shows the regional division of Ghana and the position of each region within the geography of the country.

Figure 3.2: The Political Map of Ghana. <https://goo.gl/images/dpP8dQ>



3.2.10.1 Ashanti Region

The main ethnic group that inhabits the Ashanti region is the Asante who constitute 14.8 % of the entire Akan population of 8,562,748 (Government of Ghana, 2016). The capital of this region is Kumasi. The cultural and social structure of the Ashanti region forms the foundation of the political structure to ensure the protection and continuity of the people's cultural heritage. For instance, the Asantehene, spiritual head and king of the Asante people, commands and mobilises the people who owe their allegiance to the throne and his authority. The main language spoken in this region, Twi, together with the festivals celebrated, serve to unite them as a people belonging to one ethnicity to which they owe their primary allegiance (National Commission on Culture, 2007; Government of Ghana, 2016; Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). The Ashantis are traditionally kente¹⁵ weavers, wood carvers, pottery

¹⁵ Kente cloth is a colourful traditional cloth primarily woven by men.

makers, Adinkra¹⁶ cloth makers, bead makers, brass smiths, and silver and goldsmiths. The people celebrate such festivals as Addae Kese, Papa Festival, Kente Festival, and others. Such dances as Fontomfrom, Kete, Adowa, Asaadua, Sikyi and others usually accompany the celebration of festivals and other events. The most popular musical instruments of the Ashantis are the Fontomfrom drums and the Atumpan (talking drums).

3.2.10.2 Brong-Ahafo Region

Brong Ahafo region was formerly a part of the Ashanti region until it was made autonomous in 1959. The dominant ethnic group in this region is the Akan, with a few other ethnic groups dispersed in the various districts created within the region. The Akan ethnic group forms 62.7% of the total inhabitants of the region. This percentage is subdivided as follows: Brong (61.4%), Asante (13.3%) and Ahafo (9.5%). There is also a section of the Mole-Dagbon from the Northern region constituting 15.4% of the population in this region. The religious affiliation of the inhabitants within this region points to the non-traditional nature of the region; 71% of the inhabitants are Christians, 16.1% are Muslims, 4.6% are Traditionalists and 7.8% have no religious affiliation. The regional capital of Brong-Ahafo is Sunyani. The eclectic nature of the region also suggests that languages spoken in this region are as diverse as the inhabitants (Government of Ghana, 2016; Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

The most widely spoken language, however, is Akan. The main occupations of the people in this region are pottery, handicrafts, and farming. The various ethnic groups within the region celebrate such festivals as the Kurubie, Donkyi, Kwafie, Apoo and Sasabobirim Festivals. These festivals are accompanied by dances and musical traditions representative of each of the ethnic groups within the region. Some of these dances are the Kete, Fontomfrom, Nnwomkorɔ and Adowa. Since the majority of the ethnic composition in this region is Akan, it is evident that the dances listed here, are also listed for Ashanti region above.

¹⁶ Adinkra cloth is a patterned cloth dyed with thick plant dye. The stamps on the cloth are symbols with proverbial sayings and meanings that are culturally relevant to the Ashanti people.

3.2.10.3 Central Region

Originally a part of the Western region, the Central region was created in 1970 and is one of the smallest regions, after Greater Accra and Upper-East regions (Government of Ghana, 2016). The Akan ethnic group, which constitutes 82% of the population, predominantly occupies the central Region, with 4.8% and 6.1% of the population being Ewe and Guan respectively. The Fante, who constitute 69.1% of the entire Akan population, form the predominant group within the Central region with a population of 56.6%. 3.4% of the population within the region is made up of ethnic groups from the Northern regions. Fante is the main language spoken (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010; National Commission on Culture, 2007). The region is predominantly Akan. The inhabitants are traditionally fisher folk and farmers. Due to urbanisation and higher education, more and more people are shifting from agriculture to other economic activities (Government of Ghana, 2018).

The people in this region celebrate such festivals as the Fetu Afahye, Kotokyiky and Ogyapa, Asafua and Ahobaa Festivals. Dances such as the Apotampa and Asafo (military dance) are typical of the 82% Fante ethnic group within the region. Since the Fantes belong to the larger Akan ethnic group, musical instruments and costumes often overlap across the various sub-groups.

3.2.10.4 Western Region

The Western region is bordered to the east by the Central region, to the west by La Cote d'Ivoire, to the north by the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions, and to the south by the Gulf of Guinea. The map of Ghana (see fig. 2.1 above) shows a visual representation of the position of western region, as well as the other regions in Ghana. The regional capital of this region is Sekondi-Takoradi. The region accounts for 40% of the country's forest reserves. There are five indigenous ethnic groups in the region: the Ahanta (6.3%), the Nzema (10%), the Wassa (11.7%), the Sefwis (10.9%) and the Aowins (2.5%). Other ethnic groups who have migrated to the region are the Asantes (7.3%), the Ewes (5.9%), the Brongs (3.4%) and the Kusasis (2.9%). Languages spoken in these regions are Ahanta, Nzema, Wassa, Sefwi and Brossa (Aowin). In the southern part of the region, however, Fante is widely spoken and it is the language of instruction in lower primary school classes in the majority of basic schools. In terms of religious practices, 81% of the population is Christian,

8.5% Muslim, 1.5% practice Traditional Religion, while 8.2% have no religious affiliation (Government of Ghana, 2016; Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

The region's contribution towards national development is evident in the fact that it is the largest producer of cocoa, coconut, oil palm and rubber. It is also known for a variety of mineral products such as diamonds, gold, bauxite and manganese. The people in this region engage in such economic activities as fishing; animal husbandry and hunting; manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade; mining and quarrying; and others.

The various festivals celebrated by the people across the region every year include the Bombei, the Ekyen Kofie, the Edim Kese, the Apatwa, the Kundum, the Edie Afehye, the Odwira Afahye, the Nkronu, the Afehye, and the Elluelie. These festivals are accompanied by dances such as the Kundum, Sewurada, Kotodwe, Simpoa Allewuley, Ezinlibo Abram, and others, depending on which ethnic group is celebrating the festival.

3.2.10.5 Eastern Region

The Eastern region is the sixth largest region in Ghana and the third most populous after the Greater Accra and Ashanti regions. There are four major ethnic groups in the region: the Akan (52.1%), the Ga-Dangme (18.9%), the Ewe (15.9%) and the Guan (7.2%) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). The regional capital of this region is Koforidua. The main occupations of the people include hunting; forestry; wholesale and retail; sales; transport and equipment; and others (Ghana Government, 2016).

The people celebrate such festivals as the Odwira, the Dipo, the Ngmayem, the Addae and the Akwasidae, among others. Dances representative of the region include the Klama, the Dipo and the Adowa. The major ethnic group in the region being Akan, has implications for the Akan cultural representation in the region. This is evident in the dances, musical instruments and costumes of the 52% of the region's population.

3.2.10.6 Greater Accra Region

The second most populated region after Ashanti, Greater Accra, is the smallest of the ten administrative regions in terms of land area. This region houses the capital of

the country, Accra, and has an ethnic composition of 39.8% Akan, 29.7% Ga-Dangme and 18% Ewe. 83% of the population are Christians, 10% are Muslims, 1.4% Traditionalists and 4.6% with no religious affiliation. It is interesting that even though the region is the home of the Ga-Dangme ethnic group, the Akan ethnic representation in the region is more than that of the Ga. The most popular festival celebrated by the Ga-Dangme ethnic group is the annual Homowo¹⁷ festival. It is celebrated in commemoration of their migration from Benin to their present location in the Greater Accra Region (National Commission on Culture, 2007; Government of Ghana, 2016; Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

The Ga ethnic group are traditionally fisher folks living along the coastal areas. Their fishing activities and movement inspire the movements of their most popular dance Kpanlogo. Other dances of this ethnic group include the Gome, Kolomashie, Kpaa Shimo, Kpatsa, Dipo, Kple, Otofo, Torkoi and Obonu. The musical instruments that accompany these dances include Kpanlogo drums, the Tamalin, the Gome, the Pod Bell, Bamboo Sticks and the Double Bell.

3.2.10.7 Volta Region

The Volta Region covers 8.6% of the total area of Ghana and is bordered to the east by the Lake Volta, to the west-eastern by the Republic of Togo and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. There are eight major ethnic groups which constitute the population of the region, with about 62 subgroups speaking 56 dialects.

The largest ethnic group is the Anlo-Ewe representing 68.5% of the region's population and made up of several subgroups. Other major ethnic groups in the region include the Guan (9.2%), the Akan (8.5%), the Gurma (6.5%); the Mole-Dagbon, Grusi, Mande, Ga-Dangme and other smaller ethnic groups make up 7.3% of the total population of the region.

The social structure of the region is organised under chiefs who oversee issues of settlement and lineage:

¹⁷ *Homowo* means hooting at hunger.

[T]he traditional authorities administer stool lands, holding them in trust for the people, and arrange the celebration of traditional festivals. They are also the custodians of traditional beliefs and customs, passed on from one generation to another. The traditional authorities also have courts which adjudicate on matters relating to stool lands, lineage and family lands, chieftaincy title disputes, violations of traditions and disputes between localities, lineages, families, and individuals (Government of Ghana, 2016).

Historically, the people in this region practiced the traditional religion. With the introduction of Christianity and Islam, the total percentage of traditionalists within the region has decreased to 21.8%, as revealed by the 2010 population census (National Commission on Culture, 2007; Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

The Anlo-Ewes of the Volta region celebrate the Hogbetsotso Festival in commemoration of their migration from the legendary tyrant chief Agborkorli, in the northern part of Togo, to their present location in the Volta region. Their migration was aided by drumming, dancing and singing of war songs as they walked backwards to confuse their pursuers (Ghanagrio, 2018). Dances from the Volta Region belonging to the Anglo-Ewe ethnic group include the Gadzo, Gahu, Gobi, Gombe, Adzogbo, Gota, Sohu, Boboobo, Togo, Atsia, Husago and Kadodo.

3.2.10.8 Upper East Region

The Upper East region is one of the three Northern regions of Ghana located in the north-eastern corner of the country. Its regional capital is Bolgatanga. It shares boundaries with Togo and Burkina Faso. It was separated along with Upper West from the Northern region in 1983. The major ethnic groups in the region are the Bimoba, Bissa, Buli, Frafra, Kantosi, Kasem and Kusasi. The major religion practiced in this region, is the Traditional (46.4%), the second major Christianity (28.3%) and the third Islam (26.8%). The main occupations of the people are farming and weaving. It is known for its beautiful handicrafts –straw baskets and hats –and intricately woven smocks.

The various ethnic groups within the regions celebrate various kinds of festivals all year round. Festivals such the Gologo/Golib, the Fao, the Feok, the Kuure and the Tengana are celebrated for different purposes by their respective ethnic groups within the region (ghanagrio, 2018). These ethnic groups within the region have dances specific to their unique histories and development as a people. Some of the dances that originate from the region, are the Nagla, Djongo, Bima and Wongor.

Festival celebrations and dance performances are accompanied by the talking drum, the Dondo, the calabash drum and rattles.

3.2.10.9 Upper West Region

The Upper West Region constitutes about 12.7 % of the total land area of Ghana. It is bordered to the north by the Republic of Burkina Faso, to the east by Upper East region, to the South by Northern region and to the West by Cote d'Ivoire. The major ethnic groups in the region are the Mole-Dagbon constituting 75.7%, and the Grusi constituting 18.4%. There are other indigenous ethnic groups within the region that constitute 5% of its population. The Akan ethnic groups also constitute 3.2% of the population. Religious distribution within the region is made up of 35.5% Christians, 32.2% Muslims and 29.3% Traditionalists.

The major languages spoken within the region are Dagaare, Sissali, Wale and Lobi. The people celebrate festivals such as the Kobine, Kakube, Zumbeti, Willa, Dumba, Paragbiele, Bagre, Kala, Bongngo and the Sigma. All these festivals prominently feature drumming and dancing, with the accompaniment of the people's most important traditional instrument, the Xylophone.

In terms of economic activities, the people of the Upper West region engage in handicrafts such as weaving, spinning, smock designing, pottery, blacksmithing and carving (National Commission on Culture, 2007; Government of Ghana, 2016; Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

3.2.10.10 Northern Region

The Northern Region has the largest land area in Ghana and, as such, is the largest of the ten regions. It bordered to the north by the Upper East and Upper West regions, to the south by the Brong Ahafo and the Volta regions, to the east by the Republic of Togo, and to the west by La Cote d'Ivoire. The regional capital is Tamale. The region has four paramount chiefs representing each of the four major ethnic groups in the region.

The major ethnic groups in the region are the Mole-Dagbon (52.2%), the Gurma (21.8%), and the Akan and Guan ethnic groups (8.7%). The Dagomba, a subgroup belonging to the Mole-Dagbon, constitutes about a third of the region's population. Islam is the predominant religion (56.1%), followed by Traditional religion (21.3%),

while Christianity is practised by 19.3% of the population (Government of Ghana, 2016; Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). The indigenous languages spoken, are Gonja, Dagbani and Kokomba. The main occupations of the people in the region include hunting, forestry, and wholesale and retail.

The various ethnic groups within the region celebrate such festivals as the Gobandawu (Yam Festival), the Bugum Festival, the Damba, the Beng Festival and others. These festivals are accompanied by the various dances within the region according to the specific festival and ethnic group. Some of these dances include the Bawa, Bamaya, Mina, Damba, Jera, Takai, Tora, Butcher's Dance and the Sofo Kaagyi Kaagyi. The main musical instruments that accompany dance in the Northern region are the talking drum (donno), the Brekete drum and the Straw Rattle.

As established in the foregoing, the Akans are spread across five regions (the Western, Central, Eastern, Ashanti and Brong Ahafo Regions); the Mole-Dagbanis across the Northern, Upper East and Upper West; the Ewes occupy the Southern Volta Region, the Ga-Adangmes are in the Greater Accra and Eastern Regions, and the Guan-speaking groups are scattered in Northern, Central, Eastern and Volta Regions. Each of these larger ethnic groupings has several traditions and customs, which are unique and specific to the creation of their culture.

It would, therefore, be too simplistic to describe Ghana as a country with a homogenous culture based on the fact that these groups live within the same nation. For the fact that these groups live within the same geographical region, there is a need for interethnic interactions motivated by several factors, including trade, education, migration, transportation and other mobility motivators. Such interactions fall within the domain of intercultural communication, as they involve some form of negotiation based on differences to avoid conflict.

3.2.11 Intercultural Communication

It is impossible to discuss intercultural communication without taking into consideration the attending ambiguities of 'culture'. Intercultural communication is communication between cultures that are different from each other. Michael Kelly (2011:1) describes intercultural communication as an emerging discipline, and focuses on its definition as the study of "communication between people from

diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, especially where participants do not all share a common first language". He further highlights the strong international outlook of intercultural communication as an integral part of its practice, which can be linked to Asante, Miike, & Yin's (2008b:7 –8) argument: "[a]s globalisation and localization intensify in every corner of the world, [...] intercultural communication is the only way to mitigate identity politics, social disintegration, religious conflicts, and ecological vulnerability in the global village."

Intercultural exchange and communication, no doubt, predates the academic attention the area has received over the past few decades. Hart (1997) in his review of the history of intercultural communication dates the beginning of its study as an academic discipline to 1959, the year in which Edward T. Hall's *The Silent Language* was published. The term 'Intercultural Communication' was first used in Hall's influential book, which marked the foundation of the field of intercultural communication, even though he developed the concept during the period 1951–1955 (Rogers et al., 2002). The years following the United States' victory in the World War II, saw an intensive effort towards understanding and establishing international relations with other parts of the world for economic reasons (Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

On the other hand, McCarthy (1994) provides a different perspective on the genesis of intercultural communication from an ethnographic point of view, which sought a dialogic engagement with colonised peoples after the World War II. This perspective, as opposed to the American expansionist origins of intercultural communication, was necessitated by the decolonisation agenda pushed forth after the World War II by the colonised people (McCarthy, 1994). This fact is backed by Botwe-Asamoah (2005) who notes that the full force of the African cultural awakening was not felt until the end of the European World War II.

From this time on, the growing interest in intercultural communication as an offshoot of globalisation and the need to understand one another, confirms Asante et al.'s (2008b:7 –8) observation that "[h]uman survival and flourishing depends on our ability to communicate successfully across differences". The importance of intercultural communication to this study lies in the inherent ethnic differences that exist within the GDE and how communication flows across difference and effectively avoid conflict.

3.2.12 Intercultural Communication from the Perspective of the Colonised

Asante (1983:5 –6) in his paper, ‘The ideological significance of Afrocentricity in intercultural communication’, makes the assumption that “effective intercultural communication must be based upon the equality of the interactants because the sharing of meaning is the fundamental prerequisite of communicative understanding”. This assumption is based on his observation of European hegemonic tendencies in intercultural interactions, which he describes as image domination, and likens to other colonial conquests. Asante (1983) therefore calls for an Afrocentric view, which has the power to liberate the African mind from European bondage. His call for an inside-out approach to intercultural communication stems from his observation that “we [Africans] cannot communicate as equals when our economic position is that of servants” (Asante, 1983:8).

Asante’s (1983) view, though materialistic, is justified in the sense that Africa is regarded as subordinate third world compared to Europe and America, based on economic reasons. Pavis (1996:147) puts this succinctly when he notes that cultural difference is often fundamentally economic. The disproportion of economic means that exists between Euro-America and the rest of the world, underlines the risks of appropriation and exploitation.

From Asante’s (1983) position we cannot effectively communicate across cultures, because of unequal power relations. He defines power as the materialisation of symbols towards an objective which is political, as “politics is the struggle for symbols” (ibid:9). Asante (1983:9) further notes that the following:

Intercultural communication as a harmonious endeavor seeks to create the sharing of power. In the exchange, the interchange, we find the source of creative understanding. For the African scholar the principal audience is African and from that audience one makes contact with the universal audience.

It is therefore important to look at intercultural communication from within, by basing its roots in Afrocentric thoughts to foreground what it means to understand each other as Africans, before attempting to understand people from other parts of the world. His critique of European perspectives about cultures foreign to theirs is summarised as follows in his submission: “The foundations of eurocentric [sic] thought makes Africans anti-African. Neither can we expect to communicate if

we refuse to use our own voice. Our own voice is the source of effective interaction with others” (Asante, 1983:12).

The right place to start as Africans in the development and study of intercultural communication is to study the practice from within, as it happens between people of diverse ethnicities. This is established as follows in Hountondji’s epigram at the beginning of this chapter:

[...] the decisive encounter is not between Africa as a whole and Europe as a whole. Pluralism in the true sense does not stem from the intrusion of Western civilization into our continent [...] it is an internal pluralism, born of perpetual confrontations and occasional conflicts between Africans themselves.

This ‘internal pluralism’ existed long before the arrival of the imperialist or colonialist and was managed within to address the ‘perpetual confrontations and occasional conflicts’ that arise as a result of multiculturalism. In describing intercultural communication as an interdisciplinary “clearing-house”, Kim and Hubbard (2007) point out the central role it plays in addressing the challenges posed by multiculturalism. Perhaps when viewed from the perspective of the colonised as argued by Asante (1983) above, it will help bring some new perspective on the practice of intercultural communication as experienced on a micro level, as between citizens of the same country, who belong to different ethnicities. In furtherance to this, Kim and Hubbard (2007:225–226) note that:

[t]he field of human communication was largely developed in the US, promulgating the themes of research and the contents of the theories that served its own society. However, communication theories also have been exported from the US to other societies, and the topics investigated were usually those already identified in the established literature. In other words, the study of human communication in another society has had little regard for what is actually happening in that other society or has paid little attention to how communication may best be studied in that other society.

From the above submission, it is imperative that the intercultural communication practices of the Ghana Dance Ensemble be examined from its philosophical underpinnings to determine the processes that create intercultural competence among the members.

There is a need to pay attention to how intercultural communication is understood at this micro-level, to foreground the phenomenon as it pertains to a multi-ethnic dance company. This angle will then be compared with what is relevant in terms of already

3.2.13 Intercultural Communication and the Global Village: From the Inside-Out

Intercultural communication has moved away from addressing the needs of empire, to the needs of trade, to its current position as a survival tool for humanity. In describing intercultural communication as a “matter of survival for our species”, Kim and Hubbard (2007:223) point out the glaring fact that “understanding between members of different cultures was always important, but it has never been as important as it is now in the twenty-first century.” A century, which, in the words (Knowles, 2010:3) continues to reveal an increasingly multicultural world “as cities and nations move beyond the monochromatic, as human traffic between nations and cultures (both willing and unwilling) increases, as hybridity and syncretism (the merging of forms) become increasingly characteristic of cultural production everywhere [...]”. It is therefore imperative that intercultural communication in the context of globalisation is questioned to avoid the pitfalls of only viewing these interactions at the macro-level. After all, the ‘village’ was there before the ‘global’.

Studying the global from the local in terms of cultural differences, I believe may offer insights into what it means to understand each other as humans and co-exist in spite of difference in any given situation. If people with different cultural backgrounds can co-exist within the same geographical space as nationals of the same country (which does not make them homogenous), it is even more possible for people to interact at an international level for purposes such as trade, tourism, education, work, virtual spaces, etc., as these are often more temporary or remote kinds of relationships than the former.

Understanding intercultural communication from the micro-level is especially important for this study, as I look at inter-ethnic interactions within the GDE. A conscious effort was made towards establishing this dance company as a national dance company, communicating across internal or ethnic linguistic and cultural boundaries through dance. The ultimate aim, as proposed by Nkrumah’s cultural policy, was to first understand each other from within before reaching out to the global to showcase our identities as a people.

Apart from the daily inter-ethnic interactions between the ethnically diverse members of the Ensemble, they have had several international collaborations with foreign

artists and companies, which brings to the fore their participation in intercultural communication on the global stage. How then has their internal training as intercultural agents prepared them for the international stage to be able to communicate effectively, if at all?

3.2.14 Intercultural Communication Competence

Kim and Hubbard (2007) identified two broad interest areas in intercultural communication. While one area concentrates on the comparative examination of similarities and differences in communication patterns across cultures, the other focuses on the communicative adaptations individuals make when they move between cultures. In their submission they observe how the former has held much interest for cross-cultural communication experts, much to the neglect of the latter, which is a relatively new area. Not surprisingly, this new area is of interest to this study, as it holds the key to understanding the communicative adaptations the GDE members make when they move through ethnic dances to effectively and competently communicate across ethnic differences.

Kim and Hubbard (2007) extend this to identify two theoretical strands when it comes to cross-cultural adaptation: the assimilationist theory and the alternation theory. The assimilationist theory, pertaining to immigrant communities, stresses the effect of the dominant culture on the stranger who is forced to adjust, thereby going through a process of assimilation which acculturates the stranger into the host culture and deculturates the stranger from the original culture.

On the other hand, the alternation model or theory “posits that individuals can gain competence within two or more cultures without necessarily losing their cultural identity or having to choose one culture over the other” (Kim & Hubbard, 2007:228). In addition, they advise that emphasis should be given to the alternation model by highlighting its strength against the assimilationist model:

The essential strength of the alternation model, as opposed to the assimilation model of acculturation, is that it focuses on the cognitive and affective processes that allow an individual to withstand the potentially negative impact of acculturative stresses. Several authors have noted that the additive element of biculturality or multiculturalism suggests that the acculturation process need not be the substitution of new cultural values for old (ibid).

Working within the frame of multiculturalism as it applies to Ghana, the alternation

model better explains the state of the nation and the practice of the Ghana Dance Ensemble as a presumed microcosm of the nation. It allows for individual members to gain competence in multiple cultures within the nation without necessarily losing their own cultural/ethnic identities. The GDE dancers under this model are multicultural dancers, as they identify with particular ethnicities and pledge various degrees of allegiance to these ethnicities. It is imperative therefore to understand the internal workings of the company and examine their intercultural competence.

According to Wawra (2009:163) “[a] central goal of intercultural communication research and training is to develop ‘intercultural communication competence’”, which has been defined by Wiseman (2003:192) as “the knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures”. Effective and appropriate communication across cultural difference is therefore the work of intercultural competence. As important as intercultural competence is to intercultural communication, “given the increasing cultural diversity in most urban cities, one could argue that research in intercultural competence should/would have been at the forefront in the past decade” (Arasaratnam, 2015:297).

In her thematic analysis of 608 articles published in three major intercultural communication research journals between 2003 and 2013, Arasaratnam (2015) discovers that, in spite of its importance to intercultural communication in general, there is little research on intercultural competence. There are, however, a few models developed by researchers for assessing and developing intercultural competence such as the PEER model (Preparing, Engaging, Evaluating, Reflecting), developed by Holmes and O’Neill (2012). This model for assessing and developing intercultural competence, is based on a methodology which guides individuals to prepare and engage in intercultural situations for the purposes of evaluating their competence and reflecting on it based on certain instruments designed to assess such competence.

Even though this model presents a deliberate interaction with people from diverse cultures, it does not explain the kind of professional engagement with diverse ethnic dances and people, as found within the Ghana Dance Ensemble. The GDE by design creates a deliberate intercultural space where ethnically diverse members interact on a daily basis with one another, and at the same time learn one another’s dances and accompanying cultural traditions. Each member must therefore be

interculturally competent in order to co-exist with other members at a professional level.

I therefore find the Integrated Model of Intercultural Competence, developed by Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005), more appropriate for the evaluation of intercultural competence of the GDE members. This model uses an emic approach (from the perspective of the members) “to identify five variables associated with intercultural competence. These variables are intercultural training/experience, empathy, motivation, attitude toward other cultures, and listening” (Arasaratnam 2015:297). The variables will guide my assessment of the intercultural communication competence of the GDE members. It must be emphasized that the model only serves to assess the competence of the members as intercultural communicators, their practice is not consciously guided by any model.

3.3 Interculturalism in Theatrical or Performative Sense

To crown the foregoing discussions and definitions of key words relevant to this study, the importance of defining interculturalism in the context of performance serves to ground this study within its conceptual frame. Beginning with discussions on culture, multiculturalism, ethnicity, nationalism and other concepts, the discussion is brought home to the main focus, viz. intercultural performance, as this study investigates the intercultural activities of the GDE within the context of performance.

Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins (2000:7) in their book, *Women’s Intercultural Performance*, have defined theatrical interculturalism as “the meeting in the moment of performance of two or more cultural traditions”. According to Patrice Pavis (1996:8), “intercultural theatre [or performance] in the strictest sense, [...] creates hybrid forms drawing upon a more or less conscious and voluntary mixing of performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural areas”. There are several prefixes that seek to define any performative dialogue between two or more cultural traditions; cross-, extra-, intra-, meta-, multi-, pre-, post-, trans-, , ultra-, etc.

Out of the possibilities, Knowles (2010:4) prefers ‘intercultural’ to the other terms:

[...] because it seems to [him] important to focus on the contested, unsettling, and often unequal spaces between cultures, spaces that can function in performance as sites of negotiation. Unlike ‘cross-cultural’, ‘intercultural’ evokes the possibility of interaction across a multiplicity of cultural positionings, avoiding binary codings.

Each of the terms, developed by various scholars and theoreticians to explain the phenomenon of theatre at the “crossroads of culture” (Pavis, 1990b), is defined according to specific conditions that created them. That notwithstanding, I choose ‘intercultural’ performance to describe the meeting, in the moment of performance, of two or more cultural traditions; my choice partly for the reasons given above by Knowles (2010). The prefix ‘inter-’ gives an indication of inbetweenness, which suggests the possibility of interaction between diverse cultures.

In the same vein, Lo and Gilbert (2002:44) have also consider the term ‘intercultural’, as it suggests “an exploration of the interstice between cultures; it draws our attention to the hyphenated third space separating and connecting different peoples”. Furthermore, my choice of the prefix ‘inter-’, is a result of the theoretical and conceptual developments in the field since its rise to prominence, which I contest in this study in relation to cultures within national boundaries. The prefix ‘inter-’ can also be applied to what has come to be called ‘intracultural’, thus the meeting of two or more cultural traditions which arise from within the same national space. This equation is only possible if the distinctiveness of each ethnic culture within the nation is established against the often-homogenising view of national cultures.

3.4 On a Workable Micro Intercultural Theoretical Framework

In providing a theoretical and conceptual framework for this study, a few questions must first be addressed: What theories of intercultural performance exist? Can there be a unified theory of this phenomenon? Can the discourses of intercultural performance at the current macro-level (east-west¹⁸ axis) be applied to a micro-frame along the ethnic axis within the nation-state?

The overarching argument here attempts to re-emphasise that the world is not made up of distinct continental cultures that can only cross at the international level. To illuminate this point, the epigram at the beginning of this chapter, which was taken

¹⁸ This distinction broadly refers to geographical and sociocultural classifications between parts Asia-eastern, as distinctive from parts of Europe and the wetern United.

from Jeyifo's 'The Reinvention of Theatrical Tradition...' in Patrice Pavis's *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (1996), paints an apt picture. If "the decisive encounter is not between Africa as a whole and Europe as a whole [or for that matter Asia as a whole and Europe as a whole]", then attempts at intercultural performance theory must be more nuanced than they are today.

If pluralism is internal to a nation, then we are not only looking at "perpetual confrontations and occasional conflicts" (Jeyifo, 1996:150), but also daily negotiations between cultures within the nation-state. These confrontations and negotiations arise as a result of differences inherent within a multicultural state, and therefore performances predicated on negotiations even at this level, beg for consideration in intercultural scholarship.

3.4.1 The West and Dominance of Theoretical Attempts

Research, theories and criticism pertaining to intercultural performance have not only been dominated by practitioners in Europe and America, but have also concentrated largely on intercultural practices initiated by such practitioners (Knowles, 2010; Lo and Gilbert, 2000; Bharucha, 1993; Pavis, 1996). Knowles (2010:2) describes interculturalism as "fraught territory" as a result of the historical dominance of Europe and America "where the resources and reason to dominate exchange are concentrated".

The historical incidence of colonisation provides evidence to the fact that Europeans and Americans tend to place themselves at the centre of the universe; therefore anything that is not of/from/by them is considered peripheral. The tendency to marginalise 'others' has raised incensing reactions from the south and east, where Euro-Western appropriations/misappropriations of formerly marginalised cultures are seen as a continuation of colonialism (Bharucha, 1996, 2000, 1993; Knowles, 2010). Even in the case of appropriations, criticism has bordered on ethical lines to highlight the need for cultural respect and sensitivity.

Daryl Chin (1989:167) has registered a voice in this vein by intimating that "the idea of interculturalism as simply a way of joining disparate cultural artefacts together has a hidden agenda of imperialism". These views did not arise without a cause. Peter Brook and his contemporaries opened a huge can of sentimental worms through their experiments in which 'formerly' marginalised cultures are

disregarded/misrepresented at the level of cross-cultural performance (Bharucha, 1993, 1996, 2000; Chin 1989; Jeyifo, 1996; Said, 1978; Chaudhuri, 1991). However, these reactions described by Carlson (1996:79) as “the arguments of purists”, largely come from the East and only exist as a result of Western theories and practices, thereby playing along set hegemonic constructs.

The East and the West as used in this study refer to Asia, and Europe and the United States, respectively. In operationalising the use of these cardinal points in this study, the East refers to countries such as China, Japan and India, while the West refers to countries such as England, France and the United States.

3.4.2 *The Weapon of Otherness*

‘Otherness’ being a Western instrument of obliterating any sense of worth in cultures foreign to theirs, has played a very significant role in intercultural theatre criticism. The politics of ‘othering’ is so powerful that even in its very criticism by the ‘othered’ culture lies an insidious hegemony of focus, which has caught the attention of Bharucha (1996).

Bharucha (1996:200) argues that by constantly defining: “ourselves in opposition to constructs of otherness thrust on us, then that would be the surest way of othering ourselves”. This tendency of defining the self through negation of hegemonic constructs tends to empower and enforce such categories by perpetrating the false narrative, and in the process “we fail to call attention to our own history and culture and attempts to find alternatives to the practices that we are criticising”.

Bharucha’s observation draws attention to the insidiousness of the Western agenda to create an illusion of there being only one route – something against which the ‘others’ are. Attempts at theorising intercultural performance have largely come from the Western world as a result of their pioneering role in the twentieth century for ‘conscious’ cultural ‘exchange’. This informs the dominance of the West in this phenomenon from practice to theory to conceptual framework (Pavis 1992, 1996; Fischer-Lichte 1990; Carlson 1990, 1996; Schechner 1996; Lo & Gilbert, 2002).

In the spirit of dismantling the set hegemonic constructs of what the phenomenon is, it would help to echo Bharucha (1996:200) who declares that the following:

I do not wish to be seen as anybody's other [...] [but someone] who has also found it equally necessary to explore himself in relation to differences within my multicultural context in India and beyond. In this context, my critique of interculturalism [...] cannot be separated from my exploration of translations and exchanges within India in an intracultural rather than intercultural context.

As liberating as Bharucha's declaration is, it still retains the categories circumscribed by Western construction of what the 'intercultural' should be. If India is made up of distinct cultures within the country, then why can't interactions between these cultures at the level of performance qualify for discussion as intercultural performance rather than 'intracultural'? If he is not anybody's other, then the supremacy of the cultures within his country should merit the prefix 'inter-' to register the fact that, even though these ethnic cultures exist within the same nation, they are very different from each other.

A statement like the above would also serve to criticise the homogenous view of multicultural nations, or even multicultural continents (such as Africa¹⁹) as being made up of one distinct culture. Being nobody's other should, therefore, reflect in the terminology given to the kind of intercultural theatre that represents interactions between cultures within the nation-state. Negotiations between these ethnic cultures, at performance level, in any case have certain similarities with the intercultural performance between cultures geographically apart, as a result of (internal) cultural difference and hegemony.

3.4.3 Critical Voices in Intercultural Performance

Knowles (2010:30), in suggesting a more balanced interest in cultural exchange, asks questions that place the purpose of cultural exchange in the realm of the ideal situation, with the hope that under such "circumstances the work of intercultural performance might more effectively function to redress rather than perpetuate the colonial project and might help to perform into being a more equitable basis for exchange". If the historical foundation of intercultural performance were based on the ideal exchange situation, then criticism of its practice by the West would have taken a different turn from the onset.

¹⁹ Pavis in his introduction to Jeyifo's article in *The Intercultural Performance Reader* (1996:147), makes a submission which seem to suggest that Africa is a country: "Africans, Chinese, Maoris, Indians or Japanese [...]"

The business of renewing “the own or target culture” (Fischer-Lichte, 1990:279), which staged the ‘foreign’ to transform the ‘own’, can be described as a double-edged sword: while it has given birth to the phenomenon of conscious intercultural performance, it has created a huge gap in the scholarship of its practice in the absence of a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon.

As proposed by Knowles (2010:61), there is a need for a body of knowledge that takes into consideration the multiplicity of diverse local and global performances, in which difference is celebrated in the processes of transferring energy, where formerly marginalised cultures create “intercultures that respect difference while building solidarities. Knowles is careful to acknowledge here the existence of processes of ‘intercultures’ both at the local and global stage, which strengthens his call for a more accommodating scholarship on the phenomenon. I will link his call to the fact that scholarship on intercultural theatre and performance has largely concentrated on what I describe as macro-level interculturalism, i.e. between cultures geographically apart from each other, whereas this study is addressing the gap with a micro-concentration.

The micro, which is more or less the same as the ‘intracultural’ proposed by Bharucha, is a neglected site of theory and research, even though its importance is evident in the internal cultural tension barely held at bay by the spirit of nationalism. My main aim here is to reconsider ‘Intracultural’ performance as ‘Intercultural’ performance, seeing that there are distinct and more diverse cultures within Africa as a continent and, more specifically, within Ghana as a country.

Despite my criticism of Bharucha’s terminology, he has made considerable attempts at redirecting attention from the macro to the micro: from criticising the ethics of representation of the macro to his own ‘intracultural’ practice. As a response to the ‘unethical’ representations of his culture by Western theatre practitioners, Bharucha sets an example in his *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture* (1993), addressing the method of ethics of representation in performance and proposing a more ethical means of cultural negotiation through performances of a German text, *Request Concert*, in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.

In this critical/theoretical work, Bharucha admits to finding meaning through exploring the intracultural potential of India. It can be argued that intercultural performance at

the macro-level mirrors what pertains to a multicultural country like Ghana. In the same way, intercultural theatre is criticised as offering a utopian view of the world where differences, be they racial or cultural, are completely blurred (Knowles, 2010).; Intracultural (micro-intercultural in this case) theatre can also be seen to offer a vision of one country where ethnic differences do not matter.

Another angle to this view of interculturalism stems from the hegemony of the West as echoed by Chin's (1989) criticism above. The observation by Knowles (2010:8) in *Theatre & Interculturalism* struck a chord that finds itself at the heart of this study when he identified the 'internal cultural hegemony' of the Yoruba culture in Nigeria, which is a country with over 400 languages and ethnic groups. This correlation between discourses at the macro- and micro-levels of the intercultural practice is what I explore in this study.

3.4.4 Conceptualising the Field of Intercultural Performance

Interculturalism, a relatively young and growing field²⁰, has enjoyed much attention from both practical and theoretical/conceptual fronts. This development takes root in the fact that 'conscious' cultural exchange/borrowing/appropriation is a Western phenomenon, which has foundations in the experimentations of Peter Brook, Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski, Arian Mnouchkine and several others who sought various degrees of intercultural encounters. Consequently, the very few attempts at theorising intercultural performance practice have largely come from Europe and America – inter alia Schechner, Pavis, Fischer-Lichte. This is not to say that intercultural performance is not practised in areas other than Europe and America; it rather points to the fact that attempts at theorising and conceptualising the practice, have largely come from Europe and America (Pavis, 1996; Fischer-Lichte, 1997; Lo & Gilbert, 2002; Knowles, 2010).

Lo and Gilbert (2002:37) observed that "cross-cultural work of any kind is site-specific, hence to produce an abstracted theory of its practice may seem

²⁰ Even though theatre has always been intercultural (Knowles 2010), conscious interculturalism with the revivalist intent towards the theatre of the target cultures began in the twentieth century with the modern experiments of Antonin Artaud, Peter Brook, Richard Schechner and others.

problematic". Although some scholars have argued that it is too soon to propose a global theory of interculturalism (Pavis, 1996; Fischer-Lichte, 1997), Lo and Gilbert (2002:37) maintained that "there already exists a global practice that demands further political and ethical interrogation". Having been established as a Western vision of exchange (Lo & Gilbert, 2002; Knowles, 2010), intercultural performance has become a contested site for both theory and practice.

Patrice Pavis's (1992) pioneering attempt at theorising intercultural performance (the hour glass model) has been described as inadequate²¹ when it comes to explaining the practice of intercultural performance from a collaborative micro perspective, which is where this study stands.

3.4.5 Pavis and the Hour Glass Model

Knowles (2010) observed and criticised the binary view of intercultural performance as proposed by Erika Fischer-Lichte (1990) in the preface to *The Dramatic Touch of Difference* and Marvin Carlson's (1990:50) seven-scale cross-cultural taxonomy, which he based on the "possible relationships between the culturally familiar and the culturally foreign". Lo and Gilbert (2002:42) also described Carlson's scale as useful only for differentiating types of intercultural projects and therefore "does not move beyond an essentially taxonomic analysis of the field".

Carlson (1996) in his article, 'Brook and Mnouchine: Passages to India?', suggests that a careful examination of contemporary intercultural performances reveals that not only there is a long tradition of such performances, but also several ways of classifying performance traditions that bring together diverse cultures. Contemporary intercultural performances, according to Carlson, may fall under any of the following categories:

1. Performances in traditions foreign to the audience (by local performers).
2. Complete assimilation of foreign elements in a performance.
3. The assimilation of a foreign artistic structure in a performance situation.

²¹ Gilbert and Lo (2002) criticized Pavis's hourglass model for creating a one-way street, where there is always a source culture catering to a target culture and losing sight of unequal power relations issues inherent in cultural exchanges.

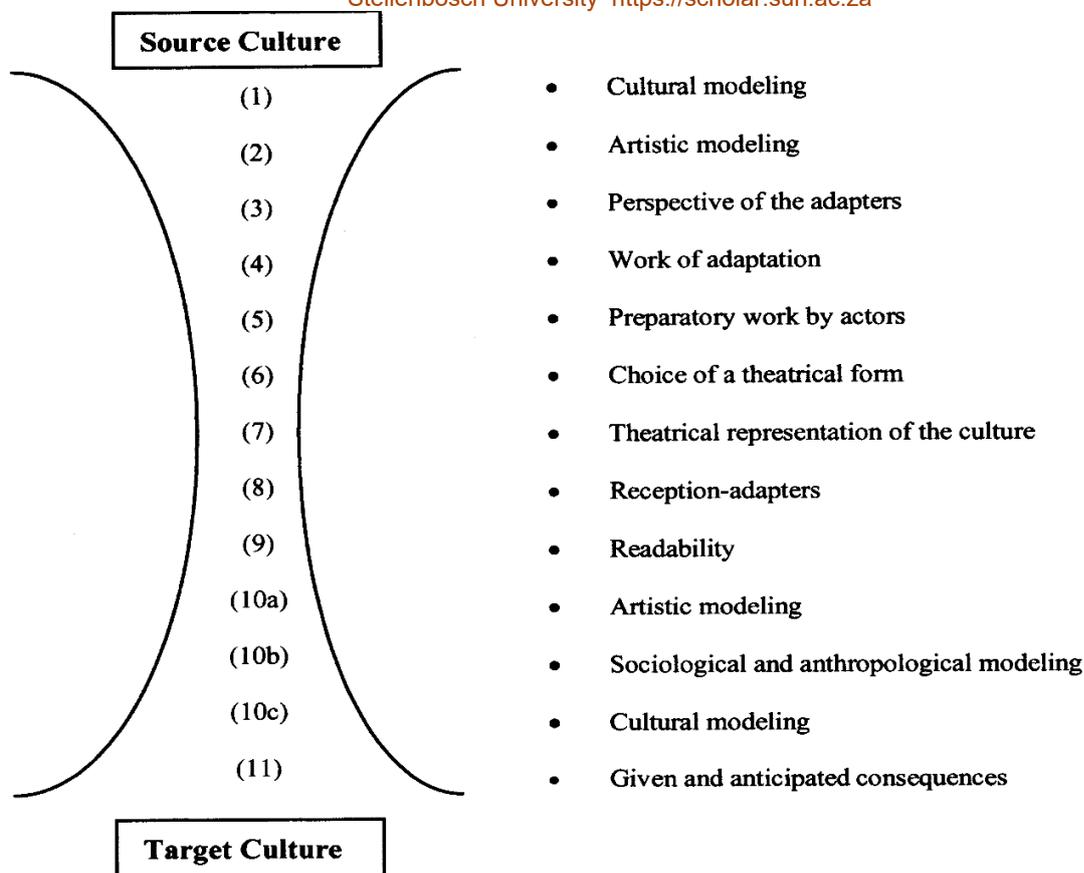
4. Blending familiar elements with the foreign structure.
5. Assimilating an entire foreign genre.
6. Adopting foreign elements into a local/familiar structure.
7. Importing an entire performance (by foreign performers) from a foreign culture that is unfamiliar.

Similarly, Fischer-Lichte's (1990) productive reception model, though formed from a different perspective, is also criticised by Lo and Gilbert (2002:42) who conclude that it does not detail or pay attention to the dynamics involved in the intercultural encounter it seeks to define. Here their main critique is based on a lack of clarity pertaining to the modalities involved in Fischer-Lichte's productive reception. This model still retains the binary view of intercultural performance as an encounter between the 'own' and the 'foreign' culture, in which the foreign culture serves to revitalise old and tired Western performance forms.

In their attempt to map out a more equitable model of intercultural performance, Lo and Gilbert (2002) in 'Toward a topography of cross-cultural theatre praxis' further criticises Pavis's hourglass model based on its "[...] unidirectionality [and replaced] it with a new model allowing for traffic in both directions between what nevertheless remain two (and only two) cultures" (Knowles, 2010:26). Knowles (2010), although acknowledging Lo and Gilbert's attempt at redressing the problem with Pavis's model, also draws attention to the binary view of intercultural encounters as involving only two cultural traditions at all times.

Lo and Gilbert (2002) have nevertheless acknowledges that Pavis is the only critic who has been able to sustain a comprehensive model of intercultural performance. Below is a visual representation of Pavis's hourglass model of intercultural performance as represen by Lo and Gilbert (2002:42).

Figure 3.3: Pavis' hour-glass Model of Intercultural Theatre



The hourglass model shows the foreign or source culture in the upper bowl which bears certain sociocultural codes represented by filters 1 and 2. The cultural grains from the foreign culture (1 and 2) pass through filters 3 through 11, which are positioned by the target culture to transform the source culture for the consumption of the target culture (Pavis, 1992).

Lo and Gilbert (2002:41 – 42) criticised the hourglass model for not being able to account for alternative and more collaborative forms of cultural exchange. According to them “the main problem with this model is that it assumes a one way cultural flow based on a hierarchy of privilege” (ibid). Having looked at the weaknesses of the model, Pavis (1992:5) suggests that the power relations need not be a one-way street, and that, “as soon as the users of a foreign culture ask themselves how they can communicate their own culture to another target culture”, the hourglass only needs to be turned upside-down and power will tilt in their favour.

However, Lo and Gilbert (2002:42) point out an assumption made by Pavis’s suggestion which

assumes that there is a 'level-playing field' between partners in the exchange and does not account for the fact that the benefits of globalization and the permeability of cultures and political systems are accessed differentially for different communities and nations.

This assumption prompts a critical debate regarding the position of formerly marginalised cultures and peoples involved in exchanges with the Euro-Western world.

This is the gap in the theoretical and conceptual attempts in the field of intercultural performance that Lo and Gilbert (2002) attempted to fill in their article 'Towards a topography of cross-cultural theatre praxis'. In this seminal work they proposed a 'matrixing' of interculturalism and postcolonialism in order to "account for interculturalism as a process of political negotiation" (ibid:43). To this end, they also proposed a model, having outlined the weaknesses in the preceding models, which takes into consideration postcolonial theory and its stress on historicity and specificity.

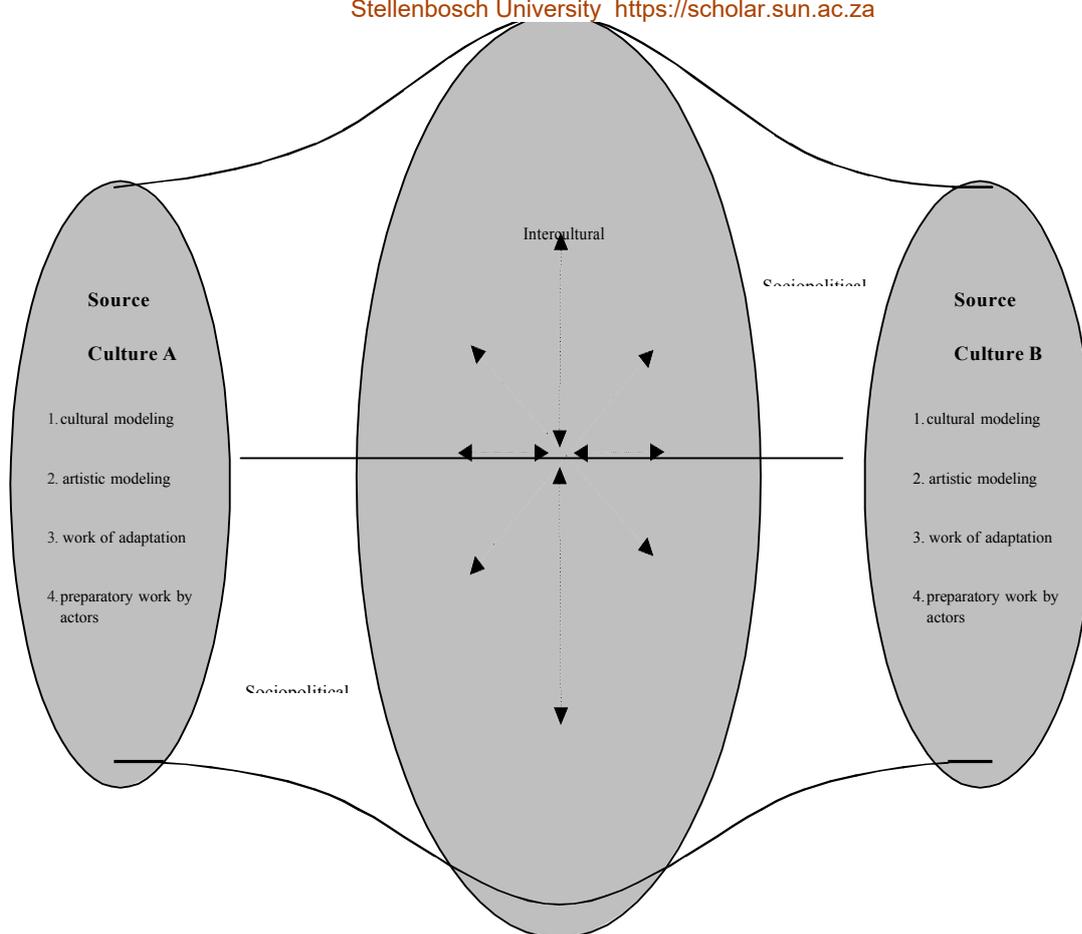
The potential in leaning towards postcolonial theory for the benefit of intercultural theory is that the following:

It offers ways of relocating the dynamics of intercultural theatre within identifiable fields of sociopolitical and historical relations. This contextualizing enables us to ask, at any point in the production and reception processes of intercultural work, questions about individual and collective power: Whose economic and/or political interests are being served? How is the working process represented to the target audience, and why? Who is the target audience and how can differences be addressed within this constituency? How does a specific intercultural event impact on the wider sociopolitical environment?

For anyone within a collaborative process to be able to ask such questions, provision must be made to ensure that the playing field is levelled enough within a specified sociopolitical and historical frame of reference; that is what the capital postcolonial theory brings to intercultural theory, as proposed by Lo and Gilbert (2002).

Below is a diagram that represents their proposed model, presenting intercultural exchange as a two-way street where both cultures are considered sources.

Figure 3.4: Lo and Gilbert's (2002:45) Proposed Model for Interculturalism



Here, the location of the target culture is not fixed but moves around, based on the location of the exchange and the modalities involved. The fluid nature of the target culture “not only foregrounds the dialogic nature of the intercultural exchange but also takes into account the possibility of power disparity in the partnership” (Lo & Gilbert, 2002:44).

3.4.6 On the Topography of Cross-cultural Performance Praxis

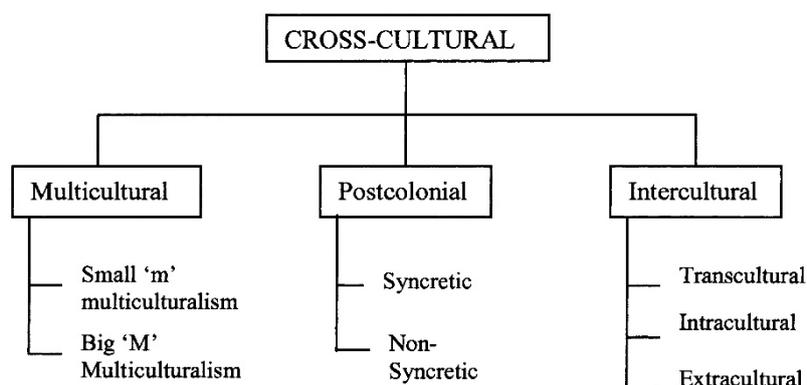
Gilbert and Lo (2002) intimated that it is an inevitable fact, that intercultural theatre of any kind involves a process of contact and negotiation between diverse cultural capitals. However, the nature of any cultural negotiation tends to be specifically depending on the kind of exchange, the location and artistic negotiations brought to the exchange process. In defining the intercultural activities of the GDE, there therefore is a strong argument to the effect that every cross-cultural negotiation, be it between cultures geographically apart or within the same geographical area, must be treated in terms of site-specificity.

Given the position of Ghana as a postcolonial state with a diverse ethnic composition, it is important to consider postcolonial theory in exploring the nature of the intercultural performance activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble. The idea that theatre has always been intercultural (Knowles, 2010), rings truer in relation to postcolonial theatre as a result of the colonial encounter. It therefore is prudent to operate within the frame of postcolonial theory when studying intercultural performance from an African perspective.

This approach is given impetus by Lo and Gilbert's (2002) proposed model for intercultural performance, which offers some form of frame for discussing interculturalism from a bottom-up approach, with its emphasis on postcolonial theory and history. The prospects of Lo and Gilbert's model for this study, lie in the fact that it offers an opportunity to locate the intra-inter-cultural activities of the GDE, within an identifiable sociopolitical historical frame.

However, since this study does not concentrate on the analysis of specific performances of the GDE but the nature of their intercultural activities in general, the intercultural model proposed by Lo and Gilbert (2002), as with Pavis's model, would not explain the GDE's intercultural practice. Thus, I will only employ their theoretical idea of situating the intercultural within the historical and postcolonial frame. To this end, the following diagram by Lo and Gilbert (2002) provides a conceptual frame with which to understand cross-cultural performance in general and in it lies a conceptual map for defining the intercultural practice of the GDE. It shows the relationship between multicultural theatre, postcolonial theatre, and intercultural theatre as derivatives of cross-cultural theatre and performance.

Figure 3.5: *Types of Cross-cultural theatre. Lo and Gilbert (2002:32).*



3.4.6.1 Multiculturalism and Multicultural Theatre

In their attempt to map a conceptual frame for intercultural performance, Lo and Gilbert (2002) have identified three main types, viz. multicultural, postcolonial and intercultural theatre. Under each of the three, there are further divisions, as seen in the diagram above.

Their definition of multicultural theatre is based on such theatre practices in Australia and Canada where multiculturalism is a federal policy (Henry and Kurzac 2013; Sneja, 1993). They, however, begin by stating the crucial fact that multiculturalism and the multicultural carry site-specific meanings.

Multiculturalism is understood differently when it comes to managing cultural diversity. The kind of multiculturalism practiced in Canada and Australia, under a federal policy, is different from that practiced in the United States and Britain, where it is generated by marginalised communities within the country (Lo & Gilbert, 2002). Beyond the use of multiculturalism as a cultural diversity management tool, what interests this study the most, is the kind of theatre created by multiculturalism, be it policy orientated or not.

The federal policy of multiculturalism in Australia and Canada has created a vibrant body of artistic practices, all supported by the state towards community development. This kind of support given to multicultural theatre, differs markedly from the multi-ethnic theatre practices in the United States and Britain, which are not integrated under one multicultural policy (Lo and Gilbert, 2002).

In Ghana, multiculturalism can be described as a predefined phenomenon, which the democratic government has adopted after independence to promote unity in diversity within the nation. Here the use of multiculturalism as a cultural diversity management tool can be described as loose, in comparison to the federal policy of multiculturalism in Australia and Canada.

Early in the years following Ghana's independence, the cultural reclamation project of which the Ghana Dance Ensemble is a product, had funding and support from the

government. This made their artistic products ethnic-blind²² to foster unity in the face of ethnic diversity within the country. This project, as in the case of Australia and Canada, has produced a body of national dances representing the various ethnic groupings in Ghana.

Today, the only official strategy that comes close to the Australian and Canadian federal multicultural policy, is the general national law of ethnic inclusiveness. Perhaps nowhere is this ethnic inclusiveness felt more strongly than during state functions, such as Independence Day celebrations where attempts at being politically correct are seen in the representation of the cultures/dances of the major ethnic groupings in the country (Lentz, 2010).

In terms of a multicultural theatre in the likeness of Australia and Canada, the closest Ghana has come to such a theatre, is in the work of the GDE at its inception when the government sponsored its activities with the agenda of blurring ethnic boundaries and conflicts. There is, however, no direct relationship between the kind of multicultural theatre practiced in Ghana through the GDE and that of the United States and Britain, which are community generated (Lo and Gilbert, 2002).

3.4.6.2 Small 'm' and Big 'M' Multicultural Theatre

As can be seen Figure 2.4 above, multicultural theatre is divided into two major types: small 'm' and big 'M' multicultural theatre. Lo and Gilbert (2002) define the small 'm' multicultural theatre by its commitment to promoting cultural pluralism, as it does not draw attention to cultural differences in productions involving racially mixed casts. This strategy of blind or non-traditional casting, while it has some benefits for minority groups, is criticised (Lo & Gilbert, 2002; Ambush, 1989) for evading the need to confront the hegemony of the dominant culture by creating a false picture of unity in diversity. Ambush (1989) makes a compelling argument against colour-blind casting, by pointing to the subtle alienation effect created by disconnecting the actor's identity from the role being played.

²² Dancers learn and perform dances other than those which belong to their ethnicity

“Fetishisation of cultural difference” in the form of folkloric theatre is another form of the small ‘m’ multiculturalism in the view of Lo and Gilbert (2002:34). Here, various cultural forms are displayed for the sole purpose of showcasing cultural difference as they celebrate authenticity, tradition, and history by taking advantage of marginalised cultural groups.

All facets of the small ‘m’ multicultural theatre seem to fit within the type of intercultural performance practiced by the Ghana Dance Ensemble. The GDE is made up of dancers from ethnically diverse backgrounds who, in addition to their own dances, perform dances that are ethnically foreign to them. Here Ambush’s argument of alienation can be applied in that dancers perform dances which do not belong to their ethnic identity.

The hegemony of the dominant culture, as found in Ambush’s critique of this kind of multicultural theatre, also finds some resonance in the case of the GDE, as there is evidence to the effect that the Akan ethnic group is the dominant (Schauert, 2015), both in terms of numbers and privilege, within the country.

In terms of the folkloric theatre discussed under the small ‘m’ multicultural theatre, the nature of the GDE’s participation in international theatre festivals could be described as contributing to the ‘fetishisation of cultural difference’. This is mainly because the GDE prides itself with its focus on ‘authentically traditional’ Ghanaian dances. Therefore, since “authenticity” with all its attendant pitfalls (Griffiths 1994:82) is their selling point, it is an apt conclusion, which describes the nature of the GDE’s international intercultural performances.

Ghetto theatre, migrant theatre, community theatre, according to Lo and Gilbert (2002), all fall under the big ‘M’ multicultural theatre with its main agenda of promoting cultural diversity by addressing ethnic marginality towards nation-building. However, the focus of this research is on the work of the GDE – not migrant, community or ghetto theatre.

3.4.6.3 Postcolonial Theatre

Lo and Gilbert (2002:35) describe postcolonial theatre, which is another form of cross-cultural theatre, as denoting theatre practices originating from “cultures

subjected to Western imperialism”, which have textual and performative elements from a combination of their own and the coloniser’s culture.

Moving away from “concepts of a naive teleological sequence in which postcolonialism merely supersedes colonialism” (2002:35), they discuss the nature of postcolonial theatre in terms of how it engages with the effects of colonisation in performative terms. They further discuss the tendency for postcolonial theatre to be political in that it aims at questioning hegemonic structures instituted by the colonial and neo-colonial agenda through “genres ranging from realism, agitprop, and forum theatre to political satires and allegories” (ibid).

Central to their discussion of the politics of postcolonial theatre, is the insidiousness of the approach used in this kind of theatre, to criticise repressive structures – be it colonial, neo-colonial or governmental – to avoid censorship. The practice of the GDE as a dance company is postcolonial theatre in that it was instituted to reclaim and showcase an identity that is not imposed by the colonial project, but one the people can, through dance, claim as their own in order to create cultural identities. The effects of colonial rule and cultural imposition necessitated the establishment of the GDE; and its existence serves as a constant questioning of the Euro-Western agenda of cultural imperialism.

The pitfalls of language being one of the major issues in postcolonial theatre, along with authenticity, syncretism and hybridity, are avoided in the use of dance to tap into its potential to liberate “from imperialist representation through the construction of an active moving body that ‘speaks’ its own forms of corporeality” (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996:242). Of the two categories of postcolonial theatre identified by Lo and Gilbert (2002), the syncretic and non-syncretic, the GDE’s practice can be described as belonging to both the syncretic and the non-syncretic categories.

3.4.6.3.1 Syncretic and Non-Syncretic Theatre

Syncretic theatre is characterised by the fusion of indigenous material with borrowed/imposed Euro-Western frameworks to create new texts for critical or aesthetic purposes. Examples of this type of theatre can be seen in the works of postcolonial African playwrights like Efua Sutherland, Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Ama Ata Aidoo, and several others.

On the other hand, the non-syncretic type of postcolonial theatre involves the use of “imposed imperial genres/aesthetics or, less often, wholly indigenous ones, to voice postcolonial concerns” (Lo & Gilbert, 2002:36). The syncretism of the GDE’s theatre practice comes in the form of theatricalising traditional dance where the dances go through transformations, not alterations, to make them ‘stageable’ for the benefit of an audience. This idea of staging theatrical performances before an audience on a proscenium stage, fits within the syncretic mode in terms of the GDE’s practice. There is also a certain sense in which their practice falls within this category where, through choreography, indigenous movements are combined with foreign movements to create new dance routines.

The GDE has developed a range of choreographic movements and techniques derived from traditional dances that inform their choreographic pieces. In their choreography there is a kind of fusion/appropriation of indigenous movement techniques and, to some extent, imposed/borrowed/appropriated techniques from the West.

The ‘less often’ practiced non-syncretic theatre, better describes the practice of the GDE within the frame of the multicultural, as they employ ‘wholly indigenous’ dances belonging to the various ethnic groups to engage with and contest the cultural annihilation agenda of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

3.4.6.4 Intercultural Theatre

Whereas Lo and Gilbert’s (2002) diagram demonstrates that multicultural theatre, postcolonial theatre and intercultural theatre, with further divisions under each, are all derivatives of the cross-cultural, I will restructure that hierarchy to suit the micro-intercultural theatre explained earlier.

At the heart of this study is a critical restructuring of the idea that intercultural theatre is a phenomenon involving an encounter between cultures geographically apart from each other. As elaborated above, while multicultural theatre is state-determined and postcolonial theatre is created in response to the colonial agenda, intercultural theatre “is a hybrid derived from an intentional encounter between cultures and performing traditions” (Gilbert & Lo, 2002:36).

Key to understanding intercultural theatre, is the idea of ‘intentional encounter’ which

connotes an agenda, at the base of which lies the reactions that serve to question the ethics of representation and exchange. Whereas the experimentations of the modern theatre, spearheaded by Peter Brook, Ariane Mnouchkine, Richard Schechner, Eugenio Barba, et al., served a revivalist agenda for dying Western theatre (Fischer-Lichte, 1990), the intentional encounter between cultures within a defined geographical postcolonial region, serves to engage with and fight the colonial agenda through theatre.

With the macro- intercultural outlook in mind, Lo and Gilbert (2002:37) assert, not without evidence, that the dominance of the West in intercultural theatre is seen even in the intercultural activities that happen within the non-Western countries. As such theatres are “mediated through Western culture/or economics” (ibid). The examples given to support this idea, are hinged on adaptations of Western texts in non-Western areas.

In the case of the GDE, which perform wholly traditional dances, their text is not borrowed or adapted. Although their practice as a dance theatre company is premised on the Western idea of theatre as a commodity, the dances are traditional and dance is their medium. Therefore, the above argument will not hold when intercultural theatre is viewed from a micro-perspective – an intentional performative encounter between diverse cultures within a state.

The main idea behind viewing intercultural performance from a micro-perspective is to emphasize Hountondji’s (1996:150) view from the epigram at the beginning of this chapter that “the decisive encounter is not between Africa as a whole and Europe as a whole”; cultures within Africa are as diverse as there are diverse cultures in the world. The homogenising view of Africa as being made up of one distinct culture, which could go against another culture, is flawed. An even more flawed view can be seen in the confusion of a ‘created national culture’ with selected traditions associated with specific groups of people within the state.

This confusion often comes from outsider perspectives and must be addressed to speak to the fact that even within the nation there are distinct practices, which distinguish one group from another. It is precisely this ‘internal pluralism’, which informs the practice of the GDE as a national dance company comprising dances from all ethnic groups, that forms the focus of this study.

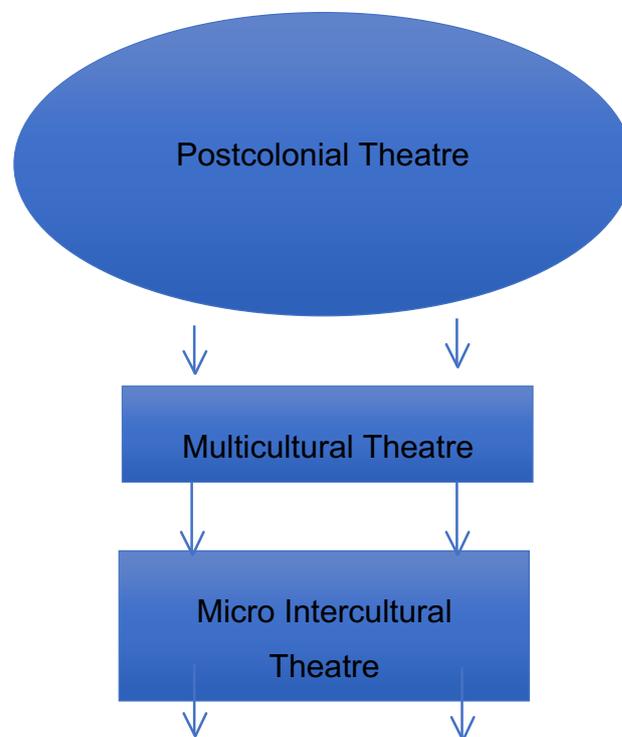
Of the categories discussed under intercultural theatre in Figure 3.4 – transcultural theatre, intracultural theatre, extracultural theatre – I am most interested in the intracultural theatre, as it seems to focus on the micro- or internal intercultural theatre which takes the focus away from the hegemony instituted by the West.

In spite of its interventionist agenda, Lo and Gilbert's (2002) proposed model for interculturalism, which matrixes interculturalism and postcolonialism, still dwells on the macro- intercultural practice, with its emphasis on two source cultures (as does Pavis's 'source' and 'target' cultures in his model) interacting to create a hybrid. To their credit, they make room in the model for a more equitable exchange.

However, their focus is still on the particular instances of cultural exchange, whereas my focus is on the general intercultural practices of the GDE. For the purposes of establishing a framework for this study, intercultural theatre is viewed from two perspectives – internal and external.

The internal is what I term micro- intercultural theatre, while the external is macro- intercultural theatre. The following diagram captures my theoretical framework in a way that addresses the nature of the GDE's intercultural practice within a postcolonial, multicultural country.

3.4.7 A Postcolonial Micro Intercultural Framework



*Figure 3.6: A Postcolonial Micro Intercultural Framework***3.4.7.1 Reconsidering Intracultural Performance as Micro- Intercultural Performance**

In this study ‘intracultural’ theatre is redefined as ‘intercultural’ theatre on a micro-scale. This is based on the premise that there are diverse ethnic groups in Ghana with diverse languages and dance traditions. Therefore, any intentional encounter between the dances of these groups, with the agenda of nation building or reclaiming cultural identity, is intercultural. The position of Ghana as a postcolonial state is crucial for understanding the intentional inter-ethnic encounter towards nation building.

In so far as culture “is a system of significations which allows a society or a group to understand itself in its relationships with the world [or, for that matter, other groups]” (Pavis, 1996:2), each ethnic group in Ghana has a culture, and bringing together these diverse cultures under one company requires some form of negotiation, dialogue, and ‘crossing’ between these cultures.

The intercultural agenda is not the preserve of only geographically apart cultures, e.g. the West and the rest binary. The macro-view of intercultural performance began with the West, but there should be room for a microscopic view of the relationships between diverse cultures even within a multicultural country. If research and scholarship on intercultural theatre began with the West, which defined what should be considered ‘intercultural’ in terms of performance, then it is time to relook the literature and rewrite it to accommodate a more nuanced definition of intercultural theatre.

Bharucha’s (1997:31) view that “in our search for ‘other cultures’ we tend to forget the cultures within our own boundaries, the differences which are marginalized and occasionally silenced in our imagined homogeneities”, is what informs his theatre practice, and that is what theoretically informs my search into the micro-interculturalism of the GDE. To buttress the need for this microscopic view of intercultural performance, Bharucha (1996:200) notes that “the ‘intracultural’ – the

interaction of local cultures within the boundaries of a particular state – as opposed to the ‘intercultural’ – the exchange of cultures across nations – needs to be reinstated at a time when globalizing forces are in the process of homogenising ‘indigenous’ cultures everywhere.”

Bharucha’s argument in favour of the ‘intracultural’ highlights the gap discussed earlier in intercultural scholarship regarding interactions between cultures within the nation-state. The chief agents of globalisation, European countries and the United States who are also the dominating figures of interculturalism in theatre and performance, have no direct benefit from researching into or engaging with the ‘intracultural’, which by nature takes their hegemonic structures out of the picture. Bharucha (1993:28) captures the problem with the egoistic preoccupations of the West quite succinctly:

The problem arises, I believe, when the preoccupation with the “self” overpowers the representation of the “other” cultures [and] when the other is not another but the projection of one’s ego. Then all one has is a glorification of the self and co-option of other cultures in the name of representation.

In effect, if there is no avenue for self-glorification, the imperialists have no theoretical or scholarly basis for any phenomenon that may be considered intercultural. The ‘intra-’, which in this case is the ‘micro inter’, therefore is a kind of intercultural theatre or cultural exchange that can only be discussed in theoretical terms and put on the world stage by internal scholarship and practice. Bharucha sets an example in this regard.

From where I stand, however, what Bharucha (1993, 1996, 2000) describes as ‘intracultural’ is intercultural theatre on a micro-scale, as it involves interactions between cultures that are different from each other but still within the same geographical boundary. It also carries some of the ethical burden associated with the macro- intercultural theatre. This is because there are dominant ethnic cultures even within the nation state, as can be seen in the case of the Akan (Schauert, 2015) and the Yoruba (Knowles, 2010).

Bharucha’s (2000:9) description of intracultural theatre as the kind of theatre that occurs between cultures within the nation-state, automatically defines intercultural theatre as the exchange that occurs between nations. On the other hand, to differentiate between multicultural theatre and intracultural theatre – both of which

concern the nation – he draws attention to what each prioritises; “while the ‘intra-’ prioritises the interactivity and translation of diverse cultures, the ‘multi-’, upholds a notion of cohesiveness”.

Bharucha, however, fails to acknowledge the fact that the multicultural situation in India and its intracultural theatre do not occur in isolation of each other, and that the multicultural is the overarching framework within which the intracultural survives and operates. He further highlights the difference between the two, by pointing to the homogenising agenda of the multicultural rhetoric, as against the critical function of intracultural theatre which challenges “organicist notions of culture by highlighting the deeply fragmented and divided society” (Bharucha, 2000:9). This view of the intracultural (for our purposes micro-intercultural) reflects the diversity of ethnic cultures that converge in the GDE’s theatre practice.

3.5 Conclusion

In the foregoing discussion, relevant literature pertaining to interculturalism has been mapped out along with theories and concepts which serve to ground the study. Beginning with culture and its manifestations in any given society, literature on related concepts such as representation, ethnicity, multiculturalism, cultural diversity, and intercultural communication from the perspective of the colonised’ has been discussed to provide a frame for the study of the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

The second half of the chapter brought the whole discussion down to the focus of the study, in order to find an operational theoretical/conceptual framework for the study. Working within the frame of postcolonial theory in relation to intercultural performance theory and concepts, the multi-ethnic nature of the GDE is then explored at the micro-level to foreground their intercultural activities.

From the conceptual framework above, I hope to draw attention to the fact that the micro-intercultural operates within the multicultural to take form before any encounters at the macro-intercultural level – all of which fall within the postcolonial context. The proposed framework situates the research on the intercultural activities of the GDE quite well, since it is not my aim to analyse specific performances of the company – though their performances will serve to illustrate their practice both within and outside the country.

In the following chapter, I will concentrate on dance in traditional Ghanaian society, the nature and function of state folk dance ensembles, the historical foundations of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, the process of theatricalising traditional dance and the creation of professional inter-ethnic dancers.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE GHANA DANCE ENSEMBLE IN THE CONTEXT OF DIVERSITY, THE NATION AND CULTURAL REPRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

West Africa is a geographical and political land area encompassing sixteen nation states with over 500 diverse linguistic and ethnic groups. Each of these ethnic groups has its own distinct cultural traditions. In Ghana alone, there are over 75 ethnic groups, a fact which disputes any notion of the country – and for that matter Africa in general – as being culturally, socially or politically homogenous.

The distinct cultural traditions of the various ethnic groups in Ghana were tapped into in the fight for political independence and cultural emancipation, and played a key role in the formation of the nation.

In this chapter, I will discuss dance in traditional Ghanaian society and its relevance as a repository of the people's cultural and historical traditions. Through this discussion I will highlight the power of dance as a unifying force in a multi-ethnic setting, such as Ghana, and how this power was tapped into for the benefit of the nation after political independence was attained.

The main focus, however, lies in the historical development of the Ghana Dance Ensemble and how its formation has served the purpose of unifying the multi-ethnic nation through performance.

This chapter is crucial, as it puts the whole discussion on intercultural performance in relation to the activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble in perspective. In discussing the Ghana Dance Ensemble, its formation and operations, it lays a solid framework through which its activities could be examined as intercultural.

4.2 Dance in Traditional Ghanaian Society

According to Nketia (1975), it has become important to distinguish between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' in our world today, due to rapid transformation fuelled by industrial and technological advancement. In Africa it has become even more important to differentiate between the pre-industrial way of life and modern-postmodern culture, especially because of colonisation.

Apart from colonisation and its effects on African culture, it is also important to point out the effects of globalisation on the current cultural dispensation of Africa. Discourses on colonisation and globalisation and their effects on cultural forms in Africa, have made it even more crucial in the twenty-first century to distinguish between precolonial/pre-industrial and modern/postmodern cultural forms.

In his paper, 'The acquisition of Ghanaian dance performance skills', Sowah (2012) describes a traditional society or community as consisting of a homogenous community of people whose customs and practices are, to some extent, unadulterated by foreign culture.

In the same vein Shay (1999), in his "Parallel traditions: State folk dance ensembles and folk dance in 'The Field'", discusses the difference between dance in the field (traditional dance) and staged dance, by highlighting the pristine qualities of the former within its original setting. Similarly, Nketia (1975:5) describes traditional society as "one in which people are linked by factors of ethnicity, kinship and a common indigenous language and culture. [...] It is the society that cultivates traditional music and dance as an integral part of its way of life." In such communities the people continue to practice the culture of their forebears, including the dance forms, which embody their history and cultural identity.

To distinguish traditional society from the contemporary, Nketia (1975) establishes the fact that, in the latter associations are established through a sense of belonging to the nation-state, formal education, new religions and various forms of occupation; which stand in sharp contrast with the ethnic and kinship linkages based on traditional beliefs, in the case of traditional society.

Dance as practiced in traditional Ghanaian societies, is a composite of all that defines the people who perform it. Mawere Opoku (1967:9) puts the culturally defining function of dance succinctly when he suggests that,

For a deeper insight to African culture, our labour, material culture, aspiration, history, social and economic conditions, religious and economic conditions, moments of festivity and sadness, life, soul and the realities, perceived, conceived or felt, that make us the people, are revealed to the serious seeker in our dance.

From the above it is evident that, to the 'serious seeker', dance defines the culture of a people in its totality. Being a form of language in itself, the coded message embodied in traditional dance can only be decoded by those who understand the historical, philosophical, spiritual, and physical conditions that informed the particular dance.

Dance, in traditional society, functions as a social and artistic medium of communication which is able to express thoughts and emotions through movement, posture, gesture and facial expression. Dance also serves as a medium through which ideologies and beliefs – religious or philosophical – are expressed through symbolic gestures and specific dance language and rhythm (Nketia, 1975).

Similarly, Adinku (2000:134), in discussing the operations of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, states the following: "African dance was a composite art form which could provide insight into the ideals and qualities of 'African Personality'." As an important medium of education in the traditional setting, dance provides an avenue through which culture is made familiar to members of the community who, in turn, pass it on to other generations. Dance instructs members of a particular society in the existing knowledge of that society as it reveals the societal norms, appropriate behavioural attitudes and role differentiation, and reinforces social education.

According to Hanna (1965:48), dance in traditional African societies "[...] both transmits cognitive messages and induces connotation; it is instrumental in exciting the motivational requirement of 'proper' behaviour and attitudes. In other words, dance helps Africans to perpetuate themselves". Hanna's submission can only be understood within the context of the oral tradition, characteristic of traditional African societies.

Dance, along with other forms of expression within such societies, has carried (and

continues to do so) the very soul of the people, as their historical, philosophical, and cosmological worldview is woven into the fabric of this art form. Sowah (2013:70 – 1) points out how dance permeates every aspect of Ghanaian society when he describes it as the most ‘visible’ and ‘expressive’ art form, ever so present in every life-cycle event

[f]rom the celebration of birth through initiation into adulthood – from the many recreational, rituals [sic], governance, religious activities, to births and deaths – dance serves as a window through which one can view the values, the shared knowledge, and the spiritual base of every community.

Similarly, Hanna (1965) posits that dance in traditional African society is communal and pervasive, because it forms part of life-cycle event celebrations. There are specific dances for each occasion such as birth, death, worship, youth education, initiations, etc. She further states that “death [in particular] assumed the position of causative force because ‘traditional dance’ was an integral part of indigenous religions characterized by magic and ritual used to communicate with the supernatural and disseminate messages from the gods and spirits” (ibid:3).

Such recreational, religious, commemorative events occasion the performance of various kinds of dances definitive of the contexts within which they were created, and therefore function within their appropriate contexts during performance. To support this point, Opoku (1976) notes that dance, as an integral part of life within African societies, is performed to satisfy certain sociocultural needs, and that dance for its own sake is purposeless.

Various types of dances performed at their appropriate times, are related to recreational or ceremonial needs:

The dance often serves as a means of bringing a society together to renew ties of kinship, to worship together, to face common dangers or express relief, to reaffirm loyalty, to remember historical associations and experience, to share in each other's sorrows and to find recreation and relief from daily chores (Opoku, 1976:60).

There also are dances which have political connotations, such as the Asafo dance of the Fantes and the Fontomfrom of the Asante, which are related to war. On the other hand, there are dances which are performed to commemorate historical events like the Agbekor of the Anlo people of the Volta Region, performed to commemorate their historical migration and escape from a wicked king to their present location.

Dances with religious associations are usually performed to communicate with the gods for the benefits of good health and prosperity (Abloso, 2013). Examples of such dances are the harvest dance of the Ahanta people of the Western Region, the Kundum; and the Kpatsa of the Ga-Adangme of Greater-Accra Region (ibid).

Dance occupies a highly respectable position in traditional society. This fact is backed by Opoku, one of the founding members of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, who stated in an interview with Botwe-Asamoah (2005:158) that “in the traditional African educational system, dance is a must for the highly educated person; he must be a good dancer. In songs and movements, [and in] the social etiquette [of the dance]”.

Being considered highly educated in traditional Ghanaian society, is to know your dance within your own traditional society. It is considered necessary for every member of the community to be educated in their cultural norms, aesthetics, symbolism and emotional expression to avoid any offensive mistakes during the dance. Mistakes such as lack of etiquette or wrong gestures during public performance, attract fines and other sanctions (Sowah, 2012).

The above statement puts in to perspective Opoku’s earlier proposal on dance being a requirement of the highly educated member of any traditional Ghanaian society. It can be considered a prerequisite for belonging to a particular community, as all members are expected to embody the totality of the community’s cultural experience.

Embodying the cultural experience of the community includes a deeper knowledge of the society’s “norms, aesthetics and symbolism [in order] to know the scope within which to perform the dance, the specific emotion to express and the discipline required” (Sowah, 2012:122).

4.2.1 Dance Performance in the Social Context

Dance as a medium of social expression is performed within the context of social occasions and as such the character of the social occasion determines the type of dance and its mood. Dances performed within their social contexts, depending on the purpose, may either occur under trees, at the courtyard, shrine, or river bank (Sowah, 2012). Within these settings the spacial arrangement for the performances are either circular, semi-circular or oblong. These arrangements are determined by

the positioning of the dancers, the musicians or the audience (ibid).

There is always a synergetic relationship between dance and music and in the traditional context dance is often accompanied by both instrumental music and song text. Music serves to establish the mood of the dance and prepares the dancer emotionally for the performance (Nketia, 1974:216).

Dance is performed during funerals, naming ceremonies, initiation rites, enstoolment or enskinment of kings and chiefs, marriage ceremonies, during storytelling and during other recreational activities. These ceremonies are “closely related to the themes and purposes of ‘social’ occasions as well as the interests, attitudes and beliefs of those who take part in the activities of such occasions” (Nketia, 1965:21). During such occasions, dances can either be open to participation by anyone, or restricted to closed groups.

According to Nketia (1965:22) there are dances conceived as “‘free’ dances, that is, dances in which individuals participate as they wish without very much regard to others, or [closed, that is] dances in which the participants are organized in respect of dance roles or the basic dance routine”. Irrespective of whether the dance is closed or free, audience participation in African dance is a very important feature, as can be gleaned from Gore’s (2001:34) observation that “performer-audience relations in Igbo and many other West African performance contexts are dialogic and dynamic, with a reciprocity alien to most contemporary European contexts”. From my observations as a Ghanaian, there are various ways through which audiences participate in traditional performances other than joining dancers in the arena, such as singing and clapping, sticking money on the dancers’ foreheads, ululation, et c.

According to Nketia (1965) organized dances in the traditional setting may take one of four forms, viz. mass dancing, team dances, round dances and solo performances. In mass dancing a large crowd of dancers perform similar dance movements; the team dance is performed by a selected group of people who dance in a linear, circular, semi-circular or serpentine formation; the round dance is characterised dancers who perform in twos, threes or fours; and the solo dance is performed by an individual dancer.

The type of organisation inadvertently determines the dancers’ use of space, as the solo dancer has more room to operate than a crowd of dancers. During occasions,

the communicative function of dance is used by individuals and social groups to convey certain messages and express sentiments that show respect for their superiors, gratitude to benefactors, and assert who they are in relation to those present through appropriate symbolic gestures (ibid:21). Among the Akans, for instance,

[...] when a dancer points the right hand or both hands skyward, he is saying, 'I look to God'. When he places his right forefinger lightly against his forehead he means to say, 'It is a matter for my head, something to think seriously about, something that I must solve for myself'. If he places his right forefinger below his right eye, he is saying, 'I have nothing to say but see how things will go'. When he rolls both hands inwards and then stretches his right arm simultaneously with the end beat of the music, it means 'If you bind me with cords, I shall break them into pieces.'

The dancer in the traditional setting is highly regarded because s/he represents the centre of his/her people's lives, in that the dancer does not dance not alone, but with all the people who belong to the community. This is because the entire community comprises not spectators, but co-creators and participants in the dance which represents their way of life (Opoku, 1993). Gore (2001:29) agrees with Opoku in her observation that dance in the traditional African setting is "[...] intrinsically rhythmic and sociable [...] you never dance alone and you never dance without music".

In order to project their way of life to the world outside their community, people in the traditional setting find no better way to do so than through dance, since participation in dance breaks down barriers to foster tolerance and acceptance (Fabian, 1996).

According to Selete Nyomi²³

[a]n invitation to dance is an invitation to participate in our culture [...] and nothing is as sustainable as letting a people know you are willing to enter into their culture. Here, the emphasis is not so much on the art, but just the fact that you have accepted my invitation to participate in my culture (Interviewed by Fabian, 1996).

²³ A participant in the 1996 research by Fabian.

Ofotsu Adinku²⁴ agrees with Nyomi's statement above in an interview with Fabian when he noted that "[p]eople accept you more here if you dance with them, than if you sit down with them and discuss politics" (Fabian, 1996:np).

Dance in Ghanaian society is pervasive and informal but its success, regardless of the occasion, depends on the extent of audience participation and the creativity of certain individuals such as the master drummer, cantors, instrumentalists and other musicians (Nketia, 1965). In the same vein, Gore (2001:34) observes that for a dance performance to be considered successful, it is "judged by the excitement generated in the audience, and their responsiveness".

The energy and vitality generated by performers and audience during dance performances, lead participants to lose themselves completely in the performance; "that is why a relatively simple dance may go on for hours on end or for several days in succession without losing vitality and interest. Many people would come to see the same old dances or take part in them because they bring to them a renewal of experience" (Gore, 2001:27 – 28). The pervasiveness and vitality of dance in the Ghanaian setting make it almost impossible not to acquire some dance vocabulary, even without intending to.

4.2.2 Mode of Acquisition of the Dance

Dance in the traditional setting is generally informal, and so is the process or mode of its acquisition. Nketia (1974:59) describes this mode of acquisition of dance as "learning through social experience". The 'training' usually begins from childhood where children are exposed to dances which are familiar to members of their society. They develop a sense of rhythm crucial for dancing at a very early age (Sowah, 2012). Dance forms an important aspect of nurturing children, as they imitate what they see and over time repeat movement vocabularies they learn.

Children are often presented with opportunities to practise the dances, rhythms and song texts during story-telling sessions or games. They are allowed to make as many mistakes they like, since there is no set duration for learning; they have all the

²⁴Adinku was one of the original members of the Ghana Dance Ensemble. He passed away in the course of this research, before I had the chance to interview him.

time to correct their mistakes (ibid).

There are, however, certain roles in the society that require individuals or groups to be trained formally in order to occupy those positions. According to Nketia (1974:60)

[...] formal systematic instruction is given only in very restricted cases demanding skills or knowledge that cannot be acquired informally, or cases in which specific roles played by a particular individual make it imperative to ensure that he [or she] has acquired the necessary technique and knowledge.

Court or palace dances, for instance, occupy a special place among Ghanaian dances, as they have many varied symbolic gestures which must be learnt formally. According to Duodu (1994:8) “[...] court dances are danced by adults, since an incorrect use of any of the many symbolic gestures might lead one into trouble. People who misuse gestures are punished and disgraced”. This category of dance is therefore reserved for chiefs and the special dancers who entertain them. It takes a lot of training to learn all the etiquette that goes along with the dance, and these cannot be acquired informally.

Apart from this special category, dance in the traditional setting is usually acquired informally. Dance education in this setting is comprehensive, as it not only entails a total awareness of rhythms and song texts and their corresponding movement, but also appropriate gestures and contexts for the performance of dances. All these are acquired experientially and therefore do not overburden young learners who embody the dances throughout the course of their life training.

The dance and music activities of the people are integral to their cultural existence and therefore deeply rooted. This quality informs the ability of traditional dance to stand the test of time (Abloso, 2013).

4.3 The Colonial Encounter and Cultural Traditions in Africa

Art in its form, content and importance varies from one culture to another (Jegede, 1993). The suppression of African art forms during colonial times goes beyond formalistic unfamiliarity, and points unequivocally to cultural emasculation. In the colonial days there were various dramatic activities which formed part of the British Empire Day celebration. However, the artistic performances had nothing to do with the colonised people, as they were based on European cultural expressions.

According to Opoku (1976:66) "the British lack of interest in the artistic expressions of the 'Natives' was a blessing in disguise. This indifference left us free to practise, evolve and develop age-old traditions with such modifications as current changes in community living and experience called for".

African drumming and dancing were labelled fetish ancestral worship by the Church and were therefore prohibited (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005). Botwe-Asamoah (2005) seems to agree with Gore (2001) according to whom the colonial church, reinforced by Victorian Puritanism, regarded African dance as contemptuous for the body and therefore rejected it all together. Similarly Hanna (1965), decades before both writers intimated that Christian missionaries were directly involved in the suppression, modification or, in some cases, the disappearance of traditional dance. She maintains the following:

These missionaries, among the first Europeans to come into contact with African societies, recognized that traditional dance was a part of indigenous religion. Even though the dances often had universal themes, and origins comparable to European folk dances, their performance was taken simply as the manifestation of savage heathenism and, therefore, as antagonistic to the 'true faith' (ibid:14).

As discussed in Chapter 3 (see Sec. 3.2.7), Fanon's evolutionary schema of the colonised points to the fact that culture, being the main object of attack by the colonialist, is also the appropriate tool for the fight against imperialism and colonisation. As a result, Kwame Nkrumah in his African cultural renaissance campaign, targeted the colonial legacy in relation to negative perceptions of African arts, especially in the academy. In his view, African art forms cannot be separated from the colonial struggle, as they form a strong antidote against the colonial virus that threatens total destruction after political independence.

According to Nkrumah, African art-music, dancing and sculpture were given the status of primitive art by the colonialists and consequently "studied in such a way as to reinforce the picture of African society as something grotesque, as a curious, mysterious human backwater, which helped to retard social progress in Africa and to prolong colonial domination over its people" (1992:13).

Nkrumah's nationalist leadership was consequently hinged on the value of culture as a weapon in the fight against colonialism and cultural emasculation. In a strong cultural tradition lies the power to subvert oppressive conditions and lay the

necessary foundations for a better society, and ultimately to lead to development. According to Botwe-Asamoah (2005:166) Nkrumah “viewed his existence as a product of history, thereby keeping the flame of his predecessors’ proactive response to European colonialism”.

In keeping with the continuum, he used the Conventions People’s Party as a nationalist movement to “[...] serve as the organized expression of the people’s culture. Thus, his party’s resistance to colonialism was an act of culture, since it proceeded from the knowledge of African personality and all the values there attached” (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005:166).

The National Theatre Movement was therefore started by Nkrumah under the then Arts Council with the aim “to preserve, improve and foster the traditional arts of Ghana” (NAG/RG3/7/33:55, as cited in Botwe-Asamoah, 2005:126). The interim committee, set up by Nkrumah for the establishment of the movement, outlined the aims of the movement as follows:

To examine practical ways and means to encourage a national theatre movement, which at once reflects the traditional heritage of this country and yet develops it into a living force firmly rooted in and acclaimed by the modern Ghana of today. It aimed at stimulating an indigenous national theatre movement aware of trends in dramatic expression elsewhere but firmly rooted in the past and drawing its strength and support from the people of Ghana whom it seeks to entertain, to stimulate and to inspire (ibid: 55 – 56).

The movement was to serve as a framework through which Nkrumah’s political cultural policy would be established. In order to further the decolonisation agenda in the academy, Nkrumah saw the need to establish an African Studies Institute at the University of Ghana to recapture and invigorate “Africa’s classical traditions in philosophy, history, religion and the arts to bear on post-independence Africa” (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005:154). This mission gave birth to the School of Music and Drama, along with the Ghana Dance Ensemble and other artistic companies.

Commenting on the successes and failures of the first phase of the National Theatre Movement, the mother of modern Ghanaian drama, Efua Sutherland (2000 48), further noted:

When the president of Ghana initiated a School of Music and Drama for the country at the University of Ghana in 1962, he answered, in a comprehensive way, to the need for full-time training on a properly established and permanent basis. The future of the National Theatre Movement was assured by the

promise, inherent in the School, of a flow of professionals of the performing arts and all other aspects of theatre work.

This served to further Nkrumah's conviction that total emancipation from the colonial influence can only be achieved through a renewed sense of cultural awareness and worth in the people. To achieve this aim, however, the problem had to be tackled from the root through a comprehensive framework aiming at every aspect of the people's development. Hence, the Institute of African Studies was established to decolonise the educational system, while the Ghana Dance Ensemble and other artistic cultural institutions were established to create a sense of cultural awareness and appreciation amongst the newly independent people of Ghana.

According to Nketia "the mission of the school of music and drama, like the Ghana Dance Ensemble, was to influence the direction of the National Theatre Movement through training programs" (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005:163). Adinku (1994) goes further to point out that the Ghana Dance Ensemble was established as a manifestation of the National Theatre Movement to fulfil its aim of preserving, improving and fostering the traditional arts of Ghana.

The National Theatre Movement served as a vehicle through which the nationalist or fighting phase of Fanon's evolutionary schema (discussed in Chapter 2), was promoted. This phase was a consequence of the cultural nationalist phase, which is responsible for building a sense of cultural awareness and pride in the native intellectual.

The position of culture in the fight against colonialism is a political one, since it was the most badly hit in the colonial attack. In expanding the idea of culture as a political weapon beyond postcolonialism, it helps to point out how it was also used by world super powers, such as Russia, to change people's perception about the country and the state of affairs (Shay, 1999). However, what is relevant to this study, is how culture has been used as a weapon to reclaim self-esteem and a sense of pride in postcolonial Ghana.

According to Nketia (1975), Africa's contribution to world civilization is found in the traditional aspects of its culture. He continues to elaborate on this by drawing attention to the traditional foundation of economic and social development efforts in contemporary Africa, which are based on the transformative force of the traditional

on the contemporary. This explains why “[t]he cultural policies of many African Governments now give a special place to the preservation and promotion of those aspects of traditional culture believed to be of intrinsic merit or of special value for the assertion of the African personality” (ibid:7).

The importance of culture as a political/diplomatic weapon is demonstrated in the various state folk arts companies across the world (the pioneers being the Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Peoples of the Soviet Union), and the positive message they bear about their respective countries.

Gore (2001:33), in discussing contemporary representations of West African dances, observes that dances within the region constitute a major part of the social fabric of the people. However, these dances have also become cultural capital “[and] tactical elements in the negotiations and struggles of contemporary living: maskers welcome international dignitaries, acrobatic dancers promote national values [...]” This observation reinforces the role and power of State Folk Dance Ensembles as ambassadors of the nation, in which capacity they cement their worth as assets grounded in the ‘authentic’ cultural traditions of the people within the nation.

4.4 On Authenticity, Hybridity, Language, and Representation In State Folk Dance Ensembles

Moving from colonial discourse to postcolonial discourse, one is quickly confronted by the inextricable link between the latter and globalisation. The condition of postcolonial Africa coinciding with globalisation explains our world today, which is characterised by constant mobility of people and the resultant exchange of ideologies and technology (Ashcroft et. al, 1995; Knowles, 2010).

That the world is in constant flux, disputes any notion of stability or authenticity of cultural traditions across the world today, especially in places affected by colonisation, which are currently suffering the second phase of cultural attack. It is therefore difficult, even problematic, to discuss authenticity in any discussion of postcolonial Africa, due to the effects of colonisation and now globalisation.

In their definition of postcolonialism as “a state of becoming or constant evolution that nation-states and cultures exist in as they reinvent themselves physically, mentally, emotionally, and economically in an ongoing response to the event of

being colonized”, Alexander and Sharmar (2013:87) seem to put the whole fascination with traditionalism and authenticity in postcolonial states in perspective.

This state of reinvention in Ghana and in other African countries, first began with the invention of the nation as discussed in preceding chapter. During this process the concepts of authenticity and hybridity featured prominently as vehicles through which the nation acquires an identity. These two concepts represented two continuums along which the colonial encounter and its aftermath can be understood in relation to how the colonised reconstructed their identity as a people.

From the initial decolonisation efforts, which are directly linked to self-assertion and identity, the renewed longing for pre-colonial cultural forms is rooted in their ability to serve as weapons against colonisation and its debilitating institutions. In these forms, the colonised can trace their roots, and find meaning for their existence and continuity as a people.

In discussing authenticity in relation to postcolonialism, Ashcroft et al. (2000) note that the idea of authentic cultural traditions is constantly present in current debates about postcolonial cultural production. They further claim the following:

The demand for a rejection of the influence of the colonial period in programmes of decolonization has invoked the idea that certain forms and practices are ‘inauthentic’, some decolonizing states arguing for a recuperation of authentic pre-colonial traditions and customs” (ibid:17).

As extreme as these demands are, they point to the anti-colonial sentiments associated with postcolonial discourse. However, in problematising such demands Ashcroft et al. (2000:17) point to how “such claims to cultural authenticity [...] often become entangled in an essentialist cultural position in which fixed practices become iconized as authentically indigenous and others are excluded as hybridized or contaminated”. The resulting effect of such claims is that it risks overlooking the dynamic nature of cultures, which “develop and change as their conditions change” (ibid).

According to Griffiths (1994) cultural essentialism, though theoretically questionable, can be used strategically in the struggle against imperialism. He further explains that cultural traditions peculiar to individual groups of people, serve as identifiers by which such cultures can resist oppression and fight against homogenising agents of

globalisation. However, he warns against the dangerous tendency of such peculiarity turning into fixed stereotypical representations of culture.

Such dangers find expression in the use of general signifiers for cultures in a way that overrides any variations within the culture in question, thus masking real differences inherent in the culture. Griffiths argues that indicators of cultural difference may qualify as authentic cultural signifiers; however, such claim implies that these cultures are not subject to change. Griffiths (1994:6) further indicates that “the use of signifiers of authenticity may be a vital part of the attempt by many subordinated societies to argue for their continued and valid existence as they become inevitably hybridized and influenced by various social and cultural changes [spearheaded by colonization in the case of Ghana and Africa in general]”.

To put Griffiths’ suggestion in perspective, cultural essentialism was used in Ghana’s fight against colonial or imperial power through the Ghana Dance Ensemble and its repertoire of traditional Ghanaian dance. The pitfalls of using ‘signifiers of authenticity’ in this case, was avoided since such signifiers such as traditional dances that formed the repertoire of the company, represented dances from all ten regions of the country along with the cultural traditions embedded in them.

Furthermore, these signifiers are not generalised within the operations of the company; each of the dances is presented along with its traditions and can be traced back to the specific area within the country it originated from. Shay (1999, 2002) discusses the issue of authenticity at length in these two studies, because it lies at the heart of state folk dance ensembles’ claim to the right to represent the nation. Such claims to authenticity shared by state folk dance ensembles, are hinged on a supposed extensive field research conducted by their respective artistic directors. However, because such companies present “[...] highly stylized, carefully choreographed and staged genre of dance that differs from the dances that are found among nonprofessional populations of villagers and tribes people, most dance researchers have shunned serious analyses of these companies as ‘unauthentic,’ ‘slick,’ and ‘theatrical’” (1999:29).

Authenticity therefore can be viewed from two perspectives, depending on the degree of faithfulness to materials from the field, and varies from company to company. According to Shay (1999:30), some companies produce “invented

traditions” or character dance, where steps and movements have no direct connection with tradition in the field, while other companies are “[...] devoted to the inclusion of authentic elements of traditional life such as the use of musical instruments and vocal styles, costumes, and dance steps, movements, and the portrayal of customs and ritual” pertaining to traditional dance as practised in the villages.

Since the claim to authenticity by these companies is solely based on the degree of connection with what Shay (1999; 2002) calls ‘dance in the field’ (dance in traditional settings), he discusses the reciprocal relationship between state folk dance ensembles and dance as practiced in the field. He makes a very important observation, which borders on the fact that research on traditional dance forms is conducted within a framework of pristine and unadulterated traditions which are not affected by the practices of professional folk dance companies. Shay (1999:31), however, argues as follows to the contrary:

Choreographic and staging elements of the performances of professional national folk dance companies are often emulated by rural groups desirous of professionalizing their presentations, thus creating a dynamic cycle which encompasses the appropriation of cultural and choreographic elements from the field to stage and a return to the field of presentational elements.

Similarly Nketia (1976), in discussing traditional music in relation to the question of authenticity, states that there is usually the notion that traditional music is static because it is rooted in the past. He argues that traditional music and, for that matter, traditional dance is not static, but admits change and innovation. To cement his argument, Nketia (1976:10) cautioned:

It is important, therefore, that we do not think of traditional music as a language with closed ‘phonetic and grammatical systems’, inflexible structures and immutable logic but simply as music in which the direction of change is controlled by the perspective of the past and the present orientation of the makers of it in order to ensure the kind of continuity that will allow for maximum participation or involvement in music making at all times.

The views, as discussed above, confirm the fact that culture is dynamic and therefore any notion of traditional culture as pure, is flawed. However, the ‘purity’ attributed to culture in the traditional setting finds explanation in Sowah (2012), Shay (1999) and Nketia’s (1976) earlier description of traditional setting as having less influence from the outside world in comparison to the urban areas of any country.

In comparing dance in the field and staged dance, therefore, Shay (1999) views the two as “Parallel Traditions” whose relationship is exhibited in the use of ‘authentic’ elements found in the choreographic expressions of the state dance companies, and the degree of ‘theatricalization’ found in ‘traditional’ social performances.

Commodification of culture within a multicultural setting is often burdened with conflict based on whose culture should represent the nation. In a case where the nation is able to negotiate and put together an agreeable cultural representation, the problem metamorphoses into a question of authenticity. This issue is expressed succinctly by Shay (1999:43) who notes that “once the issue of *who* is to be represented is decided, the next issue that arises is *how* they are to be represented” (emphasis in the original).

In his article, ‘Culture for sale: perspectives on colonialism and self-determination and the relationship to authenticity and tourism’, Ballengee-Morris (2002) posits that commodification of culture, which he terms “culture for sale”, is a major cause of conflict as a result of inauthentic representations of indigenous cultural productions.

There is a certain level of freedom associated with the subject of authenticity and how artistic directors of folk dance companies view it across the world. In his 1999 study of state folk dance ensembles, Anthony Shay compares three artistic directors of state folk dance ensembles in terms of their views on authenticity. He finds that Igor Moiseyev, former artistic director of the Folk Dance Company of the USSR, declared himself an anti-‘authentic’ artist who “did not use authentic movement any more than nineteenth century classical composers used authentic folk melodies” (Shay, 1999:43).

Zvonko Ljevakovic, artistic director of LADO²⁵, on the other hand, was obsessed with using authentic material from the field and therefore “relied exclusively on authentic movements, costumes, and other elements to create his choreographies” (Shay, 1999:43). In order to achieve this, he conducted original research in the field and spent a long time with the people from whom he was learning the dances and

²⁵ Croatian State Folk Dance Ensemble

movements. He witnessed first-hand and practised the dances and music demonstrated for him by the peasants he was working with.

According to Shay (1999) the artistic director of Ballet Foklorico, Amalia Hernandez, stands somewhere between Moiseyev and Ljevakovic, but closer to the former. Her views on authenticity seem to stem from her frustration with demands of authentic representations from folk dance companies by their audiences. Her frustration is clearly demonstrated in the following statement she made:

Authentic? You want authentic? For that you would have to go to the smallest village of my country at a certain hour on one certain day of the year. There, outdoors, in the shadow of the church, you would have a true folkloric experience. You might have to wait six months in the village before it happened, but it would be authentic. [...] There is no way to move village dancers directly onto a professional stage. Everything must be adapted for modern eyes -costumes, lighting, steps. [...]" (Carriaga, 1969:1).

Shay (1999:49) argues that the main contention with authenticity arises with all state folk dance ensembles as a corollary of the idea that they are projecting an authentic representation of the nation "using its purest, most primordial materials: folk art". As a result, artistic directors and choreographers of dance companies performing traditional dances, in an attempt to justify and prove the authenticity of their works, have conducted extensive research through which they are able to incorporate materials from the field into their work.

In the case of the GDE, the research component was linked to the research activities of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, which meant that the founders followed strict research procedures and methodologies which served to authenticate their findings. According to Adinku (2000:131) "[i]t was envisaged that establishing the company as part of the new School of Music and Drama within the Institute [of African Studies] would enable *serious research* to be done by choreographers, performers, and dance ethnologists and it was assumed that the findings would be *properly documented*" (emphasis mine). Schauert (2007:175) confirms the GDE's hold on authentic representation when he notes that

Nketia's extensive field study of nearly every region in Ghana, primarily conducted between 1952 and 1961 [...], coupled with cultural expertise of Opoku and the GDE staff provided the basis for the confidence that the ensemble's representations would be judged favourably by indigenous communities.

A favourable reception by the people from whom the dances were taken, becomes the ultimate indication of authenticity for the GDE founding fathers. Shay (1999), however, asks to what extent a choreographer incorporates 'authentic' materials in choreographic pieces. In a multicultural setting such as Ghana, it is very important that artistic licence is exercised with cultural sensitivity in order not to upset the delicate inter-ethnic balance the nation hopes to hone.

As discussed above, the claim of state folk dance companies to authenticity is directly linked to research conducted by their artistic directors, and, to take the authentication of representation a step further the founders of the GDE, according to Adinku (2000), occasionally invited individuals and dance groups from various villages across the country to teach their music and dances to the recruited members of the GDE.

Such engagement could take several months to ensure that the members learn the 'proper' traditions in order not to lose any of those traditions in representation. With the same ethical consideration in mind, the new recruits travelled across the country from town to villages to observe and learn first-hand the dances as practised within their setting. They travelled from Kumasi to "Asante-Mampong, Sekondi, Krobo Odumasi, Akropong-Akuapim, Winneba, Kpong, and Anyako to observe dances, rituals, and ceremonies" (Adinku, 2000:133).

These travels and invitation of experts to teach dances and ritual ceremonies as practiced in the villages, form the basis of the GDE's claim to authenticity. The following statement by Nketia during the inaugural ceremony of the Ghana Dance Ensemble can be considered a solid statement of authenticity: "The Ghana Dance Ensemble stands for tradition. But it also stands for creativity. It stands for the best in African dances. It stands for quality. It stands for the values that we Africans look for and cherish in our dances" (Adinku, 2000:134).

Apart from the initial research conducted by Nketia and Opoku, they considered it necessary to take the dancers to observe the dances first-hand and also bring experts from the villages for the benefit of the dancers to avoid 'unauthentic' representation. In agreement with Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist vision, Opoku brought experts from other African countries to train the members (Schauert, 2007).

In an interview with Schauert (2007:174), Nketia discussed how particular they were about authentic representation when he said that “it was very important to ensure that the movements were correct, and that the dancers who were trained could dance in the village and be judged authentic”. An example of such authentication is discussed by Adinku (2000), being a pioneering member of the GDE himself, he recalls how the group performed the Kete and Frontomfrom²⁶ much to the delight of the Asantehene²⁷ who then asked that they replace the court dancers and musicians for three days.

Schauert (2007) also discusses the possession of an audience member during a possession dance performance by the GDE. He also authenticates the performance of the GDE by the following statement about possession dances: “[...] the dances retain their spiritual power despite their transplantation to a theatrical context, who can argue with the metaphysical that these dances are not the ‘real thing’” (ibid:176).

The ultimate question then is whether the GDE can still claim authentic representation of the people today, since these dances were collected and choreographed between 1952 and 1961. However, if authenticity is that which relates to the purest and most primordial materials (Shay, 1999), they can still lay claim to it based on past research.

4.4.1 Hybridity in Relation to Authenticity in Choreography

On the other side of authenticity lies the concept of hybridity, which also features prominently in the choreographic pieces of dance ensembles, as they reinvent themselves to remain relevant in contemporary times. Hybridity according to Ashcroft et al. (2000:108) is one of the most disputed terms in postcolonial theory and generally refers to: “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization”. Hybridity basically refers to a mixture of two distinct entities, the result of which becomes a hybrid. The term and concept, borrowed from horticulture, is used to describe a crossbreeding of two distinct species by cross-pollination to form a third (ibid).

²⁶ Both Ashanti royal court dances

²⁷ The Asante King

Hybridity in postcolonial the discourse is often framed on the effects of mixture on culture and identity, since hybrids are formed of influences from the coloniser and the colonised, as a result of the colonial contact. Hybridity is often discussed in postcolonial theory and discussed as a phenomenon affecting only the colonised. However, Hommi Bhabha (2004) argues that it is not only the colonised whose culture is affected by the contact, but also that of the coloniser.

Globalisation has taken the issue of hybridity to a whole new level with an increasing mobility of people and their cultural traditions, objects and ideas; with the result that artistic productions have become inherently hybridised. On the local front, globalisation becomes an overarching framework within which local cultures mix to create new forms through innovation that is deeply rooted in tradition.

Moving away from state folk dance ensembles' claim to authenticity, is the practice whereby new forms, based on 'authentic' forms of the various local cultures, are created, which then become hybrids. This practice is often motivated by an attempt to remain relevant in the ever-changing world of today.

Hybridisation may take linguistic, cultural, political, racial and other forms, which explains its pervasiveness beginning with the colonisation and now globalisation. Hybridity in its simplest terms within postcolonial discourse refers to cross-cultural 'exchange'.

The term has been widely criticized, since it usually implies negating and neglecting the imbalance and inequality of the power relations it references. By stressing the transformative cultural, linguistic and political impacts on both the colonized and the colonizer, it has been regarded as replicating assimilationist policies by masking or 'white washing' cultural differences" (Ashcroft, et al., 2000:108 – 9).

How then does this discourse on hybridity affect the self-conscious colonised in the postcolonial setting constantly fighting for cultural space in the global village? Still operating within the frame of postcolonial discourse, the work of the Ghana Dance Ensemble – through choreographic pieces other than traditional dances – constantly create hybrids that can only be understood within the multicultural setting in which they operate.

There indeed is power dynamics internally at play due to ethnic hegemony; therefore to some extent the argument above, regarding power imbalance and inequality, can

apply to inter-ethnic relations within the nation where the dominant culture takes more of the cultural playing field. The above statement by Ashcroft, et al. (2000) on masking cultural difference can also be seen in choreographic works, where movement vocabularies from various ethnic groups are tapped into to form one piece without any indication of their sources. This may mask cultural difference in an attempt to homogenise the movements under one theme.

The Ghana Dance Ensemble, by claiming to present authentic traditional dances, absolve themselves from such criticism since the individual traditional dances, along with their cultural traditions, make up the main repertoire of the company. They therefore present choreographed 'authenticity' and hybridised choreography. Choreographed authenticity in that dances from the villages are choreographed to suit the stage, but the movements remain the same, while hybridized choreography is basically taking movements from the various movement vocabulary (both local and foreign) and combining them to give new expression.

4.4.3 On Dance as a Universal Language

Language, together with authenticity and hybridity, forms a very important aspect of postcolonial theoretical debates as offshoots of the colonial encounter. In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o discusses the importance of language in the context of culture by concluding that language "has a dual character, it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (1986:13).

Hall (1997:1) points out the relationship between language and culture when he notes that "language [...] has always been regarded as the key repository of cultural values and meaning". If dance in a broader sense is considered a language, then it is a key repository of cultural values and meaning; that notwithstanding, it helps to underscore the importance of the choice of 'dance' in the establishment or construction of a national culture.

In addressing a possible dilemma about the choice of language from among the diversity of ethnic groups to represent the nation, dance may have helped to avoid conflict based on ethnic hegemony. As discussed earlier, hybridity may take several forms. Hybridity in language can be found in such examples as pidgin and creole (Ashcroft et al., 2000). Mikhail Bakhtin also used hybridity "to suggest the disruptive

and transfiguring power of multivocal language situations [such as that found within postcolonial multicultural nations] and, by extension of multivocal narratives” (Ashcroft et al. 2000:108).

Ghana, a multicultural nation with over seventy linguistic and ethnic cultures, certainly finds itself in a difficult situation as regards the choice of a national language. Therefore, the choice of English as language of instruction and official language has served to circumvent a possible inter-ethnic conflict at the height of independence as well as into the future of the nation.

The dominance of the Akan group is apparent in terms of appropriations of their cultural traditions at the national level (Lentz, 2010). It is also evident in the fact that the Akan language is widely spoken across the nation. However, any decision at national level to make the Akan language an official national language, is likely to upset the delicate multicultural policy of the nation.

The above argument is presented succinctly by Schauert (2007:174) in his paper ‘A performing national archive: power and representation in the Ghana Dance Ensemble’ when he notes that

[...] rather than use the politically, historically, and demographically dominant culture group of the Akan to represent the nation-as one might expect, given that this is a common practice in many national dance companies throughout the world [...] the ensemble attempted to give equal weight to the various ethnic groups within Ghana.

He goes on to argue that, by this decision the Ghana Dance Ensemble has become a site for Ghanaian ethnic minorities to level the cultural playing field by displaying their traditions. This in effect serves to counteract the dominance of the Akan ethnic group in not only scholarly literature, but also in the politics of national representation.

As an intercultural agent, the Ghana Dance Ensemble appears to have given the ethnic minority within the nation some degree of agency in asserting their inclusion in national representation. The issue of agency in postcolonial discourse and theory is very important, as it foregrounds the ability of the colonial subject to act in resisting imperial power (Ashcroft et al., 2000).

Agency has featured prominently in intercultural performance theoretical attempts in the West and, as discussed in Chapter 2, it stems from the problem of ethics in representing 'othered' cultures. The voices²⁸ that have pushed for a more ethical representation of such cultures, have largely come from the East and postcolonial settings. While some practitioners of intercultural performance²⁹ have approached their use of foreign cultural material more liberally for the enhancement of their own theatrical performances, such approach has not escaped criticism from the voices presented above (see Chapter 3, Sec. 3.4.3.)

For the founding fathers of the Ghana Dance Ensemble to think of equity in the establishment of an inter-ethnic/intercultural dance company, demonstrates that they had serious consideration for both inclusion and ethics of representation. These considerations helped to create a more equitable representation of the people's culture rather than one based on ethnic hegemony as suggested by Schauert (2007).

In pitting these considerations against the problem of ethics of representation, discussed in Chapter 3, it helps to tease out lessons that could be learnt from this micro-intercultural situation for the benefit of the macro-intercultural performances. These are expanded upon and discussed in later chapters.

The issue of language was addressed with the identification of dance as language that cuts across all the ethnic groups. Adinku (2000:134), in discussing the operations of the GDE, has pointed out the ability of African dance to communicate "with ease across linguistic barriers". The power of dance to communicate our collective humanity through movement, was used for the unification of the nation.

In her paper 'The politics of dance: changing representations of the nation in Ghana', Katharina Schramm (2000:243) points out the importance of dance and its power to unite:

²⁸ Rustom Bharucha (1993, 2000), Lo and Gilbert (2002), Knowles (2010), etc.

²⁹ Peter Brook in his production of the Indian Epic The Mahabharata, Arian Mnouchkine's L'Indiade, and others. Carlson (1996:80) in his discussion on these practitioners note that the following: Both Brook and Mnouchkine have resolved that their work on the representation of the Other is primarily of a formal and professional kind, rather than being driven by an ethnological respect for an authenticity of reproductions."

Dance was to be understood as a 'living culture' that could be developed and adapted to the changing needs of society. It was – and still is – viewed to be an art form that is easily comprehensible to everybody and therefore has a great potential for unification. The activists of the *Ghana Dance Ensemble* had in mind to use this power to bring the people of Ghana closer together. Their consideration was that in seeing dances from other parts of the country than their own, people would begin to take an interest in their folkmen (emphasis in original).

As a living culture common to all the ethnic groups, and common to all people across the world, dance has the potential to draw people closer together, especially when we learn to dance each other's dances. In the same vein, Fabian (1996) also highlighted the power of dance to communicate and unify in her paper 'Professional dance in Ghanaian society: the development and direction of the Ghana Dance Ensemble', where she quotes Mawere Opoku as saying that "you've got to learn to dance. It isn't enough to say to a friend, 'I'm sorry to hear your mother has died'. You have to dance it". According to Opoku's statement, it means that if two people are from different ethnic groups and they are friends, they have to prove the friendship by learning each other's dances – therein lies the unity.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the pitfalls of language being one of the major issues in postcolonial theatre, along with authenticity and hybridity, are minimised in the use of dance to tap into its potential to liberate "from [ethnic hegemonic] representation through the construction of an active moving body that 'speaks' its own forms of corporeality" (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996:242). Schauert (2007) seems to agree with Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) in highlighting the agency of marginalised voices through the language of dance.

4.5 State Folk Dance Companies and Representation of the Nation

Benedict Anderson's (1991) famous description of the nation as an 'Imagined Community' speaks to the fact that the nation is a political entity created to produce an idea of oneness in the face of diversity. Shay (1999) concludes that Anderson's description of the nation is visually epitomised and embodied in national dance companies through their representation of their respective nation-states. According to Giurchescu (1994:17)

[...] sophisticated performances, staged according to the Soviet Model, were meant to symbolize through good technique, beautiful appearances,

homogeneity, colourful costumes, and decoration, etc., the achievement of the socialist policy, the happy life of the youth in the communist countries, etc.

The above statement provides a clear evidence of the power wielded by these state dance ensembles as bearers of the positive image of their nations, irrespective of what truly pertains on the ground. The political agenda behind state dance ensembles is amplified by their very definition as:

A government- sponsored organization of gifted dancers under the direction of a well-known choreographer. The latter coordinates and theatricalizes first-existence dance into slick and attractive showpieces, in order to present a variety of forms that represent different regions of the country (Kealijinohomoku, 1972:32).

This definition highlights the very nature of state folk dance ensembles as political entities with an agenda. In postcolonial Ghana, for instance, the establishment of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, and the extension the National Theatre Movement in general, served to address the colonial effect by reclaiming cultural pride under the rubric of the nation. According to Ozturkmen (1994:83) “the idea of folklore provided the emerging nation-states, and their devoted intelligentsia in particular, with ample opportunities to mobilize their subject populations toward the construction of a national identity.” In reference to Shay’s (1999) discussion of the three waves in the development of state folk dance ensembles, the establishment of the Ghana Dance Ensemble can be situated neatly within the third wave since it was established in 1962. It was established five years after Ghana’s independence in 1957, and the agency in its formation and agenda can be found in Ozturkmen’s statement above which, clearly points to the construction of Anderson’s (1991) “Imagined Community”.

The efficacy of folk or popular art in the nation-building project is supported by Herzfeld (1997:27) when he proclaims that “visual and musical iconicities have been especially effective in rallying entire populations [...]”. These ‘iconicities’, created to promote the national agenda, make very powerful statements about the represented nations irrespective of the realities within the nation-states. According to Shay (1999:35),

[t]he U.S.S.R utilized the technical prowess of dancers and athletes, as well as mass performances of folk dance with thousands of participants, to suggest the power of a state capable of producing powerful world-famous performers and the support of its varied ethnic masses.

The pioneering position held by the US.SR in the establishment and development of state folk dance ensembles meant that they served as the model for other state folk dance ensembles, including the Ghana Dance Ensemble. In discussing the Soviet Socialist regime and the propagandist use of the folk dance ensemble, Zemtsovsky and Kunanbaeva (1997: 6) note that:

The 'amateur artistic activity' that the regime so prominently supported, consisted, for the most part, of an imagined folklore, one fabricated by socialism for its own purposes. There, scholars and frightened performers produced folklore on command, sometimes under the threat of immediate physical violence.

The artistic movement spearheaded by Nkrumah far from the above example, was not meant to be oppressive, but rather to restore what was lost or threatened by colonialism – that sense of cultural worth and pride. This is succinctly summarised by Adinku (2000:131) as follows:

The formation of a National Dance Company in October 1962 was in line with Kwame Nkrumah's nation-building policy and his programme for the cultural emancipation of Ghana and Africa. He wanted to convince Africans that they had a past civilization worthy of emulation and thought that dance has a role to play in achieving racial reassessment.

This cultural emancipation agenda towards racial reassessment was promoted as a collective mission necessary for the much desired liberation from colonial domination. The choice of dance as a repository and representation of the people's culture in the face of linguistic and ethnic diversity, can only be appreciated within the context of a multi-ethnic/multilingual nation.

4.6 State Dance Ensembles: Power and Negotiation

Anthony Shay in his 2002 iconic book *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation, and Power*, for the first time gives academic attention to the relevant but often neglected state dance companies. According to Shay (2002:224),

[s]cholars of dance have largely ignored the performances of the many state-sponsored folk dance ensembles because their performances are considered to be 'unauthentic,' 'theatrical,' 'slick,' and 'glitzy'. These performances form the intersection between popular culture in regard to their sources and high art in their formal choreographic formats, which has placed the genre beyond the interests of scholars of Western theatre dance on the one hand, and dance ethnologists on the other.

Through his study Shay (2002) demonstrates how performances of state folk dance companies reveal important political, ethnic, social and class issues, representative of national discourses of the nations they represent. This is mainly because such companies are established “within specific contexts of the discourses of ethnicity, religion, gender, class, race, nationalism, and colonialism. Because dance is embodied, through analyses of these performances unspoken aspects of these discourses [...] can be identified and deconstructed” (ibid:225).

In order to further the above argument, he cited the perception of Gypsies in Serbian society through their representation by the Serbian state folk dance ensemble, and also the absence of women in the all-male state dance ensemble of Saudi Arabia. This discourse of inclusion and exclusion can only be glimpsed “in the gaps and empty spaces in the repertoire [of state ensembles] and can include unpopular minority ethnic or religious groups, urban populations, and upper or lower social classes, among others” (Shay, 2002:225).

The discourses of power and representation embodied through the repertoire and performances of state folk dance ensembles, make their study very significant, as it brings to the fore not only the historical contexts that formed them, but also how they serve as a microcosm of the nation. Most important for this study, however, are the issues of power and representation which further highlight the negotiations that go into choosing which folk dances qualify to represent the nation, and which ones are excluded.

Shay (1999) in ‘Parallel traditions: State folk dance ensembles and folk dance in the “Field”’, gives a brief historical overview of the genesis of state folk dance companies, which serve to foreground the framework within which such companies developed. According to him, the world saw the birth of professional state folk dance ensembles in many countries around the world in the 1940s and 1950s. Shay (1999) classified these ensembles in three waves.

The first wave began after the World War II in Eastern Europe in the early 1950s; the second wave began in areas such as the Philippines and Mexico, also in the 1950s; while the third wave took off in countries such as Turkey and Iran in the 1960s and 1970s. This phenomenon of state dance ensembles was spurred by the success of the Ensemble of Folk Dances of the Peoples of the Soviet Union in the early 1950s.

Shay (1999) notes that the political domination of Russia after the World War II led to the popularity of its dance ensemble which became a model for professional state-sponsored dance companies across the world.

Shay's focus on state folk dance ensembles serves to highlight the phenomenon of adapting traditional dances for theatrical purposes. These companies by nature are sponsored by their respective national governments for various political reasons. In the Ghanaian context, these reasons lie at the heart of postcolonial discourse, with its agenda to reclaim cultural pride and showcase how beautiful and rich the Ghanaian culture is to the world, especially the colonising powers. These companies therefore have the sole purpose of promoting "among their own constituencies of pride in the nation and allegiance to its values and the dissemination to the rest of the world of attractive and admirable images of the culture and its people" (Ruyter, 2004:200).

Since its formation in 1962, the Ghana Dance Ensemble has performed its mandate within the above framework of reference through local and international performances. A review of the historical development of the Ensemble will serve to foreground the relevance of its mandate within the historical context of Ghana as a nation.

4.7 The Ghana Dance Ensemble: A Historical Perspective

The formation of the Ghana Dance Ensemble and other cultural institutions in the 1960s, was a clear manifestation of Nkrumah's idea of a National Theatre Movement to spearhead the renaissance of "the subdued African Personality" (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005:124). The idea of a renewed pride in being Ghanaian irrespective of ethnic affiliation, was crucial to the success of the nation-building agenda. Immediately after independence national unity became Nkrumah's "determined policies whereby the people would think of themselves as Ghanaians first, Fanti, Ewe, Asante, Frafra, Dagbani, and Gas second" (Marais, 1972:18).

Nkrumah's thoughts on the power of the arts in fostering unity amongst the diverse ethnic groups in Ghana, are backed by his view on the resilience of the rich African cultural heritage against the colonial trauma. It became imperative to approach the reclamation and restoration process through the creative culture of Africa (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005). This notwithstanding, there was still a contention regarding the

conception of a national art in light of the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the nation. To address this issue, Nkrumah encouraged the incorporation of diverse traditional artistic/cultural expressions from all over the country during national functions, such as Independence Day celebrations.

The idea of a national dance company took root as a result of the success of the traditional music and dance performances displayed during national functions and celebrations (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005). These traditional music and dance performances were organised by a team of experts, including one of the founding members of the GDE, Albert Mawere Opoku. Hence, when Nkrumah had the idea to establish a dance company in 1962, he called on Opoku who was very knowledgeable about traditional dance and customs, and J.H. Kwabena Nketia who was then a research fellow at the University of Ghana with a special interest in African music, dance and related arts (ibid).

Schramm (2000:342), writing on the key role played by Opoku and Nketia in the establishment of the GDE, notes that “during the time of independence they belonged to the generation of young, highly motivated cultural activists who were eager to rediscover and rehabilitate the indigenous art forms that lay fallow after colonialism’s impact”. Their active roles in the cultural rehabilitation process gave credence to the fact that both Opoku and Nketia had a higher education in Europe where they had the opportunity to observe dances from other parts of the world. According to Nketia, these observations were not made with assimilation of those dances in mind, but rather “to see how other people express themselves in their own dance forms, including the use of space” (Schramm, 2000:157).

The main dilemma that arose regarding the establishment of a national dance company, was whether to select one ethnic group’s dances to represent the nation, or whether the company should reflect the nation in all its diversity. The former suggestion leaned towards the model of the Guinea Ballet dance company where groups specialising in individual ethnic dances, constitute the company in a rotational way on a temporary basis. Therefore, the membership of the company at various times is never the same and neither is their repertoire. Nketia (1968:9) had a full assessment of the pitfalls of choosing this model:

Many countries eager to build national dance ensembles overnight have usually created an amorphous group of people drawn from different regions,

each of whom can only do a particular dance and nothing else. The result has sometimes been just a flash in the pan and nothing else.

Opoku and Nketia, however, opted for a different model by proposing that young energetic men and women with diverse ethnic backgrounds interested in dance, be recruited and trained in dances from the various ethnic regions. After all, the primary objective of a national dance company is to embody the nation at all times (Shay, 1999).

According to Botwe-Asamoah (2005), Opoku proposed to Nkrumah to locate the company in an academic environment, which led to its attachment to the University of Ghana under the Institute of African Studies. The rationale behind this, as explained by Opoku in an interview with Botwe-Asamoah (2005:158), was as follows: “[I]n the traditional African educational system, dance is a must for the highly educated person; he [or she] must be a good dancer. In songs and movements, [and in] the social etiquette [that the dance embodies].” Opoku’s suggestion fell in line with Nkrumah’s determination to decolonise the academy, which informed the location of the Ghana Dance Ensemble within the University of Ghana under the Institute of African Studies.

Nkrumah’s aim to unify the nation influenced Opoku’s vision of the National Dance Company. Nketia and Opoku therefore enjoyed artistic and administrative freedom to establish the company and its repertoire of dances and songs, based on extensive research (Schauert, 2007; Botwe-Asamoah, 2005; Fabian, 1996; Schramm, 2000; Adinku, 2000). The artistic freedom Nkrumah gave Opoku and Nketia, was based on the fact that they shared in his vision and philosophies with regard to the restoration of dignity and pride in African culture.

According to Schramm (2000:342), the main aim for setting up the Ghana Dance Ensemble was “[...] to establish a program of ‘national dances’ that would be representative of the cultural wealth of all the diverse ethnic groups in Ghana”. To achieve this, they had to adopt a model that would ensure adequate representation of the diverse ethnic groups while addressing logistical concerns expressed by Nketia above.

In October 1962 the National Dance Company was established as the very first dance group in Anglophone West Africa (Adinku, 2000). The mandate given by

Nketia and Opoku in the establishment of the company, was two-fold. First they were to “preserve aspects of ‘dying’ traditional dances while at the same time using them as models for creative development” (ibid:131). This mandate represents the authentic and hybrid frameworks within which the ensemble operates, as established earlier in this chapter.

The National Dance Company was to be made up of dancers trained to become professionals in their own ethnic dances, as well as dances from other ethnic origins. They were also to learn the historical contexts within which the dances were produced and experience performances of the dances within their social contexts (Schramm, 2000).

Kumasi was first considered as the location of the company and the training school, but Accra was settled on per Opoku’s suggestion due to the fact that the seat of government was in the capital, and the company had to be closer to the government for official occasions and duties (Fabian, 1996).

As a first step in starting the company, advertisements were placed in the national newspapers for individuals between the ages of 18 and 25³⁰ to attend an audition for training to become members of the National Dance Company. The aspiring dancers were to be trained for a period of two years in dance techniques and theatre studies. The auditioning process, which was based on “movement improvisation and dance exercises, physical fitness, oral expression, and traditional musical and cultural knowledge”, produced young men and women totalling thirteen (five boys and eight girls) within the stipulated age for training (Adinku, 2004:50).

As established earlier, the trainee dancers first underwent rigorous training on the University of Ghana campus, and then at various towns and villages where they experienced the dances first-hand within their original setting. Professionals within and outside Ghana were also regularly invited to the University campus to be trained (Fabian 1996; Adinku 2000; Schauert 2007).

³⁰ Adinku (2004), an original member of the GDE and one of those who answered the call for auditions, has stated that, contrary to Fabian (1996), the age limit was 24.

The trainee dancers began to perform at the invitation of the President during “official parties and political rallies, to entertain visiting ambassadors while promoting the cultural tradition of Ghana” (Fabian, 1996:nd). The National Dance Company was officially launched in 1967 and renamed the Ghana Dance Ensemble (Abloso, 2013). This also coincided with the first students’ completion of their certificate course, the ground on which they became the very first members of the Ghana Dance Ensemble (ibid).

Their international travels as cultural ambassadors began with their participation in Malawi’s independence celebration in 1964 (Adinku, 2000). They have since travelled across the world with the rich repertoire of traditional dances, all choreographed by Opoku.

The Ghana Dance Ensemble has remained under the Institute of African Studies where it serves as a demonstration group, while promoting traditional dances of Ghana both locally and internationally. According to Schramm (2000: 343),

[t]he group’s task was two-fold. Apart from offering a matrix for national identification, the members of the *Ghana Dance Ensemble* were to play the role of ‘cultural ambassadors’ who represented the nation to the outside world, achieving comparable status with other nations and thus the ability to enter the international arena on equal terms. The dynamic between inward and outside representation is at the centre of the nation-building process (emphasis in original).

Schramm’s assertion that the GDE in its representation of the nation in the international arena has levelled the cultural playing field at that level, should be considered too innocent – this in light of the cultural imperialism and the discourse of ethical representation discussed in Chapter 3, especially considering Ghana’s position as a postcolonial state and a multi-ethnic one at that. This will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

4.7.1 Two National Dance Companies, One Mandate

The status of the GDE as the only national dance company was to be affected greatly in 1994 when the Ensemble was asked to join the National Symphony

Orchestra and Abibigromma³¹ at the newly built National Theatre of Ghana. Under the leadership of the then artistic director Prof. Nii Yartey, a greater part of the group left for the National Theatre, and by 1999 had changed its name to the National Dance Company (Schramm, 2000).

Fabian's (1996) presentation of the issues that led to the split of the Ensemble into the Ghana Dance Ensemble at the Institute of African Studies and the National Dance Company at the National Theatre, seems empathetic towards the former. She argued her point based on the grievances and conviction of the founders and the members who stayed behind.

Until the point of the separation, the GDE received funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture through the Culture Department of the ministry. With the split, however, that funding went to the group at the National Theatre, which meant that the group at the University of Ghana, began to receive its funding from the Education half of the Ministry through the University. Fabian's (1996) submission suggests that the group struggled as a result of inadequate funding, which came as a direct consequence of Nketia and Opoku's conviction that the company must be linked to an educational institution. The research component of the GDE's focus, which cements its claim to authenticity, made it imperative for the group to remain within an educational institution.

While the company at the National Theatre began to experiment with traditional dance with a contemporary view, the GDE held on to its focus of preserving and promoting traditional dance (Fabian, 1996). At the time of Fabian's research (1996), the GDE had existed for thirty years and her conclusion, which echoed Nketia, was that it still stood "for tradition as well as creativity, for the best in African dances, for quality, and for the values which Africans look for and cherish in their dances" (Fabian, 1996:nd).

A critical look at the main arguments that led to the split of the GDE actually reveals that it may not have been necessary, if the decision had been approached with the

³¹ The national theatre company of Ghana. The original Abibigromma was, like the GDE, formed as part of the National Theatre Movement and is now the resident theatre company of the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana.

original purpose Nkrumah had in mind for the use of indigenous Ghanaian culture. Nkrumah's (1963:13) speech at the inauguration of the Institute of African Studies, situates the GDE within the framework that established it and serves to cement its place within the academic setting:

I hope that the Institute, in conjunction with the School of Music and Drama will link the University of Ghana closely with the National Theatre Movement in Ghana. In this way the institute can serve the needs of the people by helping to develop new forms of dance and drama, of music and creative writing, that are at the same time closely related to our traditions and express the ideas and aspirations of our people at this critical stage in our history. This should lead to new strides in our cultural development.

Nkrumah's vision of developing 'new' forms of dance and drama leading to 'new' strides in the cultural development of the country, is crucial to the argument above. Traditional dance was to serve as a basis upon which new forms of dances could develop with changing times. The very nature of the GDE at the time of its establishment was dual in terms of 'choreographed authenticity' and 'hybridised choreography', discussed in the foregoing submission. The essence of traditional dances is choreographed and theatricalised, thus creating new forms based on traditional movement and other influences.

Katharina Schramm (2000) presents a convincing argument from the perspective of the Dance Company at the National Theatre in her research paper, 'The politics of dance: Changing representations of the nation in Ghana', which supports the creative development of traditional dances. She notes: "[...] the work of the *Dance Ensemble* was to be more than the simple showing of some examples of folklorist traditions; instead, its initiators wanted it to be an experimental ground for the development of a real Ghanaian dance culture" (2000:342, emphasis in original).

It is therefore contradictory on the part of the founders in their refusal to move to the new National Theatre building, since Ghanaian culture is not restricted to the primordial but changes with time even as the foundations remain in place. If their conviction to remain at the University was based on the research factor, they could have continued to benefit from research activities of the Institute of African Studies, as stated in Nkrumah's speech above.

At the inaugural ceremony of the Ensemble, during which the group was named the Ghana Dance Ensemble, Deku (1967:3) aptly points to the fact that,

[...] if traditional arts are to survive and be meaningful in present day Ghana, they must be kept alive not just by mere repetition of the same age-old traditions or by a museum approach to the arts, but by artistic imagination which clarifies their aesthetic values and renews their vitality.

The above statement clearly reveals the position of the Ghana Dance Ensemble regarding innovations based on traditional cultural wealth of the nation. Especially since “innovation and creative renewal have always been inherent to traditional dance culture” (Schramm, 2000:347). It is based on this dynamic nature of culture itself that Schramm argues for the acceptance of both representations of traditional dances by the GDE and the contemporary approach by the Dance Company as being “legitimate and in their specific ways, authentic” (ibid.).

There is, however, a need to differentiate between the two, as discussed above, under authenticity and hybridity. It is true that a true representation of Ghanaian culture today is hybrid in nature, but as discussed above the ‘authentic’ culture is often directly linked to the primordial culture, which serves as basis upon which new forms can evolve through the dynamic machinery of culture.

Globalisation is the main reason why the authenticity of cultural productions today is challenged. Without the ‘pristine’ or ‘pure’ Ghanaian cultural traditions as base for current cultural productions, there will be no Ghanaian culture to speak of. This is mainly because globalisation by its very nature hybridises through cultural interpenetration. In an interview with Schramm (2000:349), Nii Yartey puts the above argument in perspective when he says that global

[...] interactions have brought about the necessity to share in whatever we’ve learnt, to use, to be influenced, to influence one another [...] it is only when you have a weak culture, which therefore is not culture, that you’ll be afraid - and nobody on the earth can say that Africans have a weak culture, nobody.

The formation of the Ghana Dance Ensemble served to create national dances aimed at projecting a cultural image of Ghana as a nation, both within the country and at the international level. In order to execute this mandate adequately, the group constantly has to remain relevant, and this can only be achieved through innovation and creativity in line with current forms of presentation on the global stage.

Fabian (1996) and Schramm (2000) approached their study of the Ghana Dance Ensemble and the issue of separation from the perspective of the group at the Institute of African Studies and the group at the National Theatre respectively. Each

of them presents a valid argument in support of the particular group based on issues raised by the leaders. However, looking critically at the issues raised, reveals that the separation of the group into two was not necessary. By bringing their arguments together and aligning them with Nkrumah's vision for the use of traditional forms, it reveals that both groups are fulfilling the original mandate given them.

As an academic institution "primarily concerned with research into the arts and cultures of Ghana and the history and institutions of Ghanaian societies" (Nketia, 1968:3), the Institute of African Studies could have continued to feed the Ghana Dance Ensemble with its research findings, even if it had moved to the National Theatre at the time. However, there may have been reasons other than what the founders have given Fabian (1996) regarding their unwillingness to move to the National Theatre.

At the same time, Nii Yartey's argument for creativity and innovation in the productions of the GDE, which necessitated its move to the National Theatre, is unfounded, because the mandate of the group per Nkrumah's vision, especially includes innovation and further development of traditional dances. There may be hidden politics and issues of power which may be drawn from this historical move; these will be explored later.

4.8 Transposing Traditional Dance into Theatrical Spectacle

The foregoing discussions clearly reveal a difference between dance as part of society and dance in a professional or staged context. It helps to distinguish between the two, especially when discussing issues of authenticity and representation. With professional dance, what pertains in the field is either paraphrased or quoted verbatim depending on the company; either way, the contexts and presentations are never the same. According to Giurchescu (1994:21),

[...] vernacular folklore and staged folklore, exist in indivisible and unbroken continuity. However, considering the practice of symbol transformation and manipulation, it is necessary to formally segregate the sociocultural processes of folklore from selected products (dances, music, costumes, etc.) which are performed in the framework of a spectacle (called folklorism or 'fakelore').

In the same vein, Shay (1999) posits that even though the ties between traditional dance and staged dance are visible, they are separate in genres in terms of their use of improvisation, the mode of transmission of the dances, and the degree of

separation from represented traditions exhibited by professional folk dance performers. With dance in the field, there is usually a high level of improvisation while professionally staged performances of such dances are standardised and set by the companies representing them.

With regard to the mode of acquisition of dances, Shay (1999) further notes that, with a few exceptions, professional dancers in state dance companies are urban-born individuals who learn the repertoire of dances within the company in the same way as any foreigner would learn such dances. The dance professionals consciously learn a wide variety of styles and forms of dances in a classroom/studio environment in order to represent the nation, and not only their ethnic culture. On the other hand, dancers in the field or traditional settings are only skilled in their own ethnic dances.

Hanna (1965:14), in lamenting the adverse effects of Western education and rural urban migration on traditional dance, states that many children were ‘uprooted’ from their traditional environment to attend missionary boarding schools “at the time when they could learn [their own] dances effortlessly, gain skill, and become sufficiently steeped in traditional culture to be an important vehicle for its transmission”. She further cited the case of a young Nigerian man who was the best dancer in his village, who, together with his peers, “would perform, for a small fee, on festive occasions as far as ten miles from his home village” (ibid).

Hanna’s submission brings out an important feature of dance as performed and acquired in traditional settings. Its communal nature ensures that it is not separate from the people, as the events that occasion the dance, affect the entire community. This is the main reason why there is no separation between performers and audience. Even when the skilled youth in the village form dance groups, they are only able to perform their own ethnic dances. This can be gleaned from the independence celebrations in Kenya which saw “members of varied ethnic groups, with pride and dignity [...] adorned in their exciting, colourful traditional costumes, performing some of their traditional dances with great skill” (Hanna, 1965:17).

In order to transpose traditional dance from the original setting to theatrical status to be performed by professional dancers, certain adjustments have to be made. First of all the choreographer must be aware of the nature of the new audience. Dance performances in the traditional setting are often put up for the benefit of indigenes;

with professional dance companies, however, a more eclectic urban audience is anticipated. According to Schramm (2000) there is no distinction between audience and performers in the local setting due to active community participation. To establish this view, Nketia (1965:27) notes the following:

There are recognised forms of behaviour attached to each role [in terms of audience participation]. Individual spectators may shout to animate the performance or show their appreciation by running to wipe the face of a dancer or a musician or by going into the ring to give a performer a gift of money. In the Akan area he is permitted to dance for a brief moment, when he enters the ring and waves his hands around the dancer's head to congratulate him. An essentially solo dance may develop for a brief while into a *pas de deux* as a result of this.

Consequently, there is usually no time limit put on performances, which can go on for hours with participants actively improvising and adding to the movement vocabulary, as they feel inspired. To support the submission on duration of performances in the traditional setting, Schramm (2000:345) points out that "in its original context, a dance could go on for hours with only slight variation, whilst now it had to be condensed and repetitions were to be eliminated".

For the professional stage, however, the dance must go through the theatricalising process in order to be stage-worthy for the benefit of its new audience. In an interview with Fabian (1996), Adinku notes that "a sensitive choreographer caters to a personal and impersonal audience, where a personal audience are those who know the dance as part of their culture and impersonal are those who are not related to the dance". He further distinguishes between the two types of audience when he adds that the personal audience views the performance with a more critical eye as a result of their familiarity with the symbols and meaning of the dance.

On the other hand, the impersonal audience judges the performance by looking out for aesthetic quality. This is why Nketia (1995) was particular about a careful consideration for messages, symbols, humor, wit and sarcasm in dance movements to meet the needs of different audiences. To buttress this point, Adinku adds that the following: "A sensitive choreographer knows who he [or she] is presenting to. The Ghana Dance Ensemble does a wonderful job of trying to relate to the two audiences" (Fabian 1996). However, Opoku (1976:63) warns: "[...] It is not enough to possess sensitivity to the music or dance expression. Form, structure and type and, in the case of music, the text, make for a fuller appreciation."

In highlighting the challenges involved in uprooting dances from their sociocultural context and theatricalising them, Fabian (1996) quotes Nketia who, in an interview, compared such an enterprise to “that of displaying functional, ritual objects in museums for aesthetic contemplation”. The kind of consideration that must go into choreographing the dances, can be found in Nketia’s point that the choreographer must carefully “work out a form of dance which highlights and clarifies the essential forms of the dances, without destroying their basic movements and styles, their emotional and cultural values, or their vitality and vigor” (Nketia, 1968:3).

Another consideration of Opoku in choreographing the dances, was to rotate the dancers to avoid a situation where audiences have to rotate to view the dances – like in the traditional setting where the people can watch the performance from any direction (Fabian, 1996). He continues by claiming that “[...] arrangements and formations must be interesting enough to keep a passive, contemplative audience entertained” (ibid).

In his 1995 interview with Schramm (2000:345), Ampofo Duodu, the then artistic director of the GDE, outlined what went into the theatricalising process: “[...] so what we did, was to take the nice movements ... We selected ... it, made it compact ... aesthetically ... acceptable. So that within ... five minutes you can see all the essentials, the best that [the dance] can offer.” This process, which Schramm describes as “creative innovation”, was intended to preserve the dances while, at the same time, making them stage-worthy.

As appropriate representation must be an ongoing process, they, in keeping themselves in check with the transposition process, maintained strong ties with the village experts who gave them feedback on the choreographies and taught them new dances. It is interesting to note that the relationship between the villagers and the GDE is not one way in terms of teaching and learning.

Schramm (2000) indicates that, after the GDE performs to the communities for feedback, the communities also adopt some of the innovations of the group. As an example she mentions the incorporation of women into the Anlo war dance, Agbekor/Atsiagbekor, by the Ewes of the Volta Region. Traditionally, women were forbidden from dances derived from solely male activities such as war. However,

when the GDE allowed female dancers to perform, the community embraced such a development.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, Shay (1999) similarly points out that many studies of traditional dance forms give the impression that traditions in the villages have been unaffected by the presence of professional dance companies. He explains the dynamic cycle of cultural and choreographic appropriation whereby choreographic elements from the field find their way to the stage, and then return to the field as presentational elements. This dynamic cycle is seen in the example of Agbekor, cited by Schramm (2000). In the case of Agbekor, however, the very tradition of the people, and not performance style of amateur groups in the village, was altered by the GDE as it made possible the incorporation of women in a particular dance by the community.

4.8.1 Professionalising Dance and the Right to Representation

‘Professional Dance’ is a relatively new concept in Ghana – introduced by the National Theatre Movement and the formation of the Ghana Dance Ensemble (Fabian 1996; Adinku 2004). Shay (1999) contends that all performers of state-sponsored dance ensembles supposedly represent all the people of the nation-state, in other words they represent all the ethnic groups within the boundaries of the nation. However, such establishment requires some choices to be made, as all ethnic groups within Ghana could not possibly be represented within one single dance company. According to Shay (1999:40),

[s]ome of those choices stem from deeply held philosophical stances concerning which people represent the nation ‘properly’ [...]. A common choice for representing the ‘pure, noble’ soul of the people through folk dances, music, and costumes is most often the peasant, a tribal group, or some other rural inhabitant.

In Ghana the repertoire of the Ghana Dance Ensemble was based on traditional Ghanaian dances, partly because of Shay’s assertion that they represent the nation “properly”. As established before, the pure unadulterated culture of the people can be found in the rural parts of the country, and this choice is based on the fact that contact with the colonial culture and its effect rested in the administrative urban areas. Therefore, to frustrate the colonial agenda of cultural emasculation, the

pristine culture of the people was tapped into for the purposes of unifying the nation by reclaiming cultural pride towards total independence.

The repertoire of the Ghana Dance Ensemble was primarily created from traditional dance resources and from all over the country. With the same rationale in mind, the dancers were also recruited from various ethnicities of the nation. According to Adinku (2000:132), the original members of the GDE recruited between September 1962 and February 1963 comprised the following;

Patience Addo, Grace Nuamawere, Rose Atiega, Beatrice Addo, Lily Acquah-Harrison, Matilda Attiane, Patience Kwakwa, Edna Mensah, Helen Mensah, Hilda Sowa, Emmerentia Tamakloe, Thomas Ekow Adi, William Ofotsu Adinku, Victor Clottey, Emmanuel Ampofo Duodu and Frank Kwesi Mensah and Godfrey Odokwe Sackeyfio.

The diversity of the original members can be gleaned from their names, as they all come from the major ethnic groups found in Ghana. The pioneering musicians were as diverse as the dancers:

Mustafa Teddy Addy (Ga-Dangme), Husunu Afadi (Anlo), Iddrisu Alhassan (Dagbani) [sic], J. Asmah (Ahantan), Kwesi Badu (Ashanti), John K. Bennisan (Togo-Ewe), Osei Bonsu (Ashanti), Kodzo Ganyo (Togo-Ewe), and Seth Ladzekpo (Anlo) (Adinku, 2000:132).

For the dancers to be trained as professionals embodying the nation, the founders decided that, regardless of ethnic origin, all members of the ensemble must learn the ensemble's repertoire of dances without reservation, "embodying thus the idea of 'unity in diversity' on stage" (Schramm, 2000:243). Furthermore, acquiring a deeper knowledge of the sociocultural context of the dances was a crucial requirement for the dancers and musicians of the company. This understanding was assumed to be necessary for the gestures and movements of the dancers to be meaningful, thereby representing the people appropriately (ibid). In addition, if the various ethnic groups are to entrust the company with the privilege of representing their culture within and outside Ghana, they require a respectful treatment to be given to their cultural wealth.

Nketia and Opoku ensured that members of the Dance Company continued their general education, alongside their rigorous training in traditional dance and performance, which is very important for their professionalism as dancers. At the initial stages of the GDE the standards set for professionalism, are measured by

rigorous training, gaining adequate knowledge of the historical and contextual background of the dances, experiencing the dances in their social setting, as well as gaining a Certificate in General Education.

During her research in 1996, Fabian had the opportunity to witness an auditioning process to recruit new members and documented the criteria for selection:

The hopeful dancers are first given movement technique to test their strength, speed, stamina, and ability to pick up choreography. The individuals are then asked to perform two or three of the traditional dances that they know best. Afterwards, they are tested in their ability to sing and play the drums, as well as their theatrical ability to cry, act mad or imitate certain animals. Finally, they are each interviewed by the directors, who ask questions about their backgrounds, why they enjoy dancing and why they want to be a [sic] member of the company. The audition process lasts three days, although some do not return after the strenuous day one, realizing that they do not have the stamina to dance professionally.

At this point the level of education of the aspiring dancers is unclear. However, considering the fact that Opoku was present during the auditioning, it can be concluded that the basic educational requirement was adhered to. In writing about his experience as one of the original members of the GDE, Adinku (2004) recounts:

Our training, which initially was supposed to be African-centred, later included studies of ballet, modern dance, and oriental dance forms from Indonesia. Although we took these courses, they were intended only to give us exposure to the movement forms of foreign dance cultures, not to make us experts in them. In time, some of us, including me, were sponsored to American and British universities for a broader education in dance so that we could adapt the teachings and techniques to the dance programs at home.

The international training received by the original members, created an awareness of cultural productions outside their cultures and served to plant the idea of professional dancing as a form of exposure to what pertains in other parts of the world. This was the initial step towards their intercultural work as cultural ambassadors of the nation.

The criteria for selection of new members by Duodu, as outlined above by Fabian (1996), is an indication that the preliminary work of the first group produced some professional dance sense in those who auditioned, which informs the criteria for selection. Unlike this group, the original members had no idea what professional dancing was and therefore needed no prior knowledge of any traditional dance.

In the case of the original members, advertisements were placed in the newspapers inviting interested young men and women, between the ages of 18 and 25 with a good basic education, to audition for a chance to be trained as professional dancers. Upon successful completion of the two-year training period, they would become the very first members of the Ghana Dance Ensemble (Fabian, 1996).

These standards will be measured against current standards in the analysis chapters to see if the criteria and requirements for selection have changed over the years, as a result of developments in international standards. According to Shay (1999:48), artistic directors sometimes demanded dancers with “certain physical types of bodies, faces, heights, weights, coloring, etc. [...] who embody ‘the national type’” in order to ‘properly’ represent the nation internationally. In the case of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, successive artistic directors have had their own philosophies regarding this.

Fabian (1996) in her discussion of the eclectic nature of the group in 1996 under its third artistic director, Ampofo Duodu, concludes as follows:

Age is not the only eclectic factor of the group. The dancers’ shapes – from fleshy and heavy to lean and long, from petit to tall and fair-skinned to dark – are as varied as their dancing styles. Some move with a mature subtlety, as beautiful to watch, yet completely different from, the energetic, acrobatic style of others.

The diversity of body type seems intentional, as these reflect the various body types representative of the people within the nation. Fabian (1996), however, discovers that “body type” has become a key factor in the selection of members, mainly based on the artistic director’s preference and beliefs. While Opoku was more open with regard to his view on body type and dance abilities, Duodu was more specific about his preferences. Opoku, in discussing the issue in an interview with Fabian (1996), said that “it depends on how the person uses the type and size to express herself [...] when you see the real thing, It’s beautiful, and a fat person can still dance like she’s floating”.

Duodu also revealed his stance on the issue that in choosing new recruits, he is very particular about the dancer’s build. His preference for dancers with a slender build stems from his belief that they can perform both vigorous and delicate movements with equal dexterity, compared to the plump ones. He especially preferred to hire

young dancers based on the same reasons as above.

Schramm (2000) in her discussion of globalisation and appropriations in relation to the National Dance Company headed by Nii Yartey, notes how expectations of the global market have affected even the body type of the dancers. She observes that all the female dancers are slim, which is contrary to the Ghanaian ideal of female beauty often associated with plump and well-rounded shapes. She interprets this development as a concession to the tastes of a Western or Westernised audience, but most importantly, “it also hints towards the growing degree of professionalisation of the company. Only well-trained and elastic dancers are able to cope with Nii Yartey’s high expectations in terms of tempo and physical agility” (2000:352).

From the above-mentioned, it is evident that it is not always the case that artistic directors seek to project the “national type” in terms of physical build and weight. These decisions are often made with practical concessions in mind towards achieving artistic success based on the director’s philosophy. Nii Yartey and Duodu seem to agree on the fact that the slim body type is more suited for a wider range of movement vocabulary than the plump type.

Opoku, on the other hand, believes that “a fat person can still dance like she is floating”, depending on how s/he uses the body to express the movement. Opoku’s view can only hold with certain traditional dances and not the more acrobatic and physically demanding contemporary type, such as practiced by Nii Yartey.

As far as Abloso (2013) is concerned, the level of professionalism of the GDE dancers is revealed in the audience’s inability to determine the ethnicity of the dancers, caused by to the dexterity with which they perform dances other than their own. She notes that

[...] it was difficult to identify each of the dancer’s [...] ethnic origin [...]. It is delightfully awesome to watch the dancer Patience Kwakwa, an Akan, perform *Dahomey Adzogbo*. And Ampofo Duodu, also Akan, performs the Ga *Kpanlogo*. William Ofotsu Adinku is from Ada, yet he performs the Upper Eastern *Bawa*; and William Diku who is from Upper East Region performs Akan *Fontomfrom* with dexterity and precision. Ben Ayittey, a Ga-Adangme, performs the Northern and Upper Eastern *Nagla*. Mary Atta, from the Northern Region, is an expert in performing Asante *Kete*; and Faustina Dogbenu, an Ewe, is masterfully precise in performing Asante *Sikyɛ*” (ibid: 61, emphasis in original).

The level of professionalism of the Ghana Dance Ensemble is characterised by the

dancers' knowledge of the sociocultural and historical backgrounds of diverse ethnic dances in the repertory, their ability to perform these dances like natives of the ethnicities whose dances they perform, their level of education, their theatrical or performance skills, and their ability to achieve every movement vocabulary using their body type. These will form the yardstick against which current members' professionalism will be measured to see if there have been any changes.

4.9 Repertory and Representational Strategies of the GDE

According to Botwe-Asamoah (2005:164) "the repertoire of the Ghana Dance Ensemble and its performances, under the great and Africa's first Artistic Director of Dance Theater, Professor Mawere Opoku, marked the highest expression of African personality that Nkrumah envisioned". Nkrumah's idea of African personality basically sought to raise the dignity of African culture through cultural awareness and appreciation, towards cultural emancipation necessitated by the colonial encounter. Botwe-Asamoah's statement above is backed by Adinku's (2000:134) commendation of the founders who "have managed to stage traditional dances without destroying their essence", thereby creating cultural pride and awareness both within and outside the country.

In order to begin the process of choreographing ethnic dances, Opoku consulted chiefs and opinion leaders of each of the communities they visited, concerning their local dances in terms of character of the dance, historical background, sociocultural associations and aesthetic associations (Abloso, 2013). In each case he sought permission to rearrange the dances before he worked on them; and afterwards, he would present them back to the community for approval and criticism. The feedback he received from the community formed a major part of his choreographic process towards ethically and authentically representing the people (ibid.). This process clearly demonstrates that the founders were very much aware of the risk involved in packaging ethnic/national heritage for the stage, and did not want to risk representing the people inaccurately (Schauert, 2007). This demonstrates Nketia's (1993:12) submission that

[...] the challenge of the choreographer is to work out a form of dances which highlights and clarifies the essential forms of the dances, without destroying their basic movements and styles, their emotional and cultural values, or their vitality and vigor.

Schramm (2000:353) indicated that the procedures necessary for working through Nketia challenge above, lie in “standardisation, essentialisation and aesthetic transformations”. According to Shay (1999) essentialism is a strategy practiced by state folk dance ensembles as a way of representing the state and the people. He echoes Michael Herzfeld (1997:31) who observed that “essentialism is always the one thing it claims not to be: it is a strategy, born of local, social and historical contingency. The agents of powerful state entities and the humblest of local social actors engage in the strategy of essentialism to an equal degree”.

Shay presents the case of Igor Moiseyev who claimed to build a national repertoire of dances that would reveal the “national character” through folk dance. Moiseyev believed that any specific group could be reduced to a single essence through dance. To demonstrate this, he gives an example of people who are known for fighting, being portrayed in dance terms through fight movements. Therefore, through the strategy of essentialism “an entire group of people can be reduced to one character trait: combativeness” (Shay, 1999:41).

On the other side of this essentialist portrayal of the state, lies a clear portrayal of the political and ethnic tensions characteristic of multicultural/multi-ethnic states. The paradox created by essentialism can be seen in, for instance, the case of the Soviet Union, specifically in the fact that, “while the professional state ensemble embodies essentialism as it employs choreographic strategies to highlight that all Greeks, Iranians or Mexicans are the same, their programs must also show and even celebrate, a rainbow ethnic diversity” (Shay, 1999:41).

This paradox creates a polarised tension which, according to Shay (1999), is described as ‘assimilation’ and ‘differentiation’, where assimilation aims at erasing local identity and culture, and differentiation projects cultural difference. In the case of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, assimilation only occurs at the corporeal level where dancers assimilate the dances and movement vocabulary of all the ethnicities represented in the repertoire – thereby projecting a national dancing body that denies its own ethnicity.

Differentiation, on the other hand, has been the main driving force behind the representational strategies of the GDE, as a result of the overarching framework of unity in diversity underlying its formation as a nationalising agent. Griffiths (1994),

states that cultural essentialism, though theoretically questionable, can be used strategically in the struggle against imperialism. Distilling the dances to the very essence for artistic representation, only highlights the difference between what pertains in their social setting and on the stage.

Essentialism as practiced by the GDE, can be described as very loose, as they seek to present traditional dances with very little modification to suit the stage. They present on stage the essential forms of the dances in terms of their basic movement and style, along with the emotional, spiritual/cultural values, vitality and vigor (Nketia, 1968), which points out the difference between the GDE essentialism and that of the Soviet Union described by Shay (1999).

In terms of contemporary choreography, however, several movement vocabularies are put together within a context (for instance a dance drama with a theme) that does not necessarily trace the movements back to their origins. In her discussion of standardisation, Schramm (2000:344) came to the conclusion that “it is a precondition for the development of a national culture”. Therefore, the essential aspects of the dances clarified and highlighted for the stage, are standardised in order to develop and maintain a national form of dance that can be called Ghanaian. Standardisation became necessary in order to professionalise traditional dances, which were based on extensive research in order to have accurate or acceptable representation of the people.

Standardisation in this context can be linked to ethics of representation in terms of the research process that led to the creation of the GDE’s repertoire. The founders made ethical considerations by working closely with the people and seeking their approval after choreographing their dances, before they take to the stage and present before an audience. By standardising the dances, they protect the people’s culture and the people’s confidence in the research process. Standardisation also serves to avoid any form of representation of the people that may be considered misleading.

However, “[...] standardization stands in stark contrast to the movement practices found in the field where people largely dance with spontaneity and a degree of improvisation that would be impossible to teach in the classroom/studio settings” (Shay, 1999:52). During performances by a specific ethnic group, for instance, there

is usually a high level of freedom and spontaneity; however, certain requirements in terms of established norms and criteria must be adhered to in performing for specific audiences³².

In the traditional setting, familiarity with appropriate codes of conduct govern and ensure active participation by the audience. Opoku (1967:63) describes this collaborative spontaneity when he notes the following regarding the traditional performance:

One lead-singer gives way to another; a drummer may turn over his drum to another in order to perform as a dancer; clappers and instrumentalists can change roles. Symbolic use of language or gesture is within the experience of the group. Spontaneous texts by individuals awaken emotional responses in some of the participants who have had like experiences brought to their minds by the message of the texts.

In a professional company, however, there is usually no room for spontaneity, as everything is choreographed according to the wishes of the artistic director. This notwithstanding, they present an adequate representation of the people according to ethical standards that were adhered to during the process of extraction of the dances, and the people's approval that led to an agreed standard for representing them.

The GDE's standardisation was based on the origin of the dances and, most importantly, the character of the dance:

Because the directors and choreographers of these companies make claims of authenticity, the research each conducts, or has access to, allows her or him to determine the most characteristic movements, steps, and poses found in a specific geographical area or among a particular ethnic group. Through the research, however conducted, they can utilize the most 'typical', 'well-known', or 'popular' dances in a specific area (Shay, 1999:46).

The most popular dances within the various regions were put together to form the repertoire of the GDE. The character of each dance was determined by the context within which the dance is performed. The various dances were then classified under categories that determined the occasions where they featured, such as war dance, love dance, victory dance, etc.

³² Such as chiefs and other traditional leaders within the community

Shay (1999) further intimated that the most prevalent choreographic strategy employed by most state dance ensembles, is the “suite” representational strategy. With this technique, choreographers string dances together, with transitions in between, to perform at certain recurring occasions such as weddings. This is clearly exemplified in the repertory of the GDE where dances are ethnically categorised in suites: Akan Ceremonial Dance Suites, Dagbani Dance Suite, Lobi Dance Suite, and others. Within each suite there are several dances which are performed, based on the nature of the occasion. The repertoire of the GDE is directly linked to its:

[...] objective to develop new forms of expression through dance dramas and creative dances, which combine indigenous and foreign dances in new ways. However, these dances are performed to a far lesser extent than those the GDE labels ‘traditional dances’ which profess to ‘preserve the essence of various expressive forms’ by emulating indigenous practices (Schauert, 2007:171).

Table 4.1 captures the repertory of the GDE, as recorded by Fabian (1996) and Abloso (2013).

Table 4.1 Repertory of the GDE between 1996 and 2013

Ethnic Group/Origin	Dance
Ashanti	Adowa (social-funeral) Afrafra/Nsasaawa Ceremonial Dance Suite: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mpintin (processional) • Fontomfrom (war) • Kete (court) Akom (possession) Alange Asadua Highlife (recreational) Sanga (youth recreational)

	Sikiyi (recreational)
Fante	Apotampa Asafo (military dance)
Benin-Dahomey	Adzobo Azao Azaa (an extension of Adzobo) Atsia Kadodo
Anlo/Ewe	Dance Medley: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nzoma • Ahanta • Kundum Dance Suite: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow Agbekor I: Processional • Slow Agbekor II: Processional • Fast Agbekor: War • Atseagbekor: to show off Gadzo (recreational) Gahu (recreational) Gobi (recreational) Gombe (recreational) Gota (recreational) Sohu (cult dance) Have Etoi Boboobo (recreational) Togo Atsea-Ewe Husago Lamentations
Dagomba	Bawa (recreational) Bambmaya (social) Dagbani Dance Suite (court dances):

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damba (processional) • Takai • Tora • Butcher's Dance (solo) • Sofo Kaagyi Kaagyi
Frafra (also danced by Kasena, Nankani, Akampa)	Bima Nagla (recreational)
Ga-Adangbe	Kpanlogo (youth recreational) Gome Kpatsa
Ahanta	Kundum (harvest)
Lobi	Dance Suite: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sebre • Boobena • Koobena • Bawa
Choreography	Opoku <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lamentation for Freedom Fighters (1964) • Unity in Diversity Ampofo Duodu <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atamga-dance drama (1995) • Dwabo (1995) • Ngoma Kpeng • Nsrabo (1976) • The Power of Talking Drums (1995) • Slave Trade-dance drama (1995) • Women's Emancipation-dance drama (1996)

Table 4.1 only presents the GDE's repertory as recorded by the mentioned authors. Through the current study, their repertory as at 2014 will be recorded in order to

ascertain whether there have been any changes in terms of additions and withdrawals, and the reasons for these changes, if any.

4.10 Diversity in Music and Costume

With a core mandate of showcasing the diversity of the nation to the nation and then to the outside world, the GDE as a multi-ethnic company is expected to obtain accurate music and appropriate costumes for their representation to be considered 'authentic'. The musical accompaniment must proceed from the "diversity of musical instruments, vocal styles, and other ethnomusicological elements" found in all the ethnic cultures whose dances are represented by the GDE (Shay 1999:48).

At the inception of the GDE, performances were accompanied by recorded music. However, musicians with specialisations in their ethnic music were later engaged by the founders between 1963 and 1964 to join the group and provide live musical accompaniment to the dance performances (Adinku, 2000). The ethnic diversity of the pioneering musicians is evident from the list of names and ethnic origin of the members cited earlier from Adinku (2000). The diversity of the musicians implies diversity in instruments used by the GDE, as will be revealed in subsequent chapters.

In terms of costume there is one major question which will be addressed in this study: What considerations go into the design and creation of costumes for the dances in the repertoire? According to Lo and Gilbert (2002), a postcolonial reading of intercultural performance must take into consideration aspects of theatre performance such as language, space, the body, costume and spectatorship, as these aspects are ideologically laden sign systems, and therefore potential sites of hybridity.

If costumes are treated as an "ambiguous signifier rather than a transparent sign of particular gender, racial, social, [ethnic], and national identities" (Lo & Gilbert, 2002:48), it reveals how subjectivities are self-consciously constructed through performance within postcolonial settings. With regard to the use of costumes in state folk dance ensembles, Shay (1999:30) intimated that some of these companies are "truly devoted to the inclusion of authentic elements of traditional life such as the use of musical instruments and vocal styles, costumes, and dance steps, movements, and the portrayal of customs and rituals".

According to Nketia (1965:23) the following: “[B]ecause the dance [in the traditional context] is an avenue for dramatic expression, attention may be given to the choice of costume and make-up as well as props.” These dramatic elements may be considered in terms of “the context of the dance, the character of the dance and the points that need to be emphasised” (ibid). However, not all societies in Africa provide elaborate costumes or even wear costumes for dances.

He further claims that there are variations in the use of costumes, as more often than not, costumes serve functional purposes within dramatic dance performances.

Costumes may be used as part of movement, means of identification and differentiation between dramatic roles; it “may also be selected for the purpose of creating atmosphere or for conveying a message through the symbolism of their colours, shapes or details of design. Or they may be selected merely for the spectacle they present” (Nketia, 1965:25). Variations in the type of costume worn for particular dances and by particular ethnic groups, are determined by one of two considerations, viz. physical requirements and dramatic requirements. In both cases costume serves the needs of the particular dance by enhancing its meaning. Nketia further remarks that the use and choice of make-up and hairstyles are guarded by similar values as stated for costume above.

In order to prove their claim to authenticity, the GDE ensures that their representation of the people covers all the above elements mentioned by Shay (1999). However, their ‘authentic’ costumes (supposedly based on materials and styles of the ethnicities represented), are only worn during traditional dance performances. The ‘authenticity’ of these claims will be verified and discussed further. In the case of creative choreographies, artistic decisions are made regarding the appearance of the dancers; and all these are made with certain considerations, which must also be teased out to bring to light the power dynamics in such decisions.

4.11 Funding and Administration

According to Shay (1999), state folk dance ensembles constitute an official arm of their respective national governments. Thence all, in some cases some, of their funding comes directly from the government. The companies funded solely by the state, are also given “other assets, such as the use of a building, a theatre, offices

and other valuable space for rehearsals, administrative offices, and storage of costumes” (ibid:45). On the other hand, there are many such companies that earn a lot of money from touring and other sources, depending on the economic or political realities of their nation-state (ibid). These companies tend to fund their operations without much support from the state.

In the case of the GDE, which began as a national dance company, full funding was provided by the government and it was housed at a state University where offices and rehearsal space were provided. With the separation, however, funding from the government was replaced by subsistence from the University, which they are barely surviving by (Fabian, 1996; Schramm, 2000; Schauert, 2007).

Various artistic directors of the GDE and some members interviewed in the above-mentioned research, have complained about how funding is affecting their work. This outcome of events begs consideration in terms of whether it is artistically prudent for a national dance company to operate under an institute within a University. Dr K.A. Busia’s³³ report on the reorganisation of the Institute contained a recommendation that the GDE should “[...] remain part of the Institute of African Studies to assist research as a demonstration group, and this, rather than entertainment, should be its primary function” (Adinku, 2000:134).

Busia’s suggestion may serve to put the issue in perspective. Rather than continuing their operation as a state folk dance company, the GDE had a choice to stick to this ‘primary function’ as a demonstration group within the Institute. However, the group continued to work as a state dance company mainly because that was what it was established to do. At establishment, the core mandate of the group, as discussed earlier, was to establish a matrix for cultural identification as well as play the role of cultural ambassadors representing the nation at the international level (Schramm, 2000).

The very nature of the GDE suggests that it goes beyond just a demonstration group, as its artistic creations and choreographed traditional dances are meant for dissemination of cultural awareness and national presence through entertainment.

³³ K.A. Busia was a Ghanaian nationalist who served as Ghana’s Prime Minister from 1969 – 1972.

This function has even become more important now with globalisation and its cultural homogenising efforts. The implications of having a dance company with artistic and commercial success within an academic setting, will be discussed in subsequent chapters of this study.

4.12 Contexts of Performances and Local/International Reception

Riding on its mandate to disseminate cultural awareness within the country and represent the state at the international level, the GDE began to give performances soon after its formation in 1962 (Adinku, 2000). On the national front, they performed choreographed traditional dances and creative choreographic pieces at schools, in stadia, at universities, in palaces and theatres (Ibid). The group embarked on tours across the various regions within the country to showcase the choreographed ethnic dances. As experts in their own ethnic forms, the dancers and musicians then taught their own ethnic dances/music to those from ethnicities other than their own (Yartey, 2006).

At the end of this process, all the dancers and musicians had assimilated and become experts in the dance and musical cultures of the diverse ethnicities represented by them all. During these tours the result of the experiments by the GDE was presented to the communities from which the raw material was taken, which consequently served to measure the level of reception by the community. It is interesting to note that during their performances, the audience could not distinguish between the dancers who originated from that area and those from other ethnicities – not until the dancers introduced themselves in terms of names and ethnicity (Yartey, 2006).

Nii Yartey (2006:21) recounts the receptive comment made by the paramount chief of Navrongo³⁴ after seeing the GDE dancers and musicians perform in 1968: “[I]f anybody who does not come from my culture could devote his or her time and energy to learn and perform my dances so perfectly, then that person must have a lot of respect for me and my people.” Similar sentiments followed the GDE’s performances across the regions within the country. The chief’s comment is crucial

³⁴ The capital of the Upper-East Region

towards the establishment of a major argument on the issue of ethical representation and reception, which will be explored later on.

As mentioned earlier, the very first mission of the group at the international level was when they represented Ghana at Malawi's independence celebration in 1964. According to Adinku (2000), a year later the group went on tour to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union where they gave performances in towns and cities, from Czechoslovakia to East Germany, Hungary and Poland. These tours formed part of Nkrumah's Moscow-orientated foreign policy. The GDE also represented Ghana at the First World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture in Dakar, and was acclaimed one of the continent's leading dance troupes (ibid). Since then the GDE has travelled widely across the country and other parts of the world to showcase the created 'Ghanaian culture' to both Ghanaians and the outside world.

The local and international tours of the GDE provide fertile ground for examining their intercultural activities at the micro- and macro-levels. From this foundation, discussions on internal and international cultural hegemony are laid against the issue of reception on both fronts. As established by Lo and Gilbert (2002:31), "cross-cultural theatre is characterised by the conjunction of specific cultural resources at the level of narrative content, performance aesthetics, production processes, and/or reception by an interpretive community".

In defining the GDE as an intercultural site, it becomes crucial to view its activities through the lenses provided in Lo and Gilbert's submission above. Similarly, Desmond (1997:16) in discussing the 'performative' nature of dancing bodies, pointed to the fact that "[they] enact a conception of self and social community mediated by the particular historical aesthetic dimensions of the dance forms and their precise conditions of reception". The 'conditions of reception', as stated by Desmond, are very important to consider, as they reveal an often neglected component of the performances of the GDE. Speaking of 'conditions of reception' in relation to traditional dancers within their community makes a lot more sense than in the case of professional dancers performing dances that are not their own and out of context.

The situation becomes worse on the international stage where 'conditions of reception' take on imperialistic stereotypical dimensions. Here the enactment of a

created national dance culture, along with its conditions of reception, dissipate within hegemonic structures and market demands. Lo and Gilbert (2002:44) argue that it is important to situate intercultural performance within “identifiable fields of sociopolitical and historical relations” which lays the foundation for asking questions about individual and collective power at any point within the production and reception process; questions such as:

Whose economic and/or political interests are being served? How is the working process represented to the target audience, and why? Who is the target audience and how can differences be addressed within this constituency? How does a specific intercultural event impact on the wider sociopolitical environment?

These questions are equally applicable to the intercultural activities of the GDE, as they operate within the postcolonial frame. However, they are addressed on two fronts: in terms of internal power relations based on ethnic hegemony, and external hegemony based on imperialism. These two fronts affect their activities as cultural ambassadors within and outside the country.

In their discussion of the cross-cultural nature of most postcolonial theatre, Lo and Gilbert (2002:35) claim that, “in terms of reception, audiences for postcolonial theatre are complex, typically varying across geographical regions while being differentially influenced by class and race”. Consequently, the GDE as a postcolonial product, performs to diverse audiences seeing that they operate within a multi-ethnic country, and on the international stage the complexity widens by oceans. All these factors affect how their performances are received.

4.13 Conclusion

My main aim for this study is to examine the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble from 1964 to 2014, i.e. 50 years into its existence. The basic definition for intercultural performance, as established in Chapter 2, is “the meeting in the moment of performance of two or more cultural traditions” (Hollidge & Tompkins, 2000:7).

The Ghana Dance Ensemble, being an inter-ethnic company, has dancers and musicians from diverse ethnic groups within the country who perform dance traditions belonging to diverse ethnic groups in Ghana. There therefore is a meeting of various ethnic dances in the moment of performance in the practice of the GDE.

In order to examine their intercultural activities, the following research questions served to guide the study to the main aim stated above:

1. How was the issue of ethnic hegemony addressed in the creation of national dances and in the practice of the GDE?
2. What is the nature of the GDE's macro-cultural exchange and collaborations?
3. What is the nature of the GDE's intercultural activities at the micro-level?
4. When and why was the Ghana Dance Ensemble established?
5. How did traditional dance contribute towards the national unification of Ghana after independence?
6. How was the GDE's repertoire of dances and performance aesthetics created?

It was important to understand the role of dance in traditional Ghanaian society and how dance was used as a unifying tool in Ghana's independence struggle. In this chapter I began with a discussion of dance in the traditional Ghanaian context and its role in the postcolonial cultural reclamation strategies. This served as background to the establishment of the Ghana Dance Ensemble within the context of nation-building.

The discussion was then narrowed to focus on the historical development of the Ghana Dance Ensemble and how its formation served the purpose of unifying the multi-ethnic nation through performance. By so doing, I addressed the first and second research questions stated above. I also addressed the third research question in this chapter, by establishing how the repertoire of dances and performance aesthetics of the GDE was created. I further I discussed the issue of ethnic hegemony of the Akan ethnic group, and how this was addressed in the creation of national dances and in the GDE's practice.

By discussing state folk dance ensembles and focusing on the GDE – its historical formation, repertoire of dances, ethnic diversity of dancers, performance contexts and reception – I have aligned the discussion with the related literature discussed in Chapter 2, as it foregrounds the main case in relation to intercultural performance.

The importance of this chapter lies not only in the exposition it gives to the case in question, but also in the questions it poses on the intercultural activities of the GDE

at various points in the discussions; this will be addressed in later chapters. In the following chapter, I will discuss my findings which are a culmination of the processes outlined in the foregoing, as they relate to the literature and theoretical frameworks in Chapters 2 and 3.

CHAPTER FIVE: ORGANISATIONAL AND INTER-ETHNIC STRUCTURE OF THE GHANA DANCE ENSEMBLE

5.1 Introduction

As established in the foregoing chapters, the main aim for this study was to describe and understand the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, as a multi-ethnic dance company. In order to achieve this, I developed research questions that sought to examine the activities of the GDE at the micro-level and at the macro-level from 1964 to 2014.

In this chapter I present the organisational structure of the Ghana Dance Ensemble and its inter-ethnic structure, in order to lay the foundation for further analysis of the company as an intercultural performance entity. Here, I rely on data collected through personal interviews with members and the artistic director.

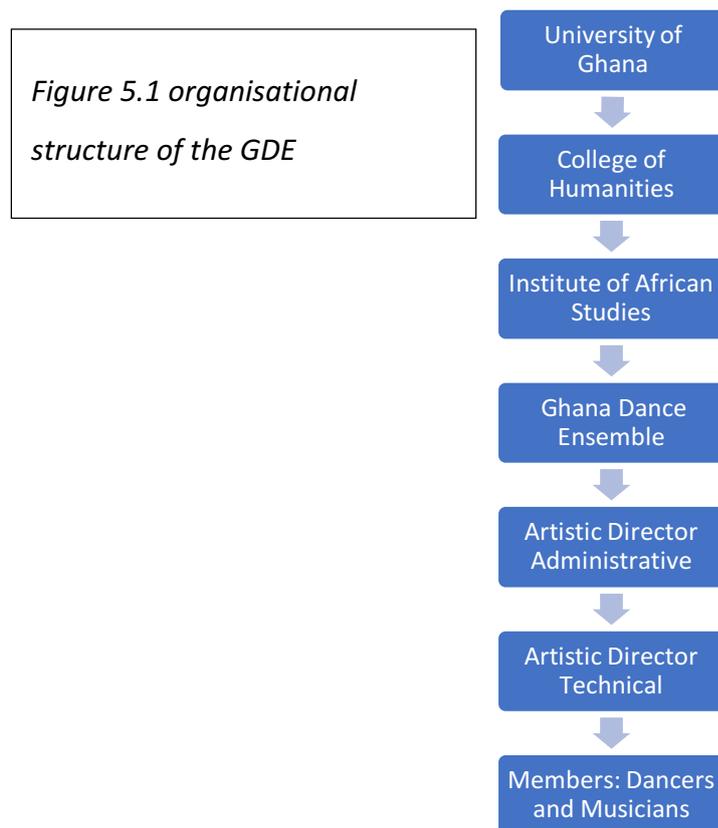
The reviewed literature on dance and state folk dance companies in Chapter 3, provides a framework within which to analyse the data in order to understand the intercultural nature of the GDE.

5.2 Organisational Structure of the Ghana Dance Ensemble

As established in Chapter 4, the Ghana Dance Ensemble was left under the Institute of African Studies after the split in 1992. The initial mandate of the group was to serve as cultural ambassadors, by operating as a national dance company. This mandate continues to drive the GDE's activities, as they disseminate cultural awareness and national presence through performance.

The current state of the GDE as a company operating within the University system, presents a hierarchical organisational structure. According to this structure decision-making begins at the top, represented by the vice-chancellor. These decisions are passed down to the Ghana Dance Ensemble through the College of Humanities and then through the African Studies Institute. The Institute appoints an administrative artistic director who oversees the activities of the GDE. Working directly with the administrative artistic director, is the technical artistic director who is in charge of the artistic productions of the company, and also the direct supervisor of the dancers

and musicians of the company. Information and decisions flow from top to bottom and affect the working conditions of the members as employees of the University. This organisational structure is visually represented in the following diagram, which also portrays how decisions made at the top flow to the Ensemble.



The artistic freedom enjoyed by the GDE as a professional company, is guarded by the rules of the University. The operations of the GDE members – dancers and musicians – are directly supervised by the technical artistic director, Mr Ben Ayittey. He ensures that the members adhere to the rules and regulations of the company in professional terms. This role is expressed in routine aspects of the company such as ensuring that members come to work on time and that they come to work regularly, taking them through rehearsals, setting dance targets, selecting dancers for specific performances, etc. If the members violate any of the company’s internal rules, the technical artistic director is responsible for taking necessary disciplinary actions. Such actions include queries, suspensions, ensuring that the transport and overtime allowances of affected members are withheld by the University, and so on.

He also ensures that the needs of the company are communicated to the Institute through the administrative artistic director. This is mainly because the GDE receives

funding from the University through the Institute. The budget of the company therefore falls under the budget of the Institute. This budget supports the operations of the Institute itself, the Institute's library, Yiri Lodge (the Institute's guest house), and the GDE. The GDE is the largest unit within the Institute.

The administrative artistic director, Dr Moses Nii Dorley, reports directly to the director of the Institute of African Studies. In an interview (9 September 2017) stated: "Everything that needs approval from the director of the Institute must pass through me. Without passing through me the director will not look at it." This means that the needs of the GDE as a professional dance company are constantly measured against the general needs of the Institute, and this affects the operations of the company. In this regard Ben Ayitsey admitted the following in an interview on 21 August 2017: "The budgetary constraints are affecting our operations. At least the Institute has met some of our needs in terms of new costumes, lights and speakers. But our urgent need is a bus because we have to bring in more dances from the various regions."

This urgent need for a bus, for instance, throws more light on the position of the GDE as a multi-ethnic dance company which must ensure adequate representation of the ethnic diversity of Ghana. Further research on traditional dances in the field is therefore needed at regular intervals to ensure that both the ethnic composition of the company and its repertoire of dances present a true picture of the nation's diversity.

5.3 Ethnic Composition of the Ghana Dance Ensemble as at 2014

The Ghana Dance Ensemble is made up of dancers and musicians from diverse ethnic groups in Ghana. The following table presents data of the members indicating their ethnicity, indigenous language, region of origin, hometown, place of birth, and frequency of visits to hometown.

Tab. 5.1 Ethnic Diversity of the Ghana Dance Ensemble Members as at 2014

Member	Ethnicity	Indigenous language	Region of origin	Hometown	Place of birth	Frequency of visits to hometown
M1	Asante	Akuapim twi	Eastern Region	Obosomasi	Sunyani	Hardly

M2	Ewe	Foh	Benin (country)	Mokpa	Accra-Newtown	Hardly
M3	Ewe	Ewe	Volta Region	Sovie	Kpando	Occasionally
M4	Ga-Adangme	Ga-Adangme	Greater-Accra	Big-Ada	Accra	Hardly
M5	Asante	Asante-twi	Eastern Region	Kwahu Papaase	Accra	Once a year
M6	Dagaati	Dagaati	Upper-West	Prina	Piina	Hardly
M7	Dagomba	Dagbanli	Northern Region	Tamale	Accra	Once every month
M8	Ewe	Ewe	Volta Region	Anlogah	Sunyani	At least twice a year
M9	Dagaati	Dagaati	Northern Region	Nandom	Accra	Once a year
M10	Asante	Asante twi	Ashanti Region	Kumasi	Kumasi	Once a year
M11	Asante	Twi	Volta Region	Ahamanso	Accra	Hardly
M12	Fante	Fante	Central Region	Fantenya Kumasi	Asenfosu	At least twice a year
M13	Ewe	Ewe	Volta Region	Anyako	Accra	Quarterly
M14	Ewe	Ewe	Volta Region	Dzodze	Aladzo	Every week
M15	Dagomba	Dagbanli	Northern Region	Tamale	Tamale	Once a year
M16	Fante	Fante	Central Region	Apa	Apa	At least twice a year
M17	Dagomba	Dagbanli	Northern Region	Nanton	Nanton	Once a year
M18	Dagao	Dagaari	Upper-West	Dabille	Dabille	At least once a year
M19	Asante	Twi	Ashanti	Nkewie	Sefwi	At least twice

			Region		(W.R)	a year
M20	Dagaati	Dagaati	Upper-West	Nandom	Sunyani (B.A)	At least twice a year
M21	Ga	Ga	Greater-Accra	Accra	Accra	Lives in hometown
M22	Fante	Fante	Central Region	Elmina	Accra	Hardly
M23	Ewe	Ewe	Volta Region	Mafi	Accra	Quarterly
M24	Ewe	Ewe	Volta Region	Denu	Denu	Monthly
M25	Ewe	Ewe	Volta Region	Dzodze	Dzodze	Monthly
M26	Asante	Asante twi	Ashanti Region	Apromaze	Apromase	Weekly
M27	Ga	Ga	Greater-Accra	La	Madina	Lives in hometown
M28	Ewe	Ewe	Volta Region	Benin (country)	Accra	Never
M29	Fante	Fante	Central Region	Swedru	Accra	Hardly
M30	Busanga	Busanga	Upper-East	Bawku	Kumasi	Once a year
M31	Ewe	Ewe	Volta Region	Agbozume	Ashaiman	Quarterly
M32	Ewe	Ewe	Volta Region	Anyako	Anyako	Hardly
M33	Asante	Akuapem-twi	Eastern Region	Aburi	Accra	Hardly
M34	Dagao	Dagaari	Upper-West	Nandom	Accra	Hardly
M35	Ewe	Ewe	Volta Region	Anyako	Accra-Nima	Once a year
M36	Mamprusi	Mamprusi	Upper-West	Walewale	Kumasi	Once a year

In all, there were 36 members – 23 dancers and 13 musicians. The gender distribution of the dancers is (13 females and ten males. The GDE has an all-male, ethnically diverse group of musicians. This is mainly because female instrumentalists, especially for traditional instruments, are rare in Ghana, which explains why only male drummers and instrumentalists audition for positions within the GDE. The role of the musician in traditional Ghanaian society is gender-specific and is usually biased towards the male gender. However, there are certain specific instruments that females play, such as the calabash among the Northerners. The GDE, however, employs specialists in the specific traditional musical instruments and styles, without any consideration for gender balance.

As presented in the table above, the break-down of the ethnic composition is as follows: Asante – 7, Fante – 4, Ewe – 12, Dagomba – 3, Dagao – 2, Dagaati – 3, Busanga – 1, and Ga – 3.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Akan ethnic group, represented here by Asante and Fante, is the dominant group in Ghana in terms of numbers and linguistic use. Interestingly, the GDE as at 2014 reveals an Ewe majority by a very narrow margin of 11) and 12 for Akan and Ewe respectively.

These numbers serve to bring to the fore Schauert's (2007:174) submission that the Ghana Dance Ensemble "[...] rather than use the politically, historically and demographically dominant culture group of the Akan to represent the nation [...], the ensemble attempted to give equal weight to the various ethnic groups within Ghana". The table shows that even though there is ethnic diversity within the group, it is not an equal distribution. The Ewe group is dominant in terms of numbers and, in effect, determines the dominant language spoken at any given time within the company.

5.4 Linguistic Diversity of the GDE Members

The ethnic diversity of the company represented in the table above also shows the linguistic diversity of the members. However, in my interviews with the members, it was found out that each member speaks at least two local languages alongside their ethnic language. In addition, they all speak some basic English. The commonly spoken local languages within the GDE are Twi, Ga and Ewe. Almost all the members belonging to the minority ethnic groups in the GDE, complained about linguistic difficulty in the early stages of joining the company. For instance, GDE-D3

complained as follows in a telephonic interview (6 April 2017): “When I first joined the Ensemble, I was not happy at all because they speak Twi and ask you to perform and you. It was difficult because I did not understand the language. But eventually I learned.”

Not surprisingly, members who speak the common local languages in the GDE do not seem to have any problems with the use of these languages. The views are, however, varied in terms of which language is predominantly spoken among members. While some say it is Twi and Ga, others say it is Ewe. It is interesting to note that both the technical and administrative artistic directors belong to the Ga ethnic group. That may explain the fact that even though there are only three Ga members, the Ga language is one of the most spoken among members. Another major reason is that the GDE is situated in the capital, which is home to the Ga ethnic group. The former explanation finds evidence in GDE-D1’s statement in a telephonic interview (6 April 2017): “I speak Twi, Ga, Hausa, Krobo and Ewe, but with the members I speak Twi and Ga. I speak Ga with the artistic director [technical].” Also, GDE-M4 informed me in a telephonic interview (7 April 2017) that “initially, there was some little tension within the Ensemble because the director is a Ga and oftentimes he speaks Ga and it was not easy relating with him. It was not easy at all”.

In some cases, the members accused the senior dancers and artistic director of exhibiting ethnic bias in their language use, and in the mode and severity of punishment. For instance, GDE-D2 who belongs to the Ewe majority within the GDE, spoke as follows about this reality in a telephone conversation on 7 April 2017:

I personally have not had such problems but some members have accused leaders of being tribalistic [sic]. A senior was accused of discrimination in punishment. Also, when learning a new dance, they speak Ewe to teach and the Akan person will get angry and ask why they do not speak Twi so everybody can understand.

GDE-D3’s earlier statement, regarding his experience with the dominance of the Twi language, reveals a general sentiment shared by minority ethnic groups at national level. The dominance of the Twi language at the national level gives it a common language status within the group. The Ga language, being a regional language, also seems to explain its position as one of the common languages spoken by members. However, there is a certain level of suspicion and mistrust associated with the

dominance of the Ewe language in the company. According to GDE-M12 in a telephonic interview (6 April 2017),

Ewes are many and I don't understand the language so they speak Twi. Ewes speak their language chatting among themselves. Sometimes misunderstanding comes up but those who speak the language explain to the others. When a Ewe person insults you, the others will not explain it to you.

GDE-D6 in a telephonic interview (6 April 2017) also highlights the language problem when he notes that: "...the understanding of other languages is the problem because some people speak their language and you might think they are gossiping about you but usually it's not so. Just that they don't want you to understand what they are saying".

The language diversity within the group creates a form of ethnic sectarianism, where members belonging to a particular ethnic group enjoy each other's company while speaking their own language. However, "we try to understand each other based on the rules and regulations guiding the ensemble" (GDE-D6, telephonic interview, 7 April 2017). These rules are based on the concept of unity in diversity, as discussed in Chapter 2. It does not, however, shield the members from tensions that arise as a result of ethnic diversity/difference.

5.5 Professional Dancers and Musicians in a Professional Company

As discussed in Chapter 4 (Sec. 4.8.1), Nketia and Opoku ensured that the original members of the Dance Company continued their general education, alongside their rigorous training in traditional dance and performance, which is very important towards their professionalism as dancers. At the initial stages of the GDE, the standards set for professionalism, were measured by rigorous training, gaining adequate knowledge of the historical and contextual background of the dances, experiencing the dances in their social setting, as well as gaining a Certificate in General Education.

5.5.1 Educational Background of the Members as at 2014

As at 2014 the educational background of the members ranged from Junior to Senior High Certificates. There are, however, two members who have no formal education but were recruited into the GDE because of their expertise. There is also one dancer who furthered his education after joining the group and has been able to obtain a

certificate in Human Resource Management and a Diploma in Education. As a result, he has been able to rise within the GDE to the level of Administrative Assistant. The GDE, however, does not place a lot of weight on formal education as criterion for recruiting members. Members therefore find it very difficult to further their education after they have joined the group, as can be seen in GDE-D7's interview: "I have a Senior High education. And since I joined, I have not been able to further my education. I tried to get the permission to further but rumours speculate that those who tried, suffered; so I backed out. But I hope to try again" (Telephonic interview, 7 April 2017).

From the initial stages of the GDE's founding, it was evident that the educational requirement for members are not supposed to go beyond the basic level. It can be argued that the GDE engaged the dancers for their practical abilities and expertise, and not for their intellect; there therefore is no need for them to further their studies. The GDE maintains its stance on formal education by putting more emphasis on the practical competence of the members than their educational background. The basic educational requirement is to ensure that they are able to speak some level of English, because it is the official language of the nation.

It also ensures that the linguistic barrier between the members is bridged when they have a common language. English also makes it easier for the members to work with visiting dancers and choreographers, ensuring that they are able to communicate with collaborators outside the country.

However, the presence of one member who does not speak English, also shows that it is possible to work within the GDE without proficiency in English. Even though there are members who join the GDE who can speak and understand only their ethnic language, they have the advantage of the English language and are therefore able to communicate with the others. A member who does not speak English, was not handicapped by his inability to speak English or any other local language, because he is Akan. As mentioned before, Akan is one of the most commonly spoken languages by the members. As a result of the linguistic diversity within the group, the members begin to understand the most commonly spoken languages with time, thereby addressing any language barrier.

As a professional dance company, however, spoken language does not occupy a very important place in the execution of their artistic duties. In addressing the issue of the dancer who does not speak English and how he communicates with foreign musicians and choreographers, the members stated that since their work is practical, they communicate through movement and rhythm. For instance, GDE-M3 (focus group, 20 May 2017) had this to say:

Whenever there is a concept he [the member in question] does not understand, we all explain to him. But drumming is practical, so most of the times the visiting musician or choreographers use their mouths to create the rhythm and that's how we communicate. The rhythm is our language.

DGE-D3 further notes the following: "We work in groups, so there is always someone who understands the language, whether English or local, to explain things. The language difference is not a problem because our work is practical. It is about movement and rhythm" (20 May 2017).

5.5.2 Competence of Members in the Repertoire

The number of dances and rhythm each dancer acquires within the GDE, depends on how many years they have been with the group. The longer the dancer or musician has been with the company, the more dances and rhythm s/he learns. As of 2014, the duration of service of the members can be put in three categories according to the year in which they joined: senior dancers or musicians (1995 – 1999); middle-level dancers and musicians (2001 – 2005); and junior dancers and musicians (2012 – 2014). The year range determines the level of mastery, and number of dances and rhythms acquired by those who joined the company within that period. The ultimate aim is to eventually be able to dance all the dances or play all the musical rhythms in the GDE's repertoire, depending on whether the member is a dancer or musician.

Even though there are dancers and musicians who join the company as professionals, they each had to learn the repertoire of the GDE in order to perform as professionals of the company. This can be seen from GDE-D4's experience: "It was very difficult at the beginning, because how I used to train is very different from how they train here. Things that I do and things that they do are very different, but now we are more okay than before. I have learnt the way the Ensemble does things" (telephonic interview, 7 April 2017).

The position of the dancers and musicians as national performers requires each of them to learn all the dances in the repertoire, made up of dances from the diverse ethnic groups within the country. As at 2014, the dancers are at various levels of mastery as a result of varying duration of service within the group. Those in the first and second period range have practical mastery in all the dances in the repertoire, while the last group of members are yet to acquire the dances and rhythms in the repertoire.

In addition to mastering all the dances, songs and rhythms in the GDE's repertoire, the dancers and musicians are required to know the socio-historical backgrounds of the dances. There is, however, a certain level of deficiency when it comes to knowledge of the historical and cultural background of the dances performed by the members. Some of the members blame the artistic director (technical) for not teaching them the theoretical aspect of the dances. GDE-D8 (focus group, 20 May 2017), for instance, revealed that "they don't teach you the history but you are expected to know it". In the same vein, GDE-D3 added: "Even though we are in the University, there is no time to go to the library because we are supposed to come to work at 8 a.m. and close at 5 p.m. We only have one break in between, so there is no time."

As established in Chapter 4, the new function of the GDE after the split in 1992 was to serve as a research and demonstration group within the Institute of African Studies. As the members are aware of this development, they complain that since they joined the group, there has not been any research that has enriched their knowledge of the dances. During my focus group discussion with the ten members, they recalled that in 2005 the Institute started giving them lessons on the socio-historical background of the dances, but it was difficult for them to attend. This can be gleaned from GDE-M3's view (focus group, 20 May 2017): "You see, they organised the classes for us, but they did not allow us to attend the classes because they always want us to be drumming and dancing. It will not help us. When it is time for class, they say go and dance." GDE-D5 (focus group, 20 May 2017) supports the above statement by adding that the following: "The classes didn't even take two months and they stopped. What made it difficult, is that most of the time we have programmes. Sometimes when it's time to attend class, the artistic director will say there has been an emergency programme, so we have to go."

In speaking about the effect of the lack of knowledge about the dances on the professional image of the members, GDE-D8 (focus group, 20 May 2017) expressed his view:

I think not having knowledge of the dances is really embarrassing as a professional, because sometimes some of the students are directed to you by the authorities to find out the history of the dances. You end up realising that it is not going to be that easy and you can't lie to them, too.

As can be gleaned from the above submissions, the members as professionals are lacking in one of the key areas that makes them truly professional national dancers.

5.5.3 Body Type and Professionalism in the GDE

The diversity of the GDE members goes beyond ethnicity; this can be seen in the age distribution of the dancers and musicians, as well as in the body-type of the dancers. The age range is between 28 and 63. The body-type and build of the dancers often determine the types of dances they are able to perform. While foreign collaborators are more interested in the slim body-type, especially for contemporary dances, the plump body-type is best suited for the more traditional dances. This explanation aligns with Nii Yartey's preference for dancers with a slender build, as discussed in Chapter 4.

The preference for dancers with slender build is based on the assumption that such dancers, unlike the plump ones, are able to perform both vigorous movements and delicate ones with equal dexterity. For this reason one of the longest serving dancers in the GDE has often been side-lined by visiting choreographers interested in working with the group collaboratively. GDE-D2 (focus group, 20 May 2017) speaks about her experience: "Some time back I put on a lot of weight and not that I cannot dance, I can dance, but when they look at the sizes, yours is not there, so they don't select you. Even though you can dance." GDE-M1 (focus group, 20 May 2017) expresses his view on why visiting choreographers prefer slender dancers:

These foreigners they are always looking at the weight, and height of the dancer before they select. You know in the contemporary aspect, they always prefer people who are not fat. They don't like using fat people because of the lifting and throwing and other movements. But in the traditional, all the body types fit.

Officially there are no restrictions in terms of body type for traditional dances. In some cases plump dancers are able to express themselves very well in certain kinds

of traditional dances. Opoku puts this succinctly when notes that “it depends on how the person uses the type and size to express herself [...] when you see the real thing, it’s beautiful, and a fat person can still dance like she’s floating” (Fabian, 1996:nd).

There is an opposite narrative to the ‘contemporary dance slender body type’ in the country; not surprisingly, these views are expressed by the members. Even though the members’ views above suggest that traditional dance fits all body types, there seem to be a narrative that suggests that traditional dance looks good on plump dancers. GDE-D7 (focus group, 20 May 2017) captures that narrative as follows:

Sometimes when we are going for performances I’m not selected because the guy that is my height left the group, so when we are performing on stage I’m the only tall one. In certain instances, they tell me the dance doesn’t look good on my body, that traditional dance doesn’t fit my body. If it were to be any other person with a low self-esteem the person would have given up.

The current technical artistic director has told me in an interview that he does not place a lot of emphasis on body type, but on the dancer’s ability to perform the movement perfectly. However, body type plays a key role in determining the dancer’s level of professionalism, and does affect the marketability of the dancers.

5.5.4 Respect for Senior GDE Members

Another area of the GDE members’ professionalism is their understanding of hierarchy within the company. New dancers and musicians within the group are required to learn from the senior dancers and musicians. In order for them to learn, they are to respect the seniors as more knowledgeable in the dance practices of the GDE. Even though most of the dancers and musicians have had experience working with other cultural troupes, the repertoire and professional practices of the GDE are unique and take time to learn. GDE-D8 (focus group, 20 May 2017) states:

When I first joined the Ghana Dance Ensemble, that is when I realised that they do things according to seniority. Whenever we are going for performance, all the seniors must board the bus first before the junior members. In cases where the bus gets full, the junior member left, must stand in the bus to the performance venue and back. You are not supposed to struggle with any senior member.

Respect for senior dancers and musicians, being one of the professional codes of conduct for GDE members, is directly related to the Ghanaian cultural code of

respect for the elderly. This code is very important to the practice of the GDE because of the cultural preservation mandate that guides its practice. Respect for the elderly is a cultural code, shared by all ethnic groups in Ghana. It therefore becomes a point of unification for the ethnically diverse members in the group. From GDE-D8's statement above it appears that respect for senior members has its downside, which may lead to unfair treatment of junior members. However, since this code is shared across all ethnicities in Ghana, it is understood and acceptable among all members. The members even consider respect for senior members as one of the practices that make them professionals, working with a company that regulates their performance practice with set codes of conduct. Respect for senior GDE members is one of the practices that ensure discipline and professionalism within the group.

5.5.5 Discipline

Discipline can be described as the hallmark of the GDE's professional practice, as members are guided by codes of conduct within the group. The clearly defined code of conduct, though verbal, is enforced within the group, and serves to separate the company from other amateur groups. The following experience by GDE-D8 (focus group discussion, 20 May 2017) is a clear example:

Where I used to perform in my village, because the group was not under any organisation or the government, when we go for programmes we do not go on time. We could arrive at the programme way after it had begun. And even though we claimed we were performing traditional dance, we do not dress appropriately to reflect the origin of the dance, we wear anything we want. But when I came here it was not like that. I faced a lot of difficulty before changing to do what is expected of me here. Here, when we are going for performance, you have to dress appropriately to reflect the traditional cultures. We do not even wear wigs: we plait our hair like in the traditional Ghanaian culture. Also when we go for performance, we all work together to ensure that it goes smoothly. We all carry drums and everything that needs to be carried on or off the stage. In my former group, we could fight fist to fist at a performance when there is misunderstanding amongst us. So it was when I joined the GDE that I truly became a professional.

The members' observance of the code of ethics of the company is guarded by the mode of punishment for indiscipline within the company. The members are constantly made aware of the punishment that their actions will attract, and have had several opportunities to witness such actions within the company. The various disciplinary actions include being taken off a performance programme, withdrawal of transport and overtime allowances' or, in severe cases, non-renewal of contract. All

these modes of punishment have the effect of simulating professionalism, when in actual fact the members adhere to them for the job security the company offers. GDE-D3 (focus group, 20 May 2017) laments about the mode of punishment that takes away part of their already meagre salaries:

What is bothering me too much is that the money is not enough and when you go against the rules they say let's seize the over-time or your transport allowance, they are practically killing me. At least there are so many ways you can punish me, but taking the little money I'm earning, is not fair.

Punctuality to work is one of the codes of the GDE. It also reflects in the way the company approaches any engagement by clients. As a professional company, the GDE ensures that the performers are always on time, sometimes to the detriment of the group, as they operate within a country where being on time is the exception rather than the norm. GDE-M4 (focus group discussion, 20 May 2017) expresses his view on this as follows:

We are all from other groups before we came to professional level. My problem is if a programme starts at 4 p.m. or 6 p.m., we go there for some time before the programme begins. But sometimes the programme will start in the afternoon and we will go and sit there for seven to eight hours before it starts and it's a problem.

The professionalism of the GDE members relies heavily on their adherence to the structural set up of the company. The ultimate aim is for them to learn the entire repertoire of dances and rhythms of the company, and participate in whatever collaboration that the administration brings to them.

5.6 Repertoire of Neo-traditional Dances

The repertoire of the Ghana Dance Ensemble is made up of dances that Mawere Opoku choreographed between 1962 and 1967. He called the choreographed traditional dances Neo-traditional dances, because they were redesigned for artistic and commercial purposes. According to the technical artistic director, "neo-traditional dances are purely traditional dances that have been redesigned for the stage". Even though the GDE has creative dances or dance dramas, the neo-traditional dances are the main selling point for the company.

As discussed in Chapter 3 (see Sec. 3.4.6.3.1) syncretism of the GDE's theatre practice comes in the form of theatricalising traditional dance where the dances go through transformations, not alterations, to make them 'stageable' for the benefit of

an audience. This idea of staging theatrical performances before an audience on a proscenium stage, describes the practice of the GDE and their performances of neo-traditional dances. The ethnic diversity of the GDE's repertoire of traditional dances, as at 2014, can be seen in the table below.

Tab. 5.2 Repertoire of Neo-Traditional Dances of the GDE as at 2014

Ethnic Group/Region of Origin	Dance
Ashanti Region: Asante	Adowa Afrafra/Nsasaawa Mpintin Fontomfrom Kete Akom Asadua Highlife Sanga Sikyi Tigari Adenkum
Western Region: Fante	Apotampa Asafo Kotodwe Kundum Gobi Fontomfrom Tigare Dance Medley:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nzoma • Ahanta • Kundum
Central Region: Fante	Aziwa
Brong-Ahafo Region: Brongs and Ahafos (All Akan)	<p>Kete</p> <p>Fontomfrom</p> <p>Nnwomkorɔ</p> <p>Adowa</p>
Benin-Dahomey: Foh	<p>Adzogbo</p> <p>Azao Azaa</p> <p>Atsia</p> <p>Kadodo</p>
Volta Region: Ewe/Anlo	<p>Dance Suite:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow Agbekor I • Slow Agbekor II • Fast Agbekor • Atseagbekor <p>Gadzo</p> <p>Gahu</p> <p>Gobi</p> <p>Gombe</p> <p>Adzogbo</p> <p>Gota</p> <p>Sohu</p> <p>Boboobo</p> <p>Togo Atsia</p> <p>Husago</p> <p>Kadodo</p> <p>Lamentations: Sohu, Husago, and Atsia</p>

<p>Northern Region: Dagomba</p>	<p>Bawa Bamaya Damba Takai Tora Butcher's Dance Sofo Kaagyi Kaagyi Nmane Gira Nabiawu Tua Waa Sapaashi Waa Bla Naaningo Mowaa Nakwao Simpa Jara Alange</p>
<p>Upper-East Region: Frafra (also danced by Kasena, Nankani, Akampa)</p>	<p>Bima Nagla Wongor</p>
<p>Upper-West Region: Dagaati, Dagao, Sisala, Lobe</p>	<p>Bawa Lobe Bine Dogo</p>

	Sebre Boobena Koobena Bawa
Greater-Accra Region: Ga Ga-Adangme	Kpanlogo Gome Kolomashie Kpaa shimo Kpatsa Dipo Kple Otofo Torkoi Obonu

5.7 Choreographic Pieces of the GDE as Intercultural

There is also a certain sense in which the performance practices of the GDE, through choreography fall within the category of syncretic postcolonial performance. The GDE has developed a range of choreographic movements and techniques derived from traditional dances that inspire their choreographic pieces. In their choreography there therefore, is a kind of fusion or appropriation of indigenous movement techniques and, to some extent, borrowed techniques from the West.

The dance dramas are artistic creations of the various artistic directors of the company. The level and nature of fusion is totally dependent on the artistic director in question. According to Ben Ayithey, the current technical artistic director, Opoku in his choreographies always made sure that movements from different ethnic groups are not merged. In his *Lamentations* for instance, he put together dance movements from three dances, viz. the Sohu, Husago and Atsia, belonging to the same ethnic

group, the Anlo-Ewe. Ben Ayithey (interview, 21 August 2017), on the other hand, admitted that:

When I choreograph I do not limit myself to any particular ethnic movement, so we try as much as possible to bring in some movement from other parts of the country. In these works I mix movements from across the ethnic groups in order to suit the story. Nii Yartey used purely Ewe, purely Akan and purely Northern movements in the choreographic pieces I came to meet in the 1980s. So that is where I developed my choreographic idea that when I go outside, I want to infuse the traditional African movement with modern movement. That is what I did with *Nightmare*, the piece I choreographed for my MFA degree. I infused movements from the regions together with creative movements and modern movements.

The table below presents a list of choreographies by past artistic directors and the current artistic director, which form the creative dance aspect of the GDE's repertoire.

Tab. 5.3 *Choreographies/Dance-Dramas of the GDE*

Albert Mawere Opoku (1962 – 1 976)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lamentation for Freedom Fighters (1964) • Unity in Diversity
Nii Yartey (1976 – 1 992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lost Warrior (1976) • The King's Dilemma (1979) • Atopre (1983) • Bukom (1985) • Okoryoo (1987) •
Ampofo Duodu (1993 – 1 997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atamga-dance drama (1995) • Dwabo (1995) • Ngoma Kpeng • Nsrabo (1976) • The Power of Talking Drums (1995) • Slave Trade-dance drama (1995) • Women's Emancipation-dance drama (1996)
Ben-Ayithey (from 2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kusum Gboo (1998) • Dance for Sorrow and Joy (2005) • Nightmare (2006) • The Map (2007)

5.8 Regional/Ethnic Diversity of Musical Instruments and Costumes used by the GDE

The diversity and inter-ethnic interactions of the GDE can also be seen in the musical instruments they use for accompanying the traditional dances. As mentioned in Chapter 4 (see Sec. 4.10), the GDE performed to recorded music at the initial stages of the company, until ethnically diverse musicians and vocalists were employed between 1963 and 1964. As at 2014, the GDE had 13 ethnically diverse musicians and vocalists, including a master drummer, who is also responsible for making all the drums of the company. According to the technical artistic director, Ben Ayithey, (interview, 21 August 2017), the GDE tries “as much as possible to use authentic instruments for their representative ethnic dances, since it is inappropriate to do otherwise. We are professionals”.

In my interview with the master drummer, he revealed his mastery at all the diverse ethnic drums. In an interview (3 August 2017) he stated: “Even though I am an Ewe from the Volta Region, I make drums from across the country, even drums from Nigeria and Benin. So within the Ensemble I am the master drummer and I make all the drums we use.”

Various types of instruments are used in performances, ranging from drums to percussion instruments such as bells, iron gongs, rattles and percussion sticks. (Salm and Falola, 2002). The diversity of instruments and costumes used by the GDE and their ethnic/regional origins are discussed below.

5.8.1 *Fontomfrom Drum Set*



Figure 5.2 Fontomfrom Drum Set: Ashanti Region.

The two big drums in the picture above are the Fontomfrom drums, also called Bomaa or Frum. The drum is about five feet tall. It is often used along with the two talking drums (Atumpan) standing in the middle, the two drums from the left (Adugrogya and Apemtema), the bell (Deruo) and stick. This instrument set is used for the Asante royal Fontomfrom dance. The crossed sword symbol (Akofena) on the Bomaa and talking drums is a symbol of war. It represents the courage and heroic exploits of the Akan people. The Sankofa symbol on the Apemtema and Adugrogya is a popular Akan symbol which means to take wisdom from the past for the benefit of the future.

The talking drum (Atumpan) is: “associated with Akan royalty and used for transmitting messages” (Salm and Falola, 2002:173). The Atumpan is used across all ethnicities in Ghana under diverse names, and its ubiquitous position speaks to the fact that drum language is a culture that is common in Ghanaian culture. The Fontomfrom drum has travelled across the Asante royal court and has been borrowed into Ewe and Krobo musical traditions. In each of the two cases, only one is used contrary to the two sets used in the Fontomfrom performance of the Asantes. The GDE stays true to the use of the above set as found amongst the

5.8.2 Kete Drum Set



Figure 5.3: Kete Drum Set: Ashanti Region

The Kete drum set comprises the Kwadum (the big drum in the middle), Pretia (first from the left), Apentema (second from left), Agygyewa (first from right), Donno (the hourglass drum), the Rattle, Adawia (banana bell or Deruo) and stick. Before the 1950s, these drums were only played in the Asantehene's (Asante king) palace. Anybody who wished to play the drums had to seek permission from the king's palace. These drums are now widely used across all regions of Ghana. The Donno (hourglass drum) is also a talking drum used in the northern parts of Ghana. These instruments accompany the Kete dance, which is a royal dance of the Asante people.

5.8.3 Ewe Drum Set



Figure 5.4: Ewe Drum Set: Volta Region

The above picture shows a complete set of instruments for the performance of a wide range of Ewe dances by the GDE. These instruments accompany performances of dances such as the Agbekor, Adzogbo, Kinka, Kadodo, Agbadza, and several others. From left, the drums in the picture are: the Atsimevu (Fontomfrom/Bomaa), Sogo, Kidi, Kagang, Kloboto and Tortogye. Gaakogui (double bell), Ahatse (beaded gourd shaker) and Bobaa (the red drum in fig.5.5 below) complete the Ewe instrument ensemble. As mentioned earlier, the Fontomfrom drum was borrowed by the Ewe to form part of their ensemble of drums. However, instead of the two used for the Fontomfrom performance, the Ewes only borrowed one and called it the Atsimevu.



Figure 5.5: Ewe Drum-Bobaa



Figure 5.6: Boboobo Drum Set

The above drum set in fig. 5.6 is played along with the Ahatse (beaded gourd shaker) and the Gaakogui (double bell) for the performance of one specific and iconic Ewe dance, the Boboobo. From the right are the two talking drums of the Akan, which are used as supporting drums to the Boboobo set. As mentioned earlier, the talking drums in whichever form they come, are essential in Ghanaian culture because of the use of drum language for communication.

5.8.4 Northern Drum Set



Figure 5.7: Northern Drum Set- Northern Region



Figure 5.8: Northern and Upper-East Rattles

Figures 5.7 and 5.8 above show the instruments used by the GDE for the performances of Northern dances: from left the Gungong (Brekete); Luna (Dondo), the northern talking drum; and a set of northern straw rattles. The Dondo is usually found at the palace of the chief. This drum, as seen in the picture, is shaped like an hourglass. Its “pitch is varied by squeezing tension strings on the side. The changes in pitch are recognised as language and can be used to communicate” (Salm and Falola, 2002:173). The Dondo has crossed from the Northern Region to the Asante Region as seen in the Kete drum set. This drum set is used for a wide range of Northern dances, such as the Bamaya, Bawa, Damba, Takai, Tora, and Butcher’s Dance.

5.8.5 Upper-East Drum Set



Figure 5.9: Upper-East Drum Set

The instruments available for performances of Upper-East dances are the Dondo and the calabash drum of the Kasena people. Depending on the dance, the straw rattles from figure 5.8 above are added to the set. These instruments accompany such dances as the Bima, the Nagla and the Wongor. The only instrument the Upper-East Region shares with the Northern and Ashanti Regions, is the Dondo. The Upper-East Region has a lot in common with the Northern Region; as a result, the two, along with Upper-West Region are known as the three Northern Regions.

5.8.6 Upper-West Xylophone



Figure 5.10: Upper-West Xylophone

The xylophone, known as Gyir or Gyl, originates from the Upper-West Region. In their attempt to use the original instruments for the specific ethnic dances, the GDE

uses the xylophone, along with some Northern drums and rattles for the accompaniment of the various Upper-West dances in their repertoire. Such dances as the Bawa, Lobe, Bine, Dogo, Sebre, Boobena, Koobena and Bawa. Even though the xylophone does not cross in terms of accompanying other ethnic dances, it is widely used across all ethnicities in Ghana.

5.8.7 Greater Accra-Kpanlogo and Gome Drum Set



Figure 5.11: Kpanlogo Drum Set: Greater-Accra Region

Each of the three Kpanlogo drums represented in figure 5.11 is called Tsonshi. According to Salm and Falola (2002), the Kpanlogo drum is the most widely known Ghanaian drum. It is played with the hands and used at festivals, naming ceremonies and funerals. The square looking drum on the far left is called Tamalin or Tete. The double bell is called Ngongo and the rattle is called Tor or Shakasha (beaded gourd shaker). The Tor is also used by the Ewes as part of the Ewe ensemble of instruments. These instruments accompany the Kpanlogo dance of the Ga people.



Figure 5.12: Gome Drum Set: Greater-Accra Region

The Gome drum set accompany the Ga Gome dance. The octagon-shaped drum in the middle is called the Gome. Salm and Falola (2002:173) describe the Gome drum as follows:

A large, square-framed drum on which the player sits and plays with both hands and feet. The sound is changed by altering the skin tension with the feet and the instrument serves as a bass drum. It is believed that it was brought from Jamaica via Fernando Po and is the essential instrument in many neo-traditional drumming and dance styles.

The Tamalin is to the left, the Tsonshi or Kpanlogo drum to the right and the Tor (beaded gourd shaker) can be seen in front of the drums. Even though this drum set is used to accompany the Gome dance, the individual components may be used for other ethnic dances. This example can be seen in the use of the Tor or beaded gourd shaker for Ewe dances.

5.8.8 Francophone Drum Set



Figure 5.13: Francophone Drums

The drums in Figure 12 are the francophone drums used by the GDE to accompany dances originating from French-speaking countries, like the Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali and Senegal. These drums have crossed their countries of origin and are being used by the GDE to accompany dances like the Kuku, Yankidi and Lakulu. From the left are the Gyembe, the Samba, the Dunduba and the Kinkini.

With a core mandate of showcasing the diversity of the nation to the nation and then to the outside world, the GDE as a multi-ethnic company is expected to obtain accurate music and appropriate costumes for their representation to be considered 'authentic'. As stated by Shay (1999:48) the musical accompaniment must proceed from the "diversity of musical instruments, vocal styles, and other ethnomusicological elements" found in all the ethnic cultures whose dances are represented by the company. From the above presentation, the diversity of the musical instruments of the GDE is evident. It also shows how some of the instruments move across ethnic musical and dance forms to further highlight the intercultural nature of the GDE's performance activities. According to Salm and Falola (2002), trade and marriage are the main cross-cultural agents that promote the mobility of music and dance styles

across ethnicities in Ghana. They give an example of the Asafo³⁵ music/dance organisations found in the Akan, Ga, Ewe and Adangbe ethnic areas. They also give an example of the Dagomba kanbonwaa music and dance performance which combines Dagomba and Akan styles. They further reflect as follows on the crossing of instruments:

Instruments such as the atumpan (talking drum) and Fontonfrom, considered Akan instruments, can now be found in Ga, Ewe, Dagomba and Wala ensembles. The Hausa donno (hourglass or pressure drum) originally came into Northern Ghana from Nigeria. It can now be found throughout the Southern Ghanaian music cultures, each group adapting its sounds into their own music and dance styles” (Salm and Falola, 2002:196 – 7).

As seen in the pictures presented above, the talking drum is found in the Fontonfrom drum set, the Ewe drum set, and the Northern drum set. The Fontomfrom of the Akan is also found in the Ewe drum set. The instruments used by the inter-ethnic GDE show the diversity of cultures the group represents through performance. The cross-cultural movement of these musical instruments also highlights the inter-ethnic nature of the GDE.

5.9.1 Authentic Costumes and Creative Costumes in GDE Performances

In terms of costumes for the GDE’s performances, there are two categories based on the specific dances in the programme. As discussed in Chapter 4 (see Sec. 4.4), the authenticity of folk dance ensembles can be viewed from two perspectives depending on the degree of faithfulness to materials from the field, and varies from company to company. According to Shay (1999:30), some companies produce ‘invented traditions’ or character dance, where steps and movements have no direct connection with tradition in the field, while other companies are:

[...] devoted to the inclusion of authentic elements of traditional life such as the use of musical instruments and vocal styles, costumes, and dance steps, movements, and the portrayal of customs and ritual pertaining to traditional dance as practiced in the villages.

³⁵ Warrior organisations of the Akan and other ethnic groups

As with the musical instruments and vocal styles, the neo-traditional dances of the GDE are ideally supposed to be performed with their original costumes from the ethnic areas of the dances. The GDE tries to maintain its claim to authenticity by ensuring that these costumes are authentic and appropriate. According to GDE-D3 (focus group, 20 May 2017) “the costume represents the kind of dance that goes with it. So, as someone sees you, they know that this costume is for this dance which belongs to this particular group of people.”

The Kete costume in Figures 5.14 and 5.15 shows a rich Kente cloth with royal beads, golden headband and Ahenema³⁶. The costume is representative of the costume worn by Asante royalty for the performance of the Kete royal dance. The authenticity of the costume and instruments for the dance is tied to the GDE’s claim to authentic representation of the ethnic group through the Kete dance.

³⁶ Locally made sandals worn by chiefs, queens, queen mothers and the rich among the Akans

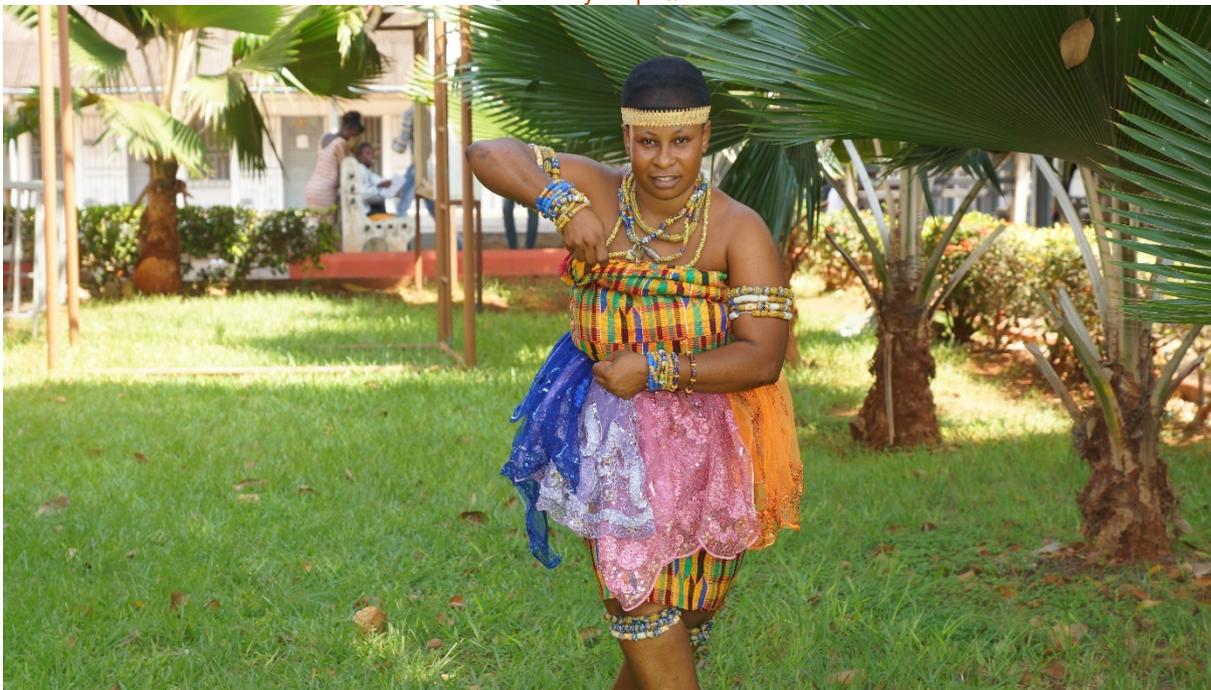


Figure 5.14: Kete Costume of the Asante Ethnic Group



Figure 5.15: Kete Costume

However, the GDE does not always strictly adhere to authenticity in costume. For instance, GDE-M1 admitted (focus group, 20 May 2017) that “we are supposed to have the original costume for the dances, but because of the current situation with funds, we sometimes just improvise with what we have”. In support of this statement, GDE-M2 (focus group, 20 May 2017) added that the following: “Sometimes there are some dances that we do not have correct costumes for, like the Adzogbo. We have it but it is not complete.” Figure 5.16 below shows the Adzogbo costume used by GDE dancers for the dance.



Figure 5.16: Adzogbo Costume

Originally, only the raffia material was used for the costume, because it is a ritual/war dance. The GDE's selection of material for the dance is based on the aesthetic appeal of the colours, but they still retain some elements of the raffia worn around the arms and the extensions of the trouser shorts, as seen above.

The skirted material around the waist is designed like the raffia skirt worn for the Akom (Akan possession) dance. It replaced the raffia skirt, because the former lacks the aesthetic appeal necessary for professional performance. Figure 5.17 below shows the Akom costume typified by the raffia skirt to demonstrate why the skirt was replaced with the colourful skirt in figure 5.16 above. This replacement was not the invention of the GDE. The dance lost its ritual/war character with time, and became a recreational dance. Its costume, therefore, changed from the use of the ritual raffia skirt to the use of colourful cloth material.



Figure 1
among t

GDE-M8 (focus group, 20 May 2017) further noted that “back home when we perform Agbadza or Agbekor, we wear a complete costume, but over here even though we are closer to it, it is not complete”. Figure 5.18 below shows the Agbekor costume used by the GDE.



Figure 5.18: Agbekor Costume of the GDE

What makes the above picture incomplete, is the absence of a local Ewe hat, and the cloth tied around the waist is also bigger in the villages than the one used by the GDE. However, anyone who knows the dance, will immediately recognise this costume as the Agbekor costume. The views above present revealing truths about the GDE's claim to authentic representation.

To further the cause of authentic and proper representation within the GDE, GDE-D5 (focus group, 20 May 2017), who is responsible for the GDE's costume, revealed that "we recently bought northern costumes from the Northern Region". One of the original Northern costumes can be seen in figure 5.19 below.



Figure 5.19: Costume of the Bamaya Dance

The Bamaya dance is a male dance of the Dagomba ethnic group of the Northern Region. The costume comprises a female blouse and skirt with anklets that buzz to create rhythm as the dancer moves the body. The dancer also wears a headgear with cowries that extend downwards to look like an earring. The waistband is added to the costume to exaggerate the twisting of the waist during the dance. The fan and towel are accessories that complete the outfit. This costume is what is used in the North for the Bamaya dance, which the GDE has purchased along with other costumes, in order to authenticate their representation.

In addition to the neo-traditional dances, which demand authentic costumes, the GDE usually creates costumes for its creative and choreographic dances, as can be gleaned from GDE-M1's (focus group, 20 May 2017) comment: "The costumes we usually create within the company are for the creative dances. For instance, we may create a costume for a dance from Senegal." Figure 5.20 below shows one of the costumes they use for the creative dances.



Figure 5.20: Creative Dance Costume

This costume is used by the GDE dancers for various creative dances such as the Kuku, Blanza, Lakulu and Yankidi. Apart from the Blanza (which was created by the dancers and the artistic director), the other three dances are from Senegal. The costume above may be used for any of the GDE's creative dances. The GDE, however, does not feel obligated to use authentic Senegalese costumes for the dances. The GDE's authenticity is limited to Ghanaian neo-traditional dances. In their practice the GDE tries as much as possible to get closer to the authentic costumes used in the original context. Even with the incomplete costumes, in the case of neo-traditional dances, the GDE ensures that anyone who sees the members in those costumes, will know right away which dances the costumes represent. If they are not able to get the authentic costumes from the village, they always ensure that the representation is satisfactory.

5.10 Uncovering the Reality of Ethnic Tension in the GDE

Table 5.1 above reveals a picture of the level of ethnic allegiance of each member within the GDE. The GDE represents the nation at a micro-level in terms of inter-ethnic relations and how individual Ghanaians have varying degrees of allegiance towards their ethnic groups. In my interactions with the members, it became clear that, while some members are conscious and sensitive about ethnic issues, others are unaware of their deep-seated allegiance to their respective ethnicities.

The romantic idea of a unified nation at the level of performance, unfortunately does not translate into the internal workings of the GDE, as members are constantly suspicious of each other due to ethnic differences. This romantic view of the nation came along with Nkrumah's "determined policies whereby the people would think of themselves as Ghanaians first, Fanti, Ewe, Asante, Frafra, Dagbani, and Gas second" (Marais, 1972:18).

There are both primordialist and constructivist thoughts within the GDE and to some extent, these views on ethnicity can be linked to the ethnic ties of the members to their roots. From Table 5.1, it is clear that while some of the members maintain strong ties with their ethnic origins, others do not. Strong ethnic ties are often measured by fluency in ethnic language and the frequency of visits to hometown.

As discussed in Chapter 3 (Sec.3.2.4.1) the primordialist view of ethnicity is particularly prevalent at grassroots level (Englebert & Dunn, 2013), where ethnic identity is held above national identity and interests. The members with primordialist thinking are constantly aware of ethnic differences and are quick to attribute the behaviour of others to ethnicity. The technical artistic director, Ben Ayittey, who works directly with the members told me the following in an interview (21 August 2017):

One of the Gas came to report to me that an Ewe guy in the company has accused me of sitting on their money. So I was very mad and I called a meeting with the administrative artistic director and spoke to him in front of them, just so they will all know that I have not taken any money that is supposed to come to them. Since then it stopped because I said it right in front of him, if I had taken their money, it would have come out.

The two artistic directors (administrative and technical) both belong to the Ga ethnic group. It is therefore not surprising that a fellow Ga member reported his/her colleagues to the artistic director. These sentiments and mistrust of leadership have their root in ethnic suspicion and from the above statement it is clear that ethnicity is strongest at grassroots level. In placing the position of the members at grassroots level, the following statement by the artistic director aptly justifies it:

Some of them are not well educated. Like Form Four and then some JHS and others not at all, so working with them is quite difficult and if you are not careful you will always find problems. So when you are leading them you should sometimes go their way because if you do not do that there will always be tension.

Interestingly, these members are often quick to dismiss any connection of their behaviour to ethnicity. However, when I asked some of them if they are likely to defend any negative view of their ethnic group, GDE-D3 had this to say: “Of course, if somebody says something bad about my people I will respond because it is like the person is insulting me indirectly.”

On the other hand, there are other members who are more constructivist in their thinking regarding their identities. As discussed in Chapter 3, the constructivists seek to resolve the multiple identities that the postcolonial Africa has acquired. These multiple identities and allegiances coexist within the individual and become capital to be drawn from, depending on the circumstance, so that at one point the individual can stress one identity over the other, while maintaining allegiance to the multiplicity of identities. Even though some of the members have maintained strong ties with their ethnic roots, they managed to move away from primordialist thinking to embrace their identity as Ghanaians. The following view by GDE-M9 (interview, 3 August 2017), who is an Ewe, serves as example of such a position:

You know that is why they say it is an ensemble. You have to come together and decide on one thing. We just live as Ghanaians. Most of my friends are Northerners. You know things from our ethnic groups, for me I do not buy into it. Because Kwame Nkrumah did it. He took a teacher from the Volta Region and sent him to the Northern Region to go and teach. I know of Ewes in Northern Region who speak Dagbanli as if they are Dagombas.

However, it would be too simplistic to draw conclusions on ethnic ties and tensions within the GDE, based only on what the members are saying. During the focus group discussion, there seem to be an open mistrust amongst the members even as they discussed issues of common concern. Members belonging to the ethnic group of the leadership, have become the eyes and ears of the leaders. The evidence of this conclusion can be seen from the earlier submission made by the artistic director (technical), where a Ga member reported an Ewe member to him. In discussing their collective problems, GDE-D1 pointed out his fears: “You know in the Ensemble, we fear ourselves. What we are discussing here will reach the leaders even before we finish.” To confirm this point, GDE-D7 cautions: “I only hope that they will say exactly what I have said here. They should not add some.”

These fears expressed by the members, seem to highlight the mistrust fuelled by ethnic difference among the members of the GDE.

5.11 Conclusion

As is presented in the foregoing, the internal structure of the GDE reveals a deliberate strategy that brings together dancers and musicians from the ethnic diversity of the country towards the promotion of national unity. The authenticity of the GDE's representation is directly seen from their use of authentic costumes and musical instruments for performances of neo-traditional dances. Their authentic representation is limited to Ghanaian neo-traditional dances, as they are not under any obligation to represent cultures outside Ghana using their respective authentic costumes and instruments. They, however, use Francophone instruments to accompany creative dances with French origins.

From my interactions with the members and the artistic director, the reality of ethnic difference fractures this utopian view of the company. While some members have primordialist inclinations, others have learned to embrace their national identity even as they maintain strong ties with their ethnic origins.

Interestingly, even though all the dancers and musicians in the company are affected by prevailing working conditions imposed by the University, some are able to look past the collective struggle in order to fulfil ethnic duties to the leadership, who happen to belong to their ethnicity. Such actions expose the reality of the concept of unity in diversity at national level, since the Ghana Dance Ensemble supposedly is a microcosm of the nation.

CHAPTER SIX: INTERCULTURAL PERFORMANCE OF THE GDE AT THE MICRO-LEVEL

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the internal (micro-) intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble. As an inter-ethnic dance company with a nationalising mission, the GDE travels across the length and breadth of the country to perform for an ethnically diverse audience. The nature of such performances and the internal processes involved in engaging the company for shows across the country, will be discussed.

I will also examine the intercultural communication competence of the members and how it affects their work as professionals, interacting with each other and the dance cultures of diverse ethnic groups in Ghana.

Finally I will discuss how Ghanaians receive the GDE's performances across the country, from an emic point of view.

6.2 Representing the Nation within the Nation

Theatricalising a people's culture and making an audience of them, is not an easy enterprise, especially because they are the immediate critics who can easily point out misrepresentations and weaknesses in the performance (Adinku, 1994). In order to properly represent the dance traditions of the various ethnic groups, a lot of research went into learning the appropriate way of performing the dances and their accompanying musical traditions. The importance of research on the GDE's practice is directly linked to their claim to authenticity, as discussed in Chapter 4.

6.2.1 *Ethics of Representation: Research and Cultural Respect*

It is important to restate the fact that the three fundamental levels at which culture manifests itself according to Schein (1984) and Spencer-Oatey (2012), are key to understanding cultures from an outsider perspective. Nketia and Opoku, founders of the GDE, approached the various ethnic communities from an outsider position. Apart from their own Asante ethnic areas, they were practically strangers in the ethnic communities and considered foreign to their own ethnicity. Upon reaching the

communities, they were immediately confronted with the superficial aspect of the cultures, viz. mode of dressing, music, dance, behavioural patterns, etc.

Nketia, being a researcher, sought for a deeper knowledge of the people's culture in order to understand the ideologies governing their dance and musical traditions. Since the people's values are not as visible as artefacts, some level of qualitative research was needed in order to gain insight into the cultural traditions of the people.

However, to fully understand the underlying unconscious motivations for behaviour or cultural manifestation, basic assumptions, though subtle and unconscious, are very powerful in determining behaviour (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). The three layers of cultural manifestation, when considered in approaching cultures other than 'own', reveal a deeper understanding of those cultures, which significantly influence their representation.

Nketia and Opoku understood the need for 'proper' representation of the people. This is because the main problem with ethics of representation in intercultural performance often arose from a lack of understanding of the 'other' culture, which stems from an encounter with that culture from the level of visible artefacts, in this case the dance.

During the research process, Nketia expressed interest not only in the people's cultural traditions, but also the underlying values and assumptions that impelled their existence. Nketia's interest to know more than what is visible, made the people open up to him without reservations. In my interview with him (interview, 10 January 2017), Nketia recounted his research experience with a Ga community:

I was a research fellow and they were giving me all these secrets. At the time I had their confidence. They will take me to see the actual rituals. Moreover, I was a Twi speaker not even a Ga in fact, but they were all very kind to me. It depends on how you approach them; if they know that you are genuinely interested, they will share. So, if you are a research person, you have to be like that in all the regions; anywhere you go, you are a foreigner but you can get along, you can get private information because you have no basis for just revealing the secrets to anybody.

As discussed in Chapter 3, migration and other mobility motivators encouraged cultural exchange even during the pre-colonial times. This process continued during the colonial times with the establishment of regional ethnic enclaves where people, ideas and cultures moved across regions, which resulted in ethnic diversification

across the regions. Nketia (interview, 10 January 2017), doing research on cultural traditions of other ethnic groups, talks about this to some extent in acknowledging his ethnicity as Asante:

The pre-colonial thing had established certain relationships, and the boundaries of ethnicity were beginning to extend, so I was doing research into African music and dance in Ghana, rather than just into Asante music and dance. But of course, you begin with what you are familiar with and train yourself and use that as a basis for exploring the other cultures.

Inasmuch as the various ethnic groups have different cultural traditions, the geographical proximity between them narrows the diplomatic gap, which makes it easier for the ethnic groups to approach each other. However, the ethnic language one speaks within the country, determines how narrow or wide the diplomatic gap is, even at this level. This can be seen in Nketia's experience (10 January 2017):

The difference between a foreigner and me is that they do not speak the language, I spoke our language but the interesting thing is that you could at that time [as is the case currently] go around with your Twi to many places: to Ewe areas, you will find someone who speaks Twi and you go to Northern Ghana, you will find someone and so on and so forth.

Nketia further recounts how the people were receptive to him as a researcher and gave him information that helped him understand their culture. When the people realised that he had interest in knowing their culture, they even gave him more information than he had originally asked of them (10 January 2017):

Well for some reason I did not have any resistance. People appreciated what I was doing and were even volunteering. I had a very good reception. I mean all the drummers and so forth, nobody hid anything because I was doing research. I also knew what to share with the public and what not to share with the public because not everything is entertainment. What is entertainment, goes to the public, but what is something else, is shared by those who are concerned with it.

Nketia (10 January 2017) further explained why the people had no reason to give him false information:

I had their confidence [when] I went to witness the secret [aspects of their culture]. I mean somehow, they were so confident in what I was doing. I had complete trust from them and I could go to certain rites that were normally not accessible to other people because they were interested in the fact that it was the knowledge that I wanted.

Nketia (10 January 2017) further added that the people appreciate it when their culture is portrayed for all to see: “They appreciate your show when you do it properly.” The people’s willingness to participate in the cultural representation of the nation is therefore tied to ‘proper’ representation. Proper representation is directly linked to the GDE’s claim to ‘authentic representation’, which is also hinged on Nketia and Opoku’s research.

In discussing the importance of the research that went into the GDE’s repertoire of dances, Nketia (10 January 2017) noted that, in order for the people to grant permission to be represented, they demand that their cultural traditions be treated with respect:

If you do not respect them, you do not go to them to ask for information. They give you permission. Once you approach them and they teach you or trust you to show what you can show to the public, you do not go out of your way to make a presentation of what they normally do not allow all their people to see. In other words, things that are secret are secret. You do not entertain people with the secret things, so there is a limit.

The researcher must, therefore have a lot of respect for the culture of the people in order not to misrepresent them through performance.

6.2.2 Tradition for Show

The ethical considerations made by Opoku and Nketia bordered on what to show the public and what not, based on the confidence the people had placed in them during the research process. Nketia (10th January 2017) further argues:

What is the point in duplicating all they do in public if it is for only theatrical reasons? Rather you must select what is significant artistically or dramatically and so forth, because you are not just a carrier of information, bound to give all information to the people. If you modify it, you may modify it for the purpose of showing it to other people, but you do not present it raw like that to the people. So you have a little discretion in selecting what you think is appropriate for your purpose.

The researcher ultimately had the responsibility to ensure that what is given in secret, is kept a secret and not revealed to the public to view as entertainment. In order to ensure adequate and ‘proper’ representation of the people in a performance situation, Nketia and Opoku constantly went back to the people with the choreographed dances for the people to judge. Nketia (interview, 10 January 2017) recounts this exercise and its import:

Yes, we went back to show appreciation [because] they are the critics, they will point out those who are doing it properly. So when we go back, they will point out particular people who are doing it properly and it gives you the basis for some criteria. [That way] you learn from them.

In so doing, the founding fathers of the Ghana Dance Ensemble set a precedent for 'proper' representation of the dance traditions of the diverse ethnic groups in Ghana. Apart from the choreographed traditional dances (the neo-traditional dances) of the people, the research also ensured that the values and basic assumptions of the people could be made available to learners of the dances. It was therefore important for the professional GDE dancers and musicians to know the origin of the dances and musical traditions of the people, along with the sociocultural and historical background of the dances. This knowledge is supposed to ensure that the professionals, who are 'interculturally competent' as intercultural communicators, 'properly' represent the people.

6.3 Intercultural Communication Competence of the GDE Members

As discussed in Chapter 3 (see Sec. 3.2.14), the alternation theory for intercultural communication better explains the state of the nation and the practice of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, as a presumed microcosm of the nation. It allows for individual members to gain competence in multiple cultures within the nation without necessarily losing their own cultural/ethnic identities.

The GDE members are multicultural dancers and musicians, even as they identify with particular ethnicities and pledge various degrees of allegiance to these ethnicities. Wawra's (2009:163) statement that "a central goal of intercultural communication research and training is to develop 'intercultural communication competence'", serves to underscore the importance of such skill in the work of the GDE members as intercultural communicators.

Wiseman (2003:192) defines intercultural communication competence as "the knowledge, motivation and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures". Effective and appropriate communication across cultural difference is therefore the work of intercultural competence. Cultural representation is a delicate practice and must therefore be spearheaded by professionals with the knowledge, motivation and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of diverse ethnicities and cultures.

Following Arasaratnam and Doerfel's (2005) Integrated Model of Intercultural Competence, I used the five variables they proposed to determine the intercultural communication competence of the members, from their own individual perspectives. The five variables are: intercultural training/experience, empathy, motivation, attitude toward other cultures, and listening" (Arasaratnam, 2015:297). These variables served as guide in my assessment of the intercultural communication competence of the GDE members.

6.3.1 Intercultural Training/Experience

Ghana as a multicultural state presents an enabling environment for intercultural interactions between members of the diverse ethnic groups, and also people from other countries. This environment, fostered by the state adopted policy of unity in diversity, offers intercultural communication experience for citizens as they constantly interact with each other on a daily basis. However, this experience is often acquired in a passive way as people learn to live and work together as Ghanaians.

Intercultural training or experience in relation to intercultural competence, is a deliberate effort aimed at equipping people with the knowledge, motivation and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of diverse ethnicities and cultures. Since the work of the GDE has a conscious agenda of effective inter-ethnic interaction towards nation-building, special training is needed for the members to achieve intercultural competence.

Almost all the members of the GDE belonged to amateur dance groups before they were recruited into the company. When asked how difficult it was relating with each other at the initial stages of joining the company, some of the members attributed their intercultural competence to their former dance groups. This can be seen in GDE-M1's (6 April 2017) submission below:

I was already playing and performing before I joined the ensemble. So it was not difficult, because I was already in the business and used to working with various people and playing traditional music and rhythms of the various ethnic groups.

The GDE as an intercultural dance company does not have a clearly designed programme to train members to become interculturally competent. Over the years, the company has relied on the experiential learning of the members as citizens of a multicultural nation, and their professional experience from amateur groups. During

the focus group discussion, it became apparent that the members are not aware of what intercultural competence is. They also revealed that during their auditioning, there was no session that touched on their ability to communicate effectively with people from diverse ethnicities and cultures.

According to GDE-M1 (6 April 2017) “there is no special training on how to work with people from different cultural backgrounds”. Other members confirm this situation, as seen in GDE-M2’s (7 April 2017) submission:

During the audition, they asked what I can play and what I can do; whether I really wanted to join the group; my aim for joining the group, and other things. The auditioning elapsed for three days and we were chosen. I do not know for the rest, but they started working with me right after the audition.

In the same vein, GDE-D3 (6 April 2017) also confirms the fact that the GDE does not place any emphasis on intercultural communication competence before recruitment:

When you join the company, the only thing they do, is just introduce you to their repertoire and the dances they do. They do not give you any special training on how to communicate verbally with people of different ethnic groups or cultures.

Furthermore, the statement below by GDE-D1 (focus group, 20 May 2017) foregrounds the fact that the GDE does not have any formal guidelines for training members to communicate effectively and competently in intercultural situations:

As for me, I have not worked with any group before joining the Ensemble. So when I came, I was constantly looking away from the audience during performances. After the performance, they do a post-mortem of the performance and punish me for not doing the right thing. The punishment and correction helped me to gain the confidence to interact with people. But there was no formal training on how to interact with people from other cultures.

In terms of intercultural training and experience, the GDE apparently relies heavily on the experiences of the members prior to joining the company. In addition, they gain this experience through their work with the GDE, as it offers the right environment to nurture the development of intercultural experience. However, as discussed in the previous chapter (see Sec. 5.5.2), the members’ lack of knowledge about the sociocultural and historical background of the dances poses a major hindrance to their cultural sensitivity.

Knowing and understanding the cultural contexts of the dances will make the members more competent as intercultural communicators. Intercultural awareness and training should be regarded as an essential part of the professional training of the intercultural GDE dancers. It therefore is surprising that there is no such training for the GDE members.

6.3.2 Empathy

Empathy is another key indicator of intercultural communication competence. It is measured by a person's ability to identify with and understand another person, especially when the person belongs to a different culture. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the members are able to form a united front when discussing issues that affect all of them. Issues such as; low salaries, lack of opportunities for promotion, restrictions on external engagement for extra income, non-payment of over-time and transport allowance as a mode of punishment, attract a feeling of general concern from the members.

However, these concerns are not empathetic, as such feelings arise because the individual members are directly affected. In a certain sense some members become empathetic towards their colleagues, because they can relate to the common issues affecting all of them. All ten members present during the focus group discussions lamented about their pay cheques, and the fact that without their over-time allowance they practically have nothing at the end of the month. Concerning this issue, GDE-D10 (focus group, 20 May 2017) revealed that the following: "We believe that something can be done about our situation. If it is done, even we can enjoy a fortune, but they will not do it. There was a time when we sat down and suggested what can be done to help the members, but nothing happened."

This suggestion and the member's reference to 'we' implies that it is an issue of common concern to which they all seek solutions. It, however, does not give a clear indication of empathy towards one another, because they are all in the same situation. Even in this situation some primordialists are able to look past the common concerns of the members to fulfil ethnic duties to the leadership, as discussed in the preceding chapter.

On the other hand, empathy in relation to intercultural communication competence of the GDE members extends to the practice of embodying dances from other

ethnicities and cultures. By sharing in the historical experiences of diverse cultures, the GDE members in corporeal terms empathise with the people. On this issue, GDE-M1 (focus group, 20 May 2017) notes that “by performing the dances well, we show solidarity and respect for the people whose dances we are dancing”. This view is supported by GDE-D3 (focus group, 20 May 2017):

When we are performing the dances, we do think about the people and whether they will be happy with it. You know we all come from various regions, so when we are doing something wrong to someone’s dance, the member will draw our attention to it. We care about what the people whose dances we perform think about what we do.

These comments serve to establish the fact that through dance, the members identify with the sociocultural and historical conditions of the people whose dances they perform. This ‘corporeal empathy’, guarded by the rules of professionalism in the company, ensures that they do the dances ‘properly’.

6.3.3 Motivation

The main motivation for the dancers and musicians with regard to intercultural communication competence, is job security. Competence is directly linked to the members’ ability to learn all the dances and musical traditions in the GDE’s repertoire. Mastery in the repertoire, coupled with a good attitude towards work and good relations with colleagues, will ultimately ensure job security for the members.

It also ensures that members get selected for travelling opportunities and performances within and outside the country. The members admitted that since the technical artistic director is their immediate supervisor, they always perform with the standards of the GDE in mind, which is what motivates them to do it right. In other words, the members are motivated to adhere strictly to the GDE standards in order to avoid being punished by their immediate supervisor. This can be gleaned from GDE-D1’s (focus group, 20 May 2017) view: “You have to do it right. If not, they will take your transport allowance, seize your overtime, and write you a query on top of it.” The ultimate motivation for the members’ intercultural competence is therefore directly linked to job security and opportunities.

6.3.4 Attitude towards Other Cultures

All the members have made a career of working with materials belonging to other ethnic or foreign cultures. In this case, it is difficult to determine the performers' underlying assumptions about other cultures. At a superficial level, it is easy to conclude that the members have a very good attitude towards other cultures, especially when they perform diverse ethnic dances and musical traditions.

As discussed in the preceding chapter there is, however, reason to conclude that there is inter-ethnic mistrust amongst the members, which creates a feeling of suspicion in the use of some ethnic languages.

On the other hand, the fact that the members are able to work co-operatively, i.e. learning each other's dances, songs, and languages, also says a lot about their level of tolerance for other cultures. In my interview with the members, almost all the dancers selected dances other than their own, when I asked them which dances they loved to dance and in which they are very competent. For instance, GDE-D4 (6 April 2017), who is an Ewe, says: "I love Nagla [a dance from the Upper-East Region] because of the energy in the dance."

The job of the GDE members seems to be circumscribed by respect for other cultures. In their very practice as professionals, therefore, they show respect for cultures other than their own, irrespective of personal prejudices.

6.3.5 Listening

The ability to listen to others is the last of the five indicators of intercultural competence, according to Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005). In order to be competent intercultural communicators, the dancers and musicians must learn to listen, first to their instructors when they are taught the dances and musical traditions of the various ethnic groups and cultures. By listening they learn to perform the dances and sing the songs appropriately, to avoid misrepresentation. Since almost all of the members came from amateur groups, it is also very important that they learn to listen in order to perform the way they, as GDE members, are expected to.

Secondly, they must learn to listen to each other. New dancers and musicians often learn from older members with regard to the operations of the GDE. In instances where new members face difficulties integrating with the group, their listening skills

ensure that they integrate faster, as can be gleaned from GDE-D7's (6 April 2017) experience:

At first I was not happy at all, because they will say some of the things in Twi and you will not understand and they will just say go and do what they said. But I did not understand it, so I felt really bad. One of the foreign dancers from the north advised me through his experience. He came from the north and they speak northern language, but because his northern colleagues also speak Ga and Twi, he learnt from them, so I am also trying to do the same thing through my Ewe colleagues.

When members draw their colleagues' attention to an issue of misrepresentation of cultural traditions, especially if such traditions belong to the complaining member, the company does well to make the necessary corrections. Listening, therefore, can be attributed to the members' active participation in the cultural traditions of the people whose dances they represent. This is mainly because if they are corrected and they decide not to do it properly, it means that particular voice has been 'othered', which is tantamount to unethical representation.

6.4 Lack of Formal Intercultural Competence Training: Challenges

Technical artistic director, Ben Ayithey, confirmed the members' submission that there is no formal guideline on intercultural communication competence within the GDE. He stated (interview 21st August 2017) the following:

We do not have any formal guidelines about working effectively in inter-ethnic or intercultural situations: the members normally do not say anything bad about anyone's tribe. We respect everyone's tribe. And we make them understand that no tribe is better than the other. So we express this in general terms.

In connection with this general sensitisation, he further commented as follows:

Usually is repeated when there is crisis or when you realise that there is tension, especially when it comes to punishment. The person knows that what he or she is doing, is not correct but, since they come from the same ethnic group, they try to side with the person.

Apart from these general verbal reminders about the need to co-exist in mutual respect, the company does not place any special emphasis on the members' ability to communicate effectively across cultures, first amongst themselves, and then with people from other nationalities. What the leadership does, is to punish the members when they flout the verbal rules of mutual respect for all cultures.

Ayittey (interview, 21 August 2017) further stated that, as the artistic director, he tries to give equal opportunities to all members to perform. However:

We look at the capacity of the individuals. Also the person's attendance to work counts. If the person is so good but is fond of taking permission to the hospital or giving unnecessary excuses, we take that into consideration in our selection. So, we take those who are consistent with attendance. The thing is that we are like family and if we are not careful, it will look as if you have likes and you like somebody better than another person. So we do that just to make them know that we like everybody the same.

Some of the problems the members face in the initial stages of joining the GDE, could be avoided if there is a clear guiding policy for building intercultural communication competence in the members. This is mainly because most of the members, upon joining the GDE, experienced cultural difference in a shocking way. A formal guideline on how to communicate effectively and competently in such an environment, could have made a difference.

The GDE has come to rely on the members' experiential training, living in multicultural spaces and their prior work experience in amateur groups for their intercultural competence. However, it becomes difficult for the members from ethnic enclaves with no prior work experience in amateur groups, to handle intercultural work without some level of awareness. This notwithstanding, they eventually learn to do their work as intercultural performers, embodying the cultural traditions of the nation and beyond.

6.5 Occasions for Performances

The Ghana Dance Ensemble has travelled across the length and breadth of the country, bringing the cultural traditions of the nation to the people. Their performance engagements include weddings, funerals, conferences, festivals, school events, state functions, National Independence Day celebrations, welcoming diplomatic dignitaries from other countries, and other such occasions.

All decisions regarding performances come from the administrative office. Members, who are directly contacted by clients, are required to direct them to the administration. When the company is contacted regarding performances, the administrative artistic director handles all details regarding the booking, while the technical artistic director plans the performance, and rehearses the performers. The members are only informed about the time of rehearsal, usually when the contract

has been signed. GDE-M1 (focus group, 20 May 2017) complained about this:

“Sometimes they explain things to us, but sometimes they do not. They just tell you there is a programme here at this time, we will be there for two or three days, the bus will be leaving at this time, this is what you are going to do ... and that is it.”

As revealed in the organisational structure of the GDE and decision-making process, members, upon recruitment, have no direct input regarding the performance engagement of the company. They become the machinery that keeps the company moving, but are controlled by the University through the Institute.

6.5.1 Criteria for Selection of Dances, Dancers and Musicians for Performance

Depending on the nature of the performance – neo-traditional dance, dance drama, drumming, flute performance; or Nnwomkorɔ³⁷ performance – dancers and musicians are selected for specific performances based on the specific type of performance engagement.

As mentioned earlier by the artistic director, dancers and musicians are selected for performances based on their capacity and competence in the dances, and a good record of work attendance. A dancer may be very skilled in all the dances in the repertoire, but if s/he is not regular and punctual in attendance, the possibility of selecting that dancer for performances will be very low.

In terms of dance selection, Table 5.2 in Chapter 5, reveals the wealth of ethnically diverse dances in the repertoire of the GDE. Therefore, when the GDE is booked for performances, a decision has to be made by the technical artistic director as to which dances to select for specific events. According to the members, the main determinants for dance selection are: the specific occasion, the performance space, the client's ethnicity and the client's preferences. In this regard GDE-D1 (focus group, 20 May 2017) notes that the following: “Sometimes there is a conference which is held in an enclosed space, like a conference room, you cannot perform dances with loud rhythm. The dance has to be the type you can perform within a

³⁷ From Brong-Ahafo Region and Ashanti Region, is an all-female dance and musical performance.

small space.” In the same vein, GDE-M1 (focus group, 20 May 2017) adds the following:

The occasion also determines the dance. For instance, if there is a wedding, we sometimes ask about the ethnic regions of the bride and groom so we can bring dances from there. Sometimes the people who call the company, know what they want, so they tell us we need you to come and perform these dances.

The selection of dances and performers is therefore contingent on the nature of the performance engagement, as well as other factors such as space and occasion. However, the client’s preference is given priority in all circumstances.

6.5.2 Frequently Performed Dances: Ethnic Hegemony or Convenience?

In my discussions with the members during the focus group, they revealed that there are certain dances that have received more attention in terms of performance frequency than others. They mentioned *Kete*, *Bamaya*, and *Togo-Atsia*. For a moment it appeared to be a fair selection in terms of their representation of the three major ethnic groups in Ghana, viz. the Akan, Dagomba and Ewe, representing the Ashanti, Northern and Volta Regions respectively. However, the members were quick to isolate *Kete* as the most performed dance. According to GDE-D3 (focus group, 20 May 2017): “*Kete* is the number one dance of the Ghana Dance Ensemble. When you join the Ensemble, whether you are a cripple or not, you have to learn *Kete* because it is the National anthem of the company.”

The question then was whether this penchant for *Kete* is attributable to ethnic hegemony of the Akan, or whether it is a matter of technical/aesthetic convenience. The members had divergent view about the issue. GDE-M1 (focus group 20th May 2017), who belongs to the Ga ethnic group, had this to say: “It is the nature of the dance. For most of the programmes we need to usher people in with dances and it is best suited for this purpose. So when there is a national programme, we usually perform it.” Similarly, GDE-D3, who belongs to the Dagomba ethnic group, added: “It is also because the costume for the dance is beautiful.”



Figure 6.1: GDE dancers retreating with the Kete dance after ushering members of convocation to the podium during a graduation ceremony at the University of Ghana. Photo credit: Ghana Dance Ensemble

However, when I probed further, GDE-M1 (focus group, 20 May 2017) complained as follows: “There are so many other dances we can use to usher people in, but those in authority prefer the *Kete*. If you select something else to rehearse, those in authority will tell you to change for *Kete*.” In response to this view from a Ga member, a Fante member, GDE-D10 (focus group 20th May 2017), notes that the following: “Yes, there are so many other dances but with *Kete*, it is easy to carry the drums. Also *Kete* has several variations in rhythm and you can play it for a whole week non-stop.” Similarly, GDE-D1 who is Ewe (focus group, 20 May 2017) comments as follows:

Agbadza (an Ewe dance) is also there, but if you look at the drum set, you have to carry this five and half feet drum and its accompaniment. So, they look at all these, and select the simplest one. But I disagree with the submission that the *Kete* drums are the easiest to carry, because when you go to the Northern parts we have the Donno and the Brekete. They are the easiest drums you can carry anywhere at any time. But I see *Kete* as a royal dance that means like everybody who is coming in for that programme is a royal. *Kete* ushers dignitaries and royals into a programme, and I think the office sees it as a dance that is both dignifying and vibrant. However, there are Northern royal dances that can also be used to usher people in and have very beautiful costumes. But we don’t know why the office insists on using *Kete*.

In response to the final parts of GDE-D1's submission, GDE-M1 (focus group 20 May 2017) registered his displeasure with the dominance of *Kete* in all the performances of the GDE: "That is the problem we always fight about. Sometimes we feel it is too much, because wherever you are seen, you are in *Kete* costume."

The above views on the frequency of the *Kete* dance in all performances of the GDE, are as varied as the ethnicity of the members. However, it reveals a critical assessment of the possible reasons behind the selection of the *Kete*, as a constant on any GDE programme. The ethnic hegemony of the Akan culture can be seen in the way it is treated as a national culture. Even in an inter-ethnic dance company that seeks to showcase the cultural wealth of the nation, an Akan dance manages to surface as the most frequently performed.

From the views above, the subtlety of this hegemony can be gleaned in the explanations the members give as to why the *Kete* is preferred. It is interesting to note that the hegemony of the dominant group is often not questioned by the members of that group, as seen in the Fante member who gives an explanation as to why the *Kete* is used, without considering the possibility of using other dances with similar qualities. However, the dissenting voices, often coming from the marginalised groups, always find a way through to question the status quo.

As discussed in Chapter 3 (see Sec. 3.2.9), a major problem that often flaws the nation's efforts towards equal representation of the various ethnic communities, is the internal hegemony of the Akan ethnic group. Being the major ethnic group, representing 47.5% of the total population, the Akan culture has become the most dominant in the cultural representation of the nation. This is well captured by Brown (2000:29) when he states that modern Ghana "is built upon a traditional Akan ethnic core, around which non-Akan peripheries are clustered".

In the same vein, Lentz (2010:8), in her criticism of the J. A. Kufuor³⁸ administration for imbalance in cultural quotations, describes the administration as the 'Asante moment' in Ghana's political history, due to the dominance of Asante cultural

³⁸ J.A. Kufuor was the second president of Ghana's fourth republic. He was president of Ghana from 2001 to 2009.

symbols. She recounts her conversation with some Northerners and other non-Akans who were not happy with the Akan hegemony displayed during the Independence Day celebrations. This dissatisfaction can also be seen in the Ewe and Ga members' views above.

6.6 Horizontal Quality Control: Towards 'Proper' Representation

It is interesting to note that, the ethnic composition of the GDE has created an internal horizontal quality control for proper representation of the dance and music traditions of the various ethnic cultures which have representatives in the company. During our discussions the members revealed that they care a lot about how they as members of the company, and as members of their respective ethnic cultures, represent the dances that have been placed in their custody. GDE-M1 (focus group, 20 May 2017) gives the following explanation:

For you to do the dance properly, means that you are giving the people respect; it is not only because it is our job. Because if you take something from somebody and you don't treat it well, it means you don't regard what the person has. But for you to do it well, means you are giving the person a bigger respect.

Similarly, GDE-D3 (focus group, 20 May 2017) stated the following:

Even though it is our job, we do care how we portray these dances. You see, because we have members from almost all the regions in the company, sometimes when we are rehearsing a member will stop us and say no, that is not how we do it in the village. One member always stops us and tells us that this song you are singing for this dance is not right. They used to sing Dangbanli songs for Kasena Nankana dances, then we said no. There was also another situation where they sang Mossi songs for *Nmane*. Then we said no, it is an insult. Me being in this company, sometimes they watch me on TV and call to ask me 'what were you people doing, so you were there and they were singing these songs for our dances?'

The leadership did not motivate this horizontal quality control mechanism, but the members feel the need to protect what is theirs as members of their respective ethnic groups. Every member in the GDE feels responsible for protecting the purity of his/her ethnic culture. This ultimately serves to further the efforts of the company towards authentic or proper representation. While the members perform as professionals, they keep an eye out for their people, who see the dancers as representing the group at the national level, in performative terms.

6.7 Reception at the Micro-level

The comment made by the paramount Chief of Navrongo³⁹ after seeing the GDE dancers and musicians perform in 1968 – “If anybody who does not come from my culture could devote his or her time and energy to learn and perform my dances so perfectly, then that person must have a lot of respect for me and my people” – is a good indication of positive reception from the people whose dances are performed by the GDE.

The chief’s comment authenticates the GDE’s performance in terms of ethics of representation, which brings to the fore Nketia’s submission on ‘proper representation’ at the beginning of this chapter. Since then, similar receptive comments have followed the GDE’s performances across the regions within the country, as evidenced by Ben Ayithey’s comment (21 August 2017):

There was a time when we lost a member and we went to Afiadenygba in the Volta Region to perform. Now what we realised was that the people started speaking Ewe with us. Because we performed their dance even better than some of them, they could not determine whether this person is an Ewe or not. Finally, we had to tell them that we are not all Ewes but from other regions. Willie for instance is from the Upper West Region but he dances the *Fontomfrom* better than some Akan and any member in the ensemble.

Similarly, GDE-D5 (focus group, 20 May 2017) revealed that “since we have been performing, the comments we receive are more positive than negative”. In the same vein GDE-D2 (focus group, 20 May 2017) added that “there are so many occasions where we have performed in the various regions and the people have mistaken us for indigenes”. GDE-M1 (focus group, 20 May 2017) also supported the above comments by highlighting his personal experience:

Even in Accra here it happens. For instance, because I play all the rhythms of the ethnic groups, when I perform, people make a mistake of thinking I belong to the ethnic group whose rhythm I play. They say I thought you are an Ewe, and then I will tell them I’m a Ga.

All these comments point to the fact that the GDE has been able to live up to its claim of authentic representation fifty years after its establishment. On the other

³⁹ The capital of the Upper-East Region of Ghana

hand, the members made some revealing comments that point to cultural estrangement of their Ghanaian audience as at 2014. According to GDE-M2 (focus group, 20 May 2017), “there are some people who don’t want to see us; there are ministers of state who get angry when they see us”. This comment was supported by GDE-D3’s (focus group, 20 May 2017):

Yes, a whole minister will see you and get angry when you try to usher him in with a dance. He will say give me way! As if he already had a problem with you. On the day our former president Atta Mills died, we were having a programme at the conference centre. We saw a minister approaching, so we decided to change the dance and rhythm to that of his ethnic region, but he responded negatively to us, as if he didn’t know what we were doing.

In an attempt to assign possible reasons to these reactions, GDE-D1 (focus group, 20 May 2017) had the following to offer:

The problem is that most Ghanaians do not appreciate and understand the culture we have in Ghana here. They always appreciate the hip-hop and those performances where people just shout and jump on stage. The moment we enter the stage to perform traditional dance, then they begin to complain. We have had very bad experiences in most of the programmes we perform at. Only a few individuals come up to us to commend our traditional performance.

The comments on the current reception of the GDE’s performances can be attributed to the effects of globalisation or cultural estrangement of Ghanaians. This is especially true with the younger generation of Ghanaians. It is, however, unfortunate that the leadership of the nation, who should understand the importance of traditional culture and even promote it, appear not to appreciate the work of the GDE.

6.8 Conclusions

Nketia and Opoku’s research, which led to the creation of the GDE’s authentic neo-traditional dances, gives the company an important position as cultural ambassadors, even within the nation. The positive responses that their performances have attracted in the GDE’s fifty years of existence, emphasize the intercultural communication competence the members have developed over the years.

It is quite unfortunate, however, that people in high political positions in Ghana do not understand nor appreciate the indigenous cultural traditions that the company projects. The dancers have complained that there are so many such encounters with

ministers of state, which paints a grim picture about the place of indigenous cultural traditions in the future of Ghana.

The GDE has, over the years, succeeded in bringing indigenous cultural traditions of Ghana to Ghanaians for mutual appreciation, even as they work through their own internal ethnic differences.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the nature of the international collaborations and festivals that the GDE partakes in, with regard to the politics of intercultural productions. I will also discuss the internal collaborations with visiting choreographers who come to Ghana to work with the GDE and the politics involved in such encounters.

CHAPTER SEVEN: INTERCULTURAL PERFORMANCE OF THE GDE AT THE MACRO-LEVEL

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the nature of the micro- (internal) intercultural activities and performances of the Ghana Dance Ensemble was discussed. Through the discussions, I revealed the organisational structure of the company and the nature of the company as an intercultural site, i.e. bringing together dancers and musicians from diverse ethnic groups to perform dance and musical traditions of the ethnic diversity of Ghana.

In this chapter the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble at the macro-level are discussed. Thus, the nature of the company's participation in international festivals and exchanges will be examined, while interrogating collaborations between the company and visiting international choreographers.

7.2 Implications of Operating an International Dance Company in a University System

As discussed in Chapter 4, the original Ghana Dance Ensemble at the University of Ghana split into two in 1992. While one group remained within the University system, the other half moved to the newly built National Theatre building in the heart of the city, Accra. The group at the University acquired a new function, as a demonstration group for the research activities of the Institute of African Studies.

At its establishment in 1962, the company was given a mandate to introduce the diverse ethnic dances of the country to Ghanaians, and then to the outside world. To this end, the GDE began to give performances soon after its formation, performing choreographed traditional dances and creative choreographic pieces in schools, stadia, universities, palaces and theatres (Adinku, 2000).

At international level, the very first mission of the group was when they represented Ghana at Malawi's Independence Celebration in 1964. Since then, the GDE has travelled widely across the country and other parts of the world to showcase the created 'Ghanaian culture' to both Ghanaians and the outside world. With this

function in mind, the GDE is structurally designed to operate as a state folk dance company.

When such a company is confined within the structure of the University system, there are bound to be implications for performance opportunities. This is mainly because the university's priorities as it were, are different from those of the national agenda that gave birth to the GDE.

7.2.1 Funding and International Performance Opportunities after the Split

At the initial stages, the GDE though housed at the University, was operating on its own as a full-blown state folk dance ensemble. It was given the necessary funds and sponsorship by the government to travel across the world in fulfilling its mandate. However, since the split, the University took over the funding responsibilities, which inhibited the GDE's activities, as a result of budgetary constraints. Speaking on this issue, Ben Ayittey (interview, 21 August 2017) had this to say:

Now it's like we are staff of the University, so the University is now taking care of the Ghana Dance Ensemble. It is now the job of the university to organise some collaborations with sister universities outside the country to really engage the company. If the University does this, we will make a lot of money for the University. But the University's interest is somewhere else, they always want to receive, they are not ready to give. If they give us what we need, we can go on trips like the Guinea Ballet and other companies and this company will excel.

While the GDE on the University campus struggled to maintain their external relations with foreign institutions and festival organisers, the group at the National Theatre continued to ride on the name of the company to perform across the world. The National Theatre group had the full funding of government through the Ministry of Culture, and has therefore been able to flourish as a state folk dance company, as originally intended when the GDE was established.

In addition to the above internal problems expressed by Ayittey, he further blames the National Theatre group for maintaining relations with external contacts through their continual use of the name, Ghana Dance Ensemble. He stated (interview, 21 August 2017) that "initially they were supposed to use the name National Theatre Dance Company but because they are still using the Ghana Dance Ensemble, they get more engagements using that name".

As a result of poor record-keeping and documentation, it was practically impossible for me to get access to documents pertaining to the international collaborations and festivals the GDE has participated in. I will therefore examine a contract document outlining the terms of participation by the GDE in the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) in 1993. The festival took place only a year after the split.

An examination of the contract outlining the GDE's participation in the above-mentioned festival, will serve as an example of the conditions for such international festival engagements. This has become necessary, because record-keeping seems to be a major problem for the GDE at the Institute. Ayittey attributed the absence of records of past engagements to the 1992 split. However, it became apparent that poor record-keeping of the company has left no documentations of collaborations from the time of the split to date.

7.3 An Examination of the GDE's Participation in the 7th London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT)

As at 1993, the popularity of the GDE had given it a prestigious reputation both on the continent and abroad. It was therefore not surprising that the group was sought after and engaged for the 7th London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT). The festival was funded by the Arts Council, Visiting Arts and the London Boroughs Grants Committee (Sackey, 1993). The then artistic director, Francis Nii Yartey, who assumed the position of the Artistic Director in 1976, led the group. The festival lasted for four weeks, from 13 June to 12 July 1993.

The group arrived in the UK on the 20th of June, since the festival contract duration was from 20 to 28 June. The actual performances of the GDE scheduled within the festival took place from 23 to 26 June. The performances took place around Old Spitalfields Market in East London.

The GDE that participated in this festival, received funding from the government. The festival organisers, according to the contract, provided accommodation, transportation, and contributed towards the group's travel in Europe onwards from Copenhagen. In addition, they agreed to pay visa fees for all 28 members listed in Schedule B of the contract. They also agreed to pay a flat fee for each of the six performances for the duration of the contract, and pay per diem for each member. The festival organisers proposed to pay a total amount of £12,580.

In addition to settling all payments with members, the GDE's responsibilities were spelt out in the contract to ensure that they adhere strictly to the terms of engagement. Since there is no mention of airfare in the contract, the company, through government funding, paid for their own flights to London and back to Accra after their European engagements.

The GDE performances lasted for four days, and during this period the group was the main highlight of the festival. The publicity focused mainly on the traditional nature of the group and its performances, which explains why they were put on display through the streets of London. It appears the festival organisers intended to make back all the money they invested in bringing the group to London, by highlighting the 'exotic' tradition in the repertoire of the group. The following advertisement of the performance paints an apt picture:

The king's dilemma, a programme of dance and drama performed by one of Ghana's drama ensembles is a double bill which will begin with one of the country's most vibrant traditional celebrations – a grand Durbar procession. The group will lead a procession through the streets surrounding Old Spitalfields Market resplendent with large umbrellas mostly used by chiefs during festivals. There will be African music, drumming, singing and dancing which will herald the commencement of the actual dance drama, *The King's Dilemma* (West Africa, 1993).

African music – drumming, singing and dancing – and traditional festivals seem to be very attractive to European/Western audiences, because of its remoteness from their culture. It therefore is not surprising that the organisers, hoping to make back all their investment and profit from the group, concentrated on the traditional culture the group represents. This display of cultural traditions of Ghana is also seen in the following:

The durbar is followed by a series of dances and music from the different regions of Ghana. These vary from war dances, dances which celebrate the end of droughts, to dances performed by young women courting lovers. At the centre of the ensemble's performance is *The King's Dilemma*, a specially choreographed work by Nii Yartey (Chaudhary, 1993).

The choreographed piece, *The King's Dilemma*, is set in the Northern Region of Ghana, and therefore had movement vocabulary from dances within the region. Even in this choreographic piece, traditional dance movements, songs, costume, and rhythm abound. Even though *The King's Dilemma* is set in a mythical village in the Northern Region, Nii Yartey stayed true to the larger setting by using only Northern

movements for the piece. The setting of each piece Yartey choreographed by Nii, circumscribes his choice of movement. This is evident in Ayittey's statement in the previous chapter about Nii Yartey's use of purely Ewe, Akan and Northern movements in his choreography, without mixing movements.

7.4 Lack of Initiative for International Performance Opportunities by the University

As mentioned earlier by the current artistic director, the University, to his understanding, is responsible for initiating collaborations and performance opportunities between the GDE and other organisations. However, since such links are currently non-existent, they rely on past relationships and contacts for performance opportunities. This problem is compounded by the fact that the group at the National Theatre maintained the Ghana Dance Ensemble name, and directed all their clients to the National Theatre.

Interestingly, the artistic director of the group before the split, became artistic director for the National Theatre group after the split, and was therefore the one who took the group to LIFT in 1993. Ayittey's allegation regarding the group's use of the name and maintaining contacts with past clients, is corroborated by the fact that, three years after the split, the group went back to England for a tour using the same name:

The Ghana Dance Ensemble touched down at the London Gatwick airport to begin a whole month's tour of England with shows scheduled for Cardiff, Birmingham, Manchester and Sheffield, with the climax performance at London's Sadler's Wells Theatre between 9 and 14 October [1995] (*Ghana Review International*, 1995).

Shortly after the split in 1992, the GDE at the University continued to maintain links with some organisations and festival organisers, in spite of the issue with the National Theatre group. This is corroborated by GDE-D3 (focus group, 20 May 2017): "When the split happened, the group here was still travelling. It is as if you have a business with customers. So even when the split happened, still the customers were coming in, but it got to a time that it all ceased."

The GDE therefore continued to rely on past relationships they had established with international organisations, even as they wait for the University to take initiative for such opportunities. While the artistic director blames the University for its lack of

initiative, the members blame their directors for not doing enough, as can be gleaned from the submission of GDE-M1's (focus group, 20 May 2017):

In terms of collaborations and festivals outside the country, I usually have a problem with the administration. It is always like a one-way thing. If somebody from a foreign country does not come to recruit the group, nobody is doing anything outside to promote the group. There is no proper channel used to promote the group.

Ben Ayithey (interview, 21 August 2017) confirmed GDE-M1's submission above regarding the company's international engagements as follows:

Over here because we have a low budget, if we don't get a sponsor from the place, we don't travel. Because the University is not always willing to pay for us, but always looking at what they will gain. Because we also want to motivate the members, we usually accept the trip, then we go. Since I joined the Ensemble, all the trips we have been on, is from the people, not the Ensemble or University.

Ayithey and GDE-M1's statements above reveal the reality of the GDE as a national dance company with an international appeal wasting away in a University system that does not take advantage of the full benefit the group could bring to the institution. In the absence of any initiative from the University, the GDE continues to rely on luck, and hope that some individuals, groups or organisations outside the country develop a need for what the group has to offer.

7.5 The Nature of Current International Exchange and Festival Participation of the GDE

As elaborated in Chapter 3, while multicultural theatre is state-determined and postcolonial theatre is created in response to the colonial agenda, intercultural theatre "is a hybrid derived from an intentional encounter between cultures and performing traditions" (Lo and Gilbert, 2002:36). The example presented above of the GDE's participation in LIFT, reveals that, while the festival organisers were interested in tradition and authenticity for the purpose of 'exotic' display, the GDE by design was also interested in showing authenticity and tradition, as a way of imprinting Ghanaian culture in the minds of all those who watch them perform.

In their festival participation, therefore, the GDE brings together the full import of multicultural theatre and postcolonial theatre in a way that puts Lo and Gilbert's (2002) definition above in perspective. On the other hand, their definition of

intercultural theatre as a hybrid created from an intentional encounter between cultures, finds expression in another aspect of the GDE's international practices. In the case of LIFT, the company did not create a hybrid arising from an encounter between the culture they brought to London and English culture. However, there are other instances when the group participated in 'intentional encounters' that produced hybrids.

To elaborate on the GDE's intentional encounters that produced a 'hybrid performance', the GDE's participation in the 29th annual International Festival of Dance and Movement Theatre (TANEC Praha) in Prague, Czech Republic, will serve as an example. Even though this research highlights the GDE's intercultural work from 1962 to 2014, this festival which took place in 2017, serves to bring to the fore the nature of the company's collaborative work with foreign artistes. This event was selected, because it is still fresh on the minds of the participants and they will therefore give accurate description of such engagement.

As discussed earlier, the foreign artists or organisations interested in working with the group, usually initiate the GDE's external engagements. In the case of TANEC Praha, it was also through a recommendation, as seen in the submission of GDE-M1's (focus group, 20 May 2017) below:

They contacted the administration before they were later brought here. First, Yvona came. She first contacted one woman who gave the contact details to the Ensemble and the director contacted her and made the deal. Therefore, they arranged everything, which they later sent Monica to come and work with us towards their project. It lasted for about two weeks. After that, Monica went back and reported to Yvona. She chose some people she wanted to work with. The selection was based on the work Monica came to do with us for the two-week period.

The process of selection, elaborated above, was confirmed by the artistic director, Ben Ayithey (interview, 21 August 2017):

Just recently they took a trip to Czech Republic and when they came, they selected a member but we had wanted to use different ways to put someone else in, but they said they needed that person. Finally, we decided to give him a chance because it is the first interaction with such people.

This selection of specific dancers for the purposes of the festival is directly linked to the discussions in the previous chapter on dancers and their body-types. The choreographer who worked with the members, came from a contemporary dance

background and therefore wanted to work with dancers with slender a body-type.

GDE-M1 (focus group, 20 May 2017) described the work she did with the group as follows:

It was more of contemporary movements. It was like she is from a different world and we are more into the traditional dances. And she wanted us to collaborate. So it was more of a fusion of dance moves. It was more of the fundamentals of how to bring out the contemporary movements in you. With the rehearsals and the exercise, she was able to come up with some movements, which she puts together to make the piece worth it.

GDE-D3 (focus group, 20 May 2017) also describes the collaborative process by recounting aspects of the process:

In the repertoire, we have our own traditional dance. When she came down we did our dances for her and she will come up and say, I want a move in a storyline. Example, do a movement with your own name. And when you do the movement, she will observe and select the moves **that she sees okay and then joins them**. So she gave us even the knowledge of how to put your own movements together.

The entire collaboration was leading up to the festival. The piece that was created through this collaboration was therefore termed 'work in progress'. It was first performed at the Mawere Opoku Dance Hall. The ambassador of the Czech Republic to Ghana, along with some representatives from the embassy, attended the performance. The larger part of the audience for the performance consisted of students from the School of Performing Arts.

Speaking on the reciprocity of such collaborations, Ben Ayittey (interview, 21 August 2017) stated:

Like those who went to the Czech recently, the people came down and we did a kind of improvisation pieces with them. So when we collaborate with them, we give them what we do over here and then we take what she also came to teach here, that makes it common collaboration. Apart from that, we also did the traditional dances with them because we want to promote Ghana. So alongside teaching them traditional dance, we leave ourselves to whatever they also have.

The fusion of traditional dance movements and contemporary dance movements created a hybrid that fits directly into Lo and Gilbert's (2002) definition of intercultural performance.

A major critique of intercultural performance, especially between postcolonial cultures and Euro-Western cultures, has to do with issues of power relations. The pendulum of power often swings in favour of the sponsoring party in such encounters, which informs my inquiry into the issue of funding. The following according to GDE-M1 (focus group, 20 May 2017):

They [the Czech partners] did not sponsor everything. All they did was give us an invitation, and pay for our visa fee. And because it was a link between the Institute and them, they asked the Ministry of Culture to pay our tickets. This request delayed and as a result, they did what they had to do to pay our tickets, because time was catching up. Actually because of the issue with the tickets, the number that went, dropped from six to only four.

From the submission above, Ayithey's earlier statement that the University is not willing to sponsor the group's trips and foreign engagements, is corroborated. It is interesting to note that the visiting artistes had to seek sponsorship from the Ministry of Culture, when the GDE does not receive its funding from that Ministry. These artists saw the link between the GDE's work and that of the Ministry. They, however, did not understand the historical incident that left the GDE under the Institute, which explains the Ministry's lack of support in terms of funding. Ayithey (interview, 21 August 2017) confirmed GDE-M1's statement above regarding funding as follows:

For this trip in particular we didn't get anything from them [the Czech choreographers]. All we got, was the flight and accommodation bookings for the people. We do it for charity because, if you do that something good will come out of it. Hence, very few of them went.

Contrary to what the collaborators communicated to the group, the highlight of the festival turned out to be the traditional dances in the repertoire of the GDE. Even though the four members – two dancers and two musicians – had a chance to perform the collaborative piece, 'work in progress', the main attraction for the purpose of the festival was the traditional dances. Video excerpts (<http://youtu.be/Bx9GyYZFXG0>) of the performances on YouTube clearly show the two dancers performing traditional dances, in some cases with the collaborators.

7.5.1 Folkloric Display in International Festival Performances of the GDE

"Fetishisation of cultural difference" in the form of folkloric theatre, as discussed in Chapter 3, is another form of the small 'm' multiculturalism in the view of Lo and Gilbert (2002:34). Here various cultural forms are displayed for the sole purpose of showcasing cultural difference as they celebrate authenticity, tradition and history by

taking advantage of marginalised cultural groups. In terms of the folkloric theatre, discussed under the small 'm' multicultural theatre, the nature of the GDE's participation in international theatre festivals, as discussed above, could be described as contributing to the "fetishisation of cultural difference" (ibid).

This is mainly because the GDE prides itself in its focus on 'authentically traditional' Ghanaian dances. Since 'authentic tradition' is their selling point, it is an apt conclusion, which describes the nature of the GDE's international festival participation. As discussed earlier, there seem to be a meeting ground between the GDE's focus on authenticity and that of international festival organisers in that, while the GDE by design promotes authentic Ghanaian cultural traditions, festival organisers ride on such authentic traditions to promote their events. There is therefore a difference between the kind of intercultural performance criticised by Bharucha (1993, 1996, 2000) and others, and this kind of intercultural performance where both the formerly marginalised culture and the imperialistic culture achieve their agenda in the encounter.

However, the process still demands further interrogation, necessitated by the fact that the hegemony of the imperialistic culture is insidiously invisible to the GDE members and leadership. While the GDE believes that it is promoting Ghana by performing traditional dances during festivals, it is important to highlight the discourse on cultural display which focuses on 'exotically different' cultures within the frame of 'otherness'. The importance of foregrounding this argument can be seen in the rather innocent statement of Ayithey (interview, 21 August 2017):

If it is a festival, we usually draw our own programme. For instance, with the previous festival that I travelled with the ensemble, we only performed traditional dances. They did not see any choreographed work. And they are interested in traditional dances just like us.

From Ayithey's statement, there seems to be some form of agency on the part of the company which appears to challenge any notion of being controlled by the organisers of such festivals. This agency is linked to my earlier argument that the group tends to achieve its aim of showcasing and promoting Ghanaian cultural traditions, whether they are put on display or not.

From a discursive point of view, however, it is important to highlight the discourse on such intercultural encounters in order to expose issues of power, identity and other

subjectivities, and what these mean within a specific historical context. Using this approach to understanding intercultural practices of the GDE, “one soon discovers that meaning is not straightforward or transparent, and does not survive intact the passage through representation. It is a slippery customer, changing and shifting with context, usage, and historical circumstances [...] it is always being negotiated and inflected [...]” (Hall, 1997:9 – 10).

In as much as the founding fathers relied on research to ensure adequate representation of the people, such representation is always negotiated each time the audience changes. The specific meaning the people ascribe to their cultural traditions, can only be understood within the historical circumstances that gave birth to these traditions. Therefore, when these traditional dances are uprooted from the cultural setting that gives them meaning, they acquire different sets of meanings depending on who is watching. From the above discussions, I would like to argue that it goes beyond who is watching and spills into the purpose for which such culture is put on display.

While festival organisers ride on the ‘need for the exotic’ to sell their shows for profit, the GDE foregrounds its agency by showcasing the cultural traditions entrusted in its care according to its mandate. With this mindset, the GDE seems blinded to the ‘cultural rape’ in its relationship with international festival organisations riding on authentic indigenous traditions as their selling point.

From my discussions with the participants, it was clear that the Czech choreographers who engaged them, led the members to believe that they were going to perform the collaborative piece they together developed in Ghana at the festival. However, the details of what exactly they were to do there, were unknown to them until they got to Prague. This can be seen in GDE-D5’s (focus group, 20 May 2017) submission: “in the selected areas that we were **supposed** to perform, we did the created piece. Except the other festivals like the TANEC of Austrava, Correspondence Dance Festival, and others, where we were given the **chance** to perform our traditional dances.” GDE-M1 (focus group, 20 May 2017) corroborated this submission when he added: “We performed our traditional dances and at some point we did the piece we had created. We also did a collaboration with the Czech artistes.”

In all, the participants stated that apart from the 'work in progress' they created collaboratively and performed at certain points within the festival, they performed more of the traditional dances, as seen in the statement of GDE-D3 (focus group, 20 May 2017): "They [the festival organisers] did not influence our performance of traditional dances. We had the free will to do our own choice of traditional dances. **We actually performed almost all the dances in our repertoire.**" It is interesting that the participants feel a sense of privilege in the fact that they were given the freedom to perform whatever traditional dance they chose; to the extent that they performed almost all the dances in their repertoire.

In comparison to the LIFT festival, the TANEC Praha festival seems to have taken advantage of the GDE's desperate attempts to remain relevant and vibrant, and used the group without adequate compensation. This is confirmed by Ayithey's statement above that they did not get anything from this particular collaboration; they did it in hope that something good will come out of it in the future. The fact that the GDE relies exclusively on international collaborators and festival organisers for funding, shows that there is bound to be power imbalance in such encounters.

7.5.1.1 International Collaborations and Power Dynamics

As mentioned in the previous section, issues of sponsorship and funding regarding the GDE's international engagements determine where power lies in the encounter. While such collaborations would be non-existent without the initiative of the foreign partners, the GDE takes advantage of the situation to pursue its mandate of showcasing Ghana to the world. The GDE has, since its inception, tapped into the potential of dance to liberate "from imperialist representation through the construction of an active moving body that 'speaks' its own forms of corporeality" (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996:242).

Through its syncretic and non-syncretic types of intercultural practice, the GDE is able to foreground its agency even in imperialistic situations, such as international festivals. In the two instances of the GDE's participation in international festivals presented above, this agency is seemingly not affected, as the dancers, through their 'active moving bodies', were able to speak their 'own forms of corporeality'. This agency exists for them, regardless of the imperialistic and commercial mechanisms put in place to 'exploit' their 'authenticity'.

However, it is important to note that the agency exercised by the GDE in such encounters, does not counteract the power imbalance inherent in the commercialisation of cultures. This power imbalance can be traced through all the stages of the collaborative process, from rehearsals and working conditions to final performance. In examining the working relationship between the GDE members and collaborators, the TANEC Praha festival discussed above, will serve as an example. This is mainly because in that instance the collaborators travelled to Ghana from the Czech Republic to work with the members for two weeks before the festival in Prague.

As mentioned earlier by Ayithey (interview, 21 August 2017), the visiting choreographer worked with all the members for two weeks. Ayithey recounted as follows:

We [gave] them what we do over here and then we [took] what she also came to teach here, that makes it common collaboration. Apart from that, we also did the traditional dances with them, because we want to promote Ghana. So alongside teaching them traditional dance, we leave ourselves to whatever they also have.

Ayithey's view of collaboration swings towards the ideal kind of intercultural collaboration where there is a levelled playing field where cultures give and take. A close look at the conditions under which the 'collaboration' happened, reveals a critical power dynamic. First of all, the position of the collaborator as choreographer carries a lot of power in the collaborative process. As choreographer, she was given full power to work with the group and guide all efforts towards what she wanted the collaboration to culminate into. According to GDE-M1's (focus group, 20 May 2017), the collaborative relationship paints a clear picture of who wielded power in the process:

Her work was more of improvisational movement. We brought up some of the movements and she will **decide** the ones that she likes, trim it and then fuse them. She was a choreographer, so she gives you the opportunity to see what you can do. Then, she later will polish it by **directing** it. And it actually works. Being a choreographer, she knows the movements that are good and suitable for combinations.

GDE-D3 (focus group, 20 May 2017) further confirms the visiting choreographer's position as the controlling brain behind the collaboration: "When she came down [from the Czech Republic], we did our dances for her and she will come up and say, I

want a movement in a storyline. And when you do the movement, she will **observe** and **select** the ones that **she sees** okay and then joins them.”

It is interesting that the GDE members believe that they were making their own choices and decisions, when sub-textually they were guided to make those choices for the benefit of a preconceived purpose, prior to the encounter. The position of director or choreographer is a power position and through that the visiting choreographer was able to channel all efforts towards achieving her aim in the ‘collaborative’ process. On the website of the festival, where there is information about the collaboration, the credit is presented as “Choreography: Monika Rebcová and the performers”. She is also credited with the dramaturgical co-ordination, which serves to buttress her position of power in the collaboration. This also brings to bare the insidiousness of cultural hegemony, in that the members and their artistic director were blinded to the power imbalance at play, as they believed nobody forced anything on them nor took anything from them by force.

While in Ghana, the collaborators took advantage of the collaboration to seek further funding opportunities. The piece they created together with the members of the GDE, which they titled ‘work in progress’, was performed at the Mawere Opoku Dance Hall. During this performance they invited the Czech ambassador to Ghana and some dignitaries to witness what they did, in order to seek funding for their current and future work. It is important to state at this point that the TANEC Praha festival is an NGO and therefore operates with funding support from other organisations and individuals. On the TANEC Praha website the production is credited as “TANEC PRAHA Festival in co-operation with the Czech Embassy in Accra and the Ministry of Culture of Ghana”. It is interesting that the Ministry is willing to support a foreign organisation working with the GDE and not the GDE directly.

The above notwithstanding, it is very difficult to differentiate between the TANEC Praha festival and the LIFT (which is a company limited) in terms of commercial interests. This is mainly because on their website tickets were sold to patrons interested in participating in the festival, just as LIFT sold tickets in the 1993 festival.

In my discussions with the members, it was apparent that they did not have comprehensive information about the collaborative relationship that the Institute established with TANEC Praha. As established in the previous chapter, the members

are often not privy to details regarding the GDE's engagements – they are only given the necessary information that allows them to execute their duties as dancers and musicians. A further investigation of the information provided on the festival's website, reveals a long-term collaborative plan between the Institute and TANEC Praha:

The head of the group [Ayittey] studied dance in the USA and seeks to open pathways for his artists to find their own contemporary expression, examine 'Western' cultures and connect what is near to both worlds. He therefore welcomed the offer to work for a few weeks with Czech choreographer Monika Rebcová, a graduate of the Music Academy in the field of contemporary dance pedagogy and a promoter of African culture. Her stay in Accra in September [2016] led to a deeper examination of both cultures and resulted in enthusiasm on the part of both sides to develop long-term cooperation. The first output of the project is *Ghana Sunrise* (TANEC PRAHA, 2017).

Ayittey earlier stated (interview, 21 August 2017) that they did not get any financial benefit from this collaboration, as "we do it for charity, because if you do that, something good will come out of it". This statement is confirmed in the above description with regard to the long-term relationship he anticipated.

From my interactions with the members, and also with Ayittey, I did not get a comprehensively satisfactory description of the collaboration, which points to the fact that they did not really understand what the project was about. The following description of the site-specific collaborative piece that began with 'work in progress', not only provides an adequate description of the project, but also highlights the position of the festival organiser:

Ghana Sunrise is primarily a dialogue between the cultures of two continents: Africa and Europe. It is based on the personal experiences of various dancers in close collaboration with musicians. It symbolises the sun's humble greeting on the shores of the Atlantic, among the unbelievably accommodating Africans with their contagious energy, rhythm in the body and smiles. **This dialogue about the awakening of a unique contemporary Ghanaian culture is also an incentive for all of us to awaken a sense of rhythm in ourselves.** Africans are well aware that the simplest things bring joy. This Ghanaian-Czech site-specific project culminates in an offer for everyone to get up and dance (emphasis mine) (TANEC PRAHA, 2017).

From the above, there seem to be an echo of the binary view of intercultural performance as an encounter between the 'own' and the 'foreign' culture, whereby the foreign culture serves to revitalise old and tired Western performance forms

(Fischer-Lichte, 1990:279). "Awakening a sense of rhythm in ourselves" and the references to 'Africans' when writing about a specific collaboration with Ghanaians, all serve as indications of an imperialist gaze that is constantly aware of the binary of 'us' versus 'them' or 'own' versus 'other.' Such deeply ingrained imperialistic inflections in collaborations have, however, not marred the GDE participants' sense of gain in the collaboration.

7.6 Benefits of International Collaborations to GDE Members

Artistic director, Ben Ayithey, places a lot of emphasis on establishing long-term relationships with foreign partners and organisations, because he links the success of the company to international engagements. For this reason, even though the Czech collaboration was not financially rewarding to the GDE, he saw an opportunity in the long-term relationship.

On the other hand, he also seems to be interested in the artistic development of the members, which informed his saying that the following: "The benefit gained [in the Czech collaboration] is the artistic skill of the members. For this trip in particular we did not get anything [in monetary terms] from them" (interview, 21 August 2017). Similarly, GDE-M1 (focus group discussion, 20 May 2017) added: "For me I will say I have gained nothing [in past collaborations]. In the sense that when Monica [Czech choreographer] came and worked with us, there was a follow up. Hence, you can say you benefited from it. But, with the others, there is nothing like that."

Other members also talked about the benefits they have acquired from such collaborations. For instance, GDE-M2 (focus group discussion, 20 May 2017) commented as follows: "When we went to India, I also learned something from their dances and songs. Where we had to create rhythms out of our local drums to fit into their movements. It was really an experience for me, too." GDE-D5 (focus group discussion, 20 May 2017) also added:

I will say I have improved in my improvisational skills. The approach that I used to learn other dances, has really improved. Travelling and performing with other choreographers has improved my way of creativity in movements in terms of creating something out of nothing.

At professional level the GDE seems to benefit from such collaborations, as the members learn improvisational skills, contemporary dance movements, foreign dances and rhythms, as well as other skills relevant for the development of their

profession as dancers and musicians. These new skills form the basis of new dances that the GDE members put together and add to the GDE creative dance repertoire. According to GDE-D3 (focus group, 20 May 2017), the following:

Creative dances, like the Blanza, are dances we create ourselves. Each member contributes a movement to the dance. We are usually given the opportunity to create such dances using movements that we have created ourselves. It is the artistic director who picks and chooses which movements are good and brings them together to create the dance and add to the repertoire.

The GDE members lay claim to such dances as their own, despite the fact that the artistic director takes the credit for choreography. This is mainly because he picks and chooses which movements to put together into a well-choreographed piece. Through the various collaborations in which the GDE members have been involved over the years, they are able to develop and contribute new dance movements to create new dances.

7.7 International Reception of the GDE's Performances

Since its establishment in 1962, the GDE has performed its rich repertoire of traditional dances and creative choreographic pieces around the world. These performances have received critical acclaim across the African continent and Europe. The GDE's international tours provide fertile ground for the interrogation of how their intercultural activities are received at macro-level. As established by Lo and Gilbert (2002:31), "cross-cultural theatre is characterised by the conjunction of specific cultural resources at the level of narrative content, performance aesthetics, production processes, and /or reception by an interpretive community".

In the same vein, Desmond (1997:16) has the following to say about the 'performative' nature of dancing bodies: "[They] enact a conception of self and social community mediated by the particular historical aesthetic dimensions of the dance forms and their precise conditions of reception." The 'conditions of reception' Desmond refers to, is very important to consider as it provides a basis for discussing the nature of international reception of the GDE's performances.

On the international stage where 'conditions of reception' take on imperialistic stereotypical dimensions, the sociocultural conditions of reception dissipate within hegemonic structures and market demands. Lo and Gilbert (2002:44) argue that it is

important to situate intercultural performance within “identifiable fields of sociopolitical and historical relations” which lays the foundation for asking questions about individual and collective power at any point within the production and reception process. Such questions as:

Whose economic and/or political interests are being served? How is the working process represented to the target audience, and why? Who is the target audience and how can differences be addressed within this constituency? How does a specific intercultural event impact on the wider socio-political environment?

These questions, when applied to the intercultural activities of the GDE discussed in the foregoing sections, situates the GDE’s intercultural activities within the postcolonial frame. In terms of whose political and or economic interests are being served, the examples presented in the foregoing discussion paints a picture to the effect that, even though the GDE seems to have its own agenda in its international endeavours, it is clear that they serve the interests of the initiators and funders of the events.

The other questions address issues of reception and serve to highlight how, in the international engagements of the GDE, these questions are glossed over as they move straight to presentation for the benefit of an audience. A European audience, typically interested in the ‘exotic’, patronise such performances which end up serving the economic interests of the event organisers, who are also Europeans.

In their discussion of the cross-cultural nature of most postcolonial theatre, Lo and Gilbert (2002:35) have noted that “in terms of reception, audiences for postcolonial theatre are complex, typically varying across geographical regions while being differentially influenced by class and race”. The complexity of the GDE’s audiences can be seen in the fact that they have performed across nations and cultures with favourable reception. Vivek Chaudhary (1993), a reporter for *The Guardian* in the UK reports as follows on the GDE:

The Ghana Dance Ensemble has performed in countries as far apart as Mexico and India, and has established a reputation for being one of the most exciting dance groups in Africa. [...] Watching the Ghana Dance Ensemble is not only a rare treat for enthusiasts interested in a dazzling display of dance, but a joyful insight into the richness of Ghanaian culture. They are a credit not only to their country, but indeed the whole of Africa.

Sophie Constanti (1993), a journalist for *The Spectator* in the UK, gives a detailed

review of the GDE's performance in the LIFT festival of 1993. Her review entitled "How the Mighty have Faded", combines a review of the Russian Kirov Ballet's performance at the London Coliseum and the Ghana Dance Ensemble's performance at Old Spitalfields Market. While her critique of the Russian company speaks directly to the title of her review, it is difficult to tell how the title reflects the favourable review she gave the GDE's performance:

The Ghana Dance Ensemble, on a first visit to Britain as part of the London International Festival of Theatre, is testament to the astonishing variety and richness of African dance, drama and music ... The Ghana Dance Ensemble speaks to an audience the moment it finds itself in the company of one. While the Ghana Dance Ensemble illustrates the compulsive energy and sinewy strength that **tally with Western notions of African physicality**, it also highlights the subtlety of hand movements, the forceful use of the head as a directional indicator and the infectious joy that binds performers and onlookers (emphasis mine).

It is interesting that Constanti found it necessary to touch on the fact that the GDE's performance tallies with "Western notions of African physicality", mainly because this stereotypical expectation is what guaranteed the GDE a place in the whole event. This argument can be gleaned from Emma Manning's (1993) review of the same performance:

Whilst the basic vocabulary of the steps is limited, individuals boast exceptional skills, and Ashaley Hammond did amazing tricks with five spinning bowls in his acrobatic divertissement [...], **the essence of this type of show is its powerful theatricality**, and the performers' genuine desire to entertain cannot help but make and audience glow.

Manning's critical review above touches on the 'typicality' of the GDE's performance, which points to the fact that such performances have become a 'type' that is a common fixture in European festivals. Interestingly, a Ghanaian journalist, Catherine Sackey, reporting for the now defunct *West Africa*⁴⁰, concentrated more on contextualising the group's existence and the positive reception it was given during the LIFT festival. She wrote:

The ecstatic drumbeats had an influence which was described as 'infectious and kind of moving', one could hardly sit still and listen to the group, you had

⁴⁰ A weekly news magazine in the UK that shut down in 2005.

to move. I was actually embraced by the resounding rhythms from as far as Liverpool Street Station, which ushered me to the action spot [...]. The Ghana Dance Ensemble has become a household name in many parts of the world, especially in the Diaspora. Founded in 1962, it continues to enjoy the enviable reputation of being Africa's leading dance and drama ensemble.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the GDE has acquired immense experience in their macro-intercultural practices over the years. Their success can be attributed to the success of their micro-intercultural practices discussed in the previous chapter. The intercultural experience of the GDE at the micro-level may hold some lessons for a more ethical, if not equitable, macro-intercultural practice.

7.8 Ethics of Representation: Lessons from the Micro for the Macro

In order to justify the intercultural nature of the GDE's practice at the micro-level, I established the socio-historical and cultural uniqueness of each of the diverse ethnic groups in Ghana in Chapter 3. This knowledge put the primordialist actions of some of the GDE members in perspective. Operating within a multi-ethnic setting, the GDE has managed to represent the ethnic cultures of Ghana in an ethically satisfactory manner, which can be traced back to the practices of the founding fathers.

As discussed in Chapter 6, extensive research went into collecting and documenting the diverse ethnic cultures within the country for the purposes of cultural representation. Through this research, Nketia and Opoku kept close contact with the natives who ensured that their culture was not misrepresented at any point.

TSstaying committed to proper representation of another culture, is having respect for that culture. This point is made clear by Nketia in the previous chapter, which highlights the importance of respect for other cultures as the key to forming bridges in intercultural encounters. In representing another culture, the artist must have a lot of respect for the culture of the people, in order not to misrepresent them through performance.

Another important practice that ensured ethically sound representation, is feedback. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Opoku consulted chiefs and opinion leaders of each of the communities they visited concerning their local dances in terms of character of the dance, historical background, and sociocultural and aesthetic associations (Abloso, 2013). In each case he sought permission to rearrange the dances before he worked on them, and afterwards he would present it back to the community for

approval and criticism.

In keeping themselves in check with the representation process, they maintained strong ties with the village experts who gave them feedback on the choreographies and taught them new dances, since appropriate representation must be an ongoing process.

The problem of ethics of representation in intercultural performance practices at the macro-level may be addressed through such practices as highlighted above in the case of the GDE. Ethics of representation in intercultural performance has been a major issue in intercultural performance scholarship at international level. It is therefore not surprising that Knowles (2010) describes intercultural performance as 'fraught territory'. This is mainly because "[...] it raises issues about cultural imperialism, appropriation and colonisation, even as it offers a utopian promise of a world where race and cultural difference do not matter" (ibid:1 – 2).

Knowles (2010:1 – 2) attributes the problems of interculturalism to the fact that its history and criticism are located in the West "where the resources and reason to dominate exchange are concentrated". Criticism of intercultural performance at international level largely spins from reactions against imperialistic tendencies of Euro-Western cultures during intercultural encounters. If the "reason and resources" to dominate 'exchange' are concentrated in the West, then any encounter with formerly marginalised cultures must be examined critically. The reason has a genesis in cultural imperialism, but goes beyond that to include capitalist interests in the 21st century. The *Mahabharata* by Peter Brook, for example, has been described by Euro-Western critics (Marvin Carlson, Patrice Pavis, Erika Fischer-Lichte) as a major intercultural performance 'success' story of the 20th century. However, Brook's main critics (Bharucha, Chaudhuri, Jeyifo), writing from non-Western positions, have reacted against it, calling the production an "appropriation and reordering of non-Western material within an orientalist framework of thought and action, which has been specifically designed for the international market" (Bharucha, 1993:68).

Similarly, Una Chaudhuri (1991) criticises Brook's appropriation of Indian material into a Western context as displacement of the original material. The critical reception of Brook's *Mahabharata* by Indian scholars lies at the heart of ethics of representation in that it revealed how

[i]ntercultural performance had unwittingly participated in the commodification of the 'other' and thereby the perpetuation of the colonial project, in which the raw materials of the world (including its cultures and peoples) were and are grist for the colonial mill of western industry and capitalist production (Knowles, 2010 21 – 22).

Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins (2000:182) decried the future prospects of intercultural performance or works as “more likely to be tied to patterns of consumption than to idealistic notions of cultural exchange”. There is hope, however, in intercultural works and practices that arise from genuine interest to forge ‘solidarities across difference’. These intercultural works seem to provide answers to Knowles’ (2010:30) questions regarding the goals of intercultural exchange and his conclusion that, perhaps, under the right circumstances of exchange, “the work of intercultural performance might more effectively function to redress rather than perpetuate the colonial project and might help to perform into being a more equitable basis for exchange”.

The macro-intercultural performances of the GDE discussed in the foregoing, have been those with European collaborators. It is practically impossible to discuss such collaborations without foregrounding the “material inequalities, power and funding differentials, and the different ways in which performances are situated within cultures” (Knowles, 2010:20). These issues directly affect ethical and equitable intercultural exchange. On the other hand, exchanges that are motivated by a genuine interest in forging solidarities across difference, usually involve an encounter between cultures that are considered to be on a levelled playing field. Typical examples of such cultures are formerly colonised cultures operating within the postcolonial frame.

In 2015 the Ghana Dance Ensemble had the opportunity to participate in one such cultural exchange in India, a formerly colonised country. The event that brought together dancers and musicians from various African countries and India, was the Third India-Africa Forum Summit held in New Delhi: from 26 to 30 October 2015. Nii

Yartey⁴¹, who had at the time resigned from his position as the artistic director of the National Theatre Dance Company, led the group to India. He assumed the position of artistic director of the GDE when Ben Ayittey travelled for an eight-month Fulbright scholarship.

The four-day summit brought together 54 African heads of states to discuss and develop a framework for strategic co-operation between India and Africa. The theme for the summit was “Partners in progress: Towards a Dynamic and Transformative Development Agenda”. To mark the opening and end of the summit, there was a cultural show organised by the Ministry of External Affairs in collaboration with the Delhi International Arts Festival. The cultural event came together under the theme “Africa in India” (Basu, 2015). The closing ceremony brought together cultural groups from India and several African countries including Egypt, Ghana, Ethiopia, Zambia, Congo, Nigeria, Uganda and Morocco.

The opening and closing ceremonies saw a genuine co-operation between African and Indian cultural groups, where music and dance traditions from all the cultures involved, were fused to create a new piece to highlight the theme of partnership and co-operation between Africa and India. GDE-M1 (telephone interview, 7 April 2017), who was part of the team that went to India, confirmed the collaborative work they did:

In India it was a collaboration with various groups, unlike the Czech one where we performed for them to watch. We all contributed our dances and music to create something new. The only collaborative part in the Czech one was with just two artistes.

GDE-M9 (interview, 3 August 2017) also spoke about the collaborative experience during the trip to India:

In India we were about 135 musicians who came together and created a piece for the opening and closing ceremonies. There were several drums and instruments. We, the Ghanaian drummers, introduced our rhythm and they saw that our timing was somehow okay for them to work with than the other

⁴¹ I had scheduled an interview with Nii Yartey before this trip to India; however, I did not have the opportunity to tap into his wealth of knowledge and experience, working with the GDE. Nii Yartey passed away while in India on this assignment.

rhythm. So ours became the foundation for all of them to join and it worked. We only played the Fontomfrom drum, and they joined with their various instruments and rhythm.

According to Basu (2015), India's Ministry of External Affairs and the New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) held a week of cultural events in New Delhi, which focused exclusively on African performance forms. GDE-M1 (interview, 7 April 2017) confirmed this when he said:

We did not perform our traditional dances alone during the programme itself. The main reason why we went there, was the African summit programme, but apart from that, the Indian commission for culture also organized some programmes for us to perform and showcase our culture.

Through this collaboration the various performers learnt from each other by working in an environment of mutual respect and a genuine interest in learning about each other's cultures. A performer from the Choka Bonga group from Zambia had the following to say about the whole event: "This week's summit had brought not just the political and business leaders closer, but also the people of India and Africa" (Basu, 2015). GDE-M1 (telephone interview, 7 April 2017) also added the following: "The reception was very good. They were interested in our drums, because they have not seen such huge drums. Wherever we go, they take pictures of our drums."

The experience in India, according to GDE-M1, was different because all the artistes came together to create a performance that reflected their collective cultural capital. The political and economic agenda that brought these performers together, recognizes the collective struggles that confront all the nations involved, as postcolonial (with the exception of Ethiopia) nations. According to Knowles (2010), theatrical interculturalism in Africa and India in the early 20th century, developed primarily in response to the colonial enterprise. This same enterprise has created a common ground between Africa and India in their effort to forge alliances towards addressing issues affecting the continent and subcontinent respectively. Consequently, cultural exchange at this level can be described as devoid of imperialistic agenda, and more as an attempt to forge alliances towards addressing issues of common concern.

The GDE's contact with other African countries began with their participation in Malawi's independence celebration in 1964 (Adinku, 2000). They have since travelled across the subregion for performance engagements. These continental

performances are not collaborative, as they are often engaged to showcase their rich repertoire of dances during interregional events. A typical example of continental collaboration between the GDE and other performance groups, can be seen in the 3rd African Summit Forum discussed above.

On the other hand, exchanges between former colonising cultures and formerly colonised cultures in most cases retain imperialistic prints. This is mainly because of Knowles's (2010) statement that both the reason and resources to dominate other cultures are based in the West. The playing field is never levelled, as the resources rest with the European partners in such encounters.



Figure 7.2: The gaze and the spectacle: A GDE dancer performing the Ga Kpanlogo during the Czech 'exchange'. Photo credit: Ghana Dance Ensemble.

Holledge and Tompkin's (2000:182) observation that the future prospects of intercultural performance or works are "more likely to be tied to patterns of consumption than to idealistic notions of cultural exchange", paints a grim picture about intercultural performance at international level, especially in the context of festivals. However, such practices by the GDE as proper research, respect for other cultures, and feedback on how other cultures have been represented in any given intercultural relations, may go a long way to ensure a more ethical representation of cultures other than own.

7.9 Conclusions

In the foregoing discussion, I have analysed the macro-intercultural activities of the GDE, by situating the company as a product of the postcolonial and historical conditions of its setting. The GDE's position as a postcolonial product cannot be overlooked when discussing its external relations, i.e. exchanges and festival participations, with imperialistic cultures that have a tendency of othering cultures foreign to theirs.

While the GDE exercises its own form of agency in such intercultural encounters, the company is not shielded from the hegemonic constructs with which its European partners approach the exchange. That notwithstanding, there seems to be a meeting ground between the GDE's focus on authenticity and that of international festival organisers in that, while the GDE by design promotes authentic Ghanaian cultural traditions, festival organisers ride on such authentic traditions to promote their events.

Festival organisers are strictly in business to make profit, and therefore exist to cater to the demands of the market. There may therefore not be a specific mandate on their part to promote genuine intercultural contact. The fact that the GDE is able to project its mandate to promote authentic Ghanaian culture, even in the face of imperialistic patronage, is proof that the reason for its establishment – to fight against the colonial project of cultural imperialism, has stood the test of time.

The problem of ethics of representation in intercultural performance seems to be non-existent in more collaborative encounters where the playing field is more or less levelled. Encounters such as those between postcolonial cultures seem to find a common ground in which to create something new, from the cultural capitals of all the cultures involved. In such cases there are no objects of spectacle, as all cultures and people involved are gazing at what unifies them through their unique cultures, rather than the commodification and objectification of difference.

The GDE's international performances have received critical acclaim across the globe through the engagements of festival organisers who largely cater to European audiences. The reception of the group's performances on such stages by European audiences typically interested in the 'exotic', highlights how such engagements serve the economic interests of the European event organisers. As the GDE is seemingly

oblivious of the power relations in these encounters, it appears the group has managed to foreground its own agency of showcasing the authentic cultural traditions of Ghana.

Furthermore, the GDE members have over the years benefitted, in terms of professional development, from such collaborations even as they share their traditions with the collaborators.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Conclusions

8.1.1 Understanding Ethnic Diversity within the Frame of Intercultural Performance

The theoretical thought that conceptualised this study, began with the epigram in Chapter 2 by Hountondji, who draws attention to the internal pluralism within Africa and within the nations on the continent. These thoughts, along with Bharucha's (1997:31) view that "in our search for 'other cultures' we tend to forget the cultures within our own boundaries, the differences which are marginalised and occasionally silenced in our imagined homogeneities", are what theoretically informed my search into the interculturalism of the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

In order to buttress the need for this microscopic view of intercultural performance, Bharucha (1996:200) notes that "the 'intracultural' – the interaction of local cultures within the boundaries of a particular state – as opposed to the 'intercultural' – the exchange of cultures across nations – needs to be reinstated at a time when globalising forces are in the process of homogenising 'indigenous' cultures everywhere". The micro, which is more or less the same as the "intracultural" proposed by Bharucha, is a neglected theory and research site, even though its importance is evident in the internal cultural tension barely held at bay by the spirit of nationalism.

My main aim in this study has been to reconsider 'Intracultural' performance as "micro Intercultural' performance, considering the diverse cultures within Africa as a continent, and more specifically within Ghana as a country, are as distinct from each other as cultures geographically apart.

Through the conceptual framework for the study, I have drawn attention to the fact that the micro-intercultural operates within the multicultural, to take shape before any encounters can take place at the macro-intercultural level; all of which fall within the postcolonial context. The proposed framework neatly situated this research on the intercultural activities of the GDE, since it was not my aim to analyse specific performances of the company – though specific examples of their performances served to illustrate their practice both within and outside the country.

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that the performance activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble can be discussed within the frame of intercultural performance. The single-case study design with an interpretivist approach has comprehensively captured the nature and context of the intercultural performance activities of the GDE at the micro- and macro-levels of interaction. The principal objective for using the case-study methodology was to have a deep understanding of the “actors, the interactions, sentiments and behaviours occurring for a specific process through time [...]” (Woodside, 2010:16).

The main challenge was to convert the emic data, received from the participants, into an etic interpretation and representation through “description and explanation of emic meaning, as well as building composite accounts of the process based on data triangulation” (Woodside, 2010:16). It was important to establish my position as a researcher in this study, in order to foreground my own biases. Merriam (1998) has noted that the researcher as the main instrument of the research process, especially in a qualitative study, brings his/her own subjectivities to the research. It therefore was necessary for me to identify and establish my own biases and assumptions, as they would affect the entire research process – from data collection through to reporting of findings.

As a Ghanaian belonging to a specific ethnic group from the Northern Region, I have been culturally trained with certain fallacies about other ethnic groups. The possibility of these assumptions affecting the research process, was very high. However, it helped that I was acutely aware of my own conceptions about other ethnic groups before going into the field to collect data; and this awareness also guided my interpretations of the findings. Peshkin (1998) in his paper on subjectivity in a multi-ethnic high school notes that the following:

It is no more useful for researchers to acknowledge simply that subjectivity is an invariable component of their research than it is for them to assert that their ideal is to achieve objectivity. Beginning with the premise that subjectivity is inevitable. [...] [He] argues that researchers should systematically seek out their subjectivity, not retrospectively when the data have been collected and the analysis is complete, but while their research is actively in progress. The purpose of doing so, is to enable researchers to be aware of how their subjectivity may be shaping their inquiry and its outcomes.

The constant awareness of my own subjectivities helped me to distance myself from the environment in order to be objective as a researcher. On the other hand, my

knowledge of the environment also helped to define the study by setting boundaries for data collection and scope of analysis. This position is backed by Peshkin (1998:18) who notes that “one’s subjectivities could be seen as virtuous, for bias is the basis from which researchers make a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities, and joined to the data they have collected”. I was therefore able to bring my unique sets of lenses to bear on the data collected against the theoretical frame of the study to present a discursive analysis aimed at addressing my research questions.

As was presented in Chapter 5, the internal structure of the GDE reveals a deliberate strategy that brings together dancers and musicians from the ethnic diversity of the country, towards the promotion of national unity. From my interactions with the members and the artistic director, the reality of ethnic difference fractures this utopian view of the group. While some members have primordialist inclinations, others have learned to embrace their national identity even as they maintain strong ties with their ethnic origins.

Interestingly, even though all the dancers and musicians in the company are affected by prevailing working conditions imposed by the University, some are able to look past the collective struggle in order to fulfil ethnic duties to the leadership, who happen to belong to their ethnicity. Such actions expose the reality of the concept of unity in diversity at the national level, since the Ghana Dance Ensemble supposedly is a microcosm of the nation.

Furthermore, the GDE’s position as a postcolonial product cannot be overlooked when discussing its external relations – exchanges and festival participations, with imperialistic cultures – that have a tendency of othering cultures foreign to theirs. It came to the fore that, while the GDE exercises its own form of agency in such intercultural encounters, the company is not shielded from the hegemonic constructs its European partners approach the exchange with. That notwithstanding, there seem to be a meeting ground between the GDE’s focus on authenticity and that of international festival organisers in that, while the GDE by design promotes authentic Ghanaian cultural traditions, festival organisers ride on such authentic traditions to promote their events.

In its fifty years of existence the GDE's international performances have received critical acclaim across the globe, through the engagements of festival organisers who largely cater to European audiences. The reception of the group's performances on such stages by European audiences – typically interested in the 'exotic' – highlights how such engagements serve the economic interests of the European event organisers. As the GDE is seemingly oblivious of the power relations in these encounters, it appears the group has managed to foreground its own agency of showcasing the authentic cultural traditions of Ghana. Furthermore, the GDE members have over the years benefitted in terms of professional development from such collaborations, even as they share their traditions with the collaborators.

The epigram at the beginning of Chapter 2, which stimulated my thoughts on intercultural performance at the micro-level, has found expression in the activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble in that the company constantly negotiates and confronts the pluralism within its structure and in its performance practices within the nation. However, while "pluralism in the true sense does not stem from the intrusion of Western civilization into our continent [...]", that 'intrusion' has become a defining factor in the postcolonial struggles of Africa today. It is that same intrusion that necessitated the need for cultural reassessment and reclamation, which gave the Ghana Dance Ensemble its footing.

8.2 Recommendations

8.2.1 Ethics of Representation: Lessons for Macro-Intercultural Practice

As discussed in Chapter 7 (see Sec. 7.8), the intercultural nature of the GDE's practice at the micro-level provides some lessons for the macro-intercultural practice. Operating within a multi-ethnic setting, the GDE has managed to represent the ethnic cultures of Ghana in an ethically satisfactory manner, which can be traced back to the practices of the founding fathers.

Through extensive research, respect for other cultures, expert training, and feedback from the various communities, the founding fathers were able to represent the ethnic cultures within the nation in a more ethical way.

At the international level practitioners like Peter Brook and Ariane Mnouchkine have been criticised for misappropriation of cultures other than their own (see Knowles

2010; Pavis, 1996; Lo & Gilbert, 2002). While these practitioners cling to the argument of artistic licence for their practice, they cannot deny the fact that cultural traditions have origins directly linked to the historical foundations and existence of a specific people. Chin (1991:94) in his critique of ethics of intercultural practice as invasive globalisation, notes that the following:

Interculturalism hinges on the questions of autonomy and empowerment. To deploy elements from the symbol system of another is very delicate enterprise. In its crudest terms, the question is: When does that usage act as cultural imperialism? Forcing elements from disparate cultures together, does not seem to be a solution that makes much sense aesthetically, ethically, or philosophically. What does that prove: that the knowledge of other cultures exists? That information about other cultures now is readily available?

Therefore, in any given intercultural enterprise the autonomy of the interacting cultures must be foregrounded and given agency through mutual respect for the cultures involved. Such practices as proper research, respect for other cultures, and feedback on how such cultures have been represented in any given intercultural relation, may go a long way to ensure a more ethical representation of cultures other than own.

8.2.2 Macro-Intercultural Engagements of the GDE and the Problem of Communication

From my interactions with the members of the GDE, it became apparent that they are not given enough information regarding exchanges between the group and external partners. The root of this issue lies in the internal workings of the GDE, as members are usually given just enough information to enable them to perform as dancers and musicians.

In intercultural work of any kind, communication is key, and if the participants do not have a comprehensive knowledge of what the 'exchange' is about, it takes away their agency as cultural representatives. I would therefore recommend that the GDE leadership ensure that adequate information is made available to the members before they are selected or required to participate in any form of exchange. The structure of the GDE should be more flexible to allow some form of democracy in the operations of the company, where the members' contribution and voice are valued. The position of the members as professional cultural ambassadors with experience in intercultural relations must be given some elevation towards their professional and

personal development. This is especially important in a University system that has no quantification for practical knowledge towards promotion for GDE members.

8.2.3 Further Recommendations

In comparison to the National Theatre Dance Company, which is state funded and has more performance opportunities, the GDE is struggling both in terms of funding and performance engagements at international level. The main problems affecting the GDE can be attributed to its current position as a demonstration group within the Institute of African Studies. By design, the GDE is a state folk dance ensemble with a clear mandate to promote and project authentic Ghanaian culture to Ghanaians and the world. It is therefore detrimental to its mandate and success to remain under a University system, which does not recognise the extent of the demands of such a company. The GDE can only succeed and develop as a company if its budgetary and operational demands do not compete with the tight budget of the Institute.

In its 55 years of existence, it is quite surprising that the GDE with preservation as a core mandate does not have a complete video catalogue of all dances and musical forms in its repertoire. Culture documentation has become very important in the increasingly globalising world that seeks to homogenise all cultures. Documenting the GDE's repertoire of dances in an audio-visual format, will not only capture and preserve the dances, but also make them easily accessible for other intercultural practices. The dances in digital form can also become source material for research and artistic exploration, since the GDE operates within a University system.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the mandate of the GDE was two-fold: to preserve aspects of dying traditional cultures while using such cultures as source for creative development. The GDE, however, leans heavily towards cultural preservation, much to the neglect of creative development. The rich cultural material in the custody of the GDE could generate new creative dances, capable of putting the group at the forefront of dance performance on the continent and beyond.

I would therefore recommend that the GDE begins to operate beyond the preservationist frame, and explore other creative prospects, using the rich Ghanaian dance vocabulary in conjunction with current trends of dance around the world. The GDE can put up productions at the National Theatre and also tour with such pieces along with the neo-traditional dances. Such creative strides would ensure that the

GDE is more vibrant and reduce their dependence on external engagements. It would also create opportunities or point of interest for other companies to collaborate with the GDE in intercultural experiments.

8.2.4 Areas for Further Research

In conducting this research, I have identified some areas that I think require further research with regard to the operations of the GDE. A comparative analysis of the GDE and the National Theatre Dance Company's operations, will be a good starting point towards understanding the position of the GDE as a professional dance company within the University system.

Another area that requires research, is local audience reception of the GDE's performances. Here the inquiry will focus on both audiences in ethnic enclaves and those in the capital city where audiences are more eclectic. Through this research, the perceived role and relevance of the GDE will be tested against Ghanaian audience perception and expectations in 21st century Ghana.

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Addendum A: Interview Consent Document



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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: The Intercultural Activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble (1964 – 2014).

REFERENCE NUMBER: 20122551

RESEARCHER/PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Rashida Resario

ADDRESS: Department of Drama and Theatre Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Stellenbosch – South Africa.

CONTACT NUMBER: +233-243927360

EMAIL ADDRESS: shheeda@gmail.com

Dear respondent,

My name is Rashida Resario. I am a PhD student at Stellenbosch University with the Department of Drama and Theatre Studies. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project entitled “The Intercultural Activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble (1964 – 2014)”.

Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project, and contact me if you require further explanation or clarification of any aspect of the study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the Humanities Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at Stellenbosch University and will be conducted according to accepted and applicable national and international ethical guidelines and principles.

This research seeks to investigate the intercultural activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble (GDE) from its establishment up to 2014. Defined as “the meeting in the moment of performance of two or more cultural traditions”, Interculturalism at the level of performance, has been practiced and theorised by the West as a kind of performance that can only take place between cultures geographically apart from each other. As a result, there have been ethical concerns raised about intercultural performance involving Euro-Western cultures and their ex-colonies – as such encounters are considered as happening on unequal grounds. Many Scholars have viewed such cultural ‘exchanges’ as perpetrating colonial interests, where Europe and the Western world plunder cultural materials – like they did mineral resources during colonial times and beyond – for their own purposes without regard for the context from which such resources are taken.

Echoing Rustom Bharucha, I therefore ask if inter-ethnic interactions at the level of performance can be viewed as intercultural performance, since ethnic groups within a nation are distinct from one another. Unlike Bharucha, however, my research is situating inter-ethnic performance through the activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, within the frame of intercultural performance and not intracultural performance. My main argument here is that, even though the various ethnic groupings live within the same geographical space, they are not homogenous – and

where there are differences, there are bound to be issues of power relations that are constantly negotiated even at the level of performance. Situating my work within this frame, therefore, I am investigating how the activities of the GDE at the micro-level mirror intercultural performance at the macro-level with its attending criticism.

Taking an interpretivist approach, this single-case study research will rely heavily on interviews, archival records, secondary data, and interviews of current and past members and artistic directors of the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

As a potential respondent, there will not be any physical or psychological risk associated with your participation in this research. Your participation will be in the form of granting an interview, which will be recorded, in the capacity of someone with knowledge about my case – The Ghana Dance Ensemble. Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Any information shared with me, will be treated as highly confidential and will not be disclosed bearing your name, on any platform. Interview records will be deleted from any storage point after the dissertation has been submitted. When reporting my findings, all names of respondents with sensitive information will be made anonymous – unless permission is granted by the person in question.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the attached Declaration of Consent and hand it to the investigator.

Yours sincerely,

Principal Investigator

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT

By signing below, I,, agree to take part in a research study entitled: ‘The Intercultural Activities of the Ghana Dance Ensemble (1964 – 2014)’ and conducted by Rashida Resario

I declare that:

- I have read the attached information leaflet and it is written in a language in which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan as agreed to.
- All issues related to privacy and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide, have been explained to my satisfaction.

Signed at (place) on (date)

.....

Signature of participant

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in

[_____] and [no translator was used/this conversation was translated into _____ by _____].

Signature of Investigator.....Date.....

July to September 2016: preliminary field work planning on the selected case to determine the scope of the research.

5 September 2016: Visited the J.H. Nketia Archives at the Institute of African Studies to gather data on the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

15 September 2016: Made contact with the Ghana Dance Ensemble directors to state and explain my research interest, and to ask for permission to research the group.

October – November 2016: Selected my methodological approach and data collection tools based on prior extensive research.

10 November 2016: I sent the interview consent form to the administrative artistic director and went through it with him. He asked a few questions and gave me the green light to proceed and interview the group members.

15 November 2016: I conducted a personal interview with the technical artistic director.

20 November 2016: The technical artistic director introduced me to the leader of the group, who then introduced me to the rest of the members. I introduced myself to the group and explained the content of the interview consent form to all of them.

25 November 2016: I went to take pictures of all the instruments used by the Ghana Dance Ensemble and interviewed the master drummer, who is also the drum maker, about the origins of the instruments and the dances they accompany.

28^t November 2016: I conducted a personal interview with two dancers, male and female.

10 January 2017: I conducted a semi-structured interview with the surviving founder of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, J.H. Nketia.

11 – 28 February 2017: Collected statistical data on the Ghana Dance Ensemble members bordering on name, region of origin, ethnicity, indigenous language, home

town and place of birth. I also collected telephone numbers of the members during the process. All 36 members of the group willingly gave me this information.

6 and 7 April 2017: I conducted telephonic interviews, based on the members' willingness to participate. In all, 25 members participated in the interviews.

8 – 15 April 2017: I listened to the recorded telephonic interviews and selected participants for the focus group discussion based on the members' duration of service with the company, and participation in local and international exchanges. In the end, I selected ten members – five dancers and five musicians – for the focus group discussions.

20 May 2017: I conducted a focus group discussion with ten members of the Ghana Dance Ensemble. I explained the purpose of the study to them all over again and answered all their questions concerning the study, before I proceeded to moderate the discussion.

25 – 31 May 2017: I listened to all the recordings of the focus group discussion and transcribed the data.

1 – 5 June 2017: I transcribed the interview with J.H. Nketia.

6 – 8 June 2017: I transcribed the earlier interviews with the two dancers.

15 June – 30 August 2017: I listened to all the recordings, interviews and focus group discussions, and edited all the transcriptions of the interviews

3 August 2017: Interview with Christopher Ametefe, GDE drummer.

21 August 2017: Second interview with Mr Ben Ayithey, technical artistic director of the Ghana Dance Ensemble

9 September 2017: Second personal conversation with Dr Moses Nii Dortey, administrative artistic director of the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

10 June – September 2017: I began data analysis. Emerging themes from the interviews and focus group discussion transcriptions shaped the analysis and the conclusions I arrived at.