

Beyond the Melody: The Symbolic Meaning of *Kɔkɔsakyi* by Augustine Adu Safo

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Abstract

This research delves into the musical iconicity found within Adu Safo's music composition, "*Kɔkɔsakyi*" (Vulture), going beyond its mere melody to explore its cultural and symbolic dimensions. Employing a semiotic framework, the composition was sampled purposefully and used as case study to examine how various musical elements evoke and symbolize non-musical concepts, particularly focusing on the representation of the vulture as a symbol of procrastination within Ghanaian society. Using the idea of the theory of semiotics and its inherent analytical frame, the study unravels the understanding of Adu Safo's compositional techniques, shedding light on the creation of iconic music. Key findings indicate that "*Kɔkɔsakyi*" skillfully utilises melody, rhythm, and lyrics to depict the character of the vulture, offering insightful reflections on the perils of procrastination. By integrating sound and text within the cultural context of *Kɔkɔsakyi*, the composition underscores the capacity of a musical composition as a potent medium for conveying socio-cultural values. Ultimately, this paper serves as a valuable resource for educators, students, and composers alike, offering insights into the use of iconic representations in art music compositions.

Keywords: Adu Safo, *kɔkɔsakyi*, iconic music, vulture, music composition, semiotics

1. Introduction

Ghana has over the past years secured a bragging right over high quality of art music through the mind-boggling display of talent from the tall list of prolific art music composers as found in the generational map of art music composers indicated by Amuah (2012). Prominent among these gallant men is Augustine Adu Safo who composed the all-time favourite *Kɔkɔsakyi* in 1969. Information available on Augustine Adu Safo from his funeral brochure suggests his birth year as 1934. He commenced his teacher education at the Akropong Presbyterian Training College, now known as the Akropong Presbyterian College of Education, where he studied from 1952 to 1955. Subsequently, he pursued further studies at the Specialist College in Winneba, culminating in the acquisition of the Licentiate Royal School of Music Certificate in 1966. Transitioning into the realm of education, he embarked on a teaching career at the Erstwhile National Academy of Music, presently the Department of Music Education at the University of Education, Winneba. Additionally, he held instructional roles at the Musama School of Music, where he eventually rose to the position of director, serving from 1985 until his demise in 1988. Adu Safo's tenure was marked by notable achievements, including leadership roles such as head of the theory unit and conductor of the institutional choir. Among his array of choral compositions, *Kɔkɔsakyi* stands out as one of the most prominent and frequently performed pieces in Ghana. This composition, arranged for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass (SATB) voices, employs the symbolic character of the vulture as a conduit for

communication, resonating with the profound proverbial wisdom entrenched in Ghanaian culture. Thus, delving deeper into its symbolic significance beyond the melodic elements is essential for enriching the understanding and appreciation of this music during its performance.

Unarguably, understanding the iconic meaning behind a song provides deeper insight into its message, themes, and cultural context. It allows listeners to appreciate the song on a more profound level, beyond just its surface melody. Songs often contain symbols, metaphors, and references that are culturally specific (Giraldo, 2019). As Kuttner (2020) postulated, exploring these symbolic meanings helps to uncover the cultural significance within a particular community or society. We are of the view that, analysing the iconic elements of a song allows for interpretation and critical analysis and enables listeners to dissect the lyrics of the song, imagery, and themes to uncover layers of meaning and interpretation. It is worth stating that many songs are rooted in history, tradition, and folklore. Hence, understanding the symbolic meanings within a song can reveal connections to historical events, cultural traditions, and societal values, providing insight into the origin and evolution over time. In this regard, exploring the symbolic meaning beyond the melody enhances the emotional and psychological impact of the song, allowing listeners to connect with it on a deeper level. Artists often use symbolism as a form of artistic expression to convey complex ideas, evoke mood, or challenge societal norms (Bishop, 2023). Therefore, exploring the symbolic meaning beyond the melody helps to appreciate the creativity and artistry behind the songwriting and composition. Again, musicologists, linguists and cognitive scientists have analysed music from various perspectives. For instance, Cross (1998) conducted an analysis focusing on music perception, while Ben (2022) examined the sonic aspects of music within the framework of constructing science as sociocultural practices. Hanninen's (2009) analysis centered on the intersection of biology and music, exploring the biological aspects of musical expression. Additionally, Humberstone (2017) delved into the realm of musical pluralism and the science of music. Furthermore, scholars such as Julia et al. (2020) have delved into bibliometric analysis of music, while Marmoret et al. (2022) have explored audio-based music structure analysis. Again, Amuah and Wuaku (2019) have talked about the various uses of proverbs in Ghanaian choral music compositions while some other scholars have also concentrated on formal analytical viewpoints of some art music compositions in Ghana (Acquah, Annan & Sackey, 2022; Annan, Acquah, & Sackey, 2022; Amuah & Acquah, 2014; Owusu-Ansah & Acquah, 2020), including Acquah (2018) who went beyond formal analysis to look at the traditional nuances of an African musical drama. However, there is a notable gap in research concerning the ability of musical themes to reference objects and events in the world based on resemblance, known as referential iconicity. In this study, we delve into the realm of iconicity in music, employing concepts and methodologies from cognitive semiotics, a transdisciplinary field focused on the multifaceted nature of meaning (Zlatev, 2015). Meir (2010) distinguished between primary and secondary iconicity, with the former being so transparent that an interpreter can understand the iconic sign on this basis alone, while the latter requires prior knowledge of what the expression signifies. Additionally, Meir (2010) suggested that iconicity in language and music often appears to be secondary. However, research suggests that the resemblance between speech sounds and meaning can be subtly perceived by both adults and children (Imai & Kita, 2014), even across sensory modalities, prior to being informed of the meanings of the expressions. This phenomenon extends to Western programmatic music, which conveys extra-musical meanings such as literary ideas, legends, scenic descriptions, or personal dramas, in contrast to absolute or abstract music. In this study, we aim to empirically address the topic of referential iconicity in speech and music, using Augustine Adu Safo's

Kokosakyi choral composition as a case study. It is anticipated that this paper will contribute to a deeper understanding of the concept of iconicity among both composers and consumers of musical arts.

2. Theoretical Framework

Giraldo (2019), drawing upon the insights of Louhema (2018) and Stampoulidis (2019), underscores the interconnectedness of signs, highlighting that they operate within intricate relationships to convey composite meanings, akin to narratives. This characteristic is deeply ingrained in African culture, where symbolism permeates every facet, including music. Music possesses the remarkable ability to conjure specific imagery or scenarios in the listener's imagination, indicating a significant influence of relevant iconic words on the iconic information conveyed by music. Rooted in the interdisciplinary domain of cognitive semiotics, which amalgamates principles from linguistics, semiotics, and cognitive science (Zlatev, 2015), Giraldo (2019) references Peirce's (2006) classical definition, focusing on the “somebody” aspect—the interpreter—as a conscious entity who establishes the link between the representamen and the object, whether in the role of producer or comprehender. Scholars have elucidated Peirce's concept, defining a sign, or representamen, as something that denotes something to someone in a particular context or capacity (Lackovic, 2020; Lloyd, 2020; Peirce, 2006). The sign represents its object not comprehensively, but with reference to a conceptual framework, often termed the ground of the representamen (Bennett, 2016). Peirce posited precisely three fundamental semiotic components: the sign, object, and interpretant as we have illustrated below:

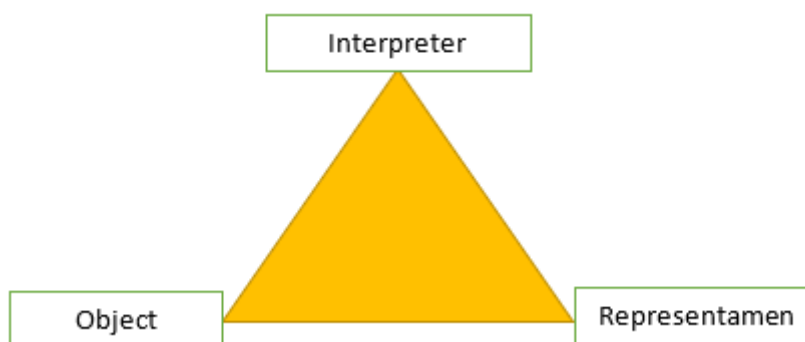


Fig 1: Process of semiosis espoused by Peirce (2006)

In the broadest sense, a sign (or representamen) serves to convey meaning about something (Peirce, 2006). This concept forms the theoretical basis for understanding the interplay between musical sounds and texts. Artists often creatively employ iconic objects to convey ideas to their intended audience. However, the interpretation of meaning ultimately lies with individual interpreters, who exercise their own discretion to decode the message based on their level of understanding and memory. When the representamen effectively provides guidance or clues, a relatively uniform meaning may emerge, facilitating effective communication to the benefit of the receiver.

3. Review of Related literature

3.1 Iconicity and Semiotics

Iconicity plays a fundamental role in creative processes of reasoning, such as modelling (Ljungberg, 2018). Models serve not only to orient ourselves in the physical world but also to sketch out problems, describe processes, or make decisions through diagrams, maps, or schemata. Mental images act as icons,

leading to new insights and the discovery of relations that may not be evident without their iconic representation (Massironi, 2001). An iconic sign is characterized by a form that mirrors its meaning, whereas arbitrariness pertains to signs in which the connection between form and meaning relies entirely on convention (Jakobson, 1965). As an example, a road sign featuring a bicycle image to indicate a bicycle lane is considered iconic because the form directly represents its meaning. On the other hand, a warning road sign characterized by a white triangle and red margins is arbitrary, as its visual components do not inherently correspond to its intended message. Iconicity permeates various domains beyond linguistic signs, exerting a notable influence on semiotics, the field concerned with the study of signs and signaling. While iconicity manifests in diverse forms of communication, language stands out as the paramount symbolic system, profoundly characterized by iconicity. This characteristic is especially pivotal in examining literary expressions of language, including prose and poetry, where the interplay between form and meaning assumes a central role.

According to Juslin (2013), one of the fundamental drivers of emotion in music is its iconic coding. The author suggests in multiple works that emotions in music performance originates from innate and universal "affect programs" designed for vocalizing emotions. Commenting further on this thought he stated the following:

Within this "functionalist" framework, which draws partly from Spencer's ideas (1857), iconically-coded expressions arise from involuntary physiological changes that are specific to emotions. These changes are closely linked to emotional reactions and have a significant impact on voice production. (p.596)

Indeed, this stems from evolutionary origins, exerts the most consistent influence on musical expression. Once more, there are numerous avenues through which meaning can be constructed and conveyed. It is imperative to examine all facets of communication, including language, imagery, and design, and consider how they interact within a given context to generate meaning. Semiotics, broadly defined as the study of cultural signs and symbols, delves into the subconscious cultural patterns that influence consumer behaviour and responses to textual messages, thematic content, and visual or auditory imagery (Gannon-Cook & Ley, 2020). Semiotic analysis delves beneath the surface of messages, scrutinizing verbal, visual, and auditory signs to unveil the underlying structures of meaning and comprehend which elements contribute to producing corresponding effects (Danesi, 2004; Sebeok, 2001).

According to Danesi (2004), in semiotics, the term "signs" encompasses anything used to convey meaning. Humans communicate meaning in myriad ways, such as through words (e.g., "breakfast" refers to the morning meal), images (e.g., accompanying images influence readers' interpretation of a news article), colors (e.g., a red traffic light signals "stop"), symbols (e.g., an exclamation mark conveys surprise or excitement), gestures (e.g., a "thumbs up" gesture denotes positivity), sounds (e.g., music in a minor key evokes sadness), and fashion (e.g., clothing reflects socioeconomic status). The interpretation of signs can vary based on the society and cultural setting (<https://www.studysmarter.co.uk/explanations/english/semiotics>)

In the realm of music, semiotics offers a theory of signification that prevents music from becoming an infinitely complex continuum, instead of enabling its division into discernible units (Agawu, 2014). This perspective posits that an understanding of signification allows for the identification of elements within this continuum, facilitating the analysis process. By examining the interplay between signifiers and signified, analysis unveils the musical text, revealing its depth beyond mere notation.

4. Methods and Process

The study adopted a qualitative research approach, combining formal and semiotic analytical frameworks to examine a musical score (Giraldo, 2019). This methodology aligns with the perspective of Merriam and Grenier (2019), who assert that qualitative research typically involves gathering data from natural settings, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument.

In this study, "Kòkòsakyi" was purposefully selected as a case study and subjected to detailed analysis of its sound and text. The piece was divided into four sections, as indicated by rehearsal letters provided by the composer. The lyrics were translated into English, allowing for the identification and interpretation of the iconic elements embedded within the song. Additionally, the sonic characteristics of the piece were analysed to elucidate the relationship between the sound and the imagery associated with the vulture character.

5. Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

In this section, the English translation of the song's lyrics is presented, followed by an analysis of its iconic effects and a discussion to uncover its cultural and communicative significance.

5.1 Akan Texts and English Translation

Akan Lyrics	Meaning in English
<i>Kòkòsakyi, Kòkòsakyi, mmòtoho ye musuo o</i>	Vulture, vulture, procrastination is an abomination
<i>Wo firi ntem boro asuo a, na wani bere</i>	Arriving early for swimming shows seriousness
<i>Mmòtoho ye musuo.</i>	Delaying task is akin to danger
<i>Kòkòsakyi, òkyena mesi me dan</i>	Vulture, I shall build my house tomorrow
<i>Kòkòsakyi! Òkyena mesi me dan o,</i>	Vulture! I shall build my house tomorrow o
<i>Ɔntee da o</i>	It is lying oo
<i>Ewie mu ye kusukusukusu</i>	The sky is overcast with heavy clouds
<i>Òkyena mesi me dan</i>	I shall start to build my house tomorrow
<i>Osuo muna tuntuntum</i>	The rains form very dark clouds
<i>Òkyena mesi me dan</i>	I shall start to build my house tomorrow
<i>Ɔpranaa bɔ mu krudukrudukrudu</i>	The thunder rumbles loudly
<i>Òkyena mesi me dan</i>	I shall start to build my house tomorrow
<i>Osuo te gu kitikitikiti</i>	It rains torrentially,
<i>Òkyena mesi me dan o</i>	I shall start to build my house tomorrow
<i>Nea ehia ne se ewie mu abae</i>	All that matters is for the weather to be clear,
<i>Ɔbo n'ataban mu papapapa</i>	It flaps its wings <i>papapapa</i>
<i>Ɔtu ne nan mmaako, mmaako</i>	It takes majestic steps one after the other
<i>Ɔbo n'ataban mu papapapa, Ɔno na ɔrekɔ no</i>	It flaps the wings <i>papapapa</i> , there it goes
<i>Ne were afi</i>	It has forgotten.
<i>Kòksakyi ei! Mmòtoho ye musu o</i>	Vulture ei! procrastination is an abomination.

5.2 Symbolic Themes and Imagery of Kɔkɔsakyi



Fig. 1: Image of Kɔkɔsakyi (vulture)

Source: <https://www.bing.com/images/search?q=Big+Vulture>

Mmɔtoho ye musuo (Procrastination is an abomination)

In this section, the text of the music depicts the character of the bird *Kɔkɔsakyi*. According to Akan oral literature, a “character of *kɔkɔsakyi* is an idiomatic expression that represents a sign of procrastination. It is believed that procrastination is a thief of time and has many negative influences. The bird *kɔkɔsakyi* does not have a nest. The only time it remembers to build its nest is when it is about to rain. The saying “procrastination is the thief of time” emphasizes the idea that delaying or putting off tasks leads to wasted time and missed opportunities. In context of the song, it serves as warning against the habit of procrastination, highlighting the negative consequences of delaying important actions or decisions as used in the work of Alblwi (2020). Indeed, the composer introduces a monophonic texture at the onset, invoking the image of the vulture, and subsequently employs a homophonic texture for *Mmɔtoho ye musuo*, creating unison for the lower parts (Tenor & Bass) and accentuating its significance as illustrated in the excerpt 1 below.



A

Mmɔ-to-ho ye mu-su o

ko-ko-sa-kyi ko-ko-sa-kyi ko - ko-sa-kyie mu-su o ko-ko-sa-kyi ko-ko-sa-kyi

Except 1: Use of homophonic texture and Unison

The saying, *wo firi ntem boro asuo a na w’ani bere* (starting early to battle with water gets you more serious) is a counter reaction to the character of the bird, indicating that the guarantee of getting serious at doing something depends on how early you start. ‘Starting early to battle with water’ suggests that punctuality and preparedness reflect a serious and committed attitude (Brislin & Kim, 2003). Within its context of the vulture symbolizing procrastination, this line underscores the need to take prompt action and avoid delay. By starting an activity early, one demonstrates a proactive approach and a willingness to

engage in tasks promptly, contrasting with the procrastinating behaviour depicted by the vulture in the subsequent lines.

The composer assigns the text *wo firi ntem boro asuo a na w'ani bere* to the outer parts, moving in parallel thirds to lay emphasis as shown in excerpt 2.



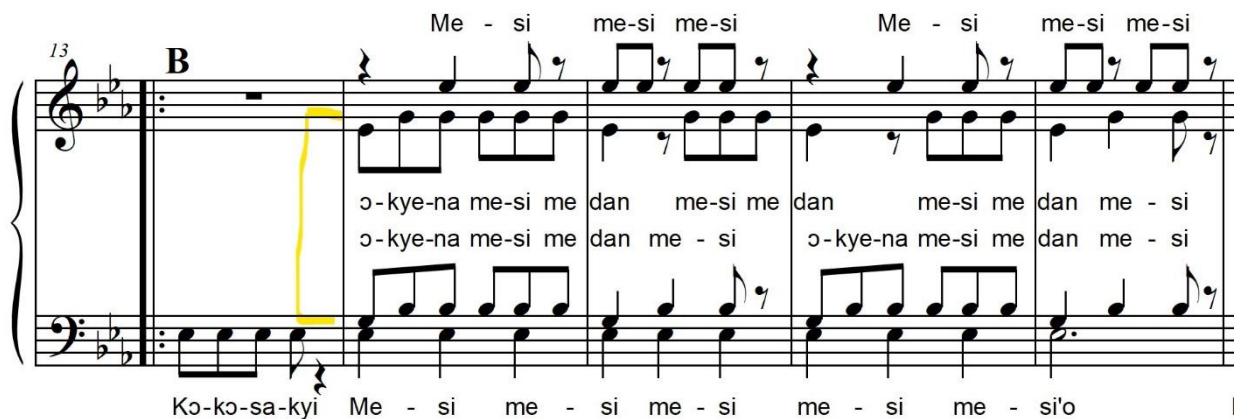
7 m̄ to h̄o ȳe mu suo wo firi n t̄em bo run sua
 k̄o k̄o sa kyie mu suo na wa ni be re
 k̄o k̄o sa kyie k̄o k̄o sa kyie k̄o k̄o sa kyie
 mm̄to h̄o ȳe mu suo wo firi n t̄em bo ren sia na w'a ni be re

Excerpt 2: Sonic illustration of the text *wo firi ntem boro asuo a na w'ani bere*

This phrase emphasizes the value of timeliness and proactive behaviour to achieve a goal, serving as a juxtaposition to the message conveyed by the vulture's procrastination (Bachmann, 2008). This proverb encourages individuals to be proactive and efficient in managing their time and tasks to avoid losing valuable opportunities or experiencing regrets later on.

***Okyena mesi me dan* (I shall build my house tomorrow)**

In the preceding of the piece, an emphasis is placed on how serious the bird claims to build a nest. Here, the bird sees a problem approaching and knows the solution which is the building of a nest. "I shall build my house tomorrow" conveys a sense of delay and procrastination. In context of Adu Safo's *k̄ok̄osakyi*, this line symbolizes the tendency to postpone important tasks or decisions. The musical passage of this text is shown in excerpt 3.



13 B Me - si me-si me-si Me - si me-si me-si
 ɔ - kye-na me-si me dan me-si me dan me-si me dan me - si
 ɔ - kye-na me-si me dan me - si ɔ - kye-na me-si me dan me - si
 K̄o-k̄o-sa-kyi Me - si me - si me - si me - si me - si'o

Excerpt 3: The musical passage of *Okyena mesi me dan*

The recurrence of this expression, distributed among the inner voices in a contrapuntal manner, amplifies the motif of procrastination, laying emphasis on the uncertainty and hesitancy, as portrayed by the counterpoints that illustrate the repercussions of postponing action. It suggests a lack of urgency and a tendency to put off responsibilities, which ultimately leads to missed opportunities or regrets as Ferrari (2010) postulated. This phrase serves as a cautionary reminder about the dangers of procrastination and the importance of taking timely action to achieve one's goals.

Ewie mu ye kusukusuku (When the sky was overcast with dark clouds)

First, the skies are filled with clouds, indicating the first sign of trouble. It is at this moment that the vulture remembers that it has no nest and therefore vows to build one the next day. Despite the looming danger, the vulture's inclination to procrastinate remains steadfast, as it refrains from initiating the building of the nest instantly instead of the vow to commence the next day. 'The sky overcast with dark clouds' implies a situation of uncertainty or ambiguity. In *kokosaki*, this particular phrase is allocated to the two upper parts (Soprano & Alto) in parallel thirds, channeling a feminist perspective of offering advice as presented in excerpt 4.



The image shows a musical score for piano and voice. The piano part is in the left hand, and the voice part is in the right hand. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "dan'o - - - da'o dan. on-te'o da'o E wie mu ye ku-su-ku-su ku-su o-kye-na me-si me". A yellow highlight is drawn around the vocal line from the second measure to the end of the excerpt, showing the parallel thirds texture.

Excerpt 4: Parallel thirds compositional style for the two upper voices

This line suggests that conditions are not conducive for progress or action. Cloudy weather often represents a lack of clarity or visibility, making it difficult to navigate or make decisions confidently (Esau-Held et al., 2023). Similarly, the song symbolizes the challenges or obstacles that arise when one procrastinates or delays taking action. The cloudy weather serves as a metaphor for the obscured vision or understanding that comes with procrastination, laying emphasis on the importance of clarity and decisiveness in achieving one's goals.

Osuo muna tuntuntum (The rains form very dark clouds)

The second sign is a heavy cloud filling the skies, indicating a high possibility of rainfall, still the bird makes no attempt of building but waits and claims to build tomorrow. The composer further assigns the feminist parts (Treble & Alto) in counterpoint with the two masculine parts (Tenor & Bass) to illustrate the weightiness of the clouds, juxtaposed with the lingering optimism to build its nest tomorrow. Excerpt 5 illustrates the contrapuntal passage for the text.



The image shows a musical score for piano and voice. The piano part is in the left hand, and the voice part is in the right hand. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "dan Kɔ-kɔ-sa-kyie O-suo mu-na tun - tun - tum Kɔ-kɔ-sa-kyi o-kye-na me-si me dan Me-si me dan me-si me dan". A yellow highlight is drawn around the vocal line from the second measure to the end of the excerpt, showing the contrapuntal texture.

Excerpt 5: Feminist parts in counterpoint with the masculine parts

‘The rains form very dark clouds’ evokes a sense of ominous foreboding and uncertainty. The context of Adu Safo's *Kɔkɔsakyi*, suggests that external factors or circumstances may appear daunting or challenging. The deepness of the cloudy rain symbolizes the depth of obstacles or difficulties that one may encounter when procrastination is allowed to persist (Gelnett, 2023). It implies that delaying action only when adversity is prevalent exacerbates the situation, making it more difficult to overcome. This phrase serves as a warning about the potential consequences of procrastination and emphasizes the need to confront challenges with determination and resolution.

Opraana bɔ mu kurudu kurudu (The thunder rumbles loudly)

The third sign is “the thunder rumbles loudly” following the heavy clouds, a clear indication of rainfall, yet, the bird continues to wait till tomorrow. ‘The thunder rumbles loudly’ signifies a sense of imminent danger or urgency. Within the context of *kɔkɔsakyi*, this phrase suggests that delaying action or procrastinating can lead to unforeseen consequences. The heavy striking of thunder symbolizes the severity of these consequences, highlighting the importance of taking timely and decisive action (Pager-McClymont, 2023). According to Jones (2016), it indicates metaphor for the disruptive impact that procrastination can have on one's plans and goals. This phrase underscores the need to address tasks and responsibilities promptly to avoid being caught off guard by unforeseen challenges or obstacles.

Osuo tegu kitikitikiti (It rains torrentially)

In the narrative of *Kɔkɔsakyi*, the final straw comes with the arrival of rainfall. Despite all the preceding warnings, the bird remains heedless, choosing to wait until the eleventh hour. This climatic moment symbolizes a pivotal juncture in the consequences of procrastination. The phrase ‘it rains torrentially’ is employed idiomatically to vividly portray the intensity of the downpour. This metaphorical deluge underscores the severity of the situation, conveying a sense of urgency and unpredictability. Much like a sudden and heavy rainfall disrupts normal routines, procrastination can precipitate challenges and setbacks in one's endeavours.

Through these imageries, the composer uses the upper parts (Soprano & Alto), frequently in 6ths and 3rds, occasionally complemented by lines from the lower parts, embedding the composition within the sonic tradition of the Akan people of Ghana. This is illustrated in excerpt 6.



The musical score consists of two systems. The first system starts at measure 37 and ends at measure 42. The second system starts at measure 43 and ends at measure 48. The lyrics are written below the notes in both Akan and English. Yellow circles highlight specific musical phrases in the upper part of the score.

System 1 (Measures 37-42):

- Measure 37: dan / Kɔ-kɔ-sa-kyie
- Measure 38: O-suo mu-na
- Measure 39: tun - tun - tum / Kɔ-kɔ-sa-kyi
- Measure 40: ɔ-kye-na me-si me / Kɔ-kɔ-sa-kyiee
- Measure 41: dan / Kɔ-kɔ-sa-kyie
- Measure 42: ɔ - pra-naabɔ-mu

System 2 (Measures 43-48):

- Measure 43: kru-du kru-du
- Measure 44: ɔ-kye-na me-si me dan / Kɔ-kɔ-sa-kyie
- Measure 45: O-suo te gu
- Measure 46: ki - ti - ki - ti - ki - ti / Kɔ-kɔ-sa-kyi
- Measure 47: ɔ-kye-na me-si me / ɔ-kye-na me-si me
- Measure 48: ɔ-kye-na me-si me dan / me-si me dan

Excerpt 6: Use of parallel thirds depicting sonic tradition of Akan people***Ewiemu abae (The weather is clear)***

‘The weather is clear’ indicates that the conditions are favourable and suitable for taking action. In the song, it suggests that the obstacles or excuses for procrastination have been removed, and there are no longer any valid reasons to delay. This line represents a shift from the previous hesitation and indecision, signaling a moment of readiness and determination to proceed with the intended action. The avian creature pledged to construct its abode, prioritizing favorable weather conditions. Despite its commitment, the bird disregards the necessity of keeping its promise. It leisurely emerges, brushing off rain droplets with its wings before taking flight. This illustrates the bird's tendency to neglect its enduring issue in favor of a temporary remedy. Like Mehdi (2023) intimated, the portrayal of the bird's character holds a significant cultural meaning, advising against procrastination as it impedes personal advancement. In the final analysis, exploring the etymology of the bird's name, *kɔkɔsakyi*, reveals a nuanced message of vacillation. The phrase *kɔ kɔ* translates to *go, go* in the native Akan language, while *san wa kyi* translates to *get back*. This linguistic interplay suggests a cycle of advancing and retreating, underscoring the imperative of perseverance and commitment despite obstacles. It becomes a poignant reminder to remain steadfast and resolute in pursuing one's goals, even when there is adversity.

6. Conclusion

The study identified that *Kɔkɔsakyi* employs musical elements, including melody, rhythm, and harmony, to evoke the iconic qualities of the vulture. For example, the motif representing the bird's name is repeated to emphasize urgency, reflecting the procrastinating character of the bird. As scholars in music composition, we acknowledge that the character of the vulture can vary depending on the context in which it is portrayed. This is because in many cultures, the vulture symbolizes scavenging, death, and decay due to its feeding habits and appearance. However, in some contexts, the vulture can also symbolize patience, survival, and adaptability. In the specific context of the discussion about Adu Safo's composition, *Kɔkɔsakyi*, the vulture is portrayed as a symbol of procrastination. This characterization suggests negative connotations, indicating that the vulture represents laziness, delay, and missed opportunities. It also serves as cautionary symbol, warning against the dangers of putting off important tasks or decisions. In summary, the examination of Adu Safo's *Kɔkɔsakyi* as a choral music composition highlights the interconnectedness of music and cultural identity. Through its adept use of musical elements and lyrics, the composition portrays the iconic traits of the vulture while conveying a cultural admonition against procrastination. This analysis underscores the importance of acknowledging the use of symbolism in music and its influence on the preservation and evolution of cultural identities. *Kɔkɔsakyi* exemplifies how music can effectively blend tradition with contemporary expression, reflecting the dynamic nature of cultural identities in an increasingly interconnected world.

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