



A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY OF ATENTEBEN IN GHANAIAN MUSICAL INSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT: *This historical research seeks to investigate the development of the atenteben, and its inclusion in the Ghanaian school curriculum. The atenteben, is a flute which is locally produced in Ghana from the stem of a species of the bamboo plant. The bamboo is a hollow, jointed, giant, woody grass that breeds predominantly in the tropical zones. While the bamboo is usually used for furniture, housing, and other household implements, the material has been crafted into a musical instrument, atenteben, to create pitched sounds for ceremonial and entertainment activities. This study sought to trace the historical route of atenteben, and illuminate how it became integrated into the Ghanaian school curriculum. Primary and secondary sources were employed for saturated data collection. Results indicated that the atenteben was first produced and introduced into the Ghanaian school curriculum by Dr. Ephraim Amu, albeit other scholars have contributed toward the development of the instrument as well as its teaching and learning. It was recommended that while seeking standardization and industrialized manufacture of the instrument through stakeholder collaborations, colleges of education should formalize teaching and learning of the atenteben in their curriculum. Further research will explore the atenteben in other keys, and examine writings and compositions of Dr. Ephraim Amu on the instrument.*

KEYWORDS: atenteben, aerophone, Ephraim Amu, Ghana, techniques, music education

INTRODUCTION

African musical instruments are broadly classified into four categories, based on their modes of sound production. These include idiophones, membranophones, chordophones, and aerophones.¹ Idiophones are musical instruments when produce sound through vibration when their bodies are struck, plucked, scratched, clashed or plucked. An example is *frikyiwa* (a pair of castanets). Membranophones are instruments (mainly drums) which have hollow-resonating shells, with either one or both ends covered with animal membranes. An example is *dondo* (hour-glass). Chordophones produce sound when chords (strings) stretched on them are plucked or struck. *Goje* (a one-stringed fiddle) is an example of chordophones. Finally, the fourth category is aerophones, with which sounds are produced by blowing air through their resonating columns.

Aerophones of Ghanaian origin are relatively few. Among them are *Wia* (a wooden, whistle-like wind instrument), *nthehera* (horns of animals such as cattle, and elephants), and *Atenteben* (bamboo flute) which is the focus of this study. The atenteben is a flute which is locally produced in Ghana from the stem of a given genus and species of the bamboo plant, which is a hollow, jointed, woody grass that grows chiefly in the tropics.

Atenteben is played, holding it in a vertical position like the European recorder², and can be played diatonically as well as chromatically.³ It is an end-blown instrument with six front holes and one back hole. (See Figure 1 below). Its embouchure at the mouth of the pipe consists of a piece of wood (fipple)⁴ made to fit tightly into the pipe with a narrow slit through which sound is produced by blowing as with the Keynsham Abbey pipe of England.⁵



Figure 1. *Atenteben: Front and Back Holes*. Source: Photograph from Adjahoe, Mawuyram Q. *New trends in B^b Atenteben Music for Colleges and Universities*. Cape Coast: Cape Coast University Press. (2016).

1. Lee, Deborah. "Hornbostel-Sachs classification of musical instruments." *Knowledge Organization* 47, no. 1 (2019): 72-91.

2. Agyemang, Fred. *Amu, the African: a study in vision and courage*. Asempa Publishers, Christian Council of Ghana, 1988.

3. Aduonum, Social. *Fingering Technique for Atenteben and Odurogya Flutes*. Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, School of Music and Drama, 1971.

4. Obikane, Yasuo. "Direct simulation on a fipple flute using the compressible Navier–Stokes equation." *World Acad. Sci. Eng. Technol* 4 (2009): 794-798.

5. Barrett, J. H. "A Fipple Flute or Pipe from the site of Keynsham Abbey." *The Galpin Society Journal* (1969): 47-50.



At the early years of its use, atenteben was mainly played to accompany reading of obituaries of the deceased, but currently it is also found in concert presentations, church services, festivities, and classroom music lessons.⁶ It is a transposing instrument in the sense that the instrument is (usually) constructed in the key of B flat major, but its sound only synchronizes with the sounds on piano if the music is written a tone higher than the actual sounds.⁷ Although Dr. Ephraim Amu (1899-1995) is credited for inventing the atenteben as a diatonic B flat instrument, the origin is contended to be obscure and transcending him.⁸

While it may be common knowledge that atenteben was developed by the late Dr. Ephraim Amu, some authors argue that the origin of atenteben transcends Amu.⁹ Secondly, atenteben, like many other traditional Ghanaian instruments, is known to have been treated with hostility due to superstitious beliefs attached to it from the early days of formal music education in Ghana,¹ thereby triggering curiosity regarding how it ended up being successfully incorporated in Ghanaian school music programmes. The purpose of this research was to unearth the developmental process of the atenteben, and how it became a prominent part of the music curriculum in Ghanaian schools. Two main research questions guided this investigation. These included: 1. How was atenteben produced for the first time? and 2. How did atenteben become part of music education programme in Ghana?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Commenting the origin of atenteben, Ebeli¹ alluded to oral history¹ which suggests that the people of *Twenedurase* (a town in the Eastern Region of Ghana) embarked on a search for a god in the Brong Ahafo (another Region of Ghana), and returned with the instrument. The musical genre (highlife) performed as part of their worship activities for the god was called *atente*,¹ which was a reason for the name of the instrument being researched. The name "atenteben" comprises two names, in the Akan language thus, *atente* and *ben*.¹ *Atente* is the plural word for *otente*, being the name of an Akan traditional double-headed hand drum. Hence, one *otente* drum but two *atente* drums, and *ben* means flute or an instrument of the aerophone family. The *atente* drums were the principal instruments that accompanied this

6. Boadi, Lawrence A. "Remarks on JH Nketia's Funeral Dirges of the Akan People." *Legon Journal of the Humanities* 24 (2013): 1-17.

7. Laughlin, Shaun C. "A Tradition of Innovation: An Exploration into the History, Cultural Role and Playing of the Atenteben and Odurugya flutes of Ghana." (2000).

8. Nketia, K. "Music, Culture and National Development: The Legacy of Ephraim Amu." *Ephraim Amu Memorial Lecture (unpublished)*, Legon, International Centre for African Music and Dance, University of Ghana, 1998.

9. Laughlin, Shaun C. "A Tradition of Innovation: An Exploration into the History, Cultural Role and Playing of the Atenteben and Odurugya flutes of Ghana." (2000).

1 . Amuah, I., and J. Flolŋ. "An introduction to Music Education in Ghana for University and Collages." (2003).

1 . Ebeli, Eva Akosua. "Atenteben: A Legacy of Ephraim AMU." *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education* (2018): 5(8),12-18.

1 . Ebeli, 18. 2

1 . Ibid., 3



flute, hence the name atente-ben (meaning the flute accompanied by the atente drums).¹ The Kwahu people who went on the trip to Sampa learned to play the instruments, and upon their return home the atente ensemble was formed.¹ Sampa is the capital of the Jaman North District in the then Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana (now, the Bono Region sharing boundary with Cote d'Ivoire). The town was noted for being an important slave¹ market in the then Gold Coast between the 16th and the 19th centuries. It is also Ghana's biggest border town (to Cote d'Ivoire) with a population of 83,059.¹ People traveled from far and near to Sampa primarily for economic reasons. The town and its environs have remained significant in the area of agriculture. Currently the natives are into the production of foodstuffs like yam, cassava, tomatoes, okro, eggs, as well as cashew, which is the major cash crop in the country.

The origin of the instrument is also linked to the war¹ between the Ashanti Empire and the Kwahu people, which was fought in Togoland (the country on the immediate east of Ghana). Within the 18th century, the Ashanti Empire encountered numerous insurgences. This development was largely attributable to the empire's policy of allowing subjugated rulers a considerable extent of autonomy on condition that they paid tribute and provided military contingents whenever they were asked to do so. By 1750, the southern captured state, including Denkyira, Wassa, Twifo, and Akyem, became openly antagonistic and threatened the empire's commercial routes to the coast. In 1763, the rebellious kingdom of Akyem people, under its King called Pobi Asomaning II, made contact with the Kingdom of Dahomey (now Benin) for support while planning a rebellion with other protesting states within the empire, including the Kwahu. Somewhere in 1764, the Ashanti army marched out to invade the Dahomey for hosting the rebel states. However, the Ashanti army was ambushed near Atakpame in Togoland. A force of Dahomean warriors, including the kingdom's elite Ahosi corps of female soldiers inflicted a devastating defeat on the Ashanti military. The Ashanti warriors could not reach Dahomey (Benin), and was forced to withdraw due to defeat. The result of this fight has been the liberation of the then conquered states from the powers of the Ashanti Kingdom till date¹.

Bellis² suggests that following the victory, a Kwahu woman proposed that they should celebrate their victory with a new kind of music from a bamboo instrument, leading to the construction of the instrument. Although the obscurity of these historical narratives suggests

1 . Nketia, JH Kwabena, and Joseph H. Nketia. *The music of Africa*. New York: WW Norton, 1974.

1 . Nketia, 74. 5

1 . Shumway, Rebecca, and Trevor R. Getz, eds. *Slavery and its legacy in Ghana and the diaspora*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

1 . Ghana Statistical Service. National Population Census, 2021.

1 . Fage, J.D. and Roland Oliver (1975). *The Cambridge History of Africa Volume 4 c. 1600 - c. 1790*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 811 ISBN 0-521-20981-1.

1 . Potter, Gordon Alwyne "An investigation of pre-capitalist economic formations: An enquiry into the burgeoning nation-state of the Kingdom of Dahomey, 1620-1740." Ph.D. dissertation, New School for Social Research, 1992.

2 . Bellis, James Oren. *Atheology and the Culture History of the Akan of Ghana, a Case Study*. Indiana University, 1972, cited in Eshun, Edwin Kwame. "Religion and nature in Akan culture: A case study of Okyeman Environment Foundation." Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University (Canada), 2011.



further investigations about the instrument, it could be inferred from these accounts that the history of *atenteben* is linked to the Kwahu people. In the subsequent paragraphs, the development of the instrument is expounded in relation to Dr. Ephraim Amu (1899 -1995), a Ghanaian music education legend. *Atenteben* is credited to Dr. Ephraim Amu primarily because he developed the diatonic model of the instrument which has become widely used in schools and communities Ghana. Biographies of Amu identify him as an African music legend, and further point to his interaction with the Kwahu² community in Ghana when he was posted to teach at the Scottish Mission Seminary at Akropong in 1927.²

2

Amu came into contact with the *atente* ensemble among the Kwahu. While a teacher at Akropong, he saw and admired the native bamboo flute called *odurogya* which had four finger holes. He later went and sought permission from the Paramount Chief of the Asante² people to learn to play the *odurogya* as well as the *atente* from a master instructor called *Opanin Opoku Mensah* between 1928 and 1929.² Through that, and guided by his knowledge in Western music, Amu developed the *atenteben* from the *atente* ensemble.²

METHOD

In order to accomplish a retrospective study of *atenteben* in Ghanaian musical instruction, we employed the qualitative historical research approach. Historical research involves systematic examination of past events, giving an account of what has happened in past phenomena, in an attempt to evoke the nuances, personalities, and ideas that influenced these phenomena.² Communicating an understanding of past occurrences is one of the goals² of historical research, which this study sought to achieve by gathering and analysing data from multiple sources.

7

Secondary data was obtained using diplomatic², including the Osagyefo library of University of Education, Winneba, interlibrary loan facilities as well as google scholar. On the other

² . Turkson, Adolphus R.1 "A Voice in the African Process of Crossing from the Traditional to Modernity: The Music of Ephraim Amu." *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 10, no. 1 (1987): 39-53.

² . Agawu, V. Kofi, and Ephraim Amu. "The making of a composer." *The Black Perspective in Music* (1987): 51-63.

² Asante (Akan) is the largest ethnic group in Ghana, part of which is the Kwahu. However, the Kwahu sub-group is located in the Eastern Region of the country as a result of migration.

² . Agawu, Kofi. "The Akan Legacy." *Africa* 66, no. 2 (1996): 274-279.

² . Agawu, 278. 5

² . Rowlinson, Michael. "Historical research methods." *Research in organizations: Foundations and methods of inquiry* (2005): 295-311.

² . Rowlinson, 42. 7

² Diplomatic and oral history are among the techniques (instruments) for data collection in historical research. Others include paleography, epigraphy, and chronology. See Griffin, Stephen M. "Digital Libraries, Epigraphy and Paleography: Bring Records from the Distant Past to the Present: Part II." *International Journal on Digital Libraries* 24, no. 3 (2023): 139-147.



hand, primary data was mainly collected by means of oral history technique from two interviewees who were purposively sampled. The need for the two interviewees was to ensure data saturation² and triangulation³. Their names were Dr. Mawuyram Adjahoe (the principal informant) and Kodzo Amu. Dr. Adjahoe was a music educator and a composer at University of Cape Coast (UCC) in Ghana. We became acquainted to him when he joined our faculty at the University of Education Winneba (UEW) on a two-year sabbatical leave.

During his time at UEW, he led a workshop titled "Exploring the Capabilities of the B Flat Atenteben" where his mastery of the instrument became evident. We witnessed firsthand his ability to craft, perform, compose for, and instruct others in playing the atenteben. Additionally, he shared a close relationship with Dr. Amu's family, recounting occasions where he dined with Dr. Ephraim Amu himself. On one memorable occasion, he even joined Dr. Amu's son, Kordzo Amu, as he played the atenteben in different keys while accompanying him on Dr. Amu's piano.

The second participant, Kordzo Amu was a son of Ephraim Amu. He was a producer and a virtuosic atentebenist, but not a formally-trained teacher. One of us (Samuel) knew him during his three-year stay in Peki as a music and dance tutor at Peki College of Education (GOVCO). He used to produce and supply atenteben to Samuel's students. A son of Ephraim Amu, he shared in-depth stock of data that informed this paper. In separate schedules, we had a semi-structured interview with both Mawuyram Adjahoe and Kodzo Amu.

Primary data focused mainly on Dr. Ephraim Amu as the pioneering individual who was credited for the production and development of the atenteben. Besides, secondary sources provided substantial data on the introduction of the instrument in the Ghanaian school curriculum and its advancement in the curriculum across time, as well as educational institutions and programmes in Ghana. During the interviews, we employed the narrative³ technique in order to allow the participants to unearth their experiences. With the prior permission of the participants, we recorded each interview and subsequently transcribed it. We then returned the transcriptions to the respective participants for review and verification as recommended by Philp et al.³ After that we had some² follow-up communications seeking further information from the participants when necessary. Following their review and return of the manuscripts, we did the necessary revisions and presented the report using the researcher interpretive approach by constructing meaning from the data while heeding the caution by Roberts³ to maintain a balance³ between facts on the one hand, and researcher interpretations on the other hand.

2 . Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field methods*, 18(1), 59-82.

3 . Flick, Uwe. "Triangulation in qualitative research." *A companion to qualitative research* 3 (2004): 178-183.

3 . Anderson, Claire, and Susan Kirkpatrick. "Narrative interviewing." *International journal of clinical pharmacy* 38, no. 3 (2016): 631-634.

3 . Phelps, Roger P., Ronald H. Sadoff, Lawrence Ferrara, and Edward C. Warburton. *A guide to research in music education*. Scarecrow Press, 2005.

3 . Roberts, Brian. *Biographical research*. Buckingham: Open university press, 2002.



FINDINGS

Introduction of Atenteben into the School Curriculum

Ephraim Amu was the first person to introduce the atenteben into the Ghanaian school context as explicated in the succeeding narrative.³ Amu, trained as a catechism teacher at the Basel Mission Seminary at Abetifi in the Kwahu area, Eastern region of Ghana from 1916 to 1920 after which he began teaching in his hometown, Peki-Avetile in the Volta region of Ghana.³ In 1926 he was transferred to join the staff of the then Scottish Mission Seminary (now the Presbyterian College of Education) as a catechism music teacher, and served as a housemaster as well.³ Responding to a remark of the principal of the Seminary, Rev. William Ferguson, Amu began to compose African songs for his students, and for specific occasions.³ It was during that time that he introduced the atenteben to his Akropong students.³

As part of his catechism duties, Amu was required to preach in European attire; woolen jacket over long-sleeved white shirt, trousers, and black shoes, regardless of the hot tropical weather.³ The message was that African dress was unholy and inappropriate for anyone entering the Presbyterian pulpit. In spite of his deep-seated Christian convictions, Amu could not abide by this prohibition. Consequently, in 1933, he was dismissed from the college for preaching in African cloth.⁴ However, he was hired the next year by Achimota College in Accra, the capital city of Ghana, where he taught both Western and African music including the atenteben till 1936, and then proceeded on further studies in Britain.⁴ He returned to the same college in 1941 and taught till his retirement in 1960. Some of his students, N. Z. Nayo, J. S. Maison, A. A. Mensah, among others took over, teaching the atenteben in Achimota College and other schools throughout Ghana, thus, building on Amu's foundation, and expanding from one generation to the other.⁴

As the music education programme advanced in Achimota College, a three-year music specialist teacher education was introduced⁴ in addition to home science, art, and physical

3 . Agawu, V. Kofi, and Ephraim Amu. "The making of a composer." *The Black Perspective in Music* (1987): 51-63.

3 . Ibid., 5

3 . Ibid., 6

3 . Turkson, Adolphus R. "A Voice in the African Process of Crossing from the Traditional to Modernity: The Music of Ephraim Amu." *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 10, no. 1 (1987): 39-53.

3 . Turkson, African, 1. 8

3 . Flolu, James. "Music teacher education in Ghana: Training for churches or for the schools." *Sounds of change: Social and political features of music in Africa* 12 (2004): 164-179.

4 . Laryea, Philip T. "Ephraim Amu: nationalist, poet and theologian (1899-1995)." (2012).

4 . Agawu, Kofi. "The Amu Legacy." *Africa* 66, no. 2 (1996): 274-279.

4 . Agawu, Legacy, 276. 2

4 . Dzobo, N. K. "The Modern Educational System of Ghana: Its Role in National Development." *Ghana Journal of Education* 2, no. 1_ (1971): 10-20.



education in 1949. The music specialist courses were taught by the then Mr. Ephraim Amu.⁴ In 1951, the music department was moved from Achimota, to another town called Kumasi, and then relocated to Winneba in 1958 where it was named “National Academy of Music (NAM)”.⁴ In 1961 the three-year programme became four-year programme: a two-year (Preliminary and Music Education 1), and an advanced two-year (Music Education 2 and Music Education 3).⁴

The NAM curriculum included Rudiments of Music, Harmony, Orchestration, Musicianship, Education, Music Education, Form and Analysis, African Music, Drumming, Xylophone playing, Atenteben playing and Bamboo piping (atenteben making; see red and blue arrows respectively on figure 4 below). The first year (Preliminary) was a qualifying examination stage leading to the second year (Music Education 1) for the initial diploma, while the further two-year courses eventually led to the main diploma examinations of the ABRSM.⁴ (See Figure 4 below).

TIME TABLE - NATIONAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC - WINNEBA GHANA

DAYS	PERIOD TIME CLASS	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
		7 - 8AM	8 - 9AM	9:30-10:30AM	10:30-11:30AM	11:30-12:30PM	12:30-1:30PM	2:30-3:30 PM	3:30-4:30PM								
MON	PREL	ENGLISH	APPRECIATION	EDUCATION	EDUCATION	CLASS	EDUCATION	ENGLISH	ORCHESTRA.	WINDS CLASS							
	MED 1	HARMONY	AFRICAN MUS.	HARMONY	STRINGS	ENGLISH	EDUCATION	ORCHESTRA.	WINDS CLASS								
	MED 2		MUSICIANSHIP	COMP. TECH.	STRINGS	HISTORY											
TUE	PREL	RUDIMENTS & HARMONY	FREE COUNT' PT.	EDUCATION	HISTORY	MUSICIANSHIP	ENGLISH	AFRICAN	MUSIC								
	MED 1	ENGLISH	FREE COUNT' PT.	EDUCATION	COMP. TECH.	FORM & ANALYS	STRICT	ATENTEBEN	MUSIC ED.								
	MED 2	ORCH.	FREE COUNT' PT.	EDUCATION	TECH.	ED.	COUNT'PT. COMP.	MUSIC ED.									
WED	PREL	MUSICIAN-	COMPOSITION	BANBOO	PIPING	MUS'SHIP	ENGLISH	EDUCATION	FREE COUNT'PT								
	MED 1	EDUCATION	AFRICAN MUS.	ORCHESTRA	ED.	HARMONY	MUS'SHIP	EDUCATION									
	MED 2	MUSIC ED.			PIANO	MUS. ED.	AFRICAN	MUSIC									
THUR	PREL	ENGLISH	APPR. ORCH.	EDUCATION	ED. FORM & ANALYS	CLASS	SINGING	ENGLISH									
	MED 1	FREE COUNT' PT.	FORM & ANALYS	EDUCATION	HARMONY	HISTORY	MUSIC ED.	ORCHEST.									
	MED 2	MUS'SHIP	COM. (CON.)	EDUCATION	MUSIC ED.	STRICT	COM. (MOD)										
FRI	PREL	RUDIMENTS	HARMONY	EDUCATION	DRUMMING	MUSICIANSHIP	EDUCATION	DRUMMING									
	MED 1	AFRICAN MUSIC	ED. COMPOSITION (CON.)	EDUCATION	ENGLISH	DRUMMING	MUSICIANSHIP										
	MED 2	APPRE.		EDUCATION		HISTORY	EDUCATION										

Figure 4. Teaching Timetable of the erstwhile National Academy of Music at Winneba, Ghana. Source: Taken from Manford, Robert. "The status of music teacher education in Ghana with recommendations for improvement." PhD dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1983.

Adjahoe compared the NAM and the UEW curricula thus:

I went to NAM and wrote the Prilim exam in 1985. We were twenty-four candidates who wrote the exam, and guess what? When the results came out, I was the first on the admission list by order of merit. You see that I used to be a very brilliant student? ... So, I continued.

4 . Dzobo, 2. 4

4 . Manford, Robert. "The status of music teacher education in Ghana with recommendations for improvement." PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 1983.

4 . Manford, 45. 6

4 . Ibid., 7



That time diploma was four years. Yes! It took me four years to get a diploma. But now, diploma is only two years...⁴

In August, 1990, when the institution was upgraded to the University College of Education, Winneba (UCEW), following the creation of a few more departments, the music curriculum of NAM was restructured to consist of three programmes, namely (1) a two-year Enrichment Programme in Music, (2) a three-year Diploma in Music Education and (3) a two-year Post-Diploma Degree in Music Education. Atenteben was included in each of these programmes. Finally, in 2002 UCEW was accredited as an autonomous University of Education, Winneba (UEW), leading to another curricular restructuring in the music department. It became a two-year Diploma in Music, a two-year Post-Diploma Bachelor of Music, a three-year Post-Diploma Music Education, a four-year Bachelor of Music, and a four-year Bachelor of Music Education.

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC EDUCATION
TENTATIVE TEACHING TIMETABLE – SECOND SEMESTER, 2022/2023 ACADEMIC YEAR

Day	PROG. (No.)	6.30 7.30	7.30 8.30	8.30 9.30	9.30 10.30	10.30 11.30	11.30 12.30	12.30 1.30	1.30 2.30	2.30 3.30	3.30 4.30	4.30 5.30	5.30 6.30	6.30 7.30	
M O N D A Y	DMU/BMU I (36+47=83)	RADIO LECTURES	MIXED CHORUS	MUE121 TUTORIALS Various Lecturers/Venues			MUE121 Mus. & Ens. II AURAL SKILLS (AYB) LH4		MUE121 TUTORIALS Various Lecturers/Venues						
	DMU/BMU II (33 +44=77)			MUE232 TUTORIALS Various Lecturers/Venues			MUE232 Mus. & Ens. II AURAL SKILLS (EEF) LH6		MUE242 Introduction to Music Aesthetics. & Criticism (MA) LH2		MUE249A A Study of Ghanaian Popular Musicians (MMC) C4			MUE366 Music of the Baroque & Classical Eras (EEF) LH2	
	BMU III (61)			TUTORIALS / ORIGINAL COMPOSITION			MUE363 TUTORIALS Various Lecturers/Venues								
	BMU IV (69)			MUE482B Mus. & Ens. VIII Sight Singing (GAM) AT		MUE352 Orchestration (GAM) LH6		MUE482A Instrumental Performance II (JFA) PH/TB		MUE482B Mus. & Ens. VIII AURAL SKILLS (JFA) LH2					
	B.ED I (122)			MUE121 TUTORIALS Various Lecturers/Venues			MUE121 Mus. & Ens. II AURAL SKILLS (AYB) LH4		MUE128 Introduction to Theories of Musical Instruction (AAM) LH4		MUE246 Teaching Music & Dance in the JHS (HKB) LH6			EDC121 Introduction to Educational Technology LH1	
	B.ED II (105)			MUE244 Indigenous Ghanaian Music & Dance (MAA) AT		MUE232 Mus. & Ens. II AURAL SKILLS (EEF) LH6		MUE246 Teaching Music & Dance in the JHS (HKB) LH6		MUE243 TUTORIALS Various Instructors/Venues					
	B.ED III (120)			EDP361Mu On-Campus (Pre- Internship Sem.) (SA, HKB, AAM) LH4		MUE363 TUTORIALS Various Lecturers/Venues						MUE368 Fundamentals of Music in Healing (HSK) LH6			
	B.ED IV (109)			LONG ESSAY PROJECT								MUE485 Administration & Supervision of Musical Arts Education (SA) LH4			

In all these programmes atenteben was part of the African music sections. Unlike the NAM and UCEW days, atenteben in UEW is currently taught during *Tutorial* sections (see blue arrow in figure 5 below) where various instrumental instructors (including atenteben instructors) schedule time with their students either on individual basis or in small groups (no more than five students per group) due to ballooned student population. The red arrow in figure 5 below shows each class (indicated as PROG.) and the number of students in a class (No.) written immediately beneath each class. Due to inadequate infrastructural resources, some classes were combined. Example: *DMUS/BMUS I* means 2-year Diploma in Music and 4-year Bachelor of Music I (both at level 100), combined in one class. Number of students in the combined classes (36+47 respectively) is 83

4 . Adjahoe, Mawuyram. Interview with author. Personal interview, Cape Coast.



Figure 5. *An Excerpt (Monday only) of Tentative Teaching Timetable of UEW Department of Music Education.* Source: Retrieved from the Departmental Staff Whatsup Platform on November 19, 2023

After graduation, the Bachelor of Arts, Music Education (B. Ed) graduates are posted by the Government of Ghana, usually to the pre-tertiary institutions. Currently, atenteben is not required to be taught in junior high schools. So, music teachers are seldom posted there. In the elementary schools where atenteben is supposed to be taught within the Creative Arts curriculum, music teachers are not often posted to that level either. The Creative Arts curriculum eventually is left in the hands of non-music major elementary school (generalist teachers) is explained in the next section.

Atenteben in the Creative Arts Curriculum

The Creative Arts is the latest music curriculum reform policy which was rolled out in the Ghanaian primary schools in 2007. It comprises two main strands namely the performing Arts and the Visual Arts. The Performing Arts strand has learning areas identified as music, dance and drama. while the Visual Arts covers learning areas such as i. "Two-dimensional arts: drawing, painting, (colour work), printmaking, patternmaking, lettering and camera/electronic arts etc. ii. Three-dimensional art: modelling, casting, carving, weaving, paper craft, sewing/stitching, crocheting, construction and assemblage" (NaCCA, 2019, pp. 22-23). The Creative Arts is taught by the generalist (elementary) teachers.⁴ The Creative Arts curriculum is aimed at providing an opportunity for learners to participate actively in creative or artistic processes including drawing, carving, acting, singing, dancing, composing, playing instruments, and appreciating the growth of one's imagination and self-expression.⁵ The music strand of the curriculum stresses prioritization of indigenous resources such as folk songs, drums, and the atenteben.⁵

The syllabus is designed with the music component, intended to reflect the Ghanaian Performing Arts culture so as to provide Ghanaian children with knowledge, skills, and understanding of the traditional music, dance, and drama of their own environment. It is also intended to unlock and develop pupils' creative abilities and potentials in the Performing Arts for national development.⁵ Furthermore, the Creative Arts curriculum seeks to empower individuals to acquire skills in Design, Expression, and Technology as a step towards national industrial advancement.⁵ Unfortunately, "in many schools, the music component (where

⁴ Kindler, A. M. "Art, creativity, art education and civil society." *International Journal of Education & the Arts* 9, no. 2 (2008): 1-14.

⁵ . Curriculum Research and Development Division of Ghana. "Creative Arts Syllabus for Primary 1 to 6." *Accra: Ministry of Education and Sports.* (2007), cited in Alter, Frances, Terrence Hays, and Rebecca O'Hara. "Creative arts teaching and practice: Critical reflections of primary school teachers in Australia." *International Journal of Education & the Arts* 10, no. 9 (2009): n9.).

⁵ . Ministry of Education Ghana. (2007), "Teaching Syllabus for Creative arts, Curriculum research and Development Division (CRDD) Accra (2007).

⁵ . CRDD, Ghana, 2

⁵ . Nantwi, William Kwabena, Patrick Afful, and Phillipa Asare-Ababio. "Pedagogical practices in creative arts: Using the right approach for effective delivery." *European Journal of Education Studies* (2019).

atenteben belongs - sic) of this curriculum is in limbo. This is mainly because the generalist teachers who are meant to teach it lack the requisite training to do so.”⁵ This challenge renders atenteben teaching and learning relatively scarce in the Creative Arts curriculum albeit it is utilised in several basic and secondary schools.

The Use of Atenteben in School Settings

Despite the challenges associated with atenteben instruction, there has been a general upward trend in the patronage of the instrument in Ghanaian educational institutions such as UEW, University of Ghana (Legon)⁵, and several other public/private tertiary/pre-tertiary institutions.⁵ This offers a major reason for increased composition,⁵ teaching, and learning⁷ of new atenteben tunes in addition to those composed by Amu. Two examples (excerpts) of tunes by Amu and Ebeli are shown in figure 6 below.



Figure 5. Excerpt of atenteben tunes taken from Ebeli (2013). *Music for the Atenteben. Vol. II: Creative Works for Atenteben with Piano Accompaniment*. Accra: Sundel Services.

There are several other atenteben tunes including those in Adjahoe’s *Anthology*.⁵ These tunes are mainly used during extra-curricular activities such as school concerts, interschool cultural competitions, Graduation/commencement ceremonies, open day celebrations, speech and prize-giving events, African universities day celebrations, school-community programmes like festivals, durbars⁵, and funerals of members of the school community/their close relatives.

⁵ . Agyeman-Boafo, R. "Creative Arts in Crisis: Teaching and Learning of Creative Arts in selected Public Primary Schools in Kumasi Metropolis." PhD diss., MA Thesis. Kwame, Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, 2010.

⁵ . Vordzorgbe, Pius PY. *The joy of Atenteben Volume 1*. Accra, Ghana: Black Mask Limited, 2013.

⁵ . Laughlin, Shaun C. "A Tradition of Innovation: An Exploration into the History, Cultural Role and Playing of the Atenteben and Odurugya flutes of Ghana" (2000).

⁵ . Ebeli, Eva. *Music for The Atenteben. Vol. II: Creative Works for Atenteben with Piano Accompaniment*. Accra: Sundel Services, 2013.

⁵ . Adjahoe, Mawuyram Q. *An Anthology of the B Flat Atenteben for Colleges and Universities*. Cape Coast: Cape Coast University Press. (2013).

⁵ . A durbar (plural: durbars) is a gathering of chiefs, usual during the climax of a festival celebration. See: Selase, G. R. (2013). The Socio-economic benefits derived from festivals. A case study of Asogli Yam festival in Ghana. *Researchers World*, 4(4), 64.



Research further indicates that:

Amu's efforts were taken to a higher level by Nana Danso and Mr. Henaku-Pobi who developed the chromatic system of playing atenteben, prevalent in both academic and non-academic circles.... Full capabilities of the instrument are exposed by the chromatic system such that the atenteben is able to play in any key over two octaves, depending on the performer.⁶ p. 14

It may however, be confounding that despite its rapid advancement over the years, atenteben is not conspicuously used during national events such the Independence Day Anniversary even though school children and teachers attend, and other types of Ghanaian traditional music are performed including drumming, singing and dancing. No clear reasons were assigned to this observation as Kodzo Amu wondered: "Well, that's a good question. But let me say that I still can't tell why they do not allow the children to play it during the 6th March celebration..."⁶ Also, it is uncommon to find atenteben in canonic works by Ghanaian/African composers for national and/or international audience as compared to flute in the Western sense; Dr. Ephraim Amu never wrote one of such works either.⁶ Kodzo Amu's disillusionment in this regard was evident when he lamented:

Tata did not have many followers at that time because some of them associated it to idol worship. So, it was after his death that many people begun to make, and use atenteben. And they are not able to make it properly because the bamboos here are not good for it. I used to travel to Sunyani to buy the bamboo but I cannot go there again because of my health. ... All these flutes are good but they refused to buy them. Sometimes when they buy, after some days or even weeks later, they will return it and say it is not in C. You see! Meanwhile, they can also play in any key, whether G or C and so on.⁶

While it is unknown how many people engaged in the commercial construction of the Ghanaian bamboo flute, Kodzo Amu's lament suggested that there were enthusiasts who were exploring it. One could garner from the quote above that there is a specific bamboo species suitable for making good quality atenteben which is inaccessible to some producers. Furthermore, indications are that depending on the material and the construction process the instrument can be produced in other keys such as C, G, D, and F majors. However, these type of atenteben are not being patronized by users; they most often opt for the B flat one.

Obviously, some people believe that the atenteben which is constructed in the key of B flat is the best because that was what Ephraim Amu originally developed. But our findings revealed that Amu chose to construct the instrument in the key of B flat major, in the interest of his students at that time. "He developed the atenteben in B flat because he had already introduced the B flat clarinet to his students in the then Presbyterian Teacher Training College, at

⁶ . Ebeli, Eva Akosua. "Atenteben: A Legacy of Ephraim AMU." *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education* (2018): 5(8),12-18.

⁶ . Ghana's Independence Day is celebrated on March 6, each year, since 1957.

⁶ . Dor, George Worlasi Kwasi. "Ephraim Amu's "Bonwere KenteAwene": a celebration of Ghanaian traditional knowledge, wisdom, and artistry." *African Music: Journal of the International Library of African Music* 9, no. 4 (2014): 7-35.

⁶ . Amu, Kodzo. Interview with author. Personal interview.

Tata in the native Peki language means "daddy or father."



Akropong, seeking to promote transfer of learning among his students.”⁶ Then, considering the transverse position in the atente is played as awkward, Amu initiated playing the atenteben in vertical orientation, as practiced currently.⁶ It therefore, implies that the tonal dogmatism found in this study may be attributed to the difficulties in pitch synchronizations, which tends to be worse when chromaticism sets in. A subsequent paper will focus on the issue of tonality in playing the atenteben.

This research also revealed that over the years, atenteben has hardly been featured during state functions, partly due to Christian missionary influence on the people. According to Flolu and Amuah,⁶ the missionaries made⁶ Ghanaians to believe that African instruments were satanic objects, thereby discouraging their use during that time, especially in churches and schools. This might have adversely affected the use of atenteben during national activities as well.

Another mystifying finding from this investigation suggest that iconic Ghanaian/African composers did not include atenteben in their orchestral works. Examples of such works are the *Folk symphony* by J. H. K. Nketia,⁶ *Negro Folk Symphony*⁷ by William Dawson,⁶ *Asomdwee Hen* (Prince of Peace) Operatta by C. W. K. Mereku,⁶ *Fraternity Symphonic Suite* (1st Movement), and *Fantasy on an Adowa Song*, both by G. W. K. Dor,⁷ in addition to *Chaka Opera* by Akin Euba,⁷ There is no gain, therefore, contending that the limited utilization of the atenteben largely due to the problems of superstition and tonal discrepancies.

⁶ (Adjahoe, Mawuyram. Personal interview. Cape Coast, August 16, 2021).

⁶ . Adjahoe, 5

⁶ . Flolu, James & Amuah Isaac. *An introduction to music education in Ghana for universities and colleges*. Black Mask Limited, 2003.

⁶ . Boamah, E. "Stylistic Traits in African Pianism Works of Three Art Music Composers JH Nketia, Akin Euba and Gyimah Labi." PhD diss., University of Ghana, 2007.

⁶ . Maxile, Horace J. "Signs, symphonies, signifying: African-American cultural topics as analytical approach to the music of Black composers." *Black Music Research Journal* 28, no. 1 (2008): 123-138.

⁶ . Acquah, E. O. "Analytical pursuit of C.W. K. Mereku's 'Asomdwee Hen' operetta." (2018).

⁷ . Amuah, Joshua Alfred "Biography and adventures of George Worlasi Kwasi Dor in the discovery of traditional (musical) elements in choral music compositions." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* (2014): 227-235.

⁷ . Robison, John O. "Akin Euba, Chaka, and Intercultural Opera in Africa." *Música Art Diálogo Civilización* (2008): 125.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to trace the historical route of atenteben in the Ghanaian school curriculum from its insertion to the year 2023. The study revealed that atenteben was developed, and introduced in Ghanaian schools by Dr. Ephraim Amu in 1927. He developed the instrument in B flat because he had already introduced the B flat with the view to promoting transfer of learning among his B flat clarinet students, and the instrument has since remained useful, especially, at the university and the senior high school levels in Ghana.

However, lack of tonal conventionality as well as superstitious beliefs have negatively affected the teaching and learning of the instrument, especially in colleges of education, junior high, and elementary schools in Ghana, Africa, and perhaps, elsewhere. It is recommended that music teacher-training institutions should make atenteben a conscious part of their official curriculum so that preservice teachers could be properly equipped to teach the instrument in the junior high, and elementary schools (the Creative Arts). Like the fipple flute and the pipe, the atenteben is a valuable musical heritage⁷; and we must uphold it.²

Future research will investigate disparities in fingering techniques on atenteben. The key C, D, G, and F versions of atenteben also require further empirical exploration. Finally, a more in-depth knowledge about writings and compositions of Amu on atenteben is needed to unearth other intricate information that Ephraim Amu may have shared on the atenteben.

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