THE AKAN HIGHLIFE SONG: A MEDIUM OF CULTURAL REFLECTION OR DEFLECTION?
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This paper is a comment on Sjaak van der Geest’s article, “The Image of Death in Akan Highlife Songs of Ghana” (Research in African Literatures, 11 [Summer 1980]), in which some observations were made, by the author, about Akan belief systems and attitudes to death on the basis of his examination of Akan highlife song texts. The significance of van der Geest’s approach and observations lies in the attention he draws to the antithetical relationship between the traditional Akan view of death and the view of death as expressed in Akan highlife songs. The contradiction he identifies gives way eventually to a series of related hypotheses in which the author advocates a preferential reliance on the cultural views expressed in highlife. The possible alternative sources of information van der Geest deliberately ignores are two: the Akan view of death as expressed in books by experts in the tradition and as portrayed in Akan myths, traditional songs, and modern poetry. The highlife is a popular genre and would better reflect Akan popular beliefs, van der Geest indicates. “It seems plausible that popular song texts would better reflect the ideas and expectations of the common people than the doctrines that are quoted by experts in the tradition” (van der Geest, p. 107); and later on in his paper, “Highlife songs will present a truer picture of popular beliefs about death than do myths, traditional songs and modern poetry” (p. 147).

Based on textual analysis of highlife, van der Geest charges that belief in life hereafter among the Akan as indicated by Rattray (1927), Nketicia (1955), and Sarpong (1974) is not a popular one. This belief was expected by the author to be manifested in highlife songs through reference to the role of ancestors, reincarnation, and retribution after death. But to van der Geest, “There is no real reference to life hereafter as a source of comfort (to the bereaved)” (p. 151). “No song expresses the idea that death is not the end, that the deceased will stay on with us as ancestor or come back to life as another person” (p. 161). “The traditional view of death as transition to another world has left no trace in texts of highlife music” (p. 102).

The flaws in van der Geest’s paper shall be discussed from three or four perspectives: his objective, methodology, observations, and, possibly, conclusions. Even though the first three of these are clearly stated by the author, he fights shy of solid, definitive conclusions about the Akan culture and therefore confronts the danger or perhaps safety of being misinterpreted. His objective:
to use a popular song as a source of information about the Akan. Methodology: examining the texts of one hundred highlife songs, presumed to be popular between 1970 and 1978. Observation: there is no suggestion of life hereafter in highlife songs. Van der Geest's conclusion, however, eludes identification, for in the section labeled "Conclusion," the author reiterates his observations over and over again.

In conclusion we can say that death is a recurrent theme in Akan highlife songs. Out of the one hundred songs analyzed thirty-one mentioned death in one way or the other. Examining the texts on death, I found to my surprise that the absolute and definite reality of death is never denied. Death sting is never taken away by pointing out that death is only a journey to another life, a transition, or a temporary event or that life is eternal, or that the human soul is immortal. No reference is made to three belief elements that are frequently quoted by experts on the Akan traditional world view. . . . Death is depicted as a gruesome reality. . . . Death itself is a punishment, but after death nothing happens, . . .

A solid conclusion that would have been expected to emerge from a juxtaposition of the two antithetical views never materializes. Could it have been, for example, one of the following? One, from the view expressed in highlife songs, it is clear that the much written about Akan traditional belief in life hereafter is a hoax. Two, the traditional Akan belief in life hereafter is no more valid; that this has perhaps disappeared over time is evident from the views expressed in Akan highlife songs. Three, there is a discrepancy between traditional Akan beliefs about death and beliefs about death as expressed in highlife songs, and the basis of this apparent cultural contradiction needs to be investigated.

None of these possible conclusions, however, clearly emerges from van der Geest's article, even though he gravitates in unsteady motions toward the first; this is deducible from the following statement: "It seems plausible that popular song texts would better reflect the ideas and expectations of the common people than the doctrines that are quoted by experts in the tradition" (p. 107). Even here the question arises: do the "experts" in the tradition purport to present the views of the common people? If so, what views do the experts purport not to represent? And finally, how did the experts arrive at their conclusions about Akan beliefs? Was it through research observation/investigation of Akan behavior and
how the Akan explain their way of life? Or did they conclude from mere examination of Akan literature?

Regardless of the disinterestedness of van der Geest in these crucial questions that even raise doubts about the reliability of his own methodology, it is still possible to subject his inclinations to closer scrutiny. First, they may be of consequence to African traditional religion in general, and second, the whole question of folklore or literature mirroring a group’s culture should be an important one for literary studies in Africa as a whole.

In this essay, I take the position that contrary to van der Geest’s observation, the concept of life hereafter is not missing in Akan highlife songs; in fact, it occurs in folk and popular songs including highlife. Second, even if the concept of life hereafter was missing in the Akan highlife song text, that would be no justification for raising doubts about the views of students of Akan, such as R. S. Rattray, whose conclusions about Akan beliefs are based on observation of Akan life-style and practices as well as the Akans’ own views about their culture. The expectations of van der Geest about the Akan highlife or popular art in general seem to be far-fetched and rather unrealistic. Rather than use the content of highlife only as a supplement to observation or elicited views or cross-check his textual findings with facts from daily life, the author overestimates the diagnostic potential of popular art, misconceiving the Akan highlife as an unedited play-out of Akan culture in its entirety.

The view of a people’s folklore or literature being a mirror of its culture has received varying reactions from anthropologists, folklorists, ethnomusicologists as well as literary scholars. Even so, genres have been said to differ in the extent to which they mirror culture. To Franz Boas, “tribal” narratives mirror the ethnography of the culture (Dorson, p. 20). Bronislaw Malinowski (p. 29) saw primitive myth as “a warrant, charter, and often even a practical guide.” Bascom (pp. 279–98) sees one function of folklore as validating culture. One implication of the above views is that each folklore form or literary genre bears the distinctive mark of the culture within which it circulates. The distinctive mark may be a theme, plot, belief, or literary development, for each culture is supposed to have what Wallace refers to as “genius” or “a set of psychological characteristics that provides certain primitive categories into which experience is coded” (Wallace, p. 137). So does each culture have its own ethos, values, and world view. It is such peculiar traits of a people that permeate their folklore or literature
and give it a distinctive character, even if some basic motifs are shared cross-culturally.

Yet the view of culture in folklore or literature as espoused by Bascom et al. meets with apparent problems. Scholars such as Ruth Benedict, working on Zuni mythology, Paul Radin (p. 131), dealing with the Winnebago trickster, and William Lessa (pp. 26-28) cite several areas of divergence between folklore and culture. At this stage the work of Alan Lomax and Joan Halifax becomes relevant, for they exhibit sensitivity to the vagaries of literary forms and assess the relative reliability of tales and folk songs as indexes of culture. Folk song texts, Lomax and Halifax propose, yield information about cultural norms more than folktales, owing to the greater redundancy inherent in folk songs: "The formalities of melody and meter tend to limit the choice of the singer and songmaker to a set of stock phrases, devices and poetic forms" (Lomax and Halifax, p. 275). Containing a greater amount of redundancy, the content of folk songs would be reasonably steady indexes of a people’s ethos and world view, even though not all aspects of the culture may be mirrored in folk songs. Weighed against popular songs, it is reasonable to surmise that, owing to the greater chances for collective creativity in folk songs and their survival and use over longer periods of time, folk songs generally portray sentiments on which the society is in greater accord.

The highlife, on the other hand, is a popular syncretic art form with single identifiable authorship and is bound to occasionally portray sentiments which constitute a covariation between individual personality and tradition. Second, for artistic and commercial considerations, a highlife artist may have to use his discretion in manipulating the tension between literary and melodic aesthetics, on one hand, and the cultural constants, on the other, where the two are not coterminous. These factors naturally reduce the predictability of the highlife as a cultural indicator.

Using the popularity of particular highlife songs as the basis for predicting popular belief, as van der Geest’s methodology indicates, is an attractive methodological step. The problem is that the acceptability of a highlife song is in no way a measure of the acceptability of the message it enhances or a reliable index of the viewpoint of its lovers, for a highlife composition is a multiplex of voice, melody, text, rhythm, and instrumentation; the source of a song’s appeal may not necessarily be its message. One may recall here a highlife recording released by the Apagya Show Band of Ghana in the early 1970s entitled "Simgwado," which shot the
The text of this popular song was a string of nonsense words that conveyed no message to the audience. Perhaps that was the source of its appeal. Second, one wonders how van der Geest even measured the popularity of the songs in his sample. Was it popularity on the radio? In the rural areas? Or at key areas representative of a cross-section of highlife audiences? There is evidence to suggest that van der Geest restricted himself largely to highlife songs performed by Ghanaian comic operas (referred to in Ghana and Nigeria as “concert parties”). This is evident both from his sample of highlife bands and also from his statement, “Highlife bands usually start their performance with a play and end with a number of highlife songs” (p. 147).

This statement could have benefited from a measure of circumspection, for it constitutes a gross underrepresentation of the myriad organizational ensembles through which the Ghanaian highlife finds expression. The highlife music, a combination of traditional recreational music and Western musical influences, originated on the Fanti Coast in the 1920s and has since spread to Ghana’s interior as well as other countries in West Africa (Collins, 1976). In Ghana the highlife is performed by three main types of musical ensembles as well as other less significant groups. The main highlife ensembles are dance bands, brass bands, and guitar bands. Of these three groups, only guitar bands incorporate comic play in their performances (Bame, 1968). Occasionally, though, guitar bands play the role of dance bands, performing ostensibly for dancing. The highlife may also be performed by traditional recreational groups such as the Akan Bosoe, Ewe Borborbor, Ga kpanlogo, and Accra-based Ga traditional groups such as Wulomei, Adzo, Suku, as well as by choral groups, some of which are church based.

The multiplicity of highlife-performing ensembles, notwithstanding, the most influential are dance bands and guitar bands. Not only do these move from place to place to perform but their music is also given greater exposure through radio, television, and phonograph recordings.

Highlife songs deal with a wide range of themes. The most recurrent traits in highlife song texts, however, may be classified under the domain of misery, brought about by social mobility, marriage, treachery, poverty, hard luck, witchcraft, death, etc. The expatiation of these subthemes in highlife texts occasionally brings the artist face to face with Akan traditional beliefs. One of such is the belief in life hereafter that, contrary to van der Geest’s
observation, is occasionally embedded in highlife songs on death. The belief in death as a transition is evident not through explicit proclamation by the singer but through occasional invocation of the spirit of a deceased to come and improve the plight of the orphan.

The implication of life hereafter in Akan literary form did not begin with the highlife: it may be traced to Akan traditional laments such as adowa, dirges, and sometimes recreational songs such as nnwonkoro. In the Akan dirge, it takes the form of defining the ancestry of the dead one, so that in the spirit world the deceased would be easily identified by his kinsmen (Nketia, pp. 19–30). This may be exemplified by the following dirge I collected from Akwamu, an Akan-speaking area in southern Ghana.

Grandsire of Ansa the drinker of blood;  
Grandsire of Akuwaa that hails from Papawase;  
Grandsire of one whose valour we celebrate with musketry;  
Grandsire of one who fights to capture rivers;  
Grandsire of the heavy bombaa drums that dislodges headpads;  
Mother earth, the equi-poised that balances stones on its head.

In this dirge the deceased is given identification through association with specific ancestors in the belief that he is entering a world where self-identification is a necessity. And in the dirge that follows, there is a suggestion of reincarnation embedded in the statement that Ansa died and made possible the birth of Afrakoma.

Ansa the fighter,  
It is you who died and thereby brought Afrakoma.  
Grandsire Afrakoma Donkoh,  
Grandsire Afrakoma the brave one,  
Afrakoma, the hard odum tree,  
Our elders are decimated.  
It’s only children left behind.  
I mourn for my plight as I mourn for you.

The belief in life hereafter also underlies adowa and nnwonkoro songs either in the form of counsel to the dead one not to give away secrets to those in the other world (Nketia, pp. 119–20) or as a request to the deceased to remit the living one in need.

In the highlife song, request to a deceased to remit or guard the
living is one of four ways in which the problem posed by a specific death is often resolved, for the orphan in the song may call on God for help or express hope that He will alleviate the hardship. Sometimes, the bereaved expresses consolation or is consoled in the fact that the plight of others may be worse than his own. In a few instances the sad plight of the orphan is attributed to fate (nkrabea) or mishap (tibone), and no specific solution is sought or suggested—gyae monka ("leave it as it is").

Highlife songs in Akan that depict belief in life hereafter may be exemplified by those performed and recorded by K. Gyasi and his Noble Kings, Ramblers Dance Band, and a selection by Kofi Gyan on the album entitled Aboma Nsia. One proverb in Akan whose use in highlife songs often implies a call on a dead parent to alleviate the sorry plight of the orphan is obaatan na enim nea ne mma bedi ("It is only the mother that knows what her children will eat"). Other indexical key phrases are san bghw wo mma ("return and take care of your children") and eya a mane me ("send me a remittance at intervals").

LONESOME ORPHAN (Ankonam Agyanka) (By K. Gyasi's Band)

Lonesome miserable orphan,
Behold my pitiful end;
Child of a ghost, here I am.
Dust has settled in my eyes,
Darkness has caught me up in broad daylight;
I am now in the snares of the treacherous one.
Mother Abena, come and take care of your children;
For we are in need.

In this song it is the belief of the orphan that his or her deceased mother is capable of returning to the world as a spirit to protect and take care of the orphan. The same message, recorded by the same band, runs through the following:

RETURN TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR CHILDREN (San bghw wo mma)

Return to take care of your children,
Mother, return to fend for your offspring,
A living guardian playing your role
Is no fair substitute for your own presence.
In this world, it’s painful to lose a mother.
Since you departed leaving Twumasi, your son,
Misery has been his plight.
Return to care for your young ones,
Mother, return to fend for your children.

In the following by Kofi Gyan, note the expression of the same idea, “return to care for your young ones,” strengthened by the apothegm “It’s only the mother that knows what her children will eat.” Note also a variation, in the following song, of a saying in line 3 above.

RETURN TO GUARD YOUR CHILDREN
Mother, your death has left your children suffering.
Your clansmen say of the property you bequeathed to us,
That we are too wretched for luxurious life.
The cocoa farms and the buildings you left, have been taken away.
Poor ones unable to walk in step with our peers.

Father the good guardian,
How could I be burning in mere ashes?
Turn and look behind.
The good will of a benefactor
Cannot equal that of a father.
Father, return to fend for your children.
Venturing into a neighbor’s house, he treats me like a goat;
The nearest club he clutches and pelts at me.

Mother, your death has brought us suffering
It’s only the mother that knows what her young ones will like to eat.

In our present plight,
What’s there for your children to eat?
Mother, Gyampoma, return to guard your young ones.

While the following example by the Ramblers Dance Band reiterates the above message, it illustrates the Akan belief in both ancestors and God, the Almighty. God is the final authority in all matters and stands at the top of a hierarchy of supernatural beings that provide the focal point of Akan religion. Next to God stand the ancestors (see K. A. Opoku, p. 10). It is thus not unusual for a needy orphan to seek solace in God, his ancestor, or both, as in the following.

CONDOLENCES, ORPHAN (*Agyanka due*)
Condolences, brother’s son.
Condolences for your suffering.
In this world, your mother’s end is the end of clan ties.
Mother’s death has spelt misery for me.
Who is there to save me?
The clan has rejected me.
Condolences, lonely one.
I leave my plight to God.

Orphan child, weep not.
Weeping will exhaust your tears.
Misery is the plight of the orphan.
Hunger in the orphan is misread as illhealth,
Yet it’s not a failing health.
In this world, our elders say,
It’s only the mother that knows what her children will eat.
Ancestor mother, remit me at intervals.
Mother Ama, remit me when another is coming.

Mother’s death is felt more keenly among the Akan, owing to the
system of matrilineal inheritance.

Besides the above examples, a few highlife songs depict an
orphan calling on a dead parent to give him wise counsel through a
dream. The phrases often used in this regard are:

Advise me through a dream,
On what path I should follow.

[Eye a so me adae pa,
na kyere me kwan a memfa so]

The belief in life after death does not underlie only Akan highlife
songs. It is found also in Ga highlife songs. In fact, the belief in
ancestor veneration is a West African phenomenon. In a highlife
song entitled “Sisa” (“Ghost”), recorded by the Suku troupe, a
highlife-influenced traditional group in Accra, the singer calls on a
newly deceased to ask her ancestors to send her a remittance, since
she is in need. The refrain runs, “Tell them I am in need, and they
should remit me at intervals” (Nkee ehia me, ke effee amandze me).

The important point to note in the examples cited is not only
the call on an ancestor for help or counsel but also, and even more
basically, the composer/singer’s conviction that he is communicat-
ing through song with a departed one, living now in a spirit world.
This is a particularly important manifestation of the belief in
death as a transition among the Akan. In ordinary day-to-day living, the belief is commonly manifested in a specialized method of communication, libation pouring (mpae-yi), in which the help and blessings of the ancestors are solicited through the pouring of drinks and the performance of a rigidly structured spoken prayer. Even so, highlife songs in which libation is poured are not uncommon. The Apagyaa Show Band of Ghana released a record in the mid-1970s entitled “Nsamanfo” (“Ancestors”) in which libation is poured. Part of the song is as follows:

On our return from a journey,
My lover’s mother had died.
Receive ye drinks, ancestors,
Receive ye drinks.
Thanks be to God,
Receive ye drinks, ancestors.

One could also bring to mind the words of Koo Nimo, a famous Ghanaian folk musician in whose song, “Nsamanfo wommra” (“Proceed ye ancestors”), the help of a long list of ancestors is solicited. The names of the ancestors and the expression “receive drinks” are transmitted first on talking drums and then verbalized. The song itself is replete with the refrain “Ancestors, proceed and stand behind us.”

Having demonstrated the implication of the belief in life hereafter in highlife songs, I could comment briefly on such songs as van der Geest cites in which death is depicted as a finality, for it would seem as if the two theses are contradictory. Examples van der Geest offers are songs by Ampadu, Konadu, and Nananom. Particularly interesting is Konadu’s “Onipa wu a na wawu” (“Man’s death is final”) in which the singer implicitly derides the concept of life after death.

When a person dies, it is the end.
I have never met my mother since she died, so I believe it.
If we say the deceased is coming to send us something, we lie.
Or when we say the deceased will write to us, it is a lie.
If there is bread sold in the other world, I don’t know anybody who has eaten it.

(van der Geest, p. 160)

To Van der Geest’s examples may be added one from Ogyatanaa Show Band, “Afrenbyia pa” (“Happy new year”), where the
singer advocates enjoyment on a new year’s day, since when man
dies, he rots away (*onipa wu a na wasge*). The following song by
Pat Thomas, “Man has places to go” (*Onipa wo baabi ko*) conveys
a similar message.

Man has a place to go.
When cassava is planted,
It germinates on the fall of rain.
But when man is interred,
He never returns.
Man has a place to go.

The existence of such apparent contradictions in highlife song
texts is significant and may be viewed from three perspectives.
First, as earlier argued, the highlife being a popular art form of in-
dividual authorship and commercial inclination is bound to be re-
plete with varying viewpoints in respect of specific beliefs. De-
pending on individual style, a performer may rely on the shock or
antinormative value of a message to win the appreciation of the
audience. Thus, for artistic reasons, he may defeat the expectation
of the audience through the juxtaposition of the sacred and the
banal such as in the above song where the interment of man is
compared with the planting of cassava. In the song earlier cited,
the mention or denial of commercial activities, such as the selling
of bread, in the “other world” is bound to provoke laughter. This
is, of course, not to write off the possibility that the song is meant
to reflect the composer’s skepticism of life hereafter through the
medium of humor. Second, it is possible for some of such songs to
be implicitly counseling the living not to use the hope for spiritual
aid as an excuse to abandon hard work and withdraw into slothful
dormancy. In the two songs that follow, for instance, while the
first, by Jos Asante, is a call to a dead mother to come take the
singer to the world of the dead because he is fed up with this
world, the second by Ramblers Dance Band counsels against such
defeatist invocation of the deceased.

The world is for me an unhappy one,
I will be happy and quiet in death,
I did my best but in vain,
I now wish for death.
Proceed, dear mother,
My dead mother, proceed.
Come fetch me.

(Jos Asante)
Hold fast to this life,
When you fail in responsible living,
You unabashedly call on a dead mother to come fetch you.
Hold fast to good life,
If you fail in responsible living,
Know that your dead mother shall never return.
(Ramblers Dance Band)

Besides the possibilities that such songs may be selling their artistry, advising against indolence, or genuinely reflecting the skepticism of the composer about traditional beliefs, it is necessary to add a caution that while some such songs may seem to contradict the concept of life hereafter, they need not be so interpreted. For even though the Akan believe in life after death, it is still clear that the body of a deceased literally rots away, as the song by Ogyattanaa indicates. But life does not end there, since the dead continue to live in the spirit world. Though they are still part of the Akan community, their death is in a sense final, since they have ceased to be members of the human society. They may send gifts or counsel, but only as spirits. Nor should the content of the songs above be taken as contradicting reincarnation. The Akan believe that the dead are able to return to earth to be reborn into their families. But it should be emphasized, as K. A. Opoku does, that reincarnation in West Africa is distinctive and that it is only the dominant characteristics and spirit of the ancestor which are believed to be reincarnated in his descendant, and not his soul. For each soul remains distinct and each birth represents a new soul, and even though the ancestor is believed to be reincarnated in his grandchildren or great grandchildren, he nevertheless continues to live in the afterlife. Thus one can speak of it as “partial reincarnation.”
(K. A. Opoku, p. 138)

From the trend of argument above, it should not be surprising that death to the Akan is real and must be dreaded. While van der Geest recognizes this, his interpretation of the signals reveals a woefully distorted view of the Akan. Proof of this lies in the following “coup de grace” unleashed by van der Geest. This bit deserves to be quoted, since in van der Geest’s own words, it is “crucial.”

A crucial final question is how are people able to live if they
have no means of forgetting the chilling reality of death. My tentative answer is that death is "forgotten" by facing it to the extreme point of drunkenness, hallucination, and emotional exhaustion. I have tried to make this possibility clear through a comparison: by looking straight into the sun the person will end up seeing the sun no more. (van der Geest, p. 169)

This "crucial" conclusion offered about the Akan is not merely false and naive: it is grossly incompetent and has the flavor of the deduction of a nineteenth-century anthropology neophyte rushing to proclaim "eureka" to his mentors, after a nine-day wandering on the "dark" continent.

It is even difficult to imagine that there is a part of this world where a people’s entire lives are geared toward contriving to forget the reality of death. In the first place, the Akan do not make a conscious attempt to forget death. Instead, even in the absence of a death, days are set aside during annual festivals such as Odwira for general mourning for those who died in the past year. The whole town is thrown into a state of mourning on such days (see A. A. Opoku, pp. 14-15). Second, reflections on death often take place on occasions of death or funeral celebrations. Besides those emotionally affected by the deceased’s death, there are those for whom the current death is a reminder of the death of other dear ones. The funeral may also call for reflection by mourners on the indiscriminateness of death. To a few it may be just another occasion to socialize, especially if the deceased is little known to them. These circumstances may or may not lead to drinking on the part of the mourners. The extent of the drinking, if this is resorted to, differs from person to person and partially depends on the availability of drinks. In a few cases some individuals may drink to excess, but this is more of an exception than a rule. Second, drinking at funerals does not constitute an escapist strategy to forget the chill of death. It is often an open demonstration of the degree of emotional excitation into which death has thrown the mourner. Excessive drinking among the Akan, as in all African societies, is frowned upon, and drunks are despised. As for van der Geest's reference to hallucination as another way by which Akans forget the reality of death, the reader, including the Akan native, would have benefited from a fuller narration, since this has the trappings of a new discovery.

This paper has attempted to highlight some pertinent problems that lie in the search for culture solely in popular song. The case of
the Akan highlife has been used as an example. We have not found it necessary in this essay to give a full account of practices during funerals and in daily lives that point to belief in life hereafter (common names like Ababio ["Has come back to life"] even point to the belief in reincarnation). Far from uttering a cry of total pessimism in the productiveness of the search for culture in song, I have cautioned against overrating the potential of popular song texts as indicators of culture. Beside the uncertainty of popular accord on the views or beliefs enhanced or derided in popular song is the fact that the popular song text, such as the highlife, is a limited medium that copes with the multiplicity of possible cultural themes only through a process of selection. Thus while the persistence of a trait in popular song may be an index to the presence of the trait in the culture, the absence of a belief or trait in a popular song does not provide sufficient basis for concluding on its absence in the culture. The search for culture in literature or folklore becomes realistic only if it is made supplementary to observation of, or investigation into, the day-to-day lives and practices of a people. A more fruitful endeavor lies in the attempt to explain the possible covariation that may lie between concepts and values advocated in popular song texts and those favored or seen to operate in the lives of a people. Further, one could assess the basis of a popular artist’s scheme of thematic preference in an attempt to determine the concord between an artist’s private and artistic identities.

Sjaak van der Geest’s study of the attitudes toward death in Akan highlife song texts does not only miss more realistic alternative designs but also misses the depth, breadth, and meaning of the highlife experience, and thereby forgoes the whole joy of it.

REFERENCES


