

1987

Time in the African Tradition

E. Kofi Agorsah

Portland State University, agorsahe@pdx.edu

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/black_studies_fac



Part of the [African Studies Commons](#)

Citation Details

Agorsah, E.K. (1987). Time in African tradition. *The Post*, No.11:10-15, Ghana Information Services, Accra.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Black Studies Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. For more information, please contact pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

ARTS ... CULTURE ... MUSIC



AUTHOR - DR E.K.
AGORSAH

TIME IN THE AFRICAN TRADITION

The African concept of time is one that has never been properly understood by non-Africans. The reason probably lies in the fact that in Africa time becomes tied-in to activities of the season, day or night rather than in terms of a large solar clock or calendar. The African seasons are not thought of as stretching evenly, but rather are considered as periods in a chain of events one gradually culminating into another. However, for one reason or another, time in African tradition has often been misunderstood and often also linked with the so-called ideas of "African time" on "Lateness"

The importance of time in African tradition can be observed even in proverbs in various parts of the continent. The Ewe of Ghana for example have a proverb which says "Zaoa ye kpoanu" meaning "It is the night traveller who sees horrible things or ghosts". In the traditional society travelling is done during the day and people who travel in the night claim to see ghosts and dwarfs, which is not a nice or desirable experience. The night, therefore, is not the time to travel. What this proverb refers to is that everything must be done at the appropriate time. This lesson teaches the evil consequences of acting at the wrong time. The Akan would also say "Eribiara wo ne bre." that is "Every thing has its time". Several of such proverbs can be cited to support the view of the importance that the African attaches to time. To the African activities are not considered to be controlled by an impartial, external measurement. Rather they are considered as events which develop according to their own rhythms. For example, among the Arusha who live in the western slopes of Mountain Meru, one of the

Kabogyi	Dry season begins	Late
	selective harvesting	September
Puerepuere	Ploughing time; grass	
	burning; preparation	October
	of farms	
Ngorefagya	Time for raising yam	
	mounds; generally dull	November
	weather	
Odenbogya	Dull wather; blood	
	curdling weather	
	Oden means curdling	December
	or chilly and bogya	
	means blood	
Twee	Plenty of sunshine;	
	Warm weather	Jan/February
	Twee means burn	

The rest are *Odwendwane* (February), *Pweapong* (March) *Bubu* (April) and *Kyewu* (May/June). For each of these there are specific related activities. The example of the *Nchumuru* time periods demonstrates the way in which in African tradition activities directly relate to time. The *Krachi* who live in the Northern Volta basin of Ghana have a six-day week - *K'kpae*, *Kelenja*, *Kupuor*, *Kinyenne*, *Kukruwa*. They, like the Ewe and *Nchumuru* have the day for rest to which they refer as *Kupuor*.

The Akan of Ghana generally also have a six-day week referred to as *nnanson*. These are *Fo*, *Nwufia*, *Nkyi*, *Kwa* and *Mono*. The seven day week in Akan is only a recent development. By Akan calculation therefore, there are nine months in the year and 42 days in the months of

Goldrema mwarig	-	February
Golgo	-	March
Sikweng	-	April
Simahug	-	May
Mariwuuk	-	June
Naching	-	July
Nabist	-	August
Kuom	-	September

As *Kuom mwarig* marks the last month of the year, it is during this month that ceremonies connected with the most important festival known as *Daa* festival is held. The time coincides with the first appearance of the full moon. Several celebrations mark different periods in the Tallensi cycle.

The cycle of these celebrations constitute the medium through which the Tallensi ritual system is regularly, obligatorily and conspicuously observed.

The examples of the time dimension also indicate that one way of understanding the rhythm of events in the African society is to be able to associate time with these events. Unfortunately many of us do not even know our traditional time systems. What are the names of the time periods or seasons in your traditional area? What do they mean or refer to? What specific aspects of your traditional practice do these names deal with. What are the main divisions and what is their cultural significance? These are questions that we all need to consider. In attempting to seek answers to these questions we should bear in mind that in African tradition days are divided into activity spans such as the warmth of the day and cool of the evening and also that the past and the present are always seen together. Days, Nights and Seasons:

external measurement. Rather they are considered as events which develop according to their own rhythms. The Arusha who live in the western slopes of Mountain Meru, one of the two high mountains in Tanzania, there is a formal time-table for advancement from one age grade to the next, and at fixed points in it everyone moves up a grade; when the senior persons referred to as *Murran* become elders, the senior elders retire. For any one man in Arusha society the process begins with his initiation. The time table is traditionally regulated, as it was in olden days, by initiation periods. For the Arusha these periods of initiation are, in calendrical terms roughly six years each. Permission to begin any new initiation period has to be obtained from the Masai ritual expert. To calculate the time, therefore, is to calculate the period of initiation rites.

Among the Nuer of Southern Sudan similar time calculations are done by alternation of what are referred to as closed and open initiation periods i.e. time when initiation may or may not be held. The sense of timing displayed by this system of time calculation is not the ability to estimate the number of minutes that passed but rather the ability to feel the inner rhythm of activities or sense of events and to maintain their movements. Time is seen as sequence of such activities as planting, sowing and harvesting. Such time scales are linked with the subsistence periods and the environment as well as social situations.

In the Northern Volta basin are the Guan speaking people known as the Nchumuru. They have a six-day week as follows:

Day	1	K'kruwa
"	2	K'enyenne
"	3	K'emunake
"	4	K'kpawa
"	5	K'pangya
"	6	K'epowe

The sixth day of the week *K'epowe* is by custom and belief the day of rest. On that day no one goes to the farm, nor is allowed to undertake hard work. It is the most important day for social activities and interaction between individuals and villages and for religious activities, family discussions, funeral rites, exchange of visits and similar events. Among the Ewe of Ghana such a day is referred to as *Afenoe gbe* meaning the day to stay at home. Although the Nchumuru currently use the twelve-month-a-year cycle and the seven day week, all traditional activities are based on the *K'epowe* time periods. An annual cycle can be completed in 45 *Kepowe* or even 65 depending upon the length of the periods and the transition from one period to another. That means that a year in traditional Nchumuru sense can be more or less than twelve calendar months.

Ecological time among *Nchumuru* is reckoned on the basis of the cycle of farming and hunting activities and as they relate to rainfall and sunshine, and in their minds the spirits of the land as well as the ancestors are well aware of these time periods and might react unfavourably if activities related to them are not performed at the appropriate times. For example *Kpakyowe* or *kyada* is the name for the harvest time and is the equivalent time of June/July. *Bo* is the name of the next month and signifies and of the rains, that is August/mid-September. The others are:

The Akan of Ghana generally also have a six-day week referred to as *nnanson*. These are *Fo, Nwuna, Nkyi, Kwa* and *Mono*. The seven day week in Akan is only a recent development. By Akan calculation therefore, there are nine months in the year and 42 days in the months of six weeks. Each of these weeks is connected with specific rites that also take into consideration the rhythm of subsistence, social and political activities. But there are four special days of ritual on the Akan calendar. There are *Akwasidae Awukudae, Fodwo* and *Fofoie*. For example *Akwasidae* comes nine times in the year. The ninth *Akwasidae* marks the end of the Akan year and is usually referred to as *Akwasidae Kese*. Most of the important ritual observances are held on these special days.

EVERYDAY LIFE

It is clear from our discussion that time to the African is tied into his everyday life. The Arusha, the Nuer, Ewe, Nchumuru/Krachi and Akan examples clearly show that the concept of time is one that is part of the ancient customs of the African. In the activities also we see that the African does not separate leisure from other time.

Among the *Tallensi* of Northern Ghana the new year starts in the middle of October. The length and number of months of the year are not the same as it is of the modern calendar year. However, the *Tallensi* period has now been crystalized into twelve as follows.

Daa mwarang	—	October
Bogram "	—	November
Kabulihim mwarang	—	December
Kwuort (Fulanfuk)	—	January

warmth of the day and cool of the evening and also that the past and the present are always seen together. Days, Nights and Seasons:

CONCEPT

The background to the African concept of time has been observed to consist of many and varied aspects. The concept is tied to a subsistence practice, natural phenomena such as night and day or seasons, ritual observances, or to some kind of social or economic activity directly related to every day activities. Most of the myths known from or about the African world take the concept of time as a serious factor. Most of them tell how something came to exist: man, the world, certain animals and social affairs. They make a "sacred history" and have as the central area the beginnings of the world, the adventures of man, his discoveries, obligations and the coming of death. Although the myth about time emphasis the belief in the eternity of the supreme being they also portray the idea that the Supreme and other being and spirits created and lived on earth and they left it later on or disappeared. Man too begins and used his life on earth.

In Sierra Leone a story told by the Kono people says that when God first made the world it never became really dark or cold. The sun shone during the day and at night the moon gave a twilight in which everything could be seen. One day God called the bat and gave him a basket to be given to the moon. In that basket was darkness. God did not tell the bat what the moon should do with the darkness. Rather he promised to tell him later. On his way bat decided to rest and to search for some food, so he put the basket containing darkness and went off. During his absence some animals found the basket and

Cont'd on page 12



Joseph Adjetye Sowah

dancing to fame

Joseph Adjetye Sowah a 20 year-old Ghanaian professional dancer who recently won the new world super dance (freestyle) championship in London has announced that he would be opening a dancing school in Ghana to train young Ghanaians to win more laurels for the country.

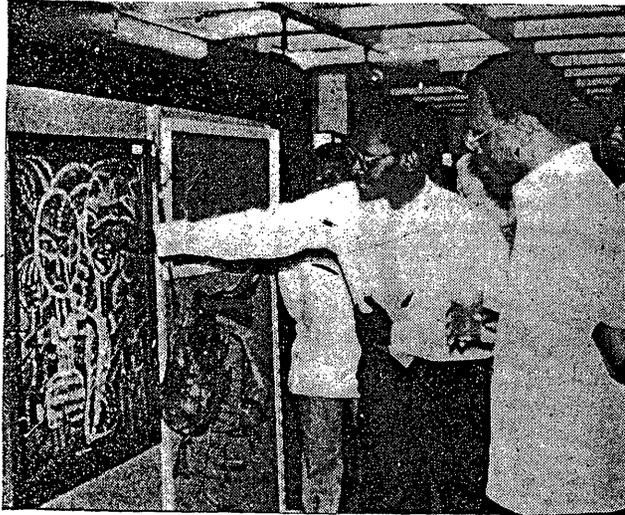
He beat a strong field of 48 dancers from 32 countries to win the title which carries with it a one thousand pounds prize and a trophy and opens the way for possible television and film contracts for the Ghanaian Champion.

The competition was organised by Malibu International at the Empire Hall at London's Leicester Square. The United States came second and United Kingdom third. India won the friendship award and the prize for the best costume went to Hungary.

Wearing a white track suit with trimmings in the national colours of red, gold and green with two black stars on his chest, Sowah stunned the large audience with intriguing body, feet and hand movements which made him the winner before the number was whittled down to only eight finalists.

Sowah was so brilliant at the finals that he was given a standing ovation by the large audience, and when he was finally declared the winner even the judges could not hide their admiration for him by giving him rounds of applause.

ARTS... CULTURE... MUSIC



Paapa Nketsia shows Prof. Akilakpa Sawyer, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana some of his selected works.

Impressions

Have the Ghanaian artists — past and present — played an effective enough role in projecting a cultural image that other generations of artist can build on? How much of any lapse in this direction could be attributed to the fact that the public — which in the end decides whether an art work lives or dies — has not been adequately tutored to appreciate this important medium of expression — the painting? Mr. Paapa Nketsiah, an art tutor and craftsman for many years, is extensively revered by his group of contemporary artists, the taste-makers in the Ghanaian art world, and the entrepreneurs of the art market. He has had many of his works displayed over the years and has recently conducted an exhibition at the British Council Hall. In an exclusive interview with *Post's* Kofi Aggrey, Mr. Nketsiah discusses aspects of the place of painting, and art in general in today's world and their contributions to the

Africa As Cultural Entity

The continent of Africa is not only very vast, but also very rich in cultural contrasts. In fact, if we attempt to emphasise the variety that this cultural heritage encompasses we may end up placing ourselves in danger, of not even looking for, let alone finding, the unity that underlies it. Even more frightening are the misconceptions and misinterpretations that persist at every level of the search to explain these cultural variations. Within Africa itself and among ourselves, there is a lack of knowledge in one area or region about the basic concepts and facts about another region. This ignorance has been compounded by the arrival and presence of differing colonial regimes, knowledge of different foreign languages and the consequent restriction of access to information for linguistic and other reasons. Africa became known or presented not through so-called myths, rather facts, as pictures were painted of "monstrous men and beasts". In many parts of the Western World, it is only recently that the mentality of the "African jungle" is being corrected.

Ki-Zerbo of Burkina Faso a leading authority on the cultural history of Africa sums up this picture as follows: "*Crushed by centuries of oppression, Africa has had generations of travellers, slave traders, explorers, missionaries, governors and scholars of all kinds give out its image as one of nothing but poverty, barbarism, irresponsibility and chaos*". Today we all know and see that the time has long gone by when the African continent was considered as marginal and subordinate. Questions that we may wish

found in some modern African languages such as Bambara. It is also suggested that the name may have come from the Latin adjective "Aprica" meaning sunny (plenty of sunshine) or possibly from the Greek word "Aprika" meaning "free from cold". Two phoenician terms also seem to provide some lead in our search. One of them means "ear of corn" which is the fertility symbol in that region. The other term is "Pharika" referring to "land of fruit". A more acceptable source of the name Africa is that it was the

This reference was made to the continent whose heritage consists of stunning diversity of peoples, customs and languages that we see today.

Many scholars have generally referred to African ethnic groups as "tribes". Many of them continue to use the term, some of them for lack of another or a more easily known one. Recently the UNESCO International Scientific Committee for the drafting of a General History of Africa has strongly spoken against its use mainly because the term is illdefined and in many cases prejudicial. For example in the 19th century the Zulu of Africa possessed a nation state that was ruled by a King and was no more a tribe than England was under Henry VIII. The Igbo of Nigeria, over twenty million strong and the Asante of Ghana several million people are, for example, also referred to as "tribes" while many a much smaller ethnic groups in Europe are dignified as "nations". Yet at the



AUTHOR - DR. KOFI AGORSAH

about the bravery and other achievements of your ancestors?

Why don't you ask about how they were united, lived in peace, loving, sharing and caring? You will be surprised to know by inquiring into the past that you even need to know more and learn considerably from some of the good examples set by our ancestors.

Many of these oral traditions continue to refer us to the values of certain practices among us. What do the elders in your community tell you about the symbols that you see on the staff of the Okyeame or the chief's spokesman? Are there any traditions about them? In the wisdom of the African, oral tradition is the principal foundation or source of information.

Differences may exist in the coverage or content of the information obtained from them. Other people who also provide oral information include heads of families, and elders of traditional reli-

talk discusses aspects of the place of painting, and art in general in today's world and their contributions to the sustaining of the nation's cultural heritage.

What is the reason for your interest in the subject? Do you see it as the only medium for the expression of your ideas?

Early influences determined that. As I've said, I got quite impressed by the many types of people I met at the time that the cinema art and huge posters were already gaining the attention on my mind as a child. And what other outlet would a child have for expressing all the impressions that filled his mind in a given day? Charcoal was free, the walls wide and the floors expansive. My early graffiti did not get the approval of my mother simply because I dirtied her house with charcoal; not that the society at the time was any better disposed towards valuing any artistic talent in a son. Parents had much more worthwhile ambitions for their sons and daughters. I didn't see myself as an artist either. I was just having fun. It was later that an older friend who was already doing the art course in U.S.T., Kumasi advised me to enter the art school just before completing the G.C.E. 'O' level exams. I did not hesitate.

Are painting and drawing your only vehicle for the expression of your ideas?

If by that you mean ideas that are inspired and translated through one's talent then I'll say, yes. I feel more

at home using the brush or the charcoal to give vent to my feelings. But I have always been able to use my hands for skills other than painting or sketching. Right from infancy I could fashion my own toys from vehicle scraps and other odds and ends. I have done some leather works, namely, bags, hats, belts, footwear etc. and from the North I learned how to produce leather from the meticulous skinning of the animal, through the processing of the hide into leather, up to its tanning, all using local stuff. But all that is craft and is usually commercially oriented. I can also express ideas through writing when it becomes necessary, but my best expression is given through the medium of painting and drawing.

Are your own works remarkably different from those of your contemporaries?

There are a number of very good artists in Ghana, such as Edinam Kudowor, Orlando Baeta, Ato Delaquis, Laud O'Lai, Sammy Bentu, Ata Kwame and a host of others. They all use the same medium of expression. Paint. They have distinct and unique styles and techniques. Every individual has his unique characteristics and these are highlighted in the creative product of

Cont'd on Page 16

Questions that we may wish to examine include: What is this Africa? How did it even come by this name? Have you ever tried to find answers to these questions? Several interpretations have been given that seek to explain the derivation of the name, and for the sake of curiosity I would like us to discuss some of them.

HISTORICAL TRADITION

There is a historical tradition supported by Leo Africanus that a chief named Africus invaded the continent in the second millennium before the Christian era and founded a town called "Afrikyah". This name for this first town then probably came to be used to refer to the continent and the areas around it. However, some scholars think that the name is more likely to be related to the term "Ifriqiya" which is the Arabic transliteration of the word Africa as we spell it today. In Sanskrit and Hindi the root "Apara" or Africa refers, in geographical terms, to that which comes after the west: that is Africa was considered the name of the western continent. The name Africa has also been related to the Phoenician root "Faraqua" which suggests separation or diaspora. Thus Africa was considered as the continent that was separated from others. This same root is also

acceptable source of the name Africa is that it was the term used to describe the Berber societies who lived south of the north African ancient city of Carthage. This term is "Asarik" or "Aouriga" which later became written as "Afriga" or Africa as we spell it today, to indicate land of the Asarik.

we see from these various references that attempts to explain in source of the name Africa has not been an easy one. The meaning is shrouded in some kind of mystery. The word Africa became an accepted term from the Roman times onwards in its present form replacing the original Greek or Egyptian word "Lybia" the land of the Lebu or the Lubins as mentioned in the Old Testament - Genesis. It is from this reference to North Africa that the word came to be applied to the whole continent and it has been in use for the past two thousand years. Even to the classical world (Greek and Roman), the area to the south of Lybia was mysterious, unknown and an inexhaustible reservoir of wonders. A leading African Prehistorian called Desmond Clerk sums it up that the continent to them consisted of "strange animals, peoples, and customs as well as rare and valuable articles of trade such as gold, ivory, precious stones, and slaves".

groups in Europe are dignified as "nations". Yet at the same time the term is applied to tiny African villages of not more than a few hundred people. More recently it has been acceptable to refer to people such as the Igbo, Yoruba (Nigeria), Asante, Ewe, Nohumuru (Ghana) and the Amhara of Ethiopia, for example, as ethnic groups; or traditional societies. Most of these groups as we know are often named on the basis of their languages, as this has become the most consistently valid way of classifying societies in Africa just as other people tend to identify themselves.

ORAL TRADITION

Many of us know very little or nothing about our culture not because we are not interested. Rather it is because we are not aware of the various sources from which we can derive information about them. One of such sources that has been mentioned before is oral tradition. These are obtainable mainly from the elders, chiefs and office bearers in our societies. Have you ever asked an elder or your chief about aspects of your cultural heritage? Have you asked such questions as where did your ancestors first settle or who the earliest leaders were or what positions they held; or have you asked them to tell stories

include heads of families, court singers, traditional religious priests, master artisans, drummers as well as poet/singers gifted in composing and reciting verses on heroes and their deeds.

However, owing to the fact that these traditions are carried from mouth to mouth and from generation to generation over long periods of time, they tend to present some difficulties. These difficulties as well as the wide variety and richness necessitate careful analysis as well as comparison with other kinds of sources. This is the way to obtain a picture that is realistic. However, as long as they remain and represent the collective memory of your ancestors you are the best fitted to start searching for them.

"What the Revolution has done is to provide a road, a direction. We now have a road and a destination. But the goal is still a long way ahead, and the people have to travel along the road in order to reach it. And we each have to travel on our own two feet, making our individual contributions towards reaching the goal."

FLT-LT J. J. RA WLINGS

ARTS...CULTURE...MUSIC

Few people wonder why Africa's Cultural Heritage should give us cause to be fiercely proud of its past. For example it teaches us through the very vivid presentations such as will be seen below that we must return to our cultural traditions in order not only to understand it more effectively but also experience it as a living reality, by re-discovering its roots. The various descriptions regarding cultural identity also imply that we need a firm grasp of authentically African values which would generate a clear awareness that will make possible the updating and renewal of our individual ethnic cultural values and thus prevent the creation of cultural gaps and ignorance. The search for this authenticity involves among other things replenishing the fountainhead. Of course, as we turn back to rediscover the past, we also want to look at the new dimensions that it has generated. In the case of Ghana, our past must be viewed in the context of that of Africa, in the context of ethnic diversity within the continent generally and in Ghana in particular.

Reconstructing the origin and growth of Ghana's cultural heritage, for example, in the context of the African past takes us back several millions of years. In fact nowhere in the world can the history of man be chronologically viewed beyond that of Africa. After years of research in the field of prehistoric science, it has now been established with a reasonable degree of certainty that Africa is the cradle of man. In fact, almost all the social, natural, physical or mathematical sciences have become increasingly involved in investigations into the past of man in Africa. The areas of study include Anthropology, Palaeobotany, or Palynology, Physical dating techniques, Methods for the study structure of metals or ancient pottery. Blood serum analy-

first animals that had backbones and which lived entirely on land. These included reptiles, the group of animals with hair, are known from rocks which date 150 million years, but these increased in number only after 60 million years. After that time modern groups of animals such as antelopes, horses, giraffes, and rhinos came to be. Remains of apes occur from 30 million years ago and the earliest fossils that bear some similarity to man are known to be 15 million years old. This is a very long time in terms of human life but is only 1% of the long history of the earth. The earliest creature that later became man dates to about 5 million years ago and this evidence is derived from Africa - hence my earlier remark that Africa is

ORIGINS OF MANKIND IN AFRICA

the surface. Often relatively large numbers of fossils are found in one area and studies are conducted on them to determine what they are. Such an area is Olduvia Gorge in the East African Rift Valley. Expeditions formed to study such sites of great discoveries may include geologists who study the rocks, palaeontologists who study the animal, and archaeologists whose interests lie in the traces of fossil man and tools he made. Geological conditions in certain parts of Africa, Eastern and Central Africa in particular, have in a unique sequence of fossil sites provided well dated evidence of man's evolution almost from its beginnings to the present. Although the circumstances of preservation have favoured East Africa, there is good

BY DR. KOFI AGORSAH, UNIV. OF GHANA LEGON.

reason to suppose that some five million years ago the African man's ancestors spread throughout favoured parts of the tropical savanna. In addition to the site of Olduvia Gorge where the earliest evidence of man's origin have been found are other known sites such as Omo Valley and Hadar in Ethiopia, Koobi Fora in Kenya, Hlauh Fteah in Libya, Rabat in Morocco, and many more in Southern Africa. In fact there is a large collection of evidence that spans the period 5 million to as recently as 50,000 years that shows increase in population

and area coverage by prehistoric African societies. Unfortunately, owing to poor preservation conditions and to some limited research, not much of the evidence comes from West Africa and for the matter Ghana. From the Lake Chad area comes evidence that can be dated to half a million years but this cannot be discussed here. Understanding the origins of the Ghanaian past in the light of the African context does not lie only in the evidence of his physical evolution. It is within the context of cultural evolution that we can see a continuity with the past.



AUTHOR

Learning and understanding the growth and development of our nation's cultural heritage depends on taking advantage of facilities which give individuals access to it. There are opportunities for acquisition of more knowledge about our culture. Even before the scientific discoveries Africans had their own stored information about their origins and that of the universe. Although they vary from place to place, they all seem to portray the myth, that also exists among societies of other places today, of origins of man and his cultural heritage. ❖

Versatile Nana Ampadu

Highlife is no doubt one of the most popular types of music along the West Coast of Africa, just as reggae which is associated with the Rastafarians of the diaspora in Jamaica. When it comes to the giants who have contributed and are contributing to the development of indigenous highlife, Nana Kwame Ampadu I stands out as a luminary.

Internationals; and Yaw Asante of the Starlite Band

Physical dating techniques, Methods for the study structure of metals or ancient pottery, Blood serum analysis, Climatology, Linguistics, Musicology to mention a few. The question of origins of man, I am sure, is one that many people find interesting and sometimes puzzling. For this reason, I shall give a very brief background introduction to the subject.

What was man like in the past? Animals that lived in the past were not like animals alive today. We know this because the remains of the past creatures can be found preserved in various types of rock that were formed at different times during the history of the earth. These remains are known as fossils and include organisms that have resisted destruction because they are hardened and turned into rock themselves by virtue of chemical changes after their burial. By use of scientific laboratory analysis it is possible to tell how old these fossils are.

By such techniques it is now estimated that the earth is about 4,500 million years old. However, it is known that the first signs of living things do not appear until about 600 million years ago. About 300 million years ago there was evidence of the

about 5 million years ago and this evidence is derived from Africa — hence my earlier remark— that Africa is now regarded as the home of the origin of man scientifically referred to as *Homo sapiens*.

DIFFERENCES

Differences in similar animals found successfully in fossil record is part of the evidence scientifically justifying the belief in *evolution*. This is the idea, now generally held to be true, that animal species have gradually changed in their form and developed through time, such that one or more new species can result from a pre-existing one. Fossils are usually arranged in time sequence or lineage reflecting their possible ancestry and showing ways in which they have developed over time. Some of the major areas of man's physical development from his small ape-like ancestor include increase in body and brain sizes, ability to walk upright on two legs, and changes in the hand. Many species in the past have become extinct in competition for survival with other animals. Others have been buried in rocks as fossils. Earth movements and erosion re-expose them on

When it comes to the giants who have contributed and are contributing to the development of indigenous highlife, Nana Kwame Ampadu I stands out as a luminary.

For Nana Ampadu, music is his profession. And to him, highlife music is the medium through which the nation can best expose its culture. Endowed with rich resources, he believes he can easily venture into other types of music which can gain him more popularity, not counting the greater financial reward involved. "But that will not give me the satisfaction I want. The fact is, I will feel guilty if I fail to share the talent endowed me by my creator to promote our brand of music the way it was and the way it should be, says the great maestro.

It is for this reason that he sees that great occasion when the title: "Nana Kwame Ampadu I" was conferred on him by the Arts Council of Ghana 14 years ago as the most memorable moment in his life. It was on that occasion that he and his African Brothers International Band won the coveted title 'Nana' (meaning chief) in a music competition involving a number of the nation's top big and guitar bands, aimed at choosing the best exponent of indigenous highlife music. One of the criteria to determine the winner of the competition, was the ability to trace through music the origins of the proverbial story on 'Yaa Ampon-sah-Gyae Aware'.

Formerly known as Paa Steel Kwame Ampadu, in short, P.S.K., the highlife chief completed his primary education in 1959. He first worked with the Ministry of

Agriculture in Mpraeso in 1960. A year later when he was introduced to Mr. P.K. Yamoah, a renowned guitarist, the music potential in him revealed itself. He became vocalist for four months and left Yamoah's Band when the latter moved from Accra to Kumasi. Ampadu then took up job as a store assistant and later left for the Ghana Farmers' Council to serve as a messenger. From his modest savings, he bought himself an acoustic guitar, that was in early 1963.

In the latter part of the same year, he pooled some boys together to form the African Brothers International Band. Some of the pioneers who formed the nucleus of the band were Ampadu himself; Rover Amo Ampadu, the current manager of the band; Dan Owusu, now with the Agricultural Development Bank; Snr. Eddie Donkor, leader of the

Internationals; and Yaw Asante of the Starlite Band.

To sell the band by way of publicity, they initially played at funerals, weddings and other festive occasions in addition to dances. Though armed with about 60 songs under his sleeves, he could

not have the songs waxed because the existing recording companies at the time highly preferred the old heavyweights like the late E.K. Nyame of the Akan Trio Concert Party, E.T. Mensah Tempos Band Jerry Hanson Ramblers Band etc., who had already made their mark on the music scene.

How did he succeed in breaking the recording barrier? Well, he was attracted by the sounds of a band engaged in a practice after close of work one day. Having mustered courage, he approached the group and came face to face with Jerry Hanson, leader of the band. After telling him his mission, he sang some of his numbers without musical accompaniment. Carried away by his songs and, particularly, the potential in him, Jerry Hanson requested Nana to write down his songs. After Nana had obliged, Jerry Hanson and his Ramblers Dance Band recorded seven



NANA AMPADU

numbers of his songs. These include: 'Afutu Nsem' 'Nto-boase' and 'Scholarship'.

These records hit the charts and for his reward, Jerry Hanson introduced Nana to the Phillips Recordings. In the meantime, Nana Ampadu hit the music market with a big bang. He came out with a 45 rpm titled: 'Agyanka Dabre' with the flip side of 'Suminaso Ntonko'. Shortly, he met the late D.K. Nyarko, a business tycoon who helped him with a set of instruments and, subsequently, became his pro-