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Speaker: **Kwasi Ampene, University of Michigan**

Topic: ***Petitioning the King: Kete Songs, Lineage and Kinship in Asante***

Date: **Thursday, September 24th, 2020**

Time: **12:00 – 1:30 PM (EST)**

Place: **Zoom Webinar: [Register Here](#)**

All Are Welcome!

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Kwasi Ampene is an Associate Professor of ethnomusicology at the University of Michigan. He specializes in the rich musical traditions of the Akan people of West Africa. He has disseminated his research in conferences and speaking engagements at major universities in the United States and around the world. He has also provided expert advice for public engagement projects on Asante and Akan culture and music to the British Library, Tufts University, and Princeton University. His latest book, *Asante Court Music and Verbal Arts in Ghana: The Porcupine and the Gold Stool*, was published on June 30th, 2020 by Routledge Press. Additional book publications include, *Engaging Modernity: Asante in the Twenty-First Century* (2016); *Discourses in African Musicology: J.H. Kwabena Nketia Festschrift* (2015); and *Female Song Tradition and the Akan of Ghana: The Creative Process in Nnwonkorɔ* (2005). He is the producer of the film documentary, *Gone To The Village*. Ampene is a member of the Editorial Board of the SOAS Studies in Music Series at the University of London, and the Outgoing Chair of the African Music Section in the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM).

ABOUT THE TALK

In contested formal spaces involving court ceremonies and rituals, how do you navigate the complex web of Akan interactional routines and communication protocols to directly articulate the collective anxieties of the masses to the king following the death and burial of the Asantehemaa? I address the above question and additional questions that may arise by examining the performed petition presented to the Asante king, Otumfoɔ Ɔsɛɛ Tutu II, by members of the Kete chorus at the Awukudae ceremony on January 25, 2017. I argue that in matrilineal societies, the critical role of women in lineage, kingship and governance is critical to the orderly function of state. Further, in their privileged position as members of the exclusive Kete chorus, they used their artistic immunity to negotiate communication strategies in formal events in order to present contrapuntal voices of the masses directly to the ruler. As a form of political dialogue that indexes diverse registers of concerns, they implored the ruler, through songs, to not only choose the most qualified member of the Royal Ɔyoko lineage to succeed the late Asantehemaa, but also to remind him of his obligation to his forebears who made untold sacrifices to establish a state with enduring socio-political and cultural institutions. My paper is in two sections: The first section examines the critical role of women in lineage, kingship, and governance; the interactional routines in greetings and communication strategies in formal settings; and how artistic immunity and musical performance create space for agency and empowerment. In the second section, I highlight the first song unit performed by the Kete chorus for formal analysis, rhetorical devices, and melodic and harmonic analyses.