Introduction

To understand the structural concept of the African drum ensemble, it is important to grasp its socio-cultural background, the performance contexts in which it operates, as well as instrumentation and playing techniques, and how these are manifest in various ethnic practices and approaches.

It is generally recognized that the cultivation of music in any given society is limited by its tradition and history. Where ethnicity defines the boundaries of social and cultural life, particular traditions of drumming tend to be similarly confined.

As a number of studies have been made of individual Akan and Anlo Ewe drumming styles, which have much in common (see references), it may be useful to offer here a general comparison of stylistic features of these two peoples, for there are also important differences that can be attributed to factors of ethnicity. Individuals who have distinguished themselves as creators of music generally draw on creative vocabulary from a specific culture. Their net results, therefore, are attributable to their ethnic traditions. For example, among the Anlo Ewe, Vinoko Akpalu was a renowned traditional composer. He created a distinctive set of Anlo songs known as agohaw – literally meaning “velvet songs”. Even though these velvet songs are unique to Akpalu, they draw on general song characteristics of the Anlo and therefore belong to the Anlo stylistic tradition.

This suggests that we can talk about the Anlo approach to song and song form as well as the specific resources that are drawn upon to give their works their distinctive qualities. The Anlo approach may therefore be contrasted to those of the Dagomba, Yoruba, Akan and even the non-Anlo of the northern Eweland, and other distinct ethnic styles. For ethnicity is also a factor in the creation or cultivation of style. It is because of this that we are able to associate instances of drumming with particular ethnic groups we know, even where we have no idea of the actual pieces or the repertoire of the ensembles. Style in this respect is a summary of outstanding characteristics unique to that ethnic practice. These features need not include surface auditory, visual and aesthetic elements alone, but also the analytical perspectives as well.

Elements that distinguish one ethnic tradition from another might be determined in relation to the following:
• Instrumentation of ensemble
• Construction of instrument
• Modes of drumming
• Mnemonics
• Context of performance
• Structural organization.

These characteristics of style will be discussed with particular reference to the Akan and Ewe. These are two distinct ethnic groups in Ghana, who share many musical traits. This article may therefore be useful in distinguishing one from the other.

Linguistically and musically speaking, the Akan are a homogeneous group of people who live in several states and who speak mutually intelligible dialects. Their present location in Ghana extends from the woodland vegetation of the Guinea savannah through the tropical rainforest, stretching south to the coastal scrub and grasslands of the Gulf of Guinea. The Ewe occupy the area stretching from the southeastern shores of the Volta River to the Republic of Togo and Benin, the area formally known as Togoland.

Some historians hold the view that, linguistically, the Akan and Ewe may have crossed paths (Adu Boahen 1967:21) or lived together with other groups of the “Kwa branch” (Bascom 1969:7–10) during their exodus prior to the 17th century. While there are still conflicting viewpoints about these patterns of migration, there seems to be a consensus that the last centre of dispersion of the Ewe was Notsie (north of present Togolese capital, Lome), and before that, Tado (on the border with present Benin), and Ketu, further north across the Weme River in the region of the Oyo Empire. Their close associates were the Yoruba and the Ga-Adangme.

From Notsie, the Ewe migrated in three groups: “Dziehe”, the northern group, comprising the Kpandu and Anfoega stock; “Titina”, the central group, made up of the Ho stock; and “Anyiehe”, the Anlo to the south (Amoaku 1975:84–104). “There were further subdivisions in the three main groups, all of which were by warfare, strife and ecological problems” (Amoaku 1975:94). The Anlo settled on the coastal lagoon area. The Ho stock settled south of the Togoland mountain range, north of the Adaklu plains, while the Kpandu and Anfoega settled northward across the Togoland mountain range, closer to the River Volta.

Though the Ewe are linguistically homogeneous, the same cannot be said of their music. The northern and central Ewe groups adopted a diatonic singing style and use drums largely influenced by the Akan. The Anlo on the other hand maintain a pentatonic singing style typical of the Yoruba and the Anexor of the present Notsie region, and use cylindrical “barrel” drums.
Instrumentation of Ensembles

Akan and Ewe drum ensembles usually consist of a selection of bells, rattles and stick-clappers (idiophones), and a combination of drums (membranophones). The idiophones are usually confined to playing prescribed, non-variable rhythms. Membranophones range from small makeshift drums to large and heavy log drums of varying levels of pitch, timbre and intensity. Usually the largest (and thus lowest) drums assume the principal role of master or lead-drum. There is a general notion that the larger the drum, the lower its pitch, and that the ensembles are arranged in a hierarchical order of pitches from high to low. While this is generally true, a few exceptions may be noted. In the Akan adowa ensemble, the donno drums are sometimes pitched relatively lower than the principal drum – the atumpan. Similarly, the fontomfrom bell – adawura – sounds distinctly lower than the expected pitch of other Akan bells. In ensembles of the Anlo Ewe, it is observed that the sogo drum pitches much lower than the atsimevu, which is bigger in size when both are in use. However, the atsimevu is indeed considerably higher in intensity. A number of high-pitched principal drums may also be observed in ensembles of some religious institutions of the Ga and Akan, such as Kple and Akom ensembles.

Each society specializes in a distinct collection of instruments. Among the Anlo Ewe, the following instruments are observed in a number of ensembles such as the gahu, atsiagbeko, agbadza and gota, and others.

Similarly, the adowa, kete, fontomfrom and other Akan ensembles may share similar instruments with the addition of distinctive master drums in the case of each ensemble.
Figure 2. *Adowa* instruments

Figure 3. *Kete* instruments
Construction of Instruments

The Akan and Anlo Ewe differ in their approaches to instrument-making. Drums carved from heavy logs often have their origins in areas of dense forest where particular trees suitable for making such drums may be found. Drum communities confine themselves to the use of resources available in their immediate surroundings.

Idiophones: Akan and Anlo Ewe employ a variety of bells and rattles in their ensembles. Double bells are typical of the Anlo, while slit bells and single bells are common with both traditions. Anlo employ enmeshed rattles (gourd rattles with seeds woven on the outside). The Akan rattles on the other hand are mostly container rattles. Stick clappers and castanets, are common to both traditions.

Membranophones: The following is a general classification of drum shapes evident in both Akan and Anlo Ewe traditions:

Figure 4. Some Akan drum shapes
Anlo use cylindrical-shaped drum shells made of wooden strips bound together with metal hoops. These bear a close resemblance to the wine barrel. It is believed, however, that the Anlo once used drums made from clay pots. Similarly, in Anexor (a subgroup of the Ewe), the lead-drum employed in a drum ensemble known as the goto was once made of calabash, which was played upside-down in a basin of water. This instrument has now been replaced by the sogo. The kidi and sogo are both closed drums, with a sound hole (which allows the passage of air in and out of the drum) located at the lower side of the drum-shell, near to the closed end. The atsimevu and kagamu on the other hand are open-ended drums.

Akan drums are carved and hollowed out directly from a chunk of a heavy log. Usually they are made from a cedar tree known as tweneboa kodua. The shape and size of each drum shell has an acoustical implication for the timbre, resonance and intensity of the sound produced.
Drum heads are made from different types of hide, of which goat, cow, duiker or antelope are the most commonly used. The Anlo traditionally use the hide of a fox (avugbe) found in the coastal lagoon areas of their settlement. Heavy Akan royal drums – such as the atumpan and from or bommaa – are sometimes covered with expensive elephant-ear hide.

The Akan and Ewe have nearly identical methods of making and lacing drum heads. The following illustration shows a step-by-step process of lacing drumheads in both traditions:

![Figure 7. Lacing procedure of the Anlo Ewe drum-heads](image)

Drum pegs and drumsticks are also made from the branches of specific trees, such as the Akan ofemma tree. Drum-pegs need to be strong to ensure that they can withstand the tension from lacing and tuning the drum heads. The difference between Akan and Anlo Ewe drum-pegs is in their neck design.
To remove the pegs, the Akan have a technique of hooking the neck of each peg with the flat end of the *dawuro* bell, as it is wedged against the rim of the drum head. Hitting the other end of the bell in a pivot action removes the pegs one at a time with ease. The Anlo wedge a drumstick between the peg and the drum-shell and hit the top of the stick to remove the peg instantly. To tune the drum, the Akan would gently hammer the pegs one by one with the back of the *dawuro* bell to tighten the drum head and thereby raise the pitch. Lowering the pitch slightly requires hammering the drum head with the heel of the palm. These procedures are similar in both traditions. Anlo stick drumming employs the use of straight sticks. The Akan on the other hand use a combination of curved and straight sticks on appropriate drums.

Locally manufactured tools are employed to make drums in both traditions. These include various forms of chisels and axes.

Figure 9. Drum pegs

Figure 10. Tools for drum-making
Playing Techniques

Stick drumming and various combinations of hand techniques are employed in the two traditions of Akan and Ewe drumming. However, particular techniques – such as muted strokes (very soft, almost inaudible), stopped strokes (rather loud, usually one stick or hand pressing the drum head while the other strikes at the centre of the head) – are prescribed for each respective instrument. Let us observe the techniques used in the atsimevu of the Anlo and the atumpan of the Akan:

The atsimevu stands approximately four feet tall (121.92 cm). It is played in an inclined position (supported by a special wooden frame wedge), with the performer standing on one side of the drum.

The atsimevu master-drum combines three main sets of playing techniques. Each technique embodies a variety of playing modes.1

(a) The stick-and-hand combination technique:

i. A bounced stick stroke played at the centre of the drum head produces an open ring. The resultant sound is mimicked as te.

ii. Hand and stick alternation producing open ring tones – kre-be.

iii. The drum head stopped with a free hand while the stick of the other hand executes the stroke. It sounds a high to.

iv. A cupped palm bounced off the centre of the drum head results in a deep open tone – ga.

v. A bounced hand stroke at the edge of the drum head closest to the performer, which produces a sharp clap-like sound when they are in succession – gi and gi-tsi.

vi. A stick stroke played on the drum shell, which sometimes serves as a timing device for the drummer. It sounds a high ka.

vii. A bounced hand stroke on the upper-half of the drum head and simultaneous stick stroke on the drum shell – dzi or ji.

viii. A cupped palm and a simultaneous shell stick stroke – dza or ja.

(b) Two-hand combination technique:

i. Both palms cupped and alternated at the centre of the drum head (bass) – ga.

ii. Bounced hand strokes (tones) across the upper half of the drum head in succession – ze-ge-de.

iii. Muted hand stroke on the upper half of the drum head (quiet slap) – gi-tsi.

1 Also see Pantaleoni 1972c; Locke 1981, 1987; Kwami 1992, etc.
(c) Two-stick combination:
- Bounced strokes at the centre of drum head – *te-ge-de*.
- Strokes with a finger stop after it (producing a flam effect) – *zep*.
- A muted effect produced with the hand after a stick stroke – *to*.
- Simultaneous “fist” and shell strokes. The fist stroke at the centre of the drum head with one hand while the other stick plays on the shell simultaneously – *dze* or *ja*.

The following are three categories of techniques employed by the drums of Akan ensembles:
- The straight-stick technique
- The curved-stick technique
- The hand technique.

The *atumpam* employs the curved-stick technique. The instrument is played in a standing position with two curved sticks. The pair of drums is identified as male and female (the male refers to the lower-pitched drum and the female to the higher one). These drums are played in a slightly inclined position. The curved-stick technique involves three basic playing modes – the bounced, the muted and the stopped strokes.

Appropriate sticking procedures are observed between the left and right hand movements in playing *atumpam* rhythms. Normally, the lower-pitched drum is positioned on the left-hand side with the other on the right. Where the rhythms alternate between low and high, the left and right sticks are confined to their natural domain (left hand on left drum and right hand on right drum).

![Diagram of atumpam rhythms]

Both hands are alternated on the same drum when there are fast, repeated strokes.

![Diagram of fast repeated strokes]

The right hand sometimes begins a passage on the left drum when there is an even number of repeated strokes, leading to a movement to the high pitched drum.
A flam is played on the lower-pitched drum, followed by a gentle mute on the high-pitched drum. A stopped stroke is usually quite loud in contrast with a mute, which is best described as a soft stopping of the drum-head.

Appropriate sticking procedures enhance the flow of its text-based rhythms and ultimately reduce fatigue in the performer’s arms.

**Mnemonics and Scats**

Mnemonics and scats, which are used as verbal references in drumming, are generally current in Africa (Locke and Agbeli 1981; King 1961; Kwami 1998). Among the Akan, scats associated with the rhythms of respective instruments are derived from their corresponding timbre (onomatopoeic sounds). Traditionally, certain phonetic syllables are associated with the sounds produced on the respective instruments. These syllables describe the resonance as well as the expected attack and decay transients resulting from the various playing techniques employed. Thus, the bell is generally associated with the syllable *ken*, representing an open ring, and *ka* when muted. The *apentemma* hand-drum sounds *pe-dem* as open tone and *pa-ta* when muted.

According to Nketia (1963), lead-drum rhythms are represented by “intelligible words, phrases and sentences... transformed into drum sounds which are then reinterpreted in verbal terms by the listener”. Mnemonics are generally intelligible phrases that may sometimes bear some proverbial meaning, unlike scats as employed in jazz, which are merely syllables without lexical meaning.

Lead-drum patterns in Akan drumming (as demonstrated in *adowa*) are conceived as themes providing a structural matrix on which a set of variations is based. The themes are usually encoded in certain verbal texts that identify particular pieces with which they are associated. In other instances, they constitute mnemonics that refer to the integration of two or more rhythms, producing a resultant concept of such a combination of rhythms.

Scats serve a dual purpose in Anlo drumming. They represent specific modes of drumming (as illustrated below) while also encoded with obscene phrases known only to the “inner circle” or community of drummers. Like proverbs, obscenities are easily remembered and so often serve as mnemonics in many drum communities.

The following classification shows the correspondence of scats relative to playing techniques and tone levels among the Anlo:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone Level</th>
<th>Playing Techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11. Classification of Anlo scats by tone levels and play techniques
For instance:

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c}
H & S & P & S & H & S & H & S & P \\
\hline
\text{gi-te} & \text{ga-ze} & \text{gi-te} & \text{ge-de} & \text{ga-ze} & \text{to} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
H = \text{Hand (Slap)} \\
S = \text{Stick (tone)} \\
P = \text{Cupped pain (bass)} \\
St = \text{Stopped stroke}
\]

**Analysis of Performance Context**

The instances of drumming among the Akan and Ewe usually include a combination of song and dance. Apart from such combinations, drum ensembles may perform by themselves without song or dance accompaniment. The modes of performance are indeed prescribed by specific traditions of each musical type.

Community drumming sessions usually begin with the singing of a body of songs, serving as preparation to the main dance. This introductory segment is often without dance and may not be accompanied by instruments. We note however that some traditions, particularly among the Anlo Ewe, may incorporate handclapping, bells, rattles and stick clappers in accompaniment to songs. This opening segment is known as the *hatsiatsia* (medley of songs). In most cases however, drumming is integrated with the singing of specific songs associated with each musical type and situation of performance. The performance of Akan *kete* royal music for instance is traditionally preceded by an interchange between solo voices and bamboo flutes, followed by a chorus of voices (Nketia 1963).

There are basic dance movements and gestures associated with each musical type. Group dances, such as the Anlo *atsiagbekor*, are traditionally choreographed into dance sequences prescribed by the different phases of the internal structure of the accompanying drumming. In the main, these choreographic changes are controlled by the rhythmic sequences of the lead drummer. During situations such as traditional worship however, the dance may be regulated by the different phases of the worship routines.

Among the Anlo, popular dance drumming sessions fall into three segments. The processional dance that leads participants from one location to the main focus of the dance is known as the *wulolo*. This is followed by the song medley – *hatsiatsia* – after which the main dance begins. Similarly, *Kete-Apente* is a dance reserved among the Akan for royal processions. *Adowa* is traditionally integrated with a body of *adowa* songs and dance.

**Analysis of Social context**

The situations in which these drumming types are performed include activities of a recreational nature and others that are performed on special occasions, such as celebrations involving individuals, institutions, associations and whole communities. They may also include worship situations and performances associated with communal work activities, such as tilling the field or building a new home (Nketia 1975).
Apart from drumming performed mainly for purposes of recreation, the occasions and events to which these performances are linked follow well-defined procedures. The application of drumming to such events may vary from one situation to another and for each ethnic society. Puberty ceremonies of the Akan, for instance, may involve drumming while those of some communities of the Ewe may be associated with the singing of particular songs associated with that occasion.

The participation of women in drumming is generally prohibited in both Akan and Ewe societies. Women however constitute the core of the chorus singing and the dance. Women are usually content with performing on gourd rattles, bells and occasionally on small drums. Performing groups formed within women’s organizations or support groups may get involved in drumming with the support of one male drummer or, in most cases, two.

Each ethnic group has a number of music associations. There is also special music for royalty and for cult groups and religious societies. Dance drumming is a source of identity and group support for socio-musical groups. These are usually occupational groups such as hunters, farmers and warrior organizations. These groups have their distinctive forms of music that distinguish them from ordinary social groups.

We have observed various factors which may contribute to ethnic differentiation in drumming among the Akan and Anlo Ewe. Such differences also manifest themselves in the organization of the composite rhythmic elements from one musical type to another as well as across ethnic boundaries.

Rhythm Perception and Organization

One of Africa’s finest contributions to the world of music is its characteristic organization of ostinato (repeated cycles of rhythm) as a compositional device. The concept implies a circular conception of rhythms providing a backdrop for structural manipulations by a lead instrument. The process implies constantly changing rhythmic concepts against a fixed structural matrix. We are familiar with the role of the “drone” (sruti) in Indian classical music or Scottish bagpipe music, and we see this role as that “which washes the background” against which “sound images” are projected.

The African ostinato phenomenon is like a compass that provides direction in the dark for a pilot (or in this case, a lead drummer). It is a structural drone consisting of an integration of multiple prescribed rhythms that act as a repeated structure against which a lead instrument provides ‘phasing’ concepts or manipulations of similar structures. Without the ostinato background, the manipulations of the lead instrument would be rendered unintelligible, at least to the un-acculturated (uncultivated) listener who is unable to mentally associate or perceive the background along with the isolated performance of the lead instrument, especially when the background is not physically present.

This African ostinato concept holds sway wherever derivatives of African music are found. For instance in Blues music of North America we find a repeated cycle of the
blues harmonic structure providing a referent for song and "improvisation" while the "groove" in Jazz music is an indispensable concept on which solo sections are built. At the heart of the Carnival celebrations of the Caribbean and Brazil is the Samba in which ostinato flourishes and is known in Trinidad steel-band music as "the engine-room". Indeed ostinato remains an integral part of all forms of hocket and of call-and-response. Perhaps most revealing is the relationship between background and text manipulation found in the urban "hip hop" or "Rap" music of recent years; a variety of today’s New Age music is also very much influenced and inclined towards the use of the technique. Despite its widespread usage there is still a need to throw light on its peculiarities to the African practice.

Ostinato operates within the confines of a structural field. The structural field refers to a constellation view or a system of "mapping" the performance. It consists of two main elements: the background ostinato and a lead instrument. In dance drumming, the lead role is played on the master drum.

The drum ensemble consists of three basic sections. (a) The master-drum and (b) the background subdivided into two functional roles consisting of (i) prescribed non-variant rhythms and (ii), those rhythms that occasionally act as predetermined responses to certain master drum rhythmic call phrases. This response section is an integral part of the background ostinato. These responses may change commensurate with the call passage or thematic section of the performance.

Particular drum pieces in each ethnic community combine definite sets of rhythms prescribed by tradition. These set rhythms are perceived in definite ways as defined by ethnic norms in relation to each other.

Structural Organization of Ensembles

The Akan and Ewe traditions share many common features in the organization of their drum ensembles. Rattles generally reinforce bell rhythms. "Running parts" (short and fast repeated rhythms) are played by Anlo kagan and Akan apentemma and Abrukuwa parts. There are response drums, the Akan kidi and sogo, whose rhythms change in response to predetermined master drum themes.

The following are brief notes on the organization of composite rhythms in Adowa and Kete-adaban of the Akan and Gahu and Agbadza of the Anlo Ewe.

**Adowa (Funeral Music Of The Akan)**

*Adowa* is primarily a funeral dance – a dance performed to comfort, strengthen and lend support in times of bereavement and sorrow. Even though *adowa* is originally linked with funeral occasions, it is now commonly performed in many other contexts. There are *adowa* groups in various Akan communities. These are organized groups within the community, usually people with a common outlook on life. Membership is usually restricted to adults due to the deep content of *adowa* song-text and the contexts
of performance. Adowa is basically a dance accompanied by drumming and singing. Leadership of the performers is made up of people in that community who are well versed in adowa drumming song leadership and dance. The chorus is made up of response singers and dancers constituting the bulk of the membership.

Adowa groups usually perform outdoors in an open space and the performance may involve members of the community and others. Where the performance is part of a larger celebration with other activities taking place, the performers are usually arranged in a horseshoe formation with the drummers flanked by the chorus, who are standing. The dance takes place in front of the drummers.

The adowa dance is said to mimic the graceful movements of the antelope (adowa), hence the name. It is basically a solo dance – therefore different dancers, male or female, take turns in the dancing ring. Quite often however, another dancer may join in to provide support to the main dancer when there is the need to help, challenge or to exert and assert in the course of the dance. The dance gestures are symbolic and combine walking movements with skips, turns and intricate footwork along linear and circular paths.

The performance segment begins with a series of adowa songs without instrumental accompaniment. The drum ensemble is called to attention with the lead drummer’s text based signal: Adawuraa Kofì ma wo homere soe. (Literally meaning, “adawura Kofi [in reference to the bell], cause yourself to arise”).

After the signal, the bell pattern follows as a way of setting the tempo for the ensemble. As soon as the bell picks up the rhythm, the rest of the support drums randomly find their entries to begin the performance.

Figure 12. Instruments of the Adowa ensemble
Front, left to right: Two slit bells (Dawuro [adawuraa]); a number of rattles (Ntrowa); two hourglass drums (Donno). Back, left to right: One stick drum (Petia); a pair of talking drums (Atumpan); one hand drum (Apetemma).
These instruments are assigned prescribed basic rhythms. Each rhythm establishes a specific relationship around a common timing referent – the regulative beat (indicated by a down arrow in the following illustration). The regulative beat is one of the four equidistant beats in each cycle and defines a common referent for all the instruments of the drum ensemble as well as the dance and accompanying songs.

Composite *ostinato* set rhythms and their relationships:

![Composite ostinato set rhythms and their relationships](image)

From one Akan community to another, variations and interpretations of these basic rhythmic concepts may be observed.

The lead drum rhythms are organized as theme and a set of variations. The following are seven examples of these text-based themes. Each defines a definite relationship with the bell pattern.

**LEAD DRUM RHYTHMIC THEMES, THEIR VERBAL BASIS AND ORIENATIONS TO THE BELL PATTERN:**

The examples show the bell pattern referents (regulative beat indicated by arrows) followed by the master drum relationship for each of the seven themes.
Theme A: *Tome kume menie, tome kume adampa.*

Literally meaning, “I am at your mercy” or “I am at your disposal”.

![Theme A Notation](image)

Theme B: *Adapom Agyemang, Agyemang kaa kyire Agyemang.*

This means: *Agyemang* (a name), who lives in a large room. One who is scarcely seen outdoors; an important man, who is self-sufficient or served by many attendants; he does not have to go out to fend for himself. It could also mean: *Agyemang*, who visits rooms of divination or oracles; or *Agyemang*, the inaccessible one. *Kaa akyire* means “the last born”. It is a term of affection. Therefore, *Agyemang*, the pampered one. When there are two or more *Agyemangs* in the list of Chiefs, the last of them is called *Agyemang kaa-akyire* on the atumpan drum.

![Theme B Notation](image)

Theme C: *Yekeka no kwa.*

Literally meaning “What we are saying does not hold substance”.

![Theme C Notation](image)

*Yekeka no kwa* is merely a title. There is no text application to the rhythm per se but the rhythmic theme is known as such among the community of drummers.
Theme D: *Asskare Mampong menie.*

Literally meaning, “*Asskare Mampong* (a name of a town), here I come”.

![Musical notation for Theme D](image)

Theme E: *Etwé bedi premu.*

Literal meaning, “The antelope (or the ducker) will swallow bullets”.

![Musical notation for Theme E](image)

Theme F: *Obi nkọtọ nnorọsọ yenmom, yenhumu so.*

Literal meaning, “Someone ought to buy drinks for us; what is happening here?” This piece is played when drummers demand that they are offered drinks for their services.

![Musical notation for Theme F](image)

Theme G: *Monnyae nsupa nkọ nom po, Asante kọkọ.*

Meaning: “Must we (the Asante) stop drinking fresh water (of the forest) and go (to the city - Accra) to drink sea water instead?”

![Musical notation for Theme G](image)

A performance segment would include a number of these themes, each providing a framework on which limited variations are ordered.
Kete (court music of the Akan)

Kete drumming is dedicated to Akan royalty and is reserved for the exclusive use of chiefs of high rank at state occasions. Kete drums are usually covered in red-and-black-checkered cloth to distinguish them from similar drums used by popular bands of ordinary citizenry in the community.

There are a number of different kete pieces performed by the kete ensemble. “Each piece has a meaning or is associated with some action or event which makes it more suitable for use in specific situations than others, although in the absence of such restricting situations, they may all be played for enjoyment or for dance” (Nketia 1963:129). Nketia lists as many as eight kete varieties performed in the traditions of Mampom and Kumasi. These include Abofoɔ, Apente (Ohene ko edwuma), Adinkra, and Adaban. Adinkra for instance is a historical piece about a warrior chief Adinkra. The following text is encoded in the drum rhythms – “Yede brebre bekum Adinkra” – “slowly but surely we shall capture Adinkra” (lit: kum = kill). This text emerges as a resultant rhythm played as call-and-response between the lead drum and the response drums:

Response drum

Master

Kete pieces may have different names in different Akan localities even though they may sometimes have similar musical characteristics.

Kete-adabanka is also sometimes known as kete-pa (meaning the standard kete). It is traditionally performed at the court of chiefs or at the durbar grounds.

Like adowa, kete performers may be encircled by the community with specialist dancers taking their turns. Kete dance is very graceful and pleasant, with hand gestures and sophisticated bodily movements that communicate pleasantries to the accompanying dancer as well as proverbial and topical themes connected with the occasion, dignitaries and the community. It is primarily a solo dance. Quite often another dancer may provide support. At the start of the dance, the dancer displays a show of humility with hand gestures to the drummers and then to the dignitaries before taking a turn at the dance.

Traditionally, kete music consists of interludes of flute ensemble and singing to accompaniment of the drum ensemble. The music is performed at a variety of “state” occasions. These include state funerals, state festivals such as Odwira and Adaе, and during state durbars, as well as during the inaugurations of chiefs.
Figure 13. Instruments of the Kete ensemble
Front, left to right: One slit bell (Kete-Dawuro); a number of rattles (Ntrowa); one hourglass drum (Donno). Back, left to right: Stick drum (Aburukwa); one hand drum (apentemma); a master drum (Kwadum); stick drum (Petia).

KETE-ADABANKA RHYTHMIC PATTERNS

Composite ostinato rhythms and their relationships to the bell regulative beat:
Lead drum stock rhythms and their orientations to the bell time-span:

**Gahu (Social Music of the Anlo-Ewe)**

*Gahu*, a social dance of the *Anlo Ewe*, originated in very recent memory. According to oral tradition, it was created in the 1950s among migrant Anlo fisher-folk living in Badagry, a southwestern Nigerian coastal city (close to the Nigeria/Benin border). The name *ga-hu* literally means “money dance” – money because Anlo, like most other African people, show appreciation for a beautiful dance by “showering” money upon the dancer. Therefore, “money dance” may mean, a dance likely to win money, or simply a beautiful dance. These ideas are vividly portrayed in the following lyrics of one of its most popular songs sung to welcome or recognize citizens returning home from the city to join in a local celebration:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Mie nya kpo na, gahu viwo mie nya kpo na} & \quad \text{You are looking colorful, dancers of gahu} \\
\text{Dzokoto ga le wo si wo do na} & \quad \text{You wear very fashionable clothes} \\
\text{Afopka kpe de nu} & \quad \text{With shoes to match} \\
\text{Nya de dzọ le Gẹ dua me loo} & \quad \text{Wonderful new things are happening in the city} \\
\text{Mie nya kpo na, gahuviwo mie nya kpo na.} & \quad \text{You are looking colorful, dancers of gahu}
\end{align*}
\]

Anlo lyrics are generally satirical. Sometimes they are formed around personalities or some happenings in the society. They are therefore “watch dogs” as they comment on social misconduct and deter wrongdoing and also praise good deeds in the community. Although *gahu* seems to be more popular with the youth, it is actually for the entire cross-section of Anlo society, and may be performed during social functions such as celebrations of individual events, political occasions to welcome dignitaries or other situations of recreational content.
Figure 14. Instruments of the Gahu ensemble
Front, right to left: a. Rhythmic foundation: Gankogui (Double bells); Axats (Rattles)
Back, Right to left: Kagan (Small drum played with two sticks); b. Support or response: Kidi (Medium sized drum played with two sticks); Sogo (Larger drum played with two sticks) c. Lead drum: Atsimevu (Large and tall drum; combines sticks and hands).

The original lead drum for the gahu ensemble is gboba (looks like Kidi but open-ended). In some ensembles of the Anlo homeland, gboba is combined with Atsimevu in complementary ways that have not been discussed here. In recent times however, atsimevu replaces gboba in many ensembles in the absence of gboba.

Gahu support rhythms:
Agbadza (Funeral Music of the Anlo-Ewe)

Agbadza is similarly a dance of the Anlo Ewe. It is a funeral dance originating from an older war dance atripkui. The word means girdle – which suggests its association with warfare.

There are a few varieties of Agbadza, namely Kini, Ageshie, Akpoka and others. These are distinguished mainly by the different temporal varieties of expression.

A performance segment usually begins with a body of songs of invocation called Hatsiatsia. Rattles and bells often accompany this opening section as the performers sing a series of call-and-response songs in preparation for the main dance.

Agbadza dance is distinctively concentrated on the movement of the torso and arms with the feet stepping and shuffling around the main beats of the music.

The participants form a dancing ring with the drummers seated on benches on one side of the circle. The dancers take short turns either in pairs or in small groups. The dancers move forwards and backwards in linear formation from where the drummers are seated. Each turn of the dance ends with a stylized closure movement on the regulative beat (marked with the arrow above).

Stick-clappers and rattles, which are usually brought by individual participants, are played in accompaniment to the songs and dances. The drumming consists of various segments, each one based on well-defined themes and variations.

Figure 15. Instruments of the Agbadza ensemble
Front, left to right: Axats (rattles); Gankogui (double bells)
Back, left to right: Kagan (small drum played with two sticks); Kidi (medium sized response drum played with two sticks); Sogo (master drum [combines two hands]).
Agbadza support rhythms:

Conclusion

In brief, this paper has examined the contextual basis of drumming, bringing to the fore issues of ethnic differentiation in instrumentation, construction, modes of drumming and other relevant aspects. Focus has also been given to the organization of the basic composite rhythms of the ensemble and the structural conceptions of the master drum within it. These insights will also enhance the understanding of the music itself within specific contexts of ethnicity.

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