

ORGANISATION OF MUSIC IN ADANGME SOCIETY

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The specialisation which the requirements of social life bring into the content and organisation of folk music and dancing must engage the attention of the student of African music, for it is often by reference to this that the musical heritage of any given society can be discovered and evaluated. Investigation into the practice of music of the Akan, Ga, Adangme, Ewe and other peoples of Ghana shows that this specialisation is widespread and tends to follow the pattern described subsequently for Adangme society.

Traditional Adangme music is very limited in its music resources, more so than the music of their Ghanaian neighbours. Much of it is vocal. The songs may be sung to the accompaniment of idiophones (bells, rattles, stock clappers, etc.) or they may be combined with drums. The variety of drums of Adangme origin in common use is small; the most important of them are the drums of Klama, the most widely used musical type in Adangme area.

Adangme music has in common with the music of other Ghanaians both a polymetric and polyrhythmic foundation. But it is distinct in its style of singing and in its melodic and harmonic usages.

The melodies of Adangme songs are conceived within a pentatonic or hexatonic framework. Their tonal organisation allows for variations in the position of the tonic and for modal shifts. There appears to be a very close correlation between the musical intonation of Adangme singing and Adangme speech.

As in other African societies, frequent use is made of solo and chorus patterns, though variations in the latitude enjoyed by solo or chorus will be found. There is for example a common habit of dividing some songs into two parts: (1) an introductory section in free rhythm sung by the cantor at the end of which the chorus may chime in on a long sustained note and (2) a section in strict tempo consisting of a solo lead and chorus refrain (or overlapping solo and chorus parts) which may be repeated thrice or more. Each new stanza may be treated in much the same way. This form is commonly found in Klama, the most important musical form of the Adangme. In other arrangements of solo and chorus parts strict tempo is maintained throughout the entire piece. The solo and the chorus portions may be different, or the chorus may be a repetition of the solo part.

The harmonic resources of Adangme music are very limited. Unisons or octaves, organums in fourths, or single sustained ground notes or a ground chord in third appear to be the foundation of the harmony of songs, the choice of organum or ground harmony depending on the modality of the particular song.

The basic resources of Adangme music are used in building up musical forms which are distinguished from each other in respect of one or more of the following:-

- (a) modality
- (b) solo and chorus arrangements
- (c) pattern of harmony (unison, organum, ground note)
- (d) dominant rhythm
- (e) tempo

- (f) Peculiarities of phrasing
- (g) nature and form of accompaniment—drums, hand-clapping, stock clappers, castanets, bells, ankle buzzers, rattles and so on.

Thus the ritual *abodo* is characterised by lightness of rhythm, gentleness and short phrasing as compared with *nimeli a do* (literally the dance of the aged) which is somewhat heavier in rhythm but faster in tempo.

Similarly the music for the visit to the confirmatory rock *tekpete* during puberty celebrations is characterised by rugged rhythmic patterns, sometimes in three bar groups, while *yoosram* is in free rhythm with many sustained notes. One style of *oleeno* uses hand-clapping while another uses gourd percussion.

In addition to musical differences, considerable importance is attached to differences in the range and references of song texts. Thus the musical form of *Klama* is textually divided into several sections each one dealing with a group of subjects of philosophical, social historical or magico-religious importance. Slight musical variations accompany these sections, as in the case of *abodo* and *nimeli a do* cited above.

Adangme music is rich in its verbal resources. The text of *Klama* for example run into many hundreds of short stanzas, though many of them are elliptical and require a great deal of contextualisation before they can be adequately understood.

An interesting feature of the practice of music in Adangme society is the adoption of music of non-Adangme origin for use in a limited number of contexts. The music of *Atsia Agbekor* (a form of drumming, singing and figure dancing found particularly in Anlo area) is practised by some Adangmes. The bilingual coastal groups of *Gbugbla* (*prampram*), *Ningo* and *Kpone* worship *Kple* gods. ("Prosperity gods" worshipped chiefly in Ga and Awutu areas: See M. J. Field: *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*). *Kple* music and dancing are therefore practised in those areas.

In addition to these, musical forms of Akan origin are found, most of them the outcome of the historical connection between Adangme groups and Akan peoples—particularly the *Akwamu* and the *Akim* whose influence is still apparent in the political organisation of many Adangme states. *Awaa*, *Adenkum* and *Adowa* are performed in the coastal areas. In many areas, *Asafo*, the traditional music of Akan warrior organisations will be heard on certain occasions. The music of the Akan *mpintin*, *Fontomfrom* (*obonu*) and *twenesin* (*tooisin*) drums are used in connection with chiefship. It is interesting to note that the principal talking drum (*atumpan*) played in this area for chiefs is of Akan origin and that Akan texts are used.

There is then a variety of musical forms in use in Adangme communities. On the one hand there are the forms of Adangme origin such as *KLAMA* (with the sub-categories *Maa*, *Me*, *Nimeli a do*, *Obue*, *Sabe*, *Tegble* etc.), *OGBE*, *HE*, *AKLIKPA*, *ADZIDZAA*, *ODOMA*, *MINE*, *OLEENO*, *KPATSA*, *SUKU*, *OZONO* etc., and on the other hand those of non-Adangme origin such as *AWAA*, *ADOWA*, *ADENKUM*, *ASAFO*, *ATSIA-AGBEKOR*, *KPLE*, *OBONU*, which reflect the interaction between the Adangmes and their Ghanaian neighbours.

Observation of musical performances shows that this variety is necessitated by both social and aesthetic considerations. The Adangmes, like other African peoples observe their rites and celebrate their festivals in the context of much music and dancing. They do not, however, leave the musical content of these occasions entirely unorganised. It is considered important that such music should be keyed as far as possible to the needs of the situation. Hence there is special music for the funeral, music for twin rites, music for puberty festivals, music for annual festivals, music for particular gods as well as music for recreation. In other words, there is a contextual distribution of musical forms or types. The programme of social events for the year, therefore, includes a programme of different forms of music. Opportunities for enjoying the special music of the season or the ceremony make the festival and the ritual something to look forward to.

A further point that should be taken into account is that in organising the musical forms, consideration is given not only to the significance of occasions but also to the needs of the participants. As the social needs men and women, young and old or the roles which these may be called upon to play vary, traditional Adangme music provides for age-sex grouping of performers. There is music or musical style for the young as well as for the old. For example there are two styles of performing the music of OLEENO. One is used by young people and the other by older people. A section of the music of Klama is "the dance of the age" or music of the elders (*Nimeli a do*), while another section (Hae) is the music for young girls who have completed their transition into womanhood by performing the rites of DIPO or OTUFO. The music of OGBEN is performed by men to the accompaniment of drums while OLEENO and MINE are performed largely by women.

It is not only the content of Adangme music that is organised. Performances are also to some extent organised. In many social situations, traditional Adangme music does not happen as a wholly spontaneous expression. Invariably it has to be led by someone or by a nucleus of musicians belonging to a social group that specialises in the particular type of music.

Performing groups may be in the nature of associations, they may be (a) Musical associations or "Popular Bands" specialising in the performance of a distinct form of music and dancing such as SUKU, KPATSA, AKLIKPA, AMEDZRO. (b) Religious associations with a nucleus of officers and musicians specialising in the music for the worship of particular gods—Digble, Laloi, Nadu, Kotoklo, Osabu, etc. (c) Heroic associations such as Asafo warrior associations or Tegble society into which were admitted in the past all those who performed deeds of valour in encounter with men or wild animals. The birth of twins on three consecutive occasions (irrespective of their survival) qualified a woman for membership of the association. (d) Political associations. The organisation around chiefship sets aside musicians who perform FONTOMFROM (OBONU) and other music for the chief.

In addition to associations, kinship groups may have their own musicians who lead performances at all kinship ceremonials—particularly those of the life cycle. The music which such groups perform may be traditional and common to all, but they also specialise in others of their own choice or creation. Although other people may in time become familiar with these lineage musical forms, the authority for performing them rests with the respective kinship groups. At Gbugbla, OGBEN music is performed solely by the group of the reigning chief, while He is the speciality of another group.

The existence of "permanent" organisations for music does not of course exclude individual effort which certain situations demand—the situation of the mother and the baby which calls for the cradle song, the situation of the friend, the relation and the deceased which calls for the individual lament. Moreover, the formation of occasional bands (the members of which do not remain in associative relation after the performance) is also a feature of Adangme musical life as indeed of the Akan, the Ga, Ewe and other Ghanaian societies in which women quickly group themselves to sing songs of exhilaration at installations and other ceremonies. But such performances by individuals and bands arise because of the specific social or musical roles that are expected of them.

Adangme music then is organised in many of its details. There are a number of musical forms created or adopted for performance on different occasions and which form an integral part of the events of such occasions. By encouraging specialisation, individuals, and social groups are enabled to make a contribution to the musical life of their communities and to hold themselves responsible for continuing specific musical traditions. The surviving strength of Adangme music, therefore, lies not so much in the quality and extent of its resources as in the tradition of linking it in all aspects with social action, and in the assignment of roles and responsibilities to individuals and social groups within the society.