TOWARD UNDERSTANDING THE PLAY OF
ATSIME*V*U IN ATSIÃ[1]

by

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The A*n*lo (E*v*e)[2] dance drumming orchestra of southeastern Ghana has three compo-
nents, each with its own general level of pitch. In the highest range idiophones and the
smallest of the drums play unchanging ostinati that provide the gait of the music. One
of these high instruments controls the timing and placement of all patterns.[3] In the
middle range one or more drums support the musical gait of the upper range but with
varied patterns. This intermediate drumming is also usually responsive to the third
component, the leading drum (or master drum), which plays intermittently in the
lowest range. Some of the play of the leading drum is decorative; some controls the
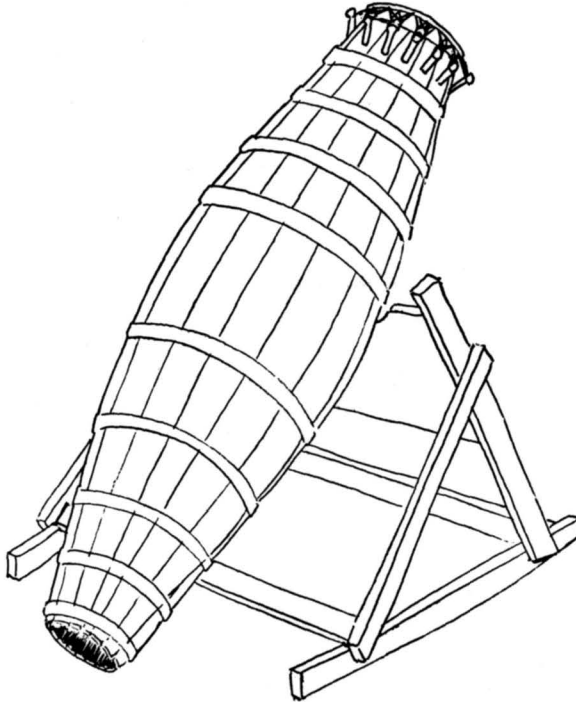performers with signals.

Fig. 1—Atsime*v*u.

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[1] This is a companion article to my study "Toward understanding the play of sogo in Atsiã," *Ethnomusicology*, XVI, 1 (January, 1972),
pp. 1-37.
[2] The A*n*lo branch of the E*v*e-speaking people live around the Keta Lagoon. Their written language uses the Roman alphabet with
changes that have been described in note 1 on p. 50 of this issue.
[3] This instrument is almost always the iron bell. See my preceding article in this issue "Three principles of timing in A*n*lo dance
drumming."

Atsimeᴠu is the leading drum in the recreational Aɲlo dance drumming known as Atsiã. [4] With one specific pattern the player calls upon the smaller drums of the ensemble to begin their parts. With another he [5] brings the dance drumming to a close. Between these commands he may play decorative passages or other commands known as dialogues, [6] which are repeating patterns that require special responses from the middle component of the ensemble (the two drums sogo and kidi) and from the dancers. The following study analyses the formal characteristics, compositional techniques, and rhythmic controls of the play of this leading drum. There are three sections: (1) a preliminary description of atsimeᴠu construction and strokes; (2) a study of the dialogues; (3) a study of the decorative passages. Not enough research has been done to support a detailed study of atsimeᴠu drumming as melody. Therefore this paper will not consider the syllables used by drummers to verbalise atsimeᴠu patterns nor the acoustic properties of the various strokes.

1. PRELIMINARIES

Atsimeᴠu (or ᴠuga) is of barrel construction. Its height ranges from just under five to over six feet, and the number of hoops used to bind the staves together varies accordingly. The drum-head measures from nine inches to a foot across depending on the length of the instrument. The bottom is open and always of a diameter somewhat less than that of the playing end. [7] The head of antelope skin is laced to a reed hoop with ordinary cord. Loops from the lacing pass around wooden pegs set downward at a slant through the shell between the first and second metal hoops (usually fashioned from the metal strapping found on packing cases). The skin is brought to a moderate tautness by driving the reed hoop down over the smoothed ends of the staves and by driving the pegs in to increase the pull of the cord upon this hoop. Because of its height atsimeᴠu is set at a tilt on a special stand, as in Fig. 1. [8]

In former times Aɲlo drums were fashioned from solid tree trunks. The practice has not died completely, although finding suitable trees is difficult in the Aɲlo area because it is savannah country. [9] Slat construction has been practised for at least fifty years in the area. As early as 1920, in the Aɲlo commercial town of Keta, a certain man from the neighbouring land of Togo sold drums made by reshaping commercial barrels. The salt, often used to pack the original contents of these barrels, permeated the staves to some extent and caused the metal hoops to rust. Staves have been made from raw lumber in Aɲlo since at least 1932. [10]

There are eight main strokes used in the play of atsimeᴠu, each of which can be modified to suit the melodic needs of the moment. The drummer always plays with a stick in his dominant hand. In his other hand (his off hand) he may or may not hold a

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[4] Atsiã is performed at a moderate tempo, i.e. the longer of the bell strokes sound at around M.M. 162. Nowadays the dance is found in the Aɲlo towns of Anyako, Alakple, Afiadenyigbã, and Dzelukofe, and in the Some town of Xedzranawo to the east of the Keta Lagoon. For a full study of this music (but not of its songs) see *The rhythm of Atsiã dance drumming among the Aɲlo (Eʋe) of Anyako* by Hewitt Pantaleoni (Oneonta, New York; privately published, 1972). See note 2 on p. 50 of this issue for the location of copies. The social organisation that supports dance drumming among the Aɲlo has been described by Kɔbla Ladzekpo, "The social mechanics of good music," *African Music*, V, 1 (1971), pp. 6-22.

[5] Drumming is traditionally done by men and not by women in Aɲlo society. There are isolated exceptions such as Madam Ɲukuyi Abotsivia of Anyako.

[6] "Dialogue" is the English term used by Mr Kɔbla Ladzekpo, Aɲlo dancer, drummer and scholar at the California Institute of the Arts.

[7] Mr Laurentios Mensaga, drum-maker of Abor (six miles north of the Keta Lagoon) told me this is characteristic of atsimeᴠu. For the description of how an atsimeᴠu is put together, see Pantaleoni, *The rhythm of Atsiã* . . . ., pp. 49-52.

[8] The great size of the atsimeᴠu used at Dzelukofe on August 11, 1971 – an instrument newly built and first used at that time – made it necessary for the drummer to stand on a bench even though the drum was tilted on its stand.
   The Aɲlo have many different drum ensembles. When atsimeᴠu is included it is always the leading drum but there are many ensembles in which it is not included. An itemized description of thirty-seven drum ensembles in the Aɲlo town of Anyako can be consulted in Pantaleoni, *The rhythm of Atsiã* . . . ., appendix C.

[9] There are two solid atsimeᴠu at Anyako I have not seen to describe. S. D. Asiama shows one six feet nine inches long in use at Pokuase, just north of Accra. The head measures one foot across. See his "Music and dancing in a Ghanaian community (Pokuase)" (unpublished thesis for the Diploma in African Music, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana [1965]), p. 25, plate II.

[10] Pantaleoni, *The rhythm of Atsiã* . . . ., p. 48.

stick, depending on the function of the pattern. Most decorative patterns are played with two sticks; most commands are played with one stick and one hand. Four of the eight main strokes are made by the off hand; four are made with a stick by either hand. The following paragraphs describe the mechanics of each main stroke, and the accompanying figures illustrate both the action and its tablature notation. In naming these actions the term "stroke" is reserved to hand drumming and the term "shot" to stick drumming. The names are of my own invention except "koga" which is Anlo.

1. **The ringing sound** – played by the off hand. The distal edge of the palm – the cushioned area where the palm ends and the fingers begin – comes down smartly against the rim of the drum-head with the fingers straight, together and somewhat tense. The forearm ends its downward motion slightly below the drum-head. The wrist bends downward as the forearm descends, giving extra speed to the fingers. The palm produces hardly any sound because the leather is not free to vibrate at the rim of the drum-head. The fingers make the sound; propelled by the wrist and forearm they are carried beyond the stopping point of the palm and hit the outer part of the sounding area of the drum-head. The tenseness of the fingers gives them elasticity so that they snap back to their former position as straight extensions of the line of the hand after they have struck the leather. This recovery is faster than conscious effort could achieve; no part of the fingers touches the responding drum-skin, and the sound is clear and ringing.

Fig. 2 illustrates the ringing sound as performed by Mr Vincent Kofi Ladzekpo, Anlo drummer, dancer, singer and composer, who posed for the following illustrations as well. He happens to be left-handed, so the ringing sound is done with his right hand. To follow the sequence of the action read Fig. 2 from the bottom up. This is the direction time moves in the tablature shown to the right. The staff is an extension of the head of the drum, with lines to mark the rim (at either side) and the centre. The ringing sound is notated to the right of the centre line since it is performed by the right hand.[11]

2. **The centre stroke** – played by the off hand. The full flat of the hand strikes the centre[12] of the drum-head. The wrist does not bend. The hand does not rebound as quickly from the leather as do the fingers in making the ringing sound. Some of the vibration of the drum-head is damped by the surface of the hand before it is clear of the leather. The tone of this stroke is muffled, and it is apt to be lost on an audio recording.

Fig. 3 illustrates the action of the centre stroke and its tablature transcription. The left hand accompanies the centre stroke with koga (see stroke 8) in this particular illustration.

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[11] For the origin of this tablature see Moses Serwadda and Hewitt Pantaleoni, "A possible notation for African dance drumming," *African Music*, IV, 2 (1968), pp. 47-52. A full explanation for the symbols used for the strokes is in Pantaleoni, "Toward understanding . . . sogo . . . ," pp. 4-6.
[12] This position may be modified.
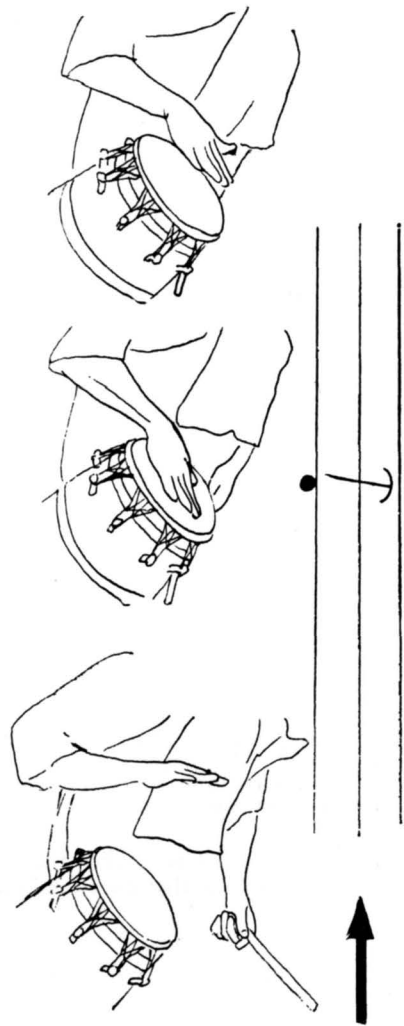
Fig. 2—The ringing sound. (Stroke 1)   Fig. 3—The centre stroke (with k*o*ga). (Stroke 2)

3. **The pressed stroke** – played by the off hand. The player strikes the outer part of the sounding area of the drum-head with the forward part of the fingers, which are together and straight. The wrist bends downward only slightly during the downward motion of the forearm. The line of the arm from elbow to fingertips is straight at the moment of contact. After contact the fingers press on the leather while the forearm rises.[18]

Fig. 4 illustrates the pressed stroke and its tablature transcription. The drummer's left hand adds koga (see stroke 8) in this particular illustration.

4. **The centre pressed stroke** – played by the off hand. The full flat of the hand strikes the centre of the drum-head and is held against the leather. The dominant hand usually plays one koga (see stroke 8) to accompany this stroke. (No illustration).

5. **The stick shot** – played by either hand. A stick held loosely between thumb and index finger, or thumb and middle finger, strikes the centre of the drum-head and rebounds freely. The forearm contributes less to the downward force of the blow than the wrist and fingers, which cause the stick to pivot rapidly downwards as the hand descends.

Fig. 5 illustrates a stick shot played by each hand. The tablature symbol is a circle drawn open to show that the stick bounces freely off the leather.

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[18] Both the position and the pressure of the fingers on the head modify this stroke, as well as the degree of separation of the fingers.
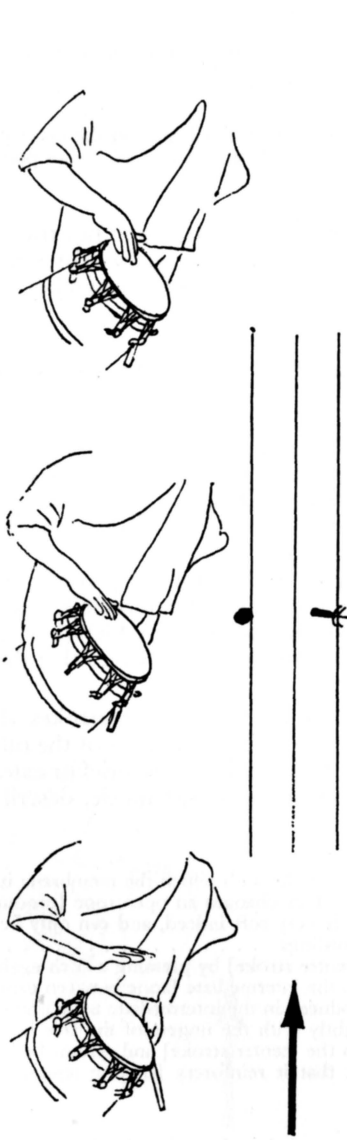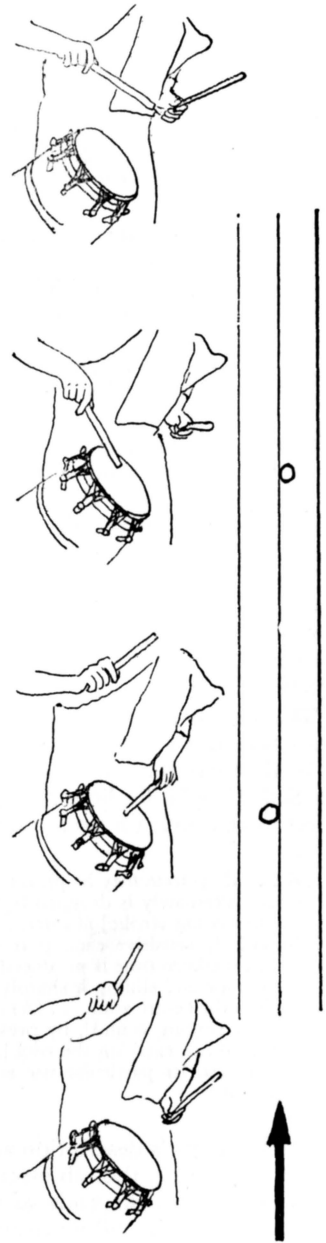
Fig. 4—The pressed stroke (with køga). (Stroke 3)

Fig. 5—Stick shots. (Stroke 5)

6. **The pressed shot** – played by either hand. A stick held firmly in the hand is brought smartly against the centre of the drum-head and held there. Most of the force of this stroke is produced by wrist action.

Fig. 6 illustrates the pressed shot. The tablature symbol is a circle filled in to show that contact with the leather is prolonged.

7. **The muted shot** – played by both hands. First the off hand presses silently on the outer portion of the playing area. This qualifies the subsequent response of the leather to a stick shot performed by the dominant hand.

Fig. 7 illustrates the muted shot. Note that it is the off hand itself and not the stick it holds which presses on the drum-head. The bracket around the symbol for this press indicates that it is silent. The vertical line extending upward from the symbol for the press indicates that the pressing action is extended in time.

8. **Koga** – played by either hand or by both hands together. The shell of the drum is struck on the side or rim with a stick. The stroke does not bounce.

During the performance of a phrase, and during the frequent pauses between passages of drumming, the atsimevu player may perform koga with one or both hands as a way to mark time. When the dominant hand is playing koga to mark time, the off hand usually presses on the drum-head. Some off hand strokes are accompanied by koga played with the dominant hand, as shown in Figs. 3 and 4.

The sound of a stick striking the side of the drum is prominent in the play of atsimevu, and does not appear in the play of the other drums in Atsiã. Nevertheless, unaccompanied koga seem to be incidental or non-essential to the patterns in which they appear, for drummers do not verbalise them in speaking the sequence of syllables that describe a pattern.

The damp is an important modifier used with some of the main strokes already described. It is a light touching of the drum-head made by the fingertips of the off hand or by the tip of the stick held in the dominant hand. This touch may be brief or extended. Dr Seth Dzagbe Cudjoe, Anlo physician and student of traditional music, describes its effect in an article on drum notation.

A . . . deep tone may be produced when one of the two sticks with which the membrane is being struck alternately is dropped lightly on the centre zone. This changes an open tone [produced by the preceding stroke] at once, into a deep tone which is very soft indeed, and can only be heard by acutely sensitive ears. It is completely lost in recordings . . . .
A . . . medium tone is produced immediately after a [centre stroke] by pressing a stick against the membrane and sliding it sharply at the same time from the intermediate [zone between centre and rim] to the centre zone . . . (A) . . . medium tone is produced in the intermediate zone immediately after [a ringing sound], by pressing the membrane lightly with the fingers of the free hand [i.e., the hand not carrying the stick]. It is much softer than the [centre stroke] and cannot be heard in recordings. Its particular use seems to lie in the fact that it reinforces [ringing sounds] which follow it.[14]

As Dr Cudjoe's description suggests, the damp is peripheral to the rhythmic structure of the drumming, though essential to a good modulation of the drum melody. It adds pitch changes to the ends of strokes and creates a moment of silence in which the ringing sound may fall more effectively.

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[14] Dr Seth Dzagbe Cudjoe, "Problems of notation. (3) The notation of drum music," *Music in Ghana*, I, 1 (May, 1958), pp. 78-80. For the sake of clarity I have substituted my own stroke names for those used by Dr Cudjoe.
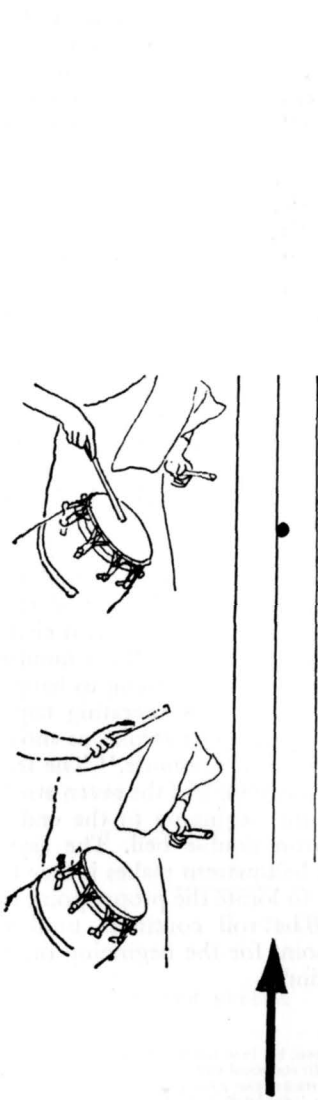
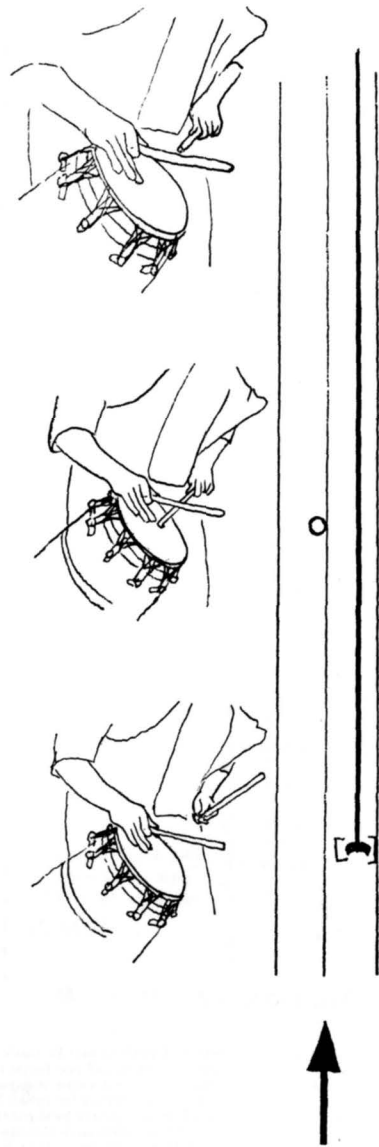Fig. 6—The pressed shot. (Stroke 6)   Fig. 7—The muted shot. (Stroke 7)

The list on p. 73 summarises the eight main atsimeʋu strokes and their tablature symbols. They have been ranked by their apparent pitch, with the highest sounding stroke at the top of the list.[15]

2. DIALOGUES

Atsiã dialogues are brief passages of tightly organised drumming in which atsimeʋu cycles a particular pattern, or call, and the intermediate drums, sogo and kidi, cycle the appropriate answering pattern, or response. This structure of call and response underlies the decorative play of atsimeʋu as well as its commands, but in a looser form as I shall show later on.

The dancers also respond to dialogues. They change from the main Atsiã figure, a walking pattern with rhythmic accents, to an energetic flexing of the trunk.[16] Because it generates this energetic dancing a dialogue is never maintained for very long.

From the high component of the orchestra there is no response to dialogues. The musical gait created by the ostinati of these instruments continues as a background for the exchange going on among the lower drums. Handclapping is the one exception, for it is not possible for the dancers to clap while responding to a dialogue.

The leading drummer uses one hand and one stick for all dialogues. He tucks the second stick between his legs or in the head kerchief that circles his waist; some drummers hold it in their mouths. First he signals that something is going to happen by performing a roll. This is a repeating triplet figure prepared by a single centre stroke, as shown in Fig. 8 for a right-handed drummer.[17] The triplets always start at the beginning of the seven-stroke pattern played from the beginning to the end of Atsiã on a forged iron double bell. The asymmetrical shape of the bell pattern makes it easy for the leading drummer to locate the proper point for the roll to begin. The roll continues until he reaches the proper point for the beginning of the dialogue he has in mind.
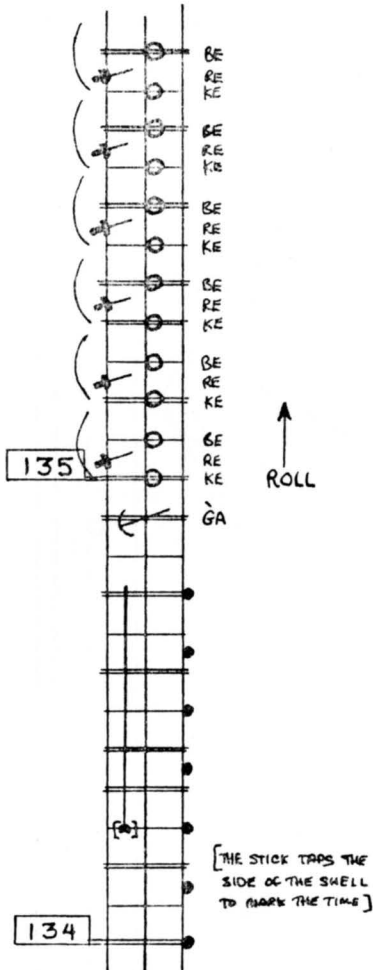
Fig. 8—The roll.

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[15] A more precise treatment of pitch cannot be made until the physics of the instrument has been researched. Suffice it to say there are two different sources for the sound one hears: the drumhead and the body of air contained within the instrument. These two sources probably do not operate as a single responding system. For example, two strokes that repress vibration in the drumhead seem to bring out one source more than the other. The high tone of the muted shot is produced mostly by the drumhead; the low tone of the centre pressed stroke entirely by the air chamber. For the case of a perfectly cylindrical drum see T. Terada, "Note on the vibrations of drum," *Physico-Mathematical Society of Japan. Proceedings*, IV, 7 (1908), p. 346.

[16] Mr Kobla Ladzekpo has called this flexing pattern "the basic movement in Anlo dance" because it appears in every one of the many different dances of these people. The basic movement is described and illustrated in "Takada drumming," by Kobla Ladzekpo and Hewitt Pantaleoni, *African Music*, IV, 4 (1970), pp. 12-13.

[17] Mr Kobla Ladzekpo, whose performance provided all the musical examples used in this paper and in chapter 7 of Pantaleoni, *The rhythm of Atsiã* . . . . A full score of his performance is in *ibid.*, pp. 413-503, and a description of the circumstances of performing and recording is on pp. 119-120 there and pp. 2-3 of Pantaleoni, "Toward understanding . . . sogo . . ." Horizontal lines have been added to the vertical staff of the tablature so that the passage of time from the bottom of the page to the top can be measured in equal intervals. Double horizontal lines mark those moments when the strokes of the iron bell sound to make the pattern by which every instrument is regulated. Each repetition of this bell pattern is numbered to the left of the first stroke of the pattern. There were 193 statements of the pattern in the performance from which these examples are drawn.
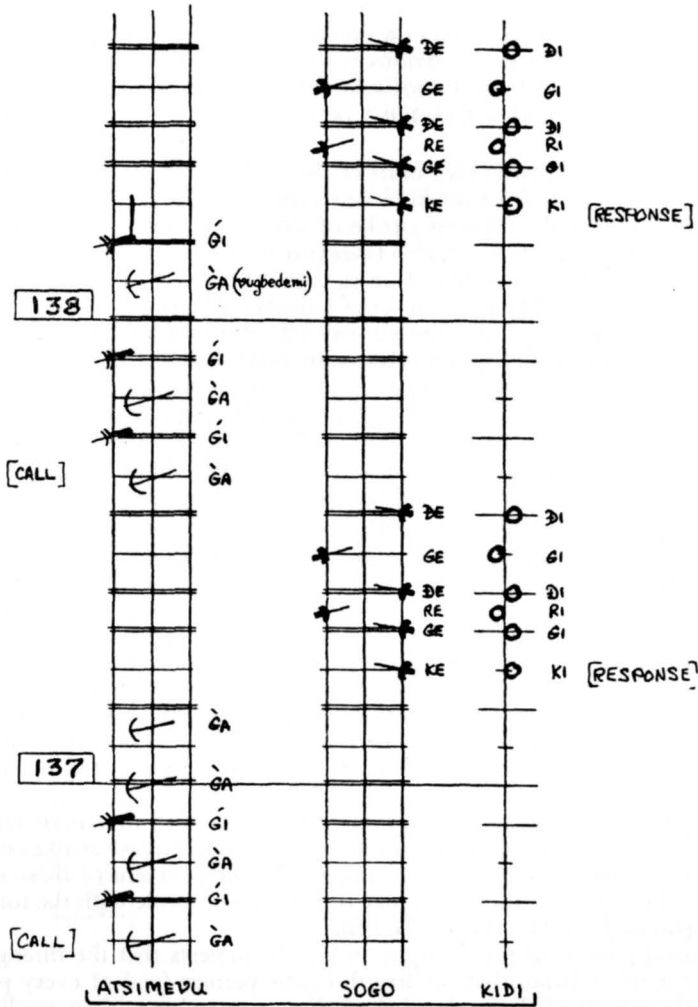
Fig. 9
A dialogue.

The eight
main atsimeⱯu
stokes and
their tablature
symbols.

HAND   **STICK**

Pressed stroke   ● Koga

Ringing sound   ○ Muted shot

Center stroke   ● Pressed shot

Center pressed stroke   ○ Stick shot

Each of the different dialogues starts at a different point in the play of the bell. It is not difficult to end the roll at these various points because the triplet figure is quite brief; and the point at which the roll ends tells the players of sogo and kidi just what dialogue is coming and thus what they must be ready to play when their time comes to respond.

The bell pattern occupies just twelve units of time as measured off by the horizontal lines of the tablature. This unit of measure was actually derived from the play of the bell and equals in duration the shortest stroke of that play.[18] One playing of an Atsiã dialogue, both the call and its response, also takes just twelve units of time. Theoretically a dialogue could be cycled any number of times without changing the relation between bell and drums. In practice dialogues are brief passages. During a dialogue sogo and kidi never alter their response, but atsimevu may introduce variations in the call once the dialogue is well established. Fig 9 illustrates an Atsiã dialogue.[19]

During a dialogue all three drums play continuously. Between calls atsimevu may double the response played by sogo and kidi but usually adds variations of its own. Between responses the smaller drums double the call played by atsimevu with quiet pressed strokes. For the sake of clarity this additional material has been omitted from Fig. 9. The passage is thus misrepresented for the call and response form a single and continuous flow of music for all three players.

The flow illustrated in Fig. 9 is asymmetrical: the call spans seven units and the response five. A pulse generated by two phrases of equal length, or by two phrases that were multiples of some factor of twelve would have been found if the rhythm were organized as a simple division of the span of the bell.[20] Evidently the inner structure of atsimevu phrases is not formed by this simple process of dividing time.

In rhythm by division the drummer places his strokes at equal intervals across a span of time established independently of these strokes. He generates a pulse with them which is in phase with the terminal point of this span. There is no extended pulse in the play of atsimevu, except when a small fragment is cycled (as in the roll shown in Fig. 8).

Could the play of atsimevu represent a process of adding small time units rather than of dividing a large one?[21] In rhythm by addition the drummer plays strokes of various durations to reach whatever total he has in mind. The arrangement of these durations can be symmetrical or not, and their total may or may not coincide with the total length of some other span such as the cycle of the bell.

The asymmetrical pattern of the dialogue in Fig. 9 suggests that the timing process is additive. On the other hand, that the length of the pattern (and of every pattern in Atsiã) matches the length of the cycle of the bell suggests that adding small units of time does not explain the timing completely.

Dividing time and adding it do not explain the rhythm of the play of atsimevu as simply and completely as the following proposition: the bell provides a basic span of asymmetrical shape, and the drummer plays from point to point within it. Sometimes the unit of spacing between his strokes remains constant (as in the second call shown in

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[18] I have found no reason to believe that this small unit of measure is actually used by musicians to build the timing of phrases. The argument is pursued further on pp. 56-58 of this issue.

[19] Atsimevu plays the call, and the smaller drums answer in unison. Atsimevu plays the call again, starting at the same point in the cycle of the bell as for the previous call, and the smaller drums make their response again, starting at the same point in the play of the bell as for the previous response. The two responses are identical; the two calls are not. (Atsimevu plays a slightly different ending each time, varying both the timing and the sign).

[20] The possibilities would be: (1) a call and response of six units each; (2) three rhythmic groups of four units each, with one or two groups allotted to the call and the remaining two, or one allotted to the response; (3) four rhythmic groups of three units each with one, two, or three rhythmic groups allotted to the call and the remaining three, two, or one allotted to the response; (4) six rhythmic groups of two units each with one, two, three, four, or five groups allotted to the call and the remaining five, four, three, two or one allotted to the response.

[21] The concept of divisive and additive rhythm was expounded first by Curt Sachs. See his *Rhythm and tempo* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1953), pp. 24-25. He does not suggest that the presence of the one excludes the other in a piece of music. I do so here only to distinguish the concepts more clearly.

Fig. 9) and sometimes the unit of spacing changes (as in the first call shown in Fig. 9). The constant unit of spacing supports the additive interpretation of the play of atsimeⱴu; the changing unit of spacing supports the divisive interpretation. When the concept of a duet suffices, to argue for either the divisive or the additive principle does not seem particularly useful.

Both inside and outside dialogues, the play of atsimeⱴu includes syncopation. In Western music syncopation refers to accentuation that does not coincide with the felt pulse of the music. In Atsiã there is no basic pulse underlying the play of atsimeⱴu; strictly speaking, therefore, the term syncopation is irrelevant. It is used here by analogy with Western practice, and refers to shifting a stroke away from its traditional position in a pattern. The second call shown in Fig. 9 ends with a syncopated effect.[22] Another such effect occurs in Mr Ladzekpo's playing of the pattern that terminates every dialogue, which is shown in Fig. 10.[23] Syncopation always spreads strokes farther apart rather than crowding them closer together, because in Aɳlo drumming smoothness and relaxation are preferred to abruptness and tension.[24]

Every atsimeⱴu pattern has a core of strokes that appear in all versions of the pattern. In Fig. 11 the core of the syncopated pattern discussed above is extracted from variant presentations of this pattern recorded in Mr Ladzekpo's brief demonstration of Atsiã.[25] Two points should be noted about this pattern.

First, the core of the core, so to speak – the strokes that change neither timing nor sign – lies toward the end of the pattern; the variation takes place at the beginning of the pattern. The same idea on a smaller scale characterizes the play of
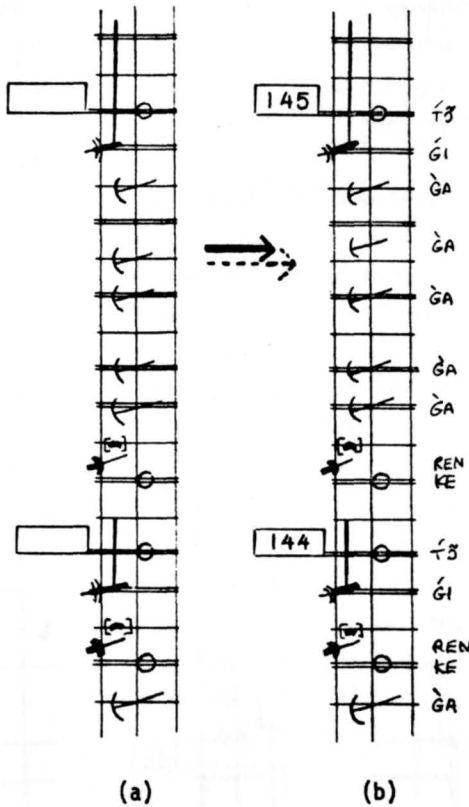

(a)   (b)

Fig. 10—Ɽugbedemi, or going "inside the time".

[22] Apparently the fifth stroke of the pattern belongs on the first stroke of the cycle of the bell, as found in cycle 137. When this felt point is avoided, as at the beginning of cycle 138, the drummers say the stroke has been put "inside the time" ("ⱴugbedemi" or "ⱴumamla"). This effect was noted in Pantaleoni, "Toward understanding . . . sogo . . .", p. 136-137.

[23] Example (a) shows the unsyncopated form of the command to terminate a dialogue. No cycle numbers have been given because this form does not occur in the brief demonstration of Atsiã given by Mr Ladzekpo which forms the basis for this study (see footnote 17 above). Example (b) shows how Mr Ladzekpo plays it. the fourth in a series of five centre strokes is slightly delayed, as indicated by the two arrows. The stroke has been "put inside the time" (solid arrow) rather than at its regular place (dotted arrow).

[24] This preference indicates that to categorize Aɳlo drumming as percussive is like insisting that all piano music is percussive. Beyond the basic mechanism of sound production there is little to indicate that Atsiã illustrates the "percussive concept of performance" which Merriam finds idiomatic of African music (Alan P. Merriam, "The African idiom in music." *Journal of the American Folklore Society*, LXXV (1962), p. 125.

[25] From the eleven versions of this pattern in Pantaleoni, *The Rhythm of Atsia* . . . ., Appendix D, four have been placed side by side as examples (a) through (d) of Fig. 11. On the time line to the right of these, which is labelled (e), are summarized strokes and timings common to all four examples. Strokes that are the same in every version appear on the summary line. Strokes that change only in sign appear on the summary line as an X (to show that either hand plays them) or as an L (to show that only the left, or off hand plays them). Strokes that change their place in the timing or that do not appear in every version are omitted. Line (e) thus represents the core of the pattern.

Fig. 11—The core of a pattern.

sogo; each pattern terminates in the core stroke.

Second, the loudest strokes – the unmuted stick shots – do not have a place in the core of the pattern. Their absence indicates that dynamic stress is not structural in Atsiä.

Dialogues provide typical examples of the play of atsimevu when it is commanding other instruments. When it is not commanding, the play is much the same: core strokes lie at the end of patterns, and the loudest strokes are not part of the core. Atsimevu rhythms that do not command the other players will be called decoration.

3. DECORATION

Decorative play is performed with two sticks on atsimeⱱu and contributes to a generalized call and response structure. The call consists of the core strokes of whatever pattern the atsimeⱱu player uses. The response consists of the combined core strokes of kidi and sogo. The core strokes of kidi and sogo are always heard in the same position in the cycle of the bell except when a dialogue requires the intermediate drums to make a special response. These core strokes form a collective, unchanging response illustrated in Fig. 12.[26]

(a)
Sogo

(b)
Collective
response

(c)
Kidi
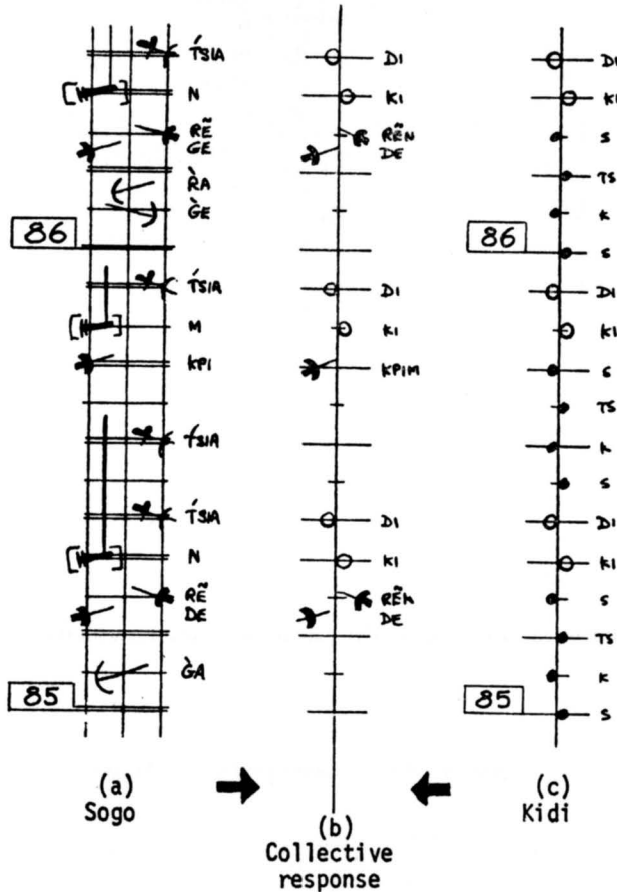
Fig. 12—The unchanging response in decorative play.

The core of an atsimeⱱu decorative pattern fits with this response, as shown in Fig. 13.[27]

[26] Example (a) shows one cycle of sogo music from which the core strokes – both plain and decorated – have been copied onto time line (b). Example (c) shows one cycle of kidi music from which the core strokes have also been copied onto time line (b). Example (b) is thus a summary of the core strokes of both sogo and kidi and represents their collective response.

[27] Example (a) shows the decorative pattern as it is formed around the beginning of cycle 120. Example (b) shows another version of the same pattern formed around the beginning of cycle 121. In example (c) the three core strokes of this decorative pattern are set alongside the collective response of sogo and kidi. Anlo drummers are very aware of the way the core strokes played on atsimeⱱu in this pattern dovetail with the core strokes played on sogo and kidi.
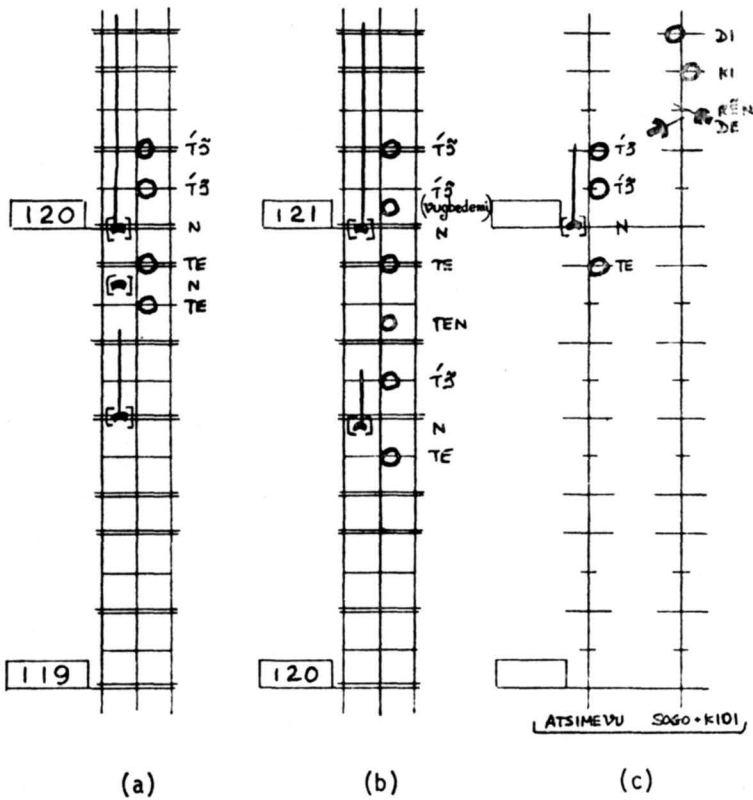
Fig. 13—The core of an atsimevu decorative pattern and how it fits with the collective response.

The call and response pattern of the decorative sections is loosely constructed. The collective response is only a small part of the play of sogo, for example; often phrases may be developed on this drum which run right across the collective response and obscure it. In dialogues the sogo player never obscures his response. Furthermore, atsimevu is often silent between dialogues, playing only intermittently during the dcorative portions of the music. Frequently, in other words, the collective response of sogo and kidi cycles by itself without a call. When atsimevu speaks, however, the call is heard to dovetail with the response.

Atsimeʋu patterns acting as decoration are asymmetrical, and usually the strokes do not occupy more than six to nine units. Techniques in the play of these patterns include **variation,**[28] **expansion, syncopation** (discussed above), and **modulation.**

Variation can be used to build large rhythmic groups out of small ones. Rhyming is possible, though Mr Ladzekpo did not use it much in his demonstration of decoration. An example of rhyming from that demonstration is given in Fig. 14.[29]
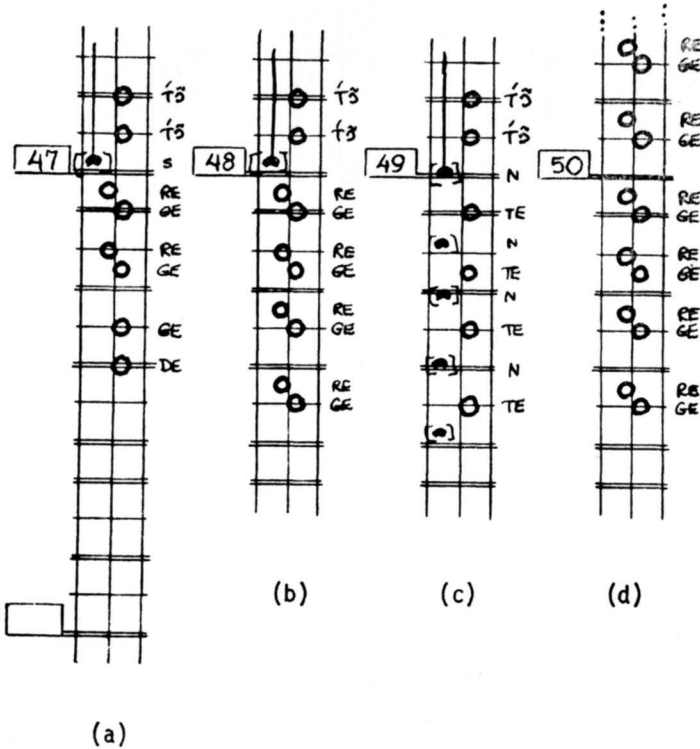

(a)

Fig. 14—Rhyming patterns in decorative play.

[28] This term denotes the presence of patterns differing from each other in small degree. It does not mean that one of these patterns is the fundamental expression from which the others are derived.

[29] Examples (a) through (d) follow one after the other in the transcript, as their cycle numbers indicate. By scanning the four examples horizontally one can see that the right hand follows the same timing in each case (except for the first stroke of example (a). In the decoration of this timing by the left hand there are differences that produce rhyming. Examples (b) and (d) are made to sound identical (except that example (d) goes on to become an extended figure almost three cycles long, whereas example (b) lasts for only nine units). Examples (a) and (c) are not identical, nor decorated like examples (b) and (d). The rhyme scheme is ABCB

Also possible is negative rhyming, in which the most different of a group of variants stands in relief as the high point of a somewhat homogeneous series. This is illustrated in Fig. 15.[30]

Fig. 15—Negative rhyming.

[30] A series of five consecutive patterns is shown, labelled (a) through (e). The right hand timing of all but example (d) is the same (allowing for syncopation of the penultimate stroke in examples (b), (c) and (e)). Examples (a) and (e) are identical, thus helping to form the series into a single group. The rhyme is AÁÁBA.

Expansion. Some phrases of the decorative play are obviously expanded versions of others. This expansion works in either direction: the leading drummer may preface a short phrase with additional material, or he may play on through the core strokes without dislodging them. Prefacing is illustrated in Fig. 16.[31]
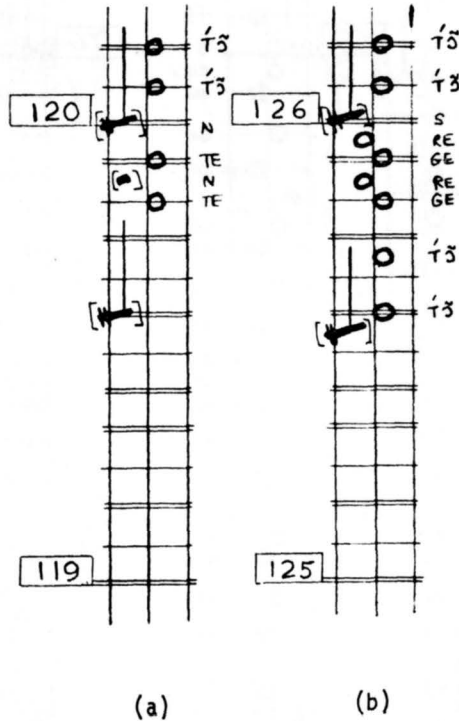

(a)   (b)

Fig. 16—Extension by means of a preface.

Expansion forward results from cycling a small rhythmic group. This process has two characteristics. First, the cycled group is a fragment found in unextended patterns. In fact, the fragment usually appears in an unextended pattern one cycle before it is used as a vehicle for extension. Second, the place of this fragment in the play of the bell is never lost. When the cycle of the bell repeats, the fragment appears in its old position.

Because of this second characteristic, extension by cycling can theoretically create a phrase of great length. Mr Ladzekpo, however, did not use this kind of extension to add more than two cycles of the ground to his original pattern. The same restraint was observed in performances of Atsiǎ in Aŋlo in the summer of 1971. Fig. 17 illustrates extension by cycling.[32]

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[31] The longer phrase of example (b) is a decorated version of (a) prefaced by two muted stick shots.
[32] Curved phrase lines to the left of the staff mark the spans of the cycled fragment. Example (a) shows a single decorative phrase containing the fragment that will later be cycled. Example (b) shows the drumming that follows immediately after example (a); the fragment is cycled four times. Note that the core strokes do not lose their original position when the extension is performed. From the first two strokes of cycle 57 to the first two strokes of cycle 58 the handedness changes, and the tone quality (from muted to open), but not the timing. In example (c) a similarly extended pattern is shown which includes syncopation (marked "syn").
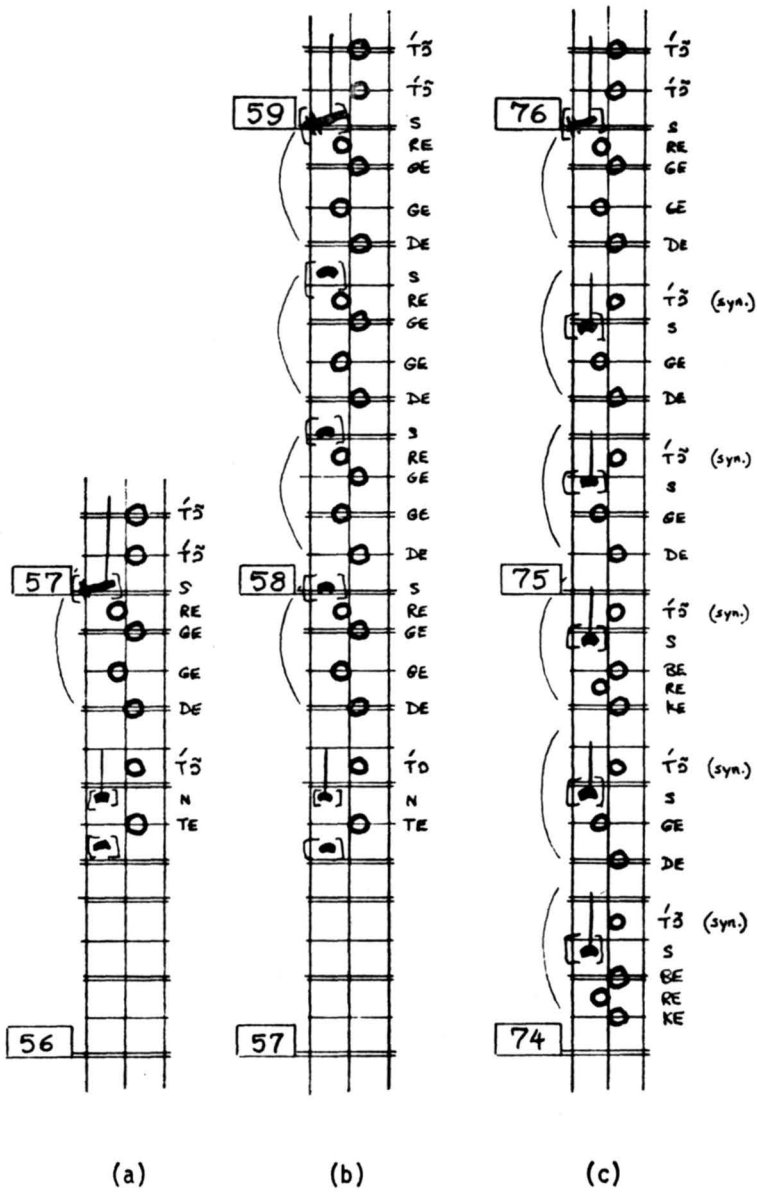
(a)   (b)   (c)

Fig. 17—Extension by cycling.

Fig. 18—Modulation during atsimeⱰu's re-entry.

Modulation. Although atsimevu may be silent at various times during the dance drumming, it is always silent at the beginning (after atsimevu has invited the other drums to start) and when a dialogue has ended.[33] On these two occasions the leading drummer lets the very different sound of sogo decorate the dancing for a while. He re-enters the play after these particular silences with a smoothly modulating passage that recalls the sogo techniques discussed in an earlier article[34]: (1) a rhythmic idea common to two successive patterns becomes the point of transition between them; (2) decoration in the central part of the passage is anticipated at the beginning and echoed at the end. An example of this modulation appears in Fig. 18.[35]

SUMMARY

Atsiã is founded on the play of the bell. The duet of the bell with every part is the primary relationship among the performers. Upon this foundation secondary relationships are built which give each musical occasion its particular shape. Atsimevu calls and the intermediate drums respond. The instruments of the high range maintain the gait of the music and the middle, freer voices support them.

The atsimevu player decorates and commands, varying the musical texture from time to time by initiating brief dialogues. Playing from point to point within the bell pattern he varies, expands, syncopates, and modulates his rhythms. His patterns are mostly asymmetrical, and the unvaried core of each is located at the end of the pattern.

The American poet, Donald Petersen, has responded to the art of Anlo dance drumming in words that evoke the web of musical relationships one hears.

On the big and little drums, the stick shots, the hand shots
Sure and quick,
The rests, the mutations, the outcry of vowels, ever and now,
The Ti-gi-desh of the little
Stretched against
The Ga Ga Ké-resh of the big ones – this goes on (no fugue,
No concerto, no theme with variations
More nicely mixed)
To the brilliant crashing pulse of the bead-meshed rattles
And the king-kang
Of the iron bell, stick-struck, a trim duet wholly beyond the
Notations of Mozart,
Speaking of union and discord, pulsation, the moment-to-moment
Rushing together and pulling apart
Of everything far and near, . . .[36]

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[33] The leading drummer, however, will mark time with koga. It is usually a simple pulse of one and one-half units, or a doubling of the bell or the rattle. There are more complicated koga.

[34] Pantaleoni, "Toward understanding . . . sogo . . . ."

[35] The opening four unit fragment includes a double stroke in anticipation of the characteristic decoration of the five unit fragment that follows it at unit 4 of cycle 43. This second pattern of five units alternates with an extended version of itself seven units long and leads into a typical nine unit pattern of decorative play. Points of transition are marked in the figure.

[36] Quoted by permission from his unpublished poem, "If not for them."