

TAKADA DRUMMING

by

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A possible notation for African dance drumming was proposed in a recent issue of this journal¹ which has since proved quite useful as a record and mnemonic aid in the study of *Eve*² *takada* music. The present article is a discussion of this music, particularly the drumming, and a demonstration of the application of the new system.

Nine miles northwest across a lagoon from the coastal settlement of Keta in south-eastern Ghana lies the island town of Anyako, a centre of traditional culture for speakers of the *Anlo* dialect of *Evegbe*. Kobla Ladzekpo was born there, and has provided the cultural background material and musical examples for this paper, while Hewitt Pantaleoni has done the notation and analysis. Both authors had the opportunity of checking their material at Anyako in July of 1969.

The *Eveawo* (usually transcribed into Roman letters as Ewe or Eve) generally accept the legend that they came to their present home in south-eastern Ghana from Ketu (*Amedzofe*), "east of the river Niger"³. Trade, marriage and today's Westernised means of travel and communication have led many of them to settle in other parts of Africa, but they live in greatest concentration in the coastal areas of Dahomey, Togoland and eastern Ghana. Needless to say, the political boundary lines are not cultural ones, but we shall restrict ourselves to the area in which our knowledge is first hand, the coastal corner of Ghana just west of Togoland. We shall start with a discussion of the dance club system, move from there to a description of the instruments of *takada* music and how they function, and conclude with comments designed to supplement the brief study score of *takada* drumming included at the end of this paper.

DANCE CLUBS

Dance drumming among the *Anlo*-speaking *Eveawo* is a vigorous traditional ensemble art actively promoted in Anyako through a system of dance clubs. These are set up by the voluntary joint effort of a group of interested men and women⁴, usually from the same age group. Sometimes a club lasts no longer than its founders are able to remain

¹ Moses Serwadda and Hewitt Pantaleoni, "A possible notation for African dance drumming", *African Music*, Volume 4, No. 2 (1968), 47-52.

² The following orthography is standard in written *Eve*, and will be found in the hand-drawn illustrations:

ʘ and ɔ are sounded by the tip of the tongue against the roof of the mouth.
 ɔ is the vowel sound AW.
 ɲ is the English -NG.
 ʋ is a V done with the lips rather than with the lower lip and upper teeth.
 ʃ is an Y done with the lips rather than with the lower lip and upper teeth.
 ɛ is the sound of E in MEY! The other E (E,e) ranges in sound from EH to EH.
 ~ is placed over vowels to show nasalization.

S stands for any sound between SH and a hiss.

X is the guttural CH of Scottish LOCH.

TS stands for the single sound of English CH.

DZ stands for the single sound of English J.

KP and GB are single sounds made by pronouncing the consonants simultaneously rather than consecutively.

In the body of our text the special characters in the above list are shown as nearly as possible by means of the equivalent *italic* characters, and nasalization is shown by placing a line over the vowel concerned.

³ This is a tradition recounted by W. E. F. Ward in "A History of the Gold Coast", London, 1948, 126-9. He spells the name of the town "Kotu".

⁴ No women were observed this summer with any other instrument than a rattle, with the exception of one song leader who used a clappered hand bell as a signal. There is in the area one elderly woman who can play the leading drum part in an ensemble, but this is quite unusual. Women mostly sing, dance, clap time and play the rattle.

active in it, and sometimes it survives the founders and accumulates representatives from successive generations.

A club is formed around a composer. He invents a distinctive melody, to which he sets all of the texts he creates. When he dies, or ceases to compose for the club, his successor will use a tune of his own for new texts while the repertoire that has been learned up to then will not be changed. Songs are sung both to the dance drumming and during the three or four "interludes" which usually occur during a performance. The dance songs are brief stanzas repeated many times; the "interlude" songs are longer and more leisurely in pace, performed to a light accompaniment of bells.

To the Westerner the drumming is probably the most outstanding feature of a club's performance, but to the Eweawo it is usually the songs. By its songs a club's individuality and quality are most clearly established, and learning them is the first and most difficult thing a newly formed club must do.

The town of Anyako is organized into geographical units reflecting an earlier military division of the people into a left wing, right wing and centre. Within one of these divisions as many as five dance clubs may be active at the same time. Each club has a name, such as Adzomani, Britannia, Yavavo, Nobody or *Alɔsɔgbey*, to mention a few. Occasionally a club may take for itself the name of the musical style it plays, as in the case of the *Takada* Club, but usually the name of a club is not the name of a style. For example, the Adzida Club is one of several groups which play a style of music known as *axatsevu* from the prominence in it of the sound of the rattle, or *axatse*. Sometimes the term *adzida* will be used to refer to the particular rhythmic combinations, songs and texts used by the Adzida Club within this style.

The occasion for dance drumming in Anyako can be a celebration welcoming government officials, the entertainment of a foreign visitor⁵, the promotion of a political party, the formal presentation of a new dance club⁶, or just recreation. It can also be part of a ritual observance such as a funeral, at which relatives or friends of the deceased have invited a dance club to perform so as to do honour to the dead person. If he or she once belonged to a dance club, that club will perform to give a final share of music to its former member. Except when fulfilling such personal obligations, a dance club expects to be paid for its work⁷. None of its members, however — even the composer — derives more than occasional income from this activity. In this sense musicians in the area of Anyako are amateurs who must take time out from their regular jobs in order to rehearse together and perform⁸.

The repertoire of every club includes at least four musics. There is that which is used for processing from the outskirts of town to the dancing area, and which is often similar to the music that will be used for dancing. This does not precede every dance session, but only occasions that are important beginnings. Whether the processional takes place or not, the performance itself will open with *afā*, which is a special singing and drumming performed as an invocation to the gods, and the same for every occasion and for every club.

The actual dancing is of two kinds at least: to the leisurely music of the "interlude" songs and bells, a rhythmic walk is done in a counterclockwise direction; to the vigorous rhythms of the full orchestra the movement is a different one and more rapid and, in the case of the men, more bold.⁹

⁵ Not an infrequent occurrence for over 400 years in this area.

⁶ The formation of a new club and the development of its repertoire will be the subject of a future study.

⁷ The frequency of obligatory performances can be a vexing problem.

⁸ The Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana is one of the few places in the southern part of the country where traditional musicians are employed full time as such.

⁹ During the fast dancing few dancers keep going without breaking to take up a rattle, speak with someone or walk about. Groups of two or three frequently dance together, and there is a standard terminal movement with which the group will dissolve itself while the music rolls on.

A movement of intermediate vigour may come toward the end of the "interlude", or between it and the dancing. It has the character of a game, and is accompanied by the full ensemble. It is never as long as either of the other movements.

THE INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

The houses of Anyako are built of cement blocks faced with mortar. Wooden beams support a roof of corrugated iron or tile. Between buildings the streets vary in width from a yard to twenty feet or more. They run at various angles, and frequently come together to form more open areas where dance drumming can be held. A covering of cloth or canvas is erected if the occasion is that of a funeral.

The orchestra forms three rows on one side of the dancing area. Behind it sit the elders and honoured guests, sometimes on benches but more usually in armchairs. Opposite them across the dance area are the women of the club who will concentrate on the singing of songs. On either side sit the women dancers and the men. Benches are provided for all participants¹⁰, while spectators without special privileges stand behind them.

The back row of a *takada* orchestra — the one nearest the elders and guests — is formed by two tall, narrow barrel drums called *atsimevu* or *vuga*, which lead the ensemble. Beside them, or to one side in the row in front of them, sits the player of the forged iron double bell, *gankogui*, whose job it is to provide a steady repeating pattern upon which the other percussion instruments can pivot. In front of the *atsimevu* are placed three accompanying barrel drums: the middle-sized, fat-waisted *sogo*, the smaller *kidi* of about the same proportions, and *kaganu*, which is as tall as *kidi* but quite narrow¹¹.

The front row of the orchestra is formed by a line of benches on which sit the male singers. They play the *axatse*, hollow gourds covered with loose beaded netting that add a brilliant, crashing pulse to the ensemble. There are at least a dozen of these instruments sounding together in *takada*. In front of them are two or three song leaders who move about the dancing area with a short wand of horsetail or hair from a ram's chest in their right hands (if they are right-handed). They supervise the activity and direct the singing.

The wooden staves, iron hoops, pegs and lacing that characterize the barrel drums of *takada* may be seen in Figure 1, in which one of the two lead drums is shown tilted

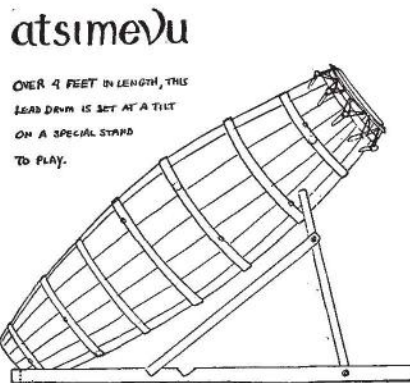


FIG. 1

¹⁰ Members are fined for not appearing at scheduled performances of the club.

¹¹ A typical lead drum stands between four and five feet high, with end diameters of around nine inches, a waist of fourteen inches. *Sogo* is half as tall, but with a waist of as much as seventeen inches, a playing head of eight inches across. The two smaller drums run around twenty-one inches tall, *kidi* with thirteen inches across the waist, the other with about nine inches.

in playing position. In performance two such drums face the dancers, and the players stand beside them in such a way as to see one another without turning. They do this because they must play together in precise unison, one leading, the other following, without prior rehearsal. To do this they rely on a keen sense for what is going to happen next, very fast reactions, and a shared knowledge of the patterns appropriate to a particular section.

The leading lead drummer creates *takada* dance music from a supply of established patterns¹². Some of these are for starting, some for ending; one is for transition, and the placement of all the others is, in general, optional (although certain ones are interchangeable without the use of transitions, and these are usually found together — as are “Gà Gà Ki De Gà Gà” and “Ke Re Be” in our study score, cycles 22 through 26).

The smaller drums do not enjoy the freedom of the lead drummer. Sogo and Kidi have the rôle of a chorus. They share a small repertoire of appropriate responses to the various rhythms introduced by *atsimevu*, and are free to vary these responses slightly from time to time. In general what they do is entirely determined by the lead drummer. They play in rhythmic unison.

The smallest drum, *kagazu*, has just one rhythm to play, regardless of what the larger drums are doing. It is therefore not part of the chorus, with its varied responses, but of a third element in the ensemble, one that has the function of a Western ground bass. Together with the *axatse* and the double bell, *kagazu* provides a rhythmic ostinato upon which the singing, dancing and more elaborate work of the larger drums are built. It is with this “ground” that we shall begin our more detailed examination of the vigorous dancing portion of *takada*.

THE GROUND

The keystone in the arch of ensemble dance rhythm among the drummers of Anyako is said by them to be the forged iron double bell, *gankogui*, shown in Figure 2. It is

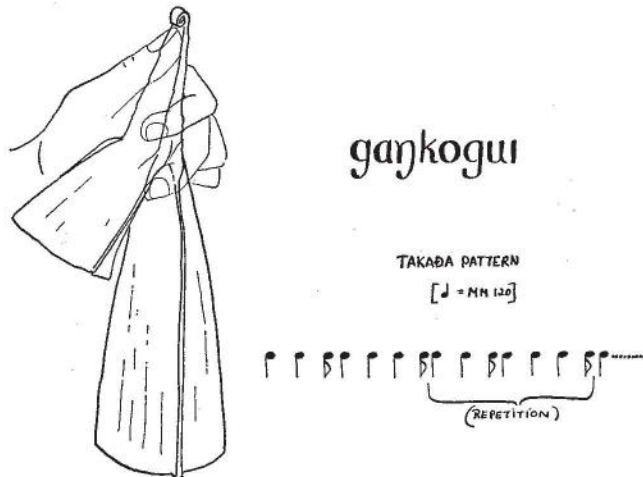


FIG. 2

struck with a wooden stick, and gives off notes that are a complex of definite pitches in the upper range of a Western first soprano singer and above. The smaller of the two

¹² This is a living art form, and so new patterns are also possible, as well as entirely new dance music. The study of this creative process remains to be done.

bells is used almost exclusively in *takada* dance drumming, and sounds a steady, brief repeating pattern found in other *Ewe* dance musics as well, but distinguished from them by tempo¹³. This pattern can be represented for the moment, with only mild distortion, as a cycle of seven strokes of eighth- or quarter-note value in a total length of twelve eighth-notes, as shown.

The distortion created by this representation lies in the act of isolating this part from its context, especially for the purpose of introducing it for the first time. Neither in Anyako nor in the West do people learn the individual parts of a generally known ensemble style before they learn the totality of the style. We absorb the whole of it first, from childhood on, and only later come to the mastering of a particular instrument and its part. In Anyako, the children are everywhere, watching and absorbing everything that happens. When they beat the side of a drum with sticks in imitation of the dance music they have been hearing, they beat a combination of parts rather than a single line, and it remains a moot point whether it is the individual line or the combination of lines that is the fundamental rhythmic statement. The *gakogui* part has been called the "keystone" of the rhythm, but in fact the player of this fundamental part has been observed to pause and even to stop for a few minutes while the dance music goes on. Admittedly it is not a frequent occurrence, but that it happens at all emphasizes the existence of a total ground effect above and beyond the sound of the bell.

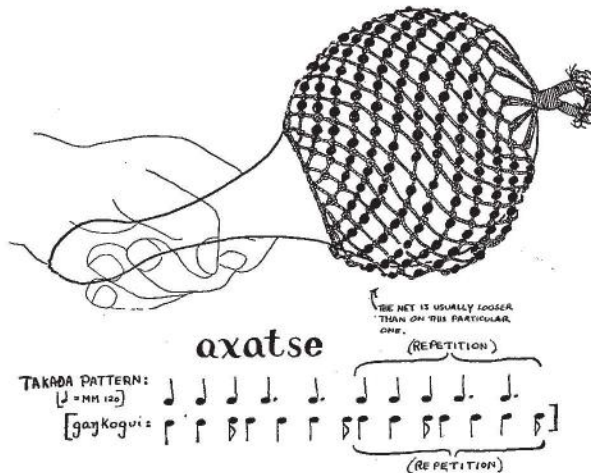


FIG. 3

The second constituent of the ground is shown in Figure 3, combined in Western notation with what has already been given for *gakogui*. Western notation was developed for instruments of sustained and definite pitch, the first of which was the human voice. For *gakogui*'s bell-like sound it is appropriate (though we shall have to abandon it for other reasons later on in scoring this instrument). For the sound of *axatse*, however, we have substituted an "x" for a note-head in Figure 4 and later examples.¹⁴

¹³ This pattern is also popular to the east, among the Nago ("Musiques Dahoméennes", rec. by Charles Duvelle, Collection Radio-diffusion Outre-Mer, OCR 17 side A bands 1 and 2) and as far afield as among the Luba of Katanga (Decca London TW 91204, Side A, band 3, Luba music, recorded by Hugh Tracey, no acknowledgement).

¹⁴ The line is divided into equal distances by the vertical lines crossing it, in Figure 4. These represent equally spaced moments in time, and remove the burden of durational significance from the sound symbol.

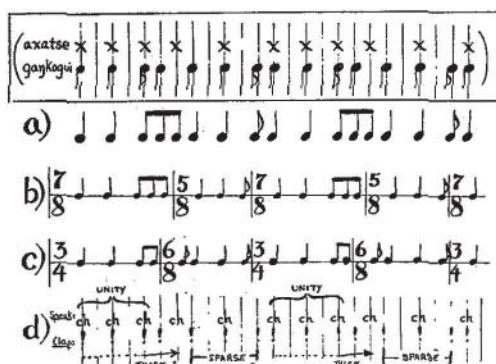


FIG. 4

Figure 4 is an attempt to comprehend the combined rhythms of these two instruments. According to what Anyako drummers say, and according to our own observations and drumming experience, the various patterns of *takada* music are synchronized with each other by being played in strict relationship to *gankogui*. As the harmonies of a medieval motet result from the relationship of the decorative parts to a melodic *cantus firmus*, so it would seem that the intricate polyrhythms of *Anlo* ensemble drumming are the result of varied relationships between each drum and the rhythmic *cantus firmus* of *gankogui*. When a drummer has occasion to play over some rhythms by himself, he will try to have someone accompany him on *gankogui*, and if no one is available, he will carry the stroke of the bell in his head, often sounding it aloud to himself. That is to say, it is an essential part of every rhythmic line; so much so that, properly speaking, we do not have "rhythmic lines" but "rhythmic duets" as the simplest constituent parts of the ensemble.

The traditional Western way to show the total rhythm of various parts is to construct a one-line resultant such as the three labelled (a), (b) and (c) in Figure 4. These three are not at all satisfactory. The notation insists that there is in this music a grouping by stress accent, but Westerners and Africans are not in close enough communication yet to allow anyone to tell in Western terms just what the rôle of stress is in drumming ensembles. It would seem to be something less than an organizing principle, since the organization of *takada* music is clear without any reference to it. It is perhaps something used more to style a line than to tie it to the ensemble, the way Westerners use grace notes. Since we feel hesitant to assign African stress a Western value, we cannot employ Western notation.

A performance of the *axatse-gankogui* duet will reveal the presence of an ensemble fluctuation in two different qualities of the total motion. First there is an alternation between rhythmic unity and disparity, and second there is an effect of rushing together and pulling apart. In line (d) of Figure 4 we have indicated the area of rhythmic unity above the music, and placed the words "thick" and "sparse" below the line to show rushing together and pulling apart. Speech and claps have been indicated for the two instrumental parts so you may try the duet out for yourself. These rhythmic effects are probably fundamental to the organization of the music.

The third constituent of the ground is the sound of *kaganu*, the small, narrow barrel drum. It is beaten with one or two sticks in a single rhythm throughout. In Figure 5

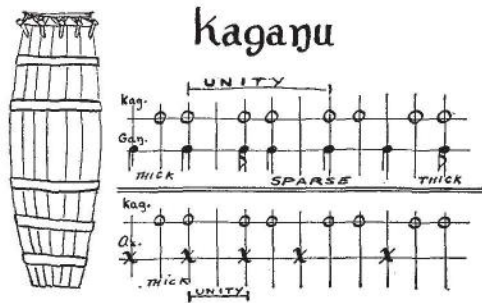


FIG. 5

we have shown the sounds as a series of open circles, which represent in our drum tablature a stick stroke that is free to bounce away from its contact point. The duet of *kaganu* ("Kag") with *gankogui* ("Gan") is shown above that with *axatse* ("Ax"). In both duets the fluctuations we have described can be felt.

If the Anyako musician is first of all a participant in the total rhythmic complex, and only by extraction the performer of an individual line, then we must certainly include dance movement in the ground. There is much individual variation in these movements, but basically there are four steps to the cycle evenly spaced apart in time, and for each step there is an even alternation of contracted shoulder blades with contracted stomach¹⁵. Figure 6 attempts to show these movements in relation to the instrumental ground

basic takada dance

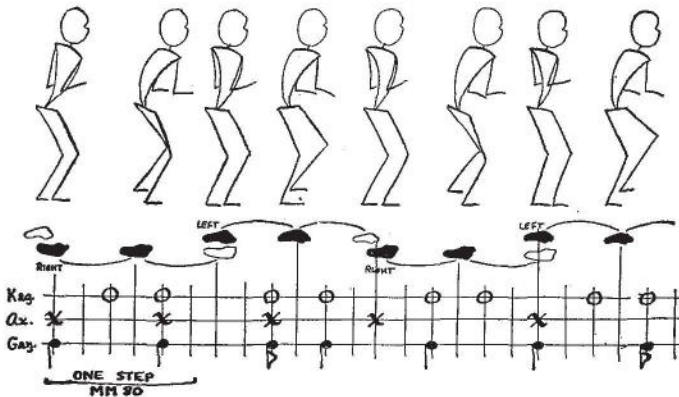


FIG. 6

already described. The footprint shows where the step comes in the music. It is empty where there is contact with the ground but no body weight, and filled in where it carries the body. A musical tie has been used to connect symbols representing a foot that does not move. The angle of the neck and head remains constant, and the flexing torso stays at one height above the ground unless the intensity of the movement changes

¹⁵ Dancing is individual, or in pairs, trios, quartets, etc. The group forms in a straight row, the dancers close but not touching. It is a brief exercise initiated by invitation and terminated with a special body pattern while the music rolls on. Men and women dance with each other but more frequently with themselves.

(relaxed dancing is more upright; greater vigour is accompanied by more of a crouch).

The Westerner looking for a main beat in this rhythm will see that the steps turn the cycle into 4:4 time (four dotted quarters, of course, to fit with the *gakugui* values). One cannot assume, however, that the other patterns are heard and performed with this as a basis. Considerable first-hand observation of performers does not deny it is so, but — and for Westerners approaching a non-Western culture this is very important — it does not confirm it, either. The bodily movements of the instrumentalists are entirely varied, and what they play betrays in the use of louds and softs nothing but shapes completely self-sufficient. We are not yet in a position to prove the existence of syncopation. We will show later on the direct relationship of drum pattern to ground cycle, and how the one divides the other up into equal portions, but we cannot point to a main beat.

What we have called the “ground”, then, is a rhythmic complex of high-voiced instruments and dance movements organised into a rather short repeating cycle, in which we can hear or see no justification for implying with Western notes, bars or time signatures, that the constituent elements derive their musical existence from anything less than the total effect of their combination. If this seems difficult to accept, the reason lies in part with the fact that it is beyond the scope of Western notation. Perhaps if we had, instead of a black-on-white two-dimensional script, a band of multicoloured, multi-shaped beadwork, we would then be able to think of music such as this in terms of the overall look and feel of the strip, and we would develop a descriptive system to match, in which there was no longer a need for the concept of regular meter, and no longer the assumption that the basis of the music is revealed when the whole is broken down into its parts.

CHORUS DRUMS AND LEAD DRUMS

The two middle-sized barrel drums, *sogo* and *kidi*, form the instrumental chorus in *takada*. They play together in rhythmic unison, responding to the lead drums behind them, in *atsimevu*. The leaders introduce a pattern, and the chorus responds with a complementary figure. Once the chorus is established in its new statement, the leaders are free to create variations within the frame of the pattern they have introduced. Thus there is created a general structure much like that of the seventeenth century keyboard canzona: a series of sections set apart from one another by their rhythmic character. The length and variety of each section and its position in the composition are completely controlled by the *atsimevu*, which are in this sense “master drums”¹⁶.

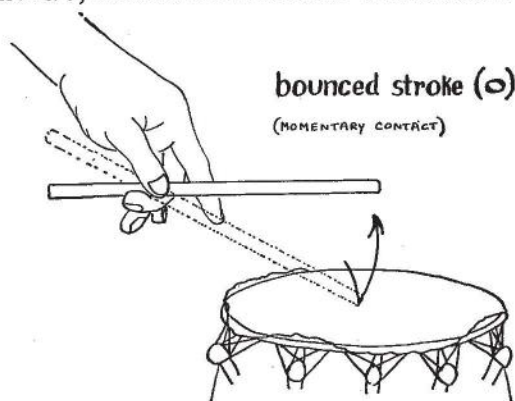


FIG. 7

¹⁶ And thus the term “master drummer” is not an hereditary or appointive title, nor a sort of honorary degree awarded for life, but simply the name for a role in the drum ensemble.

Sogo and kidi are played with sticks, atsimevu with one stick and one hand¹⁷. We have already introduced the symbol for a bounced stick stroke. The opposite is a "stopped" stick stroke in which the stick remains in tight contact with the playing

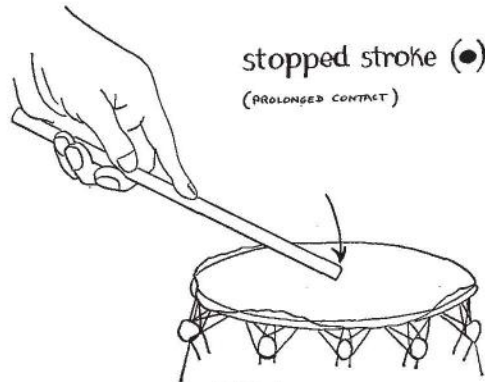


FIG. 8

surface after the blow has been delivered. For this we fill in the circle to show, much in the manner of Labanotation, that weight is being applied (see Figures 7 and 8).

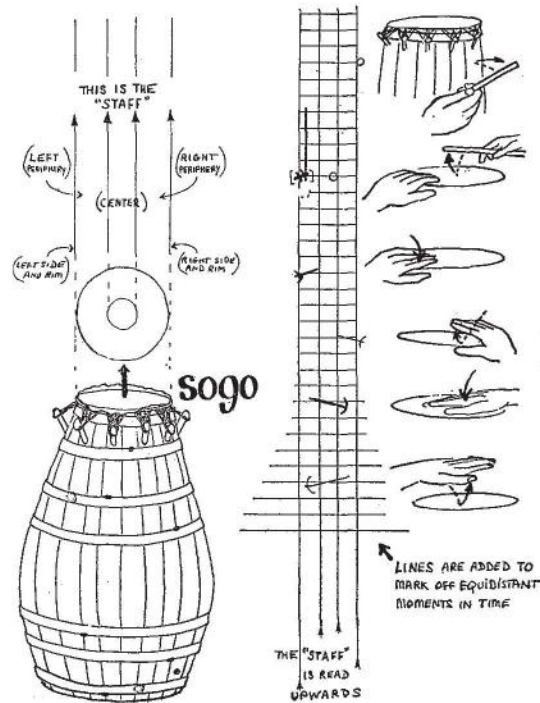


FIG. 9

¹⁷ In dance drumming other than the one under discussion, the appropriate use of hands and sticks may well be different.

All stick shots in *takada* drumming are played at the centre of the head, or on the hard surfaces of the rim and sides. Hand shots use both the centre and the peripheral "doughnut" of the flexible head¹⁸. Since the tone quality of a stroke is directly related to where it is placed, among other things, the drum notation developed in the summer of 1968 by Moses Serwadda and Hewitt Pantaleoni¹⁹ is a tablature. The principle, as illustrated in Figure 9, is simply to extend the surface and sides of the drum in time. On this staff symbols can be placed to show what is being used to make the shot. The hand symbols shown in the right half of Figure 9 are derived from the shape of the hand, as shown in Figure 10. Bounced symbols are light, stopped symbols are heavy. Muting is shown as a stopped position bracketed to indicate it is not sounded. It can be extended in time by a heavy line.

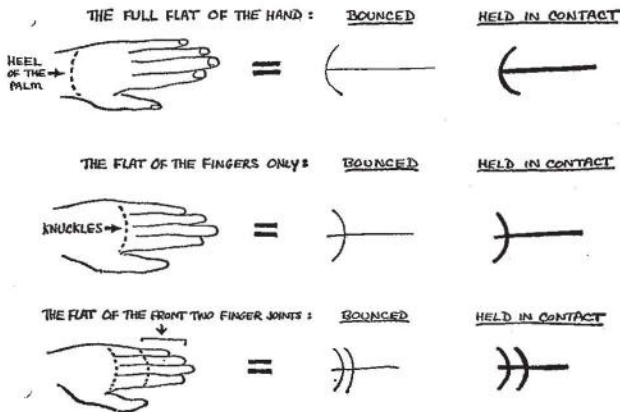


FIG. 10

Takada music for lead and chorus drums is indicated in the study score that concludes this paper. A comparison of the *atsimevu* staff ("Ats.") with the one for *sogo* and *kidi* ("S-K") shows that the bounced stick shots of the chorus usually fall in the spaces left by the lead drums, and this is what creates the call-and-response effect. Furthermore, the particular chorus parts we have included are mostly nothing more than variations of one trochaic figure (which we might represent as two eighth-notes separated by two sixteenth-notes), while the leaders have a great deal more variety. Finally, we should point out that the visually convenient arrangement of this score into braces of two complete cycles each does not mean that the music moves in waves that 'begin' at the beginning of a cycle. See, for example, the *atsimevu* part at cycles 8 and 9, 28 and 29, and from the end of cycle 41 on. We shall return to these drum patterns later on.

TAKADA DANCE DRUMMING

An afternoon or evening of *takada* music begins with *afā* drumming and singing, followed by vigorous dancing accompanied by the full ensemble, during which more songs are sung. Then comes an "interlude" movement, with leisurely singing of club songs to the light accompaniment of bells. The vigorous dancing that comes next also starts with a song — for example the one transcribed in Figure 11:

¹⁸ An acoustical study of these barrel drums has not been made.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*

Wowoē menyō ne dulagba	If not for them the town would be ruined,
Wowoē menyō	If not for them;
Wowoē menyō ne dulagba	If not for them the town would be ruined,
Wowoē menyō	If not for them.
E Nutsoko kple Gbedemā	Yes, Nutsoko and Gbedemā, ²⁰
Wowoē menyō	If not for them,
E Nutsoko kple Gbedemā	Yes, Nutsoko and Gbedemā,
Wowoē menyō ne dulagba!	If not for them the town would be ruined.

[In free rhythm]

WJ-WOE ME-NYŌ NE DU-LA-GBA, WJ-WOE ME-NYŌ! WJ-WOE
 ME-NYŌ NE DU-LA-GBA, WJ-WOE ME-NYŌ! E NU-TSO-KO
 KPLE GBE-DE-MĀ, WJ-WOE ME-NYŌ! E NU-TSO-KO KPLE
 GBE-DE-MĀ, WJ-WOE ME-NYŌ NE DU-LA-GBA! WJ-
 -WOE ME-NYŌ. NE DU-LA-GBA, WJ-WOE ME-NYŌ!
 E NU-TSO-KO KPLE GBE-DE-MĀ, WJ-WOE ME-NYŌ!
 E NU-TSO-KO KPLE GBE-DE-MĀ, WJ-WOE ME-NYŌ NE
 DU-LA-GBA!

[♩ = MM120]

Del signo

FIG. 11

The song leader first sings the text in a rhythmically free version of the melody, emphasizing the phrases with a wave of his wand. He is "lining out" the full text for the chorus of singers, in case any of them may have forgotten some of it and also in order to fulfil the formal requirements of the presentation of a song. This last interpretation is indicated by the fact that sometimes the lining out of a text will be followed by the singing of a quite different text²¹. If the text we have given above is the one with which the dancing is to begin, the song leader will turn to the instrumentalists when he reaches the last line, and set the rhythm for them by singing in strict time the final word,

²⁰ Two greatly respected elders of Anyako and the first men whose level of education during their time was equivalent to university level today. They are both still alive.

²¹ This happens in the "interlude" movement, for which there are usually three song leaders. A different leader will start the singing from the one who started the lining out.

The ground section picks up the rhythm at the instant it is given, and the chorus comes in at the third line of text.

The transition from rhythmically free solo to song with dance drumming is shown at the beginning of the study score. There you will find the staff notation set on its side to fit with the drum tablature, which begins at the point where the song leader establishes rhythm and tempo. The beginning of each cycle of the ground is numbered to the right of the *kaganu* part, on an extension of a heavy time line drawn right through the instrumental score. To the left of this part are the dance steps, rattle and double bell patterns. For visual simplicity the *gankogui* strokes are noted as bounced stick shots rather than with Western note shapes.

After cycle 3 the singing has been omitted from our score, since it is our purpose to focus on the drumming. What happens vocally is that the opening song is repeated many times, and then a song leader lines out a new song.

We have already indicated that the total ground complex may be more important than any one part of it, and so we have not dropped it out when the deeper drums enter in cycle 5, but have included all of it throughout our score. Nevertheless, *gankogui* is the instrument to which drummers insist all the other instruments must pay attention, and so we have extended the beats of the bell into the staves of the drums by means of heavier time lines, so that every drum pattern can also be seen as a duet. One sample variation of the dance step is shown in cycles 6 and 7, and another one in cycles 10 and 11, as an indication of the fact that great variety exists in this part. The ground section is scored as one choir, the lead-and-response group as the other.

We have not attempted the description of a performance but a prescription for one. A movement of vigorous *takada* dance drumming can last a good forty-five minutes, while it would take a little over two minutes to perform what we have shown. We have used typical patterns and variations from the repertoire to show how the musical processes work, but there has been no attempt to have every possible pattern and variation represented, nor to space out with extended pauses the activity of the lead drummers as is done in actual practice (one such pause can be seen in cycles 32 and 33).

The remainder of this paper has been written with reference to this score, and takes up three points of general importance to a study of *Anlo* drumming: the melody of drum rhythms, the divisive principle of the patterns, and the individual freedom of the players.

DRUM MELODY

Eve drums play melodies and harmonies. Their harmonies are the faint ringing overtones that wax and wane with the alternation of bounced and stopped strokes of the sticks on the chorus drums, especially when the centre area of the head is used consistently. It will be seen from the study score that *sogo* and *kidi* are the source for this kind of harmony in *takada*.

Drum melodies are like those of the speaking voice: intonations clearly recognised though difficult to define precisely. As with language, the sounds of the drum strokes have rounded dynamic and pitch; that is, the volume starts changing as soon as the vibration is initiated, and the "note" has a sliding beginning and end. The correct phonetic character of a drum pattern is at least as important to Anyako drummers as its timing. They use syllables to describe it. In our study score we have placed these to the right of the staff to which they apply, alongside the stroke they describe. *Evegbe* is a tonal language with three main pitch levels. We have added a back-sloping accent above low syllables, a front sloping accent above high syllables, and no accent at all to syllables spoken in a middle range. The interval between high and low levels is around a fifth or minor sixth, that between middle and low levels around a fourth.

There is a consistent relationship between syllables and drum strokes. The full flat

of the hand bounced off the centre of the drum head produces the lowest apparent sound. It is always represented by "Gà", as at the beginning of cycle 10 and later in the *atsimevu* part. The highest drum sound but one is the stopped stroke of the front part of the fingers against the peripheral area of the drum head. This is represented by "Gí" (the "g" is hard) as at the end of cycle 23 in the *atsimevu* part.

Strokes pitched between "Gà" and "Gí" receive syllables in a middle range, and there is some evidence that the quality of the vowel is important. For instance the *sogo-kidi* staff at cycle 16 carries the sequence "Te Ge De S, Te Ge De S", but these are the syllables for *sogo* only. *Kidi* speaks "with a smaller voice": "Ti Gi Di S, Ti Gi Di S"²² — because in fact it is smaller and of higher pitch than *sogo*. Voiceless syllables ("K", "S", "Ts") are always the representatives of stopped strokes, as one can see in the *sogo-kidi* part at cycle 8 and in the *atsimevu* part at the end of cycle 35.

The correlation between vowel quality and the sound of a stroke is not always this strong. The very highest sound of the *atsimevu* comes from bouncing a stick off the centre of the drum head while damping it firmly at the periphery with the fingers of the other hand. The syllable describing this is "Tó", as in the middle of cycle 16, but as you can see in the middle of cycle 17, the same syllable is also used for the much lower sound of a stick bounced off the centre of the head without damping. For another example, voiceless syllables always represent stopped strokes, but — as in cycle 20 of the *sogo-kidi* part — stopped strokes are not always represented by voiceless syllables.

Nevertheless, drum strokes do suggest specific vowels, and when the timing of a pattern follows the long and short values of these vowels in a sentence as well as their pitch levels, language results. For example, part of the dance to *takada* music may involve bending the torso toward the ground. A lazy dancer is apt not to bend very much. When the lead drummer notices this he might comment, "Those who do not bend down are hunchbacks", which in *Anlo-Evegbe* is, "Amesi ke me bóbòwò dzime kpékpí". With the negating suffix "-wo" elided smoothly into the preceding vowel in normal speech, this sentence can be played on *atsimevu* as "Ga Ze Gí Ke (Re) Be Gà Gà Ke Re (S) Tó Tó", as we have shown at cycle 38.

A final example of the connection between spoken syllables and the performance sounds of the instruments can be found in the names of some of them. *Kidi* is thought to say "Ki Di", as in its opening pattern at cycle 5, and *kaganu* plays throughout two sounds thought of as "Ka Gan". Even *axatse* is a name thought to describe the sound of the rattle.

THE DIVISIVE PRINCIPLE

Drum rhythms in *takada* have a direct relationship to the ground cycle length and its subdivisions. The patterns may start at any point in this cycle²³, but their lengths are always simple multiples or divisions of it. In cycles 5, 6 and 7 the two bounced strokes of the *sogo-kidi* pattern create a repeating figure just half the length of the ground. The more complicated response to the lead pattern "Ke Re Be" beginning in cycle 25 is the same, a figure just half a cycle long. There is a full-cycle pattern in the chorus drums at cycles 23 and 24, and a pattern of two cycles that begins in the middle of cycle 28. The response to the *atsimevu* pattern "Gí Nya", which begins in cycle 40, is short enough to fit exactly three times within one *gankogui* pattern.

This is a remarkable simplicity. If a pattern is longer than the cycle of the ground, it will be just exactly two, three, four, five or six times as long. If it is shorter, it will exactly fill out one cycle when repeated the necessary number of times. There is a variation technique not included in our study score which involves taking a fragment

²² Several members of the *Ladzekpo* family have said this, or the equivalent.

²³ "Gí Nya" (cycle 39) starts on the last bell stroke; "Gà Gà Ke Re S" (cycle 35) starts between the fourth and fifth bell strokes, etc., etc. If stress is decorative rather than organizational, then the concept of an "up-beat" prior to the "true" beginning is out of place. We avoid it, by simply taking each pattern as it comes, considering it to have its true point of beginning in its first stroke.

of a pattern and repeating it end to end, and here again the lengths are worked out so that the fragment returns to its original relationship with the ground bass after just one cycle. Completely absent is an effect much favoured in South India's classical drumming, in which the length of a pattern is out of phase with the length of the cycle, so that several repetitions of them both are necessary before they return to their original relationship²⁴.

Anlo patterns coincide directly and continuously with the cycle. In fact there is in every one of them at least one point of precise unity with a specific stroke of the bell pattern, and this point of coincidence is never interfered with when variations are introduced. For example, the *atsimevu* pattern "Gà Gà Ke Re S" (cycle 35) never loses the coincidence of "Ke" with the sixth stroke of the bell, even in cycle 38.

All of this suggests that *Anlo* patterns result from a process of subdividing a larger span. Detailed examination of the *atsimevu* part of our study score tends to confirm this. The ten strokes of cycle 30, for example, are neither evenly spaced throughout nor irregular, they simply subdivide the span exactly, the first half into four equal parts, the second half into six. Turn to cycle 24 and you will find eight strokes unevenly distributed; the first five of these create equal sixths out of the first half, while the remaining three strokes fit into a division of the second half into fourths. Whether this is actually the meaning of their distribution or not is beside the point. We simply want to show that such unevenness can be readily understood as the result of a process of division.

The alternative to dividing a large span is the feeling of adding a small unit to itself. On this additive basis the eight strokes on *atsimevu* in cycle 24 have the spacing 4, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 3 and 6. In cycle 30 the *atsimevu* spacing is 3, 3, 3, 3, 2, 2, 4 and 1. Now, the tempo for *takada* is shown at cycle 1 and again at cycle 4 alongside the *atsimevu* staff. It is MM. 120 for the longer bell strokes (which is to say, two per second). There are four of those small units of time mentioned above to every one of the longer bell strokes. This means that this small unit of time goes by at the rate of eight per second, or MM. 460. It is hard to imagine that *Anlo* rhythms result from such lightning addition.

To consider some additional evidence that *Anlo* rhythm is divisive, let us digress for a moment in order to consider the *mrdangam* drumming of south India. The player of this instrument uses a great many established patterns, and he does so additively. In the first place, his patterns exist as a certain number of counts in length, independently of the rhythmic cycle into which they might be fitted. They are known by their totals, by the sequence of timbres they contain, by the syllables used to verbalize them; they are not known by the cycle to which they belong, because they do not belong to any one in particular. A pattern which existed only as the subdivision or multiple of a particular cycle would be known by that cycle and would not appear in any other cycle.

In the second place, the Indian drummer will double, half, triple and quadruple the speed of a single pattern according to the total number of original counts he wishes to fill. For example, a span of ten counts can be filled by two playings of a five-count pattern, or by three playings of the same pattern if two of them are done at double speed. A drum pattern developed and fixed as the filling-in of a certain specific cycle is not likely to receive this treatment.

Finally, it is characteristic of *mrdangam* drumming that it creates counterpoint between the count of the cycle and that of the pattern. The rate of counting is a single rule by which both abide, but the totals will be different and therefore the repetitions will fall against each other in a changing way. A pattern tied to the divisions of the cycle cannot be used for this effect.

In each *Anlo* dance we find that the patterns belong to that dance, and borrowings are rare. We find that the pattern is never doubled or halved in speed. And we find, as

²⁴ A south Indian pattern seven counts long, for example, will appear in a cycle eleven of the same counts long, and it will take six repetitions of the cycle for the pattern to return.

we have mentioned before, that the length of a pattern is never out of phase with that of the cycle. In short, the drumming of which *takada* is an example has none of the characteristics shown by the additive patterns of *mrdangam* music²⁵, which suggests once again that *Anlo* rhythm is divisive.

INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

Free improvisation does not exist in the dance drumming of Anyako. The *gankogui* part must be rigidly precise. *Axatse* usually has more than one possible pattern, but no license to play anything else; and although the sound of the instrument with its loose net of beads or pieces of bamboo is less than crisp, it must be struck precisely. *Kaganu* on the other hand, has been noted in our study score as subdividing the dance steps into triplets, but in practice players are tolerated who noticeably lengthen the first stroke of each pair. In the dance there is great individuality which even extends to the footwork, but of course dancing does not create sound.

As the pitch of an instrument is lower the variety of its play is greater, though always rhythmically precise. *Sogo* and *kidi* have different patterns with which to respond, and these may be decorated or varied slightly from time to time. Only with *atsimevu* do we arrive at a *takada* part in which choice plays a major rôle. The sequence of the various established patterns, the pauses between them (only one is shown in our study score, at cycles 32 and 33), and especially their variation and transformation one into another, are all matters in which the superior lead drummer distinguishes himself from the average by virtue of his imagination.

His decisions are not just musical. He has an audience, consisting of players and dancers as well as of spectators, and he creates for them as well as for himself. He is a master of ceremonies in a way, whose responsibility is that everyone have a good time. He will invite honoured guests to dance; he will drum compliments and comments on his instrument, and use it to call someone up to shake his hand, he times the length of the movements, sets the tempo of the dance drumming and keeps his musicians up to the mark, reminding them of patterns if they forget. In dances in which, unlike *takada*, the patterns of the lead drum determine the choreography, this musician controls *every* aspect of the performance. In *takada*, the success of the occasion rests very largely in his hands.

To illustrate this point and conclude our brief discussion, we call your attention to how the lead drummer ends the dance movement. On the last stroke of the bell in cycle 39 the pattern "Gí Nya" begins, which is the only one in our study score to divide the ground into thirds. It makes a stunning effect in performance, and is used only to conclude the movement or to open it. When it makes its appearance, the ensemble alerts itself for the ending, for there can be no turning back. Usually not many variations are introduced ("À Zè" in cycle 41 is omitted in cycle 40). The ending itself is just one and one-half cycles long, and begins when the lead drummer changes "A Ze Gí Nya" into "À Zè Gí Te Te Ge De Gí Te Te" (this happens in our score in the middle of cycle 42). The entire ensemble knows that from this point on there will be just three more statements of the iamb "Gí Nya", and the movement thus comes to an end in a completely controlled manner.

²⁵ It is interesting to note that some of the drills for learning to play this instrument represent a training away from divisive rhythm. For example, there is a four-stroke pattern played first one stroke after the other, then two of each stroke, one stroke after the other, then three of each stroke, one stroke after the other, and so on. The successive versions of the pattern maintain a uniform stroke speed and thus become longer and longer. The divisive approach would be to retain the time span of the original pattern and speed up the strokes of the successive versions.

Song Leader [in free rhythm] [strictly: ♩ - MM 120]

.... E NU-TSJK-KAE GAEDEMÄ, WJ-WOEME-NYÖ NE DU-LA-GBA! WJ - WOEME - NYÖ NE

BEGGINNING OF THE STUDY SCORE FOR TAKADA DRUMMING

①

DU-LA-GBA, WJ - WOEME - NYÖ, WJ - WOEME - NYÖ

② ③

MM 120

TSTAGIDE

RESPONSE

OKS S-K Gj. Dk. DANCE Kag.

④ ⑤

VARIATION

VARIATION

Dts. S-k Gb. Dk. Kag.
DANCE

6 7 8

GAGAZAGIDE

RESPONSE

Dts. S-k Gb. Dk. Kag.
DANCE

10 11

TRANSITION

Ots
S-K
Gy
Ax.
DANCE
Kag.

RESPONSE

⑧

VARIATION

Ots
S-K
Gy
Ax.
DANCE
Kag.

VARIATION

VARIATION

⑬

TRANSITION

RESPONSE

Qds S-K GJ Dr. KAG. DANCE

16 17

KEREGE

RESPONSE

VARIATION

VARIATION

Qds S-K GJ Dr. KAG. DANCE

20 21

VARIATION

KEREBE

RESPONSE

Ots. S-K Gb Dks. Kag.

DANCE

34 35

T3T3TAGITAGI

RESPONSE

Ots. S-K Gb Dks. Kag.

DANCE

36 38

(BEGINNING)

Dns
S-K
G.D.
Dx
Kog.

30 31

TRANSITION

GAGAKERES

RESPONSE

Dns
S-K
G.D.
Dx
Kog.

34 35

SINWA

VARIATION VARIATION

Dis. S-K G D DANCE key

39

END

Dis. S-K G D DANCE key

43

* * * * *

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