DRUMMING AMONG THE AKAN AND ANLO EWE OF GHANA: AN INTRODUCTION

by

WILLIE ANKU

Introduction

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

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

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

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

Elements that distinguish one ethnic tradition from another might be determined in relation to the following:

- Instrumentation of ensemble
- Construction of instrument
- Modes of drumming
- Mnemonics
- Context of performance
- Structural organization.

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

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

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

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

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

Instrumentation of Ensembles

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

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

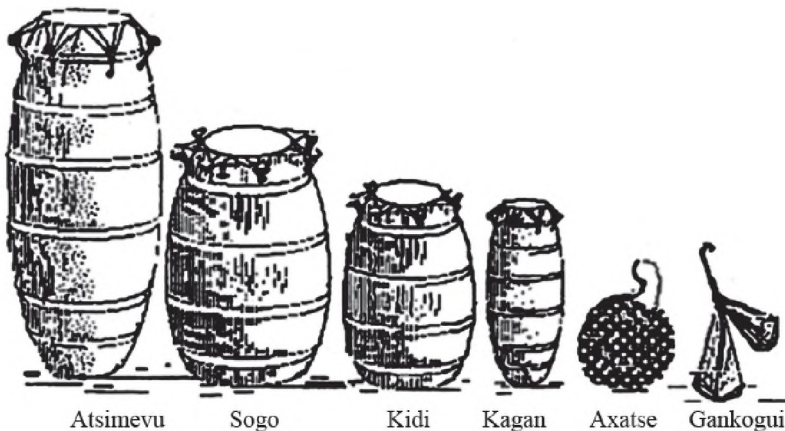Atsimevu   Sogo   Kidi   Kagan   Axatse   Gankogui

Figure 1. Ewe instruments

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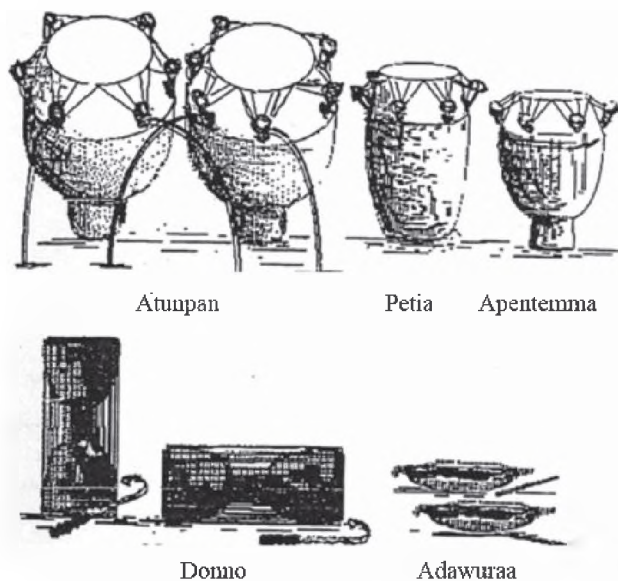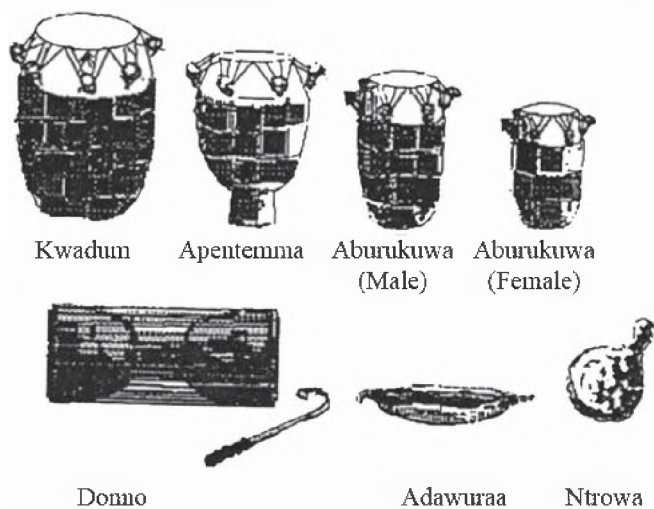
Figure 2. *Adowa* instruments

Figure 3. Kete instruments

Construction of Instruments

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

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

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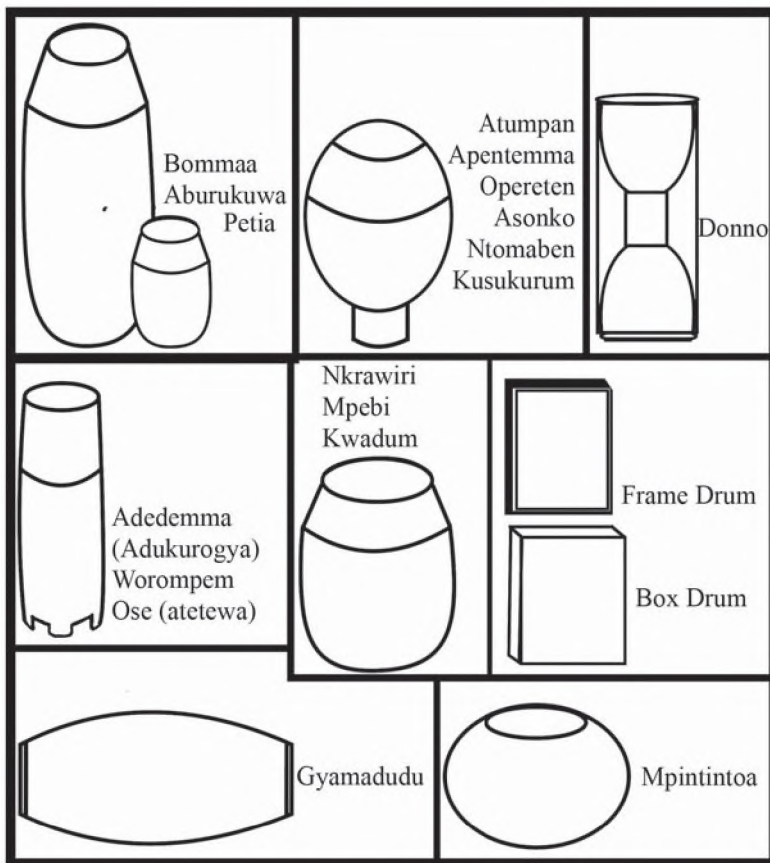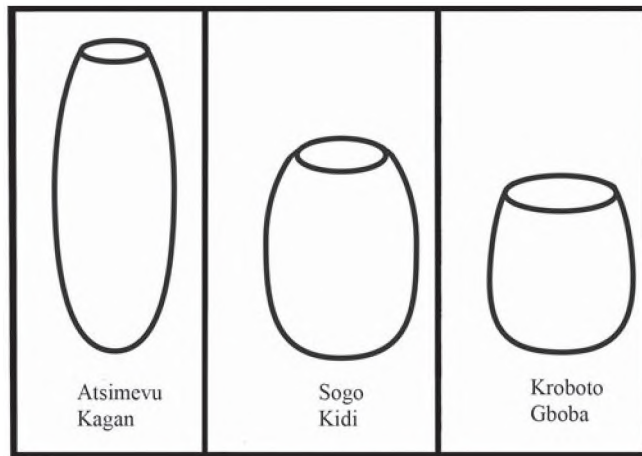

Figure 4. Some Akan drum shapes

Figure 5. Some Anlo Ewe drum shapes

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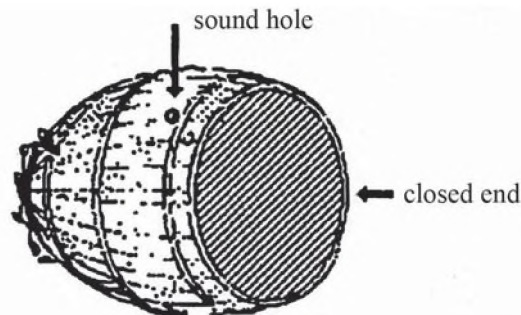

Figure 6. Closed drum

Akan drums are carved and hollowed out directly from a chunk of a heavy log. Usually they are made from a cedar tree known as *tweneboa kodua*. The shape and size of each drum shell has an acoustical implication for the timbre, resonance and intensity of the sound produced.

Drum heads are made from different types of hide, of which goat, cow, duiker or antelope are the most commonly used. The Anlo traditionally use the hide of a fox (*avugbe*) found in the coastal lagoon areas of their settlement. Heavy Akan royal drums – such as the *atumpan* and *from* or *bommaa* – are sometimes covered with expensive elephant-ear hide.

The Akan and Ewe have nearly identical methods of making and lacing drum heads. The following illustration shows a step-by-step process of lacing drumheads in both traditions:
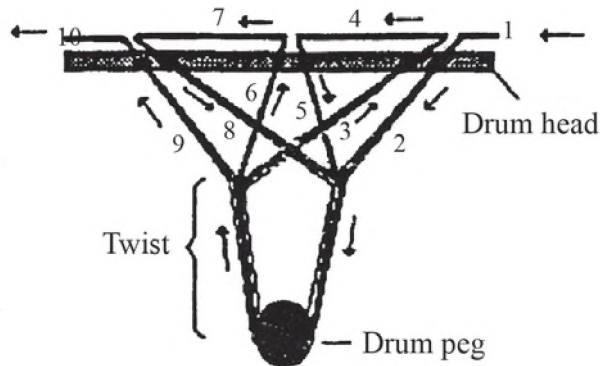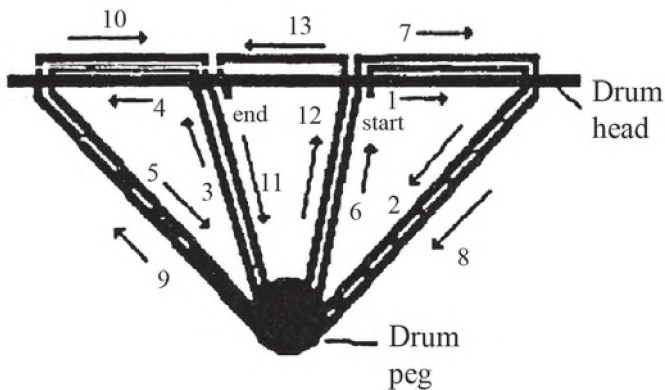
Figure 7. Lacing procedure of the Anlo Ewe drum-heads

Figure 8. Lacing procedure of the Akan drum-heads

Drum pegs and drumsticks are also made from the branches of specific trees, such as the Akan *ofemma* tree. Drum-pegs need to be strong to ensure that they can withstand the tension from lacing and tuning the drum heads. The difference between Akan and Anlo Ewe drum-pegs is in their neck design.
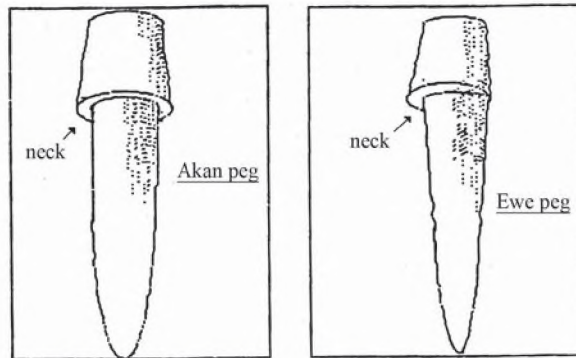
Figure 9. Drum pegs

To remove the pegs, the Akan have a technique of hooking the neck of each peg with the flat end of the *dawuro* bell, as it is wedged against the rim of the drum head. Hitting the other end of the bell in a pivot action removes the pegs one at a time with ease. The Anlo wedge a drumstick between the peg and the drum-shell and hit the top of the stick to remove the peg instantly. To tune the drum, the Akan would gently hammer the pegs one by one with the back of the *dawuro* bell to tighten the drum head and thereby raise the pitch. Lowering the pitch slightly requires hammering the drum head with the heel of the palm. These procedures are similar in both traditions. Anlo stick drumming employs the use of straight sticks. The Akan on the other hand use a combination of curved and straight sticks on appropriate drums.

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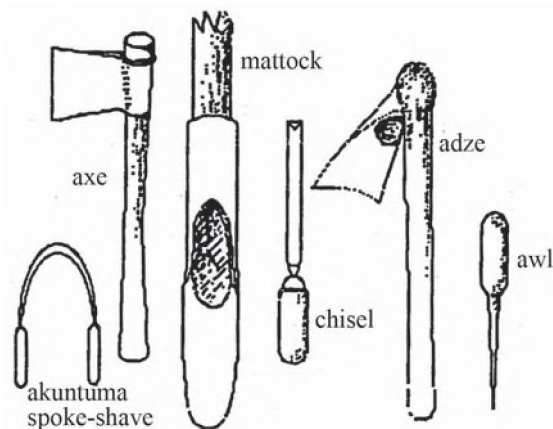

Figure 10. Tools for drum-making

Playing Techniques

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(b) Two-hand combination technique:

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

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

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

---

[1]   Also see Pantaleoni 1972c; Locke 1981, 1987; Kwami 1992, etc.

(c) Two-stick combination:
- Bounced strokes at the centre of drum head – *te-ge-de*.
- Strokes with a finger stop after it (producing a flam effect) – *zep*.
- A muted effect produced with the hand after a stick stroke – *to*.
- Simultaneous "fist" and shell strokes. The fist stroke at the centre of the drum head with one hand while the other stick plays on the shell simultaneously – *dza* or *ja*.

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

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

Appropriate sticking procedures are observed between the left and right hand movements in playing *atumpan* rhythms. Normally, the lower-pitched drum is positioned on the left-hand side with the other on the right. Where the rhythms alternate between low and high, the left and right sticks are confined to their natural domain (left hand on left drum and right hand on right drum).
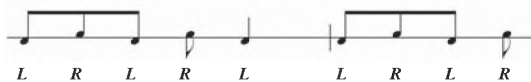
Both hands are alternated on the same drum when there are fast, repeated strokes.
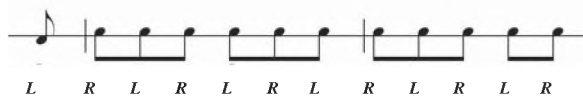
The right hand sometimes begins a passage on the left drum when there is an even number of repeated strokes, leading to a movement to the high pitched drum.

A flam is played on the lower-pitched drum, followed by a gentle mute on the high-pitched drum. A stopped stroke is usually quite loud in contrast with a mute, which is best described as a soft stopping of the drum-head.

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

Mnemonics and Scats

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

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

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

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

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

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

For instance:

H = Hand (Slap)
S = Stick (tone)
P = Cupped pain (bass)
St = Stopped stroke

gi - te   ga - ze - gi   te - ge - de   ga - ze   to

Analysis of Performance Context

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

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

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

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

Analysis of Social context

The situations in which these drumming types are performed include activities of a recreational nature and others that are performed on special occasions, such as celebrations involving individuals, institutions, associations and whole communities. They may also include worship situations and performances associated with communal work activities, such as tilling the field or building a new home (Nketia 1975).

Apart from drumming performed mainly for purposes of recreation, the occasions and events to which these performances are linked follow well-defined procedures. The application of drumming to such events may vary from one situation to another and for each ethnic society. Puberty ceremonies of the Akan, for instance, may involve drumming while those of some communities of the Ewe may be associated with the singing of particular songs associated with that occasion.

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

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

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

Rhythm Perception and Organization

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

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

This African *ostinato* concept holds sway wherever derivatives of African music are found. For instance in Blues music of North America we find a repeated cycle of the

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

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

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

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

Structural Organization of Ensembles

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

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

ADOWA (FUNERAL MUSIC OF THE AKAN)

Adowa is primarily a funeral dance – a dance performed to comfort, strengthen and lend support in times of bereavement and sorrow. Even though *adowa* is originally linked with funeral occasions, it is now commonly performed in many other contexts. There are *adowa* groups in various Akan communities. These are organized groups within the community, usually people with a common outlook on life. Membership is usually restricted to adults due to the deep content of *adowa* song-text and the contexts

of performance. *Adowa* is basically a dance accompanied by drumming and singing. Leadership of the performers is made up of people in that community who are well versed in *adowa* drumming song leadership and dance. The chorus is made up of response singers and dancers constituting the bulk of the membership.

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

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

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

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

Figure 12. Instruments of the *Adowa* ensemble
Front, left to right: Two slit bells (*Dawuro* [*adawuraa*]); a number of rattles (*Ntrowa*); two hourglass drums (*Donno*). Back, left to right: One stick drum (*Petia*); a pair of talking drums (*Atumpan*); one hand drum (*Apentemma*).

These instruments are assigned prescribed basic rhythms. Each rhythm establishes a specific relationship around a common timing referent – the regulative beat (indicated by a down arrow in the following illustration). The regulative beat is one of the four equidistant beats in each cycle and defines a common referent for all the instruments of the drum ensemble as well as the dance and accompanying songs.

Composite *ostinato* set rhythms and their relationships:

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

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

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

The examples show the bell pattern referents (regulative beat indicated by arrows) followed by the master drum relationship for each of the seven themes.

Theme A: *Tɔme kume menie, tɔme kume adampa.*

    Literally meaning, "I am at your mercy" or "I am at your disposal".

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

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

Theme C: *Yɛkeka no kwa.*

    Literally meaning "What we are saying does not hold substance".

    Yɛkeka no kwa is merely a title. There is no text application to the rhythm per se but the rhythmic theme is known as such among the community of drummers.

Theme D: *Asɔkɔre Mampong menie*.

Literally meaning, "*Asɔkɔre Mampong* (a name of a town), here I come".

A s kɔre Manpong   me___ ni e

Theme E: *Ɔtwe bedi premu*.

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

Ɔ twe be di pre mu   Ɔ twe be di pre mu

Theme F: *Obi nkɔtɔ mmorɔsa yennom, yɛnhunu so*.

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

O bi nkɔ tɔ   mmorɔsa yen_num,   yɛn__hu   nu so

Theme G: *Monnyae nsupa nkɔ nom po, Asante kɔtɔkɔ*.

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

Mongyae nsu pa nkɔnum po_____A san te kɔ to   kɔ

A performance segment would include a number of these themes, each providing a framework on which limited variations are ordered.

Kete (court music of the Akan)

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

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

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

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

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

Traditionally, *kete* music consists of interludes of flute ensemble and singing to accompaniment of the drum ensemble. The music is performed at a variety of "state" occasions. These include state funerals, state festivals such as *Odwira* and *Adae*, and during state durbars, as well as during the inaugurations of chiefs.

Figure 13. Instruments of the *Kete* ensemble
Front, left to right: One slit bell (*Kete-Dawuro*); a number of rattles (*Ntrowa*); one hourglass drum (*Donno*). Back, left to right: Stick drum (*Aburukwa*); one hand drum (*apentemma*); a master drum (*Kwadum*); stick drum (*Petia*).

KETE-ADABANKA RHYTHMIC PATTERNS

Composite *ostinato* rhythms and their relationships to the bell regulative beat:

Lead drum stock rhythms and their orientations to the bell time-span:

Gahu (Social Music of the Anlo-Ewe)

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

Mie nya kpɔ na, gahu viwo mie nya kpɔ na	You are looking colorful, dancers of *gahu*
Dzokoto ga le wo si wo do na	You wear very fashionable clothes
Afɔpka kpe de nu	With shoes to match
Ṇya de dzɔ le Gɛ dua me loo	Wonderful new things are happening in the city
Mie nya kpɔ na, gahuviwo mie nya kpɔ na.	You are looking colorful, dancers of *gahu*

Anlo lyrics are generally satirical. Sometimes they are formed around personalities or some happenings in the society. They are therefore "watch dogs" as they comment on social misconduct and deter wrongdoing and also praise good deeds in the community. Although *gahu* seems to be more popular with the youth, it is actually for the entire cross-section of Anlo society, and may be performed during social functions such as celebrations of individual events, political occasions to welcome dignitaries or other situations of recreational content.

Figure 14. Instruments of the *Gahu* ensemble
Front, right to left: a. Rhythmic foundation: *Gankogui* (Double bells); *Axats* (Rattles)
Back, Right to left: *Kagan* (Small drum played with two sticks); b. Support or response: *Kidi* (Medium sized drum played with two sticks); *Sogo* (Larger drum played with two sticks) c. Lead drum: *Atsimevu* (Large and tall drum; combines sticks and hands).

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

Gahu support rhythms:

Agbadza (Funeral Music of the Anlo-Ewe)

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

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

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

Agbadza dance is distinctively concentrated on the movement of the torso and arms with the feet stepping and shuffling around the main beats of the music.
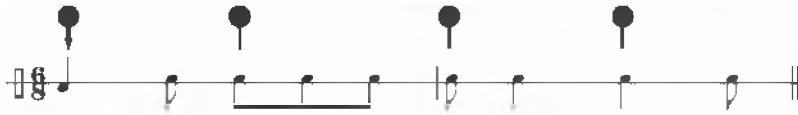
The participants form a dancing ring with the drummers seated on benches on one side of the circle. The dancers take short turns either in pairs or in small groups. The dancers move forwards and backwards in linear formation from where the drummers are seated. Each turn of the dance ends with a stylized closure movement on the regulative beat (marked with the arrow above).

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

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

Agbadza support rhythms:

Conclusion

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

References

Adu Boahen, Albert

    1967   *Africa under Colonial Domination*, New Haven: Yale University Press

Akpabot, Samuel

    1971   "Standard Drum Patterns in Nigeria", *African Music* 5(1)

Agawu, Kofi

    1995   *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective*, Cambridge

    2003   *Representing African Music*, New York and London: Routledge

Anku, Willie

    1992   *Structural Set Analysis of African Music*, vol. 1, Adowa, Legon, Ghana: Soundstage Production

    1993   *Structural Set Analysis of African Music*, vol. 2, Bawa, Legon, Ghana: Soundstage Production

    1995   "Towards a Cross-cultural Theory of Rhythm in African Drumming", in Kimberlin and Euba (eds) *Intercultural Music*, Vol. 1 Bayreuth, Germany: Bayreuth University

1997 ''Principles of Rhythm Integration in African Drumming'', *Black Music Research Journal*, 17(2)

2000 "Circles and Time", *Music Theory Online 6*, www.smt.ucsb.edu/mto/issues/mto.00.6.1.anku.html

2004 "Musical Transcription and Virtual-Scape: Reconstructing Collective Memory", *IASA Journal* 23(2004):38–56

Amoaku, Komla W.

1975 Symbolism in Traditional Institutions and Music of the Ewe of Ghana, Ph.D dissertation, University of Pittsburgh

Arom, Simha

1976 "The Use of Play-Back Techniques in the Study of Oral Polyphonies", *Ethnomusicology*, 3

Bascom, William

1969 *Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*, New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston

Ekwueme, Laz

1975 "Structural Levels of Rhythm and Form in African Music", *African Music*, 5(4)

Erickson, Robert

1975 *Timbre and Time: Sound Structure in Music*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press

Ellingson, Ter

1992 Transcription in Helen Myers (ed.) *Ethnomusicology: An Introduction*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company

Gbeho, Philip

1951a "Beat of the Master Drum", *West African Review*, 22

1951b "African Drums are More than Tom-toms", *West African Review*, 22

1951c "African Music Deserves Generous Recognition", *West African Review* 22

Greene, Doris

1983 Purcussion Notation, *Dance Notation Journal*, 1(1;3):7–49

Jairazbhoy, Nazir

1977 "The 'Objective' and Subjective View in Music Transcription", *Ethnomusicology*, 21(2)

Josephs, Jess J.

1967 *The Physics of Musical Sound*, Princeton: Van Nostrand

Jones, A.M.

    1949   "African Music", *African Affairs*, 48

    1954   "African Rhythm", *Africa*, 24

    1959   *Studies in African Music*, vol. 2, London: Oxford University Press

Kauffman, Robert

    1980   "African Rhythm: A Reassessment", *Ethnomusicology*, 8

King, Anthony

    1961   "Employments of the 'Standard Pattern' in Yoruba Music", *African Music*, 2(3)

Koetting, James

    1970   "Analysis and Notation of West African Drum Ensemble Music", *Selected Reports*, (3)

Kubik Gerhard

    1972   "Oral Notation of Some West and Central African Time-line Patterns", *Review of Ethnology* 3(22):169–176

    1994   *Theory of African Music*, vol. 1, Wilhelmshaven, Germay: Florian Noetzel Verlag

Kwami, Robert

    1992b   *Sketches and Notes on Agbadza: An Introduction to African Drum Music from Ghana*, Swansea Department of Education

    1998   Towards a Comprehensive Catalogue of Ewe Drum Mnemonics, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 1:27–38

Locke, David and Godwin Kwasi Agbeli

    1980   "A Study of the Drum Language in Adzogbo", *African Music*, 6(1)

Locke, David

    1982   "Principles of Off-beat Timing and Cross-rhythm in Southern Ewe Dance Drumming", *Ethnomusicology*, 26(2)

    1987   *Drum Gahu: A Systematic Method for an African Percussion Piece*, Tempe, AZ: White Cliff's Media Company

Nketia, J.H. Kwabena

    1954   "The Role of the Drummer in Akan Society", *African Music*, 1(1)

    1963   *Drumming in Akan Communities of Ghana*, London: University of Ghana and Thomas Nelson and Sons

    1974   *The Music of Africa*, New York: Norton

1985   Integrating Objectivity and Experience, in Ethnomusicological Studies, *Worlds of Music*, 27(3):3–22

Pantaleoni, Hewitt

1972a   The Rhythm of Atsia Dance Drumming Among the Anlo (Ewe) of Anyako, Ph.D dissertation, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut

1972b   "Three Principles of Timing in Anlo Dance Drumming", *African Music* 5(2)

1972c   "Towards Understanding the Play of Atsimevu in Atsia", *African Music* 5(2)

1972d   "Toward Understanding the Play of Sogo in Atsia", *Ethnomusicology*, 16(1)

Pressing, Jeff

1983a   "Cognitive Isomorphisms between Pitch and Rhythm in World Music", *Studies in Music*, 17

1983b   "Rhythm Design in Support Drums of Agbadza", *Africa Music*, 6(3)

Rahn, Jay

1987   "Asymmetrical Ostinatos in Sub-Saharan Music: Time, Pitch, and Cycles Reconsidered", In *Theory Only*, 9:71–89

Rahn, John

1980   *Basic Atonal Theory*, New York: Schirmar Books

Reck, David

1992   "India/South India", in Jeff Todd Titon (ed.) *Worlds of Music*, New York: Schirmer Books, pp 231

Seeger, Charles

1974   *Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology*, Los Angeles: Institute of Ethnomusicology and University of California

Toussaint, Godfried

2002   "A Mathematical Analysis of African Brazilian and Cuban *Clave* Rhythms", in the proceedings of BRIDGES: *Mathematical Connections in Art, Music and Science*, pages 157–168, Towson University, MD, July 27–29

Wilson, Olly

1974   "The Significance of the Relationship between Afro-American Music and West African Music", *The Black Perspective in Music*, 2(1)