

WANT THE HISTORY? LISTEN TO THE MUSIC!  
HISTORICAL EVIDENCE IN ANLO EWE MUSICAL PRACTICES:  
A CASE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL SONG TEXTS

by

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ABSTRACT  
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This study is in response to the need to examine aspects and functions of Ewe traditional music not commonly touched upon and contribute to historical documentation and education through the authority and memory embedded in songs. Ethnomusicological studies of Anlo Ewe traditional music have typically focused on drumming and rhythm. Some attention to song texts, for example would have challenged assertions that Africans have no history, based on assumptions that there are no historical documents. These notions prevailed primarily because the scholars' definitions of historical evidence were limited to written documents. Nevertheless, other researchers have asserted that the organization of every traditional society is based on attitudes that incorporate its myths, legends, history, and arts. In literate societies, these attitudes are mostly preserved in written literature while the non-literate ones do so orally and thereby regard their oral tradition as the basis or roots of their attitudes.

In this thesis, I assert that Anlo Ewe, like most African societies, used and relied extensively on music as a powerful tool in aid of memory, means of documentation and repository of historical events. Based on the new social historical theory and approach—that tries to reconstruct the past from the records of ordinary lives—I examine narratives of three Anlo historical epochs (Notsie narratives and migration, settlement and evolution of Anlo and Euro-

colonial encounter) in song texts and musical practices. I analyze both the explicit and implicit evidences in relation to available historical sources and discuss musical and linguistic variations and changes that occurred in time and space.

Chapter one is concerned with the definition and discussion of the scope and aim of the study, as well as the theoretical and methodological approaches. I then take an overview of the ethnography and musical tradition of Anlo Ewe with emphasis on the various musical taxonomies, historical periods and the role of the master musician in chapter two. Chapters Three and Four focus on historical evidence in *blemavuwo* and *ametsitsivuwo* respectively. Chapter five concludes the discussion with analysis of musical characteristics of the songs, linguistic considerations as well as some scholarly thoughts and implications.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

Ethnomusicological and anthropological studies of Anlo Ewe traditional music have typically focused on drumming and rhythm. This study is in response to the need for examining other aspects and functions of Anlo Ewe traditional music as it is practiced in Ewe society from perspectives other than those that have prevailed in the research field and are known to the world outside Anlo Ewe-land. Early ethnomusicological and anthropological studies are bountiful with the influence of stereotypes, generalizations, and cultural naiveté. Before the 1950s (and even after), many researchers were attracted to the study of “indigenous” people of far away lands, the jungle or “primitive cultures.” They were motivated by their curiosity of the exotic, yet unperturbed by how the very notion of “exoticism” and “primitivism” might influence their studies and “objective” research accounts. Today, we view many of these early studies as being dreadfully Euro-centric or Western minded as well as discriminatory. In contrast, this study presents some of the views of an insider—from an African perspective.

From the early subjective and limited descriptive and analytic reports by explorers, colonial masters, missionaries, traders<sup>1</sup> (and many who were attracted by the “exoticism” of this musical tradition) to the more professional and “authoritative” studies by scholars from many

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<sup>1</sup> See Ogilby’s comments as quoted by A. M. Jones (1949: 7)

fields,<sup>2</sup> Anlo Ewe music has been noted for its complex drumming, dance ensembles and rhythmic tradition.<sup>3</sup> Many of these reports mention (mostly in passing) the essence of songs and other aspects of this attractive musical tradition, their relationship to history and their role in the moral education of the people. However, one is yet to see a comprehensive work in this direction from an ethnomusicological point of view.

In most oral traditions, the creative and performing arts serve not only aesthetic, recreational and other communal functions and purposes, but also serve as a repository or archive where historical information of all sorts is “kept,” protected and transmitted from generation to generation. Based on the published literature, it would appear that researchers from Western societies may be unaware of the extent to which music plays this role, especially in non-Western societies and African societies in particular. As Dor reiterates, “songs narrating Ewe history continue to be performed irrespective of when they were composed, for the Ewe still celebrate their history, migration, victories in war, and powerful leaders through songs performed at festivals, installation of chiefs, and state burials.”<sup>4</sup> Lee Hye-ku, asserts that, “music is borrowed for the purpose of transmitting to later generations, a song extolling the achievements of a king.”<sup>5</sup> He asserts that a biography of a Buddhist priest is used as a musical text for popular music in order to keep it and also to spread Buddhism far and wide. He continued, “It was reported in 1431 that two pieces of music, Chach’ongjo and Wonhunggok, had not disappeared, due to their text.”<sup>6</sup> This dimension of the role of music is ingrained in most African societies and serves as an indispensable means of education. The extent to which Anlo Ewe traditional music and dance play this role cannot be overemphasized.

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<sup>2</sup> See Nettl (1956: 2) and Nketia (1971: 3-4)

<sup>3</sup> See Ekwueme (1976: 27-35)

<sup>4</sup> George Dor (2004:31)

<sup>5</sup> Hye-ku (1981: 194)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Before the recent past, historians, colonial masters, missionaries, anthropologists and other scholars (many of whom had no background or training in African historiography) asserted that Africans have no history—based on the incorrect assumption that there are no historical documents.<sup>7</sup> Sadly enough, some of these statements were made by scholars who are recognized authorities in history. The eminent professor of Modern History at Oxford University, Hugh Trevor-Roper, in the early 1960s declared “Perhaps, in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness...and darkness is not the subject of history.”<sup>8</sup> As recently as 1971, Graham C. Clark, in his book *World Prehistory: A New Outline*, wrote with “scientific” authority and confidence that much of Africa during the Late Pleistocene “remained a kind of cultural museum in which archaic traditions continued...without contributing to the main course of human progress.”<sup>9</sup> The narration, documentation and interpretation of Africa’s past has been a game of flawed scholarship, an intellectual exercise among Western scholars of their own assumptions and prejudices about the nature of events, time and history of the continent. The historian David William Cohen could not be any closer to a true presentation when he states that “the major issue in the reconstruction of the African past is...the question of how far voices exterior to Africa shape the presentation of Africa’s past and present.”<sup>10</sup>

I argue that notions such as the above prevailed primarily because the scholars’ definition of historical evidence was limited to written documents. Nevertheless, other scholars have asserted that the organization of every traditional society is “based on some sort of attitudes

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<sup>7</sup> See Wachsmann (1971: ix-x)

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Fage (1981: 31)

<sup>9</sup> Clark (1971: 181)

<sup>10</sup> Cohen (1985: 198)

which incorporate its myths, legends, history, and arts.”<sup>11</sup> In literate societies, these attitudes, events and day-to-day activities are mostly preserved in written literature (though oral transmission cannot be ruled out). On the other hand, the non-literate societies do so orally and thereby regard their oral tradition as the basis or root of their attitude. Jan Vansina points out that:

Oral traditions are historical sources of a special nature. Their special nature derives from the fact that they are unwritten sources couched in the form suitable for oral transmission and their preservation depends on the powers of memory of successive generations of human beings.<sup>12</sup>

It is true that the western art of writing did not develop among the Ewe until recently, but I do not think the essence and act of documentation eluded our forebears. They may not necessarily have done so in writing, but there is no disputing the fact that historical events have been documented. Evidence in musical instruments, the roles of performing artists and what they produce (songs, dances, drama and stories) testify to this assertion. Whether these were intentional acts on the part of the musicians to document these events for posterity or they were just expressing their feelings about the events of the time in their music is yet a good question that needs an answer.

I assert that Anlo Ewe, like most African societies, used and relied extensively on music as one of the powerful tools in aid of memory and means of documentation of historical and other educational events and values. I propose, therefore, that to a large extent, the Anlo Ewe used music not just as repository but also as a reliable form of historical documentation, cultural transmission and moral education. In this thesis, I examine historical evidence of this type of usage in the various Anlo Ewe musical practices and song texts, and identify and analyze both

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<sup>11</sup> Amoaku (1975: 1)

<sup>12</sup> Vansina (1965)

the explicit and implicit evidence in relation to available oral and written Anlo Ewe historical narratives and scholarly works.

Histories rotate around what may be the paramount, pre-eminent or superlative events, though they might not necessarily be the only outstanding historical events among the people. The need to establish an historical topic or subject for teaching and learning purposes ultimately demands some concentration on a limited scope of events. Such events often become securely established as part of the historical narratives. Many other important events are congested, or relegated to the background or even oblivion. It is important for the serious student or scholar of any historical topic to consider and regard such reference points with a substantial amount of skepticism. One must continually question what has determined the importance of a given event, why and how any notions regarding its significance are advanced and by whom. I believe history and music are as much political as scholarly. Many factors, ideologies and perceptions—from populism through religion to ethnic and racial differences and dynamics—exert tremendous influence on the interpretation of ideas and events as they pertain to the formation and promulgation of the historical narrative.

## 1.2. STATE OF RESEARCH

It is apparent that much of the scholarly work on the vast spectrum of Ewe music in general and Anlo Ewe music in particular has been concentrated on a few areas, most notably drumming and rhythm. Some scholars have noticed this. Ekwueme writes:

In fact, to the best of our knowledge, apart from the early studies made by Jones of Zambian musical rhythm, more studies seem to have been made of Ghanaian rhythm—in particular Ewe dance drum rhythms—than the rhythm of probably all other areas of Africa combined.<sup>13</sup>

As noted by G. W. K. Dor<sup>14</sup> “although the vocal genre of Ewe music constitutes an integral aspect of the tradition’s peculiarities, the vibrancy of Ewe drumming continues to entice most researchers to focus on rhythm, while pitch-related components of Ewe music have been relatively neglected.”<sup>15</sup> In fact, works such as Jones (1959), Fiagbedzi (1977), Locke (1992), and many others are important contributions. However, none of these researches have concentrated on the songs, song texts and tonal aspects of Ewe music. It is obvious that the volume of research works on drumming and rhythm is disproportionate to those conducted on other structural elements such as melody, multi-part organization, and form and structure. Song texts have largely been neglected and left unexamined or incompletely studied even though the lyrics of most Ewe songs have a lot to tell. The history of the Ewe, their cultural and moral values, lineage and many other aspects of their lives are embedded in song texts which are worthy of study.

In the field of music, scholarly works such as Fiagbedzi (1977, 1997), Avorgbedor (1987, 1992, 1994, 2001), Agawu (2001), Chernoff (1979), Ladzekpo and Pantaleoni (1971), Younge (1989, 1992) and Dor (2001, 2004) have mentioned to varying degrees some aspects of song

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<sup>13</sup> Ekwueme (1976: 27-35)

<sup>14</sup> See Dor (2001)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 3



texts as avenues of historical and moral education among the Ewe. While Fiagbedzi (1977, 1997) looks at the general overview of Anlo Ewe musical tradition with equal attention given to almost all aspects, Avorgbedor (1994, 2001) looks at *halo*<sup>16</sup> as literary production and its influence on social violence. Dor (2001, 2004) on the other hand explores the compositional processes of Ewe traditional vocal music and communal creativity in his Ph.D. dissertation and discusses the intricacies of song ownership among Anlo Ewe using *havolu*<sup>17</sup> as a case study in his article. In all these works, song text and its role has been looked at but only in passing. Other brief mention of Anlo music, song text, dance and history can be found in diploma, bachelor's and master's theses in music department libraries in Ghana. In view of this, I have limited my research area to songs and focused much attention on song texts and other musical activities—within the three Anlo musical categories and periods<sup>18</sup>—that make reference to the various major events and narratives of Ewe history.

My research encompasses Anlo Ewe history, as well as other literary and verbal art forms. As such, a review of the literature on these areas is helpful to my work. Among the authoritative scholarly works on the history of Ewe are Amenumey (1986), Crowther (1927), Herskovits (1958), Mamattah (1978), Manoukian (1952), Greene (1996, 2002) and Akyeampong (2001). All these works have focused on one or more aspects of the history with their biases and controversies about certain issues and historical narratives. In spite of these they have no doubt agreed on most of the vital events that form the bulk of my research focus. Perusal of scholarly works in the area of Ewe verbal arts is crucial to me, if my own work is to be comprehensive.

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<sup>16</sup> Insult songs.

<sup>17</sup> This is a session that involves total musical composition in which musicians with proven ability in traditional musical practice such as master composers, drummers, dancers and choreographers come together to either collaborate in composing a new song or piece; or listen to, critique, perfect and learn a new song from one of them for a dance group as the initial preparations for new release.

<sup>18</sup> See chapter 2 page 4.

Like dance, verbal arts such as drama, poetry and other forms are inextricably linked to music, especially song text and drum language. Works in this field that are of benefit to my research include Awoonor (1974), Anyidoho (1983), and Seshie (1973), among others.<sup>19</sup> In *Guardians of the Sacred Word: Ewe Poetry*, Kofi Awoonor (1974), one of Ghana's prolific writers devotes the entire monograph to the life and works of three eminent Anlo traditional musicians—Hesino<sup>20</sup> Akpalu, Dunyo and Ekpe. Though his research focuses on the poetic aspects of the works as well as other verbal creative skills of these composer-poets, it still contributes to music scholarship as well. Like Awoonor study, Anyidoho's *Oral Poetics and Traditions of Verbal Art in Africa* (1983) and Seshie's *Akpalu fe Hawo*, (1973) bring to light the contribution of oral poetry to other fields of endeavor among the Ewe and other African societies. These are works that delve into the history, structure and functions of Ewe traditional poetry, drama, and language. Though these monograph and articles are not directly dealing with music, they are interwoven with relevant materials that are crucial to my thesis. All the literature so far reviewed would contribute substantially to my research, which focuses on music and history and tries to establish the fact that song texts, drum language, dance movements and other Anlo Ewe musical practices are rich and reliable sources that researchers can turn to for historical evidence. Though none of my numerous predecessors have dealt directly with this area, I have no doubt that their works will serve not just as models but as rich research sources for my work.

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<sup>19</sup> These include Nukunya (1969), Dzobo (1973, 1974), Seshie (1973), Awoonor (1975), Dseagu (1975), Egblewogbe (1977, 1990), and Anyidoho (1982, 1997)

<sup>20</sup> Master Composer-Poet.

### 1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Any attempt at tracing the history of a people, especially cultures that have a long-standing oral tradition, has to look at as many areas and aspects of their lives as one could access. The social historian, E. Akyeampong, states that “ordinary people generally leave no trace in the historical record...so one of the things I’ve done is to find traces of ordinary people’s lives in other areas—in music, dance, art, fiction, and comic opera.”<sup>21</sup> Not only the history but also the philosophy, moral values, health science, ecological, environmental and educational policies, theories, and practices are well documented, preserved and transmitted through means other than in the form of written documents and artifacts—which are normally objects produced or shaped by human craft, especially a tool, weapon, or ornament of archaeological or historical interest. Music is one of these means by which the history of the Anlo Ewe is well documented. From the materials and processes (rituals, and other formalities) used in making the various musical instruments, the playing techniques, drum (rhythmic) patterns, symbols, marks or designs on the instruments, to the dance steps, and most obvious and crucial, the song text, one can trace the history of the Anlo Ewe.

What are the roles played by Anlo Ewe traditional music in general and its song texts in particular, in the preservation, documentation and transmission of the Anlo Ewe history? What does the world beyond the Anlo Ewe ethnic group know about their musical traditions in general and song texts in particular? What type of historical facts can one get from Anlo Ewe traditional music, song text, dance, and drum patterns? How authentic are those facts? How can one tell whether or not any one so-called “historical fact” has been modified, transformed and/or distorted or whether it has been repeated accurately over the years as the tradition is passed on

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<sup>21</sup> Emmanuel Akyeampong, in *Harvard Gazette Archives*: [www.news.harvard.edu](http://www.news.harvard.edu). Accessed 03/20/2004

from one generation to another? If transformations have occurred, what are they, and how have they affected the process of preservation, documentation and transmission of the history? Answers to these and other interesting questions are what I will attempt to provide in this thesis.

## **1.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.4.1. Theoretical Framework**

My research is guided by ethnomusicological methodologies and theories as well as relevant historical, anthropological, and sociolinguistic approaches and theories. In the 1950s the field of ethnomusicology began to take a closer look at issues of subjectivity. The field worker, researcher and scholar him/herself became the central figure in debates such as “insider-outsider” dichotomies. Many scholars in ethnomusicology and related disciplines started giving thought to the fact that meaningful analysis of the music of any people undoubtedly requires an appreciable understanding of both the culture of the people in which the music exists and what meaning the music might have to its traditional practitioners. Soon, studying music in context became the new standard for research—the order of the day. This became, and to a greater extent, was understood as a movement (if not a revolution) towards more acceptable objectivity—a move that continues to evolve in the field. My thesis is grounded in the confidence that history and scholarship are to some extent subjective. This notwithstanding, in a carefully balanced approach, a great measure of truth may indeed be uncovered. Whatever subjectivity may be present in the interpretation, analysis and presentation of data is in itself a means of gaining knowledge.

Since any significant study of music, dance, drama or history, cannot be separated from its socio-cultural context and the amount of values it denotes, my work is informed by a cultural

and historical approach that focuses on procedures that are used in history, anthropology as well as in music. My definition of culture in this context would lean towards that of Raymond Williams',<sup>22</sup> both as "a particular way of life whether of a people, a period or a group,"<sup>23</sup> that is, lived cultures or cultural practices, and as "the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity,"<sup>24</sup> that is, cultural text. As suggested by Merriam (1964), Blacking (1967) and other "anthromusicologists,"<sup>25</sup> music is social behavior and action that articulates other social values, ideologies and behavioral patterns. Works such as Keil (1979), and Feld (1982, 1984), provide evidence of aggregate relationships between music and other social domains in regard to style, practices, underlying dispositions, and worldview.

Another framework on which my thesis is based is the new approach to history that is being perpetuated in Africa in recent times. This type of social historical theory tries to reconstruct the past from the records of ordinary lives. Instead of tracing and narrating "official" histories from "above" or from "the powers that be"—European colonial masters' and missionaries' documents or from African annals or chronicles—this new African historical approach looks "below" at individual and collective thoughts of Africans to elicit and ascertain not only their past but its meaning. Scholars are not just beginning to recognize African societies' oral chronicles but have accepted the challenge "to bring together a multitude of small fragments of local knowledge, myths, epic narratives, and oral texts."<sup>26</sup> These theoretical standpoints would equip me to discuss the intellectual and aesthetic factors as well as the development and practices of the songs. Furthermore, they have allowed me to argue that Anlo

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<sup>22</sup> See Williams (1983)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 90

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Musicologists/Ethnomusicologists with a strong anthropological background and interest

<sup>26</sup> Grinker and Steiner (1997: xxv)

Ewe song texts, dance movements, musical instruments and practices are not just examples of culture but are a historical repository of the people.

#### **1.4.2. Archival Research and Oral History**

A review of the current state of research on Anlo Ewe traditional music with focus on songs as well as of the history is the starting point of my work for a comprehensive study. My research revealed the extent to which this area has been studied and gave me a clear sense of what needed to be done and how to approach it. Archival research, both in Ghana and in the United States, forms an important part of my research activities, especially examination of the written historical evidence. In addition to archival resources, I draw on my personal knowledge and memories of all the historical oral narratives that I have heard, seen, participated in and practiced as a native Anlo Ewe, a linguist and above all a practicing musician—born and bred in Anlo Ewe traditional culture. Nevertheless, I constantly cross checked many of the issues through telephone interviews and e-mail from some authorities and practitioners of the culture in Ghana as well as those here in the United States.

Over the past twelve years, in my capacity as music educator, choral and brass band director, research assistant and performer, I have amassed a huge collection of traditional songs in addition to the countless number that I have been singing from childhood and continue to use in my professional work. A good number of these field collections<sup>27</sup> serve as raw materials for my work. For the purpose of a complete ethnomusicological study, musical transcription and

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<sup>27</sup> In addition to the songs that I grew up singing in the traditional set up, I also collected some of the songs analyzed in this thesis during live performances (both in their natural/traditional contexts and also in organized/stage contexts). The collection process which involved audio and video field recordings as well as transcriptions and notation began in 1990 when I was a student at the Teacher Training College and is still on-going. Besides traditional community performances where participation is opened to every one (irrespective of sex and age), the songs were and are still performed by traditional dance-drumming clubs, amateur and professional groups in Ghana and Togo.

analysis is part of this project (though limited to a few selected songs from all that have been discussed as containing historical evidence). My “insider position”—as an Anlo Ewe musician—and “outsider approach” as a Western-trained musician did inform my balanced critical look at all evidence. My data analysis and writing is a synthesis of my ideas and all materials gathered.

### **1.5. CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP**

A work of this nature will constitute an important contribution not only to musicology but also history in Ghana and Africa as a whole. By engaging in an in-depth study of this nature, I hope to open yet another avenue and perspective to other scholars in music and other fields like history, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and education, and make them aware of the need for and possibility of looking at music and history from other angles. This would also bring to light the tremendous creative resources embodied in Anlo Ewe songs and help to throw more light on the history of the people. If indeed sources of historical evidence are not limited to written documents, then accurate and detailed accounts of historical activities and narrative should be welcomed as valuable historical documents. This work is crucial because of the scholarly dimension, and also because of the fact that Ewe is one of the major ethnic groups in Ghana, Togo and Benin. Eweland attracts both foreigners and indigenes who take interest in its people, religion, politics, philosophy, folklore, customs, law, language, occupations, social structure and many other things apart from the music, dance and history. I believe that the study of historical evidence in Anlo Ewe music will make a substantial contribution to the historical narratives of the people of southeastern Ghana—the Anlo Ewe.

## 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 2.1. GENERAL OVERVIEW: ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA

This thesis focuses on the historiography of the music and culture of Anlo Ewe Ghanaians of West Africa. Before the advent of colonization and the attendant compartmentalization of Africa into multi-ethnic modern nation-states in the nineteenth century, the Ewe of West Africa were one of the most powerful pre-colonial African states. Today, the Ewe-speaking people of West Africa inhabit the areas between the River Volta in modern Ghana and the River Mono on the western borders of the Ancient Kingdom of Benin (Dahomey).<sup>28</sup> The boundaries of the new African nations are those of the old British, French, German, Spanish and Portuguese colonies. They are essentially artificial in the sense that some of them do not correspond with any well-marked ethnic divisions. Due to this, the Ewe, like some other ethnic groups, have remained fragmented under the three main flags,<sup>29</sup> just as they were divided among the three colonial powers after the Berlin Conference of 1884 which partitioned Africa. A portion of Eweland went to Britain, another to Germany and a piece to France. After World War I, the German-occupied areas were given to Britain and France as mandated territories by the League of Nations. Those who were under British rule are now the Ghanaian Ewe, those under French rule are the Togolese, and Beninois (formally Dahomeyan) Ewe, respectively.<sup>30</sup> After the Second World War, the portion of Eweland that ‘went’ to the British by agreement under the so called

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<sup>28</sup> See Madeline Manouskian (1952: 9-13), Amoaku (1975: 86), and Nukunya (1997: 8)

<sup>29</sup> Ghanaian, Togolese and Beninois

<sup>30</sup> See Amoaku (1975: 94-96), Amenumey (1986: 20-23), and Akyeampong (2001: 1-6)



trusteeship system of the United Nations was administered as part of the then Gold Coast (now Ghana). The entry of Ewe into Ghana's historical framework was, therefore, recent. Amalgamation of the Ewe with the Gold Coast was heralded by a number of political controversies primarily due to the discretionary and dictatorial dismemberment of a homogeneous people with one language, customs and traditions. This necessitated a plebiscite that was recommended by a United Nations Mission led by Eduardo Espinoza, and was held on 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1956 prior to Ghana's Independence in 1957.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See Webster and Boahen (1970: 287-288), and Amoaku (1975: 94).



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Figure 1: Political Map of Africa

Wegbe, meaning ‘Ewe Language’ is the indigenous name for the language spoken by the Ewe people of West Africa. Wegbe expands across the central and southern parts of three West African countries including Benin (Dahomey), Togo and Ghana and into Badagry (Gbadagli) in the southwestern corner of Nigeria. According to linguists,<sup>33</sup> Wegbe belongs to the Kwa group of Sudanic languages that constitute a sub-family of the Niger-Congo language family of the Congo-Kordofanian language family of Africa.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Culled from: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/africa\\_pol97.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/africa_pol97.jpg) (accessed: 01/04/05)

<sup>33</sup> Westermann and Bryan (1952), Kropp Dakubu (1988), and Duthie (1996), and also Atakpa, (1997: 28-46)

<sup>34</sup> See Atakpa (1997: 28-46), Westermann and Bryan (1952), and Greenberg (1970)



Figure 2: Map of West Africa Showing the Location of Ewe in Ghana, Togo and Benin.

Though separated by geographical boundaries, political ideologies and rules, the Ewe continue to maintain their ancestral affinities through language, music, trade, religion, and cross national but intra-ethnic marriages. The most compelling cultural link among the Ewe is however, their awareness of a common ancestry.<sup>36</sup> Ghanaian Ewes occupy one of Ghana's ten administrative regions, called Volta, which lies in the southeastern part of the country and shares a common border with Togo to the east. The Ewe of Volta region can be divided into two main groups: Anlo (Southern Ewe) and Ewedome (Northern Ewe). *Wegbe* as a language has different dialects or variants. Anlo is one of the major dialects. The differences in the dialects are noticeable in tone, pitch, vocabulary and mode of expression. Despite these differences, the various Ghanaian Ewe dialects are mutually intelligible.<sup>37</sup> Anlo Eweland—the focus of my studies—occupies the southeastern corner of the modern republic.

<sup>35</sup> Culled from: <http://www.cnmat.berkeley.edu/~ladzekpo/maps.html> (modified to show the present location of Ewe speaking people in West Africa)

<sup>36</sup> See Amoaku (1975: 88), Greene (2002)

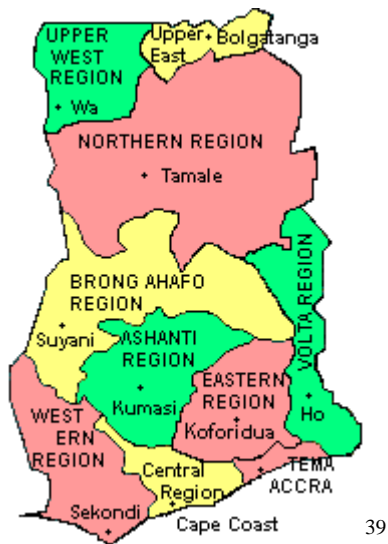
<sup>37</sup> See Agbodeka (1997)



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**Figure 3: The Location of Ghana**

<sup>38</sup> Culled from: <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/gh.htm>(accessed: 01/04/05)



**Figure 4: Regional Map of Ghana Showing the Volta Region**

Like that of most black African societies, the greater part of the documented history of the Ewe, especially those by the early explorers, colonial masters, missionaries, anthropologists, and Islamic ambassadors, was not reliable. The need to resort to other sources such as linguistic data, artistic, ethnological and archeological evidence to complement the oral traditions is overwhelming. Greater source of the historical evidence comes mostly from *xotutu/xotunyawo* ‘historical narratives’ which include legends, folktales, song texts, riddles, and poetry.<sup>40</sup> According to oral history, and some written documents by missionaries, and colonial masters as well as recent scholarly works by both indigenous and foreign historical scholars,<sup>41</sup> the Anlo Ewe people settled at their present home around the 15th century after a mysterious escape from Notsie.<sup>42</sup> Anlos initially settled along the vast stretches of white sandy beaches of the Atlantic

<sup>39</sup> Culled from: <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/geography/maps.php>(accessed: 01/04/05)

<sup>40</sup> See Younge (1992)

<sup>41</sup> Crowther (1927: 11-15), Manoukian (1952), Amenumey (1986), Mamattah (1978), Greene (1996, 2002) Akyeampong (2001)

<sup>42</sup> An ancestral federated home or region currently within the borders of the modern state of Togo. The escape and subsequent resettlement are commemorated in an annual festival known as *Hogbetsotso Za* in which music and

Ocean, from Aflao on the Ghana-Togo international border and due west to the eastern end of River Volta. Names assigned to some of the settlements reflect the various aspects of the life of Anlos. While some names depict the environment, others show their military and political powers and yet still others reflect their endurance. The early settlements include Anloga, which came from the expression “*Menlo*”, meaning ‘I have coiled’, a statement attributed to Torgbi Wenya, the last leader of the migrating team at the time of settlement.<sup>43</sup> Keta, which means ‘the head of the sand,’ Denu, ‘the beginning of palm trees’, Kedzi, ‘top of the sand’, etc. reflects the natural endowment and beauty of the landscape they were to call home: Dzodze,<sup>44</sup> which means ‘flew and landed’; Agbogbome, ‘in the spirit world’, etc reverberate the essence of spiritual power that Anlos are known to possess and display: Penyi/Peyi, which means ‘many years past’; Blamezado, ‘deceived till dusk’; Dzita/Dzido, ‘top of the heart/ ability to endure’,<sup>45</sup> etc, that echo the duration of the exodus and their ability to endure the hardships of migration.<sup>46</sup>

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dance activities that illustrate these historical events are performed, as shall be seen in some song texts examined in subsequent chapters; see also Fiagbedzi (1997: 168), and Nukunya (1997: 105-122)

<sup>43</sup> Oral tradition maintains that when the southern group of the Ewe migrants from Notsie reached what is presently known as “*Anloga*” their leader at the time who was quite old was too tired to continue the journey. Realizing his limited strength and energy, he proclaimed to his subjects “*Nye ya menlo; afi adeke yiyi mega le nunye o*” meaning, ‘I have coiled; I cannot proceed further.’ Since his people could not leave him there alone, they decided to settle there. This first settlement became known as “*Anloga*” meaning “Big Anlo” the present state capital, traditional center and seat of Anlo King, *Awomefia* and the people *Anloawo* ‘Anlos’

<sup>44</sup> The hometown and birth place of the author.

<sup>45</sup> See Akyeampong (2001: 6), and Nukunya (1997: 9)

<sup>46</sup> Most, if not all, Anlo-Ewe names (personal names, first, last, family, town/places etc) have meaning and are normally associated with an event, belief, lineage, spirit, power or proverb etc. In addition, all names have appellations in which the values and their deeper meanings are well spelled out and enshrined. All these are echoed in the song texts and drum patterns of the various traditional musics. See also Atakpa (1997: 177-194), and Anyidoho (1997: 123-152)





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Figure 5: Map of Modern Anlo Ewe State Showing the Locations of Some Major Towns

It is an undeniable fact that external forces have influenced Anlo Ewe culture, like those of other African societies. The first Europeans who arrived in the then Gold Coast brought, among other things, numerous Christian missions, mainly of Roman Catholic and Bremen (Presbyterian; which later became the Evangelical Presbyterian Church) in the towns and villages such as Keta, Peki, Amedzofe, Akpafu and many other places that culminated in the

<sup>47</sup> Culled from: [http://lightning.prohosting.com/~winkohom/Images/Southern\\_Volta\\_Region.jpg](http://lightning.prohosting.com/~winkohom/Images/Southern_Volta_Region.jpg); Doe Ladzekpo (Accessed: 04/01/05)

wide spread of Christianity.<sup>48</sup> The intrusion of these religious bodies, and of merchants, however, had both positive and negative effects on the indigenous music and culture. The formal educational, political and economical systems could be attributed to such interactions—the positive effects—but the negative repercussions, on the other hand, are traceable to slavery and to how the indigenous cultural and musical practices and traditional beliefs among others were undermined. This was evident in how the indigenes were forced under colonization to abandon their traditional practices in favor of European ones.<sup>49</sup> Amoaku testifies to this when he wrote:

The missionaries thought they were providing for the spiritual welfare of the African, but as they saw no virtue in the African's way of life, they embarked on the destruction of those things that were related to or connected to traditional beliefs; these include art-forms which were derogated as "pagan," drums and other musical instruments, and of course traditional music itself; the substitute provided by the mission schools entailed learning a foreign language as one's main language and becoming a confirmed and registered member of their religious institution, which require a complete breakaway from all traditional ceremonies and observances.<sup>50</sup>

This act fortunately did not have too many adverse effects on the practices of Ewe traditional music. The Ewe traditional musical culture stood firm against these intrusions because it formed an integral part of the general cultural heritage. Although certain parts of the culture seem to have been influenced by the encroachment, there are still authentic traditional musical resources especially the religious, and the political as well as old and even new social forms.

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<sup>48</sup> See Akyeampong (2001: 7), Agbodeka (1997: 6-7), and Greene (2002: 1)

<sup>49</sup> See Akyeampong (2001: 7), and Greene (2002: 23)

<sup>50</sup> Amoaku (1975: 39)



## 2.2. ANLO EWE MUSICAL TRADITION

Among the Ewe and throughout Ghana, music is everywhere. On any given day, while strolling through a village one may hear a mother singing a lullaby to a child, a man singing a work song as he sharpens his machete or cuts down a tree for firewood, a child singing an insult song against a cousin or a friend, or a relative singing a dirge for a lost loved one. You may hear children drumming while imitating their older siblings, or perhaps there is a funeral celebration in which communal musical performance will last far into the evening. Generally, the purpose of all these ‘performances’ is to serve the various ‘functions’— to put the child to sleep, lessen work fatigue, to insult, to mourn etc—as enumerated above. However, consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally, historical, moral and cultural education is informally in progress and the history, culture and traditions of the people are being preserved, propagated, disseminated, documented, transmitted and perpetuated by these acts. The extent to which music and its related practices permeate the entire life of the Ewe cannot be overemphasized. The musical life of an Anlo Ewe begins at infancy, when he/she learns to listen and move to music as he is carried on his mother’s back. While the mother sings, claps and dances, the child is perched on high in the midst of this musical performance, literally learning to sing, dance, and interpret music in his/her own way, even before learning to walk, but most of all virtually learning about her/his people, their history, tradition, culture, social, moral and aesthetic values.<sup>51</sup>

Among the Ewe, like many other black African societies, there is no one lexical item that stands for all that constitute “music.” There are, however, various terms that refer to different activities, all of which make up music. These include “*ha*” meaning ‘song’ and *dzi* meaning

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<sup>51</sup> See Flolu (1999: 29-43)

‘sing’ or ‘to give birth’ (to a song in this case) or; *hadzidzi*, meaning ‘singing’ or the ‘act of singing’ and for that matter making of vocal music in general. In instrumental music making, the Ewe have *fo* for ‘beat’ or ‘strike’ and *vu* for drum/membranophone hence *vufofu*, meaning ‘the act of drumming or playing a drum.’ In addition, *ku* means blow (air/wind) and *kpe* stands for any wind instrument hence *kpekuku*, meaning ‘the act of blowing or playing a wind instrument.’ These show that Ewes have both vocal and instrumental concepts of music.<sup>52</sup> Nissio Fiagbedzi specifies further other aspects of the Ewe conception of music. He identifies *hadzidzi*, *nyagbe* and *vugbe* as three categories of this concept.

*Hadzigbe* refers to the singing voice with particular emphasis on the quality of voice acceptable for singing. On the other hand *hagbe* literally means “sound of song” signifying, specifically, melody or pitch. Likewise, *nyagbe* (literally word-sound) may be defined as a speech utterance, expressing a complete thought, and may equally refer to the rise and fall of speech tone of Ewe.<sup>53</sup>

In this case, *nyagbe* guides the composer in his selection of text and melodic phrasing and also the listener in making meaning out of what the composer composes or sings in his song. It generally serves as the framework for shaping melody and meaning. Just as dance is barely separable from music, so is instrumental music in isolation not really prevalent among the Ewe. Vocal and instrumental music as one entity is used often to accompany dancing. Instrumental music is considered adjunct to vocal music in this capacity since it serves as an accompaniment. Ladzekpo and Pantaleoni indicate that “to Eweawo songs are the most outstanding features of a dancing club’s performance. By its songs a club’s individuality and quality are most established, and learning them is the first and foremost difficult thing a newly formed club must do.”<sup>54</sup>

Music among southern Ewe cuts across social, political, cultural and economic practices. There is music for rites of passage and other life cycle events, economics, political institutions,

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<sup>52</sup> See Fiagbedzi (1997: 154), Dor (2004: 26-51)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ladzekpo and Pantaleoni (1970: 7)

religion, recreation and many other socio-economic institutions. Ewe music has been classified in many ways. Notable among these are those based on function such as *modzakadevuwo* ‘leisure or boredom-killing types’, *subosubovuwo/trovuwo* ‘music and dance for religion’, *avavuwo/avadevuwo*, ‘music and dance for war’, and *fiavuwo* ‘music and dance for royalty and politics.’<sup>55</sup> *Modzakadevuwo* could be considered autonomous due to the fact that they are associated with any non-musical activity, physical object or other art forms in Ewe thinking. On the other hand, the classification of *trovuwo*, *avadevuwo*, *fiavuwo* is largely functionally based.

Besides the above taxonomy, the Ewe recognizes yet another form of classification which has a strong historical connotation. It identifies three categories as *blemavuwo/tsavuwo*, ‘ancient musical traditions’, *amegaxoxovuwo/ametsitsivuwo* ‘older generation musical types’ and *dekakpui/tugbedze/egbevuwo* ‘youth/modern musical traditions.’ Since it is difficult to assign exact dates to these boundaries, the general evolution of Ewe history serves as guidelines and gives the time frames of this classification. In view of this, *blema* refers to the pre-exodus period (before and during the Ewe migration to their present land). Some of its music and dance types include *yevevu*, *afavu*, *amesivu*, *atamga*, *husago/misego*, *agbomasikui*, and *adzogbo*.<sup>56</sup> *Amegaxoxo/ametsitsivuwo* expands over the period of settlement and the colonial times. Its musical genres include *avadevuwo/awavu* ‘war dance-music’ such as *atrikpui*, *akpoka*, *kpegisu*, and *atsiagbeko*; *fiavuwo* ‘royal, mystical, political music’ such as *amesivu*, *vuvo*, *makevonui*, and *agblovu/vuga*; *ahiavuiwo* ‘social and recreational dances’ such as *atsigo*, *akpalu*, *adzida*, *nyayito*, *woleke*, *agbadza*, *tudzi*, as well as some *subosubovuwo/trovuwo* ‘religious dances’ such as *koku*, and many others. The last category, *dekakpui/egbevuwo* refers to the period of Ghana’s

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<sup>55</sup> See Younge (1992: 5-7) and Fiagbedzi (1997: 159)

<sup>56</sup> Refer to chapter 5 for the meaning and further details on these and all other sub-genres.

independence and after. This includes genres such as *gota*, *gahu*, *kinka*, *bobo*, *adzro*, *bobobo*, *takada*, *lolonu* and some new forms of the older styles.<sup>57</sup>

The Ewe also classify songs in relation to or association with non-musical activities, objects and places. There are *dowohawo* ‘occupational (work) songs’ such as *agblehawo* ‘farm songs’, *futahawo/todzihawo* ‘coastal/sea/river/lagoon songs’, that make reference to the place where the action occurs; *adehawo* ‘hunting songs’, *asihawo* ‘marketing songs’ *vukuhawo* ‘boat rowing songs’ *kahehawo* ‘net dragging songs’, that make reference to the action or activities associated with the type of work being undertaken. There are also songs that are symbolically and or contextually named, defined or classified. These include *avihawo/kuhawo* ‘mourning/funeral songs’, *glihawo* ‘story songs’, *fefehawo* ‘play/game songs’ that define the context in which the songs are performed. There are song types that are associated or linked with certain unique objects. *Ziziha* ‘zizi song’, is linked with *zizi*, the redwood tree which is used in carving the chief’s linguist staff, symbolic of the office of royalty among the Ewe and many West African societies and it is also symbolic of Togbi Nyigbla, one of the revered gods of the Anlo Ewe.<sup>58</sup> *Ziziha* is used to announce the presence of chiefs, proclaim their power, sovereignty and to sing their praise.

Anlo songs are generally in simple binary or ternary forms. Call and response, solo/cantor and chorus, refrain, repetition and mixed sectional forms are other predominant features of the songs. Hemitonic and anhemitonic forms of pentatonic and hexatonic scales are the predominant tonal materials used in Anlo songs. Other scales such as tritonic, quadratonic, heptatonic and diatonic scales are used but rarely. Harmony, which is the result of performance roles, arises out of melodic processes. Hence it depends largely and is closely linked with the

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<sup>57</sup> See Fiagbedzi (1977: 158-160) and Younge (1992)

<sup>58</sup> See Fiagbedzi (1997)

scales and modal systems on which the melody is based.<sup>59</sup> Other polyphonic devices employed include overlapping, part crossing polarity, and coupling. Common harmonic intervals of Anlo songs include 4ths, 5ths, 2nds, 8ves and 7ths with sporadic 3rds and 6ths. Rhythmically, Anlo songs are not as complex as instrumental pieces.<sup>60</sup> Both strict and “relaxed”<sup>61</sup> rhythms are employed.<sup>62</sup>

Ewe songs in general usually have two meanings. The first meaning that a listener may get is the literal meaning which may not necessarily be the meaning or message the composer intends to put across. The second meaning which I refer to as the deeper meaning is the actual meaning of the song. This actual meaning is usually embedded in proverbs, metaphor, imagery, maxims and other poetic forms that the composers use in their song texts. I have therefore given both meanings in my discussion to help the reader understand what the musicians are saying.<sup>63</sup>

### **2.2.1. Musical Instruments**

Anlo Ewe is noted for its incredible and fascinating drumming and rhythmic complexities and is one of the ethnic groups that have some of the biggest drums and largest ensembles in Africa. Beside their usual musical functions, drum language as a means of historical narrative is elaborate in Anlo drumming. Subtle verbal expressions may be encoded in drum language. Almost everybody can understand this language at a basic level; often there will be other levels of meaning woven in which can be understood only by drumming initiates of a certain level of

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<sup>59</sup> See Dor (2001, 2004)

<sup>60</sup> See Younge (1992)

<sup>61</sup> For lack of appropriate terminology, I prefer to use ‘relaxed’ rhythm to “free” rhythm. This is because I do not think what is usually termed “free rhythm” is or can really be free. To a very large extent, the so called “free” rhythmic songs or pieces have definite durational, time span, framework and tempo within which they are rendered.

<sup>62</sup> See chapter 5 for more discussion on musical features of Anlo Ewe songs.

<sup>63</sup> Readers may also see chapter 5 for more explanation on song texts and meaning.

experience and/or those who hold significant positions that demand total knowledge of traditional and other customary practices.<sup>64</sup> This is the source of the concept of the "talking drum." Drum language may be used for reciting history and myths, for praising kings and patrons, for topical social commentary, and/or for long-distance communication.<sup>65</sup> Four Anlo drums<sup>66</sup> that may be mentioned in this instance include *vuga* (great/big drum, named after its size and role), *laklevu* (leopard drum, named after the leopard skin used as membrane to cover its head), *agblovu* (a drum probably named after its curved wooden beaters), and *atopani/atompani* (a pair of drums usually referred to as 'talking drum' due to their principal role among the Ewe and other ethnic groups in Ghana).

### **2.2.2. Azaguno and Hesino: The Musicians**

Also important in this discussion is *azaguno/hesino(heno)*, 'the traditional master musician (drummer/composer-singer)' who puts the instruments, the language and his poetic and musical skills into a neat combination that, in addition to entertaining, serves as a vehicle for traditional historical, social and moral education. The traditional musician also acts in extra-musical roles that vary from culture to culture within Africa. Among the Senufo he may be a healer and sorcerer. Among the Mandingo, there is a special caste of musicians who serve as historians, having memorized vast repertoires of songs and narratives commemorating past events and genealogies.<sup>67</sup> Among the Ewe in general, as well as some other African nations, there are styles

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<sup>64</sup> See Nketia (1958), Finnegan (1970: 499), Awoonor (1975: 89), Locke and Agbeli (1980: 32-51), Yankah (1995), Euba (1990), Anyidoho (1997: 123-152)

<sup>65</sup> See Nketia (1962, 1963a, 1963b), Finnegan (1970), Awoonor (1975), Locke and Agbeli (1980), Akin Euba (1990), Yankah (1982), and Anyidoho (1997)

<sup>66</sup>It should be noted that almost all Anlo drums may be used to send messages or for specific communication purposes but the above mentioned drums are principally designated for the purposes mentioned. See Fiagbedzi (1977, 1997: 155-158), where he discussed three of these drums.

<sup>67</sup> The Senufos are located in the northern part of Cote'd'Ivoire and the southern regions of Mali.

of drumming closely associated with chieftaincy, the king himself being the master drummer (among other drummers), for example, the Dagomba.<sup>68</sup> Each societal role, craft and occupational tradition, such as military duties (war, security), weaving, blacksmithing, farming, or hunting, has its music and its musicians who play before, during, and after every major activity. This music plays an important role in preparing for and regulating the performance of these activities.

Generally within the context and status of *azaguno and heno/hesino*, a very special role is played by the master musician, who must be not only a consummate artist, but also wise and roundly educated (according to the traditional historical, moral, and aesthetic standards to which the society subscribes) and capable of exercising his power of influence with great responsibility. He must be deeply experienced concerning human nature. He must develop and constantly exercise an extraordinary alertness and perceptiveness. There is a saying that a master drummer must have seven eyes, and that with these eyes he can see the skeleton inside people. Turkson reiterates these points and emphasizes the role of the cantor.

Like the drummer who is the custodian of society's history, the cantor is given the same treatment by his society. As a composer, he is able to create a song on the spur of the moment and teach it to members of his community. In fact, it is his compositional practices that are employed in the songs.<sup>69</sup>

These characteristic qualities of a musician and the role of music were held in high esteem until recently when modern influences from foreign cultures, mass media and other forces began gradually to de-emphasize them.

The short prelude above illustrates the breadth and depth of the fascinating and diverse traditional musical culture of the Ewe of Ghana. Over the centuries, however, the preservation and transmission of this elaborate musical practice, in all aspects, and the history of the people

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Mandingo: A member of any of various peoples inhabiting a large area of the upper Niger River valley of western Africa. Also refers to a group of closely related Mande languages including Bambara, Malinke, and Maninka, widely spoken in western Africa. They are also called Mandekan

<sup>68</sup> Dagomba of Northern Ghana

<sup>69</sup> See A. R. Turkson (1989: 77)

who make it has been mostly oral. Its study, documentation and scholarly works have been and are still a major concern.



### 3. HISTORICAL EVIDENCE IN BLEMAVUWO

#### 3.1. MUSIC, HISTORY AND RELIGION

My main aim in this chapter is to look at *blemavuwo* ‘ancient musical practices’ and their song texts and see what they say about the history of the Anlo Ewe. *Blemavuwo* as defined in chapter two include ancient musical genres, many of which are associated with religious and/or political practices and institutions. These include *yevewu*, *afavu*, *amesivu*, *atamga*, *husago/misego*, *agbomashikui*, *adzohu/adzogbo* and many others.

The Ewe have not always lived in their present home. According to oral tradition coupled with scholarly research works,<sup>70</sup> the Ewe of present-day Ghana migrated to their current location from Notsie. Their traditions recall a migration from the east – more precisely Ketu (presently located in the Republic of Benin). Ketu is also called Amedzofe “birth of mankind/source or origin of human beings” or Mawufe “home of God”. According to D. E. K. Amenumey,<sup>71</sup> Ketu was founded by the Ewe and Yoruba no later than the fourteenth century. Besides the forebears of the Ewe, the Yoruba and the ancestors of the Aja/Adza, Fon, and Ga-dangme dwelled there.<sup>72</sup>

Some historical accounts indicate that population increases, coupled with conflicts, led the Ewe

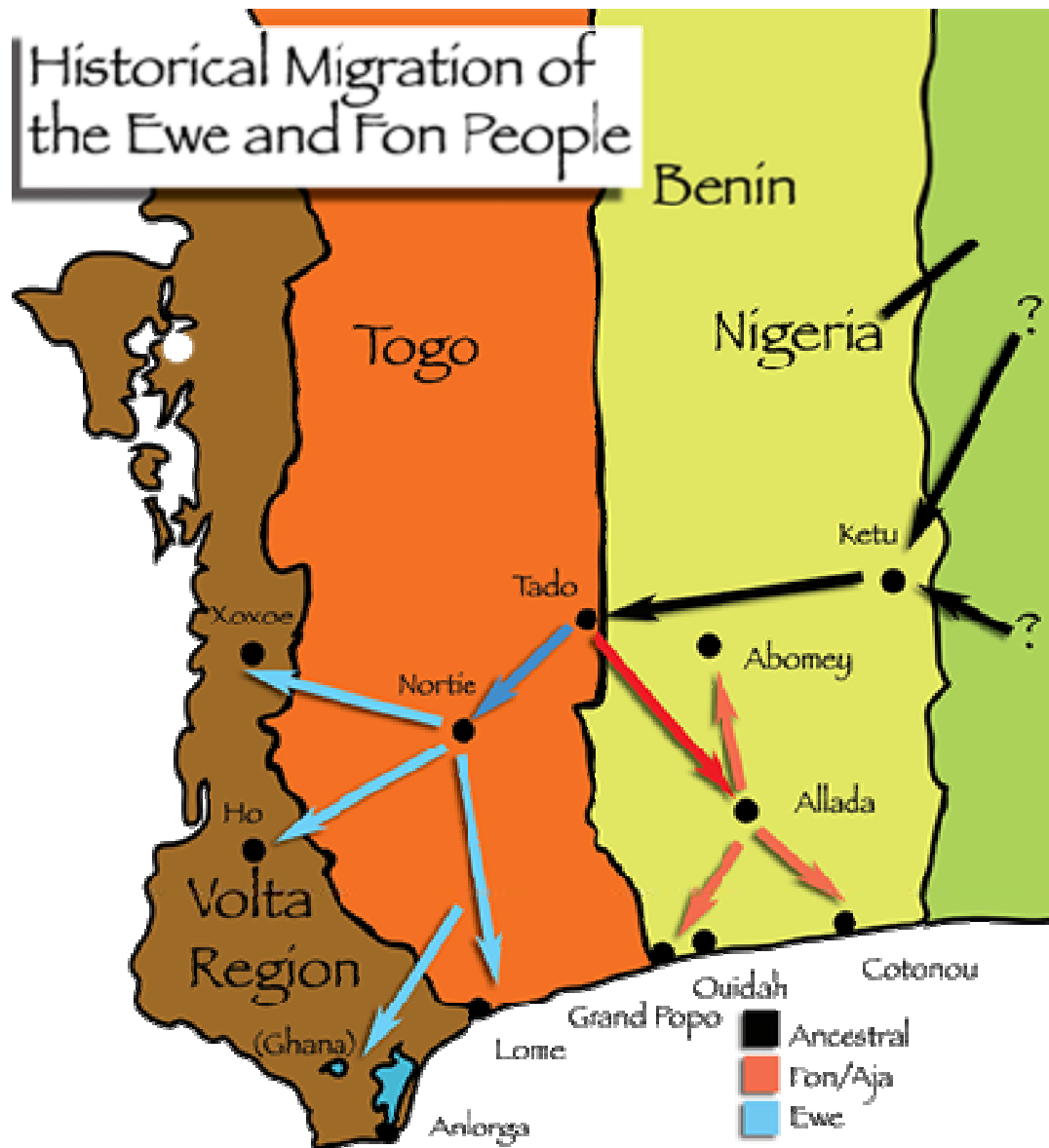
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<sup>70</sup> Scholarly works on the history of Ewes in general and Anlos in particular include Crowther (1927); Manouskian (1952), Herskovits and Herskovits (1958), Mamattah (1978), Amenumey (1986), Greene (1996, 2002), Akyeampong (2001)

<sup>71</sup> See Amenumey (1986), and Agbodeka (1997: 15)

<sup>72</sup> Ewe, Yoruba, Aja/Adza, Fon and Ga-dangme are now seen as different ethnic groups in West Africa. Yoruba are in Nigeria. Aja/Adza and Fon in Benin (formally Dahomey) are the closest “relatives” to the Ewes. To some degree the three languages (*Ajagbe/Adzagbe*, *Fongbe and Wegbe*) are mutually intelligible and some linguists see them as dialects of the same language-Ewe. Oral history and some scholarly works testify to these assertions. See Crowther (1927); Manouskian (1952); Herskovits and Francis (1958); Amoaku (1975); Amenumey (1986, 1997). Ga-dangme (now Gas and Adangme) are in Ghana.

to migrate westward. As Amenumey asserts, “it was the expansion of the Yoruba that pushed the Ewe and related peoples westward.”<sup>73</sup> The emigrants went to live at Tado in present day Togo, later dispersing in various directions. Some returned east to settle at Alada from where they founded the Aja/Adza Kingdoms of Alada, Whydah, Popo and Jakin, and later the Fon Kingdom of Dahomey.



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<sup>73</sup> Amenumey (1997: 15)

<sup>74</sup> Culled from: <http://www.atidekate.com/Volta/Ewemigration.gif> (Accessed: 04/01/05)

### **Figure 6: Map Showing the Routes of Historical Migrations of Ewe and Fon**

The ancestors of the Ewe went to live at Notsie, which was a walled kingdom. Ruled by the king of Notsie the entire community known as Dogboawo lived together, each unit in its individual ward under its own head. The early kings ruled well and the kingdom expanded. Trouble began when Agokoli, believed to be either the third or fifth king of Notsie, ascended the throne. Because of his harsh and tyrannical rule, the people decided to escape. The entire history of the migration from Ketu to Notsie and from Notsie to their present home in coastal Ghana is well enshrined in the song text of much Ewe traditional music, which forms an integral part of Anlo Ewe daily life. The music and dance practice evolved as an essential component of three key sub-cultures—religious, military and social. Although the musical traditions and practices of all three cultural aspects played vital roles, it was the religious and military sub-culture that was predominant among the people and well documented prior to their arrival at their present abode. Their daily activities had strong religious significance and connotations.

The world view of the Anlo Ewe religious sub-culture includes: knowledge about and respect for divinities and other supernatural beings; devotional activities; knowledge and understanding about the nature of the universe, both the living environment and the metaphysical; and the tenets of divine and moral states of living. The Ewe understand and believe in the universe as a body of different influential forces that control the individual in many ways. These forces, which are seen as ‘servants,’ ‘assistants’ and/or ‘mediums’ to Mawu Kitikata ‘God Almighty’, are ranked according to their influences on the individual and the society. The Ewe, like many other African societies, hold religion and its related practices in high esteem. There is rarely anything that exists or happens among the Ewe that has no spiritual meaning, connotation or understanding. For example, “the birth of a new life, puberty of the adolescent

and the marriage of the young adult are attributed to some divine goodwill.”<sup>75</sup> Any form of success, mishap, or misfortune is readily ascribed to, credited to or blamed on some superpower or divine intervention.<sup>76</sup> Observance and performance of devotional activities and the development of divine and moral principles, in which the performing arts are integral rank as some of the most cherished Ewe values. Dance-drumming is a key element of the religious culture and each divinity offers a distinct repertoire for various devotional activities. According to Kobla Ladzekpo,<sup>77</sup> these devotional activities include: the rite of consecration or centering oneself in the divine spirit; the rite of invocation or yearning for spiritual communion with the divinity and the rite of gratitude, reverence and respect for the divinity.<sup>78</sup>

The hierarchical order of Anlo Ewe divinities is as follows. Mawu Kitikata ‘God Almighty’ comes first and is believed to have power over all other divinities. To him any request—typically beginning with *tsifodi* ‘pouring of libation (prayer)’—is made through other lesser gods. Any communication with the divine world often begins with the text: *Mawu Kitikata, adanuwoto be ye woashi kple afo*, which literally means ‘God Almighty, the great craft-person who creates hands and feet.’<sup>79</sup> Mawu Kitikata is believed to be everywhere and does not require a shrine and/or devotional activities.<sup>80</sup> Devotional activities are performed through other lower ranking divinities to Mawu Kitikata. Directly below Mawu, one of the next ranking Anlo Ewe divinities is Togbui Nyigbla, the divine protector of the traditional state, its people and the Anlo Ewe state stool—the most sacred symbol of royal authority among Anlo Ewe.<sup>81</sup> Other divinities include Afã, who is among the favorites of Anlo Ewe gods. Afã is popularly known as

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<sup>75</sup> Ladzekpo: [www.cmnat.berkeley.edu/~ladzekpo](http://www.cmnat.berkeley.edu/~ladzekpo)

<sup>76</sup> See Gaba (1997: 85-104), and also Abotchie (1997: 73-84)

<sup>77</sup> See Ladzekpo, [www.cmnat.berkeley.edu/~ladzekpo/Introd.html](http://www.cmnat.berkeley.edu/~ladzekpo/Introd.html) and also (1971: 6-22)

<sup>78</sup> See Gaba (1997: 85-104)

<sup>79</sup> See Anyidoho (1997: 123-152)

<sup>80</sup> See Gorlin (2000)

<sup>81</sup> See Fiagbedzi (1977, 1997)

Kpoli/Se ‘destiny’ or ‘divinity of divination.’ Afã usually serves, among other things, as the power through whom a human requests to foresee or foretell the future through the art of divination.<sup>82</sup> Yeve, a divinity served with seven different intricate and soul inspiring movements of music and dance, is another revered divinity. Yeve’s popular names and spirits include Tohono, Vedu Xebieso, and Da. As a ‘divinity of thunder,’ Yeve is believed to harness the forces and powers of thunder and lightning to reveal concerns and anger and to exercise judgments against erring humans.<sup>83</sup> The following songs of *blemavuwo* reiterate the various aspects of Anlo Ewe religious beliefs discussed above.

**Adzohu-Atsia: “De Nu Do”**

’Mea ’de yi vedu yo ge woade nu do.

’Mea ’de yi vedu yo ge woade nu do.

Enugbe yi la megbea ‘go mado o.

’Mea ’de yi vedu yo ge woade nu do.

**Literal Translation**

Someone who goes calling on the gods should put his mouth on to the ground (should be humble or show humility).

A person who goes on a divine mission never refuses to knock

Someone who goes calling on the gods should put his mouth on to the ground.

**Deeper meaning:** *Vedu (sing.) is a divinity and among Anlos, there are different veduwo (pl) who perform different functions to those who believe and worship them. Irrespective of their functional differences, one always needs to precede any request of any vedu with “nudededo” (act of prayer, reverence and permission, excuse, pardon and/or offering’ to the divinity concerned). Similarly, to enter a neighbor’s abode in ordinary Ewe society, one needs to announce his/her identity and intentions with “agoo” (knock/give way), and be permitted to enter with the response “ame” (mankind). “Enugbeyila megbea ago mado o,” (you cannot refuse to knock when you are on an errand/entering a place,) as used in the song, is a proverbial expression that underscores the relationship between this social norm and its religious*

<sup>82</sup> See chapter 5 for details. See also Anyidoho (1997: 144)

<sup>83</sup> See chapter 5 and also Avorgbedor (1987), Gaba (1997), Anyidoho (1997), Gorlin (2000), and Greene (2001).

significance. Apart from the social implications, the Ewes believe the act of “agoo... ame” identifies a human being (distinguished from a spirit), as well as discloses his/her intentions (as being good or bad). The song advises those who would call upon the gods for help to do so with circumspection, humility and utmost respect. A devotee, believer or non-believer, who invokes the spirit, mentions the name or seeks the services of any *vedu* should not only beware of the consequences of his/her actions but also do so with *nudededo*. One should never contact the spirit world without first performing the necessarily rituals.

**Afa-Dzisa: “Mile Afo ne Agede”**

Milea ‘fo ne lo tonyeawo,  
Milea ‘fo ne agedea.  
Vu to fovu memoa adzido gbede,  
Tonyeawo mile be ne agedea.

**Literal Translation**

Hold its leg, my kinsmen,  
Hold the leg of *agede*.<sup>84</sup>  
A drum owner who drums does not make love to *adzido*,<sup>85</sup>  
My kinsmen take care of *agede*.

**Deeper meaning:** *This song admonishes those who use their social status or office as a privilege or license to defy tradition. The composer uses a proverb to indirectly caution the master drummer and all who are promiscuous and reminds us of the fact that such acts are seriously frowned upon by the gods and society. It admonishes all Ewes to hold on to tradition, be steadfast and never lose their guard. ‘We must take care of traditional belief, religion and customs first and always, so that the gods will forever be there for us’, the song reiterates.*

**Afa-Anago: “Dzo yi Adza”**

Dzo yi Adza ‘gbetsi (gbeti) dzo yi Adza ee,  
Afa menye miade wodzo le o

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<sup>84</sup> A traditional belief system

<sup>85</sup> *Adzido* sometimes called *Adido* is the baobab tree.

### **Literal Translation**

Gone to *Adza*, *gbetsi*<sup>86</sup> has left for *Adza ee*,  
*Afa* did not originate from your town.

**Deeper Meaning:** *Afa is an Ewe god of divination. The worship of Afa is also very predominant among the Yoruba of Nigeria where it is called Ifa. Afa is believed by the Ewe to have originated from Adzatome, which may be regarded as the Jerusalem or Mecca of Afa, a place from where some historians claim the Ewe and other West African societies first migrated. The song indicates that something has gone wrong in the society that has caused the sudden departure of the spirit of Afa to Adza, its original home. Some people (foreigners) have tried to recreate Afa but the spirit never originated from their society. “Dumenyo mesoa fe o, (there is no place like home), even for a spirit like Afa. So, we had better treat it well by respecting its admonitions, else it would depart from us. We may have done something wrong for which gbetsi, the spirit, has deserted us and gone back to Adza,” the song reiterates.*

The presence, mention and/or recitation of Mawu’s name and appellations in Anlo Ewe traditional songs is not just of a religious significance but very importantly, a historical narrative. Truly, one is more likely to hear the names and appellations of lesser gods than that of Mawu in most *blemavuwo*. This, however, is not an indication of non-recognition of the power and status of Mawu but rather a sign of reverence<sup>87</sup>—an act that permeates the socio-religious fiber of many societies in West Africa. It is considered rude and disrespectful for one to make direct reference to an authority—be it political, religious or social. For example, it is untraditional to talk directly to a chief or a king. The best way (polite and reverent) is to do so through the chief’s linguist or surrogate, who ‘polishes’ it to a more presentable form before it gets to the receiver—

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<sup>86</sup> A spirit. It sometimes refers to Dwarfs which Ewes believe are spirits and/or have supernatural powers.

<sup>87</sup> See Ladzekpo, “Belief in God,” <http://music.calarts.edu/~aladzekp/religion.html>. Accessed: 3/4/2004

the chief.<sup>88</sup> Some German missionary<sup>89</sup> reports testify to this assertion that Mawu is the God Almighty among the Ewe as indicated by A. B. Ellis.

The German missionaries, who are the only class of Europeans who ever seem to try to discover what the religious beliefs of the natives really are... are of opinion that Mawu is held to be the lord of the terrestrial gods, who are subordinated to his control and some even go so far as to say that he created them... Sacrifice is never directly offered to him and prayer rarely. The natives explain this by saying that he is too distant to trouble about man and his affairs, and they believe that he remains in a beatific condition of perpetual repose and drowsiness.<sup>90</sup>

Sandra Greene,<sup>91</sup> however, indicates that until their contact with the European missionaries, Ewe neither had the concept of, nor believed in Mawu as God the Almighty, and as such did not recognize or accord Him the ultimate status. She states, rather incorrectly, that Mawu was just one of their gods and that Ewes confer and/or expunge the status of supremacy of any of their gods at different times. Although accounts by most scholars and researchers of the religious beliefs of the Ewe, coupled with oral narratives, often state clearly that Mawu was historically conceptualized as the Supreme God or deity in the entire region, Greene's assertion is to the contrary. She insists:

A deity perceived at one point in time as the most powerful was defined as supreme, but it could lose that designation if its power appeared to diminish in relation to other gods. Thus I noted that Mawu was worshipped as a supreme deity in the seventeenth century in the coastal town of Whydah. By the eighteenth century, however, the worship of Mawu is said to have taken on more of the attributes of a lesser god. In the coastal polity of Anlo, Mawu continued to be worshipped as the Supreme Deity, but by the eighteenth century it had to share this designation with another god, Se, which was associated with the Yoruba Ifa divination system.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> See Yankah, (1995),

<sup>89</sup> The Germans (both missionaries and colonial masters) were some of the earliest Europeans to have contact with the Ewes of West Africa. They established Christian church denominations such as the Bremen and Basel Missions, some of which are today the Evangelical Presbyterian Church/Ewe Presbyterian Church (E. P. Church) and various Catholic missions all around Eweland in West Africa. Most of the early documents on Ewe history were written by these Germans.

<sup>90</sup> Ellis, 1890 (reprint 1965: 32-33)

<sup>91</sup> See Greene (2002)

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 16



Using evidence from Ewe musical compositions, I assert that from time immemorial, the Ewes have accorded Mawu the highest spiritual status, reverence, dignity and supremacy without interruption. They, therefore, knew Mawu as God Almighty long before their contact with the Europeans. Due to the belief that Mawu<sup>93</sup> is too big and powerful to be approached directly, the Ewe traditionally have communicated with Him indirectly through lesser gods and other means. Hence, Mawu's name and appellations have been carefully used by old traditional musicians in their compositions and other musical activities. The musicians, nevertheless, more often referred to *trowo/veduwo* 'lesser divinities/gods/spirits', and *togbiwo* 'ancestors/ancestral spirits', through whom prayer, worship, sacrifice and other messages have been sent to Mawu Sogbolisa 'God Most Powerful.' Just as any prayer section begins with the recitation of the artistic appellations of Mawu,<sup>94</sup> and *nudededo*, and anyone entering a neighbor's abode does so with *agoo...ame*, all musical performances commence with *kaklanana gbogbowo* 'seeking permission/informing the spirits or gods'—which comes under different terms (*banyinyi*, *ayodede*, etc.) depending on the musical genre, occasion, context and/or function.<sup>95</sup> The infrequent mention of "Mawu" in Ewe verbal arts (especially by the older poets, musicians and in songs of *blemavuwo*, and other musical genres that existed prior to their departure from Notsie) does not mean that they did not recognize His supremacy as the God Almighty. It rather affirms the traditional value of respect for authority. Nevertheless, later musicians (both traditional and contemporary) more frequently refer to "Mawu" in one way or another, in most songs not covered in this discussion.<sup>96</sup> This change or new trend may be (in part) the results of external influences that seem to de-emphasize or demystify the degree of sacredness attached to religious and political authority among the

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<sup>93</sup> Mawu (*Ema si ke wu*, which literary translates as 'that which surpasses all.'

<sup>94</sup> See Anyidoho (1997).

<sup>95</sup> See Younge (1992).

<sup>96</sup> These songs belong to the genres that are classified under *dekakpuiwuwo/egbevuwo* as discussed in chapter 2.

Ewe. Acknowledgement of the presence of, and belief in other lesser gods, through whom prayer is made to *Mawu Kitikata*, is expressed in the following song.

**Afa-Dzisa: “*Mete Se Wogbe*”**

Se wogbe dzie mele,  
Ne de mekpoe nyuia nenyo wue.  
Se wo gbe mete,  
Ne de mekpoe ha nenyo wu.  
Mete Se wogbe ne de mekpoe;  
Mete Se wogbe ne de mekpoe;  
Mawu mawo o fide yenu,  
Ne de mekpoe nyiua nenyo wue.  
Se wogbe mete, ne de mekpo ha nenyo wue.

**Literal Translation**

I am following the word of *Se*,<sup>97</sup>  
If I had found a better one, it would have been great.  
I am destined by the word of *Se*,  
If I had found a better one, it would have been great.  
Preordained by *Se*'s prescriptions;  
Preordained by *Se*'s prescriptions;  
If I had found a better one,  
I would have done better things.

**Deeper Meaning:** *This song is about the individual's destiny. Anlo believe that each and every individual is destined by Mawu. The composer here seems to say that his destiny is preordained, and so he/she lives according to those prescriptions. “I know I was not meant for possession of great material wealth in this life, though I would have been glad if I had been. But, contrary to how those so destined have ‘misused’ the opportunity, I would have used it in my services to Mawu,” the composer implies in the song.*

**Yeve-Adavu: “*Aho Dzo Miyi Bo*”**

Aho dzo; miyi bo, Aye ee he lo ho.  
Vedua ‘ho dzo miyi bo.  
Yali vedua ‘ho dzo miyi bo.  
Aho dzo miyi bo, aye ee he lo ho.  
Vedua ‘ho dzo miyi bo.

**Literal Translation**

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<sup>97</sup> *Se* means destiny. In general terms, however, *se* could refer to Mawu. It is also used in Afa to mean one's destiny

War has started; let's enter the state of *bo*.<sup>98</sup>  
Vedua,<sup>99</sup> war has started let's enter the state of *bo*.  
Yali<sup>100</sup> vedua war has started, let's enter the state of *bo*.  
War has started; let's enter the state of *bo*.

**Deeper Meaning:** *The role of divinities among Ewes has no limit. Ewes believe their divinities play significant roles whenever they are at war, hence they are the first to be called upon in such instances. The composer wishes to inform the leaders (political, military or religious) of either the eruption or eminence of war for the necessary actions to be taken. The song reminds and prepares the community, especially the warriors in the spiritual state of bo, for the war. In the state of bo, hunowo, 'priests and priestesses' of veduwo, prepare and call on the divinities, including Yali 'the wind god,' to deflect evil spirits, supernatural powers and other misfortunes that may befall the warriors during the war. "Disaster is upon us. Veduwo 'divinities,' we are at war; Oh divine Yali, war has befallen us, let's enter the state of bo so that you prepare us spiritually so we would be protected from harm," the song reiterates.*

### 3.2. MUSIC AND NOTSIE NARRATIVES

Narratives about life in Notsie—the undisputed last ancestral home of all the now scattered and fragmented Ewe—are the most frequently documented historical events, not only in songs and other musical practices, but in any form. Traveling through hostile territories during their sojourn from Ketu, the Ewe either defeated or escaped their enemies until they settled at Notsie in various groups (among which were the Anlo) where they were referred to collectively as

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<sup>98</sup> *Bo* is a spiritual state of power, protection and preparedness.

<sup>99</sup> Lesser god and divinity

<sup>100</sup> The wind god

*Dogboawo*.<sup>101</sup> Notsie was walled and gated to protect the citizens from the enemies on the outside. During the series of migrations and settlements from Ketu in Dahome to Notsie, the Ewe were ruled by many leaders and kings, among whom were Togbui<sup>102</sup> Kundo, Gemedra, Wenya, Sri, Ago and Agokoli, to name just a few.<sup>103</sup> At Notsie, there were petty squabbles among the various groups. Charles Mamattah<sup>104</sup> indicates that one of these tensions was fueled by Sri who believed that his installation as chief after he was nominated by Wenya was delayed unduly by King Agokoli<sup>105</sup>. A dispute erupted between the Notsie and the Dogbo during a drumming session in the Dogbo quarter of Notsie.<sup>106</sup> In the course of the fracas, Aga, an elder of Dogbo, was severely injured by a relative of Togbui Agokoli and was reported dead after a few days. The Ewe law of vengeance (*hlobiabia*) demands that the king or chief hand over a “killer” for execution in compensation for the loss and as a punishment for taking someone’s life.<sup>107</sup> Later, after the execution was carried out, King Agokoli found out that the elder who died was not the injured Aga. This came to light during the final funeral rites of the allegedly dead Aga when another elder, purportedly drunk, jokingly but proudly remarked “*Miawoe nye Adza fe viwo tso Adzatome, amemakumaku fe hlobialawo*”, which literally means ‘we are the children of Adza from Adzatome, the avengers for the living.’ This expensive and uncalled-for diplomatic blunder, emanating from drunkenness, led to drastic changes and vengeful tyranny from Agokoli on his subjects in Notsie.

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<sup>101</sup> See Amenumey (1997: 15), also Akyeampong (2001 : 24)

<sup>102</sup> ‘*Togbui*’ is a title meaning King, Chief, Elder, Grandfather, Great-Grandfather or Ancestor. In this context, it is being used as a title of a king.

<sup>103</sup> These names have been preserved in many forms. Besides song texts, they are contained in many historical narratives. Historical monuments, and places as well as families and individuals bear these names. One usually grows to know all these names as one acquires historical, musical, cultural and other traditional education, training and orientation.

<sup>104</sup> See Mamattah (1978)

<sup>105</sup> Ibid p. 83, and also Akyeampong (2001: 25)

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> *Hlobiabia*, ‘Vengeance’, which literally means ‘asking the clan’, is a cooperative responsibility and law of clan retaliation which was deeply enshrined in Ewe custom and traditional culture and has proved pivotal to Anlo history at several junctures.

Walled<sup>108</sup> in with their now primary adversary King Agokoli, the people knew neither rest nor peace thereafter. Among other things, Agokoli asked the Dogboawo to weave a rope from clay (*anyika*) for him. Smart as they were, they consulted their last remaining elder, Tegli Adzafia (known to be wise and witty), who advised them to ask Agokoli for a sample. "*Xoxoanue wo gbea yeyeawo do*" retorted Tegli to Agokoli. This means that 'it is by the old that the new is made or woven'. In other words, new ropes are woven onto the old ones. Togbui Agokoli was infuriated. It was impossible for Togbui Agokoli to provide samples. Out of disappointment and anger Agokoli ordered his people to drop sharp items into the clay pit. The Dogbo were severely injured when they unknowingly jumped into the pit with their bare feet to mix the clay concrete.<sup>109</sup>

Infuriated by their king's attitudes and treatments, the Dogbo left the pit, determined to defy Agokoli. They once again turned to Tegli Adzafia for advice. After deliberations, the consensus was an escape from the kingdom. Tegli asked the women to continuously throw wash water against the giant wall until it was wet enough to afford their escape. When it was wet, Tegli Adzafia instructed the people to have an all-night performance to disguise their plan. Ewe narratives indicate that famous Anlo hunters and spiritual leaders such as Sri, Akplomada, Tsali, Tsala, Amesimeku, and Tsatsu Adeladza had discovered a fertile, arable and uninhabited or sparsely populated vast land—the areas of southeastern Ghana (the present Anloland).<sup>110</sup> To conceal their intentions, they drowned the tumult of their escape in vigorous musical performance—drumming, dancing and hysterical singing.<sup>111</sup> On that fateful night, when the

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<sup>108</sup> The wall measured 14, 450 kilometers at its perimeter and enclosed 14 square kilometers even though it was never finished. While some say it was built only for defense, others maintain it was both for defense and a symbol of Notsie's status as a major economic power and spiritual center within the region. See Greene (2002: 15)

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p. 20-22

<sup>110</sup> See Akyeampong (2001: 26) and also Aduamah (1965: 20)

<sup>111</sup> Mamattah (1978: 119-120)

other communities went to bed and the city-state was silent, they brought Tegli from his hideout to the wet part of the wall. He raised a ceremonial sword and invoked the name of Mawu, the deities, all divinities and ancestral spirits for guidance and said, "*O Mawuga Sogbolisa, Kitikata adanu wo to; Wu agboa na mi ne mia do go adzo.*" This means "O great God 'Sogbolisa, Kitikata, the great craftsman,' open the gate for us to leave." With this spiritual invocation, the life of the Ewe was changed forever. Tegli thrust the sword into the wall and bored a hole into it, after which the entire wet part of the wall was pushed down to create a good passage to 'freedom.'<sup>112</sup> Oral tradition indicates that the older men, women, and children left while the *misego/husago* (tighten your belt) music continued.

As Mamattah puts it, "in their heart of hearts the Dogbo composed and sang secret songs."<sup>113</sup> To avoid being traced by a search party, the last group and the musicians amidst the *adekpetsi* and *husago/misego* music danced and walked backwards into freedom.<sup>114</sup> Below are a number of songs from *blemavuwo* that allude to these narratives. The song texts include names of settlements, chiefs, kings, spiritual leaders, dances and other expressions of historical importance.

**Yeve: "Wo Nutoe"**

Wo nutoe wo nua, Agokoli.  
 Yata nye ha megbe wo.  
 De nanya nu si wo ya ne le wowom de nu nye la,  
 Tonyea wu la, nye me le dzodzo ge le gbowo o.

**Literal Translation**

You have caused it, Agokoli.  
 That is why I have also rejected you.  
 If you had known what you have been doing against me,  
 If mine was worse, I would not have left you.

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<sup>112</sup> See Manouskian (1952: 12-13), and also Kamassah (2003: 23-27)

<sup>113</sup> Mamattah (1978: 113)

<sup>114</sup> See Aduamah (1965: 20), Mamattah (1978), Amenumey (1986), Akyeampong (2001), Greene (2002) Kumassah: (2003: 23-27)

**Deeper Meaning:** *This song speaks directly to Agokoli. The composer wishes to communicate to all and to document for posterity, while registering reasons for the departure of those groups of Ewe from Notsie. “Agokoli, you caused it all. The blame is yours; by your atrocities, you forced us to leave you. Had you known how hateful of you your subjects had grown lately and turned over a new leaf, we would not have fled from your wrath.”*

**Yeve-Husago/Misego: “Gbea Wodo”**

Gbea wodo lo o gbea wodo;  
Gbe ya Adzafia doa,  
Gbea menye gbevo o.  
Xoxoa nue wogbuina ka yeyeawo do.  
Gbea wodo gbea menye gbevo.

**Literal translation**

The language he used, the language he used (what he said);  
The language Adzafia used,  
The language is not a bad language.  
It is by the old that the new is made.  
The language Adzafia used, the language is not a bad language.

**Yeve-Misago/Husago: “Mebe Misego”**

Miata gawo de mebe misego.  
Edze nya yeye ade ga va.  
Afeto Dzibosu be nya ade ga va,  
Be misego loo, miatowo misego.  
Adzaviwo do gbe;  
Be ka xoxo ko dim yewo le,  
Be yewoagbe yeyea de nu.

**Literal Translation**

Our father has done it again; I say tighten your belt.  
There is some breaking news up again.  
Mr. Dzibosu says there is some news;  
That tighten your belt, my kinsmen, tighten your belt.  
Children of Adza have spoken;  
That all they want is an old clay rope,  
By which they make a new one.

**Deeper Meaning:** *The two songs translated above comment on the wittiness of Tegli Adzafia (the wise elder) and on his expressions and ideas. While the first one concentrates on Adzafia's wise saying, the composer of the second, Afeto Dzibosu,<sup>115</sup> announces this bold step of talking to Agokoli as breaking news, but advises Adzaviwo (children of Adza) whose voice Adzafia is projecting, to tighten their belt and get ready for any eventuality. "Xoxoanu wogbia yeyeawo do" (it is by the old that the new is made), a proverbial expression which is the theme of this misego/husago song, reminds all Ewe of Notsie narratives. "Gbe," literally meaning 'voice and/or language' is used in this song to mean 'expression or statement'. "The statement made by Adzafia is never a bad one; we just need to see a sample of a clay rope that our forebears have made so we can do the same as you requested, Togbui Agokoli. This cannot be taken as an affront," the composer tries to explain in his song.*

**Akpoka: "Ka Xoxoa Nue"**

Ka xoxoa nue wogbea yeyeawo do.  
Ne ameade le kome  
Nedo va mikpo.  
Ka xoxoa nue wogbea yeyeawo do.

**Literal translation**

It is by the old ropes that the new is made.  
If there is someone within the wall  
He should come out.  
It is by the old ropes that the new is made.

**Deeper Meaning:** *Here, the composer seems to figuratively throw a challenge, possibly to Agokoli and/or his warriors and advisors to come out with a possible answer or solution to their request. "Ne ame ade le koa me, nedo va mikpo," (if there is someone within the wall [wise enough to provide a sample], he/she should come out) with the solution.*

**Akpoka: "Mivu Agboa Mayia"**

Mivu agboa mayia,

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<sup>115</sup> I refer to Afeto Dzibosu as the composer based on the fact that Ewe composers indicate their ownership rights of a song by inserting their names into the song or as part of the lyrics. See Dor (2004)



Kaleawoe!  
Dahume aklasuawoe,  
Mivu agboa mayi.  
Kaleawoe mivu agboa mayi,  
Dahume.

**Literal translation**

Open the gates and let me go,  
The warriors!  
The Dahomey mysterious fighters  
Open the gates and let me go.  
The warriors, open the gates and let me go (to)  
Dahomey (the ancestral home).

**Deeper Meaning:** *There is usually a point when people under oppression defy all odds and revolt against the powers that be. The case of the Ewe in Notsie was no different. The agitation to leave Notsie and the wrath of Agokoli was overwhelming, hence the people used all means, including music and dance, to register their protest and plan their strategies for escape. In the above song the composer demands the warriors and guards of Notsie to open the gates<sup>116</sup> and permit the people (who were eager to return to Dahomey, their previous ancestral home prior to settlement in Nostie) to leave.*

Our forebears did not develop the art of writing as in western cultures. This however, did not prevent them from documenting their daily activities. Musicians were some of the agents of documentation and their songs (as discussed above) were some of the means by which they achieved their goals. These songs (drawn from four different Ewe traditional musical genres) and many others remind all Ewe of the historic events discussed above. The musical characteristics of the songs, occasions on which they were and are still being sung or performed, and the genres in which they are featured are discussed in detail in chapter five.

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<sup>116</sup> Notsie was not just walled with gates but had guards who were also warriors.

## **4. HISTORICAL EVIDENCE IN AMEGAXOXOVUWO**

This chapter looks at how music documents historical narratives of early settlements of the Ewe group that migrated southwards from Notsie. It discusses one of the predominant sub-cultures of the people—the military culture—and further touches on their encounter with Europeans and their activities. These activities—human trade (slavery), missionary works, and colonization—have since affected and changed (positively and negatively) the natural course of life of the people.

### **4.1. ANLO EWE EARLY SETTLEMENT: THE EVOLUTION OF ANLO**

Until the settlement at their present home, there was no group of Ewe known as Anlo. Hence there was no song that uses the term “Anlo.” In the course of their migrations,<sup>117</sup> the Ewes were known by as many names as places they settled. These names include Adzawo, Foawo, Dahumeawo, Dogboawo, and Eweawo. Although different sub-groups within these general groups were known by other names, none was called “Anlo” before their arrival at Notsie. One of the three groups that escaped from Notsie later became known as Anlo Ewe. The etymology of the word is traced to one historical narrative. It maintains that when the southern group of the

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<sup>117</sup> These include migrations from Ketu in present day Benin (formally Dahomey) and also from Ketu to Notsie in the present day Republic of Togo.

Ewe migrants from Notsie reached the present state capital of Anlo,<sup>118</sup> their leader at the time, Togbi Wenya, was quite old and too tired to continue the journey. Sensing his physical weakness and the rapid deterioration of his health, he declared to his subjects “*Nye ya menlo; afi adeke yiye mega le nunye o*” literally meaning, “I have coiled; I cannot go any further.” Being the political leader and one of their spiritual leaders as well, his followers could not abandon him. Instead, they decided to settle there. This first place of settlement became known as “*Anloga*” meaning “Big Anlo.” It became the traditional center and seat of *Awomefia*, “king of Anlo,” and the people then became known as Anloawo (Anlos).<sup>119</sup> The presence of the word “Anlo” in any song text or historical narrative is a clear indication that the event that led to its use took place after the Notsie Migration. Nevertheless, this is not to say that any musical genre in which the term “Anlo” is featured evolved or was created after the migration. It should be noted that the creation of new songs and other activities that accompany old musical genres such as *yevevu*, *afavu*, *atikpui*, *atamga* and many other *blemavuwo* and *ametsitsivuwo* did not cease or remain unaltered after their initial evolution. These new songs that form part of the changes that continue to occur in the performing art and the culture as a whole make use of the new name “Anlo.” The following notion that some scholars have propagated is incorrect—that African cultures have not changed much (if at all) and that the way of life of an African has remained static since time immemorial.<sup>120</sup> Cultures continue to evolve, change and grow as human beings continue to live. The use of “Anlo” in song texts of older musical genres is an example of cultural change and evolution.

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<sup>118</sup> Anloga is the present state capital of Anlo.

<sup>119</sup> See Awoonor (1974: 13-14)

<sup>120</sup> See Clark (1971: 181), and also Grinker and Steiner (1997: xxiv)

#### 4.2. MUSIC, HISTORY AND MILITARY INSTITUTIONS

The Anlo fled from their adversary, Togbui Agokoli, in Notsie but had to face the realities of conflicts with their new neighbors and foreign intruders. The early history of the settlement indicated that security concern was one of the prime elements of establishing and maintaining a strong and peaceful society. This was due to the constant danger and military confrontation that characterized the period of the exodus from Notsie till the beginning of the twentieth century. Being a society that had fought many wars in the history of its previous settlements, Anlo established and maintained their new settlements in combat readiness for a possible enemy attack. Hence the distribution of the population's settlements was informed by their past military expediency and followed the old pattern in which every Anlo township had three fighting divisions which later became known as the Anlo military units or divisions. This hereditary division was a model established for purposes of effective and controllable military precision in defense and attack when war erupted. The three divisions—Lashibi, Adotri and Woe—in which the entire population was regimented, formed the bedrock of the military sub-culture and incorporated various institutions and skills and were responsible for the security of the traditional state, her people and her values.

Members of each unit established their homesteads at the geographical position they would defend on the occasion of an attack. Usually at the center of any Anlo settlement are households of members of Adotri. They are known as the “central wing” (and have a Domefia “central chief/commander”) and are responsible for the central position during war. Lashibi unit occupies the east and is often referred to as the “right wing.” They have a Dusimefia/Dusifia “right chief/commander” and are responsible for the defense of the eastern end of the community. The third unit, Woe, which has a Miamefia “left chief/commander” settles at the

west or the “left wing” and takes charge of the security of that side during any attack.<sup>121</sup> Generally, some of the most common traits associated with Anlo Ewe are their bravery and spirituality. Historical narratives, many war dances, musical instruments and songs (mostly of *ametsitsivuwo* “older musical genres”) and artifacts that document the numerous wars they fought and spiritual feats they attained attest to these assertions.

**Gadzo: “Miawoe Nye Anloawo”**

Miawoe nye Anloawo; miatogbuiwo tso Africa,  
Kekea ‘meyibonyigba fe dziehe ke.  
Avae miewo na,  
Kaledo koe miewona.  
’Va netso dzi, ’va netso ’nyi ha  
Miawo koe le woge.  
Anlo kotsieklololo,  
Naketsi deka no dzo me bi nu.  
Ame akpe wodu he.  
Du no ’me mase ’me nya o de, zafitikoli.  
Dzogbeku menye nkpeo de; Avameku menye nkpe o.

**Literal translation**

We are the Anlos; our forebears came from Africa,<sup>122</sup>  
As far as the northern part of the black land.  
War is what we do.  
Bravery act is what we are good at.  
War may come from heaven; war may come from earth,  
It’s only we shall do it.  
Anlo *kotsieklolo*,  
Single firewood in the fire cooks the meal  
For millions of people to eat.  
A state in which one lives without ever knowing her secrets, *zafitikorli*.  
It is never a shame to die in wilderness; it is never a shame to die in war  
(it’s rather heroic to perish in war).

**Gadzo: “Nesima Nlobe”**

Nesima nlobe ha nye nku le ’dzie.  
Wo kale ntsua nesima nlobe nye nku le ’dzi.  
Anloawo metsi na gbe o de,

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<sup>121</sup> See Gorlin (2000: 6)

<sup>122</sup> The use of “Africa” and “black land” here suggests that the song was composed after Anlo State has been established and the people have acquired those concepts of identity which they did not know or show before their settlement.

Miegbona go do.  
Anlowo 'nu metsi na gbe o de  
Miegbona go do  
Nesima nlobe ha nye nku le 'dzie  
Wo kale ntsua nesima nlobe ha nye nku le 'dzie.

**Literal translation**

You wounded me and forgot but I do remember.  
A warrior man, you wounded me and forgot but I do remember.  
Anlos are never stranded,  
We are surely coming.  
Anlos' property is never abandoned,  
We are surely coming.  
You wounded me and forgot but I do remember.  
A warrior man, you wounded me and forgot but I do remember.

**Agbeko-Hatsiatsia: “To Ya Woe”**

To ya woe tovi lado xo ha,  
To ya woe miawo lado xoe.  
To ya woe, to ya woe,  
To ya woe, miawoe lado xoe.  
Ahaa eho yo.  
To ya woe, miawo lado xoe.

**Literal Translation**

In this circle, our people are the mightiest.  
In this circle, only we are the mightiest.  
In this circle, in this circle,  
In this circle, only we are the mightiest.  
We fall together; we tighten up (win) together.  
In this circle, only we are the mightiest.

**Deeper Meaning:** *The first song may be considered as a state pledge or traditional anthem of the Anlo Ewe State. The song text comprises some important Anlo state praise names and expressions—appellations, proverbs, invocations—that outline qualities such as bravery, wisdom, intelligence and historical events. “Anlo kotsieklolo” is the state “ahanonko” (praise/heroic name) and “Naketsi deka no dzome bi nu ame akpe wo du” (literally meaning “single firewood in the fire cooks the food for millions of people to eat”) is one of the state appellations usually recited or invoked together with the praise name. “Du no eme mase eme*

*nya*” literally meaning “a state in which one lives in without ever knowing her secrets” is yet another appellation which is sometimes used as part of the state appellation above and/or other times as a separate appellation to “Anlo godogolifii” which means “Anlo circumventing and mysterious”. “Zafitikoli” on the other hand is an appellation for night and all the unseen things that happen in it. The composer draws on all these expressions to instill pride, bravery and power in the citizens. The song traces the historical source and asserts the pride and sense of belonging to a strong and unified state. It should be noted that the praise names and appellations are believed to originate in specific interesting historical and cultural events.<sup>123</sup> The second song cautions people who attack the Anlo or their properties thinking they would be left free. Especially to those who undermined their strength and ability to face any attack or intrusion. It also reminds those who have offended the state in one way or the other but did not receive any immediate response that “it is not because we have forgotten all about your intrusion and harm you caused us, but that, it is only in course of time that we shall respond.”

The third song emphasizes the cohesive network between the three divisions and the effect of working together as one community. ‘We are one strong cohesive society which works together for success. It is ‘us’ but not ‘me’ or ‘you.’ We can only succeed if we work as a group. When we fall let’s fall together and when we win let’s win as a community.’ This song underscores not only Anlo Ewe community spirit and war tactics but also largely reflects African societies’ community and social cooperation.<sup>124</sup>

The presence of many music and dance genres associated with war and military culture among Anlo Ewe attests to their war-like past. Anlo Ewe war dance-music includes (but is not

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<sup>123</sup> See Anyidoho (1997: 129)

<sup>124</sup> See Gorlin (2000)

limited to) *atamga*, *atripkui*, *kpegisu*, *gadzo*, *adzohu/adzogbo*<sup>125</sup> and *atsiagbekor*. While some of the dances are performed before war (as preparation for war, review of war tactics, strategies and techniques, and to invoke the ancestral spirits and gods for protection), some are performed after war (to celebrate victory, mourn defeat and loss of lives and property, and to thank the spirits for everything). Others, however, were performed during war; both on the battle field and at home.

The role and duties of the musician in times of war are very crucial and delicate. Though most musicians are warriors, there are some musicians who are specifically designated to play special roles during times of war. The special and precise drum patterns, rhythms and drum messages that give specific signals and transmit important messages are so crucial that only well trained and initiated master drummers are allowed or assigned to play these roles. Adolphus R. Turkson writing on *asafo* (warrior) songs of the Fante of Ghana states: “The song and drum texts inspire the community to action in times of war; their value as indicator of cultural history is enormous.”<sup>126</sup> The role of the musician and the entire dance-drumming culture and repertoire, among other things, is to emotionally and spiritually invoke and prepare the human population and the Anlo Ewe spirit world (supernatural and ancestral spirits) for battle. In fact, Kobla Ladzekpo indicates that, “for example, the repertoire of *atrikpui* dance-drumming is replete with centuries of valued Anlo Ewe war-fighting tactics and military codes of honor. Through the text, texture and choreography of *atrikpui*, the military valor and skill (prowess) of ancestral heroes are invoked in exhorting their descendants to emulate.”<sup>127</sup> Also, through the text, texture and

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<sup>125</sup> Also refers to a deity associated with war where virgins of both sexes served as medium of communication between the priest and the spirit of the deity of Adzogbo/Adzohu. See Locke and Agbeli (1980: 32), and also Gorlin (2000: 35)

<sup>126</sup> Turkson (1989)

<sup>127</sup> Ladzekpo, [www.cnmt.berkeley.edu/~ladzekpo/Intro.html](http://www.cnmt.berkeley.edu/~ladzekpo/Intro.html). Accessed 03/04/2004.



choreography of this war dance-drumming, especially *atamga*,<sup>128</sup> the warriors are instilled with the necessary physical training and skills as well as psychological preparedness for war. Most important, nevertheless, is the readiness for reconciling themselves with breaking the sacred taboo before going into battle as indicated in this song.

**Atamga/Atrikpui: “Atamga Ya De Mie Gbloe Dzro”**

Atamga ya de mie gbloe dzro,  
Ego koe miedo asi mado glae loo.  
Atamgayia de mie gblor be,  
Dzadzalidza kaka ‘si mado glae hee.

**Literal translation**

The great oath we have sworn (but are about to break),  
We have just clashed and cannot stand and stare.  
The great oath we have sworn that,  
So long as the enemy persists, we shall not stand aloof.

**Gadzo: “Mieyi Gadzo Do Ge Enu Dzo”**

Etu akpo bete akpo,  
Mieyi gadzo do ge enu dzo.  
Etonye ku vi nonye ku vi,  
Mieyi gadzo do ge enu dzo.  
’Mewo be ye malo o  
Tovi do dea ’ho me.  
Ye malo tovi do dea ’ho me.  
Etonye ku vi nonye ku vi,  
Mieyi gadzo do ge enu dzo.

**Literal Translation**

My body (power) defies guns and swords.  
We went training in *gadzo*, and things happened.  
Father is concerned, mother is concerned,  
We went training in *gadzo*, and things happened.  
The people say they would not agree  
Brethren to perish in war.  
They would not allow  
Brethren to die in war.  
Father is concerned, mother is concerned,  
We went training in *gadzo*, and things happened.

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<sup>128</sup> Atamga means “great oath and sacred taboo,” depending on the usage. The name is derived from the highest oath of loyalty and patriotism among the Anlo Ewe. It is also a generic name for an older war dance-drumming genre which later became known as *Agbeko* meaning ‘life is safe or life is clear.’ See Fiagbedzi (1997: 163-176)

**Deeper Meaning:** *The first song above reiterates the essence of swearing the great oath. “Although we have sworn not to take human life, death and bloodshed may not be avoided under this circumstance. The great oath we have sworn but are about to break is due to the circumstance in which we find ourselves. We cannot and must not stand and stare while the enemy attacks us. So long as the enemy persists, we shall not stand aloof but continue to defend our sovereignty even to death (until the enemy gives up),” the song emphasizes. The second song comments on the unspoken realities of going through gadzo training, initiation as a warrior and preparation for war. Full gadzo performance is frenzied, potentially dangerous and frightening. When the young men went out to learn and be initiated, they were taken through levels of intense spiritual and physical exercises they had not been aware of, and hence had been transformed tremendously. Their test performance back at home drew criticism from those frightened by what they saw. The composer here speaks for the warrior. “If we are in the spirit of Akpo,<sup>129</sup> our bodies defy gun shots and effects of swords. Though our paternal and maternal relatives are concerned about our safety, we are not scared. The process of learning gadzo has transformed us into adults and warriors. Woe unto those enemies that may meet us in war.”*

*Atamga*, “Great Oath,” as used in the above song is one of the dance-drumming repertoires of the military culture. Its drums, songs, dance and general texture draw directly from and depict valued Anlo Ewe military strategies, remarkable and memorable operations and feats, and the prowess of traditional heroes in dramatic and inspirational dance-drumming episodes. *Atamga*’s institutional roles in those days, besides the general responsibilities outlined above, were the preparation of warriors for battle and debriefing them for a smooth transition into normal life after battle.

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<sup>129</sup>A spirit believed to have the power that protects the body from gun and sword.

Among the Anlo Ewe, every male who qualifies and has been accepted as a warrior is expected to take an oath of allegiance (*du za nu*, literally meaning “to partake in the night meal”). Once one has taken this “meal,” there is no reason for which one may be excused from going to war. History notes that some men took the oath yet still refused to go to war. This might be because the uncertainties of battle discourage some men from going to war. Apart from that, sanctity of human life is the most cherished moral value among Anlo Ewe, and is enshrined as an essential component of a normal state of mental health among the people. Although taking human life is a taboo in this culture, the taboo is set aside in times of war. The Anlo Ewe believes warfare has devastating consequences for both the victor and the vanquished. Loss of human life is the most severe consequence. Degrees of emotional disorder suffered by the warriors as a result of breaking the sacred taboo are other critical consequences. Due to these unfortunate realities of battle, some warriors easily give up. Anlo Ewe society, however, never encourages cowardliness, let alone during war. These songs record and remind not only the warriors but also ordinary citizens of the land all about these values. They also reveal to generations that followed and others yet to come, about how their forebears survived.

**Atrikpui: “Emo De?”**

Fika dzie miatogbiwo to yi adegbe, emo de?  
 'Mekae du So nu he gbe ava mayi?  
 Ayisawoe be 'mo la menyo o.  
 'Mekae be mo la menyo?  
 'Mekae du za nu hegbea 'va mayi,  
 Emo lae nye yi!

**Literal translation**

Where did our forefathers pass to war, where is the way?  
 Who has partaken So's meal but refused to go to battle?  
 The cowards say the way is not good!  
 Who says the way is not good?  
 Who has taken the night meal but refused to go to battle?  
 This is the way!

**Agbeko: “Dze Ngo Do Tome”**

Dze ngo do tome, manya wo ha?

Adza hanya yi hanya yi.

Sabla Dzesue dze lifo me.

Mizo belebele.

Sodoto de made atsia ee.

'Mekae du So nu magbe wa made ha ee?

Adza hanya yi hanya yi.

**Literal Translation**

Led in entering the dance ring, but couldn't do anything.

Just trembling and trembling.

It is death that is on the way.

Walk cautiously.

One on horse back never shows off.

Who has taken So's meal and refuses to go to war?

Walk cautiously!

**Deeper Meaning:** *In the first song, the composer wonders how and why the forebears were able to fight gallantly but some men of their time aren't willing. He cautions those who have sworn the warrior's oath but are refusing to go to war. “What exactly did our forefathers do to have won all those wars? How dare you take the great oath and refuse to defend the land. Here is the way...You can't say it is not safe. Once you have taken part in So's meal, (sworn the oath), you've got to defend the land.” Subsequently, the second song reiterates a similar sentiment. “At the sound of the warriors' drums, you were the first to declare your readiness. But after taking the great oath you are overcome by fear, and endlessly trembling. Now that you have what it takes to go to war and have come face to face with its realities, you cannot retreat.” Young warriors often rarely concern themselves with the consequences of war until it is too late.*

One of the numerous wars Anlo Ewes fought is the Sagbadre war. Historical documents indicate that in March 1784 the Danish Governor of Christiansborg secured a force among the Ga, Ada, Krobo, Akwapim and the Adangme, all of whom are neighbors and had by then become traditional enemies of the Anlo. An army of over 4,000 troops heavily defeated

Anlo.<sup>130</sup> The people had to flee and seek refuge with Veta (Wheta) and Klikor<sup>131</sup> in turn. A number of Anlo towns were burned as indicated in this akpoka song.

**Akpoka: “Fikae Loviawo Yi?”**

'Fikae loviawo yia?  
Dzo dze afe glikpowo tsi anyi.  
Lowo ga yi dzo tsi ge.  
Lo kple Adzakpa woyi dzo tsi ge le Gbaganue.  
Loviawo yia dzo dze afe glikpowo tsi anyi.

**Literal Translation**

Where are the children of Lo gone?  
The town is on fire and the houses deserted.  
The Lo are gone to fight fire.  
Lo and Adzakpa are all gone to fight fire in Gbaganu.  
Lo's children are gone, the town is on fire and the houses deserted.

**Adzogbo: “Miya Wu, Kumi Ye”**

O miya wu ha kumi ye,  
To melo wuili degbo he.  
Miya wu ha kumi ye,  
Elo wuili degbo he.  
Tomelo mano yiago,  
Egeli mano hoeso.  
Miya wu ha kumi ye,  
Elo wuili degbo he.

**Literal Translation**

Oh, come and see a miracle,  
A crocodile has attacked a hippopotamus.  
Oh, come and see a miracle,  
Crocodile has attacked a hippopotamus.  
A crocodile cannot live on land,  
A cow cannot live in water.  
Oh, come and see a miracle.  
A crocodile has attacked a hippopotamus.

**Deeper Meaning:** *The two songs above comment on the numerous clashes that Ewe in general had with different European nations. While the first laments on the Sagbadre war in which Anlo was defeated and many townships burned by the attackers, the second reminds Anlo of other*

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<sup>130</sup> See Amenumey (1986)

<sup>131</sup> Both Anlo towns located farther away from the areas attacked in this particular war.

*clashes. The first song clearly questions the whereabouts of Anlo warriors at the time villages were set ablaze by the combined enemy forces. The second one comments on an abnormal phenomenon. A crocodile does not normally attack a hippopotamus which is stronger and better adapted to water and has the potential of putting up a stronger fight against the crocodile. This underscores some of the strategies Ewe used to outwit and defeat the Europeans on a few occasions. “You mistakenly underrated our strength. You have attacked us thinking we would be a run over. Not this time round. We know our land better than any stranger and cannot be defeated easily.” Some schools of thought believe that the second song refers specifically to an earlier war between the Fo-Ewe and the British attackers.*<sup>132</sup>

In the Sagbadre war Anlo was defeated, nevertheless. After their defeat, Anlo was made to sign a peace treaty which was initialed on June 18, 1784. “Under its provisions the Danes secured the right to build a fort at Keta and a free passage through Anlo. They also obtained the permission to set up a trading post at Anloga, the Anlo capital which had to be rebuilt.”<sup>133</sup> Anlo was made to sign a treaty with the Danes not to trade with any European nation other than Denmark, and not to take its canoes to sea. These stipulations amply demonstrated what the war had really been about. The terms of the treaty aimed at one thing—to make Danish commerce predominant in the Anlo area. The construction of the fort began almost immediately after the treaty.

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<sup>132</sup> See Gorlin (2000: 39)

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. See Amenumey (1986)

### 4.3. MUSIC, HISTORY AND HEROIC WARRIORS

In many societies, the brave and all others who have attained remarkable feats are not just recognized as heroes but also have their names, figures, memories and deeds enshrined in various forms to serve as historical monuments for posterity. Anlo Ewe use music in general and songs in particular as the primary forms in which the remarkable deeds of their heroic ancestors are cast. Among the noted Anlo Ewe warriors and leaders are Kundo, Akplomada, Tsali, Wenya, Axolu, Sri, Tenge, and Adladza. Torgbui Kundo is regarded as one of the most revered of the above personalities. He is said to be the brain behind the Ewe's numerous victories over their enemies in Dahomey. Historical evidence points to the fact that *adzohu/adzogbo*, one of the spiritual dance-drumming genres associated with the Ewe military institutions, emerged from legendary struggles of Torgbui Kundo against enemies and against European domination. Torgbui Kundo, noted for being a great war commander, was also the last and the most famous king of ancient Dahomey prior to the Ewe's departure from that territory. He often did not go to the battlefield personally, but rather commanded his army from the shrine associated with *adzogbo* god.<sup>134</sup> During war, battlefield situations were revealed to Kundo by the "virgins of the shrine" – pre-adolescents who served as media of communication between the priest and the deity. These children became possessed by *adzogbo*, and danced and sang messages to their commander and his army. According to history, Torgbui Kundo was never really conquered by his enemies. One of the popular historical narratives indicates that he was kidnapped, probably by Europeans, while signing one of the numerous treaties which he made with them. The narrative states:

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<sup>134</sup> See Locke and Agbeli (1980) and Gorlin (2000)

Europeans' "adoration" for Kundo led to his invitation abroad after several negotiations. On board the ship, on the high sea, Kundo was said to have requested that the ship return to Anlo so he could get the pipe that he had forgotten. The sailors thought that since they had gotten the "notorious king" onboard, and there was no way that he could escape, that there was no point listening to his demands. Not even several entreaties from Kundo could change their minds. Kundo, who was fully dressed in his state regalia, slipped his foot out of the traditional sandals he was wearing and stopped the ship from moving by stepping on the floor of the ship with his bare foot. Kundo said to his "kidnappers,"<sup>135</sup> "*Atsiligeli, nye ya nye me to ha yi ge o, nye ya nye me go ha yi ge o, dordorklele,*" literally meaning, "*Atsiligeli,*"<sup>136</sup> I would not go to sea, neither would I go ashore unless you let us go back to Anlo for my "pipe", we shall neither proceed on the sea nor retreat ashore." The source indicates that the sailors had to sail back to Dahomey for Kundo to pick up his pipe.<sup>137</sup>

The Ewes of West Africa are believed to have been among the indigenous people who were most resistant to Western domination and the last to be defeated by Europeans and their African allies.<sup>138</sup> Despite the perceived death of Kundo, some of his subjects still believed he was too strong and powerful to be kidnapped and killed, as later wishful-thinking rumors indicate through reports of Torgbui Kundo reappearing. Kundo was and still is an inspiration to not only Anlo Ewe but all Ewe of West Africa. Ewes continue to perform musical activities that constantly remind them of this great king and warrior.

**Atsiagbeko: Kundo Yi Yevuwode Megbo o'**

Kundo yi Yevuwode megbo o he,  
 Dada be mina mitso gbe de dzi.  
 Kundo yi Yevuwode mebgo o he,  
 Mitso gbe de dzi.  
 O! Miafe Awafiaga do de aho me!  
 Mieyina aho wo ge.  
 Miyi aho, miyi aho, miyi aho.  
 Mide so, mide so, mide so.

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<sup>135</sup> Kidnapers: Used in the sense in which it was first used in 1678: See <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=kidnapper>. Accessed: 04/02/04

<sup>136</sup> *Atsiligeli* is an appellation for the elephant and the shark.

<sup>137</sup> As narrated by Kobla Molisi, Kodzo Agbalekpor both maternal uncles of the author and Kofitse Dekpe Gbolonyo, paternal uncle of the author on August 3, 1999 at Dzodze, Ghana. This narrative is very common among all Ewes.

<sup>138</sup> See Gorlin (2000: 35)



Kundo yi Yevuwode megbo o he,  
Mitso gbe de dzi.

**Literal translation**

Kundo has gone to the White man's land and never returned.  
Mother says let us bet on it.  
Kundo has gone to the White man's land and never returned.  
Let us bet on it.  
Oh! Our great war king is perished in battle!  
We are going to fight.  
Let's go to war, let's go to war, let's go to war!  
Let's fight and fight and fight!  
Kundo has gone to the White man's land and never returned.  
Let us bet on it.

**Atrikpui: "Kundovio Tso Ameta"**

Kundovio tso 'meta de tu medio,  
'Hor neva!  
Kundoawoe tso 'meta de tu medio,  
'Hor neva!  
Miele tsinoko keke Dahume;  
Fifia, 'hor neva.  
Miele 'hanokor keke 'Dahume;  
Fifia hor neva.  
Kundoawoe tso ameta de tu medio,  
Ahor neva.

**Literal translation**

Kundo's children have killed without a gunshot,  
Let there be war!  
The Kundos' have killed without gunfire,  
Let there be war!  
We went drinking water in Dahumey;  
Right now, let there be war!  
We went drinking wine in 'Dahumey;  
Right away, let there be war.  
The Kundos' have killed without gunfire,  
Let there be war!

**Tordziha: "Atsiligeli"**

Atsiligeli, nya nye me tor ha yi geo;  
Nya nye me go ha yi geo, dordorklele!  
Egoe mila yia alo 'toe milayia?  
Atsiligeli, nya nye me tor ha yi geo;  
Nya nye me go ha yi geo, dordorklele.

**Literal translation:**

*Atsiligeli* I will never go to sea;  
I will never go to shore, deadlock!  
Do we go to shore or do we go further into the sea?  
*Atsiligeli*, I will never go to sea;  
I will never go to shore!<sup>139</sup>

**Deeper Meaning:** *The fact that Togbui Kundo was a great warrior, and a charismatic leader who was kidnapped is deeply enshrined in all the above songs. As to whether he went to the White man's country by will or was kidnapped is yet another debate. Even his subjects at the time, including the composer(s) of the songs, could not agree on the above operation and his departure abroad. "Whether or not he went there by will, we need to take action. For us it is our warrior that has been captured and we cannot just let go. We must go to war, we must fight the enemy," says the composer of the first song. The second song underscores Kundo's mysterious powers. The composer brags in his song about this power and dares any enemy to respond. "We, the children of the great warrior have attacked and killed, but the victim's party never responded. We are ready for response anytime. Whether at a party or a drinking spree in Dahomey; let there be an instant attack, we shall respond immediately." In the third song, the composer draws a parallel and relates what happened on the high seas (as narrated above) to an imaginable struggle between an elephant and a whale. The traditional musician has no better choice than to document this historic event by drawing this parallel that would enrich his production, and facilitate retention.*

Axolu was one of the field marshals of the Anlo Ewe. Besides his bravery and spirituality, he was witty and was respected for his ability to settle disputes among his people. However, he was not liked by all, probably due to his abuse of power. Sometimes, while on the

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<sup>139</sup> The encounter between Torgbi Kundo and the Europeans is likened to a 'tag-of-war' between the Elephant and the Shark (the two biggest living creatures on land and in the sea).

battlefront, he was sought after and called back home to resolve desperate situations. One of the songs to honor him is as follows:

**Atrikpui/Akpoka: “Axolu Menye Amevo o”**

Axolu menya mevo o hee,  
O! Be miyo Axolu neva.  
Axolu menye amevo deke o,  
Aza so gbe vo;  
Miyo Axolu neva.

**Literal Translation**

Axolu is never a bad person,  
Oh! Call Axolu to come.  
Axolu is never one bad person,  
The day has come,  
Call Axolu to come.

**Deeper Meaning:** *Every hero has some adversaries. No matter the extent of love, respect and adoration his subjects and admirers have for him, there are usually some elements of the society that may not see eye to eye with him. They may criticize him and more often than not highlight his weaknesses. Such was Axolu’s case. Though he was hailed by many for his military, spiritual and leadership roles, his adversaries did not let go of his flaws. “We may brand him bad but he is never a bad man. You see, now we need to call for his assistance even though he is at war defending the land. We have no choice despite the criticisms leveled against him.”*

The Atrikpui song and battle cry below indicate the greatness of Abofrakuma, another great Anlo Ewe leader and warrior. He led the Anlo military right wing in fighting the *Taklava* (Takla war). Abofrakuma’s name is widely known not only among Anlo Ewes but also among the Asantes and other societies in West Africa, especially in Togo and Benin (Dahomey), where he died on the battlefield and was buried. His graveyard at Agoe-Adzigo in Dahomey<sup>140</sup> has become a shrine.

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<sup>140</sup> See Mamattah (1978: 335)

**Kpegisu: “Soho”**

Soho! Miawoe nye so wodena.  
Hodzogbe miawoe la du ga.  
Abofrakuma, nto no agbe nadu ga?  
Abofrakuma nto no agbe wo ya nadu ga ha?  
Soho ye! Miawoe nye so wodena.  
Hodzogbe miawoe la du ga!

**Literal Translation**

Thunder’s war! We are the thunder that strikes.  
On the day of war, we shall be victorious!  
Abofrakuma, alive for you to win?  
Abofrakuma, alive only for you to win?  
Thunder’s war! We are the thunder that strikes.  
On the day of war we shall be victorious.

Tenge Dzokoto Gligui was also a great leader and warrior who had some military feats and honors to his credit. The song below relates some of his mysterious spiritual battlefield deeds.

**Akpoka: “Ku Nyo Wu”**

Fia Tenge tso amevu tso nya woe miedu,  
Ku nyo wu ahomeku nyo wu.  
Ku nyo wu ahomeku nyo wu.  
Fia Tenge tso ‘mevu tso nya woe miedu,  
Ku nyo wu ahomeku nyo wu.

**Literal Translation**

Chief Tenge used human blood in preparing spiritual concoctions,  
Death is better, a warrior’s death is good.  
Death is better, a warrior’s death is good.  
Chief Tenge used human blood in preparing spiritual concoctions,  
Death is better, a warrior’s death is good.

This song recognizes him as a great man who once lived on earth.

**Akpoka: “Dzokoto Va Nyigba Dzi”**

’Megamegawo va anyigba dzi,  
Dzokoto va anyigba dzi.  
’Megamegawo va nyigba dzi,  
Dzokoto va anyigba dzi.  
Anlowo be Dzokoto va nyigbadzi.

**Literal Translation**

Great men lived on the earth,  
Dzokoto lived on the earth.  
Great men lived on the earth,  
Dzokoto lived on the earth  
Anlos say Dzokoto lived on the earth.

**Deeper Meaning:** *Warriors associate themselves with anything fearful and naturally powerful. They want to bear a name that will psychologically give them courage. The recitation, or even mentioning of these names boosts their egos and, at the same time, instills fear into their enemy. Abofrakuma and his warriors likened their power to that of thunder. Even the sound of thunder is enough to leave a fighter trembling. “Our strength is like that of the spirit of thunder, “So.” We will ever win, more so when Abofrakuma our great leader is alive and leading us.” Despite the uncertainties of war, casualties and loss of life, warriors constantly show that it is heroic to perish in war. “Death is ok, but to die in war is heroic,” they often indicate, as in the second song above. Also, a warrior would want others to know about the wonderful and mysterious feats he has achieved while on the battlefield. The composer wishes to document, for posterity, one of the numerous mysterious spiritual battlefield achievements of Togbui Tenge Dzokoto. Tenge was believed to have fed his army with a spiritual meal that sustained and helped them to conquer their enemies. In the last song above, the musician simply wishes to document that Tenge was one of the greatest men who ever lived.*

The names of historic figures and events mentioned in the above songs and their contributions are now household names and narratives not only among Anlo Ewe but also among many other societies in West Africa. This occurred largely because of music—songs in particular.

Though traditionally, every male in the community is an eligible warrior and is expected to go to war, there are restrictions in certain cases. Any male whose moral, social and spiritual character is questionable is not qualified to be a warrior. Traditionally, women do not go to war among the Ewe in general. Able-bodied men who are seen to be morally and socially fit and mentally sound are expected to fight. Musicians used the power of music (especially songs) to urge and provoke men to go to war to defend the land when enemies attacked them, but some men were not willing to defend the land. One of the most effective means of convincing them was through songs. This *Atrikpui* song, typically sung before war, attests to this assertion.

**Atrikpui: “Moxenu”**

Moxenu bla agbadza,  
 To ka mee loa le yedo ee.  
 Moxenu bla agbadza,  
 Gbe ka dzie kua wum le.  
 Mido ame de dumegawo gbo;  
 Newoa tso tu kple kpe,  
 Ne woawu lo nam loo.  
 Mido ame de azaguawo gbo;  
 Newoa fo awayivuo,  
 Newoa si awa nam loo.  
 Moxenu bla agbadza,  
 To ka mee loa le yedo ee.  
 Moxenu bla agbadza,  
 Gbe ka dzie kua wum le.

**Literal translation**

Moxenu<sup>141</sup> has put on his war implements [prepares for war],  
 In which river would the crocodile attack me [where is the battlefield]?  
 Moxenu has put on his war implements,  
 Where would death kill me?  
 Send people to the rulers of the land [petition the leaders];  
 So they'll take arms and ammunition,  
 So they'll kill the crocodile for me [and defeat the enemy].  
 Send people to the musicians [petition the musicians];  
 So they'll sound the war drums [announce and summon the warriors];  
 So they'll defeat the war for me.  
 Moxenu has put on his war implements;  
 In which river would the crocodile attack me?

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<sup>141</sup> Name of a warrior

Moxenu has put on his war implements;  
Where would death kill me?<sup>142</sup>

**Atrikpui: “Klala me Mado”**

Klala mee mado;  
Adzo tso nutsuvio,  
Klala mee mado.  
Klala mee mado lo ho;  
Adzo tso nutsuvio,  
Klala mee mado.

**Literal Translation**

I shall sleep in calico,  
Sons of men are under attack.  
I shall sleep in calico,  
Sons of men are under attack.  
I shall sleep in calico,  
Sons of men are under attack.

**Deeper Meaning:** *“What use is it to be a man if you are not ready to defend your motherland in times like this? Well, if strong men are reluctant to face realities, weaker ones are ready. Where are the brave warriors? Let’s petition the leaders of this land so that action is taken now! Weak men are ready, they have put on their war implements and wherever the attack would come from, they would face it.” The composer indirectly speaks to the powers that be (the rulers of the land). Can strong men stand and not stir while weak and “uncertified warriors” humiliate them through songs? Not among Anlo Ewe, for it is even more painful to be insulted through music than to be verbally abused. Any musical activity is believed to be a reliable means of documentation that lives for posterity. Every Anlo Ewe would avoid being negatively portrayed in song. “I would rather fight, die in war and be buried in white calico than to be humiliated in song.” The second song, which emphasizes this point, is an inspirational song of the early Anlo*

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<sup>142</sup> The use of river and crocodile in this song is metaphorical. The ‘crocodile’ sometimes refers to the Whiteman and the ‘river’ refers to the sea. One oral explanation of this historical element in this song asserts that because during the slave trade, the traders normally come aboard ships on the Atlantic Ocean to attack and capture the people into slavery, they are likened to the crocodile that lives in water and attacks people. Another source likened it to the Sagbadre (swallow) war between the Anlo state and the Dutch around 1780.

*Ewe Avagbatetsolawo*<sup>143</sup> “mercenaries,” usually sung to prod warriors to go to war and also to fight on when the going got tough.

In peace, the mostly military institutions evolved into institutions of humane and hospitable society. The Anlo Ewe traditional state evolved gradually into a peaceful coexistence with her neighbors and the institutional functions of the war dances also were modified. For example the name *atamga* was changed to *agbeko*,<sup>144</sup> which means “lives are safe” or “life is clear” and was dedicated to the pursuit of peace through a spirited remembrance of the horrors of warfare. The military units became political units and the basis of the present Anlo Ewe community system. Military commanders became political heads or chiefs of the communities they led during migration and battles within a centralized state system headed by a paramount king, *Awoamefia*.<sup>145</sup>

In this new political culture, the warlike past is not only documented in the music and dance traditions, but also in the institution of chieftaincy as relic of the heroic past, or in the regalia of chiefs as symbols of their royal rights or prerogatives. War dances, songs and other musical instruments and implements are still in use, but in quite different contexts. Since there are no more ethnic and other wars among the Anlo Ewe and their neighbors, musical activities that were hitherto associated with these military institutions are performed only during special occasions. These include occasions such as festivals, funerals, tragic events, or enthronement/dethronement of chiefs, kings, queen mothers, old warriors, elders, statesmen or stateswomen.

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<sup>143</sup> See Mamattah (1978: 224) and also Younge (1992: 15-16)

<sup>144</sup> See Fiagbedzi (1997)

<sup>145</sup> See Ibid.



#### 4.4. MUSIC, HISTORY AND EUROPEAN ENCOUNTER

The historical issue of slavery did not escape Anlo Ewe traditional musicians who made sure they documented any event that affected their people. In fact, Ewe communities served as one of the major slave markets along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. Due to its central position in the human trade, the coastline (stretching from the eastern corner of the Benin-Nigerian border to the Volta estuary in present day Ghana) occupied by different Ewe communities was then called the Slave Coast. According to historical reports<sup>146</sup> the Anlo Ewe first settled on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. The proximity of the settlements to the sea, however, exposed them to frequent raids for slaves by European slave traders who would navigate their ships easily to these shores for their human cargo. Ancestors of some Anlos who now live on islands between the sea and the Keta Lagoon fled their coastal homes partly because of the frequent raids by European slave traders. They migrated north to lagoon islands to avoid becoming slaves in some strange land. The shallow waters of the Keta Lagoon (which was central to the early evolution of the Anlo Ewe traditional state) made navigation by large slave ships impossible, and therefore served as a much-needed buffer-zone between the settlers and the aggressive slave traders. The memory of these raids and the loss of entire settlements have been deeply imprinted on the Anlo Ewe consciousness through oral tradition such as folklore, myths and songs. The following *adzohu/adzogbo* and *koku* songs establish these facts.

**Koku: “Kom Da de Gbe Adewo Dzi”**

Kom da de gbea 'dewo dzi de,  
Koku ya do bada kplim loo.  
Kom da de gbea dewo dzi de,  
Koku ya blua gbe me nam loo.  
Yevu ya kple kalea wo kpe,  
Kalea do gbe na 'vu meto o.

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<sup>146</sup> Reports from both oral and written sources as mentioned in previous chapters. See chapters 1 and 2.

Yevua tso to ha mila woe.  
Yevua tso no ha mila woe.  
Konkon 'do gbe na mila se.  
Kom da de gbea dewo dzi de,  
Koku ya do bada kplim loo.

**Literal translation**

Take me to the wilderness (foreign land)  
This Koku<sup>147</sup> has inflicted pain in my heart.  
Take me to the wilderness,  
This Koku has distorted my life,  
This White man and the warrior met,  
The warrior greeted White man, he never responded.  
If White man brings father we shall do it.  
If White man brings mother we shall do it.  
Let the powers of the spirits sound for us to hear.  
Take me to the foreign land,  
This Koku has inflicted pain in my heart.

**Adzohu Kadodo: “Atsom Do Gbexo Mi Yia”**

Atsom do gbexo mi yia;  
Dzogbe Mawunye do bada do ye de ha,  
Atsom do gbexo mi de,  
Dzogbe Mawunye do bada do ye de ha.  
Xovile kple kanumawoe kpe,  
Kanuma do tan a 'xovile.  
Azasu to ha mi la kpe.  
Atsom de gbexo mi la yia.  
Ame de yo gbetsenye woa dzua  
Atson de gbexo mi de,  
Mawunye do bada do ye lo.

**Literal Translation**

You take me to be inferior;  
My God, now I'm really cursed.  
You take me to be inferior;  
My God, now I'm really cursed  
The indigenous people and the strangers have clashed,  
There is no way the strangers can overcome the people.  
The day has come that we clash together in battle.  
You take me to be inferior;  
Somebody has called an insult to my forefathers.

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<sup>147</sup> Koku is the name of a male born on Wednesday and also the name of the spirit of a traditional god. In this song the name Koku refers to the Europeans who with the collaboration of other Africans chased people with the intention of enslaving them—an evil act, Anlo Ewes believe.

You take me to be inferior;  
My God, now I'm really cursed.

**Deeper Meaning:** *The songs above comment on Anlo Ewe encounters with the Europeans. The musicians comment on issues concerning the effects of colonial activities and the opinions of both parties. "You strangers (Europeans) regard and treat my people as inferiors, but I am not impressed by what I see you do. If you say we are inferior to you, God forbid, we are in trouble (danger). By your attitudes, you have insulted my forefathers and that is considered a grievous offence. Now is the time for us to meet in battle," the composer reiterates. Victors or conquerors often see their opponents as inferior. This was the opinion Europeans in West Africa and in other parts of the world held of the people they conquered and/or colonized. Hence numerous demeaning labels such as "tribes," "primitive people," "savages," etc. At best, the indigenous people were considered "wayward kids" who needed to be tamed and strictly controlled through, colonization; and at worst, strong, aggressive and primitive savages requiring enslavement and treatment as sub-humans. The experiences were real and bitter. Though the survivors did not follow the captured to learn what went on in the unknown land, they made sure that what took place at their own shores was preserved for posterity. If the elders forgot to relay the history, or did so inaccurately, the full history was preserved in the stories and poems by the poets, carvings and other art works of the sculptor and the artist, and ( most importantly), songs and other musical activities of the musician.*

Among many compelling reminders of the atrocities that Anlo Ewe suffered during the slave trade (including activities, figures, sites, names, dresses, clothing and stories) songs are the most common and frequently used. Though many of these songs belong to *amegaxoxovuwo* (either infrequently performed or most often performed by the elderly), some of the songs have become very common among all generations and are sung by individuals at any time. "*Klilinue*

*Mieke Do Vo*”, an *atrikpui* song, is one of such examples. Recounting some of the historical events in his book *The Ewes of West Africa*, Charles Mamattah gives a vivid interpretation of this song.

When the slaves of Yofe first saw the blue waters of the Atlantic, and realized that their fate was sealed and that they were leaving home and kin for good for a journey into the dark unknown, one of them was born on the wings of song, and granted the gift of a visionary; he instinctively composed the words and tune to this most moving of Ewe *atrikpui* war songs.<sup>148</sup>

**Atrikpui: “Aklilinue [Klinia Nu]”**

Klilinue mieke do vo,  
Adatsia ge.  
Miato nutsuvio, Klilinue miedo do vo,  
Adatsia ge, (ne) dzi mele fo (wo),  
Nagbugbo.

**Literal Translation**

We have now reached Klilinu (the wharf);  
Tear is fallen  
My brethren (brother-men/ brave men), the wharf have we reached;  
Tear is fallen, for if you are not strong at heart (cannot endure),  
Then better retreat.

**Akpoka: “Mila yi Ahoe”**

Mila yi ahoe/afe,  
Dukowo la yi afe/ahoe loo,  
Ne game sua mila yi afe/ahoe.  
Ne aza gbe su vo koa,  
Miagase mia nko.  
Ke mino to dzi miase nyawo.  
Ne game sua mila yi afe/ahoe.

**Literal translation**

We shall go home,  
The state shall go home.  
When time is due, we shall go home.  
When the day of reckoning is come,  
You would hear from us.

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<sup>148</sup> Mamattah (1978: 11)

So be on your guard and listen to the messages.  
When time is due we shall go home.

**Deeper Meaning:** *“Beholding the wharf, we now know we have come face to face with, inevitable realities of fate. Here we are at the mercy of unknown faces sharing tears. It is not a matter of weeping but rather a situation of the survival of the fittest. My brethren, it is better to die if you are not strong enough to endure the hardships of the journey to the land of the unknown.”* Historical narratives say that it was those who escaped from the European slave traders who came home with such songs. While they mourn their colleagues who were either not fortunate or brave enough to escape, they also celebrate their victory over the enemy by performing and singing these songs. The last song expresses the hopes of the sufferer and his longing for home “freedom.” The composer poses as one of the captives, sufferers, or the oppressed. His sentiments indicate their knowledge of or hope for “aza,” a D-day, an end to their sufferings, and hope that soon they would be more powerful and capable of facing their oppressor(s). While some narratives attribute the second song to Agokoli’s atrocities and Notsie narratives, indicating its origin and existence prior to Anlo State establishment, others believe it is linked with European encounter, slavery and colonization. Cross examinations point to the fact that the song might have been in existence before the European encounter but was used extensively during slavery and colonial oppression with some textual modifications. Whatever the origin may be, the musician has registered his opposition to oppressive rule—either against the tyranny of his own King Agokoli or against the foreigner’s intrusion and domination—and has documented it for posterity.

As a young boy living with my uncle and going through the difficulties of life, I used some of the traditional songs to comfort myself, and to encourage my personal spirit to continue the struggle, hoping for an end to all the hardships I was enduring. The songs included many of

the above, but especially “*Mila Yi Ahoe*” meaning “We Would Go Home” and “*Klilinue Miekedo Vo*” meaning “The Wharf/Castle We Have Reached,” the last two songs. Little did I know then that these were some of the songs that served as a source of encouragement, hope, aspiration, prayer and comfort for my ancestors, not only under the tyrannical rule of their own King, but also from their colonial oppressors. Not until I got into professional music practice later, did I get to know the deeper meaning of these songs and the roles they played in the lives of my forebears. I can hardly describe how I feel today whenever I reflect those experiences that originally led to these songs and similar ones.

These songs were frequently invoked during the struggle to escape from Notsie as well as during the escapes from being sold as slaves. Cultures die hard. “They continue to thrive even when they are considered long since dead and buried,” says Colin M. Turnbull in his article “The Lessons of the Pygmies.” He continued, “In dealing with any African peoples, I suspect we are in great danger if we assume too readily they are the structures we have made them.”<sup>149</sup> The musical traditions of Anlo Ewe which form an integral part of their general cultural heritage are, and should be considered and treated as, a repository of their historical events. Due to their functionality, citizens need not consciously memorize these songs to be able to tell their stories. As the music is performed and the songs are sung, the story is told as well, and generations are informed and educated.

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<sup>149</sup> Turnbull (1997: 227)

## **5. MUSICAL FEATURES, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I concentrate my discussion on the musical features of the songs cited in the previous chapters. Since this is not the focus of my thesis, I briefly look at the relevant features of the songs, occasions on which they were and are still being performed, and the genres in which they are featured. I follow it with some linguistic considerations and general observations that include scholarly thoughts and implications.

### **5.1. TONAL SYSTEM, MELODIC AND HARMONIC ORGANIZATION**

The musical characteristics of all the songs analyzed in this thesis epitomize the general features of Anlo Ewe songs. In this section, I briefly discuss form and variation, melodic organization, scale and tonal system, harmonic structure and common rhythmic patterns of the songs and their usual instrumental accompaniment.

#### **5.1.1. Form and Variation**

Most Ewe songs are in simple binary (AB) and ternary (ABA) forms. The variations of these forms have been used differently in songs discussed in the preceding chapters. These variations include AA<sub>1</sub>BB<sub>1</sub>A, AB(ba)A, and ABaBaA<sub>1</sub>. Usually, the *heno/hesino* “cantor/lead singer” starts a song with an intriguing and usually metaphoric and/or proverbial statement (A) which, though

puzzling and/or incomplete grabs the listeners' attention. This first statement may be repeated, but rarely in an exact form or with a clear variation, (A<sub>1</sub>) usually by the chorus. It is followed by a second statement (B), which is usually longer in length and/or more elaborate and seeks to clarify the meaning of the first statement in some cases and, in others, adds another dimension to what the first statement implies. This second phrase may also be repeated verbatim, but usually is done with significant variation (B<sub>1</sub>), or it may incorporate portions of the first statement (ba). Finally, there is often a reiteration of the first statement, sung by the entire group. This may take one of two forms: (A) an exact reiteration, as though it is being reconsidered or reinforced; or (A<sub>1</sub>) a variation, where some lexical and/or musical elements may be introduced as complements to, or emphasis on, the theme. While some of the musical variations may be due to cadential treatment, lyrical ones may result from the singers' choice of words. "*Gbea Wodo*" and "*Emode*" for example, illustrate some of the features described above.



# Gbea Wodo

Tr. jskg

A Call Resp.

Gbea wo - do lo - o gbea wo - do, gbea 'Dza - fia do gbea me - nye gbe - vo.

5 A1 Call Resp B All (chorus)

Gbea wo - do lo - o gbea wo - do, gbea 'Dza - fia do gbea me - nye gbe - vo. Xo - xo nue wo -

10 B1

gbi - na ka ye - yea - wo do, gbea wo - do gbea me - nye gbe vo. Xo - xoa nue wo -

14 A

gbi - na ka ye - yea - wo do gbea wo - do gbea me - nye gbe - vo. Gbea wo - do lo - o

18

gbea wo - do gbea 'Dza - fia do gbea me - nye gbe - vo.

Figure 7: Example 5.1.1.1 “Gbea Wodo”

## Yeve-Husago/Misego: “Gbea Wodo”

Call: //:Gbea wodo lo o gbea wodo;

Response: Gbea ‘Dzafia doa, gbea menye gbevo o://

All: //:Xoxoa nue wogbina ka yeyewo do. Gbea wodo gbea menye gbevo://

All: Gbea wodo lo o gbea wodo; Gbea ‘Dzafia doa, Gbea menye gbevo o.

## Literal translation

Call: //:The language he used, the language he used (what he said);

Resp: The language Adzafia used, the language is not a bad language://

All: //: It is by the old that the new is made. The language Adzafia used, the language is not a bad language://

All: The language he used, the language he used (what he said); The language Adzafia used, the language is not a bad language

## Emode?

Tr. jskg

Call

Resp.

Call

6

Resp.

Chorus

11

17

Fi-ka dzie mia-to-gbio to yia 'de-gbe, e - mo de ? Fi-ka dzie  
 mia - to - gbio to yia 'de-gbe, e - mo de ? 'Me-kae du za nu he gbea  
 'va ma-yi A - yi-sa-woe be mo la me-nyo. 'Mc-kac be 'mo la me-nyo 'Mc-kac du  
 za nu he - gbea 'va ma - yi, e - mo de ?

Figure 8: Example 5.1.1.2 “Emode”

### Atrikpui: “Emo De?”

Call: //: Fika dzie miatogbio to yi adegbe!

Resp: Emo de? ://

All: 'Mekae du Zo nu he gbe awa mayi? Ayisawoe be 'mo la menyo o.  
 'Mekae be mo la menyo? 'Mekae du za nu he gbea 'wa mayi,  
 Emo lae nye yi!

### Literal translation

Call: //: Where did our forefathers pass to war!

Resp: Where is the way? ://

All: Who has partaken So's meal but refused to go to battle?  
 The Ayisas<sup>150</sup> say the way is not good! Who says the way is not good?  
 Who has taken the night meal but refused to go to battle?  
 This is the way!

<sup>150</sup> Ayisa is a name of a person.

In the excerpts above, the underlined words and phrases are the places where variations usually occur. In the first example, “Gbea Wodo,” the variation shown is musical (melodic, harmonic and cadential). The second example shows possible textual variations. The word “*miatogbuiwo*,” “our grandfathers” may be replaced by “*miamamawo*,” “our grandmothers”, “*kaleawo*,” “warriors,” etc. These variations are the possible differences that one may hear in the same song sung in different communities within Anlo and also in other Ewe communities. Other common features of these songs are call and response, (solo/cantor and chorus), refrain, and mixed sectional forms. Call and response is a predominant feature. Virtually every song employs some sort of call and response which usually occurs between *hesino/heno*, the cantor (lead singer) and *haxewo/vuviawo*, the chorus (participants/musical community). It should be noted that this phenomenon is not only unique to singing (songs), but is also common in drumming and sometimes in dancing as well. During performances, a song leader, lead dancer or master drummer will make a call or a gesture, and the musical community is expected to respond immediately with a chorus, dance movement or supporting drum pattern. These repetitive interactions and complementary characteristics or phenomena are reflections of communal spirit (or communality), one of the sociocultural elements embedded in Anlo Ewe traditional culture. They also replicate the way in which most traditional African communities were built and maintained, and explain vital aspects of African societies and why they work. Community cooperation and success, individual, leadership and group responsibilities are reinforced through the singing of songs and performance of many musical traditions. Through the lifelong musical training among Anlo Ewes, effective leaders, and attentive and cooperative followers emerge to fill the roles that tradition and society have prescribed for them.

### 5.1.2. Scale and Tonal System

It is commonly known (especially to researchers focusing on Anlo Ewe music) that pentatonicism is the major tonal system used by Anlo traditional composers.<sup>151</sup> Hemitonic and anhemitonic forms of pentatonic and hexatonic scales are the predominant tonal materials used in Anlo songs. The following are examples of hemitonic and anhemitonic pentatonic scale.

1. Anhemitonic Pentatonic Scale

<sup>3</sup> (a)

<sup>4</sup> (b)

2. Hemitonic Pentatonic Scale

<sup>5</sup> (a)

<sup>6</sup> (b)

<sup>7</sup> (c)

The figure displays musical notation for two types of pentatonic scales. The first section, '1. Anhemitonic Pentatonic Scale', contains two examples: (a) and (b). Example (a) is a five-note scale starting on G4 and ending on D5, with notes G, A, B, C, and D. Example (b) is a five-note scale starting on G4 and ending on D5, with notes G, A, B, D, and E. The second section, '2. Hemitonic Pentatonic Scale', contains three examples: (a), (b), and (c). Example (a) is a five-note scale starting on G4 and ending on D5, with notes G, A, B, D, and E. Example (b) is a five-note scale starting on G4 and ending on D5, with notes G, A, B, C, and D. Example (c) is a five-note scale starting on G4 and ending on D5, with notes G, A, B, C, and D. All scales are written on a single treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

Figure 9: Example 5.1.2.1 Pentatonic Scales

<sup>151</sup> See Jones (1959), Nayo (1964), Fiagbedzi (1977), Younge (1989), Locke (1992), Dor (2001)

Anlo melodies may not always maintain the same tone as the tonal center in a piece, although there is usually a central tone to which other tones in the mode of the song gravitate. It is usual for a melody to begin and/or end on any degree of the scale in the process of melodic progression. “Kundovio” is an example.

**Kundovio**

Tr. jskg

Kun - do - vio tsoa 'me-ta de .. tu me-dio , 'ho ne-va ... Kun -  
do - woe tsoa 'me-ta de tu - me-dio - , 'ho ne-va - . Mie - le tsi-no-ko ke -  
ke Da-hu-me - , fi-fia 'ho ne-va - . Mie - le 'ha-no-ko ke - ke - Da-hu-me - , fi-fia 'ho  
ne - va - . Kun - do - vio tsoa 'me-ta de - tu me-dio - , 'ho ne-va - .

Figure 10: Example 5.1.2.2 “Kundovio”

**Atrikpui: “Kundovio Tso Ameta”**

Kundovio tso 'meta de tu medio,  
'Hor neva!  
Kundoawoe tso 'meta de tu medio,  
'Hor neva!  
Miele tsinoko keke Dahume;  
Fifia, 'hor neva.  
Miele 'hanokor keke 'Dahume;

Fifia hor neva.  
Kundoawoe tso ameta de tu medio,  
Ahor neva.

**Literal translation**

Kundo's children have killed without a gunshot,  
Let there be war!  
The Kundos' have killed without gunfire,  
Let there be war!  
We went drinking water in Dahumey;  
Right now, let there be war!  
We went drinking wine in 'Dahumey;  
Right away, let there be war.  
The Kundos' have killed without gunfire

**5.1.3. Melodic Organization**

Unlike scale and modal uniqueness, there is no common melodic shape or progression in Anlo songs. There are usually combinations of different melodic shapes, such as pendulum seconds and thirds, repeated melodic tones, gap-filled melodic structures,<sup>152</sup> scale fragments and stepwise movements, skipped tones and neighbor tones, ascending and descending scalar phrase structures, and melodic movements. This combination notwithstanding, some melodic shapes are more common than others. This may be due to the fact that melodic progression of most of the songs is conditioned and/or influenced by the phonemic tone or contour of the texts used. Ewe is a tonal language and as such exerts tremendous influence on melodic movement of vocal music, drum language and other instrumental pieces. The tonal and melodic progressions of most of the songs try to depict the three main tone bands or contour lines (low, medium and high) that are usually recognized and used in spoken Ewe language.<sup>153</sup> However, this is not to say that all Anlo Ewe traditional melodies strictly follow the tonal inflections of the spoken language. There are

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<sup>152</sup> A gap-filled melodic structure is a progression in which a wide intervallic gap created as a result of a leap is immediately filled with stepwise motion of inner tones the leap skipped.

<sup>153</sup> See Fiagbedzi (1977), Agawu (1990), and Dor (2001)

some authentic traditional songs that explicitly violate this general phenomenon of melodic tone-language contour agreement. As is typical of Anlo melodic movements, the songs in this thesis predominantly use movements of seconds and thirds. While fourths and fifths are quite frequently used, sixths, sevenths and octaves are rare.

#### **5.1.4. Harmonic Organization**

Anlo Ewe traditional harmony, which is the result of performance roles, arises out of melodic processes, hence depends largely and is closely linked with the scales and modal systems on which the melody is based.<sup>154</sup> In other words, harmonic procedures in Anlo Ewe traditional vocal music reciprocally influence melodic organization.<sup>155</sup> In Anlo Ewe musical practice, it is uncommon to have an exact repetition of a musical phrase, be it melodic, harmonic or even textual.<sup>156</sup> There is usually some form of modification either in the melodic progression, harmonic structure or in the text. The different modifications and transformations that occur contribute to the general harmonic structure of the piece. Parallelism is one of the prominent features of part singing in Anlo Ewe vocal music. Other polyphonic devices employed include overlapping, part crossing polarity, and coupling. Common harmonic intervals of Anlo vocal music and as such of most of the songs in this work include 4ths, 5ths and 8ves, usually in parallel motion. Among these, the fourth is the most important and most commonly used interval besides the octave. The harmonic fourth usually occurs at sporadic points of the piece and at the cadences. The fifth, an inversion of the fourth, is yet another important and frequently heard

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<sup>154</sup> See Fiagbedzi (1977, 1997), Younge (1989, 1992), and Dor (2001)

<sup>155</sup> Blacking also observed a similar phenomenon in the compositional process of Venda songs where he indicated that harmonic progressions are determinants of melodic creation and design during the compositional process. See Blacking, (1967: 109-167, 177-179)

<sup>156</sup> See Fiagbedzi, (1977: 249-262), Avorgbedor (1981), Anyidoho (1983: 300-309)

harmonic interval which usually occurs at points of voice separation. Thirds and sixths may be heard sporadically between fourths and fifths. Intervals of 2nds and 7ths are seldom used.<sup>157</sup>

### 5.1.5. Rhythmic Structure

Rhythmically, Anlo songs are not as complex as the instrumental pieces. Both strict and “relaxed”<sup>158</sup> rhythms are employed. The songs discussed in this work could rhythmically be organized in two main groups. The first group comprises those that are accompanied by drum and other percussive instruments and have strict metric movements based on time circles (timelines) that are usually maintained by either *gankogui* (double bell) or *atoke* (slit/boat/banana bell). The second group of songs may be described as those with loosely metered rhythmic movement or relaxed metric progression. Though the latter is usually not accompanied by drums, it is not strictly *a cappella*. The songs may be accompanied with *gankogui*, *axatse/akaye* (rattle) and other smaller percussive instruments. Any percussive accompaniment to this category of songs may not strictly or necessarily follow the rhythmic pattern, meter or tempo of the songs. The basic timecircles used to accompany most of the songs are discussed under the various genres and ensembles below. See appendix for examples of the songs.

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<sup>157</sup> See Dor (2001: 226-245)

<sup>158</sup> For lack of appropriate terminology, I prefer to use ‘relaxed’ rhythm to “free” rhythm. This is because I do not think what is usually termed “free rhythm” is or can really be free. To a very large extent, the “free” rhythmic songs or pieces have definite durational, time span, framework and tempo within which they are rendered.



## 5.2. GENRE

The songs discussed in this work were drawn from one or more of the following genres; *adzohu/adzogbo*, *afavu*, *yevevu*, *atamga*, *atrikpui*, *kpegisu*, *akpoka*, *gadzo*, *agbeko/atsiagbeko*, and *kokuvu*.

### 5.2.1. Adzogbo/Adzohu

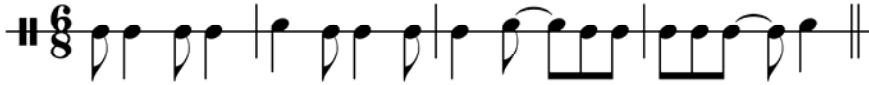
*Adzogbo* is a warrior dance that originated from the ancient kingdom of Dahomey, the ancestral home of the Ewe and Fon-speaking people of West Africa. Besides its songs, it is one of the most complex of Ewe dances.<sup>159</sup> Though originally a war dance, *adzogbo* evolved into, and has remained, a recreational dance since the pacification of West Africa in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Adzogbo* has three main movements or sections, including *ago*, *atsia* and *kadodo*. *Ago* is the processional part that brings dancers into the performance ground. It is a rite of consecration composed of several ritualistic dance and song episodes, during which the divinity of *adzogbo* is said to first manifest its presence. *Kadodo* is a less formal movement primarily for entertainment and fellowship. The performers form a communal circle to dance in a side-to-side motion and sing historic songs of pride and accomplishment. *Atsia* is the series of episodes in which battlefield maneuvers are enacted and the dancers display their virtuosity and agility. Here the performers reenact the historic use of *adzogbo* as a medium for divining battle strategies. Generally, songs of *ago* are sacred, spiritual and ritualistic. Its basic bell pattern is:



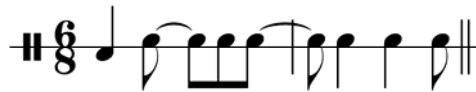
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<sup>159</sup> See chapter 4 and also Locke and Agbeli (1980)

*Kadodo* songs on the other hand are more informal but focus highly on historic issues and also try to build the morale and confidence of besieged citizens in times of war or disaster. Its basic bell pattern is:



*Atsia* songs serve basically as text for drum patterns. Their text is first recited and then sung before being played by *azaguno*, the master drummer and danced by the *atsiadola*, the style dancer. Its basic bell pattern is:



Here is an example of *Atsia* song in Adzogbo.

**De Nu Do**

Tr. jskg

Call    Resp.    Call    Resp.

'Mea 'de yi ve-du yo ge, woa - de nu do. 'Mea 'de yi ve-du yo ge woa -

5 All (Chorus)

de nu do . E - nu - gbe - yi - la me-gbca 'go ma - do . 'Mea 'de yi ve-du yo ge, woa -

9

'de nu do. 'Mea 'de

Figure 11: Example 5.2.1.1 “De Nu Do”

**Adzohu-Atsia: “De Nu Do”**

’Mea ’de yi vedu yo ge woade nu do.

’Mea ’de yi vedu yo ge woade nu do.

Enugbe yi la megbea ’go mado o.

’Mea ’de yi vedu yo ge woade nu do.

**Literal Translation**

Someone who goes calling on the gods should put his mouth on to the ground  
[should be humble or show humility].

A person who goes on a divine mission never refuses to knock

Someone who goes calling on the gods should put his mouth on to the ground

**5.2.2. Afavu**

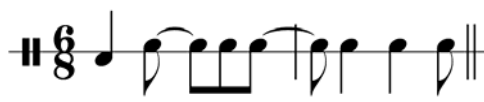
Afa is a god of divination among the Ewe of West Africa.<sup>160</sup> This religious institution, which extensively uses music and other art forms, has been described by some scholars as perhaps having one of the most complex and highly specialized forms of verbal arts among Ewe.<sup>161</sup> *Afavu* “Afa music,” (especially its songs), usually serve as the basic or introductory movement of many other Anlo Ewe musical performances (be they religious or secular). It is used to seek permission, and to invoke guidance and blessings for the performance. It is also used as a warm-up or preparatory dance for other related genres and, as such, its songs and dances are the most commonly sung and performed. It is, therefore, the most popular religious music among the Ewe. There are two principal sects in the worship of Afa. These are Afa Anago and Afa Dzisa. These names are also often used to refer to their musical accompaniments that explicitly differ only in tempo. Afa Anago is the slower and Afa Dzisa the faster one. Despite the fact that Afa music is sometimes performed informally (especially when used as an introduction to other

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<sup>160</sup> See Chapter 3, and also Anyidoho (1997)

<sup>161</sup> Ibid (1997: 144-150)

performances), it is a vital tool for true priests and priestesses<sup>162</sup> of Afa who spend a lifetime in pursuit of wisdom and spiritual growth. There is a great deal to learn, so it is no surprise that Afa songs play important roles in the learning process. In fact, Nukunya’s analogy may be useful at this point. In his article Afa “Divination in Anlo. A Preliminary Report,” he states “It has been suggested...that the amount of energy, time and knowledge that goes to qualify a person as diviner may be equivalent to if not greater than what one requires for a Ph.D.”<sup>163</sup> In addition to the spiritual values, the moral values of the people and their historic events are deeply grounded in the highly metaphorical Afa songs, which help a great deal in the training of Afa priests. The songs of Afa teach, among other things, the meaning of each *edu* (plural *eduwo*), “the symbol configurations to which various divination verses are attached,” and what must be done when that pattern is cast. Afa songs also guide and instruct disciples towards success in their religious pursuits. In fact, like so many other things among Ewe and Africans in general, the spiritual, historical and philosophical lessons are largely learned through songs. In Afa, songs are like instructional manual for the religious. It is emphasized that the theory of knowledge and intellectual history that Afa tradition establishes is as exhilarating and reliable a field and resource as that found in any culture.<sup>164</sup> There is usually one basic timeline (bell pattern) for Afa music.




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<sup>162</sup> In discussing Afa and Yeve during my interview with Bokoga Togbui Kumedzro (an Afa high priest and a paternal uncle of the author), he used *boko* and *afashie* “priest and priestess” to refer to any member (devotee) of the congregation, not just the leaders. His explanation to this when I questioned it was that, even though there are *Tobokogawo* and *Amegashigawo* “high priest and priestesses,” all initiates of the religion have equal access to the divine agents and have the right to perform the same rites and rituals. “Because we are all ordained we are all priests and priestesses. The hierarchy is determined by other factors, for instance it is not everyone that is *Toboko* or *Amegashie* (a diviner),” he reiterates. Personal interview at Dzodze-Fiagbedu, Ghana on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 2003.

<sup>163</sup> Nukunya (1969: 9-26). See also Anyidoho (1997: 144-146), and Abimbola (1976: 18-20)

<sup>164</sup> See *Ibid.*

Tempo is one major feature that differentiates between different Afa movements. Here is an example of Afa song

**Dzo Yi Adza**

Tr. jskg

Dzo yia 'Dza, gbe - ti dzo yia 'Dza - e - , A - fa me - nye mia - de wo -

5 dzo leo. Dzo yia 'Dza e gbe - ti dzo yia 'Dza e - . A - fa me - nye mia - de wo - dzo leo. Dzo yia

10 'Dzae gbe - ti dzo yia 'Dzae - . A - fa me - nye de wo - dzo leo. Dzo yia dza gbe - ti dzo yia

15 'Dzae. A - fa nye mia wo - - dzo - leo. - - Dzo - yi -

*D.S. al Fine*

Figure 12: Example 5.2.2.1 “Dzo Yi Adza”

**Afa-Anago: “Dzo yi Adza”**

Dzo yi Adza ‘gbetsi (gbeti) dzo yi Adza ee,  
Afa menye miade wodzo le o

**Literal Translation**

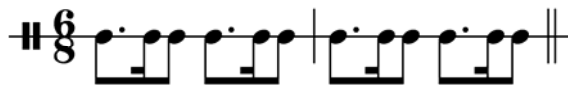
Gone to *Adza*, *gbetsi*<sup>165</sup> has left for *Adza ee*,  
Afa did not originate from your town.

<sup>165</sup> A spirit. It sometimes refers to dwarfs who Ewes believe are spirits and/or have supernatural powers.

### 5.2.3. Yevevu

Yeve, the god of thunder and lightning, like Afa is a religious institution among the Southern Ewe of West Africa and also among the Yoruba of Nigeria where the god is known as Shango.<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless, unlike *afavu*, participation in *yevevu* (Yeve music and dance) is restricted only to devotees of the god except as spectators.<sup>167</sup> The music is appropriate only for specific occasions and also on the requirements of the rituals involved. *Yevevu* is distinct from other Ewe musical types due to its general structure. *Yevevu* is considered a suite of seven to nine dance forms, movements or musical styles. Each movement and song is related to specific phases of worship. The seven major dance movements include *akpedada*, *husago*, *sogbadze/sogba*, *avlevu*, *adavu*, *afovu/afotoe*, and *sovu*. Like Afa, Yeve songs play important roles in the religious celebrations and in the life of the people. The song texts recount the history of the people, touch on the various attributes of the god and also praise the ancestors and leaders of a particular shrine. In fact, it should be noted that *husago*, one of the major movements or dance forms of *yevevu*, and its songs symbolize the great migration of Ewes from Notsie (their last and most recent ancestral home).<sup>168</sup> Below are *yevevu* bell patterns and an example of *husago* song.

1



2.

<sup>166</sup> See chapter 3 page 31 and also Amoaku (1975: 244-245)

<sup>167</sup> Sometimes non members are allowed if and only if they observe certain prescribed rules and go through some basic ritual processes as partial, temporal and/or affiliate members. Usually, to be accepted as a spectator, one needs to obey certain rules within a given perimeter of the performance arena

<sup>168</sup> See chapter 3 page 40-42, and also Avorgbedor (1987)



3.



4.



Bellow is an example of Yeve (*husago*) song, “*Gbea Wodo*.”

**Gbea Wodo** Tr. jskg

A Call Resp.  
Gbea wo - do lo - o gbea wo - do, gbea 'Dza-fia do gbea me-nye gbe-vo.

5 A1 Call Resp B All (chorus)  
Gbea wo-do lo-o gbea wo-do, gbea 'Dza-fia do gbea me-nye gbe-vo. Xo-xo nue wo-

10 B1  
gbi-na ka ye - yea - wo do, gbea wo - do gbea me-nye gbe vo. Xo-xoa nue wo -

14 A  
gbi-na ka ye - yea - wo do gbea wo - do gbea me-nye gbe-vo. Gbea wo - do lo - o

18  
gbea wo - do gbea 'Dza-fia do gbea me-nye gbe-vo.

Figure 13: Example 5.2.3.1 “Gbea Wodo”

#### 5.2.4. Gadzo, Atrikpui, Atsiagbeko and Kpegisu

All of these dance-drumming genres are Anlo Ewe war dances that originated from Dahomey and Notsie. Fiagbedzi puts the dates of origin of these musical types and other *Amegaxoxovuwo* to be between 1650-1886.<sup>169</sup> Originally, some of these dances were performed before war, and some during and after war. *Gadzo*’s origin is traced to Notsie. It is performed after war so that

<sup>169</sup> See Nissio Fiagbedzi (1977)



the warriors could display and re-enact battle scenes for those at home. *Atrikpui*, which is also called *kalevu*, “music for the brave” or *nutsuvu*, “music for men,” was associated with warriors of old. The name *atrikpu* is derived from the warriors’ historical statement “*negbe deko miakuatri; negbe deko miaku kpuide*” which means “at worst, we can only die instantly or die shortly.” *Atrikpui*, therefore, refers to the instant death associated with war. *Atrikpui*, regarded as one of the oldest Ewe war dances, was performed before and during war, but sometimes was also performed after war in olden days to mourn defeat or celebrate victory. There were and are still specific songs for every occasion relating to the mood, period and event.

Like *gadzo* and *atrikpu*, *atsiagbeko/agbeko* is identified as one of the oldest traditional war dances of the Ewe of southern West Africa. There are two opinions about the origin of *atsiagbeko*. One narrative tells that one of the great Ewe warriors and hunters first saw monkeys perform it, and he learned it from them and it was subsequently adopted by other warriors and later by the community as a whole. Another narrative states that *atsiagbeko* evolved from an older war dance called *atamga*, “the great oath,” at a time when the dance was performed exclusively by warriors and for military purposes. The name changed to *agbeko*, meaning “life is free” or “life is clear,” apparently when there were no more wars and the people believed their life and very existence was devoid of conflict and wars. In the olden days, the dance was performed after battle when warriors demonstrated the deeds, valor, and feats they attained on the battle field; hence, the word *atsia*, “style’ or ‘display” was added to the root *agbeko* to give us the term “*atsiagbeko*” as we have it today. Although it is difficult reconciling these two narratives about its origin, one can argue both cases. Since the majority of Ewe warriors in the olden days were not only noted hunters, but also war leaders and commanders, the ‘monkey origin’ is a possibility. Secondly, the many dance movements that explicitly depict war scenes,

military tactics, and maneuvers and numerous song texts attest to its being a warriors' dance. The two narratives agree on one fact: that *Atsiagbeko* is a warriors' dance. Almost all the war genres discussed here use the same bell pattern as timeline. This notwithstanding, there are clear differences between them. These differences are mainly in the dance movements, drum patterns, songs, instrumentation, costume and tempo.<sup>170</sup>

*Kpegisu* is a war dance that was instituted in honor of brave women. Unlike *adzogbo*, *gadzo*, *atamga* (which later became *atsiagbekor*), and *atrikpui*, which were musical traditions brought from Notsie, *kpegisu* evolved after Anlo had been established. It was one of the musical genres that were established as a result of war and its consequences. Having lost her only son in one of the ferocious wars Anlo fought, Yakagbe<sup>171</sup> was so devastated that she vowed revenge. In her lamentation song, she commented on how inadequately prepared Anlo was for that battle in which her son was killed. "Our sons have set *agobodzo*,<sup>172</sup> in which there is no charcoal (or much fuel) to keep it burning." In her determination to retaliate, she defied tradition and forcefully joined the team of men who strengthened the Anlo forces at the battlefield. Yakagbe was said to have fought shoulder to shoulder with her male counterparts in that battle (in which Anlo become victorious) as well as in subsequent ones. Her gallantry, military feats and bravery brought about major changes in gender roles and perceptions in Anlo. *Kpegisu* was, therefore, established in honor of all brave women who have distinguished themselves and whose deeds have benefited the state in various ways. Hence, from its inception, women have assumed some major musical roles (especially in drumming), not only in *kpegisu* performance, but also in other genres in Anlo, especially in Klikor, the home town of Yakagbe. Since the actions of Yakagbe, the roles of Ewe women have been redefined, and women's activities in various institutions

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<sup>170</sup> See Fiagbedzi (1977), Lock and Agbeli (1980), and Younge (1989, 1992)

<sup>171</sup> One of the brave Anlo women in whose honor *kpegisu* was instituted.

<sup>172</sup> "Agobo" means "corn husk" and "dzo" means "fire". Hence *agobodzo* refers to fire made with corn husk.

(such as drumming, military and politics) have never been the same.<sup>173</sup> Although men perform *kpegisu* and continue to dominate other dance-drumming genres, Yakagbe has shown that, given the chance and equal opportunity, women could do as well as, if not better than, men in previously male-dominated fields in Anlo. *Kpegisu* songs and other musical characteristics are not much different from other war genres mentioned above. The basic differences can be seen in dance movements, drum patterns and tempo of some sections and styles. Below is a song from one of the war genres (*atrikpui*) discussed above. Readers may also refer to the appendixes for examples of songs from other genres.

**Axolu Menye Ame Vo O**

Tr. jskg

'Xo - lu me - nyea 'me vo hee. Oo! mi - yo 'Xo - lu ne - va. 'Xo - lu me - nyea

'me vo de - keo. A - za sua 'gbe vò, mi - yo 'Xo - lu ne - va. 'Xo - lu me - nyea

Figure 14: Example 5.2.4.1 “Axolu Menye Ame Vo O”

**Atrikpui/Akpoka: “Axolu Menye Ame Vo O”**

'Xolu menya 'mevo o hee,  
 O! Miyo 'Xolu neva.  
 'Xolu menye 'mevo deke o,  
 Aza so gbe vo;  
 Miyo Axolu neva.

<sup>173</sup> See Locke (1992) and Dor (2001: 79-80)

### **Literal Translation**

'Xolu is never a bad person,  
Oh! Call 'Xolu to come.  
'Xolu is never one bad person,  
The day has come,  
Call 'Xolu to come.

## **5.3. LINGUISTIC CONSIDERATIONS**

### **5.3.1. Language, Text and Theme**

The song texts of these genres are mostly in Ewe, Fon,<sup>174</sup> and/or a mixture of the two languages, or even their corrupted versions. The old age of the songs resulted in some of the words being termed “*gbetsitsi/Wegbetsitsi*,” meaning “old language/old Ewe,” as some are not only from other Dahomean languages but also from Yoruba in Nigeria. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to understand some of the songs during their performance. The underlying themes of many of the songs are historical, spiritual and military. Proverbs and many allusive texts and references are common in these songs. Song texts generally refer to divinities, gods, ancestors, conflicts, military, and war circumstances, such as stress, courage, loyalty, death, cowardice and sorrow, as well as social commentary on topical issues. These songs constitute a very important part of the heritage of Ewe oral literature as seen in their texts. Currently, these dances are performed by all (irrespective of sex or age) during *zikpuizawo*, “ancestral stool festivals,” *Hogbetsotsoza*, ‘Anlo State festival,’ funerals of kings, chiefs, queenmothers, elders, statesmen, and stateswomen, as well as of members of the specific musical groups. Besides the above situations, these dances are

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<sup>174</sup> Fo is spoken in the Republic of Benin and is closely related to Ewe. The two languages and their speakers trace their ancestry to one source.

performed during rites for the state deities and gods such as Nyigbla, Hugbato, and Gbe. Professional and amateur dance groups and companies are also currently performing these dances for entertainment.

### **5.3.2. Song Text and Meaning**

As seen in all the songs analyzed in this thesis, Anlo Ewe traditional songs have at least two layers of meaning, as occurs in many other cultures, especially in African societies. Anlo traditional composers (like many others the world over), are poets who rely heavily on proverbs, imagery, metaphor and other linguistic and artistic devices in their attempts to capture and transmit a whole event, story or thought in the shortest and simplest, but deepest, form. Besides that, the language typically used is very old and replete with ancient historical, cultural and religious references, not all of which are understood by even the average native speaker. The evolution of the Ewe language over time and space contributes to these difficulties, not to mention the fact that some songs use a mixture of two or more languages (for instance Fon and Ewe as mentioned above). Hence, total and deeper comprehension of the songs demands knowledge of other fields of the culture as well as personal experiences in the tradition. Usually, there is a superficial descriptive layer, surface or facial meaning (which I refer to as “literal meaning”), which though meaningful in its original language, sometimes may not even make sense from a linguistic perspective when translated into a different language. There is also a deeper, proverbial or actual meaning which may often be hidden or enigmatic to the layman<sup>175</sup> or the cultural novice (even in the original language). The deeper meaning is often the message that the composer wishes to send out. The literal meaning may present vastly different concepts and

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<sup>175</sup> Layman is used here to refer to someone whose knowledge and linguistic skills are limited to just daily language use and whose cultural and musical knowledge of the tradition is very limited.

comprehension to people of different ages, cultural and traditional orientation and upbringing, religious beliefs and social status. To any listener and/or performer, new meanings (deeper/actual meanings) become apparent as one passes through the various stages of life and of traditional cultural education and awareness. For instance, songs from Western cultures about snow, ice and other intemperate weather conditions may require personal experiences (by an Ewe born and raised in Ghana) with these things to be fully understood. How easy or possible is it for a person who has never seen or heard of a train, or who knows nothing about its role in the development of the United States, to appreciate an American song that features a train as its main metaphor or theme? In the same way, any outsider to Anlo Ewe culture (or even a historically and/or culturally unoriented young Ewe) may not be able to fully comprehend an Anlo Ewe traditional song that features Kundo, Notsie or *Klilinu* as its main theme. In all these cases, however, a lot of insightful help from translation,<sup>176</sup> research, or orientation into the culture may be helpful. Hence, dealing with research of this nature requires deeper knowledge of Ewe language and its linguistic evolution, as well as further insight into Anlo Ewe traditional culture and musical tradition.

#### **5.4. SCHOLARLY THOUGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS**

In this section, I will look at some colonial influences: 1) their impact on Anlo Ewe traditions and culture in particular and that of Africa in general; and 2) how different scholars and schools of thought have commented on them. I will also touch on how others perceive and regard what

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<sup>176</sup> Although translating a song text from one language into another poses other challenges, it nevertheless helps to a great extent.

the Ewe hold and believe as historical facts. I will finally discuss the implications of these schools of thought for my thesis which sees and focuses on music as one of the major means of sustaining the importance of Ewe historical scholarship.

Scholarly works on Africa since the early nineteenth century by colonial administrators, missionaries and later by anthropologists have revealed and recorded in great detail the extent to which colonial rule brought massive challenges to those who were colonized. Sandra Greene, commenting on the impact of colonial and missionary works among the Anlo Ewe, writes:

Indigenous political systems were severely disrupted or destroyed altogether. Local and regional economies were reorganized for the primary benefit of the colonizer. Ideological notions that accompanied colonial rule devalued the cultures of those whom the Europeans conquered and greatly influenced the milieu in which the colonized were forced to operate. “Natives” were defined in the most negative terms according to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European notions of proper dress, sexual behavior, gender relations, technological achievements, education, linguistic development, mental capacity, and so forth. Africans were exhorted to adopt European culture and religion if they ever hoped to become “civilized.” They were encouraged to abandon those customs and beliefs that held them in a primitive state. Adoption of European practices, however, rarely guaranteed acceptance, and this fueled further frustration among the colonized. Resistance took a variety of forms, from open rebellion to passive resistance to selective adoption of European culture and beliefs.<sup>177</sup>

Besides local conflicts with their neighbors, the impact of colonialism on the Anlo Ewe, and the various ways in which they sought to resist these developments, were no different from that described above. My focus is on how Ewe communities used music and dance and other local narratives as a means to resist, and later to cope with, the assault on their culture. Among such assaults was the undermining of the traditional political sub-culture, musical sub-culture, and the sound and well-grounded social and moral sub-cultures. The fact that the Anlo were suspicious of the missionaries when they brought western education and schooling system cannot be overemphasized. Though they were constantly convinced and forced to accept the notion that

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<sup>177</sup> Greene (2002: 31)

Christianity and schooling would bring them “salvation,” they knew the colonial masters and missionaries were about to undermine their religious and belief system, hence destroying their culture. As Mamattah explicitly put it:

The black African has painfully learnt from the distortions of facts of history to be suspicious, circumspect and discreet. We suspect most the ‘early European’ be he western or eastern, for his advent on the African scene has seriously set back the hand of the clock of natural progress and ordered evolution under God’s guidance. We also suspect the ‘missionary’ who in his ignorance imagines that we as ‘heathens’ and in our blindness of heart bow down to wood and stone (inanimate beings). We further suspect all our overseas ‘traders’ because they often play pranks and the giddy-goat with our products and turn them back to us at incredible costs.<sup>178</sup>

Although, I do not totally agree with Mamattah, especially on the statement that the “natural progress and ordered evolution under God’s guidance” was set back, his thoughts no doubt more or less echo those of our forebears as represented in many narratives and musical activities. Furthermore, his utterances are to a large extent strengthened by those of some Western authorities and scholars. For example, it was recorded that in his pamphlet, “Homage to Three Great Men,” Dr. R. E. G. Anani Armattoe quotes Dr. Albert Schweitzer<sup>179</sup> of Guensback and Lambarene, as saying: “Anything we give to the coloured people is not benevolence but atonement. For everyone who scattered injury, someone ought to go out to take help, and when we have done all that is in our power, we shall not have atoned for the thousandth part of our guilt.”<sup>180</sup> As recently as 1997, Richard Grinker and Christopher Steiner in their introduction to “Perspectives on Africa” (1997) noted that at different points in history, scholars have painted negative images of Africa as a strategy of endorsing various Western activities on the continent. Such activities as the slave trade, military occupation, colonial expansionism, Christian

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<sup>178</sup> Mamattah (1978: 12)

<sup>179</sup> Dr. Schweitzer was described as a famous theologian, scholar, humanist, musician, philosopher, physician and missionary. Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> As quoted by Mamattah (1978: 12)



evangelical conversion, and even now, the terms and conditions of the World Bank and IMF loans, are clear and good examples of how Western representations of Africa could be used for self-aggrandizement and self-interested goals. With these, Mamattah cannot be said to have gone too far, but rather to have hit the nail right on the head.

In the early years of British and German rule over Eweland, the colonial master arbitrarily elevated individuals (who had been trained and brainwashed but had no legitimate traditional political rights) to positions to represent their communities. Although the legitimate political rulers and/or elders vehemently objected to these violations of traditional authority and respect for the elderly, the colonizers paid no heed. Even though later adjustments (and efforts to recognize the legitimate rulers and encourage traditional respect after achieving their motives and gains for such violations) were made, the very nature of the colonial system and missionary works permitted and often encouraged these “local leaders” to abuse their authority. This was a devastating blow to respect for authority in Anlo. The fight against this change in the culture of morality, authority and social order among the people took many forms. Among the obvious and the most interesting forms was the popularity of narratives and musical activities that reinforced elderly authority. Beside the performance of the older genres, many songs mostly of *dekadzevuwo*<sup>181</sup> (which have not been covered by this work), were composed, sung and propagated as resistance to the strange phenomenon and also as an indirect way of reminding the recalcitrant citizens of the violations and the consequences that they may face. Many of these songs were established on some popular historical narratives that serve as reference points any time one wants to talk about respect and social order in Anlo. According to Greene (2002) and also Mamattah (1978), one such narrative (quite popular from at least the 1830s) was the story of Tsali and Akplomeda.

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<sup>181</sup> See chapter 2.

One day in a fit of anger, Tsali ... challenged his father to a public display of supernatural powers (*amlimatsitsi*). In response to this challenge, the father [Akplomeda], removed his own intestines, washed them in an herbal preparation and dried them to give more years of life to himself. Tsali turned into a hawk and carried his father's intestines away into space. Tsali searched in vain for the tallest tree on which to settle and swallow the intestines of his father. But Akplomeda [had] commanded all the trees in the vicinity to be dwarfed. [He then] turned himself into the tallest tree upon which Tsali came to settle. Before Tsali could swallow his father's intestines, Akplomeda reached out his hands and Tsali dropped the intestines right into his father's unseen palms. Akplomeda [then] ridiculed his son with the words: You know how to turn into a hawk as I had taught you, but you don't know how to turn into a silk-cotton tree.<sup>182</sup>

This story admonishes the young to know their place in society. As the Ewe proverb goes “Vi mekoa to de dzi be nekpo nyi da o” literally meaning “a child does not carry the father high up to see afar”—that the father is more knowledgeable than the son, and the son should, therefore, show due respect. Like Kundo, there are many narratives in Anlo about Akplomada and Tsali, their spiritual powers, feats and relationship with the supernatural world.<sup>183</sup> They are symbols of great power whose lives and deeds are exemplary for all their descendants. Tsali's persona and spiritual feats have great influence on Anlo Ewe perception of the supernatural world. For the Anlo Ewe, the supernatural is part and parcel of the living. As Anyidoho puts it, “the Ewe accept the supernatural as a significant and inevitable dimension of our existence, and occult power and its workings may not be any more mysterious than the results of a closely guarded, complicated experiment in nuclear physics.”<sup>184</sup> However, the element of supernatural (such as above) is one aspect of xotutu “historical narratives” that often becomes contentious in historical classification, analysis and interpretation in the scholarly world. Some scholars instantly brand these narratives as myths that have no realistic bases. The many songs analyzed in the preceding chapters attest to the fact that, to a large extent, many of these narratives, events

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<sup>182</sup> Mamattah (1978: 328). See also Greene (2002)

<sup>183</sup> See Ibid and Anyidoho (1997)

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, p. 135.

and figures labeled by some as myths, legends and mythical heroes were actually historical events and personages. Commenting on Herskovits' (1958) discussion and comments<sup>185</sup> on the problem of taxonomy of Dahomean narratives, Anyidoho states; "the least we can do is to be aware of the possibility that those narratives we may classify as legends may in fact be nothing less than historical facts for those we are studying"<sup>186</sup> In the same way, if these song texts had no actual bearing on the Ewe's very existence, then the musicians would not have utilized them as they did. Besides the impact and bearing on them and their communities, whatever artists create is more or less a reflection of some (if not all) aspects of their experiences as individuals or as a society. Much as earlier scholars brushed these issues aside and considered them unrealistic without a second thought, there is the need for modern researchers to take into consideration the opinions and views of those they study today. How does the researcher's unbelief and scholarly views deal fairly with the beliefs and traditional views of the researched if we still continue with the "old school of thought"? If really we consider ourselves as "modern scholars" then it is time we begin to give thought to many things our predecessors have branded and labeled as "myths," "primitive," "dark" and "unscholarly" and therefore pushed aside. We must not hold too rigidly to our scholarly convictions and beliefs and continue to sing (in disguise) those old songs our forebears sung without really trying to understand them and putting them into modern context. I think humanity stands to benefit if we succeed in reconciling the opinions of both the researcher and the researched. This is what I have tried to do in this study and would continue to advocate in my future studies.

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<sup>185</sup>Here, Herskovits looked at issues of taxonomy of Dahomean narratives where he discusses the dichotomy between scholarly rationalizations of such narrative genres and what the people themselves maintained.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

## 5.5. CONCLUSION

The survival of any type of music is dependent upon the extent to which the music is able to satisfy the values the people seek in it. The values, which may be aesthetic or structural, social, historical or religious, may operate individually or in a simultaneous complexity. In other words, the factors that shape and maintain the music, the text and all other things associated with it may be found in the music per se, in the artist or in the context of performance as well as the rationale behind the composition and performance of such musical works. Besides that, the poetic creativity that goes into the composition of these songs plays important roles in their maintenance and continuous transmission. It is clear that one of the main features that identify and help preservation and transmission of Anlo Ewe songs is its poetic integration with musical structures into a unified artistic expression. Another is the fact that these pieces are usually short and focus on one theme. There is the need for their brevity, for “they must, of necessity, be short if they are to become the functional possession of the populace.”<sup>187</sup> The composers of these historical songs probably were aware of the fact that, for such songs to survive for posterity, they must be short, simple and catching, so that the general populace, the bearers of tradition, would not have to spend long hours trying to rehearse and commit them to memory. A closer look at these songs may provide vital insights into various aspects of the popular poetic imagination of the composers. Regardless of who these original composers were, the songs rapidly became the common possession of the community and have ever remained so. The argument here is that there must be something uniquely intriguing about such songs to have appealed to, and still continue to arrest the attention of, so many people over time and space. Undoubtedly, there was

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid, p. 139

the situation of natural selection, where for every song that captured the popular imagination and interest of the people and therefore survived many centuries, there were countless others that did not live beyond their initial performances. The various musical works and activities that survived their initial censorship as well as European and other foreign influences did so because of the positive values the people saw in them. They were kept alive because, beside their musical benefits, the society used them largely as means or processes of tracing and reenacting its history and educating its children.

The songs discussed in this thesis are just a sample of many such songs that are found in diverse musical performances, not only in Anlo communities, but among all Ewe of West Africa. As a natural phenomenon, changes and variations occur as a piece of music travels in time and space. As Nketia, states: “In drawing any evidence from traditional songs we must take into account historical processes of change. Whatever its origin may have been, it has not remained unchanged in content.”<sup>188</sup> The songs discussed above and many other ones that remind us of the history of Anlo Ewe are not exceptions. However, one noticeable characteristic of these songs is that musical text, actions, dances, drum patterns and the narratives that surround them everywhere they are performed relate to the historical facts enumerated in the works. Though there may be degrees of changes, variations and differences in the melodies, form and structure as well as occasions of performance and their functions, it reminds the people of their history. The fact remains that fundamental characteristics of Anlo Ewe music are exceptionally tenacious (especially the religious and court genres) for several centuries despite some changes. Its effect on the people is so strong that it injects its values and helps maintain them in all aspects of their lives and through many generations.

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<sup>188</sup> See .Nketia (1964)

There is the need for further investigation into many other aspects of this research. Transformations may have taken place but for one to be able to discuss these aspects, one needs to extend the field of research to cover other areas where the songs were used and/or are still being performed. No theory or conclusion on the transformations in these genres and songs would be complete without some fieldwork among the Northern Ewe of Ghana, as well as the Ewe of Togo and Benin.

In order for music to have usefulness for the African, it must have presence. Not only must people be familiar with it, they must know the music and associate with it for it is through music making that the African handles forces of great potency, shapes them according to his will, and increases or decreases the power of the life force.<sup>189</sup> So, though these songs talk about history, they have presence; for they are always linked with present issues, events and contexts.

In this thesis I have dealt with “familiar” historical issues and problems in which there is obvious necessity for examining musicological evidence. But I have no doubt that musicological studies guided by an awareness of historical issues and problems of Anlo Ewe can contribute to the study of their history by providing evidence. So far, ethnomusicologists interested in Anlo Ewe music and culture have tended to confine themselves to musical material culture (focusing on drumming, rhythm, instruments etc). But there is no reason why historical investigations cannot be extended to the oral traditions that govern musical practices, or to the critical study of musical text, looking at it from various angles: 1. Its contributions to the preservation, transmission and dissemination of the history of the people; 2. Its role in moral education of the people who hold it; 3. The transformations that have and continue to occur in it and how these changes affect the life of the people; 4. Its influence on moral values of the people and on other musical traditions; 5. And its tonal material, among others.

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<sup>189</sup> See Turkson (1989: 79)

As musicologists, we have a duty to possess a sound historical knowledge of the music we study and the people who make it, not forgetting the research into how the various aspects of these musical genres we study contribute to or affect social order and moral education of the children of the society in which such music is performed. As Nketia (1964) rightly puts it:

Certainly the integration of music and social life makes the approach of the culture-historian as important to the anthropologist as to the ethnomusicologist, since he also has to proceed to the past from the present. The full range of ethnomusicological evidence must be available to the historian.<sup>190</sup>

The evidence is there, open but hidden in the musical texts, drum patterns, dance steps and musical instruments and symbols. It is only when we take interest and research into these aspects of the musical life of the people that we will be in a position to provide the needed full range of evidence and thereby be relieved of the stereotypical and erroneous notions that we have propagated over the centuries. The historians and ethnographers on African cultures still have many areas that they can explore for clues and more insight into the people in whom they are interested. So now, beside the drums and the rhythm, we may also want to “read” Anlo music if we really want to “hear” Anlo history. The music of Anlo Ewe of West Africa has more to tell the world about itself, its culture, tradition and about its people than just “intricate” rhythms and “unlimited” drum ensembles.

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<sup>190</sup> See Nketia (1964: 279)

## APPENDIX A

### LIST OF SONG TEXTS DISCUSSED

<b>Title of Song</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. De Nu Do	Adzogbo/Adzohu	28
2. Mile Afo Ne Agede	Afa	29
3. Dzo Yi Adza	Afa	30
4. Mete Se Wogbe	Afa	33
5. Aho Dzo Miyi Bo	Yeve	34
6. Wo Nutoe	Yeve	38
7. Gbea Wodo	Yeve	38
8. Mebe Misego	Yeve	39
9. Ka Xoxoa Nue	Akpoka	40
10. Mivu Agboa Mayi	Akpoka	40
11. Miawoe Nye Anlowo	Gadzo	45
12. Nesima Nlobe	Gadzo	45
13. To Ya Woe	Atsiagbeko	46
14. Atamga Ya De Miegblo	Atamga/Atrikpui	49
15. Mieyi Gadzo Do Ge	Gadzo	49
16. Emode	Atrikpui	51
17. Dze Ngo Do Tome	Atsiagbeko	51
18. Fikae Loviawo Yi	Akpoka	53
19. Miya Wua Kumi Ye	Adzogbo/Adzohu	53
20. Kundo Yi Yevuwode	Atsiagbeko	56
21. Kundovio	Atrikpui	56
22. Atsiligeli	Todziha	57
23. Axolu Menye Amevo o	Akpoka/Atrikpui	58
24. Soho Miawoe Nye So	Kpegisu	59
25. Ku Nyo Wu	Akpoka	60
26. Dzokoto Va Nyigba Dzi	Akpoka	60
27. Moxenu	Atrikpui	62
28. Klala Me Mado	Atrikpui	62
29. Kom Da De Gbe Adewo Dzi	Koku	65
30. Atsom Do Gbexo Miyia	Adzogbo/Adzohu	66
31. Klilinu	Atrikpui	68
32. Mila Yi Ahoe	Akpoka	68



## APPENDIX B

### SELECTED MUSICAL TRANSCRIPTIONS

#### De Nu Do

Tr. jskg

Call Resp. Call Resp.

'Mea 'de yi ve-du yo ge, woa - de nu do. 'Mea 'de yi ve-du yo ge woa -

5 All (Chorus)

de nu do. E - nu - gbe - yi - la me - gbea 'go ma - do. 'Mea 'de yi ve-du yo ge, woa -

9

'de nu do. 'Mea 'de

#### Klilinu

Tr. jskg

Call Resp. Call

Kli - li - nue mie - ke do vo, a - da - tsia ge - . Mia - to nu - tsu - vio, kli - li - nue mie - ke do

6 Resp.

vo a - da - tsia ge, dzi - me - le fo na - gbu - gbo.

# Gbea Wodo

Tr. jskg

A Call  
Gbea wo - do lo - o gbea wo - do, gbea 'Dza-fia do gbea me-nye gbe-vo.

5 A1 Call Resp B All (chorus)  
Gbea wo-do lo-o gbea wo-do, gbea 'Dza-fia do gbea me-nye gbe-vo. Xo-xo nue wo-

10 B1  
gbi-na ka ye - yea - wo do, gbea wo - do gbea me-nye gbe vo. Xo-xoa nue wo -

14 A  
gbi-na ka ye - yea - wo do gbea wo - do gbea me-nye gbe-vo. Gbea wo - do lo - o

18  
gbea wo - do gbea 'Dza-fia do gbea me-nye gbe-vo.

# Mila Yi Ahoe

Tr. jskg

Call Resp.

Mi-la yia 'hoe du - ko - wo la yia 'hoe loo, ne ga - me sua - mi - la

5 Call Resp. All

yia 'hoe - . Mi-la yia 'hoe du-ko-wo la 'yia fe loo, ne ga me sua - mi-la yia 'hoe. Ne za gbe

10

su vo ko - mia-ga se-mia-nko. Ke mi-no to-dzi mia-se nya-wo, ne ga-me sua mi-la

15

yia - hoe.

# Mivua Gboa Mayi

Tr. jskg

Call Resp. Call

Mi-vua 'gboa ma - yia, ka - lea-woe - ! Da - hu-me 'kla-sua-woe, mi - vua 'gboa ma -

6 Resp.

yi. Ka - lea - woe, mi - vua 'gboa ma - yi, Da - hu - me.

# Klala Me Mado

Tr. jskg

A Call Resp. Call



Kla-la-me ma-do - 'dzo - tso nu-tsu-vio, kla-la-me - ma-do - Kla-la-me -

6 Resp.



ma-do - o, 'Dzo - tso nu-tsu-viao, kla-la-me - ma-do. - Kla-la-me

# Atamga

Tr. jskg

Call Resp.



(A) - tam-ga-y'a de mic-gbloe - dzro, e - go koe mie-do - a-si ma-do

5 Call Resp.



glae loo! 'Tam - ga - y'a de mic-gbloe dzro, dza-dza - li - dza ka - ka 'si ma-do

9 Call



glae hee. 'Tam - ga y'a

# Emode?

Tr. jskg

Call Resp. Call

Fi-ka dzie mia-to-gbio to yia 'de-gbe, e - mo de ? Fi-ka dzie

6

Resp. Chorus

mia - to - gbio to yia 'de-gbe, e - mo de ? 'Me-kae du za nu he gbea

11

'va ma-yi A - yi-sa-woe be mo la me-nyo. 'Me-kae be 'mo la me-nyo 'Me-kae du

17

za nu he - gbea 'va ma - yi, e - mo de ?

# Mi Ya Wu

Tr. jskg

A Call

Tr. jskg

Resp.

Mi-ya wu ha - ku-mi - ye, to - me - lo wui - li de-gbo he - . Mi-ya

5

Call

B Call

wu ha ku-mi ye, e-lo wui-li de-gbo he. O mi-ya he. To-me-lo ma-no yia-go

11

Resp.

B1 Call

Resp.

e - ge - li ma-no woe zo - . To-me-lo ma-no yia-go e - ge - li ma-no woe - zo

17

A All

. Mi-ya wu ha - ku-mi ye e - lo - wui - li - , de-gbo he.

# Kundo Yi Yevuwo De

Tr. jskg

**A** Call Resp.

Kun-do yi ye-vuo-de me - gbo he, da-da be mi-na mia-tso gbe de dzi. Kun - do yi

**5** Call B Call

ye-vuo - de me - gbo he, mi-tso gbe de dzi. Kun - do yi dzi. Oo - ! Mia-fea

**10** Resp. Call

'va-fia-ga - ga tsia 'va me - , mie - yi-na 'va wo - ge. Oo! - Mia-fea 'va fia-ga - ga-tsi

**15** Resp. All

'va me - , mie - yi-na va wo - ge - . Mi yia 'ho, mi - yia 'ho, mi - yia 'ho. Mi -

**20** A

de so, mi-de so, mi - de so Kun - do yi ye-vuo-de me - gbo he , mi-tso gbe de dzi.

# Kundovio

Tr. jskg

A Call

Resp.

A1 Call

Kun - do - vio tsoa 'me-ta de .. tu me-dio , 'ho ne - va ... Kun -

6

Resp.

B Chorus

do - woe tsoa 'me-ta de tu - me-dio - , 'ho ne - va - . Mie - le tsi - no - ko ke -

11

B1

ke Da - hu - me - , fi - fia 'ho ne - va - . Mie - le 'ha - no - ko ke - ke - Da - hu - me - , fi - fia 'ho

17

A

ne - va - . Kun - do - vio tsoa 'me-ta de - tu me-dio - , 'ho ne - va - .

# Axolu Menye Ame Vo O

Tr. jskg

Call

Resp.

Call

'Xo - lu me - nyea 'me vo hee. Oo! mi - yo 'Xo - lu ne - va. 'Xo - lu me - nyea

6

Resp.

Fine

'me vo de - keo. A - za sua 'gbe vö, mi - yo 'Xo - lu ne - va. 'Xo - lu me - nyea



# Moxenu

Tr. jskg

A Call

Mo - xe-nue bla - gba-dza to ka me loa le ye do ee. E - mo - xe-nue bla

6

1

Call B

'gba-dza gbe ka dzie kua wum le. le. Mi doa-'me de du-me-gao

11

Resp.

B1 Call

gbo - neo - tso tu kple kpe - neo wu lo nam lo - . Mi

16

Resp.

doa 'me de 'za gua-wo gbo - neo foa 'va - yi - vuo - neo - si'a 'va nam

21

A All


loo. E - mo-xe-nue bla 'gba-dza - to ka-me lo'a le ye do ee, E - mo-xe-nue bla

27

gba - dza - - - gbe ka dzie kua 'wum le.

# Dzo Yi Adza

Call  $\%$  Tr. jskg



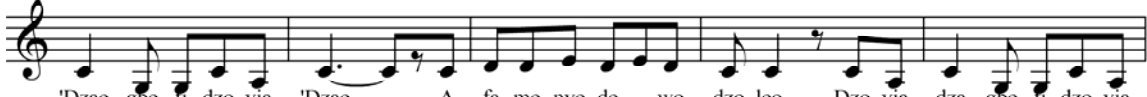
Dzo yia 'Dza, gbe-ti dzo yia 'Dza-e - , A - fa me-nye mia-de wo -

5 Resp. Fine All



dzo leo. Dzo yia 'Dza e gbe-ti dzo yia 'Dza e - . A - fa me-nye mia-de wo - dzo leo. Dzo yia

10



'Dzae gbe-ti dzo yia 'Dzae - . A - fa me-nye de wo - dzo leo. Dzo yia dza gbe-ti dzo yia

15 D.S. al Fine



'Dzae. A - fa nye mia wo - - dzo leo. - - Dzo - yi -

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