Introduction to Anlo-Ewe Culture and History

By

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Brief History Of Anlo-Ewe People

I am an Anlo-Ewe, born and raised on the island of Anyako, the largest among a cluster of island settlements surrounded by the salty waters of the Keta lagoon. These island settlements are collectively known as a major island group of the Anlo-Ewe traditional state. A major coastal group is at south of the Keta lagoon along the shores of the Atlantic ocean and a major inland group is at the north of the lagoon.

Anlo-Ewe traditional state is presently among a political union of distinct traditional states known as the republic of Ghana. The political union was created by the British government during the period of the historic Western European partitioning of Africa. It was originally called the Gold Coast and was renamed Ghana when it achieved self government on March 6, 1957. Anlo-Ewe land occupies the south eastern corner of the modern republic in an administrative region known as the volta region.

According to oral history, the Anlo-Ewe people settled at their present home around the later part of the 15th century (1474) after a dramatic escape from Notsie, an ancestral federated region currently within the borders of the modern state of Togo. The escape and subsequent resettlement are commemorated in an annual festival known as Hogbetsotsa Za.

Earlier settlements were established along seamless stretches of white sandy beaches of the Atlantic ocean, from what is now the international border between Togo and Ghana and due west to the eastern shores of the Volta river. Names assigned to some of the settlements - Keta, which means "the head of the sand," Denu, which means "the beginning of palm trees" etc. - echoed the natural endowment and beauty of the landscape they were to call home.

The close proximity of the settlements to the sea, however, offered no safety from the frequent raids for slaves by European slave traders who would navigate their ships easily to the shores of the ocean for their human cargos. The memory of these raids and the loss of entire settlement populations have been deeply imprinted on the Anlo-Ewe consciousness through the holdings of oral tradition such as folklore, myths and songs. A mass migration northward and the establishment of lagoon island settlements begun as a necessary security against becoming a slave in some strange land.
The Keta lagoon became central to the early evolution of the Anlo-Ewe traditional state. Its shallow waters were not navigable by the large slave ships and provided a much needed buffer-zone between the settlers and the aggressive slave traders.

Development of small scale marine commercial activities for sustenance began immediately. These activities included the construction of canoes for fishermen who navigated the lagoon for usable fishing sites and canoe landings. Hunters used the canoes to explore other islands and the inlands north of the lagoon for games, drinking water, farm lands and new settlement sites. Farmers shuttled by the canoes between the islands and the fertile inlands to cultivate crops. The canoe shuttle became an important tradition and a major means by which commodities and information flowed freely between the settlements.

**Evolution Of Present Community System**

Concern about security was a major element in the early history of the settlements. The distribution of the populations on the settlements followed the model of an Anlo-Ewe military culture in which the entire group was divided into three military units for more controllable precision in defense. Members of each unit would establish their homesteads at the geographical position they would defend in battle. Lashibi unit would occupy the west and were often referred to as the left wing. Adotri unit would occupy the central position and Woe unit would settle at the east or the right wing.

In peace, the mostly warlike institutions evolved into institutions of humane and hospitable civilization. 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 in battles within a centralized state system headed by a paramount chief, Awoamefia.

Membership in the community system is controlled by a patrilineal heredity that promotes a strong sense of family within a social, political and economic system of communalism. In this communal pursuit, private initiative or profit is encouraged within the realms of strong social-minded values in which family is the heart of the community and neighbors care about each other. A civilization that promotes the wish for the integration of the complex fundamental disposition of mankind. Nobody is allowed to cheat the other. The weak, the strong, the young and old all constitute an integral whole in the complex fabric of life in pursuit of a collective destiny. The most distinctive institutional result is trust, honor, compassion, sacrifice and a desire to share some part of themselves with others.

In this new political culture, the warlike past is only visible in the institution of chieftaincy as memorabilia of the heroic past or in the regalia of chiefs as symbols of their royal rights or prerogatives.

Dance-drumming is an integral part of this community life and an important necessity in the pursuit of the collective destiny, perhaps the essence of their shared experience. Everybody participates. Non participation amounts to self excommunication from society as a whole and carries with it severe consequences in a similar manner as non performance of some civic obligations in other cultures of the world.

The most severe penalty for non participation is to be denied a proper burial. Receiving a good burial is extremely important to the Anlo-Ewe. In contrast to other societies of the world that demonstrate the importance of having a good burial by buying funeral insurance from commercial funeral homes, the participation of the Anlo-Ewe in the collective and shared experiences of the community is the only insurance towards receiving the proper burial.

**Structure Of Dance-Drumming Community**
The degree of participation by each individual, however, varies and reflects a hierarchy of relative importance among the performers. This hierarchy has the elders at the top representing the chiefs and the leadership of the community. The male elders are called *vumegawo* and the female elders are called *vudadawo*. Their principal role is to provide a source of authority and advice insuring an orderly and systematic performance according to the shared traditions of the community and the entire traditional state.

The second level of the hierarchy is held by the composer (*hesino*), the master arts man, who is responsible for the creation of the distinct texture that forms the characteristic dance-drumming style. He is followed directly by the lead drummer (*azaguno*), another master arts man, who guides the entire ensemble in performing the various shared traditions of good dance-drumming.

The next level of the hierarchy includes: (a) *Tonuglawo* (ring-leaders), consisting of some more experienced participants with leadership potentials, who inspire and exhort the performers along the performance arena and provide them with examples that they emulate. (b) *Haxiawo* (supporting song leaders), who assist the composer in leading and directing the singing. (c) *Kadawo*, the whips of the musical community who enforce discipline and secure the attendance of the community members at every performance.

The fifth level of the hierarchy is occupied by the supporting drummers who assist the lead drummer in the performance of the various musical guidelines. The rest of the ensemble occupies the lowest level of the hierarchy. Their main roles are to sing, dance, and at times accompany themselves with rattles and hand claps.

**The Religious Culture**

*Anlo-Ewe* dance-drumming repertoire evolved as an essential component of three key cultures - the *religious culture*, the *military culture* and the *social culture*.

The *religious culture* embodies the knowledge about divinities, their devotional activities, the nature of the universe or the living environment and more especially, the principles of divine or moral state of living.

The *Anlo-Ewe* conceives the universe as consisting of dynamic forces which are constantly influencing each other. Mankind, in both the living (*visible*) and non-living (*invisible*) states, animals, vegetables and minerals all possess this vital force in varying amounts. As a result of the constant interaction of these forces, which at times affects human existence in negative ways, it becomes necessary for mankind to gain the knowledge and use of these natural forces in influencing his or her own existence. Hence, instead of events occurring by chance or arising from unknown causes, these events could be controlled to occur at the intention and necessity of mankind.

Everything among the *Anlo-Ewe* has a spiritual meaning or is understood in a spiritual sense. 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. Sickness, death and other misfortunes are ascribed to some divine intervention. Performance of devotional activities to the divinities and the development of some principles of divine or moral state of living rank at the top of *Anlo-Ewe* hierarchy of values.

At the top of *Anlo-Ewe* hierarchy of divinities is *Mawuga Kitikata, the Great and Overall God*. Prayers requesting blessings from the divine world often begin with the following text: "*Mawuga kitikata, adanuwoto be ye woashi kple afo*" which translated freely means "The great and overall God, the great craft-person who creates hands and feet." *Mawuga Kitikata* is believed to be everywhere and does not require a shrine and devotional activities.
Devotional activities are performed through other lower ranking divinities to Mawuga Kitikata.

The next ranking Anlo-Ewe divinity is Togbui Nyigbla, the divine protector of the traditional state, its people and the Anlo-Ewe chieftaincy stool, the most sacred symbol of royal authority among the Anlo-Ewe.

Afâ is among the favorites of Anlo-Ewe divinities. Afâ is popularly known as Kpoli (destiny) or "divinity of divination" and fulfills, among other things, the human desire to peep a little into the future through the art of divination.

Yeve is another revered divinity. Popularly known as "Tohong" or "divinity of thunder," Yeve often uses the forces of thunder and lightening in revealing concerns and anger.

Dance-drumming is a key element of the religious culture and each divinity offers a distinct repertoire for various devotional activities. These devotional activities include: rite of consecration or medium of centering oneself in the divine spirit, rite of invocation or yearning for spiritual communion with the divinity and rite of gratitude, reverence and respect for the divinity.

**Military Culture**

The military culture embodies various institutions and skills devoted to the security of the traditional state, its people and values. The most important elements of the military culture are the three military units in which the entire population was regimented. (see [structure of community](#))

In the military culture, the dance-drumming repertoire, among other things, assumes the responsibility for the emotional and spiritual preparedness of the population for battle. 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.

Sanctity of human life is the most cherished moral value among the Anlo-Ewe. Taking human life is a taboo. This value is enshrined as an essential component of a normal state of mental health.

By the nature of this breeding, the Anlo-Ewe believes warfare has devastating consequences for both the victor and the vanquished. Lost of human lives is the most severe consequence. Degrees of emotional disorder suffered by the warriors as a result of breaking the sacred taboo of not taking human life are other critical consequences.

Through the text, texture and choreography of Atrikpui dance-drumming, the warriors are also provided with the training and skill of reconciling themselves with breaking the sacred taboo before going into battle.

Another ancestral dance-drumming repertoire of the military culture is Atamga, "The Great Oath." Atamga derived its name from the highest oath of loyalty and patriotism among the Anlo-Ewe. Its text, choreography and texture drew directly from valued Anlo-Ewe war-fighting tactics, memorable military operations and the prowess of traditional heroes in dramatic and inspirational dance-drumming episodes.
Atamga's institutional responsibilities included, the military preparedness of warriors for battle and debriefing warriors for a smooth transition into normal life after battle.

During the last three centuries, the Anlo-Ewe traditional state evolved gradually into a peaceful coexistence with their neighbors and the institutional functions of Atamga also was modified. The name was changed to Agbeko which means "lives are safe" and was dedicated to the pursuit of peace through a spirited remembrance of the horrors of warfare.

Social Culture

The social culture includes institutions devoted to the development of the Anlo-Ewe human infrastructure and the welfare of the people.

Communal enculturation of every Anlo-Ewe starts from infancy and comes to climax with ceremonies and rites ushering the youth into adulthood. The enculturation process begins at the dawn of the seventh day of birth with rites and ceremonies known as "ame-hehe-de-go". "Ame-hehe-de-go" literary means outdooring a person. The major activities of "ame-hehe-de-go" include, the formal naming of a baby, introducing the baby to community and community accepting a collective guardianship.

Rite of amedzodzo or reincarnation is the next major communal activity of the enculturation process. In Anlo-Ewe belief, every new born child is a partial rebirth of an old ancestral soul in a new body. Through intense divinations, soon after birth, the ancestral soul making a new beginning is identified along with other vital information that would guide in achieving a long and happy life.

Entering puberty is another critical period of the ongoing communal assimilation into the cultural tradition of society. The young child has developed the capability of reproducing sexually and must know the social responsibilities of that biological maturity.

Puberty rites known as "nugbeto" is the communal forum in which the Anlo-Ewe female acquires the knowledge of the social responsibilities of this critical biological transition. Very respected female members of the community are the officiating elders. Their wisdom, life experience, self-esteem and self confidence provide good role models for the young adults.

The traditions of occupational groups are other vital elements of the social culture. These groups are devoted to the development of the skill and resources to sustain the occupational activities of the Anlo-Ewe. Major occupational activities include, hunting, farming, fishing, and manufacturing of a traditional cloth called kente.

Generational group activities, such as clubs organized by the youth as social platforms for expressing their perspectives on virtually every aspect of the collective agenda, are the final dimensions of the social culture. These clubs are the fermenting ground of new ideas and musical innovations as the youth prepare to take over from their parents one day.
Drums and Drumming

"La kuku dea gbe wu la gbagbe."
"A dead animal cries louder than a live one."

By

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Photo Credit: Some of the principal instruments used in Ewe dance-drumming

- Altimevu
- Sogo
- Kidi
- Kagan
- Boba (not shown above)
- Kroboto, Totodzi (not shown above)
- Gangokui, Atoke, Axatse

The principal instruments among the *Anlo-Ewe* fall under the category of vibrating membranes, metals, and gourds. A vibrating membrane is commonly called *evu* (drum). A vibrating metal is called *gankogui* (bi-tonal bell) and *atoke* (boat shaped bell), and a vibrating gourd with an external network of beads is known as *axatse* (gourd rattle).

*Evu* may be defined as a vibrating membrane fastened across the mouth of a cylindrical body caved out of a solid tree-trunk, or nowadays sometimes made by coopering curved slats into a cylindrical shape with iron bands. Striking the membrane with a stick or hand sets up a vibration that is reinforced by the vibration of the air column within the hollowed solid tree-trunk.
In Anlo-Ewe cultural understanding, a drum is a super projection of the human voice. In this view, the role and power of the drum in play embodies the Sub-Saharan concept of combining natural forces of the universe in forming the supernaturals. In the composition of this conscious experience, human force is combined with other natural forces - skin of animal, hollowed solid tree-trunk, etc. - as a medium for arousing the attention and reaction of mankind. In a variety of tonal properties - pitch, timbre, intensity, and intricate rhythms - the drum and the drummer, in mutual cooperation, create patterns of consciousness that give a moment of inspiration to those they touch.

Among the Anlo-Ewe, a legendary metaphor, "ela kuku dea 'gbe wu la gbagbe" which means, "a dead animal cries louder than a live one," is commonly used to explain the human experience that inspired the origin of the drum. A human being has a tendency to attract a lot more attention when dead than when alive. So when the need came to communicate louder, a super voice surrogate was built out of a skin of a dead animal that could deliver the message louder and clearer.

*Evu* is the generic name for a variety of drums with distinct names, shapes, sizes, timbre or characteristic tone colors, and functions. These drums are usually organized as an ensemble within a collective community system similar to the structure of the basic *Anlo-Ewe* community.

In the sections that follow, we will discuss the structures, functions, tonalities and performance techniques of the indigenous drums and other instruments of the *Anlo-Ewe*.

In describing the tonalities and rhythms of Ewe music, use is made of specific vocal syllables that imply the sound of each different tone produced by the different instruments. The meaning of these syllables, like "Ga" and "Gi" and so on, will be described in the section for each drum.

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**Atsimevu**

*Atsimevu* is the most visible drum among the instrumental resources of the *Anlo Ewe*. This is due to its traditional role as a lead drum in the organization of all basic instrumental ensemble in which it is featured.

*Atsimevu* has a carved cylindrical body of about four and one half feet tall with an expansion in the middle section of about fifteen inches in diameter and a drum head of about nine inches in diameter. The drum head or membrane is usually made out of a skin of a deer or antelope. The cylindrical body has an opening of about eight inches in diameter at the bottom to let the vibrations out.

The name *Atsimevu* was derived from the description of the manner in which the drum is tilted in a convenient playing position by the help of a functional stand called *vudetsi*. 
Atsimevu in a playing position

**Tonality And Performance Techniques**

The initial vibration of *Atsimevu* is released by striking the membrane with a full bare hand technique, a stick technique, a technique employing the fingers and their combinations. Striking different positions of the membrane and manipulating the membrane by damping it to resonate partially in varied manners produce a series of pitches which form the basic vocabulary of *Atsimevu*.

While many things affect the pitches produced by *Atsimevu* - the quality of the carved cylindrical body, the thickness, diameter and tension of the membrane etc. - the aspect that has the most significance in the area of performance is the quality of the techniques that control the release of the various frequencies of vibration. These techniques are the primary concern of the performer and we shall discuss them in the context of the pitches they produce.

The most important attribute of a good drumming technique is, perhaps, a firm relaxation of the entire body as the hands go into motion, supported in position from the elbows and not the shoulders. The elbow is only a support mechanism for the hands held in a very relaxed but firm posture. The actual swing of the hand is done from the wrist and not from the elbows.

In a performance position, the drummer stands parallel beside *Atsimevu*, which is tilted by the help of *vudetsi*, bringing the height of the drum head below the chest for a good leverage and aiming position.

Two positions of the drum head are the most commonly used for striking: the center and the peripheral zone. Stick and full hand techniques are used at the center while the technique employing the fingers is used at the periphery.
**Fundamental Pitch: "Ga"**

The fundamental vibration of the air column within the drum is released by bouncing the bare hand off the center of the membrane. This produces the lowest pitch of the drum. This pitch is commonly referred to in vocal syllable as "Ga".

**Pitch: "Gi"**

A stroke with the full fingers of the weak hand which rebounds after striking the drum head periphery produces a middle range pitch corresponding to the fundamental vibration mode of the membrane. It is identified in vocal syllable as "Gi".

Discovering the proper angle of the drum head periphery is very important for the clarity of the pitches produced by the technique employing the full fingers. This angle is commonly discovered by aligning the knuckles around the rim of the drum head, using the thumb as a guide, while the rest of the flexing fingers stretch towards the center of the drum head.
Pitch "Ki"
An alternate technique of the weak hand fingers releases a partial vibration of the membrane by pressing the fingers firmly on the drum head to prevent them from bouncing after the stroke is delivered. This technique produces a pitch commonly referred to in the vocal syllable as "Ki". In comparison with the pitch "Gi", the pitch "Ki" is higher.

Atsimevu Tonalities And Performance Techniques Continue

Pitch: "De", "Te", and "Ge"

In the understanding of a drummer, a drumming stick is an extension of the hand. It remains under constant control in order to release only the desired frequency of vibration as it strikes the membrane.

There are four types of stick drumming techniques in the art of master drumming, a basic technique and three variants of this technique. Each of these techniques produces a distinct pitch of the Atsimevu pitch series.

The basic stick technique produces a middle range pitch referred to in vocal syllables as "De", "Te" and "Ge". This is achieved by delivering a shot which rebounds after striking the exact center of the drum head, allowing the membrane to vibrate in its entirety. The syllables "De" and "Te" are normally assigned to strokes delivered by the strong hand and "Ge" is assigned to strokes produced by the weak hand. (The vocal syllables De and Te are used interchangeably)

Pitch: "Tsi"
An alternate stick-shot, approximately half the intensity of the stroke producing the pitch "De", allows only a partial vibration of the membrane by pressing the stick firmly on the drum head, at the center, as the shot is delivered. This technique produces a high range pitch known in vocal syllable as "Tsi".
Pitch "Tsì"
Alternate Stick Technique

Pitch: "To"

Delivering a stick-shot with the strong hand which rebounds after striking the center of the drum while damping the membrane by pressing it firmly at the periphery with the fingers of the weak hand produces a high range pitch known in vocal syllable as "To".

Pitch "To"
Variant Stick Technique

Pitch "Ka"

The final stick drumming technique does not utilize the drum head as the source of resonating the vibration. It strikes the expanded middle section of the cylindrical body known in the Ewe language (vegbe) as vukogo to produce an intense clap-like sound of high pitch described in vocal syllable as "Ka". In the performance of this technique, the impact of the pitch is normally reinforced by preventing the stick from bouncing as the stroke is delivered by pressing it firmly against the cylindrical body.
Pitch "Ka"
*Vukogo* Stick Technique

**Combined Techniques**
**Pitches: "Dza" and "Dzi"**

The pitch "Ka" is quite distinct from the rest of the other pitches for which the membrane is utilized as the initial source of vibration. Its intense clap-like sound can be clearly heard, in its primary role, intensifying the flavor and character of the drum music which is an orderly sequence of pitches in time known in the *Ewe* musical tradition as *vugbe* (drum speech).

In another important application, the pitch "Ka" is commonly used to accentuate other pitches to produce denser variants of those pitches. In this application, the pitch "Ka" is performed by the strong hand accentuating the pitches "Ga" and "Ki" played by the weak hand.

The pitch "Ga" played simultaneously with the pitch "Ka" produces a denser low pitch variant spoken in vocal syllable as "Dza".
Accentuating the high pitch "Ki" with the pitch "Ka" produces a denser high pitch variant known in vocal syllable as "Dzi".

The above pitches constitute the entire range of Atsimevu's useful sounds. However, there are some additional modifying terms that are used to indicate the rate of speed with which some tones are connected with one another. For example, in a segment exploiting the pitches "De" to "Ge" occurring at a duration faster than the rhythmic motion of the basic pulsation
expressing the character of the main beat, the vocal syllable "Gle" is used to describe the total occurrence of the two sounds. In a similar manner, the syllable "Vlo" is used to describe the occurrence of the pitches "Gi" to "De" at a rate of speed faster than the rhythmic motion of the basic pulsation.

In another modifying term, the phoneme "n" is added at the end of a tone to indicate a short duration of about one pulsation of the basic rhythmic motion. For example, the tone "Te" modified as "Ten" is an indication that the duration of the resonance is controlled to last for about one pulsation of the basic rhythmic motion. The drum is a surrogate for the human voice, and this action is the equivalent of closing the mouth.

In terms of a performance technique, the duration of resonance of a tone is normally controlled by damping the membrane at the periphery with a light but firm touch of the weak hand fingers. This technique is of prime importance in the articulation of the structure of a drum music or vugbe. It provides the means of indicating the basic motives, phrases and periods out of which the drum music is made.

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**Sogo**

The next most visible drum among the indigenous instrumental resources of the Anlo-Ewe is called Sogo. Sogo has a dual traditional role as lead drum in some musical structures and a supporting drum in others.

*Sogo*'s carved cylindrical shape looks somewhat like Atsimevu cut into half, just below the expansion in the middle section, and closed at the bottom. It is roughly about twenty-six inches tall with a drum head of about (nine inches in diameter and an expansion in the middle section of about fifteen inches in diameter.

The name *Sogo* was derived from a description of the shape of the drum that looks somewhat similar to the shape of a large gourd calabash commonly used in sacrificial offerings to So, an Ewe divinity associated with thunder. (lit. So - Divinity associated with thunder + go - gourd-calabash).

In performance, the player sits on a short stool behind sogo with a firm relaxed body as the hands go into motion supported in position form the elbows. The actual swing of the hand is done from the wrist.

![The drum called Sogo](image)

**Tonality And Performance Techniques**

As a lead drum, the tonality and performance techniques of *sogo* are exactly like that of *atsimevu*. As a supporting drum the most common method of releasing the initial vibration of *sogo* is by striking the membrane with a stick technique.
Support Drum Basic Pitch: "De"

There are two types of stick techniques in the art of support drumming. Each of these techniques produces a distinct pitch of the support drum pitch series.

The first stick technique produces a middle range pitch referred to in vocal syllables as "De" or "Ge". This is achieved by delivering a stick shot which rebounds after striking the center of the drum head, allowing the membrane to vibrate in its entirety. The syllables "De" is normally assigned to strokes delivered by the strong hand and "Ge" is assigned to strokes produced by the weak hand.

![Support Drum Pitch: "De" and "Ge"]

Sogo Basic Stick Technique

Support Drum Pitch "Ku" or "Tu"

An alternate stick technique releases a partial vibration of the membrane by pressing the stick firmly on the drum head to prevent it from bouncing after the stroke is delivered. This technique produces a pitch commonly referred to in the vocal syllable as "Ku" or "Tu." The syllables "Tu" is normally assigned to strokes delivered by the strong hand and "Ku" is assigned to strokes produced by the weak hand. In comparison with the pitches "De" and Ge, the pitches "Ku" and "Tu" are higher.

![Support Drum Pitch: "Ku" and "Tu"]

Pressed Stick Technique

Kidi

Kidi is the next drum among the indigenous instrumental resources of the Anlo-Ewe.

Kidi is carved in a shape just like sogo but smaller in size and higher in pitch. It is roughly about twenty-three inches tall with a drum head of about eight inches in diameter and expansion in the middle section of about fourteen inches in diameter.
Tonality And Performance Techniques

Kidi functions mostly as a supporting drum in the basic ensemble and shares the same support drum performance techniques as sogo. But since it has a higher pitch than sogo difference vocal syllables are used to indicated its pitches.

**Kidi Basic Pitch: "Ki" or "Di"**

A stick shot which rebounds after striking the center of the drum head is assigned the vocal syllables "Ki" or "Di." "Di" is normally assigned to strokes delivered by the strong hand and "Ki" is assigned to strokes produced by the weak hand.

Figure 16 ???
Pitch "Ki" and "Di"
Kidi Basic Stick Technique

**Kidi Pitch "Ku" or "Tu"**

An alternate stick technique releases a partial vibration of the membrane by pressing the stick firmly on the drum head to prevent it from bouncing after the stroke is delivered. This technique produces a pitch commonly referred to in the vocal syllable as "Ku" or "Tu." The syllables "Tu" is normally assigned to strokes delivered by the strong hand and "Ku" is assigned to strokes produced by the weak hand. In comparison with the pitches "De" and Ge, the pitches "Ku" and "Tu" are higher.

Figure 17 ???
Pitch "Ku" and "Tu"
Kidi Pressed Stick Technique

**Kagan**

Kagan is the smallest drum among the indigenous instrumental resources of the Anlo-Ewe. It's carved cylindrical body is like a copy of Atsimevu on a much reduced scale, about twenty inches tall with a drum head of about six inches in diameter, an expansion in the middle section of about nine inches in diameter and an opening of about six inches in diameter at the bottom to let the vibrations out.

Kagan is held diagonally between the legs of the drummer seated on a stool for a convenient playing angle. A technique of slapping the membrane with a slightly flexible stick is the most common means of playing kagan, which is tuned to produce the highest pitch of the entire drum ensemble.
Boba

Boba is another drum of the Anlo-Ewe indigenous instrumental resources. It has a fat cylindrical body with very unusual measurements; about thirty inches tall, a middle expansion body of nineteen inches in diameter and a drum head of about seventeen inches in diameter. There are two kinds of Boba each distinguished by the manner in which the bottom is constructed. One has a full open bottom and the other has its bottom partially covered resulting in two distinct tone colors, and functions. In play, *boba* is supported in a tilted position by the help of *vudetsi* or drum stand to let the vibrations out producing an incredible booming bass sound.

Figure 19 ???
A Sketch of Boba

Boba has a dual traditional role of lead drum in some musical structures and a supporting drum in others. As a lead drum, the performance techniques of boba are exactly like that of *atsimevu* but described in much lower vocal syllables. As a supporting drum, the techniques using full bare hand and full fingers are the most common.

Figure 20 ???
Sketches of Stick, Full Hand Full Finger Techniques of Boba

Kroboto and totodzi

Kroboto and Totodzi are constructed in similar shape and size but tuned differently. Their cylindrical bodies are the shortest among the drum ensemble of the Ewe, just about eighteen inches tall, a drum head of about ten inches in diameter, a middle expansion of thirteen inches.
in diameter and an open bottom of about ten inches. They function as supporting drums in
some drum ensembles and lead drums in others. In both capacities, stick drumming
techniques are always used. As a support drum, the performance techniques are similar to that
of sogo. As a lead drum the performance techniques are the same as atsimevu's stick
drumming techniques.

Figure 21 ???
A Sketch of Kroboto and Totodzi

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**Gankogui**

Gankogui is a vibrating iron bell hand forged in a distinct traditional shape by blacksmiths.
Popularly referred to as *gakpevi* (ga - forged iron + kpe - carrying + vi - child) "the forged
iron carrying a child," the structure of gankogui consists of a larger low pitch forged iron and
a smaller high pitch one permanently stacked together. The larger forged iron bell is
considered as the parent and smaller high pitch one is considered the child in the protective
bosom of the parent.

Gankogui is the foundation of the entire ensemble. Its voice provides the metronomic
background around which most Anlo-Ewe music is structured. A performer is often described
as blind if he or she lacks a good sense of the guiding patterns of gankogui.

Gankogui, just like drums, is conceived as a surrogate for the human voice and imitates the
manner in which the mouth produces speech. It is played with a stick technique while held in
one hand and resting on the thigh of the performer who sits on a short stool with a firm
relaxed body. The stick is swung as the hands go into motion supported from the elbows. The
actual swing of the hand is done from the wrist. The stick is struck on the full rounded portion
of the bell to achieve the best resonance. When the top high pitch is in use the forged-iron
structure rests on the thigh and when the larger low pitch is in use it is raised slightly above
the thigh. Stopping the resonance of the lower pitch after is is articulated by damping it on the
thigh is equivalent to closing the mouth and provides the means of indicating the basic
motives, phrases and periods out of which gankogui music is made.

![Gankogui](image)

**Tonality And Performance Techniques**

Two types of stick techniques are use in the art of playing gankogui, a bounced stick
technique and a pressed stick technique. A bounced stick technique allows the stick to
rebound after striking gankogui, and a pressed stick technique releases a partial vibration by pressing the stick firmly on gankogui to prevent it from bouncing after the stroke is delivered.

**Gankogui Pitch "Tin"**

A bounced stick shot across the top of the parent forged-iron produces a low pitch voice described in vocal syllable as "Tin."

![Technique of Gankogui Pitch "Tin"](image)

**Gankogui Pitch "Go"**

A bounced stick shot across the top of the child forged-iron produces a high pitch voice described in vocal syllable as "Go."

Technique of Gankogui Pitch "Go"

**Gankogui Pitch "Ka"**

A pressed stick shot across the top of the child forged-iron produces a dry and much higher pitch voice described in vocal syllable as "ka."

Figure 25
A Sketch of Gankogui Pitch "ka"

**Atoke**

Atoke is another instrument of the forged-iron family that produces a bell like tone when struck. It's traditional form is similar to a miniature boat. A thin forged iron rod is used to play it. Atoke is held in a partially open palm of the performer's weak hand, resting diagonally across from the fore finger to the heel. The iron rod beater is carried in the strong hand and rebounds as it strikes the rim of atoke producing a high ringing pitch. A pair of atoke, tuned about a fourth apart, always play together and function in a similar manner as gankogui.
Axatse

Axatse falls in the instrument category of vibrating gourd. It is made out of a gourd, hollowed out by removing the seeds, and covered with a net of beads or seeds. The sound of axatse is produced by striking it lightly on the thigh and the palm. When struck to rebound off the thigh a dry rattling sound is produced and described in the vocal syllable as "Pa." Struck in a clap-like manner by the palm it produces a rattling sound combined with a tonal component from the vibration of the air inside the gourd. This is described as "Ti" in vocal syllable.
Axatse Pitch Ti
RHYTHMIC PRINCIPLES

by C. K. Ladzekpo

"Gbe na dze ga dzi"
“The voice should sound in time”

Rhythm may be defined as the movement in time of individual sounds. In an Anlo-Ewe sense, however, rhythm is not only the whole feeling of movement in music, but also the dominant feature which, along with others, create the transcendent environment (music) necessary for the vital needs of communal communication and unification. In this communal view, rhythm provides the regular pulsation or beat which is the focal point in uniting the energies of the entire community in the pursuit of their collective destiny.

In another Anlo-Ewe definition, rhythm is an important instructional medium in the development and reinforcement of the basic Anlo-Ewe mental and moral consciousness in terms of what is real and important in life, and how life ought to be lived. In this view, rhythm is the animating and shaping force or principle that underlies the distinctive quality of being. Its medium provides the training and the logical means of subjecting contrasting forces or moments in human existence to human control. In this world, a good rhythmic sensitivity is very essential and is the most desired musical skill.

The Myth of Cross-Rhythm

At the center of a core of rhythmic traditions within which the composer conveys his ideas is the technique of cross rhythm. The technique of cross rhythm is a simultaneous use of contrasting rhythmic patterns within the same scheme of accents or meter.

In Anlo-Ewe cultural understanding, the technique of cross rhythm is a highly developed systematic interplay of varying rhythmic motions simulating the dynamics of contrasting moments or emotional stress phenomena likely to occur in actual human existence.

As a preventive prescription for extreme uneasiness of mind or self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with impending or anticipated problems, these simulated stress phenomena or cross-rhythmic figures are embodied in the art of dance-drumming as mind-nurturing exercises to modify the expression of the inherent potential of the human thought in meeting the challenges of life. The premise is that by rightly instituting the mind in coping with these simulated emotional stress phenomena, intrepidity is achieved.

Intrepidness, or resolute fearlessness, in Anlo-Ewe view, is an extraordinary strength of mind. It raises the mind above the troubles, disorders and emotions which the anticipation or sight of great perils is calculated to excite. It is by this strength that ordinary people become heroes, by maintaining themselves in a tranquil state of mind and preserving the free use of their reason under most surprising and terrible circumstances.
The Structure of African Rhythm

Beat Schemes: Rhythmic Motions

In the development of cross rhythm, there are some selected rhythmic materials or beat schemes that are customarily used. These beat schemes, in their generic forms, are simple divisions of the same musical period in equal units, producing varying rhythmic densities or motions.

![Beat Schemes](image)

Figure 1 Beat Schemes

A simultaneous articulation of beat schemes of contrasting rhythmic motions normally produces a cross rhythmic texture. In practice, a cross rhythm is produced by interacting beat schemes based on two or multiples of two units against those based on three or multiples of three units (2:3 ratio).

![Two Beats and Three Beats](image)

Figure 2

DEVELOPMENTAL TECHNIQUES OF CROSS RHYTHMS

In forming a cross rhythm, Anlo-Ewe aesthetics of rhythmic organization produces four important developmental techniques.

Technique of Main Beat

In a complex interaction of beat schemes of varying rhythmic motions, the human mind normally seeks a focal point. Among the Anlo-Ewe, one of the integral beat schemes is dominant and the rest are perceived in cross rhythmic relationship to it. This dominant beat scheme is considered the main beat because of its strong accents in regular recurrence that pervade and regulate the entire fabric.

In the cultural understanding, the technique of main beat is an artistic animation of a strong purpose or goal in life. It embodies a vital Anlo-Ewe concept that life must have a dynamic purpose or goal strong enough to regulate the dynamics of contrasting obstacles.
In the artistic animation, this strong purpose or main beat is conceived as a living, physical phenomenon reminiscent of a moving body in downward motion directing the energy or weight with the pull of gravity. When the body achieves a good center of gravity, an accented pulsation occurs.

In an Anlo-Ewe culture, ancestral divinities and the ancestors are the most important positive elements. These elements are commonly represented or buried on earth. The concept of directing the energy or weight towards these positive elements in the artistic animation of a strong purpose is an ingenious artistic expression of the lesson that the dynamic purpose should be a positive one. In a broader sense, it is a way of bringing the purpose closer to the protective divinities and thus increasing a sense of its security and success.

In a general sense, any of the beat schemes listed in figure 1 could form the basis of a main beat, but in practice, the beat scheme of four units is the most commonly used. At any given tempo, the rhythmic motion of this beat scheme is the most moderate (not too slow or fast) and the most convenient as a focal point.

**Main Beat Schemes**

To better comprehend a main beat, it is structured so that it measures off equal increment of pulsations, the first of which normally bears an accent. These integral fractions or background pulsations are the major ornamental forces that give a main beat its distinct texture, flavor and character.

There are two most useful main beat schemes in Anlo-Ewe dance-drumming. In the first scheme, each main beat is structured measuring off three equal pulsations as its distinctive feature. This main beat texture is identified here as a *triple structure main beat scheme*.

![Figure 3 Triple Structure Main Beat Scheme](image)

The second most useful main beat scheme is structured with each main beat measuring off four equal pulsations as its distinctive feature. This texture is identified here as a *duple structure main beat scheme*.

![Figure 4 Duple Structure Main Beat Scheme](image)

As noted in figures 3 and 4 above, the background pulsations of main beats are developed in the faster rhythmic motions produced by the beat schemes of 12 units (triple structure) and 16 units (duple structure).

In the Anlo-Ewe cultural understanding, this concept embodies another important world view guiding that a purpose in life should possess a distinct flavor or character. In other words, a purpose in life should be logically or aesthetically coherent to oneself as well as society who will be the beneficiaries.

The flavor and energy of a main beat is of prime importance in Anlo-Ewe dance-drumming. A main beat possesses that character of regular energy or accent that runs throughout a
composition as a unifying element and gives the cross rhythms as well as the entire composition, a unique quality of logical coherence.

The student should learn to construct the main beats in both the duple and triple structures and practice by handclapping the pulsations while foot tapping the accented to acquire the habit of conducting them with a good comprehension of the various inherent pulses and energy. It is very crucial, in the development of informed skills of appreciation and performance to translate the artistic techniques into their real-life meanings. In other words, if it is to be meaningful, the developmental techniques must be studied within the context of the shared customary ideas that they convey to the mind.

Measure Schemes

The recurrent grouping of the main beats normally creates a fixed musical period or measure. While it is possible to create several measure schemes by varied groupings of the main beats, two types of such groupings are the most frequent in the development of *Anlo-Ewe* dance-drumming.

The first most useful measure scheme consists of four main beats with each main beat measuring off three equal pulsations as its distinctive feature.

![Figure 5 A Musical Period of 12 pulsations](image)

The next most useful measure scheme consists of four main beats with each main beat flavored by measuring off four equal pulsations.

![Figure 6 A Musical Period of 16 pulsations](image)

These beat schemes are roughly equivalent to 12/8 time and 4/4 time in Western music.

In contrast to the Western measure concept of accenting the first beat of each measure, the *Anlo-Ewe* concept maintains regular accents on all the main beats. However, there is a tendency to end phrases as well as the entire composition on the accented pulsation of the first main beat implying further movement or flow. This attitude of considering the beginning of a measure to be also the end embodies the sub-saharan cosmological concept similar to reincarnation. This is the belief that every new born child is a partial rebirth of an old ancestral soul in a new body. Thus all human life is cyclical, every ending is a new beginning.

![Figure 7. Popular concluding phrase in Anlo-Ewe dance-drumming](image)
Technique of Composite Rhythm

A cross rhythm consists of a main beat scheme (a purpose in life) and a secondary beat scheme (a perceived obstacle). Each beat scheme has a significance and function in making up the distinct cross rhythmic texture.

In performance, a cross rhythm becomes a composite unit by combining the contrasting beat schemes into a one line resultant rhythm or motif that recurs throughout the measure scheme as a unifying element.

By the very nature of the desired resultant rhythm, the main beat scheme cannot be separated from the secondary beat scheme. It is the interplay of the two elements that produces the cross rhythmic texture.

Discovering the character of a cross rhythm simply implies absorbing the distinct texture produced by the interplay of the beat schemes, noting the distinct rate of speed with which they coincide or disagree. When the beat schemes coincide, a static effect (standing still) is produced and when they are in alternate motions an effect of vitality (fast-moving) is produced. These features occur in varying manners and moments and reveal the distinct character or texture of a cross rhythm.

In aesthetic expression, a moment of resolution or peace occurs when the beat schemes coincide and a moment of conflict occurs when the beat schemes are in alternate motion. These moments are customarily conceived and expressed as physical phenomena familiar to a human being. A moment of resolution is expressed as a human being standing firm or exerting force by reason of weight alone without motion while moment of conflict is expressed as a human being travelling forward alternating the legs.

In the cultural understanding, the technique of composite rhythm embodies the lessons of establishing contact between two dissimilar states of being, or in particular, the right way to look at despair.

Let me paraphrase an old Anlo-Ewe song to further illustrate the real-life lessons inherent in the technique of composite rhythm. The song says, despair is not only useful, it is vital. Those in despair recognize the facts of their existence, rather like a drowning swimmer admitting the water is there. If you block off the despair, you block off the joy. More simply, an avoidance of contrasting obstacles is an avoidance of the real challenges of life. It will only stifle progress.

Technique of Polyrhythm

A cross rhythm in its basic form begins with a moment of resolution and continues with moments of conflict, thus showing a progression from a "static" beginning to a "dynamic" continuation.
In another popular technique, the normal interrelationship of the component beat schemes of a cross rhythm is inverted to produce a variant texture. In a primary form, the regular recurrence of the main beat scheme is normally preserved and the secondary beat scheme is shifted to start at a different but specified moment in time.

As noted in figure 9 above, the beginning moments of the beat schemes, in a vertical relationship, establish a permanent polyrhythm against one another, and thus, in a composite structure produces a variant progression from conflict to resolution or "dynamic" beginning to "static" continuation.

This customary process of changing the relative positions of the beat schemes of a cross rhythm in producing a variant texture is identified here as the technique of polyrhythm.

The technique of polyrhythm simply implies that the secondary beat scheme of a cross rhythm can be shifted to produce variant textures. In the development of these polyrhythmic textures, the secondary beat scheme can begin and accent any moment of the time span.

Cultural Understanding of Polyrhythm

In the cultural understanding, the technique of polyrhythm simply asserts the highly unpredictable occurrences of obstacles in human life. They occur without a warning. It reinforces the need for the development of a strong and productive purpose built on a foundation of adequate preparation for life.

These real-life meanings of cross rhythmic techniques were repeatedly driven home to me as I grew up gradually in a traditional Anlo-Ewe community. In this community, dance drumming is an integral part of the life of everyone from the moment of birth. A training in dance drumming is an essential part of the larger comprehensive preparation of every child for a productive and fulfilled participation in adult life. In this community, artistic elements are not abstract phenomena. They assume real-life characters. A main beat scheme represents a strong purpose in life and a secondary beat scheme represents an obstacle. Tension created by the customary ordering of these characters conveys a number of ideas simultaneously.
As a child going through this normal routines of Anlo-Ewe upbringing, my lack of subtleties in performing new sophisticated rhythmic contrasts were frequently criticized as lack of a strong sense of purpose capable of regulating the dynamics of contrasting obstacles in life. Blocking off a beat scheme to ease the hostility between opposing beat schemes of unfamiliar rhythmic contrast was often severely punished as my avoidance of the real challenges of life. A rare guidance in the proper management of opposing beat schemes of a rhythmic contrast was usually in form of a large dose of philosophy such as: to solve a problem, you must convert obstacles into stepping stones.

During these formative years, organized community rehearsals were my greatest relief. On such rare occasions, the interactive totality of a dance drumming would be re-synthesized from scratch in a more relaxed practice environment. These rehearsals were customarily aimed at encouraging the development of a greater understanding of the structural components, their interrelationships and most importantly, their performance. For us the younger generation, these practice sessions were essential head start in our assimilation into the cultural tradition of the community.

Spirited aural demonstration, earnest imitation and assimilation were the norm of this exchange of idiom. An experienced elder would lead the community by extracting major component parts from the whole, aurally demonstrating how they sounded and fit together, and when appropriate, he would explain the meanings or ideas that they were intended to convey. The community would follow in earnest assimilation until a discernable confidence in their ability to perform was achieved.

During my professional career as a master drummer and scholar of African dance drumming with the Ghana National Dance Ensemble and the University of Ghana’s Institute of African Studies, I have had the privilege of participating in several elaborate research and study residencies in many cultures across the sub-sahara. In these residencies of intense participation in dance drumming very much different from my own ethnic origin, I have had the rare opportunity of comparing my Anlo-Ewe experiences as remarkably similar with the shared concepts of these other sub-saharan cultures. The surface structures or sound-products among all these ethnic groups were indeed very diverse but the undercurrent principles demonstrated profound homogeneity.

The concept of perceiving artistic elements as real-life characters is the most visible characteristic of this sub-saharan cultural homogeneity. This attitude is also the premise for idiomatic discourse or verbal interchange of ideas. It is the single most important factor that integrates the dance drumming as well as its component elements with the everyday world as a functional coherent phenomenon.

**Cross Rhythmic Textures**

From the earliest times, repertoires of cross rhythmic textures have been developed from which the composer draws in expressing his ideas. We will begin with the two most useful textures, six against four (6:4) and three against four (3:4), since they have the greatest use in the thematic development of Anlo-Ewe dance-drumming.

The student should learn to construct and discover the character of these cross rhythms and make them part of his way of thinking by the following exercises.

i. Construct the main beats in the proper metrical grouping bearing in mind the inherent pulsations of each main beat. A musical period of twelve pulsations, three per main beat, is chosen for these exercises because of its frequent use in the development of Anlo-Ewe dance-drumming.
ii. As the main beats are set in motion, their order of recurrence cannot be changed. It is extremely important to develop, at a very initial stage, a good subjective metronomic ability to conduct the main beats in their proper order of recurrence within the musical period. This could be achieved by numbering the accented pulsations of main beats 1, 2, 3, 4, in their order of recurrence and counting them verbally while articulating them by a foot tap and also by the weak hand on the thigh during the initial stages of the drill exercises.

iii. With the strong hand, articulate the second beat scheme by tapping it on the other thigh bearing in mind the interrelationship of the two beat schemes as the composite structure emerges.

v. Memorize the composite texture and practice until it becomes part of your way of thinking or useful rhythmic vocabulary.

**Two Basic Textures**

*SIX AGAINST FOUR CROSS RHYTHMS*

**i. Basic Texture**

A simultaneous interaction of a *main beat scheme* (a purpose in life) and a *secondary beat scheme* (a perceived obstacle) produces a cross rhythmic texture. A thorough understanding of the structure of these characters is very essential in comprehending a cross rhythmic texture.

We have discussed *main beat schemes* and their textures earlier in this chapter. It is important to point out, however, that four recurrent groupings of a *triple structure main beat scheme* produce a musical period of twelve pulsations. We shall refer to these four recurrent groupings of a triple structure main beat scheme as a *four main beat scheme*.

![Figure 11 Four recurrent groupings of a triple structure main beat scheme forming a musical period of twelve pulsations.](image)

The term *secondary beat scheme* refers to a component beat scheme of a cross rhythm other than the *main beat scheme*. In a similar manner as a main beat, each secondary beat is distinguished by measuring off a distinct number of pulsations. A recurrent grouping of a number of these beats in a musical period forms a distinct *secondary beat scheme*.

A beat scheme measuring off two pulsations as its distinctive feature in a musical period of twelve pulsations is one of the most important *secondary beat schemes* in the development of cross rhythms. In the musical period, there are six recurrent groupings of this *two pulse beat scheme*. In contrast to the *triple structure main beat scheme*, the *two pulse beat scheme* produces a faster rhythmic motion. We shall identify this six recurrent groupings of the two pulse beat scheme as a *six secondary beat scheme*.

![Figure 12 Six recurrent groupings of a two-pulse beat scheme in a musical period of twelve pulsations](image)
Interacting the four recurrent triple structure main beat schemes (four beat scheme) simultaneously with the six recurrent two pulse beat schemes (six beat scheme) produces the first most useful cross rhythmic texture in the development of Anlo-Ewe dance-drumming.

Figure 13 Basic Pattern of Six against Four Cross Rhythm

The interaction of the two rhythmic motions produces a short figure (motif), half the length of the musical period, that recurs giving the cross rhythm a coherent character. The motif begins with a moment of resolution and continues with moments of conflict, thus showing a progression from a "static" beginning to a "dynamic continuation. As the basic cross rhythmic pattern, the first moment of resolution occur on the first main beat and the second occur on the third main beat within the musical period.

As a child growing up and struggling to make sense of cross rhythmic textures and make them part of my usable rhythmic vocabulary, verbalizing the composite structures by giving each character a syllabic pitch and singing them like a melody in their proper rhythm was very helpful in my discovering and absorbing the distinct texture. Many Anlo-Ewe kids do this and often turn it into a communal game of playing drum verbally. Each kid would sing a specific cross rhythmic texture that interlocks with one another into a dynamic fabric. They would entertain themselves spiritedly with the structure while enriching their understanding and ability to carry their own weight in the complex fabric.

A syllabic pitch "Kpla" is designated for a moment of resolution or when the two component beats coincide. The pitch "Tu" represents main beats in alternate motion with secondary beats articulated with the syllabic pitch "Ka”.

The following is a syllabic intonation of the six against four cross rhythmic texture.

Figure 14 Syllabic intonation of six against four cross rhythm

ii. Polyrhythmic Variant
(Six Against Four Cross Rhythm)

The basic pattern of the six against four cross rhythm is inverted to produce one variant polyrhythmic texture by shifting the beginning moment of the six beat scheme a pulsation later than the main beat scheme.
As the student will notice in figure 15 above, the alternate interplay produces moments of resolution on the second and fourth main beats. Each moment of resolution is preceded by moments of conflict and thus showing a progression from a "dynamic" beginning to a "static" conclusion.

The following is the usual syllabic intonation of the polyrhythmic variant of six against four cross rhythm.

**iii. Overlapping The Basic and Polyrhythmic Textures Of Six Against Four Cross Rhythm**

Anlo-Ewe composers have a tendency of overlapping several layers of cross rhythmic textures in the process of creating a dance-drumming. A skill in comprehending overlapping cross rhythmic textures is very essential in developing a repertoire of usable rhythmic vocabulary.

Absorbing the distinct texture and energy of each cross rhythm is the first step in developing this repertoire of usable rhythmic vocabulary. Another essential step is recognizing the manner in which the cross rhythmic textures differ from each other and most importantly, developing the ability to comprehend them overlapping one another.

As part of a communal game of playing drum verbally, Anlo-Ewe kids would drill themselves spiritedly in the skill of comprehending overlapping cross rhythmic textures. In a competitive but playful spirit, one kid would sing the basic pattern of six against four cross rhythm and the other the polyrhythmic variant. Each kid must carry his own weight (cross rhythmic pattern) in the complex fabric created by the simultaneous interplay of the two cross rhythmic textures. A winner emerges if one kid loses his pattern.

This competitive game of playing drum verbally encourages the development of a greater understanding of the structural components of dance-drumming, their interrelationship and most importantly, their performance. It prepares the Anlo-Ewe kid for a fulfilled participation.
in the development and performance of traditional *Anlo-Ewe* dance-drumming. It would achieve a similar result for any enthusiast.

![Figure 17 Syllabic Intonation of Six against Four Cross Rhythms](image)

**iv. Sequential Arrangement Of A Motif of each Texture in a Musical Period**

Arranging a motif of each six against four cross rhythmic texture following each other in a musical period is another essential technique of *Anlo-Ewe* composers we should anticipate in the development of usable rhythmic vocabulary. In fact the tenacity of *Anlo-Ewe* dance drumming resides in the rhythmic interest and variety provided by this sequential ordering of diverse motifs or cross rhythmic textures in the development of structural component phrases. This technique also offers a combination of intellectual and artistic enjoyment much favored by *Anlo-Ewe* composers.

Below is the structure of the syllabic intonation of a motif of the basic six against four cross rhythmic texture, "Kpla Ka Tu Ka" and its polyrhythmic variant, "Tu Ka Kpla Ka" following each other in a musical period.

![Figure 18 A structure of a motif of basic six against four cross rhythm and its polyrhythmic variant following each other in a musical period](image)

The above sequential arrangement of half a measure of the basic 6:4 cross rhythm (a 3:2 cross-rhythmic relationship) and its polyrhythmic variant in a musical period is the foundation of the most popular time line in the development of Anlo-Ewe dance-drumming.

![Figure 19 Popular Anlo-Ewe Time Line 1](image)

As demonstrated in the figure above, the last note of the basic motif is modified by articulating it in two faster pulses to facilitate a smooth transition. This adds an extra attack to the normal six bringing the time line to its distinguished seven attack points structure.
In creating an alternate seven attack points time line, the composer facilitates a smooth transition, by adding the extra attack on the third main beat as a pick-up for the polyrhythmic 3:2 texture.

Figure 20 Popular Time Line 2

Another favorite time line very popular in sacred dance-drumming repertoires of the Anlo-Ewe has only five attack points by simply avoiding to articulate the last note of the polyrhythmic motif.

Figure 21 Popular Anlo-Ewe Time Line 3

Assignment:

The student should learn how to perform these important time lines by tapping the four main beat scheme with the feet and also with the weak hand on the weak leg thigh while tapping, with the strong hand, the attack notes of the time line on the strong leg thigh. The composite structure as represented in the syllabic intonations should emerge immediately. Remember the syllabic intonations are functional guides to discover the dynamic activities of rhythmic resolutions and conflicts as the resultant time line evolves. It is also a great exercise in discovering how to conceive and reproduce the resultant time lines with ease.

Self Evaluation

As you gain confidence, give yourself a simple test to evaluate and confirm your ability to conceive and perform the time lines with a good comprehension of their fundamental components. Try counting the main beats verbally by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, as you perform the time line drills. If you continue to have fun and hold your ground, congratulations, you have developed a good understanding of these very important foundation rhythms. This test exercise is also very important for the development of a multi-dimensional attitude to rhythm, a skill needed to participate in a musical culture dominated largely by creating several layers of rhythmic and melodic activities. However, if you encounter problems, continue the drill exercise and the self evaluation process until a discernable ability to conceive and perform the time lines are achieved.

Figure 22 Time Line 1/Four Beat Scheme
Try the same process with the six beat schemes also and see how you fair. As you perform the time line drills verbally count the six beat scheme by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
A good exercise to get more familiar with the different component rhythmic frameworks is to amplify verbally one measure of each component beat scheme following one another as you perform the time line drill as in the examples below:
THREE AGAINST FOUR CROSS RHYTHMS

i. Basic Texture

Another important secondary beat scheme in the development of cross rhythms measures off four pulsations as its distinctive flavor in the musical period of twelve pulsations. There are three recurrent groupings of this *four pulse beat scheme* in a musical period of twelve pulsations. We shall identify this recurrent groupings as a *three beat scheme*.

![Figure 34 Three recurrent groupings of four beats scheme in a musical period of twelve pulsations.](image)

In contrast to the *four main beat scheme*, the rhythmic motion of the *three beat scheme* is slower. A simultaneous interaction of these two beat schemes with contrasting rhythmic motions produces the next most useful cross rhythmic texture in the development of sub-Saharan dance-drumming.

![Figure 35 Three Against Four Cross Rhythm Basic Pattern](image)

The composite texture of the three against four cross rhythm produces a motif covering a length of the musical period. The motif begins with the component beat schemes coinciding and continues with the beat schemes in alternate motions thus showing a progression from a "static" beginning to a "dynamic" continuation.
The following is a syllabic intonation of the three against four cross rhythmic texture.

![Figure 36 Syllabic Intonation Three against four cross rhythm Basic Pattern](image)

**ii. Polyrhythmic Textures**

(Three Against Four Cross Rhythm)

There are three *variant polyrhythmic textures* of three against four cross rhythm. Each polyrhythmic texture is produced by setting the three beat scheme in motion a pulsation or more later than the main beat scheme.

Starting the three beat scheme from the second pulsation of the main beat scheme produces a variant motif showing a progression from a "dynamic" beginning to a "static" conclusion. The moment of resolution between the component beat schemes (*static effect*) falls on the fourth main beat. We shall identify this distinct polyrhythmic texture as the *fourth phrasing of the three against four cross rhythm*, a term reflecting the moment the component beat schemes coincide within the musical period.

![Figure 37 1st Polyrhythmic Variant Three Against Four Cross Rhythm](image)

Another favorite polyrhythmic texture of three against four cross rhythm is produced by setting the three beat scheme in motion from the third pulsation of the main beat scheme. The resultant motif of this variant interplay shows a progression of dynamic motions interceded in the middle by a static motion. The static effect, produced by a moment of resolution of the component beat schemes, falls on the third main beat. This polyrhythmic textures is identified here as the *third phasing of the the three against four cross rhythm*.

The progression of this variant motif is replete with dynamic motions interceded in the middle with a static motion.
Figure 38 2nd Polyrhythmic Variant Three Against Four Cross Rhythm

The last polyrhythmic texture of three against four cross rhythm is achieved by starting the three beat scheme from the second main beat, the moment of resolution of this alternate interplay.

![Diagram of Four Beat Scheme, Three Beat Scheme, and Composite](image)

Figure 39 3rd Polyrhythmic Variant Three Against Four Cross Rhythm

**Assignment:**  
The student should learn how to perform these important cross rhythms using the drill exercise described at the beginning of the section on individual cross rhythms.

As you gain confidence, try to use them as second layers just like an Ewe composer or choreographer using the following exercises:

i. Construct the first rhythmic layer by setting up our time line 1 in motion, tapping its seven attack points pattern on the thigh with your strong hand while the weak hand and your feet tap the four main beats.

ii. With the voice, articulate the three beat scheme by numbers 1, 2, 3 bearing in mind the interrelationship of the layers as the composite structure emerges.

![Diagram of Time Line 1, Four Beat Scheme, Three Beat Scheme, and Voice](image)

Figure 40

![Diagram of Time Line 1, Four Beat Scheme, Three Beat Scheme, and Voice](image)

Figure 41
**Pulse and One-Half Beat Scheme**

**Pulse and One-Half Beat Scheme (Eight Beats Scheme)**

**Against**

**Three Pulse Beat Scheme (Four Main Beats Scheme)**

All the beat schemes we have discussed so far measure off specific number of whole pulses as their distinctive characters. None exploit a fraction of a pulse.

The next most useful secondary beat scheme in the development of cross rhythms measures off one and one-half pulsations as a distinctive characteristic (the term hemiola used in music theory describes a similar relationship). Eight recurrent groupings of this beat scheme fit in a musical period of twelve pulsations. We shall therefore identify it as eight beats scheme.

![Figure 44 Eight Beat Scheme](image)

The eight beats scheme is perceived as a duple subdivision of the four main beats scheme. Its rhythmic motion within the musical period is twice as fast as that of the main beats scheme. An interplay of these divergent rhythmic motions produces another useful cross rhythm in the development of Anlo-Ewe dance-drumming.
As the student will notice in figure 23 above, two recurrences of the one and one-half pulse beats (two dotted eighth notes) and the three internal pulses of a main beat (three eighth notes) establish a vertical relationship of 2:3 ratio. In a composite structure their interplay produces a short energetic motif showing a progression from a "static" beginning to "dynamic" continuation. The eight against four cross rhythm is perceived as a succession of these short motifs within the musical period. The fast progression of tension and relief creates an incredible effect of vitality very much favored by the Anlo-Ewe.

The common Anlo-Ewe syllabic intonation for this motif reflects this peculiar interaction of two recurrences of the one and one-half pulse beats against the three internal pulses of a main beat. It also shows that two recurrences of these one and one-half pulse beats are perceived as a unit and a duple subdivision of a main beat. Note that in this distinct ordering of syllabic pitches, "Kpla" articulates a moment of resolution while the pitch "Tu" represents the one and one-half pulse beats in alternate motion with weak pulses of the main beat articulated with the pitch "Ka".

Rhythmic Frameworks Exercise

This exercise is fundamental to developing a musically useful vocabulary incorporating African 12/8 polyrhythmic structures.

To practice these exercises, you want to keep three different rhythms going simultaneously by the following method:

- (a) Tap the seven-stroke time line with your strong hand.
- (b) Keep the four main beats with your feet.
- (c) Vocalize the different beat schemes like this:
  - "One Two" or "One Two Three" and so on.

Practice each beat scheme in turn, keeping the time line without breaking between different beat schemes. Go slowly at first, then faster. Aim for smoothness and accuracy.