

#4

Song

This is one of the "long form" songs in the collection; a relatively lengthy poem is set to a tune with several sections arranged to a comparatively elaborate call-and-response format. Within the field of Ewe music as a whole, song like this are common. The leader's long melodic line (mm.1-4) can be heard as two phrases: the first begins at high pitch (a5-g5) and ends with a sense of temporary stasis on d5 (m.3, four-beat 1); the second phrase climbs back to g5 and then descends first to a4 (m.3 four-beat 4) and then finally to g4 (m.4, 1.2). The group answers with an upward move a4-g5 with a pause on d5 (m.5, 1.1) followed by descent with slight pauses on e5 (3.1) and d5 (4.1). Significantly, the phrase final of group's tune is a4, not the g4 that would convey the sense of tonal resolution we might expect. In the repeat of this section of the poem, the group ascends past g5 to a5 and then falls back only to d5. When factoring in both melody and text, the form of the opening section is A1A2. In terms of the tonal logic of Ewe song, we can say that the group heralds the advent of the tune's next section by remaining within the song's upper tessitura.

In comparison to other long form songs, the B section is modest in duration (two measures) and design: the tune explores the high pitch area with pendular seconds (g5-a5) and a downward leap g5-d5 before borrowing from the leader's A section material to descend down to g4. At this point in the song's form, an enculturated listener's would expect leader and group to join together to reprise material from the A section but the composer must decide whether to bring back the full alternation between leader and group, just the leader's part, or just the group's part; listeners also will notice whether the

melodies of the opening section recur exactly or are modified slightly. In this case, the singers repeat the group's phrase from opening section. I mark the song's form A1A2 B1 A3.

If a listener pays attention to the syllabic divisions of the lyrics as well as the shape of the tune, the song's phenomenal accentuation, i.e., its the surface lilt, can be heard to heterometrically shift between four-beat and six-beat time feels, as follows (starting on the midpoint of measure 1).

mm. 1-4 | ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ . ♪ . ♪ ♪ ♪ | ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ . ♪ . | ♪ . ♪ . ♪ . ♪ . |
 mm. 5-6 | ♪ . ♪ . ♪ . ♪ . | ♪ . ♪ . ♪ ♪ ♪ |

The surface meter of the tune in the B section becomes (starting at the midpoint of measure 8):

mm. 8-9 | ♪ . ♪ . | ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ . ♪ . |

The pickup-onbeat figure (short-long, eighth-quarter) set on four-beats 3-4-1 recurs so often in this song that it becomes a key feature of what we might call its "musical signature" (see measures 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11). The onbeat quality of this figure is what shifts the tune's surface accentuation from a six-beat flow to a four-beat feeling.

Drumming

The morphology of this composition is 5 + 7, a proportion much enjoyed by Ewe musicians in genres with a twelve-pulse bell phrase. Specifically, the kidi phrase has two figures within it: the first figure has two bounces followed by three presses, while the second has two bounces followed by five presses. The kidi phrase contrasts the two different locations within the bell phrase of the two-note bounce figure: the first figure

begins on the beat (bell stroke 6, pulse 10, 4.1) and moves off it to an rhythmically unresolved condition, while the second figure begins offbeat and moves towards rhythmic stasis on the beat (no bell stroke, pulse 4, 2.1). However, the unison between bell stroke 2 and the first bounce stroke in the second kidi figure weakens the quality of closure on four-beat 2, thus maintaining the forward flow of the whole kidi phrase. In terms of its relation to the song, the second kidi figure exactly matches the word "agbe" ("life"), giving it extra energy and prominence.

Sogo presents three drum language expressions. Sogo begins with what we might consider a "drummed fanfare" that means "Sit!" Musically, the phrase is built from two-note figures (tedzi, or bounce-press) that accentuate both onbeat and upbeat six-beat time, depending on which quality of sound (timbre) achieves prominence in the mind's musical ear. After playing this a few times, GFA brings the main drum language, whose key rhythmic feature is the binary treatment of four-beat 3. As is normal for sogo in Agbadza, dzi strokes cue the kidi rhythm while ga and de strokes interlock before and after kidi's bounces. In drum language C quick sixteenth-eighth pairs increase the density within four-beat 3 but retain the basic binary idea because of the stroke placed on the beat's midpoint. On the sound recording GFA frequently strikes the drum on the third partials within four-beats 4 and 1 (pulses 12 and 3, 4.3 and 1.3). To me, this shows that he is well aware that bell strokes 7 and 2 share the identical offbeat relationship to a subsequent onbeat. It is as if he is purposely teaching us that the bell is the source of inspiration for drumming rhythms.