

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4294



Yoruba Elewe-Bata Drums and Dance

Recorded at Ila Rangun at the Odun Egungun Festival by G. Odukwe Sackeyfio

ELEWE MUSIC: Ila Togun, ELEWE DANCE MUSIC: Oro



COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4294

**YORUBA BATA DRUMS:
ELEWE MUSIC AND DANCE**

Recorded at Ila Rangun at the Odun Enungun Festival
by G. Odukwe Sackeyfio

SIDE 1:

1. **ELEWE MUSIC: ILA RANGUN**
2. ABIDA (slow form)-EWO (fast form)
3. ABIDA-High Life-SIKO (dramatic dance form)
4. Continuation
5. ESE (singing and dancing) orderly and in row
6. ALUWASI (praise song)
(call and response between IYA LU and EMILE ABO)

SIDE 2:

1. **ELEWE DANCE MUSIC OF ORO**
2. ASIDA, SIKO (Dramatic dance form)
3. ESE and ALUWASI (Praise song)
4. Continuation
5. SIKO (Dramatic dance form styles 2 and 3)
6. EWO (Stylistic dance)
(call and response between IYA LU and IYAOMELE)
7. Continuation
8. SIKO-Style 4

Note: In most cases where IYALU plays an interpoint in relation to OMELE AKO and OMELE ABO, BEMBE keeps the foundation pattern until a change signal is given IYALU and EMELE ABO and AKO also plays cross rhythm during the dramatic dance.

© 1980 FOLKWAYS RECORDS & SERVICE CORP.
43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C., 10023 N.Y., U.S.A.

Yoruba Elewe- Bata Drums and Dance

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4294

RETURN TO ARCHIVE
CENTER FOR FOLKLORE PROGRAMS
AND CULTURAL STUDIES
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

YORUBA ELEWE MUSIC AND DANCE AT ILA RANGUN ODUN EGUNGUN FESTIVAL

Notes by G. Odukwe Sakeyfio

Elewe Egungun, otherwise known as Eborá-Spirit, represent one such music and dance form used in the Odun Festival. This spirit also known as One From Heaven, Ara Orum Kinkin or Ogege manifests itself in the words "egungun eborá, ogege eborá, Kankin Kanhinfe eborá, ododi ago abeti aso fele le" which literally means "egungun spirit, ogege spirit, a complete masquerade, the tip of which moves in the direction of the wind.

Masquerade, a religio-social concept enacted by a male clothed in a costume has two basic types of re-enactment.

Ila Rangun lies 120 kilometers north of Ibadan in the southwestern Oyo State of Nigeria, West Africa. Similar to all Yoruba groups of people, these townspeople belong to the Kwa language family. Their occupations consist chiefly of farmers and traders, for the growing population of 15,000.

Music and dance function intrinsically in Nigerian life, culture and arts. In today's society, state and town cultural festivals and popular, contemporary television broadcasts maintain a significant role for the musicians and careers of Ila Rangun and its closest neighbor, Oro, in Kwara State.

(a) Paraka (Pioraka) Egungun Eleru - A non-dancing masquerade with carving on its head.

(b) Elewe - A dancing masquerade (however, the classification of masquerades has since varied according to clans and ethnic conception. The origin of Elewe masquerade is believed to be Ilofa, about 35 kilometers away from Ila in Osun, northeast division of Oyo State. Towns in which the Egungun festival is celebrated every other year include: Ilofa Oke/Ilofale, Oke Ila orangun/Ila orangun, Oro (Kwara State) Isahlusin (Kwara State) Ora, Ikin Ekiti (Ondo State), Otun Ekiti (Ondo State), Ori Mope (Ondo State), Igogo Ekiti (Ondo State) and Rore (Kwara).

In all the festivals in these places where I have attended, Elewe features as a special egungun. In Ila they enjoy the private protectorate of the King is the oldest masquerade in Yoruba land, dated as far back as 1400 as my information goes.

The original drums for Elewe were Dundun but there has been a new adaptation which is the Bata drum, though the Bata drums are associated with Sango, and Obaluwaya rites.



Ewe girls under the age of puberty who follow Elewe wears ritual hair styles which symbolize sango sculpture.

Elewe dancers are cognizant of the language of the Bata and Dundun sounds. Drummers communicate the proceeding dance sequences one after the other, so that the dancers experience phrase realization of dance movement. The master drummer puts in the music more effort for

stimulation of the dancers, to recreate and stylize their steps.

He manipulates them into phrases of individual creativity and (ekoro) choreographic impetus.

Elewe dancers sometimes comically dramatize sexual and acrobatic observable behavior of men and of animals.

Elewe dance is a polyrhythmic dance using the whole body as a psychological score of counterpoints and harmony of Elewe choreometrics. Elewe dance utilizes all instruments provided in movement percussive beats and instrumental harmony becomes equal to rhythmic significance in the movements.

1. The large drum relates to shoulders and chest.
2. The medium drum relates as above and follows or imitates him.
3. The smallest drum relates to waist, hips, and feet.

The dance performed with rapid rhythmically complex jumps on the balls of the feet and arms extended to the diagonal forward, resumes the twisting and rotating of the shoulders from the upper torso and contraction of the chest intertwined with precise footwork.

Six distinct patterns of dance can be observed in Elewe music and dance, each pattern is different from others by their function. For example, the first content-pattern is called Abida. It is a procession form of music and dance. Slow in pattern which introduces the ancestor (dancers) to the public.

The creativity inherent in Elewe choreography emerges within the tightly woven structure. The Bata drum phrases imitate the total pattern of Yoruba language which communicate movement direction and social commentary.

The Elewe dancer is expected to be able to "count" with his feet and shoulders, the rhythmic patterns of the master drum beats, the sound of the small drums, an essential element and vehicle for his precision. The pelvis thrust out in time with the rhythm while the

costumes, semicircle skirt attached to the dancer's waist, exaggerates the movement of sway and flipping of a bird.

The Elewe dancing and drumming plays a major role in the kings cult as it dignifies Egungun group in the culture.

Iya ' lu bata the lead had double membrane, a large bass side and a smaller high pitch side. The second supporting drum the medium size Omebe aba /yalu. The smallest but same built twin Bata (ten inches length) joined together which two short strips leather playing featured. The Bata possesses the highest pitch of the three set drum Omele ako and Omele abo., support and synchronize rhythmic patterns.

The Iyalu Omele abo plays sounds by muting and striking with left fingers while the right hand with a strip short leather. At times, both hands play with leather strips. The drums share parts of phrases having dominant ties to a particular lineage segment.

Highlife drum called Bembe which features in Abida is to high-light the freedom mood dance style.

In the olden days the people of Isanlusin believed that their dead ancestors visited Earth again. Hence they started to worship them. Some people say that it is from Isanlusin that the Elewe masquerade originated (others claimed Ilofa, also in the Kwara).

Before the commencement of the festival, all the fathers of Egunguns known as "Alagbaa"¹ gather together to plan for the festival on a large scale.

Initially, belief has it that these people fashioned the costumes of the Egunguns based on the decor of the costumes of the underground spirits. (dead people who live in heaven) who come to town every other year to revisit the living during the festival periods. These underground spirits usually tied tiny bells around their ankles, underlaid by a piece of leather to prevent the bells from itching the ankles. and they used coral beads (ileke) on their wrists. These later became

the hard charms. Around the waist they had a big hanging charm that is separated longitudinally, which later became the "Apete"² which Egunguns now tie around their waists. Under these, one wears plenty of beads and cloths to make it swell up.

The Costume of Paraka/Egungun Eleru Plate 3

(The masquerade with decorative on its head).

The masquerade must not show its face or legs. These masquerades, believed to be reincarnation of heavenly people on earth, evoke the fear of the people especially of women. Women must not move near the masquerade nor know its secret. If a woman sees it oro oro³ will catch her that day.

The costume of Elewe Masquerades: - Because of the cultic movements of the underground spirits, by which the costume of Egungun Elewe was fashioned, these masquerades dance foremost. One of their hands is left unclothed. Because the Yorubas were not satisfied with the hand showing, they tried another costume whereby the hand was covered. But the Egunguns could not dance well, so they believed that it this showing hand that enhances the beautiful dancing capacity of the masquerade. So one hand was left out for dancing, and also the legs are left uncovered.

¹ AlayrBaa is the title of Egungun chief (leader or father).

² Apete

³ Oro oro - ritual - Yoruba dictionary.

But the legs are painted red with a substance called "Iyere osun." A hand fan is carried just for decoration.

The cloth used for Elewe costume extends to cover the head with the exception of a small opening as wide as an adult's finger, which has a net-like structure through which the Elewe dancer sees.

The faces of the costume of the Paraka¹ is wider than that of the Elewe to prevent the Parakas from falling down. Since this pre-

caution is taken, any masquerade who falls down should be given seven cane strokes before it stands again.

The underground spirits come to Isanlusin once in three years. Before this was known, the people performed their festivals once in nine years. Now they perform once in nine years. Now they perform this festival once in three years at times announced beforehand to the people. This announcement inculcates an event known as "Idajo Egungun."

Ojo Idajo Egungun - Day of Announcement of Festival

- 1) The Idajo egungun is a one-day festival which should be repeated three times before the commencement of the real festival.
- 2) All the Egunguns emerge from a bush, (igbo Egungun" or "Igbale" or "Iyara." Inside this bush, many rituals will be performed by different people including the Oba and the Alagbaa--the chief of Egungun. Foods, most especially, pounded yam would be served to all who visited this bush.
- 3) Different masquerades will perform dances to show their perfectness and might.

How the Alagbaa Performs His Rituals at Igbo Egbale

The Alagbaa, in paying homage to their ancestors would say as follows: "Egungun eborá, Ogege egora, wholly costumed fellow whose dazzle in the direction of the wind. Paying respect does not result in bad for anybody but instead it is lack of it that brings ill. Listen and harken to my voice. I give everything to my ancestors. It is left to you. It is left to my forerunners. It is left to you Oniyo Arawande. (Oniyo Arawande is one of the ancestors). What makes the eagle stop laughing. If it happens to the vulture, it will die still on its eggs. I pay my homage." A poor man can't survive a rich man's tolerance.

¹ Parakas - literally meaning roam about, or wander about, a dramatic masquerader.



DRUMS: from left to right
 OMELE ABO IYALU,
 (b) OMELE-AKO,
 OMELE ABO (c) IYA,LU
 (d) OMELE OABO,
 (e) BEMBE.

The Alagabas would later pray for the Oba, imploring the Egungun to listen to his prayers, that he might live long on earth like the bitter kola; that his time may be one of peace and plenty and that the Oba might witness many more occasions of the Egungun festival. The Alagbaa would also pray for all the chiefs and town's folks that they might live to witness more occasions of Egungun festival. He would also pray for himself.

The Oba would dance, followed by the Alagbaa himself, and the chiefs (all in turns).

After everybody at "Igbale"¹ partakes of the food and drinks, the Elewe masquerades would dance in turns to show versatile they are in dancing. The Alagbaa Egungun, the king, and the chiefs would choose the Elewe masquerades who could perform to his satisfaction, these Elewes would be named after their owners e.g., we have Alagbaa's masquerade, the king's masquerade, Obajoko's masquerade, etc. An Elewe may sing before he dances. In his song, he would express his mind in paying homage to the ancestors. He would say thus: - "I pay my homage to the cult of life. I pay my homage to the cult of heaven. Cult exists, the Egungun cult also exists - the cult that makes his presence felt on the field. It is selfishness that destroys an individual. Paying homage does exalt an individual. A cult should

not spoil a co-cult." This is followed by the Elewe's dances.

In the town at the Oba's palace, the different masquerades would be met by the townsfolk, most especially the "aragbo", (older women) and members of the Egungun cult who have been waiting for quite a long time for the arrival of these masquerades. As soon as they are in sight, the townspeople will start praying that they be able to witness another festival especially that of the coming year. All the Elewe's would go to the front of the king's palace where they dance in turns as they did at "Igbo Igbale." Having completed the dance in front of Oba's palace, the Egunguns would follow their owners to their different compounds. (The Elewes would not be seen again until the next Idajo Egungun.) On the next Idajo Egungun similar ceremony would be repeated. Idajo Egungun is made prior to the Festival.

Festival Day

On the day of the commencement of the festival similar ceremonies are also repeated i.e. they would perform all the ceremonies at Igbo Igbale: Bloom shrine.

Igbale and other Egungun dancers in the front of the Oba's palace. But after the dance in the front of the palace the dancers with their "owners" visiting different houses to collect gifts. The Elewes would start dancing and collection of gifts throughout the 9, 14, or 17 days of the Egungun festivals. The Paraka or Egungun Elewe would be going about during the nights as well. They collect gifts of money, dried fish or meat, etc., to cook and eat, together.

The closing date of the festival is referred to as "Idile Egungun." All the Egunguns, both the Elewes and the Parakas would dance together. The dance is known as "Oduwaye." It is not conscious choreographic effort, but rather a sort of race. The Egunguns, the drummers, the women and children would all set off from the Oba's palace and run the whole length of the town. They would be singing: Oduwaye, Oduwaye a ni ku no o: Oni Ibro nlo koro l'oju n ro, etc.

Each of the Elewes would sing before the dance, singing songs of praise for the name of his leader and would be calling the name of his owner and the king often in the song. The usual pre-dance song runs thus: I woke up this morning, to greet both on earth and in heaven. If the dog wanted to start takinig he would start by barking. If the sheep wanted to start talking it would knock his horn. If a new baby wanted to talk, he would first mention his father's name: Alagbaaaa!" (The Elewe would mention tne name of Alagba in a loud voice if he belongs to Alagba, or if he belongs to another chief, he would mention the name of that chief as well.)

Then the Elewe would start dancing. Each set of three or two Elewes in their turns would have to dance to various tunes or styles of bata drums. The dance tunes or styles played for the dancers are: (1) Abida; (2) Aluwasi; (3) Esa; (4) Libamu; (5) Silo; (6) Ewo; (7) 'ILU Oro ; (8) Ilu Orisa Oko; (9) Ilu Pde.

The chief may have at least three Egungun groups to himself/herself. Out of these three, one is the head Egungun called Iya Egungun, who would say: "Our festival is successful, we shall not die again. It it today that our people from heaven are returning, our hearts are filled with sadness."

At the seventh round of the race, the women would remain behind while the Egunguns, men of the Egungun cult, and all the chiefs would all go to Igbo Igbale, their place of origin, where the Egunguns would remove their costumes, not to be seen again until the next festival. Then the chiefs proceed to the main palace where libation by the king concludes the festival.



PARAKA the Dramatic masqueraders

SIDE 1

AN EGUNGUN/EEGUN CHANT

- 1) Leader - Emi gbede elegbe mi rokun
Emi gbe de bi elegbe mi rosa kabo
Chorus - Eegun olola
Leader - Asola onibata mi
Ok o Alake omo Ajebi yo
Chorus - Eegun olola
Refr: Leader - Saruku yoyo mo gbobe to dun de
Chorus - Soruku yoyo mo gbobe to dun de
Leader - Mo gbere mi de E wa wo wa o
Chorus - Soruku yoyo mo gbobe to dun de
Leader - Mo gbere mi de E wa wo wa o
Chorus - Soruku yoyo mo gbobe to dun de
2) Leader - O to o, Elegbe lo le mu ja
Chorus - Eegun olola
Leader - Asola omibata mi
Ok o nile Asola omo Ajebi yo
Ok o nile Irese a te bi oba
Ok o omo ataka ja
Owu o ni je o lopo lobinrin
Rogbodo lewa awon obo
Kakaki kakaki nma mu 'Rese sele
Mateji ma tele alawo ma beere
Mateji sola oko ~~aka~~ 'Rese ni ng o be lowe kiri
Refr: Leader - Emi o gbagbe ile Baba mi
Chorus - Eegun olola
Leader - Emi o gbagbe ile Baba mi
Chorus - Emi o gbagbe ile Baba mi
~~Egungun~~ = Emi o gbagbe ise Baba mi
Leader - Ise egungun ki i sole o
Chorus - Emi o gbagbe ise Baba mi
Leader - Ise egungun ki i sole o
Chorus - Emi o gbagbe ise Baba mi

SIDE 11

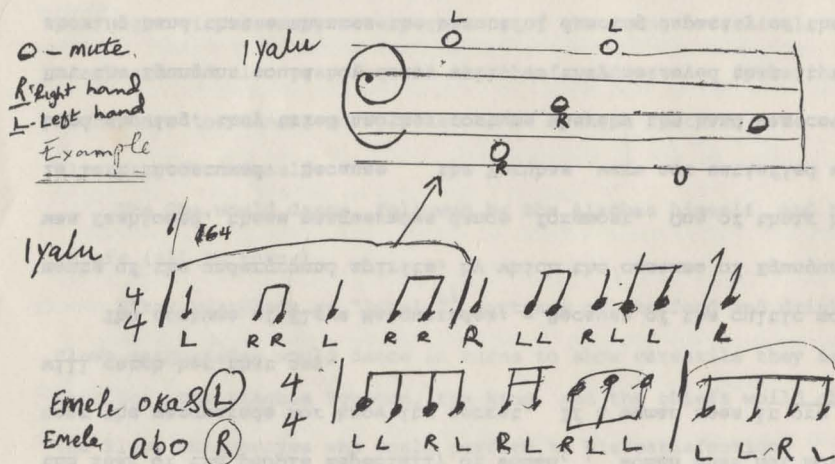
A MASQUERADE CHANT - TRANSLATION

- 1) Leader - I come with my chorus who had been to sea and lagoon and returned
Chorus - Masquerade of the Rich
Leader - Asola my bata drummer
Ok o Alake child of he who is guilty and joyful
Chorus - Masquerade of the Rich
Refr: Leader - Soruku yoyo I have brought sweet soup
Chorus - Soruku yoyo I have brought sweet soup
Leader - I brought my play, come and watch us
Chorus - Soruku yoyo I have brought sweet soup
Leader - I brought my play, come and watch us
Chorus - Soruku yoyo I have brought sweet soup
2) Leader - Silence! the chorus only can answer
Chorus - Masquerade of the Rich
Leader - Asola my bata drummer
Ok o is the house of Asola child of the one who is guilt and joyful
Ok o is the house of Irese, child of he who puffs like a king
Ok o the child of he who bets to fight

Envy will not let you have many wives
 Robustness is the beauty of Vagina
 For me not to take Irese to my house
 I will go step the misty path to go to
 the herbalist Oko Rese is he I will
 send on an errand

Refr: Leader - I do not forget my father's house
 Chorus - ~~I do not~~ Masquerade of the Rich
 Leader - I do not forget my father's house
 Chorus - I do not forget my father's house
 Leader - I do not forget my father's house
 Chorus - I do not forget my father's house
 Leader - Masquerading is not a lazy work
 Chorus - I do not forget my father's work
 Leader - Masquerading is not a lazy work
 Chorus - I do not forget my father's work.

Example of Bata Drums Pattern



Biography

MR. G. ODUKWE SACKKEYFIO
 CHOREOGRAPHER/ETHNO-CHOREOGRAPHY AND MUSIC RESEARCHER

A. Academic Qualifications & University Education

M. Ed.	Dance Education & Film	1973	Temple Univ., Phila., Pa.
DIP.	Dance, Theatre	1968	Ghana Univ., Accra, Ghana
CERT.	Dance, Theatre	1965	Ghana Univ., Accra, Ghana

B. Postgraduate & Profession Qualifications

Julliard School of Music, New York, New York 1968

C. Scholarships, Honours & Distinctions

1979	Delegate to CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DE LA DANSE (UNESCO Paris) First Int'l Choreographers' Conference, N.Y.
1977	Choreography & Movement for Nigerian National Drama Participation in FESTAC.
1963 - 1978	Twelve Major Productions
1973	Temple University Film Awards
1972 - 1973	Temple University Graduate Assistantship
1968	Julliard School of Music Scholarship
1968	Fairfield Foundation Scholarship
1966	Ghana Government Study Scholarship
1966	National Artistic Performing Representative of Ghana at the DAKAR NEGRO ARTS FESTIVAL

D. Teaching Experiences

1980	University of Jos, Jos Nigeria, Assistant Professor
1979	Black Theatre Alliance, New York City
1979	Herbert H. Lehman College, New York City
1975 - 1978	University of Ibadan, Nigeria
1974	East Stroudsburg Star College, Pocono, Pa.
1973 - 1975	Museums of Philadelphia and New York City
1972 - 1973	Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa.
1971	West Chester State College, New York State
1970	New York State University, Purchase, N.Y.
1968 - 1969	Lincoln Center for Performing Arts, Inc., New York City
1969 - 1970	New York City Board of Education, New York City
1968 - 1970	Community Action Program of Mamaroneck and Mt. Vernon

E. Publications

Book: Games & Dance for Children in Africa, Consultant.
 New York, Board of Education, 1969
 Article: Critique On African Dance as Social Behavior
 New York: Foot Magazine, Volume 2, 1970
 Academic Paper: Drama in Education - A Syllabus For Dance Education
 Lagos, Nigeria; Federal Ministry of Education, 1977.