

RECORDED IN GA BY ODUKWE SACKYFIO



ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4295

OTU MUSIC FOR MENTAL HEALING

Good for Dance Therapy and Parties



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Recorded in Ga by ODUKWE SACEYFIO

SIDE 1 FE 4295 A

Band 1 AKROMA 5:46

Priest Solo Singing/Dance

Band 2 BLASE (Style) 2:40

Band 3 KPELE BLASE (Style) 1:55

Band 4 ANOMAKWATSE 1:03

SIDE 2 FE 4295 B

Band 1 BLASE 2:45

Band 2 ANO MAKWATSE 4:53

Band 3 GEMI KWEKWE 3:26

(Dukewe Sacicey/Fio)

Recorded in New York

Band 4 OBAMLAN DRUM & BELL

Kpanlogo-ga

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632 BROADWAY, N.Y.C., 10012 N.Y., U.S.A.

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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The Organization of Otu Music Dances and Performance

Like most musical organization of African societies, the cult has its own music designed by experts who are themselves members and worshippers of the Otu God. The organization of the music of the Otu in Ga Mashie has its own leaders and officers who control the behavior of the member of the performing groups. Generally, the leaders of the groups have a special knowledge of the techniques and repertoire of the various instruments used by the society. Posts such as treasurer, tutor, and patron are held by some of them. The old priest is the patron of the society, and during public worship he sits directly opposite the drummers. It is believed that evil spirits can and may enter the circle when performances are in progress, and to prevent them from entering, the chief priest offers prayers and entreats the gods for help. Should there be any dispute among the members, it is the patron's responsibility to mediate. The guilty person is liable to a fine ranging from a bottle of home-made gin, or imported gin--to one goat.

Singing plays a specific role in the music of the Otu. The songs sung are mainly refrain and chorus. Specially trained persons who are well acquainted with the language in which the texts are interpreted, are those who begin the songs. Others in the group respond. The cantor might, therefore, be a male or a female fetish dancer who will do all the solo singing. Those who sing the chorus are selected upon their ability to sing. Otu priests are not chosen on the merit of their dances, as happens in other societies, or their ability to maintain their knowledge of the repertoire. Some voices may be bad--but they are well controlled by the choral group.

At Ga Mashie, Tuesdays and Saturdays are sacred days on which no work should be done on farms or on the sea. It is on these days that the Otu public worship (music and dance) is performed normally.

A performance of Otu music and dance of the Amontsewe god of Otublohum took place at Salaga Market near Gbese, Accra at about three o'clock in the afternoon. The music was provided by an ensemble of small drums and two bells. The drums named Ampaa were the master drums. Adzankua and Mmama were the small supporting drums.

The bells are known as "nono". Singing and handclapping then accompanied these instruments. The instruments were played by men exclusively. The drummers seated themselves and began playing. The dancer called Akatrama and (mboawafoe) yeebii began singing. The drummers responded "Akremade," which means "singing is all right." The singing began in the form of a solo, to which all the drummers and singers responded in a chorus. The soloist sang a second time, and the drummer started drumming. The dancer was the director and controlled the music from time to time. Then she started singing a new tune and told the drummers what to play. She made sure everything was going on well - especially the singing and drumming, since it is believed that it is only by means of good music and corresponding forms of dance, that possession can be induced. This piece did not last long and it was changed. From the starting point of more than ten minutes, singing continued throughout - with exclamations of "stop!" or "start". These were shouts from the priestess. She sometimes bent her body as if she were going to pick something from the ground; then she leaped, and stepped, and stamped with the right leg on the "Ampaa" (the chief drum). She did this to stop the music. She then started a new song immediately. This continued with dancing for about four hours.

Briefly, these are the forms of the songs and the music of Otu. This music is based on the interpretations or invocations of (powers) spirits of animals. It is believed that some animals like the cow (akbma), the squirrel (blase,) and the vulture (anomakwatse,) are endowed with supernatural powers which are used for healing as well as for helping women who are barren to be fruitful. So, most of the songs refer to these powerful animals. The medicine man, for instance, regards these songs as the source from which he derives his powers for healing and righting wrongs beyond the power of mortality. In the cult of the Gas, when a sick man wants to be cured by a medicine man, the latter will first ask for the music of "Akroma" to be performed. He does this because it gives him the required power to cure his sickness. The performers, in the course of the songs, refer to the war. Some of the songs run as follows:

Asanse be tua wudza(Akroma ode nam beba)

Akroma ode nam beba
Olo so blibi wonun obimon.

If Asanse is about to fly, wudza
wudza
Akroma will bring us meat.

As stated before, some movements of the dance are symbolic and mean a great

deal to both the dancers and the worshippers. For instance, when the dancer stands on her toes in a second position with little brushes to the sides and then with both her hands flexed to the chest, she intends to make known to the watchers that she is on top of the world. Again, she may stretch her right hand forward through side right to the chest and with the left hand she does likewise to mean that he has conquered all forces. Furthermore, like a desperate person, she throws the hand with the props side to side like hitting something invisible. She kicks with both feet ultimately she lets out a shout of victory. These movements are intended to mean that she has conquered all evil forces and enemies who come to test the prowess of the gods. She sometimes is seen rushing with short steps to side left and right and stops suddenly as if she is preventing something from passing behind her. She trembles all over the body as if she is very angry, and then places her swords on her shoulder and pretends to have seen something. With incredible speed she makes for that direction, swaying her sword here and there as though cutting mercilessly what she is following. This I am told, is how the gods help them to drive away evil out of the secret society and kill them whenever they give any resistance.

In song number sixteen where the texts means that Asanse is about to fly wudza and to bring meat, the dancer does some movement to imitate the bird's action, as stated in the previous description of the Akroma.

Music Dance Forms of the Otu

The Otu dance has never been influenced by any form of traditional dance movement. It has an atmosphere peculiar to itself. It is a restricted type of dance music, and its standards have been maintained at the Otu training center at Odorkor since the period it was established. To maintain the standards of dance performances, they usually invite Otu Okomfo from the Fanti areas: Anomabu, Moree, Elmina, and other places where this music and dance came from.

In Field's book about the Ga religion and medicine (p.68) there are two photographs - a Fanti Okomfo who has been invited to a yam feast by his friend "wulomo" of Osu Ogbame god.

The Otu dance form grew out of the necessity to protect the non-verbal expression of their own beliefs and religion from dying from the strong and oppressive Christian societies in Accra. There were fetish priests who held-out against Christianity. One great Otu ruler was Otu Okomfo, Kwao, who walked in a fire during worship, but who became "dumb" at Osu his death unknown. Another great Bukom Otu healer Ayi Klma who was also against the Christians died during the

last British colonization in Gold Coast eleven years ago etc. They were great priests who kept this religion from dying.

Otu movements have subjective communication with the spirit of the gods when the mediums are possessed. The movements are physical expressions of invocation to the gods through imitation of animal movements.

According to Peggy Harper (Ibadan University), dance is an art of which the basic material is the movement of human bodies in space, and time. The analysis breaking them into their component elements of space, time and energy. The use of space is recognized in terms of the design of the dancer's movement on the ground or through the air. The element of time is expressed in duration of the dance, the tempo or relative speed at which the movements of are performed, and the metric and rhythmic patterns which bind the movements to the accompanying music. These movements are performed with a characteristic use of energy or muscular movement which gives the dynamic quality to the movement.

In Ga Mashi, worshippers of Otu have formalized dances requiring great technical skill. Each dancer improves within the accepted patterns of movements, and thus he finds his own way among the freelance Otu dancers. The ground patterns consist of circle, semicircle, then dancing forwards facing the drummer. The dancer is assessed on his ability to interpret the basic pattern of the dance with personal dynamics, which follow the rhythmic improvisation of a master musician. The outstanding feature of Ga Mashi dance is the delicate, complex of dynamics and rhythms which bind the movements to the music. Another outstanding feature is the elaborate and intricate use of raffia costume as an expression of spatial movements, which move to subtle grading of position, rather than from one definite spatial position to another. The dancers may carry symbolic objects such as a sword and a broom by the name of minati.

In the traditional dances, audiences and performers are members of a closely knit homogeneous community. Thus, the form of the dance is familiar to all members of the society. In Otu, however, the audience does not form part of the performers. In Otu, there are three forms upon which the dancer imparts his ideas of movement, as mentioned in the previous pages.

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1. Akroma | These animals are personified by the dancers who also imitate their dramatic and sero-comic expression. |
| 2. Blase | |
| 3. Anomakwatse | |

1. In Akroma movement, dignity and dramatization are emphasized. There is

weight, tension in space and time starting with side thigh more across to the other side as a unit, hold and fall while the head and chest stay in their original position. It is a difficult movement to attain technically as notated in (nota no.8).

2. In Blase movements, the beginning steps are where the dancer steps forward with the right foot on the first beat of the time measure with the other foot in a resultant touch, then a quick transference of weight on to the back leg swinging or springing a little and then steps forward again. Both arms sway forward diagonally towards the right leg at the same time as in (nota Plate no....) Here the use of uncomplicated movement, and force have concrete effect on space and time. It expresses a happy mood.

3. Anomakwatse movements are stressed energetically to depict prowess -just like movements in Ashanti Akoma dance. Movements include somersault, acrobatic, and body contortions that are beyond the dance medium. These movements bear a resemblance to the more extreme positions used in Yoga.

ODUKWE SACEYAD COMPOSITION "GEMI KWE KWE"

GEMI KWE KWE GEMI KWE KWE GEMI KWE KWE HEE
 OKE MEKE GEMI KWE KWE GELA NKE NO OKELE NUN WU HEE
 YOO YA YAA YOO YA YAA YOO YA YAA HEE
 OKE MEKE YOO YAA GE LE NKE WU OKELE NUN WU HEE
 NUN YA YAA NUN YA YAA
 NUN YA YAA HEE
 OKE MEKE - NUN YA YAA GELA NKE NO OKELE NUN WU HEE

OTU DRUMMING PATTERNS

First Bell
 2
 4

2 Bell
 2
 4

DRUMS
 2
 4

No. 19-3570 (R-2470 MU) 12 staves

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LANBAN NOTATION BASIC BLASE STYLE

