

FOLK MUSIC OF GHANA

EDITED BY IVAN ANNAN

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1964

MUSIC LP

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8859

FOLK MUSIC OF GHANA

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8859

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

AKONODEY
ADAAWE
ATTA OBLANYO
SIMP (Amura and Fire Fire)
AGBAJA (Ewe, Drums and Chorus)
AGBAJA (Drum Chant)
AGBAJA (Percussion and Ritual Chants)
KUMI 'NA GYAEMI

GOME-MR. JACOBSON
GOME-JANJA
AKORAH ANUMAH
ABOSUAH
ASAF (War Songs)
ASAYE (Women's Ritual and War Drums)
KOLOMASHIE

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So This Is Ghana

RECORDED by JUAN ANNAN

SIDE I

1. AKONODEY.
2. ADAAWE.
3. ATAA OBLANYO
4. SIMPA (Amura and Fire Fire).
5. AGBAJA (Ewe, Drums and Chorus)
6. AGBAJA (Drum Chant)
7. AGBAJA (Percussions and Ritual Chants).

SIDE I

AKONODEY

Adowa music plays a very important part in Akan society or for that matter the whole of Ghana excluding the northern part, who have a combination of Islamic influence and indigenous musical patterns. Akonodey is a highly respected religious cult among the Akan speaking people, not only for the legends associated with it, but the many mysterious deeds that have been associated with it. The customs and traditions of the Akan speaking people have spread out so far that only a small section of the entire population have not been influenced by the Adowa music. This music is either associated with funeral rites or other memorable moments, and even durbars, where the great deeds of ancestors are included in the lyrics of the chants. The music is performed mostly by old women whose age and philosophical attitude contribute to the betterment of the society and its youth, maintaining the dignity and devotion, these older people pass from one generation to the other. The great mystery of Akonodey can not be exposed because other religious sect have expressed similar communication with it in their environments, and the music also expresses such defiant attitude in the hands of over a dozen women, playing various indigenous instruments like the bamboo joints in three different tones at different rhythmic or time signature, various sizes of gauds with beads strung around them (Shekere) with only one male drummer punctuating as the changes are made by the movements of the dancer.

ADAAWE (Women's Play Songs)

After the days work, and the moon in full shape

SIDE II

1. KUMI 'NA GYAEMI
2. GOME (Mr. Jacobson)
3. GOME (Janja)
4. AKORAH ANUMAH
5. ABOSUAH.
6. ASAFO (War Songs)
7. ASAAWE. (Womens Ritual and War Drums)
8. KOLOMASHIE.

women get together in an open square and the usual delight of women (Gossip), is converted into songs led by a lead singer responded by the whole ensemble, clapping hands. These songs are always preceded by the call Adaawee, before the next 'gossip' begins. Even their wishes of the type of man they adore are included in the same topical fashion.

ATAA OBLANYO (Literally means, 'the young man')

As the women progress with their gossips and songs of praise to their men folks, they some time find male intruders who have also adopted the same songs expressing their desire of the opposite. These women never look down on these male intruders, since very often marriage develops out of this. A combination of joy, truth and affection in their humble small communities is expressed on this track.

SIMPAH

The Hausas are not only in northern Nigeria; through trade and games migration is no problem, and for many years they can be found in many society as a distinct group of people. The Arabic influence is more on them than many other tribe or people who have experienced the remnants of the fall of these ancient great Empires south of the Sahara. Yet they never lose the dialect or even their costumes which form part of their identity. But the confusing Arabic rhythm melody and harmony is usually abandoned as they enter the coastal line, adopting the pulsating steady rhythm and melodies of the coast folks in their own dialects. 'Fire, Fire' is one of the most popular song among the Hausa speaking

people in Ghana as well as their immediate neighbors in their locations, so is 'Amura', which has been adopted by many groups as the signature tune at any performance.

AGBAJA

The most talked about tribe in West Africa is the EWE tribe (Ewe, pronounced EVE') which spreads from the eastern part of Ghana through Togoland and Dahomey, fading at the boundry with Nigeria, into Yuroba. Their indogenous religion is a very powerful one which still have traces in the Latin Americas, especially in Cuba and Haiti. Many religious cults in Africa have their own distinct music to accompany the performances of a ritual, or after ritual ceremonies. Although drum music seem to dominate the entire performances, its sequences vary as it is portrayed here by the first portion of drumming and Chorus, followed by the chant of girl in trance, and a ritual song. The third of the series of the Agbaja, concludes in slow tempo played with percussion instruments of mostly cow bells at varying tempos and rhythm, and a chant of a girl which ends at the call of a whistle which starts another high spirited drumming and dancing. Other rhythm instruments used, are a number of high pitched drums of a smaller size, and the mama drums which rests on a bracket, and played with sticks and hand. Also various percussion instruments like the cow bells, rattles, wooden clappers and similar gaud with beads as in the Adowa groups and voices.

SIDE II

KUMI'NA GYAEMI

Religious organizations were shaken during the mid 1940's when one of the indogenous religious cults called TIGARI took a very dramatic turn, not converting the christians but through healing of the sick, got a tremendous following from other religious sects. It was a powerful organization that its existence became a challenge to modern society in Ghana. Rituals connected with it were so sacred that initiating ceremonies into the cult is an oath swearing with one's life. KUMI 'NA GYAEMI (Kill me or leave me) is one of the many oath swearing songs which is associated with the powerful Tigari cult of Ghana. A box-like instrument with metals across the open round hole on top, and played with the fingers called the ASHWA with cow bells and finger bells, back the chant of the ensemble of male singers in the soul string performance.

GOME (Mr. Jacobson)

Many years ago, various types of artisans were employed by Europeans to other parts of Africa to work, these include washermen, carpenters, masons and plantation workers. As it is with all Africans, their work is swiftly done as they accompany themselves with their own folksongs

combined with worksongs. In the Spanish possession of Fernando in West Africa, they did not receive favourable treatment from their European bosses, and these unfair treatments were established in the Gome songs.

Apparently one Mr. Jacobson, noted for his cruelty lost a finger while manipulating a machine, this incident was automatically transposed into a creol. At play time or work time, it became a very popular song among the people of the island. Those who returned home later made the Gome very popular again that it also became a farewell song at funerals of their mates. A single drum played with the hand, and tonal changes derived from the pressure on the skin by the heel of the foot, and other work tools like the crow-bar and saw, are the simple instruments used by the Gome players.

JANJA --

is another Gome music, but this time the emphasis is laid on competition with other tribesmen who are also workers. During fishing periods, the Gas dislike the selfish attitudes of the Kroos who returns home with only the fish they and their families will live on. There is another pattern of performance in this particular song, the introduction call of the leader, and the solidarity response of the members proceed the music, played in the same Gome fashion.

AKORA ANUMA (The early bird)

Folk songs of Africans deals mostly with historic or memorable incidents as well as people of great influence and contributions. Recent political changes have brought a new light to the outside world of the potentialities of the African leaders, and to the Ghanaian these changes and the contribution of such great personalities, are included in their folklore. A group of Ashwa musicians in their traditional manner, have established this particular song to the great leader of current Africa, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. A man of wisdom usually get such tribute during his life time, and as it is now and will be, handed from generation to generation in the same traditional manner, Akora Anumah will also remain on the lips of the children as they grow.

ABOSUAH (Weep no more mourners)

One instrument which is not Ghanaian but have been exploited in recent years in many musical forms including a combination of African and Jazz music, is the Yuroba talking drum. This is a small drum with skins on both sides and held together by strings made out of animal skins and played under armpit. The player of this instrument must be a competent musician to be able to create the excitement needed by the rest of the ensemble. Although the Yurobas use it in different forms, mostly in proverbial