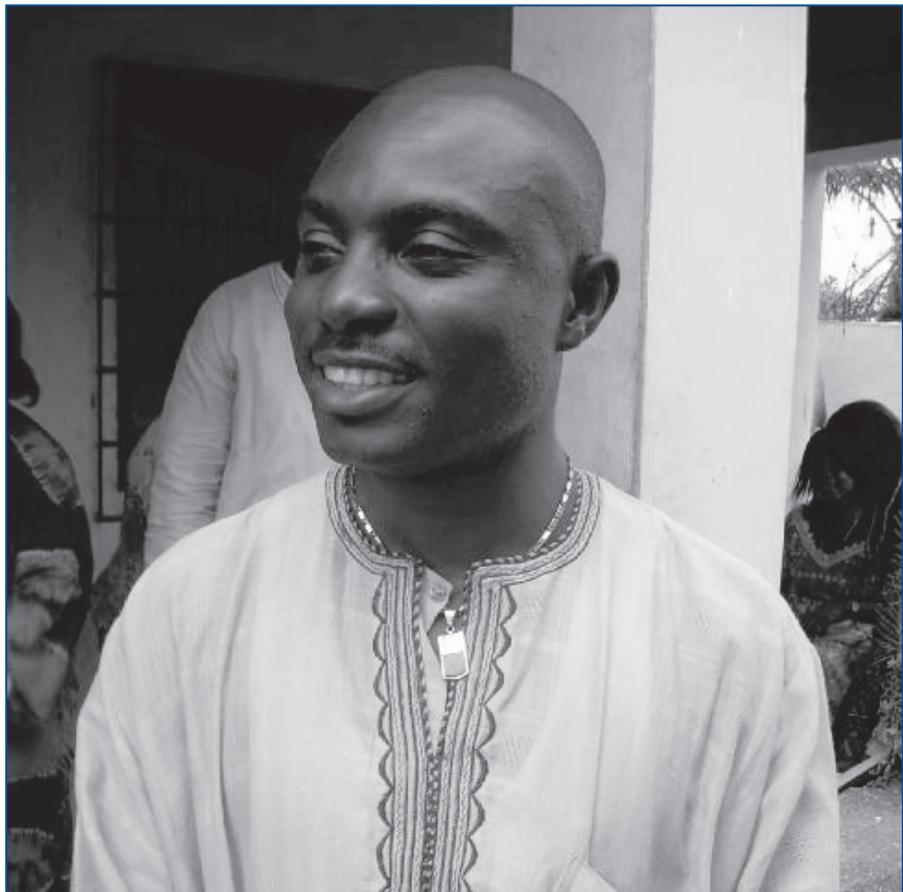


## Performing Adzomanyi: Religious-Cultural Expression among the Anlo-Ewe of Ghana

**SAMUEL ELIKEM NYAMUAME**

Traditional music and dance are among the cultural legacies that preserve the history of the Anlo-Ewe, who are located in the southeastern corner of the Volta region of Ghana. Musical performance in Ghana generally, and among the Anlo people in particular, is organized and practiced as an integral part of everyday life. The Anlo-Ewe people's rich musical tradition has been the subject of study from the time of their migration from Dahomey, now the Republic of Benin, until their present settlement in Ghana. The research that has been conducted focuses on recreational and social music as well as the amateur and national dance companies. Since there is ample research on social and recreational music, my research is geared towards an examination of religious music and dance traditions.

For the past three years, I have been researching a highly complex religious music and dance performance called *Yeve* among the people in Ave-Dakpa who are considered Anlo-Ewes. *Yeve* is a religious cult associated with the god of thunder, which also has a historical relation to the Yoruba *Shango*. Considered as a suite, I examined seven different movements that made up the musical performance. I studied the songs, dance, and the various drumming associated with rituals and performance in general. In the summer of 2010, I went to Ghana again to research another religious aspect of music, dance and song in the central part of the Anlo State called Lashibi-Anloga. The music is called *Adzomanyi* and performed mostly by older folks. Historically, *Adzomanyi* served as a powerful force of resistance during the colonial period by helping to maintain customs, values, and morality within the Anlo State. The success of this



resistance to the colonial administration and the lasting existence of the *Adzomanyi* group is due to the religious significance of ritual music performances through the language of the drum, the dance movements and the theme of the songs.

During my research over the summer, I investigated three aspects of *Adzomanyi* music that work together to give a holistic interpretation of how the performance of *Adzomanyi* serves as a safe medium for religious and political expression. The three aspects are: *Vugbe* (the drum language or texts and their meaning, and the text that angers and sets the deities to rebel), *Atsiadodo* (different

dance styles that interpret the songs and the drum text that conforms with it and its association with the divinities), and *Hamekoko/Hatsiatsia* (song performances that praise and reveal the power of deities). Though it is challenging to research complex rituals and religious musical traditions, I hope my research and findings contribute significantly to the religious music discourse in ethnomusicology as well as African-related disciplines in the arts and religion.

*Samuel Elikem Kwame Nyamuame is a doctoral fellow in ethnomusicology in the School of Music. Part of this research was funded by a Center for African Studies summer pre-dissertation grant.*