

**Mock Hunting, Music and Visual Art Forms in *Adevu*: A  
Northern Ewe Hunters'  
Dance-Drumming Ritual in Ghana**

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**Abstract**

Indigenous music in African cultures is strictly performed within the cultural matrixes of the people. The northern Ewe, like their other African neighbours, regard music as life because of their beliefs that are deeply rooted in religious, psychological and philosophical themes that support their daily activities and also provide solutions to their problems. Since their indigenous music making is also embedded in their social, political, religious and economic activities, one major music genre that supports personal and economic activities of *adelawo* (hunters) to provide bush meat for consumption in their communities is *adevu*, a hunters dance-drumming ritual. This article, therefore, attempts to find out what *adevu* is, its mode of performance, cultural role(s), and to further explain why visual art forms are incorporated into its performance. The study uses historical-analytic, iconic cultural, musical notation and participant observation methods to engage the issues it sets for itself.

**Keywords:** Indigenous music, Initiation ritual, *Adevu*, Dance-drumming, Visual art forms

**Introduction**

Agbodeka (2000) explains the term, 'northern Ewes of Ghana as Ewe ethnic groups that are located in the Ho, Hohoe, Kpando and Jasikan districts and are classified into two broad groups based on language and origin. A recent sub-division of the Ho, Kpando and Hohoe districts has led to a further creation of Agortime-Zi fe, Adaklu, North and South Dayi districts. Amenumey (1997) describes the first category of Ewes as the *Ewemeawo* who are in

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the majority and speak Ewe as a mother tongue. In addition, they have a common migration and settlement history as descendants of a major block of Ewes that migrated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century from *Dɔtsie* in the Republic of Togo.

The second category of northern Ewes referred to as *fiafialawo*, speaks distinct dialects that overlap and vary. These *fiafialawo* speak *Guan*, *Buem* and *Akan* dialects in addition to Ewe as a second language. Some of the Guan speaking settlements include *Akpafu*, *Avatime*, *Bowiri*, *Krachi*, *Likpe*, *Logba*, *Lolobi*, *Nkonya*, *Nyagbo*, *Sanrokofi* and *Tafi*. The Buem speaking groups are found at *Jasikan* and its adjoining settlements of *Baglo*, *Teteman*, *Kute*, and *Okadjakrom*. Going further north, one can identify pockets of Akan speaking groups of settlers at *Ahamansu*, *Breweniase*, *Kadjebi*, *Papase*, *Pampawie*, *Tapa Amanya* and *Worawora*.

### **Socio-Political Structure**

Bluwey (2000) analyses the political structure of northern Ewe land and states that:

1. The basic unit of a political organization in northern Ewe land is *du*, a settlement inhabited by a people who claim a common ancestry and are subjects of a chief. The *du* may consist of several clans, each with its own lineage and leadership who all owe allegiance to the *Dufia* (chief of the town) whose symbol of authority is the stool. The highest political entity, being the *dukɔ*, is composed of several *duwo* which owe allegiance as subjects to the *Fiaga*, paramount chief.

According to Gavua (2000), the *Fiaga*, by his position, is the supreme political head, the chief executive and the supreme judicial officer of the *dukɔ* (the state). Every chief including the *Fiaga* is a descendant of a *fiasa* (royal house) or a specific clan whose ancestors are believed to have been either the original founders of the state, town, or village or must have been rewarded

with the right of rulership for valour or distinguished service to the community or state.

### **Economic Activities of the People**

A close study of the economic activities of the northern Ewe, according to Obianim (1990), shows that principally, about 90% of the people are subsistence farmers and a very small percentage of them are fishermen and hunters. Foodstuff production and fishing from the Volta Lake and its adjoining smaller rivers form the hub of their economic activities. Cassava, yam, plantain, cocoyam, maize and rice, constitute their main staple food items in the area.

Besides farming and fishing, a handful of the citizenry are teachers, nurses, bankers and state security officials. An age-long economic activity that has always been and continues to sustain the well-being of the northern Ewe is hunting of wild animals. The Cambridge International Dictionary (1995) defines hunting as chasing and killing animals for food or sport. Hunting, according to Hoskins (1990), is the practice of tracking and pursuing an animal with the intent of killing it.

### **Why *Adedada* (Subsistence Hunting) a Northern Ewe Vocation?**

From the researcher's field studies, animal hunting in northern Ewe land is commonly undertaken to provide meat for direct consumption, for sale or to eliminate [predators](#) which are considered as dangerous to humans or domestic animals. Hoskins further states: "apart from food crop availability, wildlife as a food resource in Africa leads to employment, income generation as well as positive improvement in the physical, spiritual and cultural well-being of the people."

Corroborating the above, Ntiamo-Baidu (2016) claims that: "in many African countries *including Ghana* (emphasis mine), hunting is not only a means of securing food resources, but is also a male social event (rites of passage) in which young men prove their bravery and masculinity as future hunters." Africans, especially, rural dwellers, also depend on hunting to obtain

essential protein and income, while many others supplement their livelihood by hunting (Asibey, 1974; Ajayi, 1979; Butynski and von Richter, 1972; Infield, 1988; Tutu, Ntiamoh-Baidu & Asuming-Brempong, 1993). To date, what underscores the value of wildlife in northern Eweland is the consumption of what I term bush meat, and rituals that are performed for both hunters and the games killed.

### **Implements and Methods of Hunting**

Similar to what obtains among the northern Ewe of Ghana, Afolayan(1980); Martin (1983) identify and describe the gun as the most popularly used weapon in hunting communities of Nigeria where this vocation is undertaken individually or in groups:

í .In the past, the use of flint-locks, locally produced by blacksmiths, is now giving way to locally manufactured shot guns and imported rifles. The hunter enhances hunting activities at night, by using a head lamp; a special device made from brass with polished reflector that contains carbide, and carried on the forehead. When water is dropped on the carbide, it produces acetylene which burns to give a strong light. Other hunting methods include setting of traps and snares, using dogs to sniff out wild animals and fire to smoke out rodents which are killed with clubs or cutlasses.

By being a participant observer in the Kpando, Vakpo, Alavanyo, Peki, Hohoe and Wli traditional areas from October, 2015 to May, 2017, I have observed that hunting with guns as an individual or group activity, is very prevalent. The ability, therefore, to successfully kill at least three wild games, leads to a mandatory performance of *adevu* for such hunters.

### ***Adevu*: Origin, Distribution and Occasions of Performance**

A typical folk genre incorporated into ritual ceremonies to incite the presence and support of the spirits of the gods and ancestors of

the land, especially in the activities of northern Ewe traditional hunters, is *adevu*. The term *adevu*, which is a short form of *adedadavuwɔwɔ*, literally means 'hunting music' or 'hunting dance-drumming music' and it is derived from two Ewe words, *adedada* (hunting) and *vuwɔwɔ* (dance-drumming music). By definition, *adevu*, regarded as one of the oldest northern Ewe folk genres, is performed to give ritual cleansing and protection to hunters who have killed wild games (believed to possess harmful spirits) in order to ensure their overall welfare and survival. *Adevu* is also performed to usher an amateur hunter who has killed three wild games to the status of *ademega* (professional or chief hunter).

Research findings validate the assertion that this folk genre did not originate from any northern Ewe society in Ghana; but was a cultural legacy inherited from *D tsie*, a town in the Republic of Togo. Upon their arrival in Ghana, Younge (2011) states that:

The northern Ewes, who moved hinterland upon arrival at their respective places of settlement in Ghana, were mostly hunters and farmers. Since hunting at that time was by far the most revered occupation, they practised *adevu* dance-drumming inherited from their forbears at *D tsie*. For this reason, the best hunters who travelled long distances and killed wild games were highly decorated and given the title of *ademega*, chief or headhunter.

*Adevu* dance-drumming which is prevalent in the farming communities of the forest zones in northern Eweland, is largely performed by the people of Abutia, Adaklu, Alavanyo, Anfoega, Ho, Hohoe, Kpando, Peki, Sokode, Vakpo, and Wli traditional areas. *Adevu* performance also takes place during festival and funeral celebrations that pay tribute to or honour deceased hunters and citizens who have performed feats of bravery such as shedding their blood to protect their communities and people from the attack of enemies and wild beasts. Fiagbedzi (1997) further

states why Ewes observe death and funeral celebrations: music publicises the bereavement, and thus, propagate the news of death; it is considered as part of a decent burial; for it is denied certain types of death generally classified *asvumekuwo* (bad deaths) incurred through lorry accident, drowning, suicide, etc. Music performances at funerals are, therefore, means of helping sympathizers who keep vigil to be awake and occupied.

### ***Adevuas* Music and Ritual of the Northern Ewe**

A strong belief among the northern Ewe is that all wild games possess revengeful spirits that are harmful to a hunter and the entire community, hence, music and ritual performances for a hunter who has killed some number of such wild games is never delayed. The *adelawo*, in their discharge of activities, share the view that though their functions or interests are non-musical, they on the other hand, incorporate music and dance into their ritual performances to enhance a strong and formidable fellowship that can be renewed or adjusted with the spirit of their hunting deity and the gods of the land for physical and spiritual protection in the discharge of their duties. It is probably in this regard that Parrinder (1949) comments on music in African indigenous worship:

No one who has visited a scene of public worship in Africa can be in doubt that one of the attributes of the gods is that they are music-loving gods. The most common situation in which they manifest themselves is the musical situation in which music which affects them is performed. They descend to the people through their human media and participate in the drama of worship.

Parrinder further asserts that the gods, acting through their media, are known to object to singing of particular songs or show displeasure when performance lacks in animation and vigour. One can, therefore, infer from the point above that music as part of the religious activities of Africans is not always based on routine worship but also, it is associated with the ritual needs of individuals, social groups, and communities as a whole. Nketia

(1963a), with reference to the hunting songs of the Akan ethnic group in Ghana, claims that when such wild games are killed, there is a repertoire of songs that are sung by hunters during public rituals that are held to re-enact their encounters in the forest with animals.

Two weeks before a hunter gains public recognition for killing a wild game such as an elephant for the first time, he sends part of the meat to the *ademega* to announce his successful hunting expedition. Later, the head hunter leads his colleagues to present drinks such as *akpeteshie* (a locally distilled alcohol from fermented palm wine) or schnapps and a portion of the meat to the *dufia*, (chief) of the town and officially informs him about the hunter's achievement. A day is set aside for public celebration and invitation is thrown to hunters, drummers and singers in the area to be part of the celebration.

The public celebration often takes place on a Thursday, and on the morning of that day, the hunter first announces himself on the outskirts of the town by firing a gunshot and bursting into a victory song, and he is joined by boys training under him. His colleague hunters and members of the community also join him on the outskirts of the town and amidst exchanges of songs, declamations and verbal recitatives of praises and congratulatory messages; they carry him shoulder high through the streets of the town to the celebration ground where the chief, his elders and members of the public gather to welcome him. The hunter, led by the chief hunter, goes round to exchange formal greetings with the chief, his elders as well as other prominent members of the society. The public celebration is followed a few days later by confinement, initiation and cleansing ritual performances for the new hunter at the shrine of the *ademega*.

#### **Confinement and Initiation Rituals**

To be duly recognised and elevated to the position of a professional hunter, an initiate is confined for seven days to the shrine of the *ademega* for ritual cleansing. The *ademega* faces the east, prays and offers both local and foreign drinks mentioned earlier to the past glorified hunters for their protective spiritual care

of the initiate. The initiate is later served with a ritual meal prepared from selected parts of the game killed: heart, kidney, liver and jaw in order to forestall mishaps in the forest and harassment from the spirit of the dead animal. The head, ears, and tail of a wild game are not consumed but are kept as relics at the shrine of the chief hunter for rituals that enable hunters to shoot with precision, wild games that are confronted in the forest.

In addition to alcoholic drinks used for ritual performances, *wɔtsi* (corn flour mixed with water), is offered as a symbol of peace, blessing and good health for the attendants at the shrine. The rituals are believed to fortify the initiate and infuse into him courage, masculinity and hunting virility to embark on all hunting expeditions without fear of animal spirits or other principalities. A fowl is sacrificed to show gratitude to the Supreme Being, spirits of the gods and ancestors. The posture of the dead fowl is traditionally interpreted. The celebrants yell, sing, drum, dance, shout and fire musketry if the head and legs of the fowl face upwards; a sign that the rituals have been accepted by the gods. Younge (2011) further comments that:

The period of confinement for initiation rituals of northern Ewe hunters takes seven days during which the hunter is fed with meat from the heart, jaw and kidneys of an elephant or of any wild animal killed. The animal parts used for the meals symbolise the hunter's bravery, strength and endurance. He is also introduced to the use of some herbs for protection during his hunting expeditions. The final ritual which takes place on the seventh day is the preparation of the animal's head on which the new hunter, dressed in full hunting regalia, sits to demonstrate his total superiority over all forest animals.

A special ritual dance-drumming session is held for the initiate to exhibit his bravery and hunting skills through enactment

of dramatic forest scenes: tracking, stalking, taking, slow or quick steps, crawling, halting, aiming and firing.

### Song texts

Northern Ewe *adehawo* (hunting songs) are associated with both physical and spiritual worldviews of the people. From my field studies, northern Ewe *adehawo* reflect the relationship between activities of hunters in both physical and spiritual worlds. They also express hunters' experiences and knowledge of the behaviour of wild animals and forests within which they operate. These song texts, therefore, infuse a spirit of bravery and stimulate them into warlike actions and dance dramatisations that remind them of what happens during acts of combat with wild forest animals, successful and bitter hunting expeditions, the power of the gun and other related hunting materials; potions and amulets that facilitate their victory and superiority over the animals killed. Illustrated below, is a victory song, entitled, *Ne law'adakpl'adela do goa* and sung by a hunter who approaches the outskirts of the village or town to announce his victory over a wild animal killed.

Example 1: A victory song sung by a hunter after killing a wild game.

<i>Ne la w'adakpl'adeladogoa,</i>	If a wild game and a hunter meet,
<i>Ny'adedzɔa loo!</i>	Something happens!
<i>Ne la w'adakpletudogoa,</i>	If a wild game faces the bullet of a gun,
<i>La gaemua loo!</i>	The wild game falls dead!

From participant observation undertaken during my field studies, I have noticed that apart from Ewe language in which *adehawo* are sung, some of them are also sung in other varieties of Akan dialects such as *Fante*, *Twi*, *Kwahu* and *Akwapim*. Some of the hunters interviewed attribute this to a long standing social interaction between the northern Ewe and some Akan ethnic groups dating many years back to periods of wars of conquest, trading activities and sharing of common geographical boundaries which eventually, led to inter-marriages. The structural organisation of *adehawo* is mainly based on call and response or the (AB) form. The diagram below illustrates the AB form:

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[ A section ] [ B section ]
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intoned by the Cantor/Soloist answered by the Chorus

Two other ways in which the (AB) vocal form is used by hunters in *adevu* performance are: Solo/Chorus and Cantor/Chorus performances. The solo/chorus vocal form involves a soloist who sings an entire song through from the beginning to the end and it is exactly repeated by the chorus section or the soloist introduces a new material into the Solo section before it is responded to by the chorus section. This is illustrated below:

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[ Section A ] [ Section A1 ] [ Section B ]
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A: Portion of the original text intoned by the soloist.

A1: A new material added to complete the solo section before the chorus enters.

B: Chorus section.

The second AB vocal form which is the Cantor/Chorus form is where the cantor does not end completely, the musical phrase he intones on a perfect cadence before the chorus joins in to sing. Various elaborations of these forms also include variations in text, melody or both in the cantor/solo sections while the chorus section remains or changes as well. In another development, a soloist intones a song, and at different points in time, a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>

soloists take individual turns to sing allotted portions in order to complete the entire solo section before the chorus enters. The diagram below depicts a call and response vocal rendition between three soloists and a chorus.

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      [__1st soloist__][__2nd soloist__][__3rd
      soloist][_____]
      [____ Section A (Solo Section)][Section B (Chorus section)_]

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These two vocal forms, especially, the cantor/chorus form, in many cases, produce overlapping effects which eventually lead to some form of polyphony. Amlor (2010) contends that an important attribute of the cantor or soloist is that, apart from possessing a sweet and a strong tone, retentive memory, and good dancing skills, he is also supposed to have a good sense of improvising melodies on the spur of the moment. Collins (2004) further comments on other features true of soloists associated with indigenous African music performances as song leaders: "these skilled singers can be political spokespersons that praise and satirise, or folk philosophers, didactic teachers, chief mourners and repositories of genealogical knowledge". *Adehawo*, composed in the heptatonic and varieties of the pentatonic scales, are either ended on a sustained or a prolonged note or ended in sporadic use of parallel thirds, fourths, fifths and octaves that result in harmony and multi-part singing.

### **Structural Form of *Adevu* Dance**

*Adevu* dance performance first begins when the hunters, as a traditional obligation, pay homage to the *vufolawo* (instrumentalists), chiefs, important dignitaries and the spectators. According to Younge (2011), "the dancer who is expected to observe a dance ritual before beginning a dance session, pays homage by bowing to the drummers, chiefs and important dignitaries and touching the ground in front of them with the fore-

fingers of their left and right hands. The instrumentalists are said not to perform to their maximum best if a dancer does not observe this pre-dance ritual. *Adevu* dance movements are executed as solo performances where dancers take turns in executing short and brisk syncopated movements of the feet one after the other; forwards, backwards and crossing of the legs to depict forest animals or episodes encountered during their hunting expeditions. The structural form of the *adevu* dance, therefore, comprises four main stages: *adezoliḡeḡe* (hunters' processional dance) *adekaka* (dance-drama of the hunting expedition), *adevu* (the real dance-drumming session) and *akpi* (warriors' dance).

*Adezoliḡeḡe* is a symbolic processional dance-drumming ritual that depicts the nature of journeys embarked upon by hunters to and from their hunting grounds. The dance procession is led by the *ademega* and closely followed by *adegbadro/tsola* (the bearer of the hunting deity). To the people, *adegba* which is a collection of relics such as skulls, horns, tusks and jaws of wild animals killed, is an epitome of the spirits of deceased hunters, warriors and ancestors. Accompanying the *adegba* is *adetre*, a calabash filled with *wḡtsi* (corn flour mixed with water), a favourite ritual meal of the ancestral spirits during prayer sessions. During performances, the *adegba* is placed in front of the drummers and the bearer, regarded as the soul of the deity, sits either at the left or right side of the *adegba*; and maintains this position throughout the entire dance performance.

*Adekaka*, the second phase of *adevu* performance, is led by an *ademega* who mimics and executes dance-drama which is rooted in civic lessons on bravery and patriotism to inspire and educate young would-be hunters about the experiences of their elderly and professional hunters. The third stage which is called *adevu*, is the real and grand music and dance-drumming activity performed when a new hunter is joined in the celebration by fellow hunters and their wives to celebrate his victory dance. The session begins with *abrasi*, a vocal warming up exercise in which short and repetitive songs closely related to the worldview of the people are sung in a declamatory style either in free or strict rhythm. Nketia (1963b) describes declamatory songs as 'having series of

phrases or short musical sentences with intervening breaks. This song form which lies between speech and lyricism, has an opening, exposition and ending patterns that psyches and charges the atmosphere and creates emotional satisfaction and readiness in the hunters to perform the actual dance with vigour, joy and satisfaction.

*Akpi*, a warriors dance, is the fourth phase and climax of *adevu* dance performance. Homage is paid to deceased hunters and citizens who fought as warriors in the past to defend northern Eweland from enemy and animal attack. Tribute is also paid to hunters who during their hunting expeditions, were believed to have explored new territories and founded new settlements. For their skills in the past as leaders of warrior groups, search parties and experts in the knowledge of their geographical terrains, Asiama (1965), illustrates below, an *Akan* song text that projects hunters as pioneer settlers and pathfinders of their communities, villages and towns:

<i>Kwan ketewa</i>	Narrow path
<i>Obɔfoɔkwanketewa</i>	The hunters narrow path
<i>Bedantempɔn</i>	Will turn into a wide road
<i>Kwan ketekete</i>	A narrow path,
<i>Obɔfoɔayikwanketewa</i>	The hunters have made a narrow path.

Traditional chiefs, to date, have high regard for hunters for providing them (chiefs) with meat and other animal parts such as horns and hides for use at their traditional courts. For example, the ears of an elephant are used as head covers for Ewe and Akan court drums such as *agblɔvu* and *fɔntɔmfrɔm* and *nyidwo* (elephant ivory tusks), are used as talking wind instruments during societal ceremonies or celebrations to praise chiefs.

#### ***Adevu* Percussion Ensemble**

Instruments constituting the ensemble of this occupational folk music include the following: 1st and 2nd *Eko/Ladzo* (animal horn), *Uuvi* (supporting drum), *Asivui/adesivui* (deified hunters drum) and *Krokoto* (lead or master drum).

**1<sup>st</sup>/ 2<sup>nd</sup> Eko/Ladzo:** *Ekoorladzo*, a wind instrument constructed from elephant tusks, horns of buffalo, or any horn-bearing wild game killed, is used in *adevu* dance as an idiophone. The rhythm and sound of this instrument dictate the time-line or rhythmic phrases that guide the entire performance. The second *eko* accentuates the time-line of the first *eko* and sound is generated by striking the outer body of the instrument which is held slackly in the left or right hand and struck with a stick.

**Uuvi:** This is a small single-headed supporting drum that has a base carved in a bottle neck shape and tuned to a little higher pitch than the other drums. It is held in between the knees in a sitting position and slightly tilted forward and played with the hand or the palm.

**Asivui/adesivui:** This is a supporting drum that is a little bigger in size than the *vuvi*. Its shell is entirely covered with raffia and it is regarded as a deified instrument that represents the spirits of both the living and dead hunters. It is held in between the thighs and played with the fingers and the palms.

**Krokoto:** As a lead or master drum, the *krokoto*, often supported by *adesivui*, controls and monitors the rhythmic pattern of every instrument. A lot of improvisation is done on the *krokoto* by the master drummer; and at the climax of a performance, he introduces *vugbewo* (varieties of rhythmic patterns and drum languages) to embellish the tone colour of the ensemble. It is held in between the thighs, tilted forward and played with two curved sticks while seating. Open tones are generated by alternately hitting the head of the drum with curved sticks. The *krokoto* also plays a non-musical role as a speech surrogate at the chief's palace by announcing the arrival of chiefs and their elders at traditional and state functions. Illustrated below is *La w'adamezɔakplefe o*, an opening phrase of an *adevu* vocal and instrumental music.

Eko I  
 (Animal horn)  
 Eko II  
 Vuvu  
 (Supporting drum)  
 Asivui  
 (Supporting drum)  
 Krokoto  
 (Master drum)

Beginning section of  
 an accompanying song  
 La wa da me zaa kple fe!  
 Fe la ku me

Example 2: An opening phrase of an *adevu* vocal and instrumental music.

*Law'adamezɔakplefe o!*

A wild beast never walks on its claws.

*Fe l'aku me.*

It draws them into its paws

The picture below is a group of *adevu* performers in the northern Ewe traditional area of Alavanyo.



Fig. 1: *Adevu* dance ensemble being played during an initiation ceremony of a hunter.

The text of the above song is quite proverbial and likened to a person who is highly provoked to exercise patience to overcome such provocations. The drum patterns in *adevu* performance on the whole, consist of *õburden* texts, nonsense syllables, vocables or mnemonics<sup>õ</sup>. To a large extent, the roles of the *krokoto* and *adesivui* augment the complexity of the rhythmic foundation of the entire ensemble during performance. A close look at *adevu* dance arena reveals a simple formation. Behind the seated instrumentalists are the singers and dancers. The spectators form a circle and surround the performers.

### Visual Art Forms in *Adevu* Dance-Drumming

Visual art forms can be described as colours, paintings, drawings or physical objects that are incorporated into a musical performance to enhance its, meaning, understanding and enjoyment. In *adevu* performance, paintings or drawings appear on a hunters<sup>õ</sup> *adewu* (smock), or raffia is used to cover the shells of the drums. Besides, visual art objects employed in the dance serve as appendages that are held, suspended on parts of the body or attached to the shells of *adevu* drums. They include *alible* (waist bands), *asige/afõge* (finger/toe rings), *kõmege* (necklaces), *adekotoku* (haversack), *sebe* or *kabla* (amulet or protective charm) *sõsi* (animal tail), *adetsigoe* (gourd/rubber water container), *dzofii* (ash gathered from the hunters<sup>õ</sup> shrine), *adegbadza* (girdle), *etu* (local flint-lock guns now giving way to local and western manufactured rifles), *yi* (cutlass) *adekpui* (dagger), *ehẽ* (knife), *kpo* (wooden club) and *ekpe* (whistle).

The interrelationship, therefore, between *adevu* dance-drumming and visual art forms incorporated into its performance, is one of symbolism. Cohen<sup>õ</sup> (1974) definition of symbol, as *õ*objects, acts, concepts or linguistic formations that stand ambiguously for multiplicity of disparate meanings, evoke sentiments, emotions and impel men to action. Symbolism in *adevu* among the northern Ewe is quite abstract because its exact meaning transcends the arts/objects mentioned above and can only be understood by way of the interpretation and people associate with or give each of them. They, therefore, firmly believe that

though these objects of art are not musical instruments per se, they add to the structural organization and performance of *adevu* by serving as props and extensions that are used by the hunters to depict actual forest scenes.

### ***Adewu***

The *adewu* (smock), plural (*adewuwo*) which is worn over dark or blue knickers/trousers, is woven or sewn from calico and dyed in red, brown or black colours produced from the juice of the bark of *gboloba* or *logo azagu*, a species of cedar tree also used in constructing drums. Although amulets fixed on hunters' *adewu* enhance hunting activities in the forest, they on the other hand, claim that its exposure during dance performances at home practically demonstrates a mock hunting exercise that makes the public aware of how this dress together with other objects of charm such as *alible*, *asige* and *komege*, improves their hunting successes by drawing the animals closer to them to kill.

### ***Adekotoku and its Contents***

The *ademega* and his *adekplavi* (assistant) always carry *adekotoku*, a haversack which contains items such as *sebe/kabla*, *dzofii*, and *sosi*, *yi* (cutlass) *adekpui* (dagger) and *kpo* (wooden club). To the hunters, public performance of *adevu* dance-drama, offers the general public an opportunity to see at first sight, how and why hunters manipulate these related art forms; potions such as *sebe/kabla*, *dzofii*, together with *sosi*, *adetsigoe*, *adegbadza*, *yi*, *adekpuikpo* and *ekpe* as appendages to facilitate the discharge of their duties in the forest without hindrance.

For example, the *sebe/kabla*, which is prepared from local herbs, heart and liver of wild animals such as leopard, tiger and hyena (animals of the cat family that draw their claws into their paws while walking), is highly regarded as a first aid material or a protective charm. It is covered with animal skin or strips of red or black cloth and tied to the barrel of a gun, elbows or wrists of a hunter and believed to ward off evil spirits or any form of harm that might befall him in the forest. The hunters also claim (though not verified), that these charms have invisibility or magic of transformation powers that make them (hunters) invisible during

dangerous encounters with wild animals and thereby, enabling them to approach and shoot them at close ranges. *Dzofi* (ash), which is gathered from fire at the hunter's shrine, is used as a directional tool. If an *ademega* misses his bearing and cannot trace his way in the forest back to his hunting camp or home, he sprinkles himself with the ash to have the problem resolved.

The *sosi* (plural-*sosiwo*) is held by would-be professional hunters in a procession and introduced to the public for the first time. Later, they march to the shrine of the *ademega* for initiation rites. Amidst poetry of songs and rhythmical patterns and sound of their drums, the hunters, during their dance gestures, hold high their *sosiwo* and swing them to show their power which is accompanied with incantations to subdue 'stubborn wild games' before they are killed. *Adetsigoe*, a local gourd, which is now being replaced by a small rubber receptacle, contains water that is often suspended at the back of the waist of a hunter during dance performance. The drinking posture and quantity of water to use to avoid shortage during hunting expeditions are all dramatised through dance gestures. It is also not surprising to see hunters chipping off small quantities of *dzowæ* (a mixture of groundnut and roasted corn flour paste) into their mouths as a dance gesture to depict scarcity of food experienced at times in the forest. They, therefore, rely on these two food items to sustain themselves while hunting.

The *adegbadza*, a girdle worn around the waist during dance performance, contains both western and locally manufactured cartridges and gun powder which are used for hunting. Where a game shot does not die instantly, the hunter through dance-drama, displays how he uses *yi*, *kpo*, *adekpuiorehe* as 'arsenals' to effect a final death blow on the animal either by inflicting cutlass wounds on it or hitting its head with *kpo*. The *ekpe* is blown to alert and rally other fellow hunters to the spot where the animal is killed. The *adekpui* (knife/dagger) is used by the hunter to cut off the ears and tail of the animal as a symbol of overpowering and killing it. Death and burial rites of the hunters do not go without choice of colour as a visual art form in dirge performances. Red colour, according to the hunters, symbolises blood and spirits of forest animals and at home, it depicts sorrow or

bad news such as death. It is, therefore, not surprising to see hunters clad in red clothing materials tied around their heads, necks, elbows or wrists or suspended on their hunting costumes/implements. The red colour also communicates deep-seated feelings of hunters to outsiders as a way of reinforcing the meaning of what they express verbally to listeners in their songs. Although these red pieces of cloth do not in any way add to the form, structure or quality of the songs sung; their impact on dirges sung or on the occasion, symbolise the (grieving) condition of the mourners as not a pleasurable one. The picture below shows a group of hunters who have worn or displayed some of these art objects.



Fig. 2: Visual art objects: *adegba* (hunters' deity; old animal head in a brass pan) and *ladzo* (animal horn), displayed in front of hunters dressed in brown-dyed *adewuwo* (smocks)

### Conclusion

Among the northern Ewe, besides music genres that are linked with their social, political and religious activities, one prominent type that supports the economic activities of *adelawo* (hunters) is *adevu*. The term *adevu*, which is a short form of

*adedadavuvawaw*, is derived from two Ewe words: *adedada* (hunting) and *vuvawaw* (dance-drumming music). This article has examined what *adevu* is, its mode of performance, cultural role(s) and why visual art forms are incorporated into its performance. Visual art forms; colours, paintings, drawings and physical objects such as amulet, gun, cutlass, neck and arm/wrist bands incorporated into *adevu* dance-drama, are believed by the performers to be objects of charm and protection that increase their hunting successes. Though these objects are not musical instruments per se, they add to the structural organization and performance of the music by serving as props and extensions that are used by the hunters to depict actual forest scenes to enhance the understanding and enjoyment of *adevu* within the cultural domain of the people.

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