WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

DRUM MAKING among the
Southern Ewe People
of Ghana and Togo

by
Joseph A. Galeota, Jr.

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Wesleyan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Art.

Middletown, Connecticut         May 1985
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Plates</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typography</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps</td>
<td>xiv,xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quote</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Drums and Their Function</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II: The Master</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Analysis</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Does Eye Society View the Drum Makers</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III: The Apprentice</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who's Who?</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Contract</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duties</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV: Construction</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage One: Cutting and dressing a stave.</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Two: The bending process.</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Three: Drying.</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Four: Making of the bands.</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Five: Finishing.</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Six: The pegs and flesh hoop.</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Seven: Lacing the skin.</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Anani at Agoenyive</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview at Abo with Mensaga</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

The construction of barrel drums among the southern Eye is an important feature of West African music. Prior to barrel drum construction, Eye drums were painstakingly hollowed and carved from logs and as a result were produced on a limited scale. According to barrel drum makers, the economic process of coopering has made these drums more readily available. In addition, the popular sonorously sound of the barrel drums has increased their distribution throughout the Eyeland of Ghana and Togo. Barrel drums are now evident in all types of Eye dance drum music. This thesis will demonstrate that drum making is an important facet of Eye society and that the drum makers themselves play an essential part in the existence of their culture.

Biographical Sketch

My career as a musician and drum maker began at an early age. Formal lessons began at the age of eight and continued through High School and College. In 1977, I graduated from the Berklee College of Music with a Bachelor's Degree in Music with emphasis in performance.
In conjunction with drumming, my love for crafts and woodworking developed. I established a reputation as a drum maker for schools and universities, and was called upon to repair damaged percussion instruments. For example, in 1980-1981 I was commissioned by Brown University to completely recondition their set of Eye barrel drums. At Wesleyan University in 1982, I replaced the skins on several dondos (hour glass drums) for the West African program. Also, in 1982, Tufts University contracted with me to purchase an entire set of Eye drums, bells and rattles from sources in West Africa.

My wide range of musical interests has involved me in classical and contemporary performances including musical theatre, orchestras, bands, wind and percussion ensembles and operas, as well as pop music in rock, funk, jazz, Latin and African styles.

My training in West African music began with Ethnomusicology at the University of Ghana's Institute of African Studies in 1979. After completing course requirements for a Master's Degree in Music in Ghana, I continued at Wesleyan University, where I was a teaching assistant under Abraham Adzinyah and Freeman Donkor.
Although much of my time in Ghana was spent involved in academics, weekends were devoted to field trips. These took me to different villages where I learned a variety of musical drumming styles as well as techniques of barrel and hourglass drum construction.

At Wesleyan I broadened the scope of my studies to include world music, such as Indonesian Gamelan orchestra and South Indian music, in addition to traditional and popular African music.

In 1982 I was asked to teach at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. There I taught classical and contemporary percussion and developed courses in Latin and African drumming and drum making. Following the first year of teaching, in May 1982, I conducted primary research in Ghana and Togo for this thesis. I was initiated into an apprenticeship where I learned the process of making Eye barrel drums. This research, conducted over a four-month period, was based on material gathered from several communities. As an active participant in the actual drum making process, my apprenticeship provided greater depth and understanding than I would have gained had I been solely an ethnographer.
The data contained in this thesis has been collected from six drum makers, including the originator of Eye barrel drums, Laurance Mensaga Nutakor.

Shortly after my return to the United States, I established a company called Jag Drums in which I have applied the knowledge and skills learned in Africa. This company offers a line of professional African instruments distributed world-wide. My business and manufacturing experiences have combined with the concepts and process of Eye drum making, contained in this thesis; and as a drum maker, they have provided me with a greater understanding of music culture in general.

The goals of this thesis are 1) to view drum making as a social and cultural process and 2) to present a detailed description of the actual construction. I have included several anecdotes from my field work, 48 photographs of the drumming process and personal interviews with Mensaga and my Master, Anani Laffi.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the people who have contributed their assistance throughout this thesis project. I am especially grateful to Anani Laffi who took me on as an apprentice of drum making and who spent most of his time with me during my research and interviews. I would like to thank other drum makers for their assistance and information including: Agbe, Koami, Anani Ayite, Kobla E. Abotsi, Rafael Mensah Laffi and Agbodzi Nutegue.

I am deeply grateful to and honored by Mensaga Nutakor the originator of Eye barrel drums for his invaluable information offered in this thesis.

I am indebted to Godwin Agbeli with whom I studied Eye drumming in Ghana and who interpreted and transcribed many of my interviews. I wish to thank Koami Denakpo, a dear friend, who has helped on countless occasions. He is responsible for introducing me to Anani, for my living accommodations in Togo, and for interpreting and translating interviews throughout this project. Special thanks goes to my friend Kweku Ahiable for his transport, invaluable during my stay in
I would like to thank Abraham Adzinyah and Freeman Donker who established a strong concept of West African music for me, at Wesleyan during my graduate work.

I am especially grateful to my friend David Locke for continuing my education in African music for the past three years. He has shared with me numerous styles of African drumming and dance and many opportunities for perform with his group The Agbeko Drum and Dance Society. In addition, I wish to thank him for supervising and supporting my writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank David P. McAllester, my first reader and advisor for his scholarly comments and literary suggestions which guided me through difficult moments.

I am grateful to Dottie Ahlgren and Lucy Mack who spent many hours proofing, reading, and reviewing my writing in the final drafts. Special thanks to Anne Nagy for typing and putting up with me throughout on such short notice.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife, Vida Awuku Galeota, for her continual support and the sacrifices
that she endured from the very beginning. We were married in Ghana on August 6, 1982, the month that this research was completed. I am indebted to her for teaching me the real meaning of patience and humility.
I wish to dedicate this thesis to our late son
Joey A. Galeota III. May his spirit live on and guide
us.
List of Figures

A. Atsimeyu (three sizes)
B. Boba
C. Sogo, Kidi, Kagan (left to right)
D. Kloboto, Totodzi (left to right)
E. Congas (two types)
F. Kinka Set; Boba, two Atsimeyuwo, Kagan, Kidi, Sogo (left to right)
G. Carved Yeve Master Drum
H. Koami Carrying Unfinished Atsimeyu
I. Laurance Mensaga Nutakor
J. Workshop of Laurance Mensaga Nutakor

1. Backing a Stave (Koami)
2. Jointing a Stave (Agbe)
3. The Raising Up Process
4. Kocking Hoops
5. Rope Clamp being Tied to the Root of a Tree
6. Rope Clamp Closing Staves for End Hoop to be Fixed
7. Barrel Drums Drying in the Sun
8. Cold Pot for "Rush" Drying
9. " " " " "
10. Making Rivets or Anvil
11. Punching Holes for Rivets
12. Riveting Bands Together
13. Chiming End of Barrel
14. Spoke Staving Atsimevu (Koami and Mawudeka)
15. Spoke Shaving Sogo (Anani)
16. Chiseling Splints
17. Sawing Bottom in Halves
18. Forming Basle and Cant on Bottom
19. Measuring for V Groove
20. Preparing Groove for Bottom (Kudzo)
21. Boba
22. Kinka Set
23. Cutting Trees Used for Tsotsi
24. Wood Used for Tsotsi
25. Sawing Lengths of Tsotsi
26. Cutting Ends of Tsotsi with Cutlass
27. Rough Cutting Tsotsi
28. Carving Tsotsi with Knife
29. Adzuka Vine
30. Measuring Flesh Hoop (Gbako)
31. Joining Flesh Hoop
32. Removing Hair from Skin
33. Soaking Skin
34. Punching Holes in Skin
35. Lacing Skin
36. Leveling Flesh Hoop
37. Fixing Pegs into Loops
List of Plates

Plate I: List of Drum Makers Researched
Plate II: Drum Names
Plate III: Types of Drums, Bands and Staves
Plate IV: List of Drum Types, Skins and Implements
Typography

The following "Notes on the Typography" is borrowed from David Locke 1978.

The Eye language contains eight letters not found in the English language. In this dissertation, these Eye letters are indicated by underlining the closest English letter.

\[\varepsilon (\varepsilon): \text{sounds like e in men}\]
\[\varphi (\varphi): \text{sounds like o in cost}\]
\[\lambda (\lambda): \text{an alveolar flap; like a Spanish r}\]
\[\varsigma (\varsigma): \text{a voiceless bilabial fricative; like blowing out a candle}\]
\[\eta (\eta): \text{a nasalized n}\]
\[\chi (\chi): \text{a voiced velar fricative}\]
\[\upsilon (\upsilon): \text{a voiced bilabial fricative}\]

The pronunciation of the six Eye diagraphs is shown below.

\[\text{dz: \text{sounds like j in jump}}\]
\[\text{gb: \text{sounds like gb in good bye ellided to become g'bye}}\]
kp: sound like kp in cook peas pronounced as one sound
ny: sounds like ni in opinion
ts: sounds like ts in sits
tsy: sounds like ch in chime

In this thesis, African proper nouns have not been pluralized. The symbol $\sim$ indicates nasalization.
"...I would like to stake a claim for a place in history for the band of ordinary people, men who worked with the skill of their hands and the sweat of their brow, of tradesmen who have a history longer than any dynasty or house of kings, who know no frontiers in the practice of their craft and whose position in life is quite humble." (Kilby 1971: Introduction).
CHAPTER I

Introduction

Setting

The research for this thesis was conducted among the Southern Eye people of Ghana and Togo. The following insert is borrowed from a Ph.D. dissertation, The Music of Astigbeke by David Locke (1978: Chapter One). It best describes the geography of Eyeland and any materials available on this subject:

"The Eye people of West Africa live between the Volta River on the west and the Mono River on the east in the modern states of Ghana and Togo. Their country lies on the Gulf of Guinea and stretches north to the upland Togo ranges. Eyeland, with 80 miles of coast and reaching 75 miles inland, has an area of approximately 10,000 square miles and a population in excess of one million people."

Southern Eyeland receives an annual rainfall of 25 to 30 inches, has an average temperature of 86 to 92°F, and an average humidity of 75 to 88%. 
Principle fruits and vegetables of the area include coconut, mongo, cassava, okra, tomato, maize, sugar cane, banana and shallots. Moreover, it is an area long noted for its abundance of domestic animals including fowls, pig and goats. The principle occupational activities are fishing and weaving along the coast and farming and weaving inland. A striking geographical feature of the area is the Keta Lagoon, a large and shallow body of water 50 miles by 12 miles which separate the long narrow coastal strip from the mainland."

I primarily studied in Agoenyive, a town six miles north of Lome, the capital of Togo. Although the national language of Togo is French, Eye and Mina dialects of the Gbe languages are spoken in Lome and the surrounding towns. The population of Agoenyive was 27,491 in 1982 (Centre National d'Etudes et de Traitement Informatique).

In addition to my study at Agoenyive, I conducted research in Aflao, Akatsi and Abo, three towns in the Volta region of Ghana (see Map, page xv).
The Drums and Their Function

As an organological study, this thesis describes the construction of Eye barrel drums and the role of the drum makers themselves in Eye society. As a basis for this, I will first present the different types of Eye barrel drums and their function in drum ensembles.

With the exception of the barrel Brekete, which has two heads, Eye barrel drums have one head, or skin. Each skin is laced with rope around a hoop and stretched over the mouth or opening of the drum (see Construction, page 127). The drums are tuned by attaching rope loops, laced through the head to wooden pegs which are driven into holes around around the shell. Another form of tuning is accomplished by turning the drum either upside-down or on its side, then filling the resonator with water. The drum is rolled for approximately two minutes until the wood and skin are saturated. Wet tuning is necessary in the Hormatan or dry season to maintain tightness of the pegs and slats or staves of the shell. Drums are usually wet before a performance. If any additional tuning is desired, the pegs are driven farther into their holes.

There are eight types of barrel drums. The
largest, with its long, thin body resonator, is Atsimeyu. Atsimeyu is constructed in three different sizes, ranging from four and one half to five and one half feet tall, and each size is used in specific musical settings (see Figure A). Because the Atsimeyu is so tall, it is played from the side while resting diagonally on a wooden stand. Heavy wooden sticks about 10 inches long are used to play the Atsimeyu. Common playing techniques include two sticks, two hands, or one hand and one stick. Having an open bottom, the Atsimeyu projects a full, piercing resonance that can be heard over an entire drum ensemble.

Of all drums made, the one that most resembles a barrel is Boba (see Figures A and 21). Shaped and sized like a 50-gallon cask, Boba originates from peg leg barrels from the colonial time in Ghana (personal information Godwin Agbeli). It speaks with the lowest voice of all Eye drum types. A 20 or 21 inch goat skin head is stretched over the upper end of the drum. As a result, Boba produced a thunderous sound that is most noticeable from a distance rather than from up close. The two variations in this drum include the open-bottom construction and closed-bottom construction. The closed bottom type is used as the leading drum in Gahu and is played with two sticks, or one hand and one stick. The
open type of Boba is played with the hands, as in Kinka, and functions as an improvisatory lead drum. There is a special tilting stand made for Boba which includes a built-in chair for the player to insure the proper angle of contact. Both Gahu and Kinka will be discussed later on in this chapter.

*Sogo* and *Kidi* (see Figure C) are two teardrop shaped drums that are constructed and played in a similar manner. They are designed with an unusually low stomach (widest part of the shell) that produces their unique sound. The wooden bottoms that close the resonating chambers of both the Sogo and Kidi have a one half inch hole, drilled in the lower side of each drum. This hole serves two purposes:

1) to depressurize the air in the shell; and
2) to allow water inside for tuning.

Both drums sit flat on their bottom rims while being played.

Although Sogo and Kidi are shaped alike, there are drastic differences in their tunings. For Kidi, its seven and one half inch head is consistently stretched tight, tuned to a high pitch. This small head requires
the use of two short, light sticks, approximately eight inches long and one half inch wide. The Sogo may be tuned to a relatively low or medium pitch, depending upon its function in the drum ensemble (see Function, page 9). Like Atsimevu, two sticks, two hands, or one hand and one stick may be used when playing Sogo.

The highest pitched drum manufactured by Eye barrel makers is Kagan (see Figure C). It is a thin and narrow drum with an open bottom, standing almost two feet tall. Two long, thin sticks (about 14 inches) are used to beat its tight skin. The Eyes refer to it as "the baby", since the common off-beat rhythm played exemplifies crying ... ka-gan, ka-gan, etc. (Freeman Donkor.

Two short, miniature-like barrel drums, Kloboto and Totodzi, are about 16 inches tall and also have open bottoms (see Figure D). Kloboto, the higher pitched drum with a smaller head, is slightly taller than Totodzi. They are each played on an angle, tilted away from the performer between his legs. These low sounding drums are commonly played in the Eye warrior music, Agbeko (see Locke 1978).

In addition to the drums mentioned thus far, there
are two remaining types that are less popular from the makers' point of view. The first is a medium-sized barrel drum called Breke\text{t}e. Brekete drums are usually carved from soft wood or made from cylindrical oil drums. They are suspended by cloth from one shoulder, and are played with a curved stick. It was brought to my attention that the Eye drum makers construct their own version of this drum, on occasion (Anani Laffi). It is double-headed with a peg tuning system.

During my apprenticeship, I ordered two barrel-type Brekete drums. They were larger and heavier than the conventional Breketes of tin and soft wood. When I asked why this was, my Master explained to me that it was difficult to construct a light-weight Brekete made from Odum (mahogany). "Nevertheless" he said, "these barrel-type Brekete drums are still requested."

The second-least popular drum constructed is Conga. Congas are hand drums used in various cultures throughout the world (see Figure E). The Eye drum makers manufacture different sized conga drums, usually to the customer's specifications. The common shape of this hand drum looks like an upside-down thinner version of the Kidi and Sogo. The stomach is constructed above the middle, tapering towards the bottom. Conga drums
range from 29 to 32 inches high, and have head diameters of about nine to 11 inches. Congas are commonly played with the hands.

**Ensemble Function**

Eye barrel drums are played together in groups, or sets, forming a drum ensemble for most Eye dance drumming music. Specifically, each drum plays an important role in the ensemble, creating musical conversation between parts. This musical conversation is commonly referred to in African music as dialogue. Let us take a closer look at these tonal relationships.

In any one form of Eye drum and dance music, there are several relationships to consider between instruments. For example, Kinka, a social dance with all of its songs and drumming, clearly demonstrates the links among musicians. Although its modern structure is prominent in Ghana and Togo, Kinka finds its roots in the music of "Gahu", a flirtatious social dance influenced by the Yoruba in Nigeria. The instrumentation includes Atsimyu (large), Boba, Sogo, Kidi, and Kagan in conjunction with such idiophones as gankogui (iron double bell), several *akate* (rattles with netted beads, and hand clapping (see Figure F).
The "time" or tempo of Kinka is established by the gankogui, axatsė and hand claps. They play similar rhythm patterns that consistently repeat throughout the music, establishing a fundamental reference point for other musicians.

The second inherent rhythmic relationship is created by Sogo, Kidi and Kagan that I will refer to as "support parts." The Kagan plays a repetitive off beat rhythm that functions as a type of "motor" to the music. This rhythm which is standard in Eye music remains an ostinato pattern for the entire event. The Kidi and Sogo, however, begin playing ostinato rhythmic patterns and then change to dialogue, or call-and-response form, with the Atsimevu, or leading drum. In addition, they play in unison, creating both rhythmic harmony with Kagan and tonal harmony with low and high pitched sounds. Therefore, support drums have two functions:

"1) They may play recurrent rhythm patterns that help create the defining polyrhythmic texture of a musical type, and/or 2) they may play rhythmic patterns which change according to the rhythms of the leading drum..." (Locke 1978: 318).
Kinka is unique in that two different leading drums are used, Atsimeyu and Boba. As Locke points out, "The two principal functions of the leading drum are: 1) playing the traditional rhythms (yugbe; literally, drum language) of a musical type; and 2) playing rhythms which provide choreographic signals for the dancers." (Locke 1978: 318). While these principles apply to general forms of Eye dance drumming, the leading drums in traditional Kinka take on slightly different functions. The rhythms of the Atsimeyu primarily accompany, or outline, the rhythmic structure of songs that are sung throughout. These songs contain the history and culture of the Eye people, portraying their life styles passed down from generation to generation. There is no organized choreography in traditional Kinka. The dance movements are free interpretations of the standard torso and side-to-side Eye dance styles, and the Atsimeyu plays a rhythm pattern that appropriately complements a song. Atsimeyu rhythms are composed by lead drummers, or so-called "Master drummer(s)." In addition, they may be simply passed down from musician to musician.

How do these lead rhythms fit into the form of Kinka?
Kinka begins with songs accompanied by bells and rattles. Soon after, the Atsimeyu plays a rhythm that signals the support drums to enter. As the Kidi and Sogo continue to repeat their pattern, the Atsimeyu will improvise on the "basic" rhythm or dialogue. After a short while, the Boba will take over from the Atsimeyu and improvise, creating hot polyrhythmic conversation. As a new song develops from the crowd of singers and dancers, a signal stated by the Atsimeyu will alert the Kidi and Sogo to listen for a new rhythm that is introduced by the Atsimeyu player himself. The Kidi and Sogo immediately change their rhythm, answering with the appropriate response pattern. This pattern is continued while the Atsimeyu improvises for some time. He then "passes" the rhythm to Boba, who in turn takes over improvising. This intense conversation continues for two to five hours accompanying song and dance.

There are other types of Eye music that contain rhythmic relationships to be considered here. Agbadza, taken from the old traditional after-war dance Atrikpui, has developed into the most popular general social dance of the Eye (see Jones 1959: 162). In Agbadza, Sogo takes on the role as the master drum along with supporting drums, Kidi and Kogan. Against the repetitive gankogui (iron double bell) and axatsa
(rattle) rhythms, the Kagan adds another layer of recurring sycopation, accenting the off beats of the ternary subdivisions. Sogo's low monstrous tones call the Kidi to respond in a direct way, creating exciting dialogue for participants to dance. I surmise that it is this interplay which establishes a one on one relationship that makes Agbadza so popular.

Teenagers and young adults in Eye society enjoy a different kind of interplay that is present in another popular social dance, Akpese. Akpese incorporates rhythm and choreographed dancing, with light, anecdotal songs, anecdotes in life. The funky off-beat groove is sustained by two Eye Congas and the Patange drum (a small two-sided drum play with a thin stick), in addition to bells and rattles. A double-headed Tom Tom as Master Drum is frequently used to accentuate syncopated rhythms that highlight the action. The interlocking parts of "patange" and Congas create a steady flow of notes that manifests momentum throughout the music. It is said that these instruments give "motion" or "spark" to the dancers feet. As Akpese is danced in a circle, the drummers display their talents in the center and the audience participates in the event with interest.
One of the more modern local religious cults among the Eye is Brekete (see Hill 1984). The music that accompanies its ceremonies and festivals is known to be one of the most challenging, physically and mentally to perform. The drum whose name is taken from the cult is Brekete. As previously described on page 7, the Brekete drum is suspended from the shoulder and rests on the hip or knee as it is played with a curved stick. It plays specific rhythms that evoke spirits who possess or embody so-called mediums of the cult (personal info: Emanual Kiss Doe). Possession only occurs when the Brekete drum is in action. As the tempo is extremely fast, the lead rhythms excite members to come forward and move their feet in a shuffle-like manner that characterizes the dancing of Brekete. In addition to the battery of support drum, bells and rattles, the Master Drum insistently creates an abundance of energy that continues through the night.

Finally, there are two forms of Eye music and dance that were created in pre-colonial times by Fo-speaking people of Dahomey (presently Benin). They are based on enactments of war, either before or after battle. The drumming and dancing coincide with each other, making it necessary for performers to learn or at least understand both idioms. Atsigbeko and Adzogbo
are among the most complex and intricate forms of music in the Eye repertoire.

Firstly, *Atsiagbeko*, sometimes called *Agbeko*, uses two indigenous drums, *Kloboto* and *Totozi*, in place of Sogo. These two drums play repetitive figures along with other support parts, Kidi and Kagan. There is no changing dialogue between support drums and the Master Drum. The Master Drum, Atsimeyu, choreographs the dance by playing particular rhythm patterns or "atsiawo" (literately; displays or styles) that are each set off by a turn signal for the dancers. *Atsiagbeko* is danced in two movements. The first movement, *vulolo*, is a slow processional march where the ensemble interacts with rhythm and dance depicting warrior styles of courage and bravery. The second movement, *yutsotsoe*, is set at a brisk tempo where dancers display movements of strength and agility. The drummers maintain rhythms supporting the lead drum Atsimeyu, who dictates the form (see Locke 1978).

Along with *Atsiábeko*, Adzogbo ranks as one of the most exciting and complex forms of Eye dance drum music. "Adzogbo was created in pre-colonial times by Fô-speaking people of Dahomey. According to oral tradition, Adzogbo provided a means for Fô warriors to
get information about impending battles from their war gods." (Locke 1977: 26). Adzobgo is danced in two parts, the Kadodo for women and the Atsia for men. During the Kadodo section, women sing songs intertwined with a vigorous side-to-side dance step. The Atsia section is similar to the Vutsotsoe in Atsiagbeko where men display war-like gestures only it is danced in a circle instead of lines (personal info: Faith Conant, Toby Berla).

A unique feature of Adzogbo is the drum language that is played on the Atsimeyu during the Atsia section. First, the leader or Atsiando will chant a poem, proverb or song text. "As he speaks, the last phrase of text, the ensemble starts and the leading drummer plays the rhythmic representation of the spoken text. The drum language is performed twice, first for the dance leader to demonstrate the movement sequence and again for all the men to dance." (Locke 1977: 28). As compared to other forms of Eye music, Adzogbo is very challenging to perform, requiring the utmost concentration by both drummers and dancers.

Music in general plays an integral part in Eye society. It is present in just about every daily event from the rhythmic hammering of men as they roof a house,
to work songs as women prepare food. Socially, music accompanies ceremonies of all types, whether secular or sacred. Kwabena Nketia points out, "...What ever the setting, the focus is on music making as a social activity, one that emphasizes artistic as well as social, political, and religious values." (Nketia 1974: 34).

As music is performed Eye barrel drums provide a basis for music making at both sacred and secular social events. For example, during the secret rituals of the "Yeve Cult" (a tradition Eye religion), a small carved Master Drum (see Figure I) is used along with support drums Sogo, Kidi and Kagan. Other parts of the ritual utilize the same drums publically in a social setting. David McAllester writes about the water drum used with similar differences among American Indians. He points out that the peyote water drum "is also intensely symbolic to members of the Native American Church"...and continues..."the traditional Iroquois, Navajo and Apache water drums are used for social dancing and do not have the same religious feelings associated with them..." (McAllester 1984). Drums provide a fundamental root in music, establishing rhythmic feel that is essential in most cultures throughout the world. Let us now take a close look at the construction of Eye barrel
drums and their makers.
Figure A: Atsimemyu (three sizes)
Figure B: Boba
Figure C: Sogo, Kidi, Kagan (left to right)
Figure D: Kloboto, Totodzi (left to right)
Figure E: Congas (two types)
Figure F: Kinka Set; Boba, two Atsimeyuwo, Kagan, Kidi, Sogo (left to right)
Figure G: Carved Yeve Master Drum
Figure H: Koami Carrying Unfinished Atsimeyu
In Eye society, the term **Master** refers to a person who has gained a high level of expertise in his field. After he has studied an occupation as an apprentice for a period of time, until all requirements have been met, the Master-to-be is then presented to the public in a ceremony in which he is granted respect and honor (see Apprentice, page 46). What are the duties of the Master and what is his role in Eye society? Before discussing these questions, I would like to introduce my Master, Anani Laffi.

Anani Laffi was born in 1956 in Abo Ghana (see Map, pagexv). His father died when he was eight years old. Shortly thereafter, his uncle Kobla took him to Akatsi where he began his apprenticeship as a drum maker. Anani studied and worked under Kobla Adugbe, who learned from Mensaga, the originator of Eye barrel drums. At the age of eleven, Anani "learned the secrets of drum making" (see Appendix, page 149) and he graduated as a professional drum maker. He worked at Akatsi under his Master, Kobla Adugbe, for five years and then opened his
own business nearby. Three years later, in 1975, Anani moved to Agoenyive, a town outside of Lomé, Togo, where he settled as the first drum maker.

Although Anani had never attended school and spoke very little English, I always felt humble in his presence. The community bestowed on him the utmost respect; and though he was only 26 years old, he was regarded as an elder in the society. He was keen on all business matters, prompt in fulfilling orders, and was always thinking ahead. His wife, two daughters and one son lived in the town of Abo, Ghana.

The duties of a Master extend beyond learning the skills of craftmanship in the drum making process. In addition, the professional drum maker must have the knowledge of a businessman. His drum sales are sparse at first as he establishes a reputation in the society. As sales increase, it is common for the drum maker to take on an apprentice. The fact that he is financially able to hire an apprentice also gives him prestige in the society. For example, Anani became a professional craftsman at the age of eleven. He worked for many years until establishing his profitable drum making business at Agoenyive. Taking on an apprentice, he attained a leadership role in the community. Based
on his craftsmanship, wisdom and experience, he was then granted the title of Master. The role of a Master requires him to perform several duties listed below.

The first and foremost duty of a Master drum maker is to conduct himself as a business owner. He relies on productivity and sales to transact business on a regular basis. When I asked Anani how he regarded his business, he boldly replied, "Oh yes! Since I live on that, it is a private business for me, of course." (see Appendix, page 154). Profits are usually spent very quickly. The Master is financially responsible for his apprentices' daily food, some clothing and transportation. In addition, he acquires the normal expenses of a small business, such as overhead costs, materials, rent, etc. Anani owned a trotro (local transport) that his cousin ran as a business for him in Ghana. Also, his wife and children used up a portion of his monthly salary. All of these costs added up to a financial burden about which Anani frequently spoke.

The second duty of an Eye drum maker is that of a teacher. The trials and tribulations of teaching are many. Before teaching drum making skills, the apprentice must be taught respect for the Master, his family and the customers of the business. For some,
this process is ongoing. Teaching actual drum construction takes many months of hard work and hours of patience, lecturing and observing the apprentice. This process is a true test for the Master, demonstrating not only his ability to pass on the traditions of the trade, but also his ability to ensure that his apprentices produce high quality drums for his business.

Finally, the third duty that faces the Master is that of a father. The humanistic qualities that he displays are essential to both the apprentice and the family of the Master. He is responsible for the actions of the apprentices who live with him during their term of study (see Apprentice, page 45). Anani, for example, was a legal guardian for two young apprentices, Kudzo and Mawudeka (see page 44). Because they were only eight and nine, respectively, Anani was not only providing financial support, but also consciously molding their attitude and behavior from a fatherly point of view.

The role of the Eye drum maker in his community is one of importance. He provides the drums used in the music making that is a regular activity of daily life. He continues a tradition that characterizes the style of Eye music, since the drums themselves play such a
predominant part in the music. He teaches the art of drum making, sharing the knowledge with apprentices who may become competent Masters. Finally, all drum makers are trained in the general areas of carpentry and roofing houses. As a result, they provide the community with additional useful services, as well as supplementing their own income.

**Research and Analysis**

As an apprentice, I experienced barrel drum making on a daily basis. After Anani and I ate breakfast together early in the morning, I would observe the apprentices at work. The afternoons were devoted to discussions; and after two weeks, I was involved in the actual construction. I set up formal interviews with Anani and kept a daily journal.

During my first interview with Anani, he described the man who created and designed the process of making barrel drums. This process, Anani said, came to him in a dream. I became very excited when I was told this man was still alive and that it might be possible to meet him. Towards the end of my research, Anani set up a three-day excursion to Ghana. We went to interview several fellow makers, one of whom was Mensaga, the
originator of Eye barrel drums. He lived in Abo, a town 20 miles from the Togo border. The participants on this trip included Anani, Godwin Agbeli (my interpreter and drum teacher) and myself. We crossed the border to Aflao and arrived at Anani's former drum making shop, currently owned by his brother, Mensah. Mensah, the only drum maker in Aflao, was our first interview. We proceeded ten miles west to Akatsi, a town noted as a popular drum market frequented by many foreign and local patrons. Interviews in Akatsi included Anani Ayite, Emanuel Abotsi and Agbodzi Nutegue.

The sun was "beating us" and it was getting late as we boarded a trotro (local transportation in a covered pickup truck) and headed for Abo. It was about 4:00 p.m. when we arrived at the station, with approximately two hours of daylight remaining. A neighbor brought us to Mensaga's house, where we were all told to be seated on a bench. After the proper greetings and introductions, a blind old man limped towards us with the help of his cane. He was tall and thin and wore a full piece of kente cloth, a white tassled hat and locally made sandals (see Figure G).

Laurance Mensaga Nutakor was born in Ghana in 1911
at a small town in the Volta region called Wuti. His father, a local farmer, was known as a person who enjoyed the arts. He died when Mensaga was nine days old. As a young man, Mensaga studied carpentry and coopering with European missionaries at Adzidome, a neighboring town to Abo. There he created and developed the art of drum making. A personal description:

"...It is out of my own imagination that I made my patterns. I placed them on the wood and had them cut, smoothed them, and had them curved a bit. I fixed them together from the top end with the help of two metal bands. Then I used wires to tie the bottom, tighten it properly, and fixed the bands on. At one time, I made a barrel for storing drinks for the people of Mamvi..." (see Appendix, page 177).

From Wuti, Mensaga moved to Dabala (see Map, page xv) where he worked making drums, tables, chairs, beds, etc. One customer, the Reverend Father Donkas, who lived outside Abo at that time, frequently visited Mensaga at Dabala. Soon, Mensaga's reputation for craftsmanship spread throughout the Volta Region. After moving to another town, Mamvi (see Map, page xv),
Figure I: Laurance Mensaga Nutakor
Figure J: Workshop of Laurance Mensage Nutakor
Reverend Donkas persuaded Mensaga to join him at Abo, where he could work on a chapel (on the outskirts of town). Mensaga accepted the offer and soon they developed a strong friendship. He explains:

"...I found in the Reverend Father an extreme love. We ate from the same plate, stayed in the same room, worked day-in and day-out until everything was completed which prompted my departure from him and my settlement in the town of Abo (in 1932)...

(see Appendix, page 170).

Mensaga was a spirited Master who actively worked with his apprentices on a regular basis rather than assigning the construction to others. He was clever, ambitious and bold throughout his career. He dedicated his life to "the Almighty God" in place of local deities. Mensaga's reputation as the father of barrel drums has spread throughout Eyeland and he still conducts the "freeing ceremonies" for graduating apprentices (see page 46). He has one daughter and two wives, one at Aflao and the other with him at Abo.

At the time of this research, Mensaga was in poor health for two reasons:
"Two factors are responsible for this state of affairs. One, old age, against which I try to force myself, but the second factor I cannot do anything about. For three months now I lost my sight, which threw me out of the trade. At first, I could see faintly, but now I am completely blind..."

These unfortunate circumstances made him feel uncomfortable and I could see his depression. For the remainder of his life, and in times to come, he will be highly respected by all drum makers. Figure B shows the dormant condition of his workshop. For additional information on the life of Mensaga, see Appendix II.

How Does Eve Society View the Drum Maker?

On several occasions during my interviews with six Masters, they discussed their profession in terms of its social context. One of the questions I posed to the makers was, "How do you view your work in terms of the society?" The responses were quite positive. All of the makers expressed feelings of pride and satisfaction when they heard their drums being played in a public setting. One maker, Agbodzi Nutegue, pointed out that when he was among a crowd of drummers and dancers who
recognized him as the marker of their drums, "drinks of beer" were given to him. They praised him in songs, drummed appellations, and invited him to dance with the local chief. They told him the drums were "sweet" and very strong (personal interview Nutegue, July 1982). As a result, the makers saw themselves as vehicles through which the traditions of their culture were expressed. When I asked Anani Laffi how the society viewed him as a drum maker, he replied:

"The kind of treatment the society accords to a drum maker is relative. In the first place, it depends on how you make your drums. If you make good drums, you command a lot of respect from the people; if your drums are not good, you know. After being a good drum maker, you earn a lot of money, people consider you as a custodian of tradition, a practical one of course..."

Here, the reputation and role of the maker in society depends directly on the quality of his work. If the drums do not meet the qualifications of the public, specifically the musicians, this will be reflected in sales. The makers will not profit. In addition, the attitudes and actions of the drum maker are important once he becomes accepted as a "custodian of tradition",
in other words, he becomes successful in creating the tools that express the history and culture of the Ewe people. Anani continues:

"...somebody who makes good drums has got a lot of customers and is doing well. What comes out of it in the form of remuneration? If he spends his money on drinking or committing crimes, the society or community in which I live is not prepared to accord any kind of respect to him because of the way he used his money; it is not decent."

Drum making as a profession is considered prestigious by the maker himself. Anani Iyite, an Ewe drum maker from Akatsi, formerly worked with his father as a farmer. At the age of 18, he realized that farming was not lucrative and turned his interests to drum making; he is presently earning a living from it. All the drum makers I interviewed were happy about their work, and none of them regretted the vocation. They considered their trade an important asset in addition to other forms of carpentry they do, and took great pride in their work. Many informants during the interviewing process spoke of the secrets of drum making. Anani Laffi stated that at the age of 11 he learned the "secrets of drum making." This statement
highlights a commonly held belief among drum makers that their craft is special. Anani, as well as the other makers, describe a certain mystique in this process. Mensaga reveals that he "created out of nothing the art of drum making..." What does this mean? Common opinion among Master drum makers is that Mensaga created the process in a dream. It is my opinion that he believed in himself as a gifted artist, like his father. The first five pages of my interview (at Agoenyive, pages 147-153) clearly show his creativity and cleverness, in his autobiographical anecdotes. Finally, he offers his philosophy and states, "...what God has given you cannot be taken away from you...out of jealousy or by force..." The virtuosity of Mensaga's teaching has been passed down from one generation of drum makers to another. This fact emphasizes the importance of trade secrets and the value that barrel drum making has in Eye society (see Appendix, page 149). Dennis Waring in his thesis, "The Instrument Maker", discusses this point in relationship to "the 'Stradivarius Syndrome', a mystique of religiously guarding trade secrets..." He explains that the European guild tradition functioned "to protect that which gave them (makers) a competitive advantage. Also, it is understandable that a student who toiled through years of apprenticeship in a guild
system might be reluctant to divulge hard earned
techniques after he finally reached mastery." (Waring
1982: 107). Even though there is no guild or union
among Eye drum makers, these feelings are common.
Later, Waring states that while many instrument makers
are open to sharing ideas on techniques of
construction, they "...having years of research in
their craft, object angrily to having their designs
used without consent..." (Waring 1982: 108).

Do drum makers consider themselves as musicians?
All six of my informants could demonstrate various
rhythms from their traditional repertoire. However,
none of them were capable of playing the lead drum in a
performance situation. What does this mean? Let us
consider a statement by Alan Merriam: "Music
instruments are usually made by musicians or
ex-musicians, and the work is considered to require
special ability..." (Merriam Ethnomusicology 1969,
13 (1): ). From this point of view, instrument makers
usually have a certain amount of musical skills on the
instruments that they make. But Waring points out that
"though it is an important asset to play the instrument
one makes, it is not a necessity." (Waring 1982: 110).
This assertion may be applied to Eye drum makers.
While my informants have limited experience playing
drums, they rely on local drummers and customers to make constructive criticism.

During my apprenticeship in Agoenyive, I offered a few suggestions to Anani regarding construction (see page 109). He excepted my comments wholeheartedly and made a conscious attempt to satisfy my requests. This demonstrates Anani's willingness to please his customers, and indirectly he was gaining practical music knowledge of drumming skills. This is a general attitude among Eye drum makers that contributes to establishing a positive reputation in their community.

During my apprenticeship as a barrel drum maker, the community viewed my efforts with astonishment. I spent most of the day at the workshop eagerly trying to learn the trade. Frequently, people who wandered by would notice this white man hacking away and curiously inquire what he was doing. They were delighted to see me working. Why? As Merriam remarks about his experience as an ethnographer among the Basongye drum makers, "The activity was harmless and thus relaxed, enabling the ethnographer to establish himself as a 'member' of the community." (Merriam Ethnomusicology 1969: 13 (1)). Indeed, I was trying to establish myself as a member in the community. However, the Eye
people found it hard to believe that an American would spend his time drum making. It seemed that (to some extent) they had adopted the attitude that Western culture was more "advanced" than either African culture. Everywhere I went, people expressed their interest in visiting and/or living in America. They did not understand the value of their culture to a Westerner. When I explained my interests and goals as a research student to them, they were honored that their culture had meaning to a Westerner. As soon as they understood my sincerity and enthusiasm, they accepted me wholeheartedly.
**Plate I**

**List of Drum Makers Researched**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Anani Laffi</td>
<td>Agoenyive, Togo</td>
<td>Kobla Adugbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. George Hamenu</td>
<td>Tsevie, Togo</td>
<td>Anani Laffi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kodzo Ahon</td>
<td>Zangera, Togo</td>
<td>Anani Laffi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Kobla Adugbe</td>
<td>Abo, Ghana</td>
<td>Mensaga Nutakor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Anani Ayite</td>
<td>Akatsi, Ghana</td>
<td>Kobla Adugbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Kobla E. Abotsi</td>
<td>Akatsi, Ghana</td>
<td>Anani Laffi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Rafael Mensah</td>
<td>Aflao, Ghana</td>
<td>Anani Laffi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laffi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Agbodzi Nutegue</td>
<td>Akatsi, Ghana</td>
<td>Kobla Adugbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Kobla Nono</td>
<td>no shop</td>
<td>Kobla E. Abotsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Kwami ---</td>
<td>Abo, Ghana</td>
<td>Anani Laffi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Kwasi Donkor</td>
<td>Akatsi, Ghana</td>
<td>Kobla Adugbe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Yaovi ---</td>
<td>Denu, Ghana</td>
<td>Mensaga Nutakor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Victor Abenu</td>
<td>Dakpa, Ghana</td>
<td>Mensaga Nutakor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Anthony Kofi</td>
<td>Abo, Ghana</td>
<td>Mensaga Nutakor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Mensaga Nutakor</td>
<td>Abo, Ghana</td>
<td>originator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*personally interviewed
CHAPTER III

The Apprentice

In Africa, tradesmen and craftsmen learn their skills as apprentices for a number of years before they graduate to the level of Master (independent professional). For example, in order to become a seamstress, a girl usually signs a contract for two years to learn the proper sewing skills before she opens her own shop. A young goldsmith may inherit his father's business, but he only earns the right to continue it after his qualifications have been approved by the elders of his family. Similarly, carving, blacksmithing and weaving are considered to be a family heritage that must be learned through the painstaking duties of an apprenticeship. The same holds true for the Eye drum maker.

Who's Who?

In the town of Agoenyive, Anani was sole proprietor of the only drum making business. Under him, he had contracted four apprentices. Agbekor, Agbe (for short), 19 years old; Koami, 18 years old; Kudzo, 8 years old; and Mawudeka, 9 years old, were all natives of Abo, a
town in Ghana approximately 20 miles west of the Togo border. In each case, the family decided to enroll their sons as drum makers apprentices. Agbe and Koami were soul searching and career oriented when their families decided on their apprenticeship. The proper procedures were followed and they were each contracted to a three year term. Kudzo was a relative of Anani and came from a large family. Because his father was very sick, and, in fact, died during my stay at the work shop, an agreement was reached whereby Anani would care for the boy and at the same time teach him drum making. Mawuđeka, who was also from a large family, and was considered a problem child. His behavior was outlandish and overwhelming. An agreement was made whereby Anani would teach him the skills of coopering drums, with an emphasis on discipline. This contract between Anani and the young boys, Kudzo and Mawuđeka, is common practice in Eye society. When a family is large and having difficulties surviving, extended families may offer their assistance in raising one of the children. A wealthy relative with few or no children can offer more attention to the adolescent than can a crowded household. Anani considered Kudzo and Mawuđeka as junior and Agbe and Koami as senior apprentices.
As the creator of Eye barrel drums, Mensaga implemented certain rituals and procedures one must follow to be considered for an apprenticeship. Anani discussed this issue in the following manner:

"... there is a special ritual for someone who wants to become a drum maker, that is, an apprentice. There are three most important phases of this ritual. The first day, the apprentice is introduced to his work. His tutor or the parents bring sodabi (local gin), one bottle of beer and one bottle of schnapps. These items are given to the Master, who in turn will accept the apprentice to stay with him and work for three months. During that period, the Master studies his conduct, his ability to learn, and his prospects, that is, whether he will be prosperous in the future after learning how to make drums.

The second phase, after three months, is the signing of the agreement, a kind of contract. It involves the tutor or parents bringing a hen, a cock, palm oil, and corn flows (the quantity depends on the number of people invited to the
ceremony). Also, one bottle of schnapps, one bottle of whisky, one bottle of sodabi (local gin), two bottles of beer, and in Ghana the amount of 100 cedis (local money) is added. The fowls, the flour and the palm oil are used to prepare *dzinkle* and it is eaten by all those who have attended the ceremony. From there, the actual learning process begins. From that day, the apprentice learns all the techniques of drum making; it covers three years.

At the end of the three years, there is another ceremony called the *freewing ceremony*, whereby the apprentice, after learning all the techniques involved, is given the freedom to establish his own business. The parents or tutor once again bring one white goat, two fowls, one white and black, twelve bottles of drinks ranging from soft to alcoholic types, and the amount of 500 cedis is added. The Master "gives" the apprentice a hammer and mallet, a meter, and a plane; these are the most important tools used in drum making. They are given to the apprentice during the ceremony. They are, however, taken back by the Master later.

During the period of three good years, the
apprentice works for the Master for no pay. Most of the time you stay with your parents but arrangements are made for some apprentices to stay with the Master. It will be included in the agreement. Here, the Master is obligated to feed the apprentice. One must know at the time of the freeing that your Master is not obligated to help you in any way, such as getting drinks or buying certain things. It depends upon how you respect your Master during the apprenticeship. He can offer some help financially in many ways, but there is no obligation.

Failure to comply to the terms of the agreement or in the event of breach of contract, the tutor or parents of the apprentice are forced to pay the items cited under the freeing ceremony. This compliance holds true only when the agreement is signed. When an apprentice leaves the work before the signing, the parents have no obligation to pay anything to the Master..."

Anani emphasized the three month grace period when he observed character, discipline, and desire of the trainee. This probation period is crucial in determining the future of both the Master and
apprentice. The success of a business is based on a Master's trust in his employees, as well as in a marketable product. In regard to this, African philosophy is centered around respect for the Master, the elders, and the customer. One must prove his loyalty and dedication to his work in order to survive in the environment. The Master will only take on someone who is compatible and eager to learn. A question arose in my mind: Why not have several apprentices work at one time? Anani's response was intriguing:

"Apprentices are a full-time job. They require chop money for breakfast and lunch. They need to be looked after constantly at work and at learning how to conduct themselves as men."

It was clear that the responsibilities were greater for the Master than for the apprentice. If work was in abundance, the Master would send for another drum maker from a neighboring village or town, usually a close friend. Now and then, Anani subcontracted extra work to two friends, George Hamenu from Havé, Ghana and Kojo Ahan from Abo, Ghana. Although a percentage of profit was paid to George or Kojo, this was no reflection on Anani's apprentices abilities as drum makers. This
simply meant that Anani had more work than he could produce in a short time and that he respected the work of his fellow master craftsmen. Even though the apprentices at times felt slighted, since they were producing drums and not being paid, Anani reassured them that in good time each one would graduate to become his own Master.

The signing of the agreement and the freeing ceremony also posed questions in my mind. During my interview with Mensaga, I finally got the chance, to ask about these ceremonies. His response went as follows:

"...In the past we put the apprentice under observation for three months, after which an agreement is signed. The agreement gives legal sanction or backing to the apprentice's period of stay with the Master. As for why the ritual is performed, we demand the drinks as proof that the apprentice is really serious. In the absence of this ritual, I think anybody can present himself to be an apprentice and people used to do it..." (see Appendix, page 176).

Mensaga continued to explain that the items presented (drink, fowl, money, etc.) represent an
investment or a down payment that is non-refundable after the contract has been signed. This is the material commitment that is so necessary for the agreement between apprentice and Master.

At the end of the three-year term, a freeing ceremony, along with a testimonial, is given to the apprentice by the Master, as previously described by Anani. Items of food, drink and money are presented to the Master and shared during the ritual. The Master is not obliged to give any kind of additional monetary support for freeing items if the parents or tutor made arrangements to have the apprentice live with him. During this ritual, the character of the apprentice is publically revealed to his parents, relatives and guests. A thorough report of conduct and progress is given. Here the apprentice is informed about his future, whether his attitude towards his work is good or bad, and whether he is expected to succeed or not. Mensaga explains this point further:

"The ceremony involves different kinds of drinks and animals which are estimated to cost thousands of cedis. They are symbols to the freed apprentice or the future Master. Now that he is no more an apprentice, he isn't free but he has to work hard
to pay for all items used for the agreement and freeing ceremony either to his parents or to himself and work hard to become a man to get his living out of his trade."

To paraphrase this statement, the apprentice is now entering adulthood; he has to support himself and eventually his family. Yes, he is free from the Master and workshop, but only to open his own business in order to survive. Often, an apprentice will "go to farm" or work for a relative, etc. to earn enough money for his own tools to begin his trade as a drum maker. If the apprentice is very close with his Master and is in good standing, the Master will offer employment, now for pay. Mensaga also mentioned:

"Usually, an apprentice who looks down upon this ceremony, dissolves his life; it abruptly or suddenly ends."

Some apprentices drop out during the three-year term, mistreating the Master in the process. Mensaga seemed to be bitter about this and stated that all of his prospective apprentices must "sign the agreement before you are considered as an apprentice of mine...", meaning that he will only consider the serious
candidates for the position of drum maker. I also asked Mensaga, "What if an apprentice who did not complete his years of studies left and opened his own workshop, what would happen?" His response to the question was, "The Master has the right to charge him at the court. Even if the Master refuses to take this action, the apprentice will never prosper (see Appendix, page 180)."

In conclusion, the contract of agreement that is signed is a legal bond known to stand up in court. The apprentice is obligated to complete his term of three years, unless other arrangements are made during that time. If this contract is broken, and the Master declines to file a grievance, it is believed that the apprentice will not succeed in the business. The following anecdote may help clarify the nature of the apprentice's role.

One weeknight I asked Abge if he would like to go to the local cinema to see a film with a few friends and myself. In his reply to me, he explained that an apprentice was usually not allowed to attend such activities during the week and rarely could he roam freely on the weekends, unless he had special permission from his Master. I frequently asked Anani, Koami and Agbe to come over for dinner to my house, which was only three miles away, but for some reason they kept making
excuses about why they could not come. Because Agbe was educated and could speak English, my communication with him was easier than with the others, thus our relationship became very close. When Anani wanted to teach me or inform me of a custom, his brother Cash, who lived in the vicinity and worked as a radio repairman next to our workshop, would do so. But if he was not around, Agbe would help out. Eventually, Agbe's helping me became a problem. After a while, I noticed some friction in relations between Anani's crew and myself, and, as I am generally naive about such matters, it took me a while to figure out the circumstances that were generating these negatives feelings all around. My relationship with Anani was very special. A white man from America studying drum making with the local cooper was unheard of. I conferred special recognition upon Anani in his community and brought him respect among all social groups. I now understand that it was unethical for me to develop a rapport with Agbe, an apprentice, that seemed more intimate than with Anani, a Master. In any case, I soon learned to show greater respect towards my Master, especially since I was considered as an apprentice myself. It was brought to my attention soon after that Agbe was considered direspectful and that he was seriously reprimanded by Anani and the elders.
Duties

There are certain functions one must perform as an apprentice of drum making. Here is Anani's description that was conveyed to me by Anani:

"When you first introduce the apprentice to his work, he must stand with his hands folded behind his back, listening carefully to the following rules that govern the apprenticeship:

(1) total respect for the Master, his wife and children;

(2) total respect for your senior, that is, those who were there before you came;

(3) total respect for all customers who come to the workshop; how to talk to them, how to receive them, how to serve them, if possible, and so forth;

(4) you have to go down a bit before you address somebody who is your senior, your Master, his wife or a customer;

(5) every morning, you have to fetch water for your
Master, sweep his room, then go on to sweep the workshop and bring all the tools to the workshop;

(6) the apprentice is not allowed to stay out late in the night and also he is not allowed to follow girls;

(7) an apprentice is not allowed to marry during his apprenticeship, otherwise, it will amount to breach of contract." (see Appendix, page 158).

These rules were carefully followed by all apprentices. When Anani spoke to any of us, we had to drop whatever it was we were doing and respond in a professional manner. At times, we would joke and play around in the late afternoon when most of the days work was completed. One day, I brought my Moon-Glo frisbee to the shop and showed everyone how to throw it around. Smiles and laughter spread very quickly; it was sheer joy to share and participate on this level. After a while, we created such a spectacle in the area that Anani gave the word to stop, explaining that "people will vex", i.e. become jealous.

What if the apprentice disrespects and disregards the rules the Master has taught him? Most of the time,
if the action(s) were misdemeanors, the problem could be corrected with a pep talk. However, if the actions were repeated several times and no attempt was made to correct them, the apprentice would be subjected to permanent suspension from the work. Anani explains, "An apprentice who fails to comply with these rules will be exposed to the public during the freeing ceremony and will be painted as a bad apprentice. No apprentice is prepared to carry that labor on him. It goes a long way to effect his whole business in the future." (see Appendix, page 159).

It seems to me that the system that governs the education of the apprentice is successful. There are few modifications made in it from maker to maker and even though there is no official association of drum makers, there is a strong bond that is shared between them. At a slow but consistent rate, apprentices are opening shops in many towns and the demand for Eye barrel drum is constant.

The process which an apprentice undertakes is similar to that of many professions in western culture. After academic study, the internship in residency of a doctor or dentist lasts for about three years, during which time he/she works like an apprentice for a meager
salary. The token pay helps the student survive the necessary monthly expenses until graduation. A testimonial or diploma is granted to the student after which he/she prepares to qualify for state exams, similar to the apprentice as he prepares for the freeing ceremony. They both work hard and save to invest in the tools for their future business. In both cases, "dues are paid" on the long road to success, as one gains respect from the public and a professional salary. Unfortunately, the professional salary of the drum maker does not compare with that of the doctor or dentist; nevertheless, they both are invaluable and irreplaceable in their own respective societies.
CHAPTER IV

Construction

The construction of Eye barrel drums takes place in seven main stages. Each stage can be broken down into several events that I will discuss and illustrate in detail. Since Mensaga learned the skills of European coopering and applied them to drum making, it seems appropriate to interject traditional coopering terminology where applicable.

Before the manufacturing process begins, lumber is bought at the timber market. The wood used by all the Eye drum makers I encountered is called Odum (Twi) or Logo (Eye). This type of light-colored mahogany grows in the thick forests of Kpalime and Atakpame, in the western region of Togo, and Dunkua and Kumasi, in the central region of Ghana, as well as many other parts of West Africa. This type of wood is common in local timber markets and is used for furniture, fences, tool parts, building materials, as well as drums. In Anani's explanation of Odum's characteristics, it:

a) shows some kind of resistance to insect damage;
b) should have tenderness or flexibility (for the bending process);

c) has to have high fiber content (see Appendix Interview with Anani, page 162).

The Master usually selects the wood himself since quality Odum is crucial to a good sounding drum. Once the correct wood is purchased and transported to the workshop, the manufacturing begins.

Stage One: Cutting and Dressing a Stave.

First, using a wooden pattern handed down either from the Master or the Master's Master, the staves (wutsi) or wooden slats are traced on the board of Odum. Each type of drum has its own pattern (see Plate II). Agbe showed me how to trace rows of staves on the wood in order to save material space. Every inch was utilized. The drum makers are equipped with a large rip saw (sakaga) (saka, saw; ga, big) that is used to rough cut each traced pattern. All the staves are now rough cut to the approximate shape and thickness, approximately two centimeters.
Plate II

**Drum Names**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eve</th>
<th>Mina</th>
<th>No. of Staves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atsimevu</td>
<td>Vuga</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boba</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sogo</td>
<td>Kplikpa</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidi</td>
<td>Kpesi</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kagan</td>
<td>Tada</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kloboto</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totodzi</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conga</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brekete</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Patterns Traced on Board

[Diagram of a board with staves marked as 5 meters in length and 30 cm in height, labeled with various drum names and their stave counts.]
My first experience watching Anani was awesome. Not only was his technique new to me (he sawed with two hands, the saw teeth facing forward) but he also worked with impressive power, grace and speed. In no time the staves were all cut and ready to be ripped in half. This is done by clamping each stave upright and sawing it in half making two from one. Boards come three to four centimeters thick, five meters long by 30 centimeters wide. It is common practice to use wedges made from scraps of wood inserted in the joints while sawing to ease the blade as it cuts. A blend of palm oil and kerosene is rubbed on the saw blade as a lubricant also to ease cutting.

The next step is to shape or dress a stave (see Kilby: 21). This is done by shaping the stave to its proper dimensions and angle with a variety of hand planes, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Tool Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Backing a stave</td>
<td>Single &amp; double edge straight plane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hollowing a stave</td>
<td>Scoof plane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jointing a stave</td>
<td>Long or short straight plane</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each plane is used for a particular purpose and it takes a good deal of strength and agility to master the
technique. "Backing" is accomplished by laying the stave flat on the workbench with the outside surface facing up (see Figure 1). At this point, single or double edge plane is used to form the concave curve which eventually gives the barrel-like resonator its roundness. It is interesting to note that this roundness seems to have many names. An American cooper from Liberty, Maine, Irving Davis, refers to the fat part of a cask or barrel as the "bilge" (personal communication) or "pitch", whereas Kilby talks of shaving too much off as "robbing it of its 'stoutness'" or "giving height to the cask" (Kilby: 27).

Anani refers to the widest section of the stave as its stomach or belly (fodo). In order for the stave to have flexibility during the bending process, the inner side must be hollowed and shaved to the proper thickness; a process called "hollowing." Hollowing is achieved by turning the stave over on the bench and gouging the middle with a scoof plane. Even though the thickness regularly is planed to one-half inch and thinner in the middle, the African drum maker always works by eye using his intuition and experience. He must be very clever and economical in his work; for example, "stops", blocks of carefully shaped wood, are used for positioning staves and securing them during
backing and hollowing. A groove is made from two blocks of wood in which the stave is placed in an upright position on the bench in order for it to be jointed.

"Jointing" or beveling the sides to their proper angle(s) is one of the most meticulous tasks that confronts a cooper, and the apprentice spends a great deal of time perfecting this technique. It is a process of trial and error in which the required angle or "shot" (Kilby: 23) is calculated by eye. In Figure 2 Agbe is using a long straight plane to joint an atsimeyu stave that is wedged in an upright position on the workbench. For all other drums besides the tall atsimevu, a short straight plane is used. The angle of the joint varies according to its place on the stave; the middle is less steep in order to accommodate the belly of the drum. I was told that an apprentice has to wait three months before he is allowed to attempt jointing and that it takes a good six months before the joints are accurately tight.
Figure 1: Backing a Stave (Koami)
Figure 2: Jointing a Stave (Agbe)
Types of drums, number of staves, and their lengths are listed below. Note that these statistics vary from each drum maker according to his own personal tastes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drum</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atsimiyeu</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>52&quot;, 58&quot;, 62&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sogo</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidi</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kagan</td>
<td>14 or 15</td>
<td>23&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boba</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23&quot;, 34&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kloboto</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17 1/2&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totodzi</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brekete</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conga</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29&quot;, 32&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stage Two: The bending process.

At this point a comparison should be made between the traditional European cooper and the African drum maker. Through the ages, most coopering has consisted of the manufacture of casks or barrels made from wood slats. The solid oak or ash staves were "dressed" at three-fourths of an inch thickness and were bent using some sort of heating process of fire or steam (Kilby: 27). Since the Eye drums are constructed as sound resonators, the staves are dressed thinner one-half
inch or so. The drums then are lighter and can be bent "green" when the wood is wet (freshly cut, not dried out) eliminating the need for heat.

Upon completing the shaping and jointing for one drum, the staves are gathered to be "raised up" (Kilby: 24), the preliminary step to bending and knocking. Raising up requires a fair amount of patience and coordination and it is usually accomplished by two people. The raising up process begins with two hoops\(^1\) of slightly different diameters that are held up, one inside the other at the approximate height of the drum while the staves are put into position between them (see Figure 3). Once the staves are all in a standing position, a larger hoop is placed over the top and driven down, allowing the original two hoops to be removed. The remaining two outer hoops firmly secure the staves. The mouth (\(\approx\)\(\approx\)) or opening where the membrane is stretched, is leveled by hammering the tips of the staves making a round, even rim.

\(^1\)Hoops are one and one-half to two inches wide. They are acquired from old wine barrels, heavy strapping from imported crates or made to order by local blacksmiths. They are used for bending only.
Now the bending process is "ready to go." As I have mentioned, the wood is green and flexible, allowing the newly formed resonator to be joined by sheer force with the use of two important tools, the driver and the mallet. The driver is a rectangular shaped iron chisel designed by the drum maker and manufactured by a local blacksmith. The end or lip of the chisel-like tool is blunted with a small groove along the edge to "seat" properly as the hoops are "driven home." The handle, constructed to wedge or taper into a small hole in the top of the iron, is made from extremely hard wood, such as berrywood. The mallet (aketsa), is also made from dense fruitwood, usually blackberry, and is large, sometimes weighing up to four or five pounds.

My first experience with these tools was conducted, as usual, in front of several onlookers. After Anani showed me the technique, I took my first swing. On my windup, I nearly hit Anani in the head. My swing missed the driver completely, causing me to lose control as I gashed the drum and almost broke my toe as the mallet hit the ground. Needless to say, laughter spread immediately and I was the talk of the town for some time. Through this humiliating experience, I learned that control is the key when using the driver and
"Knocking", so termed by both European and African craftsman, is a process whereby the staves are forced together above and below the stomach (fodo) by heavy metal hoops. It is accomplished by driving down one set of hoops on one end of the resonator then driving a set of other set on the other end. For a description of hoop sizes, see Plate III. Following the raising up, the center hoop (usually the widest) is set in place around the upper perimeter of the drum. The mallet is held firmly with the strong hand while the driver, in the weak hand, is held tightly upon impact. Timing and positioning play an important role in the skills of knocking. A free-turning motion of the wrist will allow the worker to maintain a relaxed position and to build endurance, important when long periods of knocking are required. The driver strikes the hoop twice in position to ensure direct contact prior to the blow of the mallet. Failure of stability may cause the driver to slip from the hoop and possibly damage the wood. In the beginning, I must have seemed to be a high-risk apprentice to Anani, who often became frantic when I picked up the driver and mallet.

The driver is held at different angles in the
### Plate III

#### Types of Drums, Bands and Staves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. of Bands</th>
<th>Bands Top</th>
<th>Bands Bottom</th>
<th>No. of Staves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atsimeyu - small</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atsimeyu - medium</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atsimeyu - large</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boba</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sogo</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kagan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14 or 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kloboto</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totodzi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conga - medium</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conga - large</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brekete</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3: The Raising Up Process
Figure 4: Knocking Hoops
Figure 5: Rope Clamp being Tied to the Root of a Tree
Figure 6: Rope Clamp Closing Staves for End Hoop to be Fixed
knocking process. When driving a middle hoop ("booge") (Kilby: 27), a slight angle is used for powerful blows with the mallet while the end hoops ("chime") (Kilby: 27) are driven in an upright position making sure that the lip does not slip, piercing the resonator. Hoops are generally knocked in parallel motion from center to rim obtaining even tension of the staves around the drum (see Figure 4).

Once the drum is tight on one end, a type of rope clamp (yukeke rope and handle) is used to pull the other ends of the staves together so that the opposite remaining hoops may be fixed and driven into place. The clamp is made by tying a heavy piece of braided rope around the root of a large tree in the middle of the workshop (see Figure 5). A carved wooden handle is fixed to the end of the rope for leverage. According to Anani, every drum maker had his own version of this clamp. The rope is wrapped two or three times around the end of the open staves. As the rope is gently pulled, closing the staves, a center hoop is slipped over the end. Depending upon the size of the drum being knocked, this process requires two or three people. Frequently, one of the junior apprentices, Rudzo or Mawudeka, who were only eight and nine years old respectively, would manage this task easily. The center
hoop is then carefully knocked towards the middle. The stomach of the drum is subjected to extreme pressure as the center hoop closes the staves. "This hoop must be kept tight so that it minimizes the tendancy of the staves to crack outwards in the pitch while being bent" (Kilby: 27). It is common practice for the African drum maker to use two or three center hoops for reinforcement, if there are signs of the wood splitting. The remaining hoops are "driven home" according to size. The end hoop, being the smallest, is last (see Figure 6). All the hoops are knocked in parallel motion once again until the drum body produces a high pitched ring when struck with the driver. The resonator is now put in the sun for drying.

Stage Three: Drying.

As you enter the lorry park or transport station in Agoenyive center, you can see any number of what might look like odd-shaped barrels being displayed at the roadside. This was Anani's chosen spot for drying the drums in front of his workshop. People would travel that road daily to check out the scene, an African pastime. During my research, I ordered many drums. Passersby wondered who the owner of those drums was; and since Anani counted on this display, it was a sign of a
thriving business as well as his only form of advertising. In Figure 7 is a typical scene of drum shells drying in the sun.

Shells take four to five days to dry in Harmatun season (dry season) or one to two weeks in the rainy season. The drums are taken out of a storage room every morning and placed in the sun so that the moisture will evaporate from the wood; they are returned and locked away every night. As the wood dries out, the staves shrink. Anani explained, "The metal bands (hoops) become loose and begin to fall off, and there can be seen holes in between the joints of the staves. The drum becomes comparatively lighter to what it was before the drying process." (see Appendix Anani, page 165). Proper dryness is judged by the shrinking of the staves and by the condition of the wood during spoke shaving (see Finishing, page 90). As the drum is planed, the shavings should be dry. If they are moist, the drum is placed in the sun for two or three additional days.

Occasionally, a customer will buy a drum that needs to be "collected" in two or three days. In the purchase of any drum, Anani requires a 50 percent deposit with the balance due upon collection. These conditions are common among local drum makers, since sales are fairly
minimal. A "rush order" is when a customer needs his drum(s) in a hurry. This requires a special drying process "heating_of_the_drum." Anani's explanation of rush orders:

"(1) The drum is assembled first with the metal bands on; (2) A fire is made in a cold pot (small-like habachi with a bottomless pot that is placed on top with charcoal). Usually the pot is a special type because the seat (of the pot) is removed and it is used to cover the fire, which is placed on the burning charcoal, and why? The reason being that the heat is evenly spread in all directions, that is, vertically and the rest horizontally; (3) Two or three metal bands are now placed on the cold pot on top of the charcoal. These metal bands serve as a seat for the drum during the heating process. If not, the heat may burn the wood (staves) to ash. If those bands are not used for a seat, the drum (resonator) will be sitting on the hot charcoals, burning the wood to ashes; (4) A board is used to cover the upper end or mouth of the drum in order to retain the heat in the drum. The only place for the heat to escape is through the pores of the wood, thus drying the drum. Because the wood is wet, this heat begins to dry
the water content and the wood becomes dry in no time; (5) When the drum is subjected to intensive heating, the process lasts just for one hour and that is serious heating. What are the signs of completion? You will see that the wood shrinks the drum becomes lighter as compared to what it was before the heating process started. After one hour, you can pick up the drum and put it on the ground and allow it to cool down." (see Appendix, pages 166 and 167) (see Figures 8 and 9).

This heating process is very similar to that of the traditional European cooper. The cask (barrels) were usually heated over a cresset or small metal container filled with the shavings from the barrel. A fire was made in the cresset and the cask was placed over it. In doing so, the moisture from the wood was extracted by the heat, making the staves pliable in the bending process (see Kilby: 26). I find one major difference between the African and European heating techniques: African drums are carefully watched so that the wood does not burn, charing them inside, whereas European casks are intentionally burned inside, in order for the staves to become hot enough for bending. Depending upon the use of the cask, the inside will be planed to a smooth finish or left with ash or charcoal as a finish,
Figure 7: Barrel Drums Drying in the Sun
Figure 8: Cold Pot for "Rush" Drying - Top View

Figure 9: Cold Pot for "Rush" Drying - Side View
preferred in the making of distilled hard liquor.

Stage Four: Making of the bands.

Hoop is the general term in European coopering for the metal straps that join the staves together on a finished cask. In African drum making, I am referring to the preliminary heavy metal straps that are used in the bending process as hoops (trusses are used in the bending of the casks) (see Glossary).

To replace the hoops after bending and drying, metal bands (gablo, gayi) are made for the drum. These bands are constructed from strapping around crates or boxes used in shipping. Frequently, freight or import companies wholesale the strapping to market-women, who in turn sell them at retail prices. The bands, made of mild steel one-inch wide and one-sixteenth of an inch thick (16 or 18 gage), are measured to length and joined by handmade rivets.

One tool that is essential and cleverly used, principally in the construction of metals bands, is an engine head block. This mass of iron, extracted from the engine of a car, is the drum maker's anvil (ëzu) and it is primarily used in working with metal. Many
functions can be performed on this block. Every hole, corner and hollow is utilized. Often the apprentice will first learn how to make the *tacks* (*gakaka*) that hold the bands in place, keeping them tight around the drum. Gakaka are simply cut out of a piece of strapping with a straight quarter-inch chisel and hammer on the engine block or anvil. The cuts are made diagonally on the band, as shown:

![Diagram showing diagonal cuts on a band](image)

individual pieces

The rivets (*gata gbadze*) that hold the hoops together are cut in lengths of one-half inch and made from a spike or long heavy nail used in framing houses (see Figure 10). This task is something the apprentices look forward to since it is one of the few times they can sit on the ground relaxing while working.

To begin the process of making the bands, the bundle of strapping is disassembled, sorted and straightened with a hammer on the block. The ends of the strips are prepared, e.g., they are rounded and a
hole is made by a prick punch (see Glossary) using the holes in the block (see Figure 11). A rope is stretched around the drum to measure the desired length for each band. This length is then cut from the metal band with a straight cold chisel, allowing some overlap for the rivet. An "x" is marked at the desired location where a second hole is punched on the other end of the metal strip. To fasten the band, the metal strip is bent, the holes are aligned, and a rivet is inserted (see Figure 12). A ball peen hammer is used to pound and shape the rivet to form a neat and smooth joint. The holes in the engine block, formed in its original construction, are extremely convenient for this operation.

Since the drums are curved, it is important to flare or taper the band to conform to the angle of the drum. A straight peen hammer is used for the correct taper, achieved by straight peening at the middle or edge of the band. Flaring a hoop to fit is called "splaying" or "splay". As Kilby explains, "This is done by hammering the inside of the hoop intended for splaying with the tapered side of his hammer. This is, in fact, what the taper is used for, and he bruises the steel, forcing it outward." (Kilby: 36). This job takes experience. Bands with the improper amount of splay will not stay in place when they are knocked.
Figure 10: Making Rivets on Anvil
Figure 11: Punching Holes for Rivets
Figure 12: Riveting Bands Together
Once all the bands are made up, they are ready to replace the hoops. As the drum stands upright on the soft earth, one of the middle hoops is knocked off using the driver and mallet. The corresponding finished band is knocked in its place. Certain considerations govern this process. First, the bands are more difficult to knock than the hoops because they are lighter and less rigid. Secondly, a new band lacks "shape" until it has been driven to conformity. Even though the bands have splay, adjustments are necessary at this time. According to Kilby, "chalking" the inside of the bands (with regular chalk) creates friction, enabling them to grab or clutch better. This was not familiar to any of the African drum makers that I knew, including Mensaga. Each band replaces a hoop until all are mounted. Although there is no specific order, the norm is from the middle outwards, driving the band(s) tightly, as mentioned in the knocking process. The weakest part of the band is at the joint. I was warned several times to "watch out for rivet" or the band could break.

One day at the work place during my apprenticeship, I begged Anani to let me try and drive a new band. He finally agreed and told me to work on the sogo at the corner of the shop. I knocked and hammered for at least a half-hour. Along came Fuseni, a local butcher and a
personal friend of Anani. His first comment was, "Ah, big Joe, you try hard.", and sat down beside me. The time was going; my clothes were saturated with sweat from the heat and frustration of the day when Fuseni stood up again. "It be so? But why?" He took out a butcher knife and tapped it gently at three equidistant points around the belly. Then he called Kudzo to come over and finish driving the band. The nine year old boy picked the heavy mallet and drove the band home as Fuseni muttered, "Ah ha ..."

**Stage Five: Finishing.**

At this point, the resonator requires the finishing touches. Even though the drums are built to withstand the mighty blows of the Master Drummer and grueling extremities of climate, appearance is an important factor to the customer. The exterior is shaved, sanded and the ends are finished prior to making the mouth (yunu) and the bottom (yugoma).

The drying process has a tendency to affect each stave differently, making the circumference or ends of the drum uneven. The "chiming process", as this is called (Kilby: 31), levels the ends by beveling. First, the opening at the top or mouth is cut and shaved
Figure 13: Chiming End of Barrel
to the correct diameter of the head size. This is achieved by cutting and/or spoke shaving the rim as the drum is turned on its side. A cross-cut saw is used to bevel the uneven staves, sawing one or two at a time. It is important to rotate the drum as you cut the beveled edges cut. This will achieve the evenness desired for the circumference of the rim. A spoke shave, a small type of plane with two handles, is used for "chiming." It rounds the yunu, making a smooth, even seat for the skin so that no jagged edges can tear the hide. Also, a round beveled rim is always more comfortable to play on than a jagged one and the skin will not rip. The yugoma or bottom of the drum is chimed in a similar fashion. Instead of a rounded bevel, a flat bevel is made with the spoke shave so the drum can sit evenly on the ground while being played (see Figure 13).
Since the drums are played together in sets, it is important to obtain the desired tonal relationship among them. Through experience, the African drum maker knows the correct diameter of each size (*vunu*). The sizes for Anani's drums are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vunu_Size</th>
<th>Diameter (inches)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atsimeyu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>9.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sogo</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidi</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kagag</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kloboto</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totadzi</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conga</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brekete</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These sizes may vary before finishing, depending upon the amount of shrinkage during the drying process.

In addition to chiming, the spoke shave is used to smooth the resonator. *Smoothing* or "buzzing" is
Figure 14: Spoke Staving Atsimewu (Koami and Mawuèeka)
Figure 15: Spoke Staving Sogo (Anani)
Figure 16: Chiseling Splints
accomplished by planing the shell, making the outside rough texture smooth. This process involves many hours of back-breaking work and it is the most time-consuming step in the entire process. The drum is shaved in sections by removing the two inside bands first. This allows a large portion of surface area to be smoothed but the remaining bands keep the staves in place. Turning the shell frequently, the wood is always planed with the grain to keep the spoke shave from gouging the wood (see Figures 14 and 15). After the mid-section is completely shaved, this process is continued outwards toward the ends of the drum, removing one or two bands at a time, then replacing them, until the end or "chime" bands are last.

At times, Anani would point out places around the stomach where splinting or chipping had occurred. He explained that as the shell dries in the sun, frequently the wood weakens in the middle of the bend causing cracks or splinters. To correct this problem, a chisel or plane blade is used to cut out this section. This is done by chiseling across the grain of the wood (see Figure 16). Sandpaper is used on the shell to further its smooth finish until the desired texture is accomplished.
All types of European casks have some sort of bottom to them called the "head." "Heading" is the process whereby pieces of wood are fastened together to form a circle used for closing the end of the barrel (see Kilby: 38).

Two drums in the Eye set, sogo, and kidi have bottoms. It is uncommon, but the Master Drum in Gahu Boba will also have a bottom. The Eye coopers call this process panning, and at times also refer to it as the under, down, pan or bottom.

Panning is very complex and it takes several months of practice to acquire the correct skills and technique; as an observer, I felt that this step was difficult to comprehend. One begins by measuring the outside diameter of the bottom rim with a stick, a rule, or a piece of string, whichever is most readily available. Two perpendicular measurements are made to obtain an accurate diameter, since the shell may be oblong or oval. If the shell is egg-shaped, the correct diameter for the pan can be obtained from the average of both points. The pan helps make the drum rounder. Two boards of mahogany are joined together edgewise (atitsatsu; to join wood) by nail-like dowls (see Figure 17). The measured diameter is then transferred
Figure 17: Sawing Botton in Halves
Figure 18: Forming Basle and Cant on Bottom
Figure 19: Measuring for V Groove
to the joined pieces of wood. This is executed by scribing the radius \((d/2 = r)\) with a handmade gage made of a stick and two nails. After clamping the wood to the workbench, the circle is cut out with a small cross-cut or turning saw \((gakayi)\). Cutting circles with a cross-cut saw was very impressive as the apprentices demonstrated their style to me. The next step is panning a beveled edge around the circumference of the cut circle, commonly referred to as the "basle" in European coopering. This edge is planed to a point on both sides, about one to one and one-half inches, by a small straight plane, shown in the plate below (also see Figure 18).

![Diagram](image)

There is a slight difference between the inner and outer basle to accommodate a snug fit. The overall thickness
of the under is planed to five-eighths or one-half an inch, keeping the total weight of the drum to a minimum.

While the senior apprentice prepares the bottom, the junior apprentice cuts out the "V groove", where it is slipped into place. As shown in Figure 19, Agbe is scribing a line for the V groove with another type of marking gage. This line is measured one and one-half inches up from the inside bottom rim when the stomach is small, as in kidi, and one and one-quarter inches when the stomach is fat, as in sogo. Anani mentioned that the kidi sits better on the ground if the ends of staves are longer to dig into it. The groove is cut with a small cold chisel five-eighths of an inch wide and one-fourth of an inch deep and measured by eye (see Figure 20). The drum is turned on its side and rotated as the groove is cut. Upon completion, the under is ready to be fixed into place.

Turning the drum upside down, the bottom band is removed, increasing the diameter so that the under can slide in a vertical position into the center of the shell. By using a nail that has been previously hammered in the wood for a purchase, the bottom is worked down into the V groove. A common technique
Figure 20: Preparing Groove for Bottom (Kudzo)
involves turning the drum on its side; and while you hold the upper rim with your hands, force the under into place with your foot, being careful not to go past the V groove. Panning becomes annoying when one realizes the under is too big for the opening and must be removed so that its diameter can be reduced. This process often creates tension for an apprentice and it requires careful consideration throughout his term. When the pan is the correct size, it will slide into place without too much difficulty.

At this point, the drum is turned upright and the bottom band is driven down tight. This must be done with care; since sogo and kidi have a V groove for the bottom, the ends of the staves are weakened and may break if the drum is dropped on its edge. When knocking the end band, the driver is placed between two staves for double strength in absorbing the blow. Finally, the drum maker alternates between staves, driving the bands with double knocks.

There are two additional aspects of the finishing process that should be discussed. The first concerns the painting of the resonator. In traditional practice, the African village groups and societies that owned drums preferred them to be painted; very few were given
Figure 21: Boba
Figure 22: Kinka Set
a clean finish. Frequently, drumming clubs would earn enough money to purchase an entire set at one time and would request them to be painted a certain way. This would highlight and identify them in competitions or in settings where many drum groups performed simultaneously. Anani's testimony led me to believe that a drum maker could identify his products by the color scheme painted on the shell. I later found out that the colors of paint chosen were subject to the retailer's supply at the moment. If the drums were ordered for export or for tourist shops, the dealers preferred their drums to be painted with a clear polyurethane finish. The reason for this is that when Eye barrel drums are shipped to dryer, non-tropical climates, where the temperatures reach below freezing, the wood has a tendency to shrink, causing the bands to become loose. Knocking is required to maintain the drums' resonance. The bands may move one to three inches, leaving serious marks or scars if the shells were painted. In Figures 21 and 22, boba, the Master Drum, Kinka, exhibits the contrast of finish clear versus paint finish.

The actual painting of the drums is rather basic. A drum is propped up on a table and dusted off to provide a clean surface. The large portions are painted
first, followed by the bands. Acrylic paint is preferred, but again, it is not always obtainable. Light horizontal brush strokes are used, and for each color there is a different brush. The bottom of each drum is left unpainted.

One difference in the finishing of clear or natural drums is that the outside surface is sanded somewhat smoother than with painted drums, since the natural beauty of the wood is displayed. Varnish, gloss or satin polyurethane, or any type of clear finish may be used. It is simply brushed on to cover the entire external surface of the drum, leaving the internal surface bare. The drum, whether painted or varnished, takes approximately one full day to dry. One suggestion that I made to Anani was that the moisture content in the wood breathes through the end grain of the staves. If the ends were sealed with paint or varnish, the drum would stabilize to a consistent shape even though it experienced changes of climate. The suggestion was graciously accepted, as always, but somehow the end grain remained unpainted.

The final step in finishing the resonator is "boring_the_holes." These holes (tsotsido or tsodu) are a part of the rope tension tuning system used for
all Eye barrel drums. After the drums are painted and dried, a guideline is drawn around the shell. For all drums, with the exception of atsimevu, the standard measurement is four inches down from the mouth. The measurements for atsimevu are four and one-half inches for the small size and four and three-quarters for the medium and large size. The line is scribed with the same marking gage as used for the V groove and bottom. Points are marked on the line four inches apart, where the pegs (tsotsi) are later inserted (see tsotsi, page 118). The African drum maker uses an auger bit, one-half inch in diameter, at a 55 to 60 degree angle to the perimeter of the shell. The holes are purposely bored slightly above the second band, which serves as a reinforcement. The wood is under great pressure from the tension of the pegs as the skin is stretched across the mouth (see lacing, page 136). The second band, therefore, helps to secure the wood, keeping it from splitting. Often drums that have been knocked several times, because of shrinkage, develop cracked holes if the bands are driven too low to provide support.

Splitting also occurs when a peg hole is drilled at the joint of two staves. The four inch measurement between holes is a traditional African rule. Regardless of the number of staves used to assemble a drum or the
width of each stave, the holes are drilled four inches apart, falling on at least one or two joints on each drum. After pointing this out to Anani, I requested that he drill the holes in all my drums in every other stave, despite the traditional norm. The suggestion was again happily accepted, but I had to remind him continually as each drum was bored.

**Stage Six: The Pegs and Flesh Hoop.**

Two necessary parts of the tuning system for Eye barrel drums, the pegs (tsotsi) and flesh hoop (gbako) (see page 127 gbako), are not easily obtained. Unlike all the other raw materials used in the construction of drums purchased in the marketplace, tsotsi and gbako are found in the open marshlands or thick bush, growing wild.

The story of my expedition to collect tsotsi and gbako will illustrate for the reader some of the hazards of ethnomusicological fieldwork.

Anani spoke of his favorite spot north of Agoenyive where the wood for tsotsi and the vine, gbako, could be collected. This place is located between two villages, Deti Kofe (palm tree village) and Torgblo Kofe (river
farm village), where sugarcane used to be planted. From the workshop, it takes three hours by bicycle to arrive there since the roads are bumpy, unpaved, narrow, and off the routes of public transportation.

Throughout my apprenticeship, I was looking forward to making a journey into the real bush. After badgering the workers for several days, Anani allowed Agbe to take me to a spot that was a bit closer and not as wild as the usual place where tsotsi wood was collected. He pointed out the direction and said that due to the rainy season, the further location would be too difficult a journey for a stranger, especially a westerner. Agbe and I borrowed two locally-owned bicycles and began pedaling our way to the closer site. As we rode up and down the hills, the fresh smells of neighboring trees and bushes filled our noses. Agbe led the way with his sharpened cutless wedged in the left rear basket, over the back tire. He assured me that since he was raised as a hunter, he felt able to cope with any wild animals or snakes that might cross our path. This made me a bit apprehensive and added a different kind of excitement to my anticipation.

It was about 4:15 in the afternoon when we arrived, and my legs were sore from riding that China-made bike
for one and one-half hours. The sky was gorgeous and the air clean; we were all alone. I was surprised to see such an open vast land with many small hills and tall grass everywhere. Agbe instructed me to pile the bikes together so that he could lock them to a tree. This was an important precautionary measure taken against any local thieves because without the bikes, our travel home would be long and difficult. Throughout the grassy marshland there were very few trees, but finally we found one and we locked our bikes. "The rest of the way we walk", Agbe grunted, and off we went. Our feet got sopping wet as we trudged through the grass, up and down the hills. I had not been informed that I should be wearing boots to protect my ankles and feet, but it would not have made any difference since I did not own boots anyway. As we walked, Agbe reminisced about his hunting days. "It is very dangerous. It is no small thing to be a hunter. The people will honor you and bring big money for selling a cow or bush animal in the market." Just as we were talking, we saw a Moslem shepherd directing his tall, one-humped cows across the ridge. The old, thin gentleman dressed in rags began to approach us. We met him half way and wished him good afternoon. He seemed to be very upset about something, although it was difficult to know what, since neither one of us spoke his language. The old man muttered
Figure 23: Cutting Trees Used for Tsotsi
Figure 24: Wood Used for Tsotsi
something about missing one of his flock, but it was unclear. We bid him good day and Agbe continued his hunting stories. "Ah, sometimes there is a big snake or bush dog, maybe even ape or wild pig, and life or death is at stake. A wild pig will attack you at any time. He can kill you at any moment. You must know how to move." Now I was feeling uneasy as each footstep sank below the water in the swamp. This exciting experience was turning into a nightmare.

After about thirty minutes of searching, we located a large area of tall bushes where kpafia grows, a wood used to make pegs (see Figure 23). This bush which grows seven to ten feet high, has few limbs and large leaves. The cut is made at the bottom of the stem, and only the parts of the stem and branches free from knots are saved. There is another tree that grows nearby, also used in making pegs, aketsia or xetsi. We chopped some of this as well, since the supply of kpafia was limited. Aketsia wood grows stout and bushy with many small leaves and long thorns. Agbe removed the thorns with his cutlass and kept the branches since the stems were too hard (see Figure 24). I brought a hunting knife along, which I put to good use helping Agbe remove the thorns.
As we worked together, a loud grunt came from somewhere under the thick bushes. We immediately stopped what we were doing. Again the grunt came. Agbe instructed me not to move an inch. He hunched over very carefully, holding his cutlass out in an upright position in front of him. I have never seen a man transform his character so quickly from calm and cool to alert self-defense. I thought surely we were going to be attacked by an African wolf or one of those wild pigs with the sharp teeth who eat people alive. Agbe slowly moved in towards the middle of the bush where the sounds were coming from. The roar came again so Agbe froze. He peered closer and there lying under the bush was a huge black cow with a wounded leg. She tried to get up, but it was too difficult. Agbe and I were both extremely relieved. We decided that this was the long lost animal of the Moslem shepherd and that it would be helpful to call the old man to come and collect his cow.

As the evening grew near and the sun was beginning to set, Agbe and I gathered our sticks for tsotsi and headed back towards the bicycles. The distance seemed longer, especially with soggy shoes and a load of sticks on my back. We made it to the clearing, on dry land once again, but the hills were difficult to
pass. On my way down one hill, I tripped on a long green vine that seemed to draped everywhere. Tumbling down, Agbe and I broke out in laughter and admitted that the day was growing old. "Big Joe, this is *adzaka* (see page 127), the vine used as a hoop to hold the skin over the mount of the drum." He was delighted to find it at his disposal, especially since we needed to bring some back for Anani. After winding up a sizeable coil of vine, we went on towards our bikes. They seemed to be in order so Agbe unlocked them. We loaded them up and pedalled back to Agoenyive as the sun set. After we returned, Anani was excited to hear our stories, but first we bathed and "chopped (ate) heavy akple" in order to recover our energies from such an adventurous day.

*Tsotsi* (pegs) are used to secure the membrane to the resonator. They are carved to a taper with a notch made in the thick end of the peg to hold the rope loops that secure the head. Since carving wood by hand is tedious and time consuming, the pegs are carved when the wood is green, which makes cutting easier and faster. The process begins when the pegs are sawed to the proper lengths from the wooden stems or branches that have been collected (see Figure 25). The standard length of six inch pegs is used for all types of drums manufactured, except for atsimevu. The sticks are cut to six and
one-half or seven inches. As in splitting a log, the six inch pieces are split in half, thirds, or quarters with a cutlass, depending upon size. If it is easier, a long stick may be split upright and then cut to length (see Figure 26). A cutlass is a very handy tool, especially for the drum maker. Most of these machete-like tools are forged by local blacksmiths. However, it is said that the Chinese imported type is preferred. The handle is made of two wooden halves, riveted to the long solid blade of metal. Since a machete is used quite a bit in the forming of tsotsi, the blade is sharpened regularly for fast, easy cutting. The split pieces are each rough-cut and shaped to the approximate dimensions until they resemble the shape of a peg. This job is usually performed sitting on a board on the ground, and a very hard piece of fruit wood is used for a chopping block (see Figure 27). A knife is then used to carve the peg to the finished shape (see Figure 28). All pegs are made to fit a one-half inch hole, bored in the drums, and they are carved oversize to allow for shrinkage.

Most tunable drums throughout the world have a hoop around which the wet drum skin is wrapped and stretched. This hoop is commonly referred to in America as a flesh hoop. The Eye drum makers use a vine
Figure 25: Sawing Lengths of Tsotsi
Figure 26: Cutting Ends of Tsotsi with Cutlass
Figure 27: Rough Cutting Tsotsi
Figure 28: Carving Tsotsi with Knife
Figure 29: Adzuka Vine
Figure 30: Measuring Flesh Hoop (Gbako)
Figure 31: Joining Flesh Hoop
(adzaka) for the material used in making flesh hoops (gbako) on their drums (see Figure 29).

Gbako is stretched around the rim of the drum with a two inch overlap on each side (see Figure 30). A rope or string may be used to measure in substitution for the vine if it is too bent. The ends are then sliced on a diagonal, referred to as a scarf joint, with a knife. The overlapping ends are joined together by wrapping a piece of string in a zig-zag fashion around the joint and securing it with a knot (see Figure 31). In its final state, gbako fits just slightly over the rim of the drum, tucked under the skin. If the hoop is made oversize, there will be a tendency for the skin to stretch, breaking the gbako, and possibly tearing the head.

Stage Seven: Lacing the skin.

The transformation from cask to drum is made when the membrane is laced across the mouth of the resonator. This is the final step in the process of Eye barrel drum making and it takes special skill and technique that distinguishes the African craftsman from other coopers.
Skins are found in the local butcher market already stretched and dried. Anani was very fussy in choosing a strong skin, particularly since it was non-returnable and quite expensive. Many types of animal skins may be used, although duiker\(^2\) is the most preferred. This small deer-like animal roams freely throughout the savannah and the skins are plentiful in most local markets. Two similar non-domestic animals, the \textit{sitatunga}\(^3\) and \textit{bushbuck}\(^4\) are also hunted for their hides (as well as for food). Their skins are usually thinner than duikers, giving clearer tones. Domestic goat and sheep skins may be chosen for the lacing, especially when large thin heads are needed. In response to my questions about the characteristics of these animals, Anani gave the following information:

1) \textit{Ayebze} (gray duiker): It is found in the deep forest, except for during the rainy season when it migrates to the flat grassy lands of the savanna. Both

\___________________________

\(^2\) "The subfamily of the duikers (cephalophinae) most clearly resembles the small forest type horned ungulates of the Tertiary period. They range in size from a hare to a deer. The head rump length is 55-145 cm, the tail length is 7-17 cm, and the body
height is 30–85 cm. The animal has an arched back, slender legs, and a relatively plump body. The facial part of the skull is not much longer than the part, and the head has a humped nose which is bare. The tail has a small tassel. The short horns, which are no longer than the ears, are straight or slightly bent downward or upward. In the females, they are weaker or missing. The forehead has a full tuft which partially or completely hides the horns. There is no color difference between the males and females although the males are somewhat larger and heavier than the females. The females have four nipples. They eat vegetarian food in addition to protein. The habitat is the forest or savannah. There are two genera (sylvicapra and cephalophus) with 15 species and 71 subspecies." (see Grzimek : 308).

3 "Of all tragelaphus species, the sitatung is best adapted for life in the swamp and water. The hooves can be spread far apart and carry the animal safely over muddy ground. On solid ground, the sitanuas actually move rather clumsily and with difficulty. They are excellent swimmers, often spending the day resting in the swamp or in the water, and taking to the water in flight. When in danger, they submerge out of sight so that only the nostrils are visible.
This is rather unusual for a horned ungulate.
Because of these habits, the sitatunga inhabits only places with swamp forest, marshes, reed and papyrus jungle, or other very moist regions within its large area of distribution..." (see Grzimek: 323).

4 "Bushbucks live in plains, alpine regions up to 4000 meters, prime forests, fringe forests, along rivers, or tree covered spots in the steppe plains. Since they are good swimmers, they have managed to populate islands, such as those in Lake Victoria. Often bushbucks may be found in the immediate vicinity of human settlements..." (see Grzimek: 324).

male and female have two very sharp pointed horns. The fur is ash or gray colored and it is hunted by either gun or trap.

2) Dzobedzski (black duiker): It inhabits the open bush or forest (not dense) and roams about in herds. The dzobedzski is known to be the fastest animal in the forest. There is no difference in size between the avegbze and the dzobedzski (duikers). The color of its fur if also grey with the additional of tiny black spots at the tips of the hair.
3) **Kodzoe or Kodzopki** (bay duiker): This duiker is shorter and fatter than the previous two with very tough thick skin. The fur is reddish brown in color with a black stripe running down its backbone.

4) **Ese** (sitatunga and bushbuck): The ese is taller than the duiker and similar in size to the American deer. It lives in the forest among scattered trees or around water as they are good swimmers. The reddish fur is sprinkled throughout its body with patterns of white spots and lines. The skin is usually thinner than the other duiker types.

5) **Agbo** (goat): These domestic goats roam free to feed on anything that is edible. The pores in their skin are noticeably larger than most other hides. Goat skin is very thin and is used on many other types of African drums besides the barrel types. It is said that goats that are shipped from the northern areas of Ghana and Togo are much tougher than the coastal breeds.

6) **Alē** (sheep, ram (male)): Also domestic, sheep hide is the thinnest of all skins used in drum making and is very high in elasticity. The white and brown fur is usually very long and difficult to remove.
There was mention of other uncommon hides used in drum making, such as alligator, python snake, and lizard but often the customer would supply his own preference, since these skins are extremely expensive (see Appendix, pages 163 and 164). As a general rule, drums that are smaller are played with smaller sticks and have thinner heads than larger ones. In Plate 4, I have listed the types of heads and sticks used for each barrel drum.

Before the lacing process begins, the fur or hair must be removed from the skins. This backbreaking job takes plenty of muscle and energy. This skin is laid on the ground, a board, or any flat surface. Cooled ashes and sometimes sand are poured and spread on the skin. A wedge made from the unused leftover portion of sawed staves is used to scrape the hair off the skin. To achieve optimal success in removing the fur, it is important to scrape against the grain of the hair. Ash contains alkali, an acid neutralizer that helps dissolve the hair, and the sand acts as a mild abrasive to sever the hair from the skin (see Figure 32).

When the fur is all removed, the skin is cleaned off and submerged in a bucket of water for 30-90 minutes, depending upon the thickness of the skin (see
Plate IV

**List of Drum Types/Skins and Implements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drum Types</th>
<th>Animal Skin</th>
<th>Implement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atsimeyu</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>HS/H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sogo</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>MS/H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totodzi</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kloboto</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conga</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidi</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>MS to LS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragan</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>LS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boba</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brekete</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>CS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- **HS** = heavy sticks
- **MS** = medium sticks
- **LS** = light sticks
- **H** = hands
- **CH** = curved stick
Figure 32: Removing Hair from Skin
Figure 33). Anani told me that, "if the skin be left in water too long, it will smell proper."

After the skin is properly softened, it is ready to be fastened to the resonator. This process is accomplished by sewing the skin around the flesh hoop (gbako) over the mouth of the drum. The rope used in the sewing process is purchased in the market that day. Available materials of nylon, cotton, a mixture of both, plastic and even wire are all used for lacing. It seemed to me that Anani would always wait to purchase the rope five minutes before he was ready to lace a head.

There are two tools used in the actual sewing. The first is a chisel-like tool (eps) that is used to pierce the skin like an awl. It may be hand-made from the tail of a file, an old screwdriver, or perhaps a chisel or cutting tool from a lathe, store bought. The second tool, a hook (guyusiga) is usually constructed from a spoke of a bicycle. It is simply removed from the wheel, cut to about eight inches, and bent in half. A coat hanger or any strong ridged wire may be substituted in its place.

The wet skin is draped over the mouth of the drum
Figure 34: Punching Holes in Skin
Figure 35: Lacing Skin
Figure 36: Leveling Flesh Hoop
Figure 37: Fixing Pegs into Loops
several drums myself, I have learned this technique only after many frustrating hours pulling strings through four or five times until I achieved the proper tension.

Once all loops have been pulled through, they are grouped into threes and twisted together producing one strong loop per peg. Using a hammer in one hand first, the flesh hoop and then the peg are struck while the other hand applies pressure downwards on the peg, preventing it from breaking (see Figure 36). This is the beginning of tuning.

Tuning is accomplished by hammering the flesh hoop followed by the respective peg in order to stretch the skin evenly so it sits level around the rim. There is no particular order in which the tsotsi (pegs) are knocked, as long as the head is even. The pegs are driven one quarter of the way into the hole, only enough for the head to set or dry with even tension. The excess skin around the rim is carefully trimmed with a blade or knife so that the flesh hoop will sit flush around the rim (see Figure 37). Often a carrying handle is constructed from the excess skin by cutting a loop in the leather and twisting it around a peg. Handles are common for the smaller drums, such as Kidi, Kagan, Kloboto and Totodzi. The drum is then stored in a room
or placed in the shade to dry, protecting it from the sun's rays. Heads that are left in the sun to dry often become brittle from the loss of evaporated oils, drying too fast from high temperatures. It takes one to two days for a head to dry properly, depending upon the season. Once the head is properly dried, forming a stiff membrane, it is tuned once again by hammering the rim, then the peg, to the desired tone.

The drum is now ready to play. The peg tuning system is actually very convenient and practical. The performer may simply raise the pitch of the drum by striking the rim with his palm and or knocking the pegs with rock, mallet or hammer. Lowering the pitch is accomplished by striking the center of the head with the palm, releasing the tension around the rim. Barrel drums are constructed to withstand the most rugged playing situations.
The tradition of barrel drum making remains a popular vocation among the Southern Eye people of Ghana and Togo. As evidence of this, one would find barrel drums used in most festivals, ceremonies, and funerals throughout Eyeland. As the popularity of Eye music and dance increases, so does the number of barrel drums, thus enabling musicians to spread their cultural traditions.

Practical aspects of the construction process are also a factor of the drums' usage. As Jones points out in a key statement:

"The Southern Eye living on the edge of a lagoon have doubtless learned the art of the cooper through their contact, perhaps for several centuries with Western shipping. They have made ingenious use of their skill for it is easier to make a drum from planks (staves) then to carve from the solid tree." (Jones 1959: 57).

This clearly describes the makers contribution to Eye society. The creative skills of Mensaga, the
originator of Eye barrel drums, are passed down from generation-to-generation. These skills manifest a process of constructing drums that is now an indigenous to the Eye people. Through this process, inexpensive light weight high quality barrel drums are produced that are endorsed by most Eye social and religious dance-drum groups.

This thesis contributes a greater understanding of a process that is an important aspect of Eye culture. In addition, it offers knowledge of the drum makers as people and their relationship to Eye society. For those of us who have experienced Eye music, we acknowledge the contribution of barrel drums and their makers.
Appendix

The following two interviews provide additional information regarding the personal lives of Anani Laffi and Laurance Mensaga Nutakor. They were recorded on a Sony DM5 field cassette recorder and later transcribed. These interviews are included for two reasons:

1) to provide a more detailed description of the drum makers themselves, i.e., their views, personal stories, etc...

2) to give the actual flavor or tone of the Eye language and culture

The first interview is with Anani Laffi. It takes place at his workshop, in Agoenyive, Togo on June 7, 1982. The participants present at the time included Anani, Koami Denakpo (translator) and myself. Mr. Denakpo both translated during the session and later transcribed the information from Eye to English.

The second interview is with Laurance Mensaga Nutakor at his home and workshop in Abo, Ghana. It takes place on July 24, 1982. The participants involved
were Mensaga, Godwin Agbeli (translator), Anani Laffi and myself. Mr. Agbeli was the translator at the time of the interview and Koami Denakpo transcribed the information into English.

I have rephrased the English translations in a few places so that they read more smoothly.
INTERVIEW WITH ANANI AT AGOENYIVE

Togo, June 7, 1982

Joe: What is your name?

Anani: My name is Anani Laffi.

Joe: Where were you born?

Anani: I was born at Abo in Ghana.

Joe: Where did you grow up?

Anani: I grew up at Akatsi.

Joe: What schools have you attended?

Anani: I've never been to school.

Joe: How long did it take you to become a drum maker?

Anani: It took me three years to become a drum maker.

Joe: How old were you before you decided to learn the
art of drum making?

Anani: As a matter of fact, I was very young when my father died and my uncle took me to Akatsi. At the age of eight, I decided to learn drum making. After three years (that was when I was eleven), I knew the secret of drum making and I became a drum maker.

Joe: How many drum makers are there now in Togo?

Anani: I was the first person to settle in Togo and later on I brought in two other friends who are now in Tsevie and Zangera. The drum makers' name from Tsevie is George Bamenu (from Bavo, Ghana), at Zangera, Kojo Ahon (from Abo, Ghana).

Joe: When did the idea of becoming a drum maker first come to you?

Anani: As I said earlier, it was one of my brothers called Kobla who at the age of eight came and took me to Akatsi where I started to make drums. The death of my father prompted me to become a drum maker. My Master was Kogla Adugbe who took me to Abo to a cousin of mine.
Joe: Could you tell me the process of drum making as seen by an apprentice.

Anani: The first thing to learn is how to make the tacks. They are a type of tack traditional called gayi used to hold the metal bands around the drums. The second thing is how to fix the metal bands. Third, the shaving of staves. Forth, the techniques of shaping planing the stave. Fifth, how to handle the driver and mallet; these two instruments are used in the positioning of the metal bands. Here, you are taught how the rope is used to measure the circumference of the drum, which is later transferred to the metal bands. Seven, you learn how to polish the resonator with sandpaper. Eight, you will be taught how to close the bottom of the drum, such as in the kidi and sogo. Nine, how straighten the rim of the resonator, which is the part of the drum that is later covered by the membrane. Ten, you will also learn how to drill equidistant holes for the pegs, around the resonator. Eleven, you will have to learn the type of rope called adzuka which is used as a ring around the membrane while fixing the skin on the drum.
Joe: How do you get rid of the hair on the skin?

Anani: Usually, you put ashes which are taken from a cold pot (oven). The skin is placed on something flat, such as a board, then we pour ashes on the skin. A stick with a sharpened edge is used to remove the hair from the skin. The ashes help a lot. At times people use sand but there is an inconvenience, that is, the stone in the sand can perforate the skin and this is very bad.

Joe: Is there any ritual preceding the drum making?

Anani: No, there is no ritual. However, there is a special ritual for someone who wants to become a drum maker, that is, an apprentice. There are three most important phases of this ritual. The first day, the apprentice is introduced to his work, his tutor or parents bring sodabi (local gin), one bottle of beer, one bottle of schnapps. These items are given to the Master who in turn will accept the apprentice to stay with him and work for three months. During that period the Master studies his conduct, his ability to learn and his prospects, that is, whether he will be
prosperous in the future, after learning how to make drums. The second phase is after three months there is a signing_of_the_agreement, a kind of contract. It involves the tutor or parents bringing a hen, a cock, palm oil, corn flour (the quantity depends on the number of people invited to the ceremony). Also, one bottle of schnapps, one bottle of whisky, one bottle of sodabi, the local gin, two bottles of beer, and in Ghana, the amount of 100 cedis is added. The fowls, the corn flour and palm oil are used to make dzinkple and it is eaten by all those who have attended the ceremony. From there the actual learning process begins. From that day the apprentice learns all the techniques of drum making; it covers three years.

At the end of the three years there is another ceremony called the freeing_ceremony whereby the apprentice, after learning all the techniques involved, is given the freedom to do his own business. The parents or tutor once again bring one white goat, two fowls, one white and one black, 12 bottles of drinks, ranging from soft to alcohol types and the amount of 500 cedis is added. The Master gives the apprentice a hammer,
a mallet, a meter, and plane; these are the four most important tools used in drum making. They are given to the apprentice during the course of the ceremony. They are, however, taken back by the Master later. During the period of three good years, the apprentice works for the Master without pay. Most of the time the apprentice stays with his parents, however, some arrangements are made for some apprentices to stay with the Master; it will be included in the agreement. Here the master is obligated to feed the apprentice. One has to know at the time of freeing that your Master is not obliged to help you in any way. That is, be getting drinks or buying certain things, etc. It depends on how you respect your Master during the apprenticeship. He can offer some help financially in many ways, but there is no obligation.

Failure to comply to the terms of the agreement or in the event of breach of contract, the tutor or parents of the apprentice are forced to pay the items cited under the freeing ceremony. This compliance holds true only when the agreement is signed. When an apprentice leaves the work before the signing, the parents have no obligation to pay
anything to the Master.

Joe: Could you talk a little bit about the pricing of the drums among drum makers. It is believed that all makers have the same fixed price.

Anani: To that question I will say no. There is always some variation in the prices of materials. Personally, I fix my price according to the cost of the materials used. Today I can buy a board at a certain price and tomorrow the price can change. Now we are in an inflationary world, it keeps on changing from day to day. Second, transportation costs play a lot of difference in the pricing of the instruments. Third, I also add our labor to it so that you always have a kind of profit margin that will sustain me and all of my apprentices and take care of all my necessities of life, etc.

Joe: Do you think of this work (drum making) as a business?

Anani: Oh yes! Since I live on that, it is a private business for me, of course.

Joe: I want to understand if you keep daily records of
your business because in the U.S. it is very
different to maintain a business. I want to
understand, in the African context, this process.

Anani: We do not keep records of our daily activities.
All that we do is in a month, I've sold so much
and then I keep on spending day and day out. We
don't keep any record. As a result, there is no
tax; we don't pay tax to any person.

Joe: How were drums made in the past.

Anani: In the past, drums were carved out of selected
wood cut in the forest and carved in the form of a
drum.

Joe: Did you learn how to make carved drums?

Anani: No, I did not. I learned the process whereby
staves were used.

Joe: Who was the first drum maker you knew?

Anani: The first drum maker I knew is still alive. He
stays at Abo in Ghana. He is called Mensaga.
Joe: Where did Mensaga get the idea of drum making from?

Anani: Well, according to him, he said he was sleeping when the idea came to him. It was a kind of revelation. He put it into practice and came out with the process. He is still alive. Also, anytime I want to free my apprentices, I take them to him at Abo, since he always supervises the freeing ceremony.

Joe: Is there any drum makers' association?

Anani: No, there isn't any.

Joe: If there is no association, how do you feel about your competitors?

Anani: Well, if someone is selling drums for less, maybe they are of low quality. The people will not buy poorly constructed drums, so you have to know the drum maker and his work before you purchase them. Also, most drum makers set their shops far enough apart so there is little competition.

Joe: Here is another question which ought to have came
earlier on. What about the conduct of the apprentice; what are the roles governing his actions?

Anani: When you first introduce the apprentice to his work, he must stand with his hands folded behind his back, listening carefully to the following rules that govern the apprentice:

(1) Total respect for the Master, his wife and the children.

(2) Total respect for the seniors, i.e., those who were there before you came. You must respect them.

(3) Total respect for all customers, those who come to the workshop. How to talk to them, how to receive them, how to serve them, if possible, and so forth and so on.

(4) You have to go down a bit before you address somebody who is your senior, your Master or his wife, or a customer. You must bow down a bit as a sign of respect.
(5) Every morning you have to fetch water for your Master, sweep his room, then go on to sweep the workshop and bring all the tools to the workshop.

(6) The apprentice is not allowed to stay late in the night, and also he is not allowed to marry during his apprenticeship, otherwise it will amount to breech of contract. An apprentice who fails to comply by these rules will be exposed to the public during the freeing ceremony and will be painted as a bad apprentice. No apprentice is prepared to carry that labor on him. It goes a long way to effect his whole business in the future.

Joe: How does the society look upon you or treat you as a drum maker?

Anani: The kind treatment the society gives to a drum maker is relative in the first place. It depends on how you make your drums. If you make good drums, you command a lot of respect from the people. If your drums are not good, you will know. After being a good drum maker, you earn a lot of money. People consider you as a custodian of tradition, a practical one, of course. Also,
how you use the money that you derive from drum making is important. Say for instance somebody who makes good drums has got a lot of customers and is doing well. What comes out of it in the form of renumeration? If he spends his money on drinking or committing crimes the society, or the community from which I live is not prepared to accord him with any kind of respect because of the way he uses his money; it is not decent.

Joe: How do you view your work in terms of the society?

Anani: I view my work with a lot of pride. I have to assure you that I never regretted becoming a drum maker. I like my job.

Joe: You are a drum maker. You are at a village. There you are, your drums being beaten with about 500 people, singing, dancing, doing all sorts of things around your drums. How do you feel?

Anani: I feel good when the people play my drums. When they say that the drums sound good and the drums are nice, then I feel really good. It gives me a lot of pride to know that I've made drums that are
appreciated by my customers and other people around.

Joe: Is there any special treatment for you any time you happen to be at the place where your drums are being played?

Anani: Well, if the people realize that you made the drums, they can introduce you to other people that offer you some drinks. Although you are really proud, it also feels great for them. "At the corner, they are creating more of a market for you."

Joe: How long have you been in business, since you've opened your workshop?

Anani: Eight years.

Joe: Can you tell me about the trade of your business, how do your products sell from day to day?

Anani: Sometimes you may stay for about a month and not sell any drums. The next month you can sell a lot of drums; it is not steady, it varies.
Joe: For instance, take from January to December, which months are really bad for you financially?

Anani: During farming season (June through August), people are occupied by farming activities. At that time there is a ban on drumming (to encourage healthy production on the farms). I may say that those periods are my limp periods. I don't sell quite enough drums. The drying processes are retarded because of the rainy season. During the farming season I do not sell many drums.

Joe: Is Mensaga very old?

Anani: Yes, he is very old.

Joe: I wanted to visit Mensaga and talk to him. As I am a white man, I learned that there is a ban on American tourists going to Ghana these days, so I find it very difficult to meet him but I wish very much to see him and talk to him. I want to put it before you whether he is too old to travel to come down here and chat with him and then go back. I don't know whether it will be possible for you to organize or arrange it. I will be very grateful.
Anani: Well, as you've said, it is possible for me to go to the village where Mensaga is on Friday, June 11, 1982. When I go, I will try to talk to him and see whether he can travel. Recently I learned that he is suffering from one eye. When I talk to him and he agrees, I will bring him down for a chat, then I will take him back.

Joe: What are the factors in selecting wood for drum making?

Anani: For wood to be suitable for drum making, it should a) show some kind of resistance against insects, b) it should have tenderness or flexibility (for the bending process) and c) it has to have a high fiber content (long pores). All of these things are so important because during the bending process, when the drum is taking shape, and they are assembling it, the staves have to be bent in a special way. If there is no resistance, the wood is not tender and the fiber is not present, it will break. Even during the drying process you can see the wood cracking here and there. To that effect, the only wood or tree that has these three qualities mentioned above is called Odum. In the drum making, the tree Odum is the most suitable
and the only one used in drum making.

Joe: Where can Odum be obtained?

Anani: Well, Odum is cut in Ghana from the forest in Kumasi, but over here in Togo, Odum is grown and cut in Atakpame.

Joe: Where do you (Anani) buy your Odum from for drum making?

Anani: Oh, there is a village nearby called Atiku in Togo very near Agoenive. I always get my Odum for my drums there.

Joe: Can you tell me the current price of a board of Odum.

Anani: One board of Odum is now sold at 3800 CFA, roughly 12 U.S. dollars.

Joe: What kinds of skins are used in drum making?

Anani: Antelope skin is mostly used. In addition to that, we also use goat skin, alligator, crocodile and python skin. The type of skin selected
depends on the individuals. Some prefer one type of skin to the others; some say goat skin gives high sounds, some claim that alligator is so nice, even though it is small you have to moisten it and stretch it to cover the drum. Some say crocodile skin is the best. Among all the type mentioned above, antelope and goat skins are very common and cheap, compared to the other types. Alligator is very expensive and uncommon. The same applies to crocodile and python. However, some customers may bring one special kind of skin which they will like you to use.

Joe: Out of the alligator, crocodile and python, which of the skins have you ever used?

Anani: One of my customers brought alligator skin for me to use on his drum and I liked it very much. The only thing is they are not common and some how very expensive. So when the customer brings it, there is no objection for me to buy a skin.

Joe: Usually the drums, after being assembled, are put in the sun for drying. Could you tell me something about the process of drying?
Anani: After the staves are assembled with the bands on, the drum is ready to be placed in the sun for some days. When the drying process is completed, i.e., when the drum is dried, you can see that the drum shrinks. The metal bands become loose and begin to fall off. You can see holes in between the joints of the staves. The drum becomes comparatively lighter to what it was before the drying process.

Joe: Now, if a customer wants a drum finished in a very short time, what we can call rush orders, whereby the customer wants the drum in two or three days, and the drum isn't properly dried, what do you do? Do you just make the drum and give it to him just like that? Are there other means whereby you proceed?

Anani: Ah, as for what you call rush orders, we do what is termed heating of the drum. This process is a bit complicated and I want to tell you more in detail.

(1) The drum is assembled first with the metal bands on.
(2) A fire is made in a cold pot (small hibatchi with a bottomless pot that is placed on top) with charcoal. Usually the pot is a special type because the seat (of the pot) is removed and it is used to cover the fire, which is placed on the burning charcoal, and why? The reasons being that the heat is evenly spread in all directions, that is, vertically and horizontally.

(3) Two or three metal bands are now placed on the cold pot on top of the charcoal. These metal bands serve as a seat for the drum during the heating process. If not, the heat may burn the wood (staves) to ashes. If these bands aren't used for a seat, the drum (resonator) will be sitting on the hot charcoals, burning the wood to ashes.

(4) A board is used to cover the upper end or mouth in order to retain the heat in the drum. The only place for the heat to escape is through the pores of the wood, thus drying the drum. Because the wood is wet, this heat begins to dry the water content and the wood becomes dry in no time.
(5) When the drum is subjected to intensive heating, the process lasts just for one hour and that is serious heating. What are the signs of completion? You will see that the wood shrinks. The drum becomes lighter as compared to what it was before the heating process started. The bands get loose and you can see holes in between the joints of the staves. After one hour you can pick up the drum and put it on the ground and allow it to cool down.

Joe: How do you bevel each stave to the correct angle?

Anani: We go through a process of trial and error. The beveling is basically done by feel (or by eye). You plane each stave, approximate each angle the same, and assemble the drum. After assembling the drum, and you realize there is a fault somewhere, you have to dismantle the whole thing, bevel it again, and assemble it to the proper angle until the staves fit together properly.

Joe: Where do you get the steel that is used in making the hoops?

Anani: The steel is obtained from old imported wine
barrels that are sold to us. We remove the steel bands from around them. The wood comes from an oak tree and we use it on other drums. It is very strong and resistant.

Joe: Don't you think your Master, Mensaga, learned to make drums from European coopers?

Anani: Well, he didn't tell us, but all that he claimed to say is that he was sleeping when the image came to him; he just put it into practice, thats all...
INTERVIEW AT ABO WITH MENSAGA

Ghana, July 24, 1982

Joe: I was able to be an apprentice of Anani, a drum maker of Agoenyive for three months. During my research, almost all of my informants made reference to Mensaga. Now that I am almost at the end of my work, I am exceptionally honored to be with Mensaga, the first drum maker. I am happy to have the privilege to meet and talk with you alive. To show my appreciation to you, I offer you a bottle of Schnapps and 60 cedis.

Mensaga: In your first speech, I noticed your interest in art objects since your childhood. This life coincided with my personal life. Why do I single out this phenomenon? Simple, because I learned from nobody. I was a shepherd when I was very young. This actually exposed me to nature. I started to be fascinated by the arts, especially when I got out in the fields. First, I was grabbed by carpentry, followed by driving, fitting (mechanic), though I am an illiterate. I created, out of nothing, the art of making drums before I
came to this town, Abo. My coming here was the initiative of the Reverend Father Donkas, who was here in Abo some time ago. He visited with me very often at Dabala where I did a lot of work for him. There came a time when I realized that I was troubled by the people of Abo because of my excellency in art, which is effected by my frequent sickness. I was then advised by my relatives to leave Dabala. When I left Dabala, I went to Mamvi where I had some awaiting orders to finish. It was there when the Reverend Father saw me while passing by and asked me about my mission there. On narrating the story to him, he vehemently disagreed with my stay in Mamvi and told me that he had enough jobs in the chapel for me to do. Since I was looking for jobs, I had no objection to his proposal. I then moved to Abo, in 1932. I found in the Reverend Father an extreme love. We ate from the same plate, stayed in the same room, worked day-in and day-out until everything was completed, which prompted my departure from him and my settlement in the town of Abo. I wish to inform you that I was not the first carpenter in Abo. There were several of them before my arrival. My first apprentice was the late Mr. Anthony Akofi, a native of Abo. He was
followed by several apprentices, whose documents I kept until my whole house was set on fire some time ago and my workshop on two other occasions, which destroyed several valuable documents and all my tools. To confirm my vested interest in the art, all my tools are made by myself. Never do I use tools made by Europeans or, in other words, imported tools. As far a Eye drum making is concerned, I am proud to say that I am the pioneer in this field. In every corner of Ghana, a reference is made to me. My full name is Laurance Mensaga Nutakor.

People of Keta remembered me when I repaired the German-made harmonium which got spoiled some time ago. Several repeated carpenters tried to fix it, but it was in vain. It was my house owner (living in Keta then) who advised them to see me for repairs. There was a confusion over this suggestion or choice; some of them (the carpenters) claimed that it was an insult to their persons. All said and done, Mr. Lotu, who was then the technician of the harmonium, suggested that he knew Mr. Mensaga. "There is always someone ahead of others in every department of life, be it knowledge or skill." He advised them
that the harmonium be sent to me, but they all refused. He then asked his sons to carry the instrument to me at Abo here. They arrived at this place at 4:00 p.m. on that day. I looked at the harmonium very closely and said honestly to them that I can't do it. So they left, leaving the harmonium behind. That night I could not sleep. I was thinking about how to repair this instrument. Ideas came to me, and finally I retained one. I went to the Reverend Father to collect some papers to enable me to design patterns for the work. I found the pattern making extremely difficult, for the harmonium itself was so sophisticated. This, however, did not prevent me from coming out with the patterns. I sent a friend of mine to Keta to buy me a board of plywood for the beginning of the serious work; that is, the transfer of the patterns to the plywood pieces. I succeeded in repairing the harmonium. It was amidst a jubilating crowd that the harmonium was brought back to Keta. My labor was priced at 25 pounds. Pounds in those days were between 750 to 800 CFA for one pound. Two people, out of satisfaction, donated 20 pounds and 10 pounds respectfully for the celebration. At that time I was not known. One day I paid a visit to
Keta and I was in a bar drinking when one
gentlemen asked me, "Where do you come from?." I
answered, "From Abo." He continued that a man
from Abo saved their harmonium from scrap. I then
identified myself to him. He couldn't believe me.
In the end he kept shouting congratulations on me
for a long time. I then realized the value of the
work I did.

As you know, I started my work at Adzidome. It
was there that my elder brother Olivan was given a
truck with a driver for conveying luggage. After
three days, I asked the driver to leave and I took
up driving. From then, I became the fitter of
that truck. All the repair work was done by
myself. Only broken parts were bought, but they
were fixed by myself. Other people later bought
new cars or vehicles; I was the repairer anytime
they broke down. I wish to tell you another story
about car repairing. A car owner next door had
his vehicle that was broken down. He went to Keta
to find two fitters to repair his engine. These
fitters came all the way from Keta to Abo on the
engine but failed to identify or spot the fault,
and left. The owner of the vehicle came to my
elder brother and asked him if I would come to see
his engine. My brother asked for two pounds 10 shillings. My brother later informed me of the work. Honestly, I couldn't imagine the degree of the challenge put to me. For that reason, I could not sleep the whole night because of my thoughts over how to fit back this engine. The next day, it took me no time to get this machine working. In short, "what God has given you cannot be taken from you what so ever out of jealousy or by force or what not." One thing about me is that I don't take interest in JuJu or Black Power. I surrender my whole life to the Almighty and ask for his protection from all evils. That is how I started.

I had, and I still have, a lot of apprentices. Anani wasn't an apprentice under me but he said the truth to you. I don't like to sit down in Master's chair and see my apprentice at work, rather I work with them. At times, people who don't know me ask, "Where is you Master?", while I am among them. When I was at Adidome, there were carpenters with a lot of apprentices, but when I arrived, their Masters always stopped them from their work, for the senior man has come, until I leave them before they continue their work. This
is an example of the kind of respect people accord me. What pains me is that I am now in my old age, if not, I would have asked you to try me at work for two days to see my caliber. All these are the work of God. Since you claim to develop interest in the art since your childhood, nature will allow you to succeed. Even all that I am saying now is a blessing upon you. You will achieve your objective. I end it here.

Joe: Thank you very much old man. I am very grateful for your story, but before I end it, I have some questions to ask you. What happened before you started making the barrel type drums?

Mensaga: In the past, drums were carved out of wood. I adapted a new way of making drums from cooperman. I had my own patterns made and used them to cut the wood, made my own drums out of the process of coopering. Therefore, my critical observations added to my attentiveness which helped me succeed with a new, cheaper and easy way of making drums. When I first started people wondered over the technique involved. They quickly realized the sound was better then the carved ones; then there was a switch from carved drums to my drums. So my
drums came to Abo before my physical or bodily arrival. My drums can be seen all over Ghana. There was a white man who I used to construct drums for, to be sent to Europe for teaching purposes. He was introduced to me by his friend Anyako.

Joe: As you started your carpentry work from Adzidome, does it mean that you started drum making from Adzidome?

Mensaga: Yes, I started drum making from Adzidome. I later went to Dabala where I did a lot of work and my third settlement was Abo, where I am still living. I am now in my 50th year. I settled here in 1932 (Abo).

Joe: When were you born?

Mensaga: I was born in 1911 at Wuti. My father died when I was nine days old. I was told that my father took a lot of interest in arts, but he was a farmer.

Joe: Where were you brought up?

Mensaga: (No answer)
Joe: What is the name of the right tree for making drums?

Mensaga: Odum. The name is Akan in origin. The Eye name for it is Logo.

Joe: How do you account for the shape of Kidi and Sogo? Was it an accident that came about in a dream?

Mensaga: It is out of my imagination upon which I made my patterns. I place them on the wood and have them cut out, smooth them, have them curved a bit, I fixed them from the top end with the help of two metal bands, then I used wires to tie the bottom, tighten it properly and fixed the bands on. At one time I made a barrel for storing drinks for the people of Mamvi.

Joe: Are you aware that you are responsible for the continued existence of Eye music culture or that you are maintaining the tradition for playing music because carved drums are scarce these days?

Mensaga: Yes.
Joe: Do the people of the village know your importance and accord you due respect?

Mensaga: Yes. But out of envy at times some of them try to (out) do me.

Joe: Since when have you stopped making drums?

Mensaga: Two factors are responsible for this state of affairs. Old age, against which I try to force myself, but the second factor I can't do anything about it. For three months now I lost my sight which threw me out of the trade. At first, I could see faintly, but now I am completely blind.

Joe: Can you talk about the freeing ceremony to me?

Mensaga: In the past, we put the apprentice under observation for three months after which an agreement is signed. The agreement gives legal sanction or backing to the apprentice period of stay with the Master. As for why the ritual is performed, we demand the drinks as proof that the apprentice is really serious. In the absence of this ritual, I think that anybody at all can present himself to be an apprentice and people
used to do it. The presentation of the items obliges, in one way or another, the apprentice to be aware of what he will lose if he runs away from the family or Master through whom he is studying. The apprentice is forced to complete his work for him, not to waste his money or that of his parents. As you all know, every study or course is sanctioned by a certificate or testimonial. In the same vein, our apprentices leave the Masters with a testimonial which is delivered during the freeing ceremony. The ceremony involves different kinds of drinks, an animal which is estimated to cost thousands of cedis. They are symbols to the freed apprentice or the future Master. Now that he is no more an apprentice, he isn't free, but he has to work hard to pay for all items used for the agreement and freeing ceremony, either to his parents or to himself and work hard to become a man to get his living out of his trade. Usually, an apprentice who looks down upon this ceremony dissolves his life; it abruptly or suddenly ends. Now, this three month grace period has ceased or personally I stopped it. You sign the agreement before you are considered as an apprentice of mine, for the abused people made this arrangement possible.
Joe: For instance, if an apprentice who is not free but succeeded with the help of some friends to write up a testimonial for himself, can such an apprentice succeed in the trade?

Mensaga: It is unheard of; it has never happened. One of my apprentices is working with the State farms in furniture making. There came a time for them to take an exam. He failed it and came to me with the test; I explained it to him. He went back and did it accordingly and passed the exam this time. At this point, if he were not to be freed, could he come back to me? Not at all!

Joe: An apprentice who has not completed his studies, left and opened his own workshop. What would happen?

Mensaga: The Master has the right to charge him at the court. If the Master refuses to take this action, the apprentice will never prosper.

Joe: How do you know if antelope skin is best suited for the drums?
Mensaga: The reason is that antelope was used on the carved drums, it is tender and last longer than other types. The thicker skin gives muted or unclear sounds.

Joe: How many wives and children do you have?

Mensaga: Now I have two wives, one is with me here and the other is at Afla. I have only one girl.

Joe: Was your father a carpenter?

Mensaga: As I said, my father died when I was nine days old. I was told that my father was a farmer but took great interest in arts.

Joe: Thank you.
Bibliography

Grzimek, Bernhard H.C.

Hill, Richard
1984 *Spirit Possession and the Music of Brekete Cult of Southeastern Ghana*
   Masters Thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana

Holmes, Michael D.
1984 *The Pulse of Adowa*
   Masters Thesis, Wesleyan University

Kilby, Keneth
1971 *The Cooper and Bis Trade*
   John Baker, pub. LTD 5 Royal Opera Arcade, Pall Mall, London
Jones, A.M.

Oxford University Press

Locke, David

1978 *The Music of Atsiabeke*
Phd.D. dissertation, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan

1977 "Drum Language in Adzogbo" with Godwin Agbeli
*The Black Perspective in Music*

McAllester, David P.; Titon, Jeff T.; Koetting, James T.; Reck, David; and Slobin, Mark

1984 *Worlds of Music*
An Introduction to the Music of the Worlds' People. Collier Macmillan, pub.

Merriam, Alan P.

1969 "The Ethnographic Experience: Drum Making Among the Bala (Basonguye)."

Nketia, J.H. Kwabena

1974 *The Music of Africa*
W.W. Norton and Co., New York, New York
Waring, Dennis G.

1982 *The Instrument Maker*

M.A. Thesis, Wesleyan University, Middleton, Connecticut
Interviews

Abotsi, Emanuel Kobla
   July 24, 1982 Akatsi, Ghana

Ayite, Anani
   July 24, 1982 Akatsi, Ghana

Laffi, Anani
   July 7, 1982 Agcenyive, Togo

Laffi, Rafael Mensah
   July 24, 1982 Aflao, Ghana

Nutakor, Laurance Mensaga
   July 24, 1982 Abo, Ghana

Nutegue, Agbodzi
   July 24, 1982 Akatsi, Ghana
African Terms

adzuka - a vine used for flesh hoop
afifafa - cooled ashes
agbo - goat
aketsa - mallet
aketsia - type of wood used in making pegs
akple - type of Eye food
ak - sheep
atitisashi - to join wood
aveboe - gray duiker
cold pot - small like habachi for drying drums
dzobedzoki - black duiker
dpe - small chisel like tool used in sewing skin
dse - small duiker with reddish fur and white spots
evusiga - a hook, bent piece of bicycle spoke
ezu - anvil
fodo - belly, stomach of a drum
gabra_or_gavi - metal bands
gakaka - tacks
gatagbadze - rivets
gbako - flesh hoop
ekodzoe_or_kodzopki - bay duiker
kpafia - type of wood used in making pegs
odum (twil or logo) (Fye) - wood used for barrel drums
sakaga - large rip saw
sakayi - small cross cut saw
tsotsi - tuning pegs
ツツシ or Tsodu - peg holes
Yabeke - rope and handle for closing staves
Yugama - bottom of drum, "the under"
Yunu - mouth or opening
Xetsi - type of wood used in making pegs

European Coopering Terms

Backing - shaping the outside surface of a stave
Bands - metal rings used to hold staves together on a finished drum
Basle - the beveled edge of the bottom of a barrel or drum as in sogo or kidi
Boogie - middle hoop of a barrel
Buzzing - smoothing outside of barrel with spoke stave
Cask - a barrel of any size
Chalking - applying chalk to coat inside of bands so they will grab
Chime - end hoop and/or rim of cask
Chiming - shaving a bevel on the ends of a cask
Cresset - an English cooper's small metal basket for
bending
dressing - shaping a stave to its proper dimensions and angle
driving_home - knocking a hoop or band tight
duiker - small like antelope or deer
beading_or_panning - process of manufacturing bottom of a barrel or drum as in sogo or kidi
hollowing - thinning and shaping inside of a stave
hoops - rings, heavy metal strips that are riveted and taped to hold the drum together in bending process
jointing - the beveling of a stave to its correct angle or shot
knocking - driving hoops or bands with driver and mallet
prick_punch - small metal pencil like tool for starting or punching holes
raising_up - standing staves in position readying them for bending
shot - the correct beveled angle of a stave
splay - flaring a hoop conical to correspond with the curvature of the cask or drum
trusses - hoops or bands, metal and/or wood used in assembly process
V_groove - a groove or slot cut around the inside perimeter of a cask or drum to fit the bottom