

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SONGS OF PROTEST *

Francis A. Kobina Saighoe

Every society of the world, notwithstanding its system of socio-political organization and its level of industrial development, grapples with the problem of controlling the behaviour of its members. Enculturation, the process by which individuals learn their culture, partially takes care of this problem. But since individuals are born with different innate tendencies, no society has attained a perfect record of conformity to acceptable patterns of behaviour by its members; conflicts of interest arise, and rules of conduct are violated. Each society, therefore, has built into its socio-political fiber arrangements which help to enforce norms of behaviour.

Among the Dagaba of upper-west Ghana, as, indeed, among other West African societies, one such arrangement is the institution of protesting through music. Music is used as a corrective measure. If, for example, one's conduct brings one under the censure of the community, community protest is registered through music. The protest, which may take the form of ridicule, admonition, reproach or just plain blatant insults, takes place in the context of *bewaa* social dance music. The performance of *bewaa*, therefore, serves not only as an avenue for artistic expression but also as a vehicle for communicating group sentiments through the verbal references of its songs.

The impact of the protest on those referred to by a song performance can be tremendous. But the texts of *bewaa* songs, examined in isolation, do not portray any power as criticism. How then do these songs serve as effective corrective measure? It is proposed, as an explanation, that the desired effect is achieved not only through the influence of the texts but through the interplay of the various components of the performance: the psycho-physical dynamics of the sound stimulus, the verbal references of the texts and the participants' collective action of confronting the accused with his undesirable behaviour. The purpose of this study is to examine how these components interplay to act as a corrective measure and to promote conformity.

The practice of protesting through music is not unique to the Dagaba or, for that matter, to West African societies. It is a universal phenomenon on which much has been written. Tracey, among others, has discussed song texts as a means of social control (1948); he asserts that in African societies, songs are used to effect observable change in the behaviour of erring members of the society. Firth has also reported the use of song-texts as a form of legal mechanism by which ridicule of the community is mobilized and launched against offenders among the Tikopia (1940), and, according to Herskovits, song-texts, functioning as a Freudian mechanism, provide psychological release for the participants (1934:76). Titiev has said the same of the Mapuche who use songs to "blow off steam" (1949:264).

The problem with these studies is that they portray song-texts as the sole agents of communication in a song behaviour. The authors focus their analysis exclusively on text, which is only one component of every given performance.

If song-texts were the sole agents of communication in the context of protest music, why would protesters go through the difficult process of setting words to music? Why wouldn't they just recite the texts to the accused and expect results? In other words, why would they painstakingly manipulate the reciprocal give and take relationships between language and music to create appropriate songs for their purposes? Merriam has explained that song makers try to establish the right marriage between texts and melody in order to make the song a desirable and effective communication tool since "song gives the freedom to express thoughts, ideas and comments which cannot be stated baldly in the normal language situation" (1964:193). The question that arises from this assertion is: how does song come to gain and give special license to people to say things that they would not ordinarily say? Our evidence from *bewaa* performance situation indicates that an examination of the interplay of the various components in a protest music behaviour would yield profitable insights into these questions. This kind of analysis becomes particularly important when one is dealing with song-texts which, as exemplified by *bewaa* songs, depend upon contexts for their effectiveness as a tool of communication.

Bewaa literally means, "young people come together". It is a call for young adults of both sexes to come together and make music. It is recreational music performed most often in connection with social events of the Dagaba people. But its performance is most emphasized during the period of harvesting the year's farm products to express the joy of the harvest. This is an important period in the calendar of events of the Dagaba people. Since a poor harvest signifies imminent hunger in the impending year, a good harvest, naturally, calls for celebration. It brings relief from hunger, misery and anxiety for, at least, a year. The duration of the period for celebration as well as the intensity of the merriment and, therefore, of the musical expression, is contingent upon the abundance of the year's harvest. *Bewaa* may also be performed on nights of the full moon. Aside from the musical enjoyment, these occasions provide avenues for wooing and courtship between young men and girls of nubile age.

Bewaa is not performed when there is trouble in the community. In the event of an emotionally disturbing incident in the community, a ban is placed on the performance of *bewaa* since, as recreational music, its performance creates or, at the very least, connotes an atmosphere of happiness and conviviality -- an atmosphere which would belie the concern prompted by the particular disturbance. The ban is lifted only when all vestiges of the disturbing incident have been wiped away. For example, during the months of March and April, 1982, there was an outbreak of Cerebro-Spinal-Meningitis in the Dagaba area where I was doing research. The epidemic claimed a few lives. The performance of *bewaa* and all

other types of recreational music was banned immediately by the chief and his elders, acting in consultation with the medical authorities of the local hospital.

The Bewaa Dance

In the performance of *bewaa*, the musicians position themselves in the center of the "arena" -- which could be a market place, a dance plaza, an open space in front of the chief's palace or in front of the house of an important figure in the community, a school assembly hall or field for recreational activities -- so that ample room is left on all sides for the dancers. The dancers, meanwhile, form two files, one by each of the sexes, outside the arena. When the music begins, the dancers move toward the arena singing and dancing. At an appropriate distance from the musicians, the two lines begin to merge into one single file, with men and women alternating in the file to form a dance ring around the musicians.

Each dance in the suite of dances has two sections. There is a section in which the dancers stamp their feet on the ground while they move around the instrumentalists and sing along with the xylophone accompaniment. This section is followed by a more action-packed one. In the latter section, the dancers cease singing and begin to articulate the rhythms of the music by dance steps characterized by infectious display of energy, manliness as well as fascinating and synchronized rhythms. The special technique of this section, as it is the case with most Dagaba dances, is a "tremolo" of fast contraction and release of the torso. The series of contractions and releases are so rapidly done that the dancers may give the impression of being convulsive to the uninitiated observer; but, indeed, the seeming convulsiveness of the body results from the restrained manipulation of bodily power and strength -- an act which is said to frighten enemies away (Tokur, 1982). The dancers stop singing at this point because the intricateness of their steps and movements require their undivided attention and also because the bodily movements are so energy absorbing that they cannot be effectively combined with singing which is itself a demanding task.

After this vigorous section, the stamping section is resumed, or that of a new variation may be started. The singing, from then on, becomes breathy because of the energy already burned by the dancers.

Song Texts

Because *bewaa* is music for the youth, the verbal contents of its songs centre around subjects that are of interest and concern to young adults. The textual references are lighthearted, satirical, and may sometimes have leaning towards sensuality. As songs of recreational music, their themes reflect the carefree atmosphere concomitant to the happy occasion being celebrated. Also, these youngsters are not yet ready to grapple with the meaning of the deeper mysteries of life. In later years, when they are somewhat settled, they will be forced by the

The African Music Educator, Number 9, Dec. 1997.

social circumstances and the human conditions around them to ponder over their relationships with nature in general and their immediate environment in particular. In the quest for solutions to mundane as well as metaphysical problems (at that point in time), they will begin to reflect upon the cause and effect of life, death, disease, poverty, and all those conditions and circumstances that afflict mankind. Their concern with these mysteries and conditions of life will be manifested in the songs they will come to sing, later, in the context of the funeral. The texts of *kuorbine* funeral music reflect how these youngsters, in adulthood, become preoccupied with these mysteries, and how the phenomenon of death, in particular, comes to gain much attention in their songs (Saighoe 1988: 162 ff.).

For these youngsters, now, this is the time to be merry; they are full of life and are out to enjoy it. Their youthful exuberance forbids them to "stand and stare" so to speak; it gives them the urge to eschew or avoid anything that is psychologically and/or emotionally ponderous and which has the potential of robbing them of the joy of life. Therefore, instead of singing about poverty and its attendant problems, they sing about the providence of mother nature; they also sing about courtship and marriage, and about their loved ones.

Man-woman relationships, especially the exciting process of wooing and courting, and the happy aspects of marriage provide themes for *bewaa* songs. In the following song, more experienced young men instruct the "uninitiated" in the art of courtship. In the song, they emphasize the fact that some girls (or young women, for that matter) are difficult to woo and, therefore, men who really desire them must combine aggressive persistence with admiration and loving attention:

Buule woo maali ire!
 Edaa be yel kub kyaa kyere.
 Pɔgbɛ na yel a deblɛɛ, ude seng bin ku maans;
 Bin ku maans! Bin ku maans yaa!
 Bin ku maansbuole debrɛ.
 Uu nimie kede buuli duo fur nyɔdaa.
 Mwemere uu nimie de buolie kuo fur nyɔdaa mwemere!
 Tagr tara, ulɛ saa be sagr fuu derɛ ni.
 Biri i kaa gyele
 Ule saa sagr fuu kyognu zele ni
 Una en bula kuɔb.

Billy-goat, behave yourself properly!
 I told you to keep moving on, didn't I?
 Boy told girl to spread the mat and cool it;
 For cooling, for cooling,
 For cooling invites eaters.

Open your mouth and drink the porridge, you fat nose
Open your mouth and drink the porridge, you fat nose.
Get nearer her, even if she doesn't agree, get nearer.
Look at her breast.
They look like the eggs of a guinea fowl.
Well spread your hands and beg,
She might give you a little.

In the first few lines of the song, we hear of a young man in love being teased by his peers for being consumed with love and passion for the woman he has been trying to woo. He is admonished to behave himself and to leave the woman alone. After the teasing phase, they begin to empathize with him -- the condition into which love has placed him is not unfamiliar to most of them -- and to encourage him in his pursuit of the woman. They advise him to be more aggressive and persistent: "Get nearer her; even if she doesn't agree, get nearer!" When the woman concerned proves unyielding, some of the friends in their confusion and frustration, begin to insult her, "look at her breast; they look like the eggs of a guinea fowl". Obviously, the woman in question is not endowed with seductive breast since the eggs of a guinea fowl are very small. In their immature logic, they begin to question how a woman with a "flat chest", so to speak, should be worthy of all that attention and adoration. Forgetting that "beauty lies in the eye of the beholder", they seem to be telling their friend that the flat-chested woman is not worthy of all that admiration and that the desire for her should be abandoned.

But a few of them know better. They know that not all women can be courted in that aggressive manner. They also know that a woman's aloofness to a man's advances does not always connote disinterestedness. While aggressive persistence may win the admiration and, eventually, the love of some women, others may find it offensive. Therefore, since the macho-tactics have failed "to deliver the goods", the man in love is admonished to apply the opposite strategy of pleading with her: "Well, spread your hands and beg; she might give you a little".

The boys do not let go because some of them are aware that most women enjoy being pursued, especially, if the pursuer and his approach are acceptable. As one young man put it, a persistent pursuit gives a woman the feeling that the man concerned is, indeed, truly and deeply in love with her. Though this does not always prove to be true, whatever happens later, most women look upon these days of courtship with nostalgia.

Most of the women with whom I discussed this assertion (while in the field) agreed with it. According to them, in their youthful ignorance and naiveté, they interpret the man's attention to be true love, but the truth of the matter dawns on them after the marriage: once they have been married, their husband cease to pay them that kind of attention; they, the men, begin to look for other women while their wives at home cease to exist for them. The women loathe this practice which

Dagaba society, unfortunately, sanctions. To them, therefore, the courtship period is the best time of their romantic as well as married lives and they try to enjoy it while it lasts. Fortunately for them, the marriage structure of their society enables them to prolong the period of courtship. Because divorce is costly for a woman's parents, parents do not give a girl's hand in marriage unless the latter is ready and willing to go into the contract. Some of them take their time to make the decision. The boys know this and most of them are prepared to pursue their love patiently.

Some of the songs, as already noted, lean towards sensuality and eroticism. Certain parts of the song quoted above have such undercurrents. "Boy told girl to spread the mat and cool it". What the boy wants to cool, I was told, are the heat and passion generated in him by his desire for the woman of his heart. The cooling of the consuming passion refers to the sex act. At the end of the song we hear also: "Well, spread your hand and beg; she might give you a little". My informants were not quite agreed on what "a little" in the last line of the song means in this context. The disagreement to my thinking, however, was one of semantics. The women interpreters said it meant a little love from the woman who is causing the passion in her lover. The men thought that it could also mean a little of the "body of the woman" in question, taken by means of copulation. The men argued that a man does not always have to love a woman in order to pursue her amorously. The goal of the pursuit may be generated by love or by just pure lust. Be it as it may, the morality underlying such a courtship and the eventual copulation is not our concern here. Whether the courtship is inspired by love or by lust is beside our point. For our purpose it is sufficient that "a little" has a sexual connotation.

Most of *bewaa* songs, however, are meant to protest against the behaviour of non conformists. In the following song a young saucy woman is instructed on the need for being obedient. She is admonished to behave properly towards her elders and to control her impudent boldness. This young woman, I was told, was very beautiful and had many admirers; unfortunately, she did not know how to enjoy the attention paid her. Instead of being courteous to her admirers, her self-pride was inflated. She became unduly conceited and arrogant and began to put on insufferable airs of pomposity in her interaction with her peers. She even began to address her own parents in a rather unbecoming manner. That attitude had to be curbed, and it was effectively done through a *bewaa* performance. The following song was sung at one such performance by the youth to express their disapproval:

Poglivula ta tuur nibe . . .bewaa oo!
Poglivula yongne saa ni maa . . . bewaa oo!
Poglivula ta tuur nibe
Bowaa oo, bewaa oo, bewaa oo!

A beautiful girl should not insult people . . . bewaa oo!
Beautiful girl, respect your father and mother, bewaa oo!
A beautiful girl should not insult people!
Bewaa oo, Bewaa oo, bewaa oo!

In another song a young woman who, instead of helping her mother with her house chores, chooses to roam about drinking pito-beer with men and indulging in promiscuous and indiscriminate relationships with them is reminded of the consequences of her conduct:

Nowele, nowele, nowele nu lewa waari poo.
Nowele, nowele, nowele unaku kyen kula.
Nowele, nowele, nowele nu lewa waari poo.
Nowele, nowele, nowele fo no kon lenye kula.

With your whistle-like mouth, you will soon get pregnant.
With your whistle-like mouth, you never fetch water.
With your whistle-like mouth, you will soon get pregnant.
With your whistle-like mouth, you don't like to fetch water.

Bewaa songs also serve as an avenue for checking people who, for one reason or another, are expected to lead exemplary lives but do not live up to expectation. For example, people who profess to be devout Christians but whose life-style leaves much to be desired are reminded of their duties to God and their fellow men in the following songs:

Nyi bera ifaar ib,
Nyi bera ifaar ib,
Nyi bera ifaar ib,
Epuore Naangmen been yoo.

You are full of misdeeds,
You are full of misdeeds,
You are full of misdeeds,
Pray to God about your iniquities.

Or, for the purpose of reproaching Christians who are debauched, one might hear the following song:

Bagre fu zure nuun
Bagre deber, ebobr pogbe

The African Music Educator, Number 9, Dec. 1997.

You are newly initiated yet you go approaching
You are newly initiated yet you fornicate and commit adultery.

Although songs of insult and admonition dominate *bewaa* repertoire, there are examples of songs in which the youth remind each other of their civic duties. The song, "Ni maali, maali, maali," for example, was sung in campaigning for the cleaning of the village by the youth of the town of Nandom.

Naandome Naa yee laa
Ni maali, maali, maali
Be maale ke sangne bere
Nyi nyog na gbine yangtaa

The chief of Nandam says
"Clean up, clean up, clean up!"
They clean up, but the place is dirtied again.
You could as well besmear one another with cow-dung.

Organization of *Bewaa* Songs

Bewaa songs are designed in simple call-and-response patterns. But the organizational relationships between the call and the response sections do not always follow the same patterns. The songs may fall into one or the other of the types described below.

A great number of the songs are designed so that the lead-singer sings the entire piece through and, then, it is repeated by the choralists. The song, "Nyi bera ifaar ib", quoted below, is an example of songs in this form.

Nyi be - ra i - far ib, nyi be - ra i - far ib. nyi

be-ra i - far ib, e - puor Nang-men been yoo!

Example 1: "Nyi bera ifaar ib"

The African Music Educator, Number 9, Dec. 1997.

In some of the songs, the chorus repeats of the solo section are on different pitch levels. The repeats are transpositions, up or down, of the solo section. An examination of "Bagre fu zure nuur", example 2 below, shows that even though the texts and the melodic curve of the chorus section are the same as those of the solo part, the melody of the choralists is shifted a whole fourth below the latter.

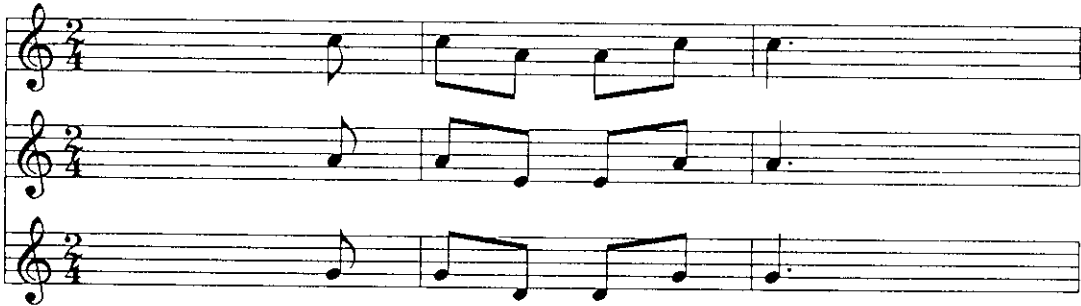
Cantor Chorus

Ba-gre fu zure nuu Ba - gre de - E - bobr pog - bee- Ba - fu

zu -re nuur - ba - gre de - ber E - bobı pog - bee

Example 2: "Bagre fu zure nuur"

By the use of the structural device of transposition, the two sections are bound together to form a unit. The same device gives the song, "Nyi bera ifaar ib", its essence. The words nyi bera ifaar ib are repeated three times; but even though each repetition maintains the same melodic curve, it is a step lower than the preceding one. See example 3.



Example 3: "Nyi bera ifaar ib" segmented

In other pieces, the lead singer merely intones the opening phrase and the chorus joins in to sing with him or her to the end. When the chorus joins in depends very much upon the spirit of the performance at a given point in time. When the performance is animated, the chorus joins in almost immediately after the first few notes have been intoned by the lead-singer. At other times, the choralists may delay in joining the leader.

The asterisks in example 4 indicate the points at which the chorus joined the singing at the same performance.

Zom - be yi-lee E - kye nyu pan taa si, zom - be zom - be yi-lee

Nang - meen nyu kuor ba daa

Example 4: Zombe Yile ee

Then there are pieces which are characterized by an alternation of short phrases between choralists and soloists, followed by a refrain sung by all. The song, "No wele", quoted in example 5, illustrates this category of songs.

Example 5: No wele

The texts of *bewaa* songs are not varied. Notwithstanding the number of times a song is sung, the text remains the same. We have noted that the execution of the intricate *bewaa* dance steps and bodily movements requires the fullest attention and energy of the performer and cannot, therefore, be effectively combined with singing. Because the dancers are also the singers, it is almost impossible for them to divide their attention and energy between the execution of dance patterns and improvisation of variations on song-texts.

Because textual variation is not emphasized in *bewaa* songs, melodic lines of songs also remain the same throughout the performance of any given song. On very rare occasions, however, one might hear a note changed here and there in the repetition of a song. For example, in the last phrase of the song, "zombe yile ee" (see example 6 below), one may hear the note "D" sung in place of "G", thus:

The African Music Educator, Number 9, Dec. 1997.



Example 6

This practice of occasionally sounding alternate notes raises the question as to whether or not polyphonic singing is a feature of Dagaba song styles.

Vocal Polyphony

Bewaa songs are intended to be performed in unison when sung by children with equal voices, or in octaves if performed by men and women with mixed voices. Occasionally, as mentioned above, when a choice of melodic direction is possible, a song may break into two voices and quickly return to the basic linear form. But this kind of organization, illustrated in example 6 above, is more of an exemption than the rule, for the Dagaba rarely sing in polyphony. Their singing is linear rather, than multilinear.

Rev. Dominic Yuorbeviel (1980, p. 1), following after Nketia (1974, p. 106) has described this "incidence of occasional heterophony" in Dagaba singing as decorative. Nketia's description of this heterophony as decorative may not be easily refuted since he describes the practice outside the context of any particular musical tradition. Since this style of singing is characteristic of several non-polyphonic singing traditions of Africa, it is possible that some of these traditions do intend and perceive it as decoration. In the Dagaba context, however, the singers do not intend nor perceive its occurrence as a decoration; it happens coincidentally. As already noted, what happens is that a word or syllable, depending upon its position in a phrase, allows for a choice in melodic progression so that it could be sung to one of two notes which are not necessarily meant to be sounded together. Since there are no hard and fast rules regarding when one or the other may be sounded, the choice is open to the singers. Generally, they all sing the syllable to the note "G" but, occasionally, a few of them may sing the "D" instead of "G". Taken out of its context, this occasional incidence of heterophony may be seen as decorative, but I am inclined to suggest that "coincidental decoration" is a more appropriate emic-etic description of the style in the Dagaba context.

Instrumental Accompaniment

Bewaa is always accompanied by an instrumental ensemble. The ensembles of the performances I have witnessed and/or recorded, consist of the following instruments:

- 1 *lo-gyil* (14-key xylophone) (This may be doubled)
- 1 *gangaar* (cylindrical drum)

According to my informants, both the *logyil* and the *gangaar* may be doubled, and two other drums (*kuor*, funeral drum and *dalari*, earthenware drum) may be added. The *kuor* and the *dalari* can be omitted because their patterns merely reinforce those of the supporting xylophone and the *gangaar*. Their omission is not seen as a detraction from the fullness of the music. The second xylophone may be omitted physically but not musically. The *gyilkpaore* (supporting xylophonist) is always there in the ensemble. But instead of playing his patterns on a separate xylophone, he sits opposite or to the left of the lead xylophonist and plays his patterns on the same instrument as the latter.

To add to the percusiveness of the music, a number of metallic idiophones are used. These include *nupura* (castanets) played by the dancers, *bule* (jingling metal bands worn on the wrists of the lead xylophonists) and *kyiime* (ankle bells, jingles or rattles worn by the dancers). The last two are secondary idiophones which are activated indirectly by the movements of the performers wearing them. Without exception, the instruments of *bewaa* ensembles are played by men; the women sing and dance.

Bewaa Songs as Protest

Generally, *bewaa* is performed for the enjoyment of the participants and their "audience". The songs that accompany the dances are not directed towards anyone in particular, and no one feels attacked by their contents. These songs which may have moral and ethical implications are sung only to emphasize the cultural values and codes that are important for the smooth running of the society.

But when someone's conduct brings him under the censure of the community, and the latter decides to address the issue in a *bewaa* context, the drama is modified. The drama, then becomes an action directed towards the erring subject with the intent of making him conform to acceptable patterns of behaviour. A number of related actions are taken to isolate him, and to confront him with his unbecoming behaviour.

It is important to note that even before this action is taken, the offense and the offender are known to some members of the populace -- the incident or

behaviour is now an open secret. Some kind of private action is taken against the culprit even before the offense is publicly addressed. Close relatives and friends discuss with him the consequences of his conduct. The concerned friends and/or relatives do not mince words in pointing out to him that his behaviour is wrong and opprobrious, and should be changed. But, usually, the offenders do not pay heed to the admonition of those who care, hence public confrontation becomes a necessary ultimate step.

When the need for such an action arises, musicians create appropriate songs for the occasion. If the song is composed by a xylophonist, he teaches it secretly to one or two lead-dancers; if it is by a dancer-musician, he teaches it to one or two xylophonists; this is to make sure that, when needed, there would be some one to lead the singing, and a xylophonist to provide the accompaniment. Meanwhile, people will be looking forward to the day of the action, even though no one knows when that would be. The action is taken so spontaneously that the culprit is usually caught off his guard. When a performance has reached a high intensity level, the xylophonist suddenly plays the new melody. The lead singer takes it up, and the rest of the dancers join in with him. To facilitate the quick learning of the song, the song is usually simple in text and structure, and the melodic line is catchy. The chorus line is also repetitive. In fact, the catchier the melody, the more infectious the singing. From the verbal contents of the song, the offense being addressed is inferred. Because the song is new, it is not confused with any previous offense.

People look round for the offender, and, before he is aware of what is happening, he is encircled by the dancers. If he is among the performers, the rest of the dancers move to isolate him and form the dance ring around him. If he is in the audience, people try to push him into the ring, but this does not usually succeed, so the dancers move to encircle him, dancing and making all sorts of teasing faces at him. Varied remarks--baldish as well as insinuating -- are thrown at him. The goal is to publicly shame him. When the actors feel that their message has registered, they resume their original position and continue with the performance. The new song becomes part of the *bewaa* repertoire. The subject is welcome to join the dancing, but usually, he may be too overcome with a feeling of shame and remorse to bring himself to enjoy the rest of the performance.

The impact of the action on the culprit is tremendous. A long lasting feeling of contrition is evoked in him instantaneously. One young man was reprimanded for indolence in a song with the following texts, while I was doing fieldwork:

Fo na beter kpankpan kuor a.
Fo bɔbre pɔgbɛ,
Eyee! for bɔbre pɔgbɛ.
Pɔgbɛ waa,
Wobra a muo bir?

You have no hands to farm.
And you want a woman.
Eyee! You want a woman.
If the woman comes (to your house)
Will she eat grass?

In an interview with him a few days later, he said to me, "I wished to God that mother earth would open up and swallow me up. I felt so ashamed and embarrassed that I could not look at anyone in the face, and worst of all, I could not walk away, nor pretend not to care. Believe me, this not going to happen to me again". I did believe all that he said; I had watched him carefully during the showdown and had seen how his knees had wobbled and knocked against one another. I had seen how he had stood there on the spot where he had been encircled, as if he was transfixed, even after his accusers had left him. I believed his declaration that he was not going to place himself in that situation again.

When I mentioned that I thought I saw a look of aggression and violence in his eyes for a brief moment before it changed into one of remorse, he agreed with me and explained that his initial reaction was to physically fight back; he felt the behaviour of his accusers was an outrage on his person. But that feeling, he added, did not last. He remembered the number of times he himself had taken part in similar situations against other culprits. Gradually guilt and shame chased away the feeling of aggressiveness which had momentarily consumed him.

My interpretation of the group's action and the resultant reaction of the culprit is that the bond of oneness between the former and the latter is for that august moment disrupted. By isolating him, spatially and otherwise, and preventing him from participating in the performance, the group alienates the culprit and makes him an object of public ridicule. Through that non-verbal language, the individual is told that by his refusal to observe what is important to the community, he has denied himself the privilege of sharing things with the rest of them; that unless he changes his conduct to conform to acceptable standards of behaviour, he is an outcast, and, indeed, that is how the culprit feels after the showdown.

What is it that the group denies the individual by the isolation? They deny him the enjoyment of the convivial, happy atmosphere and excitement created by the music. This brings us to the element of music as a factor in the equation. What part does music play in the process and effectiveness of communicating the sentiments of the group to the offender? Music's functional potentialities, like those of electricity, are known to us chiefly through observation of the accomplished manifestations. As yet, we know very little of its nature and its ways of working. But in spite of the elusive nature of the "x-factor" in music, scientists, for years, have been intrigued by what it can contribute to our understanding of human behaviour.

Recent investigations of the effect of music on the listener's sensorium indicates that music has influence over mind, body and emotions. In connection with the effect of music on the listener's emotions and moods, Bingham, in an experiment based on data obtained from 20,000 persons, reported the effects produced upon their moods by a variety of 290 phonograph records. The study led to the conclusion that a musical composition not only produces a mood change in the listener, but induces markedly uniform mood in a great number of persons in a given audience (1940:97-98). It is important to note that age group, race, sex and educational background played a significant role in the selection of controls which the purview of this study does not permit us to examine in details.

In 1922, Pfeifer, in another study, claimed that music provides a method of escaping reality through its basic rhythm which preoccupies the consciousness to the degree that unconscious fantasies are released. He proposed that music is pure libido symbolism lacking objectification or cathexis. Because music is dynamogenic, it increases muscular energy and action when the intensity of the sound stimulus is increased.

From these insights, it is plausible to assert that in a given performance situation, music helps to reduce the actors, male and female, young and old, extrovert and introvert, prominent and obscure, master and servant, wealthy and poor, to a common ground through the uniform emotions and moods evoked in all of them. This is especially so if the actors share common associative musical memories, and can, therefore, derive the same meaning from the context. The reduction of actors to a common ground by music accounts for song's ability to give freedom to express thoughts, ideas and comments which cannot be stated baldly in normal language situation. And the need for that freedom, in turn, explains why protesters go through the trouble of manipulating the reciprocal give-and-take relationships between text and melody to create meaningful songs.

Participants in *bewaa* performance belong to the same age group and share common cultural traditions. Each performance, therefore, has the same meaning and implications for all the them. Because the accused shares these traditions with his accusers, the underlying meaning of the latter's action becomes clear to him the instant the action begins. From the very moment of his realization of that message, he is overcome by a sense of shame and remorse and decides immediately to live up to expectation from then on. In the case of the young man who was reprimanded for indolence, for example, the following year showed the results of the collective action against him. According to reports that reached me from my informants, he produced so much food from his farm that he was voted the second best farmer.

Conclusion

In sum, songs of insult or protest, besides serving as vehicles for artistic expression, also provide avenues for communicating group sentiments through the interplay of the various components of the performances; these include the verbal

The African Music Educator, Number 9, Dec. 1997.

references of the songs, the psycho-physical dynamics of the sound stimulus and the collective action of the participants. Our evidence from the Dagaba *bewaa* context indicates that the texts of the songs help the participants to specify the nature of the protests; they help to give definition to the sentiments being expressed. The collective action of the accusers helps to isolate the accused and to direct the sentiments being expressed to him. The weight of the psychological meaning of the collective expression and action of confrontation brings into sharp focus and intensifies the lexical meaning of the texts to bear upon the culprit.

Music, in addition to serving as the vehicle for expressing the sentiments, creates an emotional intensity which functions to reduce the performers to a common ground through the uniform emotions and moods it evokes in all of them -- accusers and accused. Because the accused share common associative cultural memories with his accusers, the underlying meaning of the latter's action becomes clear to him instantaneously and, then, he is overcome by a sense of shame and remorse which forces him to behave according to the norms of his community.

**NOTE: I am grateful to the Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research and to the Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences for financial support of the fieldwork from which part of the present data were obtained. I also thank University of Cape Coast for helping me, financially, to continue with my studies on Dagaba xylophone music.*

REFERENCES CITED

- Firth, R. (1940). *The work of the gods in Tikopia*. London: London School of Economics and Political Science. Monograph on Social Anthropology. Nos. 1 and 2. 2 volumes.
- Herskovits, M. J. (1934). Freudian mechanism in primitive negro psychology. In E. E. Evans-Pritchard et. al (Eds). *Essays presented to C.G. Seligman*. London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner, pp. 75-84.
- Merriam, A. P. (1964). *The anthropology of music*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Nketia, J. H. K. (1974). *The music of Africa*. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc.

The African Music Educator, Number 9, Dec. 1997.

- Pfeifer, S. (1922). Problems of the psychology of music in the light of psychoanalysis. Abstracted in the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*.
- Saighoe, F. A. K. (1988). *The music behaviour of dagaba immigrants in Tarkwa, Ghana: A study of situational change*. Doctoral Dissertation. N. Y.: Columbia University.
- Titiev, M. (1949). *Social singing among the Mapuche*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Anthropological Papers, Museum of Anthropology. University of Michigan, No. 2.
- Tokur, B. (1982). Personal Communication
- Tracey, H. (1954). The social role of African music, *African Affairs* 53:234-41.
- Yurbeviel, D. (Rev.). (1980). *Pentamus Dagaraa: The Penta-Ga scale approximated on the Western staff*. Final Year Composition for Music Education Diploma, Academy of Music, Winneba.