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The Organization and Instrumental Resources of Adzewa and Adzeba Music and Dance among the Fanti and Guan People of Ghana

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Abstract:

Adzewa, adzeba and adoba are variants of the same occasional musical type of predominantly female or all-female ensembles along the Fanti coastline of Ghana. The purpose of the study was to examine the structure of adzewa and adzeba ensembles and the utilization of instrumental resources in their performances as predominantly female music and dance ensembles of the Fanti and Guan people of Ghana. The research involved three musical ensembles. Two of them are traditional adzeba groups while the third group is a dance ensemble from Cape Coast. Two main types of Adzewa musical ensembles were identified. Those that use the mfoba (gourd rattles) and dawur (bell) as basic instruments and those that use a drum in addition to the basic instruments. The similarities and differences among adzewa, adzeba and adoba organization and instrumental resources were also discussed.

Keywords: Organization, Resources, Instrumental, Adzewa, Adzeba, Adoba

1. Introduction

The research involved three musical ensembles. Two of them were traditional *adzeba* groups while the third group was a dance ensemble from Cape Coast. The two traditional *adzeba* groups were the Winneba *Dentsefo* and Mankoadze groups. The third group, the Central Folkloric Dance Company was established in 1996 by the Centre for National Culture to perform traditional Ghanaian dances on stage. The dances included *adzewa*, *osoode*, *asafo*, *apatampa*, *kpanlogo*, *konkoma*, *sikyi*, *adowa*, *kete*, *topui*, *bɔbɔɔbɔ*, *agbadza* and *gawu*. Aning has classified African music into two categories. The first category is what he defines as traditional African music which embodies the musical heritage of present-day Africa. The second category is what he termed modern African music (Aning, 1973). Applying the two categories to the three ensembles under discussion, the two traditional *adzeba* groups could be classified under the first category as African music embodying the musical heritage of contemporary Africa. The Central Folkloric Company falls in-between the two categories because its repertoire combines both traditional music and modern African music.

2. Methodology

The research used the Descriptive research design and the qualitative research approach. The theoretical framework was based on Nketia's model on the problem of meaning in African music (Nketia, 1962, 1973, 1976). The model was based on the definition of ethnomusicology as the 'study of music in culture', 'the study of music as culture' and 'the study of music in terms of itself and in terms of its cultural context' (Merriam, 1960, 1964; Herndorn and McLeod, 1979; Hood, 1963). Preliminary studies at Winneba and Mankoadze showed that <code>ompe</code>, <code>Apatampa</code>, <code>Asafo</code>, <code>Adenkum</code> and <code>Adzeba</code> were some of the traditional ensembles in Winneba; while <code>Adenkum</code>, <code>Asafo</code> and <code>Adzeba</code> were available at Mankoadze. Three out of ten <code>adzewa</code>, <code>adzeba</code> and <code>adoba</code> ensembles along the Fanti coastline of Ghana were purposively sampled for the study. These were the Winneba <code>Dentsefo</code>, Mankoadze and Folkloric Dance Ensembles. These groups were interviewed after listening and observing sessions. The <code>Adzewa</code> ensembles at Apam and the <code>Adoba</code> ensembles at Senya Breku were interviewed, but their performances were not recorded.

3. Results

The following were the presentations and an explanation of the major themes that emerged from the performances, interviews and observations on the organization and the instrumental resources of the two *Adzeba* groups and the contemporary dance ensemble:

- Organizational structure of Adzewa and Adzeba
- Musical instruments used in *adzewa* and *adzeba* performances
- Performances

3.1. Organizational structure of Adzewa and Adzeba Groups

Traditional *adzewa* and *adzeba* groups have a leader who is called *abaa Panyin*. In the Winneba group, she keeps and takes care of the musical instruments. Additionally, she negotiates fees and distributes drinks and money among members as with the Cape Coast group (Sutherland-Addy, 1998) but in the case of the Mankoadze group, all the musical instruments except the *dondo* drum are kept in the *Twidan* royal palace.

In addition, the Winneba group has an organizer who goes round to remind members about appointments. According to Sutherland, a committee of elderly women oversaw the affairs of the groups, such as the acceptance or rejection of engagements among the Cape Coast traditional *Adzewa* groups (Sutherland-Addy, 1998).

The Central Folkloric Dance Company, one of the groups under study had a very interesting variation of the organizational structure of *Adzewa*. It has the following officers:

- Stage Manager
- Costumeer
- Property Officer
- Productions Officer
- Welfare Officer

The stage manager directs the affairs on the stage and prepares the group for performances. The costumeer takes care of all the costumes and makes provisions for new costumes. The property officer takes care of all the properties of the group, including the musical instruments. The productions officer, who also doubles as secretary, is in charge of engagements and transport arrangements after engagements. He communicates the date, time and venue of appointments to ensemble members. The welfare officer has always been a woman. She is in charge of feeding and giving first aid to members during programmes.

There is also a structure in the singing of songs. The *Ndwomtufo*, (literary raisers of songs) are the cantors and the groups have a number of them. The Winneba *Dentsefo Adzeba* group had two cantors whereas the Mankoadze group had three. These were the ones, who narrated and explained the history and context of the songs to the researcher. The Folkloric Dance Ensemble had one main female cantor but almost all the females could sing the cantor part in any of their songs. Following the raising of a song by the *dwontufo* (soloist), the *Ngyedo* (Chorus) responded in two, three or sometimes four-part singing.

3.1.1. Contemporary developments

Smith observed an interesting development in the organizational structure of the *Oguaa Mba Adzewa* group in Cape Coast. Its officers such as President, Secretary, Treasurer, Porter, Leader, Policeman and Patron were elected by acclamation. The Porter, for example, arranged for benches and made sure they were returned at the end of performances. His duty was to mark those present and take note of absentees. The leader created almost all the songs, composed or improvised. The Patron not only provided moral and financial support but also settled disputes. It was observed that these innovations were probably the result of influences from the educated class as well as social developments that have taken place in modern Ghana since the colonial period (Sutherland-Addy, 1998; Smith, 1969).

3.2. Instrumental resources of adzewa and adzeba

Along the Fanti coastline of Ghana, *Adzewa* or its variants could be found in Cape Coast, Elmina, Apam, Mankoadze, Winneba and Senya Breku. The *Adzewa* group in Saltpond is now defunct. In Cape Coast, Elmina and Apam, it is called *Adzewa*. In Mankoadze and Winneba, it is called *Adzeba* whereas in Senya Breku it is called *Adoba*. Out of the seven *Asafo* warrior groups in Cape Coast, only two had traditional *Adzewa* groups. These are *Bentsir*, the Number 1 group and *Anafo*, the Number 2 group. Apam, Winneba and Senya Breku have two competing *Asafo* groups each, with their *Adzewa*, *Adzeba* and *Adoba* counterparts respectively, known as the *Tuafo* and the *Dentsefo*. Mankoadze has only one *Asafo* group and one *Adzeba* group.

Musical instruments generally used in the performance of *Adzewa* or its variants are *mfoba* (gourd rattle), *asɔ* (hoe head) and *nsambɔ* (rhythmic hand clapping). *Mfoba* (gourd rattles) are shown below:



Figure 1: Mfoba (Gourd Rattles), on top is the cloth in which they are kept

- *Mfoba* (Gourd Rattles): This instrument is known among the Oguaa, Effutu and Mankoadze people as *mfoba* (*mfo* or *akor*. It has a wide rounded sealed bottom segment with a short extensive neck and a small upper rounded part. A circular hole is formed by cutting open the top. The contents of the gourd were emptied from this opening. The gourd is dried up in the sun before being used for performance. Various sizes of the gourd rattle are used for performances. A picture of gourd rattles used in a Mankoadze *adzeba* performance is shown in Figure 2 above.
- The Asɔ (hoe head): Originally, the Adzewa and Adzeba groups used the asɔ (hoe head) but today the dawur (bell) is mostly used. The asɔ is struck with a thin piece of solid metal thereby producing percussive sounds, which keeps the basic rhythm and time line for each Adzeba performance. All the groups use this instrument.
- Nsambə (Rhythmic hand clapping) is used for keeping the timeline in adzewa and adzeba ensembles.

Additional instruments include

- One *dondo* (hourglass drum) which is used by the Mankoadze Ensemble.
- One *Apentsima* which is used by the *Bentsir* traditional *Adzewa* group of Cape Coast (Sutherland-Addy, 1998). The Folkloric Dance Ensemble which is not a traditional *adzewa* ensemble uses the *Apentsima*, *Petia* and other drums.
- The *Adomba* (Hand Bell) is a metallic hand bell foreign to the Effutu people of Winneba. It was adapted for use by the *Dentsefo Asafo* Association of Apam, Winneba and Senya Breku and their women *Adzewa*, *Adzeba* and *Adoba* counterparts respectively. A household whose head serves solely as a custodian of the instrument provides a player for it. The bell looks like an inverted cup with a flared mouth and contains a clapper that hangs loosely inside it. When the bell is shaken intermittently during performance, the clapper strikes the bell towards the lip producing a ringing sound (Turkson, 1982).
- *Kakradaa* (Cog-Rattle): This is a scraped wooden idiophone consisting of an axle and a casing containing a tongue and a cogwheel. The axle operates as the handle while the tongue, which is fixed in the casing, turns freely on the handle. The cog-rattle is played by whirling and used for sound effects. It is believed to have reached the *Effutu* people of Winneba through contact with European sailors. The *Tuafo Asafo* Associations of Winneba, Apam and Senya Breku and their female "Adzewa" counterparts use it in their performances (Turkson, 1982).

In addition to the bell, gourd rattles and the Apentsima drum, Smith added the following:

- Wood clappers
- Ekvinba, Slim drum
- Akasaw, a metal bowl with rings round its edges for rattling (Smith, 1969).

Sutherland-Addy, however, observed that Smith was probably talking about syncretic groups, which have absorbed characteristics of other contemporary ensembles. The *Akasaw*, for example, was most likely borrowed from modern recreational bands whereas the *Ekyinba* was probably borrowed from the *Asafo* ensemble (Sutherland-Addy, 1998).

Nketia has proposed three main approaches to the study of traditional African musical instruments. The first is from the historical standpoint which concentrates on the origin and development of the instruments. The second approach is the cultural viewpoint which involves the social uses, functions, beliefs and values related to the instruments. The third perspective is the study of musical instruments as material objects involving knowledge about the instruments such as how they are designed, of what materials they are made of, how they are constructed and what constitutes their musical functions. The study examines *adzewa*, *adzeba* and *adoba* musical instruments from the cultural viewpoint involving the social uses, functions, beliefs and values in society (Nketia, 1974).

Nketia further identified idiophones (self sounding) as the commonest instruments found in Africa. According to the classification of musical instruments by Hornbostel and Sachs, the sounds from idiophones emanate from 'the substance of the instrument itself' (Hornbostel & Sachs, 1961) Two main groups of idiophones could be identified in Africa as those used solely as rhythmic instruments and those played as melodic instruments. The idiophones of the study are used mainly as rhythmic instruments. These are *mfoba* (gourd rattles) and *dawur* (bell). The *mfoba* (gourd rattles) used in the study are classified by Nketia as 'shaken idiophones' and 'primary rattles' which are played while being held in the hands and shaken as opposed to 'secondary rattles' which are worn by performers and activated by their movements (Nketia, 1974. pp. 69, 70). Another category of idiophone used in the *adzewa* ensemble is the bell which belongs to the 'struck idiophones'. The bell is struck with an iron rod or stick to produce sound. The *kakradaa* (cog-rattle) is also described as a scraped idiophone (The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments, 1984).

Dondo and apentisma drums are the last group of instruments used in the adzewa and adzeba ensembles. The sound is stimulated by a stretched membrane and they are classified as membranophones by Hornbostel and Sachs (Hornbostel and Sachs, 1961). A picture of the various instruments used in traditional adzewa and adzeba ensemble performances are shown below:



Figure 2: Various instruments of the adzewa and adzeba ensembles From Left (Behind):Apentsima, Dondo, Mfoba. (In front): Dawur, Adəmba and Kakradaa

3.3. Performances of adzewa and adzeba

At the Winneba performances, women were in full control of the ensemble. During the interview with their leader, she reiterated that point and confirmed my observations. In the Mankoadze *Adzeba* Ensemble, a young man played the *dondo* (hourglass drum) but one of the women in the group played it when he was absent.

At the *OLA Bentsir Adzewa* performances, male instrumentalists were observed while playing the *as4* (the hoe head percussive instrument) and *apentsima* drum. There were also young men from their *Asafo* counterpart who joined in the singing and clapping during performances. (Sutherland 1998, p.8). At the Mankoadze *Adzeba* Ensemble, however, the young men who joined in the singing and clapping during performances were not members of the *Asafo* group but active members of the *Adzeba* group who replaced their fathers or grandfathers. Apart from the fact that the ensembles were women-dominated, the cantors and dancers were women. Performances by the Mankoadze *adzeba* group showed this trend.

3.3.1. The order in which instruments joined performances

According to the leader of the Winneba group, immediately after the Oseb > 0 (songs without instrumental accompaniment), the cantor came in followed by the bell, rhythmic handclapping, gourd rattles and the chorus in rapid succession. The leader of the Winneba Adzeba group gave the pattern as follows: dwomtufo (cantor) $\rightarrow dawur$ (bell) $\rightarrow nsamb > 0$ (rhythmic handclapping) $\rightarrow mfoba$ (gourd rattles) $\rightarrow ngyedo$ (chorus) in rapid succession. My observation, however, showed inconsistencies in following this pattern. The pattern I personally observed was 'dwomtufo (cantor) $\rightarrow nsamb > 0$ (rhythmic handclapping) $\rightarrow dawur$ (bell) $\rightarrow mfoba$ (gourd rattles) $\rightarrow ngyedo$ (chorus)'.

The Mankoadze group started the singing session with songs without musical accompaniment referred to as osebo. During the full ensemble session with instrumental accompaniment, the aso-nda (bell pattern) started before the other instruments came in. The general order of joining the performance by the instruments was 'aso-nda (bell pattern) $\rightarrow nsambo \rightarrow$ (rhythmic handclapping) $\rightarrow mfoba$ (gourd rattles) $\rightarrow dondo$ (hourglass) drum $\rightarrow dwomtufo$ (cantor) $\rightarrow ngyedo$ (chorus)' in rapid succession. Just as the nsambo started, the mfoba players came in with their individual rhythmic patterns. The Mankoadze group also closed its performance session with a typical closing song as they processed towards the royal palace.

The Folkloric Dance Ensemble was inconsistent with the order in which the instruments joined the performance. The introduction to their first song had the following order with the bell missing: mfoba (gourd rattles) $\rightarrow nsamba$ (rhythmic handclapping) $\rightarrow dwomtufo$ (cantor) $\rightarrow apentsima$ drum $\rightarrow ngyedo$ (chorus). When it came to the main song, the order was apentsima drum $\rightarrow dawur$ (bell) $\rightarrow mfoba$ (gourd rattles) $\rightarrow nsamba$ (rhythmic handclapping) $\rightarrow dwomtufo$ (cantor) $\rightarrow ngyedo$ (chorus). The first song in the medley of songs, when all the ensemble was performing had the following pattern: mfoba (gourd rattles) $\rightarrow nsamba$ (rhythmic handclapping) $\rightarrow dwomtufo$ (solo) $\rightarrow dawur$ (bell) $\rightarrow apentsima$ drum $\rightarrow ngyedo$ (chorus). The order in which the instruments joined the performance is illustrated the Figure below:

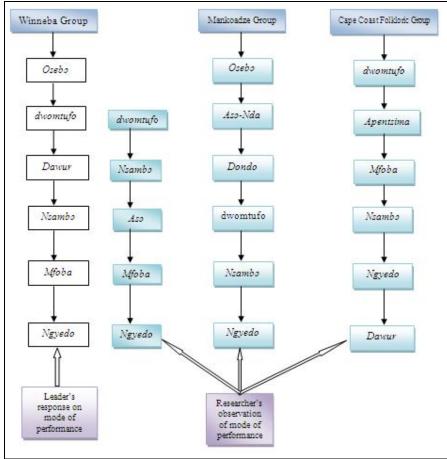


Figure 3: The order in which instruments joined adzewa and adzeba performances

A comparison between the order given by the leader of the *Dentsefo* Winneba group and my observation showed that rhythmic handclapping came before the bell while it was the other way round in the leader's pattern. The rest of the instruments followed the same order in both patterns. The order of entries of the *Bentsir Adzewa* group as given by Sutherland-Addy was *dwomtufo* (cantor) $\rightarrow mfoba$ (gourd ratles) $\rightarrow nsambb$ (rhythmic handclapping) $\rightarrow dawur$ (bell) $\rightarrow apentsima$ drum. This did not include the ngyedo (chorus). It was my guess that the ngyedo of the Bentsir group probably came in immediately after the cantor or came in last as was the case of the Cape Coast Folkloric, Winneba Dentsefo and Mankoadze Adzeba Ensembles.

4. Discussion

The *mfoba* (gourd rattles) is the most important musical instrument of the *adzeba* ensemble. The *Oguaa* (Cape Coast), *Effutu* (Winneba) and Mankoadze people call this musical instrument *mfoba* (*mfo* or *akor*). It is the most important instrument of the ensemble because the name *mfoba* and the *adzewa* or *adzeba* ensemble are used interchangeably. The groups metaphorically say they are 'performing gourd rattles' (*y1r'gor mfoba*) which is the same as saying they are 'performing *adzewa* or *adzeba*'. In a normal *adzewa* or *adzeba* performance a majority of the group play the *mfoba*.

The *mfoba* (gourd rattles) are neither grown in Winneba nor Mankoadze but bought from elsewhere. The leader of the Winneba group said the gourd rattles are bought from a woman in Accra who gets them from Nigeria or the Northern Region. She was quick to make the point that some time ago there were unsuccessful attempts to grow them at Winneba. The Mankoadze group gets their gourd rattles from a town called Ekumfi Atwaa. The leader of the Mankoadze group told me that many years ago the gourds were enmeshed with beads but that practice has now ceased.

The gourd is played by holding the neck in one hand and continuously shaking it while hitting the other side with the other hand in rapid succession. They 'were also shaken and stamped against the thigh' with the top being cupped at times producing harmonious and 'well-blended rhythms' (Sutherland-Addy, 1998). All the ensembles under discussion used the *mfoba* (gourd rattles). At Mankoadze, out of a total performing group of 22, twelve of them played gourd rattles. The rattles were roughly of two sizes. Some of them were big while others were medium in size. A good number of them had long necks while others had short necks. While some of the necks were straight, others were crooked. The gourds used by the Winneba group were bigger in size compared with those of Mankoadze. All of them were short-necked. The differences between the rattles were not as well marked as those of Mankoadze. Out of a group of 13 players, five played the gourd rattles. The Central Folkloric Dance Company of Cape Coast had 15 performers three of whom played the gourd rattles. Here, the rattles were very small compared with those of the other groups. They were about the same sizes and enmeshed with beads.

In the above analysis, the number of *mfoba* (gourd rattles) used in the *adzeba* performance at Mankoadze was quite representative of a normal *adzeba* or *adzewa* performance with a majority of the performers playing the gourd rattles. The Winneba group fell below expectation of the normal *adzeba* performance because a minority of the group played the *mfoba*. The reason for this might probably have been that the group was not fully constituted. The Folkloric Dance Ensemble's performance of only three of them playing gourd rattles was not strange as this group was not a purely traditional *Adzewa* group but had been constituted to perform traditional Ghanaian dances including *adzewa*.

Axatse is the name of the gourd rattles used in the agbadza ensemble among the Ewe people of Ghana and Togo. In this ensemble, however, the gourd rattles are cut open at the apex, filled with beads and sealed off whereas in adzewa and adzeba ensembles the gourd rattles are cut open at the apex. In West Africa, gourd rattles are found mainly in the countries of Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Benin, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire (Botsford, 1990).

The *dondo* was among the oldest instruments used by the West African *griots*. Its history could be traced to the Ghana Empire, the Hausa people, and through the influence of the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria and Benin as well as the Dagomba people of Northern Ghana ("Ashanti: Musical Instruments-Ghana Goods", n.d.). The Ashanti people were believed to have imported the drum, which is played by the stick and armpit control technique, from the Dagomba. It well known that among the Dagomba, for example, on every Monday and Friday, musicians play the *dondo* (hourglass drum) as they sing praises to their chiefs until daybreak. The Ashanti use the hourglass drum as a supporting drum in ensembles such as the *adowa*. Other ethnic groups in southern Ghana probably adopted the instrument from the Ashanti (Ampomah, 1997).

Apentsima is another drum used in the adzewa ensemble. This is a goblet shaped open drum with a hollow pedestal. It is used by the Adzewa groups in Cape Coast but not in Mankoadze or Winneba. Many Akan ensembles such as adowa and kete use the apentsima.

The aso (hoe head) is the next instrument of the Adzeba ensemble. The hoe has been used traditionally as a farm implement by Ghanaian farmers. Many traditional Ghanaian music and dance ensembles use it to regulate time in music. The importance of this instrument is stressed by the Mankoadze group which constantly reminds the bell player with the Fante expression Aso-nda (the hoe never sleeps), when the bell player appears to relax or stops playing the instrument. The hoe head, according to the Mankoadze group, is expected to keep on playing as long as performance continues, hence its name Aso-nda.

The adzewa and adzeba ensembles under discussion share some common characteristics and at the same time have differences. They all have mfoba (gourd rattles), dawur (bell) and nsamob (rhythmic hand clapping) as common musical instruments. There are two adzeba groups in Winneba which are very similar in many respects to the two adzewa groups in Apam and the two adoba groups in Senya Breku. Each of the three towns has two competing Asafo warriors' groups-the Tuafo and Dentsefo Asafo groups-with their respective Adzeba, Adzewa and Adoba women counterparts with common musical instruments. The adomba (hand bell) is the symbolic instrument of the Dentsefo Asafo warriors' group. It is commonly used by all the female groups associated with the Dentsefo Asafo groups in Winneba, Apam and Senya Breku. The kakradaa (cog rattle), on the other hand, is the symbolic instrument of the Tuafo Asafo warriors' group. It is therefore used by all the female groups associated with the Tuafo Asafo warriors' groups in Winneba, Apam and Senya Breku.

There are also differences among the female ensembles. The Winneba *Dentsefo* ensemble, for instance, does not use any drum but the Mankoadze Ensemble uses one *dondo* (hourglass drum) in addition to the basic instruments. The Folkloric Dance Ensemble which is not a traditional *adzewa* group uses extra drums and bells in its performances. The order in which instruments join performances are also different and so is the organization of the ensembles. The traditional ensembles have simple organization of the groups whereas the Folkloric group has a far advanced system of organizing the ensemble.

5. Conclusion

The study examined the organization and instrumental resources of adzewa and adzeba as traditional and contemporary Music and Dance ensembles of the Fanti and Guan people of Ghana. Unlike Adowa, Nwonkorə and Agbadza, which are well known Ghanaian dances, very little is known about adzewa and its variants. The aim of this study is not only to stimulate research interest but also to fill a gap in literature in the study of adzewa and its variants. The research involved three musical ensembles. Two of them are traditional adzeba groups from Winneba and Mankoadze while the third group is a dance ensemble from Cape Coast. The similarities and differences among adzewa, adzeba and adoba organization and instrumental resources were discussed. Both traditional and contemporary Adzewa and Adzeba groups have dwomtufo (song raisers) and Ngyedo (choruses). Two main types of Adzewa musical ensembles were identified. Those that use the mfoba (gourd rattles), dawur (bell) and nsamb4 (rhythmic hand clapping) as basic instruments and those that use a drum in addition to the basic instruments. The order in which instruments join an adzewa or adzeba performance was observed to be unique with each of the ensembles under study. The ad4mba (hand bell) and the kakradaa (cog-rattle) are symbols of the Dentsefo and Tuafo Asafo warriors' Companies and their women counterparts respectively. They are used as musical instruments in the performance of adzewa in Apam, adzeba in Winneba and adoba in Senya Breku.

Traditional *adzewa* and *adzeba* groups have a leader who is called *baa Panyin*. While the Winneba *Dentsefo Adzeba* group has a secretary, the Mankoadze traditional *Adzeba* group does not have a secretary. The Folkloric Dance Company, a contemporary Dance Ensemble which performs several Ghanaian dances including *adzewa* has a more complex organizational structure with officers like Stage Manager, Costumeer, Property and Production Officers. Through the influence of the educated class as well as social developments that have taken place in modern Ghana since the colonial period, some contemporary *Adzewa* groups have provided new directions and interest in *adzewa* and its variants by creating offices such as President, Policeman and Patron.

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