



Music as an Embodiment of Culture and Philosophy: A Survey of Some Nigerian Folk Songs

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The omnipresence of music in the human society and its utilitarian Stance in human life make the study of its cultural and philosophical essence a necessity. Though the functionality of music can be ascertained from a myriad of perspectives, it is often in the textual content and performance practices of folk songs that the ways of life and the general world-view of a people are exposed. Through the contemplation and appreciation of the art of Nigerian folk songs, one encounters some of the set ideas, views, opinions, beliefs, and norms of the Nigerian/African in relation to the cosmos, nature, and providence.

Definitions of and about music abound, each favouring the angle(s) that would suit and support the objectives of the scholar. Such angles as aesthetic, emotive, symbolic, psychic, cathartic, cryptic, normative, perfunctory, and metaphysical have all been covered in manifold definitions of and about music; yet, a consideration of music as a mere sonic material reveals music as the deliberate and, at times, chance combination of individual notes that appear successively (melody) or simultaneously (harmony), or even both. The foregoing is true whether the medium of music-making is vocal, instrumental, or vocal-instrumental.

A consideration of folk music, however, stirs up other emotions and practices that argue for a re-negotiation of music theory as a scientific study of the sonic material. Music-making is a global practice, but what is arguable is that music is solely a human practice. The argument arises from such expressions as ‘music of the spheres’, ‘celestial music’, ‘music of the gods’, ‘music of the spirits’, ‘mating songs and dances of certain animals’, ‘songs of birds’, ‘musical cry of hounds’, and ‘musical murmur of brooks’. Rhythm and harmony, two basic elements of music, are hailed by philosophers as the vital instruments responsible for balance in the human psyche. All manners of development start and end with the human individual who is physically fit, emotionally stable, and mentally balanced. However, the folk music of the Nigerian/African is a communion shared by the supernatural, the supra-terrestrial, the human, and the sub-human (Nzewi, 1980; Onwuegbuna, 2012; Umezina, 2009).

Culture

Culture, generally defined (and rightly so) as the totality of the way of life of a people, embraces such details as the people's peculiar approaches to the development of matter, mind, and spirit via education—formal and informal. Culture accommodates the distinctive customs, achievements, products, and outlook that characterize a people. They include the collective arts—music, art, literature, and related intellectual activities of the people; it also includes their knowledge and sophistication, shared beliefs, values, attitudes, practices, properties, morals, vocations, skills, expertise, social forms and structures, etc. The culture of a people, therefore, exists in abstract and concrete forms. While the totality of their artifacts constitute the concrete form, the abstract is made up of the institutional, the creative, and the philosophical dimensions of the people's way of life (Achinivu, 1985; Anichebe, 2009; Okafor & Emeka, 2004; Okoro, 2009).

The natural delineation of culture is such that the enculturated individual conforms to the cultural dictates of the community. This cultural compliance is expressed through his thoughts, attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills in conformity with the cultural dictates of his immediate and distant environments; otherwise, he would be considered a social dissenter. In line with this trend of thought is the cultural philosophy of Nigeria (as cited in Okoro, 2009), which defines the content of culture as:

...the material, institutional, philosophical and creative aspects. The material aspect has to do with artifacts in its broadest form (namely, tools, clothing, food, medicine, utensils, housing, etc.). The institutional deals with the political, social, legal and economic structures erected to achieve material and spiritual objectives; while the philosophical is concerned with ideas, beliefs and values; the creative concerns (*sic*) of a people's literature (oral and written) as well as their visual and performing arts which are normally molded by, as well as help to mold other aspects of the cultures (p. 189).

Music in Nigeria, as much as in Africa, is a spiritual socio-cultural artifact with a lot of intrinsic functional values. Uppermost in these functions is that of imparting the norms, values, duties and traditions of the society to the child—from the womb to the tomb. The education of the Nigerian child is, therefore, a sacred duty conducted through music—along with other

media of transmission. Folklore, mnemonics, jingles, slogans, memory enhancers and other agencies of education are first encountered in music—mostly folk and popular music. The roles of the musician in this social order, as he expresses his musicality, are contributory as well as complementary. This means that he is not only knowledgeable in but also responsible for maintaining civil, criminal, moral and congenial order of the society. This he does by ensuring that his ways of life and his creative philosophy tally with the accepted social order (Onwuegbuna, 2006).

Philosophy

Conceptually, philosophy can be considered to be man's critical approach to the acquisition and coordination of knowledge of his universe, employing such tools as thought, logic, and transcendental means to demystify the so-called mysteries behind being, existence, reality, and nature. It also covers a set or system of ideas, opinions, beliefs, or principles of man's behaviour based on an overall understanding of his existence and the universe (Encarta, 2011; Nwala, 2007; Nze, as cited in Okolo, 1993; Okolo, 1993). Much as professional philosophers are in disagreement over a globally acceptable definition of philosophy, some definitions still carry their weight in the field of philosophical studies. One such definition is that of a foremost professor of philosophy, Nwala (2007), who argues:

No definition of philosophy can be complete without taking into account the nature of the more traditional world views, the product of ancient sages and the critical mass reflections and nature of reality including the nature of world views (p.21).

Much as there are diverse views about the definition of philosophy, its regional application has never been as contestable as its interpretative and pedagogic approaches. This accounts for why we have medieval philosophy, Greek philosophy, Chinese philosophy, Indian philosophy, Islamic philosophy, Western philosophy, and African philosophy. It is the latter that is, indeed, the thrust of the current discourse. And to proceed, the authoritative words of another expert become expedient. Okolo (1993), in defining African philosophy, writes:

African philosophy...articulates and critically reflects on the total experience of the African, on the way or ways, for example, he perceives reality. African philosophy thus places special emphasis

on the African, his world, history, values, etc. and on the significance these have for him. In general, it explores the particular way or ways the African experiences, conceives and interprets nature, society, religion, man, God, human conduct, and so on. In short, it deals with the African in his radical subjectivity, that is to say, precisely as an African (p.11).

Philosophy as it concerns the Nigerian would, naturally, give insights into the Nigerian/African general world view about the people, their religion, art, language, culture, morals, social organizations, belief patterns, divinity, time, matter, energy, space, and life generally; mostly in consonance with African philosophy—part and parcel of which the Nigerian is (Nwala, 1985; Okafor, Nwokike, Eziechi, & Egudu, 1999; Okafor & Emeka, 2004; Opata, 1998).

Nigerian folk music

Nigerian folk music has been referred to as the music of the traditional environments of the people of the sovereign state of Nigeria. These people are said to share a near-homogeneous culture; and their music includes the Incidental, the Occasional, and the Recreational categories. Nigerian folk music embodies five dimensions of the creative arts, combining songs, dances, drama, visual arts, and oral literature in folk languages and expressions. The modal melodies, the country-side lyrical contents, and the close-knitted intervallic ambience are evident features of Nigerian folk tunes.

Nigerian folk musical performances reveal the employment of dramatic effects, antiphonal exchange between cantor(s) and chorus (es), an essential expression of life, and other extra-musical properties. The melodies are organized in short phrases, and are language-based. They are at times ornamented, and words could be used to paint images—like in idioms, dicta, aphorisms, and proverbs. Since Nigerian folk music is largely functional—though at the same time contemplative, the purposes for each performance vary. It could be to communicate, entertain, worship, praise, heal, supplicate, mourn, mock, invoke, or even curse.

With the definition of folk (also traditional) music already given in the foregoing exposé, it is equally necessary to look closely at the word, *song*. A song is a musical experience, expression, or composition that involves the setting of text to melody for vocal performance. Such texts are often metrically composed verses, which accounts for why they readily lend themselves to melodic interpretations. They may or may not be accompanied

by musical instruments. However, some of such songs are, at times, delivered through the medium of musical instruments. They are still identified as songs because they retain their text-driven melodic expressions (Apel, 1964). The implication of the aforesaid is that there could be music without song, but all songs still remain music.

It is proper, at this point, to attempt an analytical examination of the lyrical text of some Nigerian folk songs, for their cultural and philosophical contents. Even though the analyzed music have been popularized by the minstrels, the songs are still redolent of the folk. The modal melodies, the country-side lyrical contents, and the close-knitted intervallic ambience of these songs are evident features of African folk tunes. The songs are delivered in a vocal technique that employs an interchange of speaking and singing, couched in folkloric musical activities.

The song texts

Song No.1 (from the Igbo culture): *Omekagu*

Opi m fughuelum Omekagu; Opi m fughuelum Omekagu

My horn, please, blow *Omekagu* to death

Omekagu lil' ji Mmuo; Omekagu lil' ede Mmuo

Omekagu ate the yam of the Spirit; *Omekagu* ate the cocoyam of the Spirit

Obu' n'ifughuelum Omekagu, fughuelum Omekagu

If you could just blow *Omekagu* to death, blow *Omekagu* to death

Ka m wel' ebunu gwa yi aka

So I could sacrifice a ram in appreciation

Obu' n'ifughuelum Omekagu, fughuelum Omekagu

If you could just blow *Omekagu* to death, blow *Omekagu* to death

Ka m wel' ebunu gwa yi aka

So I could sacrifice a ram in appreciation

Ma gi jide ugu, jide ofo; Ma gi jide ugu, jidekwa ofo

But ensure you are just and fair; but ensure you are truly just and fair.

Oh ghoo, oh gho-oghoo; Oh ghoo, oh gho-oghoo!

A summary of the story behind this song goes thus: The King, upon envisaging his imminent death from old age, assembled the elders and council of chiefs of his kingdom to introduce to them the heir apparent to the throne. But instead of presenting his first son, as the custom of the land stipulates, the King presented his younger son, named *Omekagu*. His reason was that he loved *Omekagu* better—whom he had often praised beyond the skies; thereby spoiling him. This unjust deprivation of the right of primogeniture of the first son was unacceptable to the elders and chiefs, who walked out on their King in disapproval. The King, adamantly paraded *Omekagu* to his community on the appointed market day. It was as this parade progressed that his aggrieved first son picked up the magical horn he received from the forest, and sounded the quoted song. The result: The horn did as was implored, striking *Omekagu* to death; the King and the entire community apologized to the first son; he reversed the song of his magical horn; *Omekagu* resurrected; the rightful heir was reinstated; and peace and harmony restored to the community.

Some of the symbols in the song include:

1. *Omekagu* - The tiger-brand (a name and an item of characterization).
2. *Opu* – Musical horn (voice and power of the Spirits).
3. *Ofo na Ogu* – Justice and fair-play.
4. *Ebini* – Ram (forbearance and resilience).
5. *Eze* – King (spiritual and temporal ruler, custodian of *Omenani*).
6. *Ji na ede* – Yam and cocoyam (totality of the agrarian economy of the Igbo).

The cultural and philosophical contents

The song, ***Omekagu***, is Number One in the *Omenani* series by Mike Ejeagha. *Omenani* (also *Omenana*, *Omenali*, or *Omenala*) stipulates, assigns, interprets, and orders in totality, the norms and values of the Igbo nation (Ekwunife, 1997; Nwala, 1985; Opata, 1998; Ozigbo, 1999; Umeh, 1999). Looking at *Omenani* as what accords to the customs and traditions of the Igbo-African, Nwala (1985) writes:

Omenala includes major beliefs about the origin of the universe and its nature, the place of the spirits, deities, man and other

beings in the universe, the nature or character of taboos, regulations, prescriptions and prohibitions as to what is proper in such a universe—rules of marriage, sexual intercourse, attitudes to strangers—and forms of social relationship, as well as the realm of simple decency and etiquette. Indeed, *Omenala* is a body of law and morals along with their metaphysical foundations (p.27).

Injustice is a negation of *Omenani*; and when it is done by the custodian of the *Omenani* himself, the spirits of the land would wade in on the living to defend the offended. As long as the oppressed is on the side of justice and fair-play, he is always assured of the intercession of the spirits. The facelessness of both the king and his first son (none of whose names were given in the story) speaks volumes about the impartiality of the spirits in administering justice. *Ma gi jide ugu, jidekwa ofo* - But ensure you are truly just and fair! It is this disposition of justice and fair-play that gave the oppressed the qualification to ‘receive’ the magical horn from the spirits. The communion of the living and the dead (the immortal Spirit-Ancestors) is not a mere belief in the life of the Igbo-African; it is a reality. Hence, Arazu (as cited in Umeh, 1999) concurs:

Igbo realization (not belief) of the existence of that which is beyond the material, that which supports and modifies the material, that which is the ultimate basis for the phenomenon of life (*Ndu*) manifesting in matter, is expressed in the term *Mmuo*. When man puts off his material cocoon at what is called death (*onwu*), he continues to exist on the other side of existence in a life that is not cut off from relationships and mutual influences with the world of the bodily senses of those who are on this side (p.22).

To further justify his claim to fair-play, and therefore, his qualification to receive divine assistance, the oppressed had to inform that *Omekagu lil' ji Mmuo*; *Omekagu lil' ede Mmuo* (*Omekagu* ate the yam of the Spirit; *Omekagu* ate the cocoyam of the Spirit). It is mere foolhardiness for a mortal to pounce on the entire economic wealth of the Spirits—as equated to *Omekagu*'s crime against the land. This is a highly philosophical allusion, for, according to Nwala (1985), “In Igbo traditional society we find evidence of economic factors reciprocally interacting with religious and philosophical ideas”

(p.176). And touching on gender sensitive issues, while yam represents the entire economic wealth of the male, and cocoyam represents the entire economic wealth of the female spirits, a distress call from an oppressed mortal, with this form of allusion, would surely put the spirits on the double to help. And it did!

All religious doctrines uphold the idea that divine utterance is heard as sound. In the Igbo nation, this sound is musical. Spirits speak to mortals via coded musical sounds, whose meaning can only be deciphered by the *Afa* priests and the initiated. The non-lexical syllables (often, erroneously, termed nonsense vocables) are actually the coded language of the spirits, and the onomatopoeic *Oh ghoo, oh gho-oghoo* is, in effect, the voice of the spirits speaking through the medium of the magical horn that was ‘received’ by the oppressed heir.

Ka m wel’ ebini gwa yi aka (So I could sacrifice a ram in appreciation) is a figurative expression that conveys the meaning: ‘So I could forbear and defeat my assailant without violence’. This underscores the Igbo-African’s belief in nonviolent resistance to evil and injustice. Rather than take the laws into his hands, the Igbo-African would seek divine intervention in matters of misunderstandings and disagreements. This philosophy is borne in the name *Chimua* (that is, *Chi nuaḣu m oḡu*) – Let my personal God fight the fight for me.

The issue of postmortem amongst the Igbo is more spiritual than physiological. The cause of physical death of humans is often traced back to the spirits, and not just the disease that may have ravaged only the body. This philosophy is expressed in the Igbo adage, ‘*A chọba isi oḡbu e jee n’uḡu*’ (literarily, ‘If you want to trace the cause of the murder/manslaughter, you go to the blacksmith’). The idea is that it was the blacksmith that manufactured the weapon with which the crime was committed. In the case of *Omekagu*, it was the consultation with the *Afa* priest that revealed that his sudden death was due to his connivance with his father, the King, to dispossess his elder brother, the rightful heir, of his right of primogeniture.

Omekagu, the title of the song as well as the name of the protagonist, also stands as an item of imagery and characterization. Literarily meaning ‘the tiger-brand’, *Omekagu* images a spoiled brat who gloats about in a devil-may-care attitude. His destination is quite predictable: disaster; not minding that he

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may have the backing of the 'High and Mighty'. The moral of this imagery is central in Igbo philosophy of child bearing and rearing. Humility is a virtue, and pride is a vice. For this reason, Ejeagha warns against *otuto ntogbu na-egbu nwankita* (the highly-bloated praises that leads the dog to its untimely death).

In all, the *Omekagu* story-in-song (*akukọ n'egwu*) has touched on the entire aspects of what Ekwunife (1997) calls the *quinguagram of Igbo traditional religious cultural values*. They include life (*ndu*), offspring (*omumu*), wealth (*akụ na ụba*), peace (*udo*), and love (*ifunanya*). The death and resurrection of *Omekagu* provide insights to life as a supreme value in the Igbo nation. The presence and activities of the two sons (offsprings) of the King can be easily seen as the hub upon which the whole story is built. The value of wealth (as typified in the throne) can also be appreciated by the conflicts that arose from dispossessing the rightful heir apparent to the throne. For the love of peace, the subjects boldly disagreed with their King, notwithstanding his power and might. Eventually, it was fraternal love that assuaged the pains of the offended prince, which led to his act of reversing his request of the spirits.

Song No. 2 (from the Hausa culture): *Aure Da Kudi*

Hausa text

English translation

- 1) *Yau nayi takumi*
Na rame ban iya chin komi ba
Allah koro
Allah ko koro da masoyi na
Rashin ganin ta na rame
Ban iya chin kome ba
- 2) *Yau ga dan talaka yana son yar mai kudi*
In na biya sadaki
Ba za ni yi leife ba
Dan a biya sadaki
Ba za ni yi leife ba
Idan ta je gida ni
Ba zan barta a summa ba
Dada ammalmataki lallai
Baban ta baya so ba
Maman ta bata so ba
- 3) *Matan garin ga sun yi yawa*

I sit today, with my hand on my jaw
I have grown lean from fasting
Send down, O' God
O' God, send down my lover
Her absence has made me lean
I couldn't eat anything

Here is a son of the poor who fell in love with a daughter of the rich
If I could pay the dowry
I would not present a box-full of clothes
(as demanded by the girl's parents)
That I may just be able to pay the dowry
Then I'll not bother providing a box-full of wrappers
When she comes home to my house
I shall not let her be clothed in rags
Surely
Her father is not in support
Neither is her mother in support

Ladies in this town are so many

- Kuma sun chika tumbulbul*
Kuma ba su son aure
Sai sun budi mai kudi
Idan baka da kudi
Bana ba za ka yi mata ba
Idan kana da kudi
In sun gan ka da mota
Har hotuna suke kai na
Daraje bidi mai kwari
Tsoha da kudi yaro
Yaro in ba kudi yan ya koma tsoho
- 4) *Ana wata magana jama'a*
Ga wata Magana ta zo
Wani mai jaki ya ingiji mai gwoyo
- Baba Magana a nan*
Ji, ana wata magan ga wata Magana ta zo
- Wani mai yaki ya ingiji mai gwoyo*
Baba Magana a nan
Ji, samman na son mata
Kuma sannan ba kudi
Gayu na son mata
Bana gayu ba kudi
Sau zawa a kan hanya
Da takama da sa T-shirt
Sai zama a kan hanya da takama da Tupac
- In sun ga mata*
Wadansu na fadin Chika
Wadansu na fadin Chisga
- 5) *Muna nan muna aikin mu*
Ba za mu tsayawa ba
In ka ga wa tsayawa ta
Sai in mutuwa ta zo
Babangida Kakadawa ma kida
Kam'n Sani
Na dan Maraya
Wakar wakar yi
Sai mu
Ko kanza ri yana tsinke
Ban da irin ta wa
Da na zarin ya murde
- They are so many, like a barrel so full
 Yet they don't like to get married
 Unless they see a rich man
 If you don't have money
 Then you have no chance of getting a wife this year
 If you have money
 If they see you with a car
 Even photographs, they will be sending you
 Seeking for a fat chance
 A rich old man is a youth to them
 A youth without money will become an old man
 While we are talking about one issue
 Here comes another issue
 The owner of a donkey pushed down a nursing mother
 This is real trouble
 Listen, while talking about one problem;
 people, here comes another
 A donkey owner pushed down a nursing mother
 This is serious trouble
 Listen, guys like girls
 Yet, they don't have money
 Boys need women
 This time, guys have no money
 All they do is sit by the wayside
 Showing off with their T-shirt
 All they do is sit by the wayside, showing
 off their Tupac-branded
 T-shirt
 Then a girls passes by
 Some will call her *Chika*
 Some will say *Chisga*
- We're still on our job
 There is no stopping us
 When you see me you stop
 That means that death has come to me
 Babangida Kakadawa the minstrel
 Sani's younger brother
 Dan Maraya's boy
 Song of songs
 Only us (can do that)
 Even though strings get broken
 Not my kind of string
 And when it gets twisted

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*Ya zama karfe jirgi
Kirar sa sai makeran asali
Sunika foro nai
Don da dan nai da dan gado
Ba za zame daya ba*

It suddenly becomes like a rail track
Its forging can only be done by real smiths
They keep forging it
For the hireling and the heir
Can never be the same

6) *Yaro bai san yaro ne ba
Sai ya rasa baba nai
Ko ya rasa mama nai
Zai san yaro ne shi
Kuji dai yana ganin duniyan nan
Ta yi mashi talala
Har yana fadin wai su ne za su yi ba mu ba*

The child does not know he is a child
Until he loses his father
Or when he loses his mother
Then he knows he is a child
For he sees that this world
Has enwrapped him
They, it is, that are the doers,
not us

*In ban da rashin kunya
Mai bidar nama me ya kai shi zuwa gwibi?*

If not for a lack of respect
What business has the butcher with the
stream?

*Kuma nar da wukake nai
Mai bidar kifi me ya kai shi zuwa kwata?
Me ya kai shi zuwa zango?
Kuma har da zaggon taru
Tsobuwar kura mai bidar kashin bango*

Even with his knives
What took the fisherman to the abattoir?
What took him to the ranch?
Even with nets and angles
Old leopard seeking for a piece
of bone

*Wanchan na kan gina
In ta ga mai tsoka
Ba za ta raga mai ba
Tsobuwar kura sai dai ki chi kanki
Ni ba za ki chi na ba
Alhaji Babangida Kakadawa
Mai kida kam'n Sani*

That one on the wall
When she sees a well-fed flesh
She won't let go
Old leopard, you have to eat your own flesh
For you can't eat my flesh
I, Alhaji Babangida Kakadawa
The minstrel, younger brother
to Sani

*Na dan Maraya
Wakar wakan yi sai mu*

Dan Maraya's boy
Real songs can be obtained only from us.

7) *Yau nayi takumi
Ban iya chin kome ba
Ga dan talakawa
Yana son yar mai kudi
Da na biya sadaki
Ni ba zani yi leife ba*

Today, I sit with a hand on my jaw
Unable to eat anything
Here is a pauper
He's in love with a rich man's daughter
Had I paid the dowry
I wouldn't present the box-full
of clothes

*Idan ta je gida na
Ba zan barta a summa ba*

When she come home to me
I won't let her be clothed in rags.

The Trans-Saharan trade that introduced Islamic-Arabian cultures to the area heavily influenced socio-musical events of the Hausa of Northern

Nigeria. Among the social events that are celebrated with music in the North are birth, marriage, circumcision, and other important occasional events like coronations and calendar festivals. In terms of popularity, however, the professional Hausa court musicians, patronized by the wealthy and powerful Emirs, are more important than the ceremonial musicians. Though they are resident in the Emirs' palaces, where they are regarded as part of the royal paraphernalia, the echoes of their musical skills resound in both urban and rural settlements (Graham, 1994; Kofoworola & Lateef, 1987).

In the above selection, the minstrel, Babangida Kakadawa, achieves a passionate marriage of culture and philosophy of Moslem-Hausa through his use of language and dramatic musical structure. It is evident that the central theme of the song is about marriage; yet, the song also expresses other extraneous themes that help to expose the culture and philosophy of the Hausa. The conflicts arising from marriage are due, largely, to the heavy financial demands of the bride's family on the groom. The groom must convince his in-laws that he is financially balanced because the culture of the Hausa stipulates that the husband bears total responsibility of the wife's (or even wives') financial needs. As the woman discharges her domestic duties, while submitting wholly to the husband, the man is the sole bread-winner of the family (Skolnick, 2011). This is why the musician dramatizes the issues of dowry and provision of the box-full of clothes.

The dramatic allusion to 'the owner of the donkey and the nursing mother' is one of the artistic uses of language by the musician to achieve a desired effect. The metaphor alludes to the challenges that poor bachelors encounter in getting to marry from rich families. This allusion introduces another theme which rebukes lazy young men—those who would not do any work to help themselves, but rather loaf around and hope to get married to a daughter of the rich.

Verse 5 of the song is a structural turn-around to show the philosophical and cultural relevance of the musician in the Hausa society. His voice, his message, his lineage, and his musical instruments have both cultural and spiritual undertones. The allegorical expressions in verses 6 and 7 and the portrayed images help in furthering the sacredness of the music and the musician's place in Hausa culture. And the last verse, as a recap of the first verse, concludes the cyclic nature of life.

Song No. 3 (from the Yoruba culture): *Ise Agbe*



Translation

Agriculture is the handiwork of our land
He who does not work
Surely, might steal
Education without agriculture
Is incomplete
Truly, not complete.

This simple Yoruba tune says it all. Agriculture and education are symbolic of the concrete and abstract items of culture of the Yoruba people. Both are guided by the Yoruba philosophy that he who does not engage in lawful creative exercises (culture) would likely get involved in criminal activities (negation of culture). For the fact that both the Igbo and the Yoruba belong to the same linguistic region, it becomes possible to analyze language from both ethnic groups in a similar manner and approach. In that way, the philosophy of the people becomes more evident.

Music and social consciousness

Every human endeavour is founded on a philosophy that stipulates the desirable and acceptable norms of the people involved, and every philosophy mirrors the norms and values of the culture that upholds it. Nigerian folk music, as an item of culture and as a carrier of the philosophy of the people, has the latitude to accommodate, dictate, and even enforce the values of the society. In so doing, the folk music serves the role of shaping the consciousness of the people. Howie (1968) reports that Aristotle recognizes the natural love of harmony and rhythm—two basic elements of music—as an important influence on human growth and development, and consequently moral uprightness in man. In the words of Aristotle (as cited in Howie, 1968),

The spectators laugh and weep in sympathy with the actors on the stage. They are emotionally involved in the drama unfolding before them in the powerful blend of music, poetry, and dance....

From this they emerge purified and more capable of facing the daily drama of their own lives with confidence and effect (p. 169).

Nigerian folk music has contributed in shaping the consciousness of Nigerians, especially in the pre- and post-independent era of the nation. During the period between 1930 and 1967, Nigeria, according to Dozie (2001), was characterized by relative policy stability, incremental economic growth, good external image, and a healthy competition. "Simply put, we were building a great nation based on traditional institutions and practices that have typically been successful" (p. 8). And the contributions of folk music within this period was felt most as chants and slogans for social mobilization and enlightenment of the people.

Conclusion

On basis of the foregoing facts, it is evident that numerous Nigerian folk songs embody various dimensions of culture and philosophy with global relevance and appeal. To benefit the most from these songs, the contemplator of the art would need to have a thorough knowledge of the language and culture of the people. The job of accessing this artistic treasure would become easier when ethnomusicologists, linguists, philosophers, historians, and specialist scholars gather, articulate, and systematize the extant works of Nigerian folkloric minstrels and many other similar works and introduce same to Nigerian schools for sincere, serious, and vigorous academic teaching and learning. Until this is done, scholars of African descent may never realize how much disservice we are doing to our continent and her posterity through our mindless attitudes towards our own unique and lucrative cultural heritage. On the contrary, a total endorsement of an alien culture and abandonment of the indigenous culture will amount to emasculation of the people from their culture, and therefore from the philosophy upon which the norms and values of that culture is built. The end result would be an annihilation of the spirit of the nation.

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Discography

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Filmography

- Mike Ejeagha (n.d.). *Omekagu* [VCD], Ehbbiy & Myk 'O'