

AN EXPLORATION OF SOCIO-CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF MUSIC AND DANCE IN AFRICAN MILIEU

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Abstract

In African cosmological system, Music and dance is very important. Religious Ceremonies and rites are often accompanied by one or these activities which are a very popular part of African life in general. Some European scholars are of the opinion that African music has nothing to offer them to entertain people, that African music is not relevant and it is influenced by the European music. The objective of this paper is to examine the Socio-Religious, Cultural and moral educational significance of music and dance in African societies, particularly in scientific world that African cultural heritage, Religion, traditions, custom and values are now being severely relegated. Africans are particularly perceived as having nothing to offer. This paper argues that the African has institutionalized devices for preserving and transmitting their norms, beliefs and traditions, one of such is their traditional music and dance. More importantly, this paper reveals the importance of music and dance in African societies. There is no doubt that various forms of indigenous education are passed or transmitted through African indigenous music. It must be observed, and recognized that Western or European music adopted, adapted by African youths had corroded or infringed on the indigenous African music. The paper concludes that music and dance contribute immensely to the continuity and stability of African culture. The paper recommends among others that music and dance are useful media for understanding other cultural aspects of a given society. Music and dance are used at religious, socio-cultural events in African traditional and modern communities to curb, praise, condemn, pray, approve, promote good behaviour of people in order to impact desirable cultural ideas.

Key words: Music, Dance, Instruments, Africa, communities.

Introduction:

Music and dance occupy a very important position in all aspect of human life. In the life of Africans, every form of their activities are marked by one type of ceremony or the other which is usually accompanied by music and dance (Blacking: 1976:11)

For centuries, music and dance exerts a strong influence on man's life, not only as a form of artistic expression, but also as inhibiting or stimulating factor of human Psychic experience. The influence of music on man's frame of mind, particularly in relation to worship, shows that it assists invocation and inspiration. It is a well-known fact that music has been successfully used in many cases of affected souls, a famous example being the biblical story of David playing his harp to sooth Saul. Conjurers make use or employ music to commune with spirits. Not only is music influential in the life of an individual, it plays an important role in a community life too. It is possible to assess the character of people through their respective reaction to music.

However, some European scholars are of the opinion that African music has nothing to offer than to entertain people that African music is not relevant and it is influenced by the European music. If actually African music is not meant to entertain populace as alleged by the European, what then are the moral lessons it teaches or impact on African people? Is African music relevant in 21st century where moral decadence like corruption, deviant behaviours and moral vices are on the increase daily? No doubt African music and dance is very relevant at all time to correct moral decay in the society manifest in various crimes. The aim of this work is asses the relevance of African music and dance.

Omojola, (2006:15) Opine that music is one of the most important branches of the arts because it has the greatest power to arouse human emotions. A piece of well-rendered music act instantly on the emotions of listeners. So much so that the spontaneous urge to dance or weep for joy could hardly be resisted. A piece of good music can be enjoyed anywhere, regarded of where, or by whom it is composed and irrespective of the language in which the song is written.

Music during the solemn rituals at the shrines does not, as a rule, evoke dancing but there is always a place for dancing in rituals, especially during the sacred day of worship and certainly during the annual festival celebrations. Ritual dances of this kind are not mere random movement or mere emotional responses to the rhythm of music. They are symbolic and often re-enactments of something sacred, the history of which have may still be remembered or may have been forgotten, Kayode (1984:25).

This correctness is more than a matter of form; it is a sacred obligation, a default of which traditional African believes may be ruinous to the efficaciousness of the ritual. Music may be used in African traditional communities for entertainment and religious purpose. The methodology adopted in carrying out this research is descriptive. The method is aimed at gathering information for an in-depth study of any topic choosing to research on.

The Importance of Traditional Music to Africans

For centuries, music exerts a strong influence on man's life, not only as a form of artistic expression, but also as an inhibiting or stimulating factor of human psychic experience. The influence of music on man's frame of mind, particularly in relation of worship, shows that it assists invocation and inspiration.

Kayode (1984:27) Asserts that in music, three most important qualities are rhythm, melody and harmony. Rhythm, for which African music and dance are famous, is the superstructure on which music is built, and the latter is good or bad in ratio of the soundness of the former. Rhythm is the regularity of the musical beat. Melody is the tune of the music, and harmony, the fullness of the melody. Music during the solemn rituals at the shrines does not, as a rule, evoke dancing but there is always a place for dancing in rituals, especially during the sacred day of worship and certainly during the annual festival celebrations. Ritual dances of this kind are not mere random movement or mere emotional responses to the rhythm of music. They are symbolic and often re-enactments of something sacred, the history of which may still be remembered or may have been forgotten. Most of the dances, except where they are only expressions of religious conviviality, are of fixed patterns and must be done correctly. This correctness is more than a matter of form; it is a sacred obligation, a default of which traditional African believes may be ruinous to the efficaciousness of the ritual.

Ojetayo, (2013:178) Maintained that music may be used on African traditional communities for the following: entertainment, birth, initiation, marriage, funeral-rites, rituals, etc., and the musical instrument may be drums, bells, flutes, timbres, gongs etc. Music may be used to announce commencement of festival, war, confinement of women, and to aid inspiration and ecstasy.

Omololabo (1998:35) is of the view that traditional music is that type of music which is created entirely from traditional elements and has no stylistic affinity with western music. Representatives of such traditional music are: Apala, Sakara Waka, Fuji, Dadakuada Traditional music, in many ways, represents continuity with the past and give as opportunity of learning, in order that the present may be better understood. Therefore music can be said to form an integral part of life in Africa. It follows the African through his

entire day from early in the morning till late at night and through all the changes of his life, from the time he came into this world until after he has left it.

In the word of Olagunju, (1997), Music is a means of expressing world views among the Yoruba. He grouped Yoruba traditional music into two: religious music and secular music. There is connectivity between music and religion in Yoruba, Igbo and other African Societies. For example, in Yoruba society, each divinity has the type of music each of them enjoys. Sango likes Bata drum and rara song; Orunmila likes Gbedu and Orin ifakika while Ogun, Yoruba god of iron, steel and war likes Flute and ijala. For Egungun (masquerade) is Esasongsandgangan or bata drums.

The Yoruba are a music loving people. No aspect of their life is devoid of music, in joy or in sorrow, time of meeting and departure, time of exhortation rebuke and so on. There is always music to express the situation. Music among the Yoruba is a reflection of people's feelings and those feelings centre especially around their world view. That the Yoruba enjoy expressing part of their world view through music shows the appealing nature of music in their society.

Adegbite (2013) Submits that drum is the foundation of Yoruba instrumental music. Early references to Yoruba music seem to Place a high value on its use. Describing the pomp and pageantry that Characterized Yoruba nobility, Richard Lander (1830) in one of his visits to the Palace of a Yoruba traditional ruler, reported:

The chief was seated outside his house under its verandah surrounded by about a hundred of his wives and musicians with drums to entertain them.

Witford (1960) described the hourglass drum as "the principal instrument" while Ellis (1972) described the Gbedu as an important drum found mostly in the courts of the Yoruba rulers and in the homes of the nobility. Adegbite (2013) add that similar description of the extensive use of drum ensembles have been given by Johnson (1960) and Oba Laoye 1, the Timi of Ede. It is to be noted here that the use of the drum is not limited to the Yoruba royal families and traditional rulers alone; nearly every Yoruba divinity has his own special drum ensemble and often this drum group is said to be the group particular deity enjoyed, danced or listened to during his earthly life. Thus the significance of drums and their liturgical Function, especially in ritual ceremonies, cannot be over emphasized. Apart from accompanying songs and chants which the devotees of the divinities use during ritual and ceremonies, drums also provide the medium through which the worshippers are in constant ecstatic communication and communion with the Supreme Being.

The relationships between music and dance have been so strong in Yoruba culture over a long period of time. They serve as an integral part of Yoruba culture which has been passed from generations to generations.

Adesokan (1999:120) remarked that various social occasions in a Yoruba land gives rise to songs and dances. A dancer can be motivated by songs and at the same time related to the music of the drums. Many songs and dances alternate and there is a lot of singing as well as dancing in Yoruba social, economic, political, cultural, educational religious, funeral and ceremonies activities

There is no separation between music and dance. They have been conceived inseparable in Yoruba culture. There is music in dance and dance cannot live a life without music. Music and dance bring the various art disciplines together. They bring into focus the movement mannerisms, artistry, values, musical cultures, songs, rhythms, melody, harmony, musical instruments and so on.

Music is essential for dancing and nowhere in Yoruba culture does one see an organized dancing without music. They can take the form drumming, singing, clapping, tapping which have either simple or complex rhythms to be interpreted by the dancer

Music and dance are shared and experienced by the members of Yoruba society, There is room for creativity within the idiom of music and basic movements of the dance. The artistic values are augmented by the creative powers of the dancers as they are liberated to create and improvise.

Music and dance contribute to the continuity and stability of Yoruba culture. Occasions which allow for music and dance to be performed in Yoruba culture could be ritual, social, recreational, religious, political socio-economic and so on.

The art of music and dance in a Yoruba land is a language to speak, a mirror to see reflections and everyday movement magnified for effective registration of thought and feelings transmitted. Omojola (1983) in his writings assert that “traditional Yoruba music thus represents a mirror through which the Yoruba culture in its totality can be understood”.

A great deal of the dance depends on the variety of ideas offered by the music, The dancers are always at alert, responding to the basic rhythms of the music, indicating changes in their body movements. A good dancer always follows the master –instrumentalist and changes his or her body movement with the music. A drummer is a particular important person; he must have good memory and vision. He serves as the music director and choreographer in Yoruba music and dance performances.

Perfection in dance is achieved by a dancer’s preparedness to develop his sensory faculty and an ability to respond accurately to music sound.

Music and Dance in Africanculture

Music and dance are important features of African social and cultural activities. For example music and dances are highly respected in traditional Yoruba culture. They are statements of their ways of which is central to their day to day human activities. Merriam (1962:45) observed that, "African music is highly functional in the sense of its integration into almost all aspects of daily living. Music and dance making in Yoruba culture covers the widest possible range of expression. They play an important role in regulating, sustaining and preserving African traditions, customs and institutions.

Music and dance are performed during different occasions that are connected with human activities such as naming, marriage, house-warning, burials, Social activities, to mention but a few. Vidal (1976:58) reiterated that "music and dance perform important roles as media through which the events of life are recognized and affirmed" Music and dance in Yoruba land are avenues for the members to express joy, happiness, sorrow, fear or pain. They are general statements of emotional and sentimental feelings' which give scope for conveying thoughts or matters of personal or social importance. Nettie (1974) remarked that:

Music for the dance thus performs two major
Functions: it must create the right atmosphere
Or mood or stimulate and maintain the initial urge
For expression movements: and it must provide the
Rhythmic masses to be articulated in movement or
Regulate the scope, quality, speed, and dynamics of
Movement through its choice of sounds internal
Structural changes or details of design.

Through music and dance, individual or social, groups can express themselves through feelings. They are source of pleasure, recreation and entertainment to the members of Yoruba culture. Singers and dancers used to be triggered with both the inner self and the outside World. The context of the song and facial expression gives out the emotional feeling of the dance.

They body interprets and translates the musical utterances into appropriate movements. The understanding of the taboos, customs, mannerisms and improvisation help in making it possible in establishing one's self as a cultural dancer or singer. Through the choice of song text, signs, symbols, postures and facial expressions, individuals or social groups show their reactions to attitudes of hostility or co-operation held by others towards them

Music and dance are very strong in Yoruba traditional and customs. They sing songs about past deeds of greatheroes recollect what happened in the past songs teaching moral and impart societal norms and values. They sing and dance in honors of the spirits of the ancestors; funeral dirges that keep them in touch and communicate with the deities.

Many funerals in Yoruba land are occasions for people to sing and dance. They consoled themselves as well as remembering the departed souls. They sing and dance in order to regulate their associations with the Supernatural powers. Pritchard (1928) pointed out that. "One must not think of the dance simply as a play activity but as forming part of an important social undertaking associated with religious ceremony". Music and dance in Yoruba culture constitute an important role in the rituals of gods and ancestral spirits. Music and dance give an opportunity to express spirits or oneness co-operation in order to work together as a group and perform in unity

In the life of traditional Yoruba people, they make use of different songs and dances such as ceremonial music and dance, war music and dance, ritual music and dance, ethnic music and dance, funeral music and dance, entertainment music and dance, and so on. The songs and dances are combined efforts of vocal and instrumental music which is a significant part of their cultural heritage.

It is important to note that the artistic enjoyment is based upon the reaction of people's minds to musical forms; as activity in music and dance are expressed in muscular body movements and facial expressions. The Yoruba people have very much traditions and customs, which are embodied in their performing arts of music and dance. Through these performances, the people's ideas about the past and present ways of life are manifested. Man is always seeking to know himself through music and dances in Yoruba culture and there is no joy and happiness greater than the attainment of this state of cultural awareness. Music and dance in Yoruba culture are usually given a prominent place, worthy of its social, political economic and religious importance. It contributes to the continuity and stability of traditional Yoruba culture.

Every type of music and dance accepted by the members of a given society or sections of it deserves to be preserved for posterity. Seeger, (1962) rightly pointed that it is just as important to study how music came to be,

Preservation, promotion and continuity of this type of music and dance is necessary in the sense that some people of older generations may eventually pass away without leaving their knowledge or expertise. We must be concerned with the total dance and musical heritage of our people. It must be studied and documented in spite of the far reaching Social, political and cultural changes that have been taking place in Africa. There is certainly much to be accomplished than we have been able to undertake and we should have a right to be proud of our traditions and past achievements, although there are differences in African music and dances because of the many cultural differences in musical and movement styles. These dances must be viewed in close connection with Sub-Saharan African music traditions and Bantu cultivation of rhythm. African dance utilizes the concept of polyrhythm as well as total body articulation.

Dances teach social patterns and values and help people, praise or criticize members of the community while celebrating festivals and funerals. African dances are largely participatory, with spectators being part of the performance. With the exception of some spiritual, religious or initiation dances, there are traditionally no barriers between dancers and onlookers. Even ritual dances often have a time when spectators participate.

Traditional dance in Africa occurs collectively, expressing the life of the community more than that of individuals or couples. Early commentators consistently commented on the absence of close couple dancing: such dancing was thought immoral in many traditional African societies. In all sub-Saharan African dance there seems to be no evidence for sustained, one-to-one male-female partnering anywhere before the late colonial era when it was apparently considered in distinctly poor taste. For the Yoruba, to give a specific example, touching while dancing is not common except in special circumstances. The only partner dance associated with African dances would be the Bottle Dance of the Mankon People in the Northwest Region of Cameroon or the Assiko from the Douala people that involves interaction of Man and Woman and the way that they charm each other.

Emphasizing individual talent, Yoruba dancers and drummers, for example, express communal desires, values, and collective creativity. Dances are often segregated by gender, reinforcing gender roles in children and other community structures such as kinship, age and status are also often reinforced. Many dances are performed by only males or females, indicating strong beliefs about what being male or female means and some strict taboos about interaction. Dances celebrate the passage from childhood to adulthood or spiritual worship. Young girls of the Lunda of Zambia spend months practicing in seclusion for their coming of age ritual. Boys show off their stamina in highly energetic dances, providing a means of judging physical health.

Master dancers and drummers are particular about the learning of the dance exactly as taught. Children must learn the dance exactly as taught without variation. Improvisation or a new variation comes only after mastering the dance, performing, and receiving the appreciation of spectators and the sanction of village elders. "Musical training" in African societies begins at birth with cradle songs, and continues on the backs of relatives both at work and at festivals and other social events. Throughout western and central Africa child's play includes games that develop a feeling for multiple rhythms. Bodwich, an early (circa 1800) European observer, noted that the musicians maintained strict time (i.e. concern for the basic pulse or beat), "and the children will move their heads and limbs, while on their mother's backs, in exact unison with the tune which is playing." The sounding of three beats against two is experienced in everyday life and helps develop "a two-dimensional attitude to rhythm".

The most widely used musical instrument in Africa is the human voice. Nomadic groups such as the Maasai do not traditionally use drums yet in villages throughout the continent the sound and rhythm of the drum expresses the mood of the people. In an African community, coming together in response to the beating of the drum is an opportunity to give one another a sense of belonging and of solidarity, a time to connect with each other and be part of a collective rhythm of the life in which young and old, rich and poor, men and women are all invited to contribute to the society.

Shoulders, chest, pelvis, arms, legs etc., may move with different rhythms in the music. Dancers in Nigeria commonly combine at least two rhythms in their movement, and the blending of three rhythms can be seen among highly skilled dancers. Articulation of as many as four distinct rhythms is rare. They may also add rhythmic components independent of those in the music. Very complex movements are possible even though the body does not move through space. Dancers are able to switch back and forth between rhythms without missing movements.

The drumming represents an underlying linguistic text that guides the dancing performance but most meaning comes from nonverbal cues and metalanguage of the performers. The spontaneity of performance creates an impression of extemporaneity, yet it is not to emphasize the individual and bolster her or his ego but to preserve the community and mediate the audience and the performer interaction.

Moral Values and Significance of African Music and Dance

Music plays an important role in African societies. It also transmits knowledge and values, and it is a way of celebrating important communal and personal events. In the view of Mbiti (1975:9), "Africans are very fond of music. Therefore music, dance and singing are found in every community"

In African societies nowadays, many people have lost bearing with moral compass and social etiquette as reflected with behaviour dysfunctions which have beclouded the entire societies. The social syndrome among most Africans nowadays is based majorly on wealth and materialism which have engendered multifaceted social vices such as corruption, kidnaping, bribery, prostitution and all forms of uncouth behaviours. All these negative values are resultant effects of disengagement from the core-societal values. According to Ajere and Oyinloye (2011) the core societal values are uncontestable the practicing of acceptable, right, cherished dignifying behavior such as good character, hard work, respect, contentment, good conscience, honesty, loyalty and the like. These core-values are what African music teaches to the people, mostly the Africans.

In every society across the globe, core-values are attached prime priority as social ingredients for social transformation, peace, unity, stability, growth and development. The values are in most cases passed in songs for citizens to internalized for inner transformation. According to Rock (2010:22)

negative attitudes could be changed to positive irrespective of the period of its assimilation, interorisation and internalization.

Examples of African Music and Dance

James (2008:35) is of the view that traditional music of Africa given the vastness of the continent is historically ancient, rich and diverse, with different regions and nations of Africa having many distinct musical traditions. African traditional music is frequently functional in nature. Performances may be long and often involve the participation of the audience. There are for example, little different kinds of work songs, songs accompanying child birth, marriage, hunting, political activities, music to ward off evil spirits and to pay respect to good spirits, the dead and the ancestors. None of this is performed outside its intended social context and much of it is associated with a particular dance. Some of it, performed by professional musicians, is sacred music or ceremonial music performed at royal courts.

Different parts of the body are emphasized by different groups. The upper body is emphasized by the Anto-Ewe and Lobi of Ghana. Subtle accent of the hips is characteristic of the Kalabari of Nigeria. In Agbor, strong contraction-release movements of the pelvis and upper torso characterize both male and female dancing. The Akan of Ghana use the feet and hands in specific ways.

- The stamping dance known as **Ndlamu** is done by the Nguni group of tribes of South Africa, each in their own fashion. It is a secular dance performed by young men in single or double line. Different tempos, manners of stamping the ground, ending the dance, and ways of holding their dance sticks are used by each tribe: the Itlangwini from Southern Natal; the Baca from the Eastern Cape Province; the Mpondo and Mpondomisi from further south; and perhaps best known, the Zulu.
- **Adumu** is a Maasai dance which is performed during Eunoto, the coming-of-age ceremony of warriors. This dance, also referred to as *aigus*, or "the jumping dance" by non-Maasai has made Maasai warriors known for this competitive jumping, which is frequently photographed. A circle is formed by the warriors, and one or two at a time will enter the center to begin jumping while maintaining a narrow posture, never letting their heels touch the ground. Members of the group may raise the pitch of their voices based on the height of the jump.
- **Kpanlogo** comes from Ghana, more specifically the Ga ethnic group. This dance started in the capital city of Accra, but now it is enjoyed throughout the country. Kpanlogo is known as a highlife dance form performed to conga-like drums. The music of Kpanlogo is especially important. E.T. Mensah is considered the king of dance band highlife, and played in many bands and locations. Kpanlogo is a

fairly recent dance and started around 1940 after World War II, which is when the dance band highlife scene picked up recognition. Odette Blum talks about the movements. There is a free-flowing motion to this dance, with arms swinging around. There is no stillness in this dance, the free-flowing motion, of a move either beginning or ending, fills pauses. The torso acts as the stronghold base of this dance, since the center of gravity shifts rapidly from one foot to the other.

- Performed by Amakwenkwe (young men under the age of about 20 or 21) of the Xhosa, the **Umteyo** (Shaking Dance) is common in Gambia it involves the rapid undulation or shaking of the thorax so that the whole length of the spine appears to be rippling. Older men, Amadoda, do a similar dance, Xhensa accompanied by singing and clapping while dancers draw their breath in and out through a relaxed larynx, producing a kind of guttural roar.
- The **Mohobelo** "striding dance" of the Sotho features striding, leaping, and in some cases, sliding, and almost slithering along the ground. Two and sometimes three main movements occur: the slow Bahobela featuring high kicks, the swifter Molapo with leaping and twisting in the air, and the often left out Phetholaletsoho, which involves hand movements.
- Among the **Jerusamera** of Zimbabwe the major movement for men is the mbende step, a quick darting movement from a crouched position. Twisting of the waist and hips is the main movement of the women.
- **Yankadi** and **Macru** are two common dances. They are from Guinea, West Africa. Yankadi is slow and mellow, while Macru has a faster tempo with lots of movement. The men and women who participate in the dance face each other in rows; everyone has a scarf, and the dancers put their scarf on the one whom they wish to dance with.
- **Moribayasa** from the Malinke people in Guinea, is a dance for a woman who has overcome a great adversity. The woman prepares by putting on old, ragged clothes. Accompanied by musicians, she circles the village several times, singing and dancing. The women of the village follow her and sing too. Then the dancer changes her clothes and buries her old ragged clothes in a special spot. This may be at a cross-roads or, as in the village of master drummer MamadyKeita, under a mango tree.
- **Agbekor** comes from the Fon and Ewe people of Ghana. It is an ancient dance once known as Atamga. Agbekor is often performed at cultural events and at funerals. This dance is performed with horsetails, and the movements mimic battlefield tactics such as

stabbing with the end of the horsetail. This dance consists of phrases of movements. A phrase consists of a "turn" which occurs in every phrase and then a different ending movement. These phrases are added back to back with slight variations within them.

- **Agahu** was created by the Egun speaking people of Ketonu. Although this dance was believed to be based on the Yoruba dance from Badagry because the Yoruba costume was used, some Yoruba words were used in Agahu songs, and the dance is associated with the Nigerian town Badagry, Agahu is a popular social dance in West Africa. Agahu's music is also very important to the dance. Dance movements are closely related to the percussive rhythms and songs. The lead drum, a large barrel-shaped drum called an agboba, can distinguish Agahu from other dances. In this dance there are two circles, one with men and the other with women.
- In Zimbabwe, the **Muchongoyo** was performed by males with female participation. Women are primarily musicians playing the tuba (essentially a gourd with seeds inside it, used as a shaker) and singing alongside the men. They improvise or use the standard side to side shuffling movement lifting their feet from the ground. In contrast the men perform high knee lifts, returning their feet quickly to the ground. The women will sometimes move out of the choir line in a single file and dance around the drummer and male dancers until they return to their original positions. The Muchongoyo commemorates, celebrates, witnesses and highlights events. Although not specifically a religious dance, it is spiritual, and the repetitious nature takes participants closer to the divine.

Praise Song, one of the most widely used poetic forms in Africa; a series of laudatory epithets applied to gods, men, animals, plants, and towns that capture the essence of the object being praised. Professional bards, who may be both praise singers to a chief and court historians of their tribe, chant praise songs such as these of the great Zulu chieftain

Among some Bantu-speaking peoples, the praise song is an important form of oral literature. The Sotho of Lesotho required all boys undergoing initiation to compose praises for themselves that set forth the ideals of action or manhood. Sotho bards also composed traditional praises of chiefs and warriors, and even a very young man was allowed to create praises of himself if he had performed feats of great courage.

These praise songs were recited as follows: the reciter stood in an open space, visible to all assembled. He then began reciting in a high voice, punctuating his victories in war by stabbing the ground with his spear, until he had set forth not only his lineage and the battles in which he had fought but his entire life history. Sotho praises are telegraphic, leaving much to the listener's

imagination; their language is poetic, and the sequence of events not necessarily logical. Metaphor is a key device for suggesting worth (a reciter might call himself a ferocious animal), and poetic license is granted for coining new words.

To the subjects used by the Sotho, the Tswana of Botswana add women, tribal groups, domestic (especially cattle) and wild animals, trees, crops, various features of the landscape, and divining bones. Their praise songs consist of a succession of loose stanzas with an irregular number of lines and a balanced metrical form. Experiences such as going abroad to work for Europeans have become a subject of recent praise poems, and recitation has been extended from tribal meetings and ritual occasions such as weddings to the beer hall and labour camp.

In western Africa, also, praise songs have been adapted to the times, and a modern praise singer often serves as an entertainer hired to flatter the rich and socially prominent or to act as a master of ceremonies for paramount chiefs at state functions—*e.g.*, among the Hausa and Manding peoples. Thus praise-song poems, though still embodying and preserving a tribe's history, have also been adapted to an increasingly urbanized and Westernized African society.

Music, Singing and Dance in African Religious Worship

The researcher had pointed out earlier on that religious ceremonies and rites are often accompanied by one or more of these activities which are a very popular part of African life in general. The Bavenda are said to worship God with singing and dancing. When the Ila invoke him to send them rain, they do so with singing and presumably dancing. Likewise, at their annual sacrifices and prayers, the Joe affirms with singing that God will give them rain and cause the crops to grow. They dance and rejoice as well. At their big religious assemblies, the shone used to use cymbals and trumpets, with much clapping of hands and singing. The Tonga ceremony of praying for rain is accompanied with communal singing and dancing. Among the Warjawa, when there is public need, whole communities assemble to sacrifice, dance, and call upon God for his aid.

On the occasion of sacrificing to the divinity of plenty, the Banyoro dance and sing throughout the night, dispersing and returning to their homes the next morning. The Ga has different songs and styles of dancing for each of their divinities. The Fibrous narrate that before heaven and earth were severed, the inhabitants of both worlds used to invite each other to festivities at which there were dances. They picture dancing and music as dating from the primeval days of human existence. Examples of music, singing, and dancing in worship are certainly more plentiful. Some rites do not involve either singing or dancing. For example in African societies at large deaths resulting from contagious disease like leprosy, small pox, swollen body, suicide or pregnancy, confessed witches and wizards and so on are classified as bad

death while death resulting from old age and non contagious disease are referred to as good death. Those deaths, which are termed bad death, are not given proper funeral rites. Those who died young on the other hand are not given full burial rites on because they have not attained adulthood.

Duvwarovwo and Asha (2005:2) submits that, among the Dukkawa of Northern Nigeria, “a funeral *bikki* (A term used for celebration, feasting, dancing and music making during funeral ceremonies) is not performed for anyone who dies young or criminal death. A proper burial therefore is the one accompanied with music and dance, given to an adult whose death is considered to be normal, to give him a smooth and peaceful transition to spirit world.

Music performed at funeral is for historical documentation, through which members of the extended family amidst singing and dancing are reminded of their genealogical and relationships, strengthening family ties and contributing to cultural stability. During such performances, communal ties are not only strengthened in sharing the grief of loss but cultural continuity is ensured as the younger generations learn from the older generation.

Music and dance are considered to be one of the vital of African culture. It is life segment that serve as a means of propagating facts on societal concern for occasions like rituals and ceremonies, emphasizing the dos and don'ts of the society. Music also features prominently during festivals. For example, during Gelede festival among Yoruba people of Ogun State, the festival is highly revered among the people in spite of modernity and existence of two dominant foreign religions (Christianity and Islam).

By its entertaining power and the zeal with which people participate freely in the festival, according to Encyclopedia Britannica (2008). Gelede is an organized ritual involving drumming, dancing and singing, the ceremony usually takes place at night on a public square and dancers prepare in a nearby house. The singers and drummers are the first to appear. They are accompanied by an orchestra and followed by the masked dancers wearing splendid costumes.

It is impossible to imagine that African peoples could assemble and part solemnly without singing and dancing in honor to God, or as an expression of their feelings. As the drum is the commonest musical instrument, we can safely assume that it is used in most cases, though other instruments like whistles, bells, horns, etc. are also used.

Conclusion

One of the main features of music in Africa is its close association with a social context. In view of this, some scholars are of the opinion that traditional music may be of little meaning outside the social context, A number of arguments could be offered in one way or the other regard to this

theory. But suffice it to say here that in African traditional society music and dance are part of their culture and traditions.

Much of the experiment has been going on in the last few years; African traditional music has been carried out in the theatre. There are today a fair number of theatrical groups, especially among the Yoruba, which have been producing works popularly known as “folk operas”. The composers of these operas have usually spent most of their formative years in those parts of the country where the traditional arts are still intensively cultivated. This opera consists, in addition to singing of a good proportion of spoken dialogue and dances. Their subjects are sometimes topical and sometime historical, invariably making good use of traditional feeling for proverbs and for myth. The chief exponents of the new operatic style are Hubert ogunde, kola ogunmola, DuroLadipo and so on.

Music experience is a distinctive instrument that could be used for describing where a man came from and whom he is. The way of talking, greetings and interacting reflects in the life of anyone due to the music he or she listens to. Since music remains as an organized sound that is pleasant to the ear, what is pleasant here might not be pleasant there, it is the listeners that decide on what should be taken as music or not, which must be in line with the culture of the people. The verbal conception of music is an artistic work that forms an integral part of the total cultural, representing music as a product of human mind, which reflects aspects of human thought.

Therefore, culture gives music the appropriate meaning, because music makes a major aspect of culture. Music goes side by side with language and demand for an expression that will make its content to be well communicated to the listeners. This is the reason why music is highly unique in the trend of communication and social life of Yoruba people and Africans at large.

Music and dance are considered to be one of the most vital aspects of African especially Yoruba culture. Therefore, our musicians should use their gift to preach wisdom, moral and ethics. Music as life segment, should serve as a means of propagating facts on societal concern for occasions like rituals and ceremonies, emphasizing the dos and don'ts of the society, with praise singing of the past and present leaders as duly deserved. Music and dance are highly respected in African culture. They are statements of their ways of life which is central to their day to day human activities. Music and dance making in African culture covers the widest possible range of expression. They play an important role in regulating, sustaining and preserving African traditions, customs and institutions

In Preservation, promotion and continuity of African culture, good music and dance is necessary in the sense that some people of older generations may eventually pass away without leaving their knowledge or expertise for the younger generations.

Recommendations

This research is very significant because it contribute to knowledge. It is hoped that the research will expose the importance of socio cultural and religious significance of music and dance in African societies to the outside world as this journal/article could be read in any part of the globe. This will clear the notion that African music culture and religion has thrive in faces of the so called universal religions.

It is the believed that this research will be a source of information for students, scholars of African Traditional Religion and other discipline to know more about African culture and traditions.

The research will advance and increase the use of methods of indigenous music knowledge and musical instruments in music teaching in all level of Nigerian Education.

The researcher advice that effective use of indigenous musical materials be made available within a community setting for musical illustrations.

Dialoguing with Ministries of Education as well as curriculum planners on emphasizing African music content in music education at all levels is very germine.

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