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**The Place of Igbo Folk Songs in Peace Building and
Sustainable Rural Development**

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Abstract

Music is an art that is generally practiced and most available of all the arts. In most Nigerian cultures especially in Igbo culture, musical activities are organized to meet the demands of the people in all situations of life be it good or bad. It cuts across all stages of the developmental processes of man, from childhood to old age. At each stage, music plays some significant roles in the lives of the people. Music is part and parcel of Igbo culture. Igbo society provides avenues like ceremonies, festivals, and burials to mention but a few through which music are expressed. This paper among other things tries to examine the impact of folk music In Igbo culture, the place of music in the promotion of sustainable rural development. Selected Igbo folk songs with subject matters geared towards maintenance of peace in Igbo societies were also analyzed.

Key words: Igbo Culture, Folk Music, Peace, Development, Ceremonies

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Introduction

The Igbo tribe is one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Igbos occupy the South-Eastern and some areas of the South-South of Nigeria. Agu (2011) states that:

The Igbo, east of River Niger covers Imo, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Abia states. These states occupy a land mass of about 29,230. 2 square kilometers of 356,669 square kilometers (p.1).

The Igbo have rich cultural heritage. Igbo people are basically farmers, traders and craftsmen Okafor (2005:26). The studies in this paper were limited to Igbo people of Anambra state.

Concept of Music

Music has been defined by many scholars in various ways. Odunuga (2009:1) defines music as the combination of sounds that are pleasant to hearing. Ekwueme (2008:1) defines it as:

As a phenomenon using the medium of sound which is organized and manipulated into socially accepted patterns that communicate intelligibly and meaningfully, verbally, or non-verbally, ideals, feelings, emotions and events to people (p.1).

From the above definitions one can easily say that music is the product of an organized sound that is pleasing to the ear. Music is the spice of life. It is so much a part of the background of everyday life that it tends to be taken for granted in contemporary living. Yet, for many people, it is a powerful focus for creative energy and one, which both stimulates and guides imaginative thinking. Okpala (2006) opined that:

It can gently plough the mind so that it will be more receptive to the seeds of learning, music can comfort the lonely, and the sick, awake pleasant memories in the old, delight the young and lull a child to sleep. (p.1)

Okafor (2004a) in Okafor (2005, p. 2) identified three classes of music that exist in Nigeria namely: the traditional, the popular and classical. This study emphasizes on the traditional/folk music.

Traditional/Folk Music

Traditional music is the indigenous music of a people within a particular culture area. It originated from folktales. Agu (190:80) defines folk music as the indigenous music of the people which forms an integral part of their way of life. Okafor (2009:2) views it as an expression of the traditional culture. Folk music is part and

parcel of Igbo culture which is orally transmitted from one generation to another. It is performed in the native language of the owners and with local musical instrument within the culture area.

The Place of Folk Music in Igbo Culture

Folk music is an integral part of Igbo culture. Its impact in the life of the people cannot be over-emphasized. Igbo people do not just perform music for aesthetic purposes; music is a lifelong activity that serves as a medium for cultural transmission. Music is an essential part of Igbo man's life. There are musical activities associated with every stage of development in one's life. Okpala (2006) states that:

All Igbo societies have provided the musical training for their people right from childhood. And the nature, scope and quality of the training is so efficient that it offers the average Igbo a comprehensive and sound musical knowledge in more than one of the various aspect of Igbo music (p. 3)

The above assertion explains the reason why Igbo folk music has remained despite the strong influences of the western culture especially during the period of western colonization.

In Igbo societies, music is performed as a social event just as in every other African society. Nketia (1974:21) observe that, in traditional African society, music making is generally organized as a social event. However this does not preclude individual music making.

The integration of music into Igbo life style has prompted Igbo people living in the urban cities to assemble under the umbrella of town unions, to learn and perform their traditional music as a mark of culture identity. This agrees with Akpabot's statement that one method of finding out about the culture of a people is to examine how they conceptualize their music Akpabot (1986:91). It also serves as a unifying factor for members of the association. Discussing "Music in Igbo Culture" Okafor (2005) states that:

Every person is expected to make music or perform at a dance at certain points in life. It is also an activity in which one participates in childhood or in age. All life rites have musical implication and involvement so that at any point of time, somewhere, somebody is making music or dancing in Igbo land (p.27).

The Role of Igbo Traditional Music in Peace Building for Sustainable Rural/National Development

Forchu (2013), elucidates that: “Since music is an aspect as well as an avenue for cultural expression, it is fully embedded in the stream of daily life of people and occurs in response to religious, economic and political needs” (p.320). The lyrics of folk songs are so powerful that they can penetrate the heart of both the performers and the spectators resulting in a change of attitude towards positive issues. Lyrics of songs contribute to maintenance of social control. This results to a peaceful society. It inculcates the right behavioral attitudes to members of the community. They learn moral and social responsibilities through music. In line with this, Forchu (2012) opines that:

Since the psychology, concept, values and attitude of a culture are reflected in the song text, the fabric of the society is therefore upheld in music, through which these behavioral patterns come to live (p.214).

The roles of folk music in shaping the lives of Igbo people are innumerable. It ploughs the mind of the people that make up the society leaving them as law abiding citizens. Through folk music the conventional rules of behavior are maintained. This is achieved when the right conduct is encouraged through praise and appreciation, and ill behaviours discouraged through caution and ridicule. Breeding people with the right mind set go a long way to encourage development both in the rural areas and the entire nation.

Folk music also encourages peace among members of the performing group. It encourages oneness and team spirit. The impact of music in the life of the people and the community at large are summed up with words of Forchu (2012:209) thus: Music because of its multi-dimensional characteristics is an indispensable tool in the quest for sustainable development. She goes on to state that:

As a result of the multi-dimensional nature of music and its integration into the African life style, it is an indispensable tool in the achievement of many pursuits such as political, social, cultural, religious, and economic endeavors. For this reason, many communal activities are accompanied by music for it enhances the effectiveness of specific actions on particular occasions, thereby contributing as part to the socio-cultural system (p. 209).

Igbo folk songs have a great impact in the maintenance of a peaceful atmosphere conducive for all kinds of development.

Songs that Encourage Peace

Gini Na-Enye Obara?

Call: *Umunyanyi, gini na-enye obara?*

Response: *Ihunanya na-enye obara ma agwakọ ya na udo,
ọ gwuọ hipatenshon, kpam kpam*

Call: Women, what is the source of blood?

Response: Love is the source of blood when peace is added to it,
it cures hypertension completely.

The song above is performed by women whenever they gather for meetings. They sing it to ease off tension and stress. They also perform it during funeral ceremonies and religious activities. They embrace one another while singing this song. It is believed that any two persons, who were not in good talking terms before coming for the meeting, will go home at the end of the day united.

Anyi Bu Ofu.

We are one

A-e-e I yo-a-e

A- e-e I-yo-a-e

Umunwoke amaha akwukwo.

Men are not educated.

Umunwoke amaha akwukwo.

Men are not educated.

Umu nwanyi dechaa akwukwo,

Women wrote a letter,

Nye fada nwsu, ya guoro anyi;

And gave to Father Nwsu to read for us;

Fada nwsu, guchaa akwukwo,

After reading the letter,

Muo kere kere kere kwee n'isi,

Father Nwsu laughed and nodded his head,

Si ihe ohuru n'ime akwukwo,

And said that what he saw in the letter,

Na mmadu ncha bu ofu n'ime anyi o;

Was that we are all one;

Onye nahasia ndi uka ezije nga,

And anybody that disputes that, will be sent to prison,

O tawa ahuhu;

To suffer;

Rum na abo enyere ye onyuchisichaa ya o. And will fill the two rooms given to him with feaces.

A - a –Umunyanyi okwanu eziokwu o? A- e- women, is it true?

In the song, the women acknowledged that all human are one and anybody that disputed that view will be punished by the church. It inculcates the spirit of togetherness among them.

The next song is children's folk song stressing the need for children to be obedient to their parents.

Ezigbo Nwa

*Ezigbo nwa e ,
Na-erubere nne ya isi.
Ezigbo nwa e,
Biko rubere nne gi isi;
Ka I wee di ndu.*

Good Child

A good child,
Is obedient to his mother.
Good child,
Please be obedient to your mother;
So that you will live.

Onye Aghana Nwanne Ya is another song performed by the youths during work. It encourages team work, advising them to be their brother's keeper.

Onye Aghana Nwanne Ya**Call:**

*Onye aghana nwanne ya.
Na nwanne bu ife nwanne gi.
I lusia chere nwanne gi,
Na nwanne di uto.*

Response:

*dodolima
dodolima
dodolima
dodolima*

Translation

Let no one leave his brother behind.	<i>dodolima</i>
Let no one leave his brother behind,	<i>dodolima</i>
For it is good to have a brother.	<i>dodolima</i>
If you have anything, give to your brother.	<i>dodolima</i>
After working wait for your brother;	<i>dodolima</i>
For it is good to have a brother.	<i>dodolima</i>

Nwanyi Gbara Olu**Call:**

*Nwanyi nu gbara olu
Nwanyi nu gbara olu
Nye ya azu tinye n'ofe
O taa azu tinye okpukpu*

Response

*I yo
I yo
I yo
I yo*

Translation

The stubborn woman	<i>I yo</i>
The stubborn woman	<i>I yo</i>
If she is given fish to put in the soup	<i>I yo</i>
She eats the fish and cook the bone	<i>I yo</i>
When given spice to cook with	<i>I yo</i>
She eats the spice and cooked with chaff	<i>I yo</i>
Ah! Woman	<i>I yo</i>

The song above is used to ridicule the stubborn woman who fails in her responsibility as a good house wife. It is believed that one’s her ills are exposed, she will not repeat such.

Conclusion

This paper has viewed music as part and parcel of Igbo culture. It has also highlighted the impact of folk music in moulding the characters of the Igbo citizens to an acceptable one. Nwankpa (2013:43) affirming this, states that music is used for social reconstruction and character formation. In his writing on “The Primacy Music in Igbo Traditional Religion”, Agu (1990) observed that:

In African societies, all aspects of life, ranging from birth to death, are believed to be integrated with music making. Among the Igbo, it is said that music serves not only as a medium for entertainment and social relationship, but as an intricate part of the development of the mind, body and soul. It is assumed that the laws of the land are learnt through songs. The history of the tribe is learnt through songs. And the accepted behavioural patterns in the society are all assimilated through music and dance (p.50).

This paper establishes the fact the messages of folk music are embedded in the lyrics of songs. Lyrics can assuage our loneliness or incite our passion, Onuora-Oguno (2005:79). Igbo folk music was portrayed as a powerful agent of peace which encourages sustainable rural and national development.

Folk music should be encouraged in all Igbo communities for the positive impact it has on the lives on the people can never be over emphasized. Community leaders should discourage the performances of those songs that influence the lives of the people negatively.

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