

Music and Sustainability of Peace: An Appraisal of Selected Yorùbá Traditional Songs

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Abstract

Yorùbá context has music as a fundamental motivator in communal development, projects, war, attendance to dispute, conventional gathering, exigent meeting, and peace maintenance and so on. At present, attention is gradually shifting focus from the obtainable mediation and impartation of traditional music towards popular urban culture. Hence, the study sets out to identify the possible potency of Yorùbá traditional songs as means of peace advancement and to ascertain the status of its usage for peace social stability in contemporary dispensation. Anchored on functionalism and communicative theories, the research used Yorùbá traditional song repertory, and bibliographic modes of enquiry to achieve its set goals. The result shows that Yorùbá traditional music for peace advancement is in three dimensions, namely, peace conservative songs, peace recovery songs and peace conceptual songs. There are also traditional songs for ritual peace advocacy. The paper concludes that traditional repertory is convincingly potent in the maintenance of peace culture in the Yorùbá context.

Keywords: Peace, Conflict, Traditional music, Yorùbá songs, Yorùbá.

Introduction

For the purpose of this study, research activity was limited to Yorùbá traditional songs. These songs are very common to every sub-division within the Yorùbá nation. However, it is practically impossible to have any community totally void of conflict, there must, hence, be a channel to restore peace at any instance of conflict and to also provide balance for continual sustenance of peace culture. To the aforementioned, Nigeria is not excluded from such experience (Ekwueme et al., 2013). It is, therefore, in the view of this assertion that the research into Yorùbá traditional music (peace songs) seems to be a natural antidote to conflicts among Africans. Furthermore, charity, they say begins at home and according to Yorùbá tradition, the use of traditional music for peace advancement is a means of employing indigenous methods in tackling internal fracas before engaging other alien (foreign) approaches to mend any of those problems.

Indigenous music is efficiently capable in reducing violence in the Nigerian society in the sense that it contains elements capable of enlightening the populace on the humanistic aesthetics of peaceful coexistence of the society. Among traditional African communities, music making is closely related with and recognized or seen as a social activity that fosters and reinforces communal unity. Indigenous music of Africa is still being passed orally from generation to generation. Evidences from various field works revealed that it possesses powerful roles that go beyond words. It enables meanings to be shared with great appealing mode to the public. It is embedded with multidimensional coded meanings which make the music a typical means of identification for the Africans.

It is, in fact, no longer news that Africans have their culture mostly preserved in oral tradition, most of which were concealed in their arts such as poetry, music, religion and arts. Hence, traditional music possesses great potential in the protection and restoration of peace among the Africans. This includes settling of all sorts of conflicts, wars, disagreements, inter-boundary disputes, ethnic clashes employing African media and wealth of oratory prowess. This goes along with application of its arts one of which traditional music plays a major role. Such valuable quality of traditional music should never be swept under the mat but to be

given a proper attention and status in order to protect and preserve African heritages in the first place and secondly to gain the prospect that African traditional music offers in finding lasting solution to dispute, disagreements, war and clashes.

Theoretical Grounding

This study is anchored on Adedeji's functional theory as expressed in Adedeji and Omosilade (2018) and Daramola's communicative theory (2010). Adedeji (2018) functionalism theory postulated that: music possesses both anabolic (constructive or creative) and catabolic (destructive) roles of functions. The anabolic role of music aids in the creation of a positive mindset being entrenched in the listeners, hence, making them better citizens. The catabolic function of music on the other hand, is believed to be responsible for the creation of various vices in the society. The above implies that music is both having the creative and destructive power. Barenboim (2006a) affirms that music potency is so powerful touching humans from all sides. Daramola's communicative theory (2010) hypothesised that "musical instruments (music) is a medium through which information is communicated to the society among the traditional Yorùbá people". This is to mean that, whichever work music is going to effect on humanity, it must first communicate. This translates that there must be contact between humans and music before it can impart.

Literature Review

There have been many theoretical projections into peace and conflicts resolutions, even though a majority are from sociological views. Only a few are propelled from musicological grounds. Craig (2010) argues that while many music departments were beginning to look at cultural theory and sociology and how they might incorporate these disciplines, they still remained secondary considerations. Music departments did not seem to be exploring the wider social meaning of music, which I began to feel, was crucial in order to understand how music might assist in conflict situations. From the aforementioned, there is yet much less focus on music and conflict resolution. This in otherwise is to state that less is being done to ascertain and explore the sociological power of music.

The above notwithstanding, there is a number of existing studies which has focused on sociological theoretical frameworks that lead to conflicts resolution or peace advancement. Ideas from such scholarly studies could be applied to music and peace resolutions. A very cogent example of such study is Bercovitch (1984). He projected three methods of conflict resolution. These, in his view, include use of violence and coercion, negotiation, or third party intervention. However, his projections left music out as a veritable tool in peace negotiation and conflict resolution. Music could have been a veritable tool in peace-conflict negotiation. Those studies that have really contributed to the relationship between music and conflict resolution or peace sustenance involve Barenboim (2006b); Craig (2010); Born (2010); Ekwueme et al. (2013); Odunuga (2013); Okpala (2015); Ndoma, Offiong, Davina, Juliet and Florence (2016); and Oke (2019).

Craig (2010) opines that music did seem to have some traceable reflexive influence on group cultural identities that could theoretically be included in a conflict transformation scenario. Music could be used to remove enmity between two warring people. This is also Barenboim position while discussing the formation of an orchestra that combined equal number of Arabs and Israeli. Performing together in the orchestra brought about interactions, which could if continued, provide the desired peace among the people. This music escapade should be replicated among Africans, especially, among the Yorùbá people. Peace culture or conflict resolution could be empowered through the instrumentality of Yorùbá songs. Odunuga (2013) delved into music education as it could be used to position the mind for a peaceful coexistence in the face of world conflicts and especially Nigerian situation. However, the discourse is based majorly on music education while the efficacy of Yorùbá traditional music was not addressed in the write-up which is the basis for this research at hand. Okpala (2015) presented traditional Igbo folk songs as part and parcel of Igbo culture. Furthermore, he presented that Igbo folk music is capable of moulding character, its lyrics can assuage loneliness or incite passion, and that Igbo music is a powerful agent of peace which is a pathway to both rural and national development.

Discourse is thus limited to Igbo music; hence, the need for this research on its Yorùbá counterpart as findings may be harnessed towards building a nationalistic foray for sustainable

peace in Nigeria. Ndoma, Offiong, Davina, Juliet and Florence (2016) analysed the lyrics of selected popular music artistes in Nigeria with respect to peace building. These artistes are Sunny Okosun, Sir Victor Uwaifo and Onyeka Onwenu. Song lyrics input to peace building were highlighted through lyrical construct. Yet, discourse did not include traditional Yorùbá songs with reference to peace building. Oke (2019) discussed extensively the Yorùbá and Roman political institutions for conflict resolution strategies in pursuit of peaceful environment. He argued that these institutions can ameliorate peace without necessarily going to the modern day judicial courts. He also lamented the deterioration status of these traditional institutions with regard to peace mediation in the contemporary time. Above all, discourse did not, however, relay the influence and impact of music towards peace fostering especially among the Yorùbá people of Nigeria.

The above studies have examined the capacity of music to bring about peace and to resolve conflict in a broader terrain yet not in the direction of 'traditional music'. Craig (2010) remarks concerning music role in conflict resolution 'that music did seem to have some traceable reflexive influence on group cultural identities that could theoretically be included in a conflict transformation scenario'. A vivid understanding of the assertion above draws attention to the use of traditional music to uphold the aesthetic right values of any society. This will resultantly bring about a peaceful co-existence as pivoted by traditional music. Piekut (2014) observes 'that music is a special and exemplary case for investigating matters of social theory'. The provision of these special features is predominant in Yorùbá traditional music.

Peace versus Conflict Scenarios

There cannot be the need for the pursuit of something that is readily available either at hand or within range. The social status of the Nigerian communities is of a great concern especially now that there are a lot of inter-societal hullabalos and unfriendly engagements. This is obvious when we look at the Nigerian society today with the level of crime and conflicts disparaging every nook and cranny of the country. In the very recent past (18th and early 19th centuries), the Yorùbá people could boast of a better community, in terms of peace and conflict stability. The story, however, is now a different one compared with the situation on-

going today. Many factors may be responsible. In the period earlier mentioned, traditional music was of great help. This is owing to the fact that the people are constantly in contact with the bulk of traditional repertoire as available. The lyrics thus do the magic. This is an area where Daramola's theory of communication comes to play. Contact with music leads to communication before it could either make (anabolic) or mar (catabolic) the recipients – a centre argument of Adedeji's functionality theory. When the communal life unpalatable under whatever condition; it simply means the existing peace has been interrupted. Yorùbá people generally understand the concept of peace hence their popular parlance says '*ogunòdàbíiyán, ogunò dàbíàmàlà, ogunò dàbíkásunnn'aralóòdèni'* which literarily translates that 'war/conflict is not like pounded yam, it is unlike steamed yam powder and it is never like sleeping peacefully in one's home.' This is a clear statement that underscores any form of precipitations that does not encourage peace. Traditionally within Yorùbáland, when the people are aggrieved or when they are experiencing development that is capable of disrupting the existing peace, they begin to sensitize the people who are meant to bring about the desired solution or correction by singing around the street, display of various kinds of leaves as a kind of signalling to prevent such already foreseen conflict or disruption of existing peace.

This practice is done with the use of symbolic elements called àrokò (Dáramólá, 2010). Peace is, therefore, relative within every society and it depends on basic set beliefs, ethics, religious practices and general values. Furthermore, activities of individuals are expected to conform in order to avoid a chaotic co-existence within the community. Peace and conflicts are antonyms of relative human relations and interactions. 'Peace is a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. In a social sense, peace is commonly used to mean lack of conflicts (such as war) and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or heterogeneous (relatively foreign or distinct) groups' (Peace, 2019). Naturally, every human society cannot be totally void of conflict. As a result, Yorùbá communities do find themselves in various conflicts. Dáramólá (2010) noticed the evidence of conflicts among the Yorùbá people of Africa and posited that:

When an àrokò contains an option, the receiver may opt for the positive or the negative and prepare for the consequence(s) of his choice. For example, if two groups of people are quarrelling, one of the groups may send an àrokò of è)tù-ìbo)n (gun powder) in a container and iyò) (salt) in another with both items wrapped together in a sack. The choice of gun-powder by the receiving group implies that the group has opted for war while the choice of salt implies that the group opts for peace. On the other hand, the sending of gun-powder only implies that the receiving group has no choice but to prepare for war.

Hence, there is always a proffered solution to such difficult or unimpressive situations among which music is not lacking. Music among Yorùbá is grossly inseparable from day to day activities. It forms an important aspect of living from birth to death; music is everything. Resultantly, there is music to solicit and restore peace among Yorùbá in general. Music in African context involves a great blend of songs, instrumental accompaniment and dance and it is oftentimes intended for a purpose. Music rarely exists for music sake among Africans generally and the Yorùbá are not any exception to this. Music thus plays one role or the other among which may include but not limited to communication, creativity, education, entertainment and corrective roles. In the corrective role capacity of African rendition falls the music to settle conflicts and advocate for peace and tranquillity. To this discovery Nketia (1974) attested that: the treatment of the song as a form of speech utterance arises not only from stylistic consideration or from consciousness of the analogous features of speech and music; it is also inspired by the importance of the song as an avenue of verbal communication, a medium for creative verbal expression which can reflect both personal and social experiences.

Accordingly, the themes of songs tend to centre around events and matters of common interest and concern to the members of a community or the social group within it. Consequently, themes of Yorùbá musical repertoire will surely concentrate on peace whenever there is any form of conflict, be it intra-communal or inter-communal. Such musical context may be officially organized or staged by some interest group or groups depending on which side is agitating for peace. The potency of music in pursuit of peace cannot be overestimated. It is a powerful tool that has developed

in the core traditions of Africans in general and the Yorùbá people in particular.

Traditional Sacred (Ritual) Music as Peace Advocate

Looking at communal peace among Yorùbá people is as important as any other issue. When the community experienced same graceful season, it is interpreted as a peaceful era. When this changes, it is described as 'not-peaceful'. To secure and maintain the former, traditional ritual music is often employed to appease the gods in a special request to grant them enhanced living in the community. The summation of this request falls back to a peaceful environment. This kind of request involves everything that can contribute to a peaceful living of the members of the society such as good farm yield in the year, safe women deliveries, progress in infrastructure, progressive sales in the village/town market, the required amount of rainfall to allow good farm produce, moderate sunshine, prevention of untimely death, undue mortality rate (especially among children and youth), longevity for the king and chiefs and security against attacks from enemies to mention but a few.

Such music may be kept from the uninitiated while some are available to every interested member of the community. However, performance context meant for initiates only would not overrule its existence. To this practice, Vidal (2012) referenced Smith on comment on how traditional music is performed to appease the gods for "a prosperous journey, fair weather, a good crop, or whatever else they want". The collective spirit of purpose behind such musical performance can be convincingly described as importune for peace, thus being traditional ritual music, they are meant to project peace from the metaphysical realm for the community as a whole.

Traditional Secular Music as Peace Advocate

This involves the total collection of local songs which are genuinely traditional and native to the Nigerian people, the Yorùbá most especially. Music evokes, it has power as opined by Barenboim (2006a) and likewise, Adedeji (2018) said that music is functional. It is, therefore, capable of sending or communicating to various individuals (Daramola, 2010). Obviously, traditional music is performed by singing and it is guided by the context of the uprising. These songs were discovered to be in use in three ways.

These are thus described as ‘conservative songs’, ‘recovery songs’ and ‘conceptual songs’.

Peace Conservative Songs

The conservative songs are intended to protect and preserve the existing peace among the people or between few individuals beginning from two or as many that may be connected to or with certain issues. The performance context may differ from place to place, and between groups. Yet the notion behind the rendition of such songs is to keep alive the existing peace among the affected fellows. Renditions may come in a persuasive manner, as an advice and sometimes as a strict warning hoping to avert a looming peace breakdown among factions within the society. Below are few examples of traditional songs that portrayed the spirit of preserving the existing peace in the community.

Song 1

Oro yi a d’ariwo t’e o ba lo jawo [This issue will result into chaos if you refuse to retreat]



The above song is simply warning a defaulting section or people to desist from their action as it is capable of breaking down the existing peace in the community. In a similar spirit is the verse that is always sung as follows:

“Oro yi a d’ogunnit’e o ba lo ja’wo” [This issue will result into war if you refuse to retreat]

Other traditional song that portend the destruction of the existing communal peace is Highlighted below

Song 2

E mǎf'òtèba 'hunto dárajè [Let not conspiracy destroy that which is good]
 E mǎf'òtèba 'hunto dáraj [Let not conspiracy destroy that which is good]
 T'óbá lo bàjékònisunwòn Destroying it is not palatable]
 T'óbá lo bàjékònisunwòn [Destroying it is not palatable]
 E mǎf'òtè o é éé [Let not conspiracy, I mean]
 E mǎf'òtèba 'hunto dárajé [not conspiracy destroy that which is good]



The above song, according to its usage in the traditional Yorùbá setting, is simply sounding a serious warning to desist from unethical actions. It portrays a preservative spirit in a warning style. This song is usually rendered before things get out of control hence capable of preserving the existing peace within the community.

Peace Recovery Songs

These are series of songs rendered to halt an ugly development which are directly or resultantly anti-peace movements. Its context may be formal or informal though the latter is often applicable within Yorùbá settings. Such renditions are intended to bring to an end any kind of imbroglio(s) that is/are already in place hence its description as 'recovery'. Recovery songs sought to reinstall peace that has eluded the community, an attribute and features that are evidently available in the text of such songs. Below are

few samples of traditional songs that exist in the capacity of recovery works.

Song 3

Call - Ore la o ma se [Friendship we shall embrace]
 Res - Ore la o ma se [Friendship we shall embrace]
 Call - Awa o jamo o [We shall fight no more]
 All - Ore la o ma se [Friendship we shall embrace]



Song 4

Call - Awa o 'f'ogunn'leyimo o d'okere [We no longer want war in land but afar off]
 Res - Tefetefe o d'okere [But far and far away]



The above song is always the rendition to seek an end to chaotic situation in the community.

Peace Conceptual Songs

These are set of traditional songs that have the capacity to mould or build and instil values and character in growing children and adults in the African society. They portray the exalted values of Yorùbá indigenous way of life by means of the content of their lyrics. Ordinarily, a child will be indoctrinated by the aggregate of all he/she has been exposed to in life; therefore these songs are always a valuable tool to constructively build a Nigerian child for the expected character and personal interrelations that is needed to keep alive the peace of our community. These songs are therefore meant to conceptualize characters that could uphold peace existence within the community.

Below are few examples of conceptual songs

Song 5

Eyinomode e ma s'afajudi o, [O! ye children never be]
afajudi o on j'eniyanniya o [..... Causes unpredictable
sufferings]



The above song is simply to warn or teach children to desist from any anti-civic behaviour as it leads to great punishment within the society. It is actually a very sound way to naturally create and inbuilt peaceful character in every child.

Song 6

Aare npe o Olondifa [The general calls you and you are
consulting the oracle]
T'ifaba fore tare fobinko [what if the general speaks
negative though the oracle says right]



This is simply suggesting a life without suspicions. When you are upright in all things you

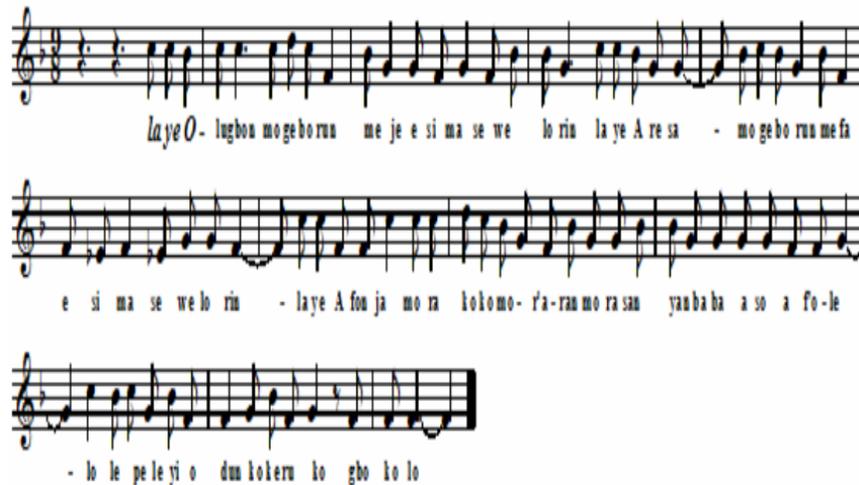
do not have to be troubled whenever you are sent for or needed at a public place. It is rather better to live a peaceful live rather than living a live full of suspicions.

Song 7

L'áyé Olúgbón¹ mo gé 'borùn méje [During Olúgbón's rwing
I bought seven shoulder
muffler]
E ò ma sèwé l'órin [Write this as a song]

¹ Olúgbón is the traditional ruler of orileigbon situated along Ogbomoso-Ilorin road, Oyo State.

L'áyé Arèsà² mo dá 'borùn méfà [During the reigns of Arèsà I bought six shoulder muffler]
 E ò ma sèwélórin [Please write this as a song]
 L'áyéÀfònjá³moraKókó⁴mor'Arán⁵ [During the reigns of Àfònjá I bought Kókó, Aran]
 Mora Sányán baba asoàf'òle [And I bought Sányán the king among fabrics except for the lazy ones]
 Lolèpé 'lèyìòdùnkókérùkógb'oko lo [that can say the era was not good and I guess they should pack and go to the village instead]



This is a song that teaches how to be hard working in every season. The lyrics reveals that you can make something out of every dispensation come what may. It was presented in the song that during the *Olúgbón* era something was achieved, likewise in *Arèsà* period and even during *Àfònjá* period – a period characterised by

² Arèsà is another king in the ancient Yorùbá city
³ Àfònjá is a great warrior and the first king of Ilorin the ancient Yorùbá city in the northern part of Nigeria
⁴ Kókó is a type of Yorùbá fabric for important occasions
⁵ Arán is a lovely Yorùbá fabric; it is a symbol of wealth for those who have it, among the Yorùbá

war and clashes, the best was achieved except for the lazy – *Afole*. This is to clarify that with all sense of commitment, one can achieve much in any period.

Song 8

Iseagben'iseilewa	[Agriculture is our native occupation]
Enikosiseyo ma ja'le	[He who does no work will sure steal]
Iwekiko, laisioko, atiada	[Schooling without hoes and cutlasses]
Koi pe o, Koi pe o lete]	[is incomplete and incomplete]



The above is a song that deals with children's psyche to prepare themselves for a dutiful future. It explicate that despite the western education, one still requires the nativity occupation which is farming. Most important emphasis in the song is the part that says '*eni ko sisie yo ma j'ale*' i.e. he who would not work will resolve to stealing. This a song for a lasting and true peace construct as its meaning is embedded. It encourages children and everyone to be gainfully engaged to avoid becoming a nuisance in the community.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Traditional songs are of various usages among the Yorùbá people. Yorùbá traditional peace songs are highly potent in the sense that

they are capable of building the society for a peaceful co-existence. They are capable of promoting the development and maintenance of peace culture among individuals or groups (social, religious or cultural groups), and that traditional music facilitates communication which goes beyond words and it enables meanings to be shared among people. Traditional music is at present underutilized both at the traditional and urban settings in Yorùbáland. Youths among the Yorùbá race are grossly unfamiliar with both the lyrics and tune of many traditional songs, hence, its underutilisation in the present dispensation. The usage of traditional music for peace advancement is gradually tending towards extinction. This is partly because the songs are not constantly used in everyday activities as necessary and there are no official platforms to actually showcase its rich contents. However, traditional music could only become a versatile tool for peace resolution only if given the required attention, recognition and usage. Let every traditional institutions rise in profuse usage of traditional songs. This will bring unprecedented results by creating citizenship that is very close and familiar with their own very traditions and by the way, culture, ethics and values would be instilled and preserved. To further enhance the results, the academia needs to solicit for use of traditional music both in writings and performances and finally, government should create an enabling status, recognition and patronage for traditional music both in schools and among the general populace.

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