



THE EXTRA-MUSICAL FUNCTIONS OF MUSIC IN WORSHIP

A CASE STUDY OF OBEREBE IN OGERE-ODE MUSICAL ENSEMBLE IN IPOLE-ILORO EKITI

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ABSTRACT

The palpable functions of music in the day to day activities of man are to entertain, recreate, and to change the mood of man during festivals and ceremonies. However, other covert musical functions such as creating awareness, changing situations in both the sacred and secular world have not been adequately explored, ditto for the overt function of public announcements. The focus of this paper is to examine both the covert and the overt musical functions in the society during worship. The mode of data collection will be through participant and non-participant observations, discography and interview. It is discovered that music has the capacity to change the mood of worshipers from normalcy to ecstasy during worship.

KEYWORDS: Music, Extra Musical Function, Worship, Oberebere, Ogere-Ode, Ensemble.

INTRODUCTION

Music could be described as an organised sound agreeable to the ear. Its role in worship cannot be over emphasized because of its importance to both secular and sacred worship. On the other hand, music occupies a vital part of man's environment as it is a conscious creation which enhances social, cultural, emotional, physical, creative and economic development of man. In African traditional society, music plays a vital role in disseminating information, announcements, entertainments, rituals, dance form and worship. In Yoruba tradition, worship occupies a vantage position and for the Yoruba to undertake their worship, with all zealously and adequately, different types of music are created to commune with deities because of the belief that each deity has a type of music sacrosanct to its worship. Most ancestral gods of the Yoruba were mighty men and women of old whom after their death must have been deified and must have done something during their earthly life worthy of emulation and remembrance. Safra (1998) defines music as the;

art concerned with combining vocal or instrument sounds for beauty of form or emotional expression, usually according to cultural standards of rhythm, melody, and harmony". It is "any rhythmic sequence of pleasing sounds". Music is "the art and science of combining vocal or instrumental sounds or tones in varying melody, harmony, rhythm and timbre especially so as to form structurally complete and emotionally expressive compositions.

Webster's (1970) also define music as;

Music as the art by which a composer, through a performer as intermediary, communicates to a listener certain ideas feelings, or states of mind. Music, which makes use of tones, singly and in combination with various rhythmic configurations, may be subjective or objective, appealing to the emotions or

the intellect. It is in essence, a tonal design created to stir and influence the listener.

The definitions above is an indication that music is very effective in the dissemination of information and useful in making man to be aware of his environment. On the other hand, worship is the devotion accorded to a deity or to a sacred object, the religious ceremonies that expressed this devotion is known as worship. Munroe (2000) affirms that;

worship is what is all about seeking God until he graces us with his presence. Once he is present, everybody and everything else is dismissed.

Awolalu (1981) further confirms that;

Worship is a religious exercise which involves the performance of devotional acts in honour of a deity or divinities. It presupposes a yearning for God and it is a means of glorifying the source, the sustainer and the end of life; it confirms man's acknowledgement of the transcendent being who is independent of the worshipper but upon whom the worshipper depends."

These statements are indications that music has efficacy to perform extra musical functions apart from the use of music for entertainment, dancing and pleasure and its role in worship is of paramount importance. Its role in both tradition and Christian worship cannot be overemphasized.

Ogere-ode is a musical ensemble organised mainly by hunters to perform at various festivals and other important events in Ipole-Iloro Ekiti, in Ekiti West Local Government of Ekiti State. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary

English (2009) defines ensemble as:

a small group of musicians, actors or dancers who perform together regularly or a group of musicians performing together using the combination of Voice and musical instrument".

This ensemble belongs to the hunters guild in Ipole-Iloro Ekiti and also similar to hunters of other cultures in Nigeria. The ensemble is used by the hunters in the worship of *Ogun* (god of iron) and to entertain in other important events in Ipole-Iloro Ekiti such as Aran-Ewi festival, the installation of the Iwarafa Mefa (the kings maker) and the installation of Kings. Olusegun (2010) notes that;

Ogere-Ode ensemble performs at important place and events, especially those involving rituals and during *Ogun*, *aran-ewi* festivals, installation of a king and members of the council of chiefs.

Oberebere is the smallest in size out of the three membranophone musical instruments used in

Ogere-ode ensemble. The musical instruments include *Ogere*, *Onikekemeji* and *Oberebere*. Apart from *Oberebere's* function of playing a constant rhythmic pattern or bell rhythm in the ensemble, it is believed by the hunters that it also performs a unique function of invoking the spirit of *Ogun* during worship at most times and at other times help in conveying messages to the gods especially *Ogun*, the god of Iron.

Olusegun (2010) concludes that;

it plays a constant rhythmic pattern, although the player may vary the pattern with a narrow limit especially during ritual performance. This is so because it was believed by the hunters that this little drum had magical powers of conveying messages to the gods during rituals. It is noteworthy that this drum plays a special rhythm at this point in time. This is characterized of the *Agere* drum of the Yorubas that assists the worshippers of *Ifa* during the chanting of *Odu*.

As stated above, the hunters believe that without this little drum, effective sacrifices and communication cannot be made and if any, without the said drum, the sacrifice will not be accepted by the god, *Ogun*. This is because; the drum is the only medium to invoke the spirit of the deity (*Ogun*). This is so because it was believed by the hunters that the deity only understands the language of this small drum, which was believed to have been constructed and used by *Ogun* himself during his time on earth as a mortal (Orisade 2009). This assertion is amplified by Alade (2011) when he notes that:

it is to be noted that use of drum is not limited to the Yoruba royal families and traditional rulers alone, nearly every Yoruba *Orisa* also have their own special drum ensemble and often, this drum group is said to be the ones that a particular deity enjoyed, danced or listened to during his earthly life.

It is the belief of the Yoruba and most Africans in general that most of the deities worshiped in the traditional society were sometimes ago heroic human beings who might have decided to enter the ground and translate into other realms of existence because of one reason or the other known to them and became a deity as a result.

In the herbal homes for example, when the herbalists are divining for a person through chanting of incantations which may be poetic, but mostly in song, they chant their *Iyere Ifa* to the extent that the person concerned will know exactly what the herbalist is saying through the song text and thereby, have a temporary relief from their plight before the application of any herbs. Abimbola (1968) chant thus;

Adia fun adunmbaku
 Ti n somobibi inu agbonniregun,
 Won ni o rubo nitori iku
 O see iku o pa
 Ijoni n jo
 Ayo ni nyo
 O n yin awon awoo re
 Awon Awo re n yin ifa

Writing further on the extra musical or covert functions of the African musical instruments, Okafor, (1994) notes that;

African musical instruments are the tools of a musician. African musical instruments are used primarily for making music but they also perform some special (extra-musical) functions in the society". Musical instruments in Nigeria also perform these extra-musical functions as their counterparts in other parts of Africa.

Onwueke, (1994) also comments that;

In Igbo land the metal gong is believed to possess some curative qualities. It is held that some traditional doctors use the *Ogene* to cure stammering. They believe that the stammerer who drinks water from the *Ogene* will be cured because of its distinct and clear tone. In Yoruba land, the *Agada* drum is used in invoking or appeasing the spirit responsible for curing certain disease like leprosy and blindness.

All these are indications that drums have various extra musical roles to play during worship and such roles have their significance in the life of the deity and the worshipers at large.

Other musical instruments are used as instrument of communication to announce various traditional events, and urgent information within the society. Onwueke (2011) concludes;

some societies use the metal gong for public announcement; others use the slit-wooden drums of varied sizes for announcements too. In the olden days, when the *Ikoro* (huge slit-wooden drum) sound, it was believed that something terrible things must have happened. It could be that a great man had died or outbreak of war.

There are other areas where music performs extra musical role and functions such as the role of solo instruments, voice, and as an aid for retention, timing, political propaganda, while some difficult words and numbers can be set to music for easy memorization and retention. The use of music is also very effective in the media where music, are played prior to the advertisement of a particular product. The music so played will attract the attention of the public while the sound of the bull roarer known as

We divine for odunmbaku
 The real child of Agbonniregun
 They say he should sacrifice to avoid death
 He obeyed and was saved
 He is dancing
 He is rejoicing
 He is praising his herbalists
 While his herbalist are praising ifa

"Oro" in the local language are used to warn women not to come out during ritual performance. Similarly, Ekutu, (gourd horn) are played to announce the imminence of *Ogun* festival in Ipole-Iloro Ekiti.

The use of the hunter's music is also of great importance when an Oba is to be installed in Ipole-Iloro Ekiti. This is because the King was believed to be the commander in chief of the army warriors in the traditional settings of the towns and villages in Yoruba land. This is because in the traditional setting the hunters are the warriors saddled with the defence of the community before the advent of the Army of the present day.

Apart from the extra-musical role of music in the traditional religion, the extra musical role of music is also prominent in Christian religion. For example, the Bible records in 1st Samuel chapter 16 verse 23 as follows;

And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and play with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

The extra musical power in music restored King Saul through the playing of the harp by David. This is a confirmation of the healing power in music. In addition, the song of Paul and Silas in the prison brings the power of deliverance down and Paul and Silas were delivered from bondage in Acts of the apostle Chapter 16 verse 25, the Bible records, that:

at mid-night, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

In the same vein, the extra musical role of music brings down the hands of God upon Elisha when a minstrel sang to empower his Vision. In 1st King chapter 3 verse 4 the Bible notes that. Elisha lacks the power to prophecy due to the spirit of annoyance operating in his life at that moment, the only solution to restore his vision is through the power of music as he requested thus,

But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hands of the Lord came upon him. And he prophesied and said, thus saith the Lord, make this valley full of ditches.

All these examples confirm the extra musical role of music in worship both in the traditional and Christian religion.

Musical Accompaniment to Rite of Passage

To the Yoruba people of Western, Nigeria, the belief is that the king at the end of his sojourn in this world translates to the other realm of existence to monitor and carry out certain duties on behalf of the living. This accounts for the saying that 'Oba waja' when he passes on. This means the 'demise' not 'death' of the king. Specific musical types are played to aid the numinous passage of the king to other worlds and to create a sense of awe among the living.

The play *Death and the king's Horseman* (2004) by Wole Soyinka, is a historical / day based on the rites performed at the demise of a certain king of Ife town believed to be the cradle of the Yoruba race. At the demise of the king, it is the duty of the Elesin, a lieutenant of the king, to die willfully so as to accompany his master, the king in the journey to the beyond. The crisis in the play is centered on the failure of Elesin to be attuned to the music that will enhance his passage to the other realm of existence. It was believed that the music in question will lure Elesin to his death without feeling much of the pain.

In conclusion, the use of music should be encouraged both in the sacred and secular world to enhance efficacy in the communication system of the society. And to solicit the presence of God and the gods in our worship which can help in solving knotty problems in our lives and society and bridge the gap between man, gods and God.

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