

TAROK MUSICAL CULTURES: IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE IN ITS SOCIAL STRUCTURES

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Introduction

The Tarok people constitute a very significant homeland population of Plateau State. They have a remarkable array of musical cultures and instruments, most of which are yet to be researched upon. The social structures as a fulcrum of informal learning are collapsing to the extent that it has great impact on her culture of producing musical instruments from generation to generation.

The Tarok people live mainly in Langtang-North, Langtang-South, Wase, Mikang, Kanam and Kanke Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Plateau State in central Nigeria. Their main town, Langtang, is about 180 kilometres Southeast of Jos, the State Capital. Their estimated population in their core area of Langtang-North, Langtang-South and Wase LGAs is slightly over 300,000.¹The Tarok call themselves '**oTárók**', their language **iTárók** and their land **iTàrok**. Other names have been used in the literature, such as **Appa**, **Yergam** and the variants **Yergum** and **Yergam**. Yergam is believed to be a corruption of the Tarok phrase **yar i ga**, 'take/carry and let's go' as heard by early Hausa and Fulbe traders. Jemkur et al. 2005 suggested that a likely etymology of the name 'Tarok', is derivation from the nickname '**Tallok**' 'spread from Tal/immigrants from Tal'. A further proposal is a derivation from '**Tal roktok**' 'dotted about with Tal' (Longtau 2008).

Until the colonial era, the Tarok lived in inaccessible hill settlements, partly as a defence against endemic slave-raiding. After the establishment of British rule

after 1900, most villages moved to the plains, between Dang Kang in Kanke LGA and the Benue Valley. The 'Hill Tarok' are those who have remained in the higher hill settlements and have a reputation for maintaining their culture. Despite its relative ethnic and linguistic homogeneity today, oral traditions suggest the Tarok incorporated clans from the neighbouring Pe, Jukun, Ngas, Ywom, Boghom, Yangkam, Tel (Montol) and Tal peoples. This diversity about origins has implications for the musical heritage of the people which this paper is propagating.

Theoretical Framework

This work is hinged on the theory of change and modernity.

Change is a gradual transition from one stage to another within a series of events. Stein Danielle and Valters Craige (2012) explain the theory of change to be: beliefs and assumptions about change... an endless variation of style and content; it includes a big picture of how change happens in relation to a specific thematic area. It is basically related to activities and outcomes. Each outcome is expected to be in a logical relationship to all the others hereby creating a chronological flow. The links between the outcomes are explained by rationales or statements of why one outcome is thought to be a prerequisite for another. The innovation of the theory of change lies in:

- Making the distinction between desired and actual outcomes.
- Requiring stakeholders to model their desired outcomes before they decide on forms of intervention to archive those outcomes.

The United Nations Development Group's (UNDAF, 2017) Companion Guidance simply describes the theory of change as a method that explains how a given intervention, or set of interventions is expected to lead to specific development change, drawing on a causal analysis based on available evidence. Furthermore, the theory of change helps to identify solutions to effectively address the causes of problems that hinder progress and guide decision on which approach should be taken, considering comparative advantages, effectiveness, feasibility and uncertainties that are part of any change process. Change is very visible in the realms of religion, language, food, dressing, musical genres and instruments, informal to formal learning, apprenticeship in community arts and crafts to apprenticeship in carpentry/woodwork, metalwork, information and communication technology and so on.

Modernity can be seen as a concept used in the humanities and social sciences to describe a historical boundary as well as the confluence of particular socio-cultural practices or behaviours. These came up after the medieval Europe and have metamorphosed differently, extrapolating to other parts of the world. With a wide range of interrelated processes and cultural phenomena, they can also mean the subjective or existential experience of their outputs, and impacts on human cultures and other walks of life. The source of modernity needs not to be Europe only. Berman (2010).

Norton (2018) succinctly illustrated this in the context of a linguistic domain;

In many sub-Saharan African countries, three languages are used regularly: a language of immediate community (LIC) and two languages of wider communication (LWC) for communicating with people from beyond the immediate community, a language of wider communication of African origin and a language of wider communication of European origin. This trilingual pattern is followed in the Middle Belt of Nigeria, where the LICs are the Middle Belt languages spoken in their own communities, the LWC of African origin is Hausa, and the LWC of European origin is English. Norton, (p1)

As a historical category, Kompridis (2006) reveals that modernity refers to a period marked by a questions or rejection of tradition. the prioritization of individualism, freedom and formal equality, faith in inevitable social, scientific and technological progress, human perfectibility, rationalization and professionalization. A movement from feudalism toward capitalism and the market economy; industrialization, urbanization and secularization; the development of the nation-state and its constituent institutions (e.g. representative democracy, public education, modern bureaucracy) and forms of surveillance. Some writers have suggested there are more than just one possible modernity, given the unsettled nature of the term and of history itself.

Charles Baudelaire receives the credit for devising the term "modernity" (*modernité*) in his 1864 essay "The Painter of Modern Life", to designate the

fleeting, ephemeral experience of life in an urban metropolis, and the responsibility art has to capture that experience. In this sense, it refers to a particular relationship to time, one characterized by intense historical discontinuity or rupture, openness to the novelty of the future, and a heightened sensitivity to what is unique about the present (Kompridis, 2006). Modernity tends to be from Afro-centric to America/Euro-centric. For instance the European and Hausa flutes have replaced the Tarok short frame flute made from fresh plant parts. Even the Tarok name is lost and now completely replaced by the English and Fulbe/Hausa names aflut and abusa respectively.

Informal Learning Concept

Coming from a United Kingdom perspective, McGivney (2009) reveals that there is no single definition of informal learning. He says:

It is a broad and loose concept that incorporates very diverse kinds of learning, learning styles and learning arrangements. Informal learning can be unpremeditated, self-directed, intentional and planned. It can be initiated by individuals (for example in the home, in the workplace); it can be a collective process (arising from grassroots community action or social protest), or it can be initiated by outside agencies responding to perceived or expressed needs, interests or problems. These may include educational providers who wish to offer previously excluded groups learning experiences in their own environment. P37.

The arenas described below are structures for informal learning in diverse scenarios at clan, family, 'age grade', village and individual levels. Factors that led to their collapse as religious tenets, "hausalization", westernization and modernization are highlighted and briefly discussed.

Social Structure of the Tarok People and Collapse of Informal Learning

According to Longtau et al. (in press), the principle underlying Tarok social organisation is a "segmentary" lineage system, based around extensive exogamous clans. Although there is an overall Tarok chief today, this is largely a colonial creation. Each clan has an earth-priest known as the 'Ponzhí Mbín', and

one of these is assigned a notional headship to make sacrifices in times of crisis and to maintain socio-cultural norms, ethics, traditions and customs. Order is further kept in the society by the '**orim**', or ancestors, a cult controlled by men. The **orim** have the function of punishing those who transgress social norms and rewarding acts of bravery and accomplishments.

Good music is usually taken over by **orim** as their exclusive preserve Longtau (1997). The history of the music and accompanying instruments of each clan at the micro level is revealing and worthy of a separate study. Each clan also has a central dance arena called '**aginting**'. It is here that prospective brides and suitors make their choices as they participate in the '**nkwok**' dance. The music is accompanied by an assemblage of instruments with a conductor. This is now extinct due to appeal and advantage of Christian wedding ceremonies.

At the village level '**atak-nsal**' (playground) is a place for young people and children to socialise and play. That has basically disappeared in most villages with the exception of hill enclaves due to the invasive disco and wild party music. Similarly, '**iyor**' (victory dance) and its music is gone because there are no longer lions and leopards to be hunted for such warriors to be celebrated for individual who accomplish outstanding feats. Informal teaching of personal attainment is gone.

Apart from the clan, the Tarok have marked arena where social intercourse and accompanying music play out. The layout of a compound is marked out as an arena for social discourse in the evening (Lamle 2005). Women and younger boys use '**ashé amulok**' (inner courtyard) or '**ashé agilàn**' (private courtyard) for narration of folktales with rendition of songs (Sibomana, 1981). Some songs are accompanied with clapping of hands. No instruments are involved in the music that accompanies the chore of grinding at the quern stone by women and young girls. The songs are reservoir of maternal family history. Grinding mill songs are themes of dirges at funerals. The mills today are not quern stones but the motorised hammer mills. All the songs and knowledge of maternal family histories are lost with no substitute whatsoever. Similarly, narration of folktales was means of enlisting the help of children in shelling groundnuts. All of that is gone because the modern "sheliers" do the work in minutes and children have no role to play.

The morals of our rich culture learnt from folktales are no longer transmitted. Worse still, there are no modern substitutes.

For men and boys initiated into the **orim** cult, discussion takes place at '**anungbwàng**' (outer courtyard) or the '**ashé ñkilang**' (main entrance hut). Here serious discussions and cases are tried. Folktales in this arena are on themes that have to do with development of heroism and curbing of social vices and bad etiquettes (Lar, 2015). It is here also that most craft works as twining of ropes, weaving, carving of all sorts, iron mongering and so on take place. That is not the case today and all the benefits of its informal education are lost.

The farm during communal farming parties, '**acipir**' involving drums, sistrum, dance costumes, rattles and so on, is an important avenue for production of music. Farming parties still exist but no longer cut across the entire community they are now affairs of a group of families.

At funerals '**atak-iku**', women sit separated from men who are in turn arranged by age group (Longtau 2000). Men use the cruciform whistles and drums for the mock warfare dance. Dirges are no longer performed at funeral but only on rare occasions. Public celebrations of heroism are gone.

'**Atak orim**' 'cult shrine' is a formal setting where young boys are initiated into the adult cult with customised 'curricula' specific to the character trend of each lad. General topics of etiquette, customs, taboos etc. are taught in a matter of a few days. Part of the initiation process is the intensive instruction of boys in public conduct to show that they are now men (Lamle 2001). Even before initiation, the culture of boys marks them off from women and female children. These shepherd not only have a society called '**ñggari**' that mimics the real '**orim**' but a specific repertoire of songs, '**ññap-ñshì ovanogaiñbil**', 'songs of shepherds', and a type of drum unique to this context called '**apónggóng**'. The songs are marked by a series of obscene references which can only be tolerated outside the world of the village. The other instruments they play are highlighted in Longtau et al. (in progress). Further detail on these subjects can be found in Longtau (1997, 2010), Lar (2005, 2015) and especially Zwalchir (2007) which prescribes steps to be taken to restore informal education.

We shall look at changing social structure as it specifically affects transfer of skills not only in making musical instruments but also how to play them.

Changing Social Structures, Decline in Informal Learning and Musical Instruments

Aginting and nkwok dance

At the clan the biggest decline is rather the extinction of **aginting** and **nkwok** dance and its music, instruments and costumes. Christian wedding competed and has replaced the social structure of **aginting** to the point of improbable restoration. **Aginting** dance and music were national festivals of some sort. Today **nzam-nkwok** is extinct. People still marry under traditional customs but the music of **adopzani** 'wedding dance' lack lustre and communal celebration. Traditional music and dance are sometimes replaced by modern drum sets, DJs and electronic gadgets or systems.

Atak-nsal dances

Modern life has greatly impacted the moonlight social discourse at **atak-nsal**. Today, young people use portable generators to enable them to socialise with modern equipments and gadgets like DJs and Public Address systems.

Farming music

The staple crop of guinea corn is the principal determinant of the Tarok farming calendar and music. The musical instrument **agbishi-ikur** 'horn for sorghum music' is still in use in a few places but they are now more of antiquity because it is made from the horn of an extinct antelope **ingau**. Any informal education associated with the instrument is basically gone.

The zither **abwa** is common but it is now produced by master craftsmen. In the past, this was a skill found in every family. The so called professional traditional musicians of today are mere praise singers who perform to patrons for a fee as Hausa musicians. This was unknown in the Tarok culture. Solo music was to lessen drudgery associated with chores and trekking long distances. If not, music was a communal activity.

Funeral music

The principal instruments for funeral music are **nggapak**, **ntoka**, **nka** and **izur**. **Ntoka** and **nka** are no longer widespread because **igyan** tree for making them have been over exploited and are no longer easily available.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The encroachment of modernization, technology and westernization has greatly affected the Tarok culture. Also, a change in lifestyle and trends has eaten even deeper into the cultural norms causing a cultural decline in different areas. Before the colonial era, a wealth of cultural practices (Musicianship, Craftsmanship, General Skill, Archery, Farming, Herding, Hunting, Brewing of local beer, cooking delicacies, etc.) were passed on from one generation to the other as lineage based practices.

Unfortunately, those good old days are almost completely forgotten. It is therefore a matter of urgency and a call on the traditional rulers, musicologists, writers and other scholars in related areas, musicians and lovers of the rich African culture to take as much data as possible for the sake of posterity and situate a cultural outfit in form of a museum in the heart of Tarok land 'Langtang'. This is because special days like 'Illum oTarok', 'Gazum Day', 'Bwarat Day' among many others are not enough cultural custody and exhibition due to the political and corporate nature of the programs which are mainly focused on community development. There is the need to open up 'Ponzhi Mbin' institution as a tourist attraction in 'Langtang' for discourse and research at designated places; as well as generate revenue alongside museum services so as to use funds recovered to pay the workers therein. Obscure craftsmen should be encouraged to come out during cultural functions like Illum o Tarok, to function at the museum and display their crafts as it will be a source of income for them even in the international market. Stakeholders should go back to the cultural roots and extract cultural motifs and use them in subsequent compositions, publications, literature, theatrical activities etc. to keep the Tarok culture much alive, as well as advertise and create traffic of awareness about the rich culture of the Tarok people on all electronic media available and accessible.

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