

TRADITIONAL MUSIC OF YAA PUBERTY RITES CELEBRATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTIONS IN OGONI COMMUNITY, RIVERS STATE

**Augustina C. Ezebube
and
Alvan-Ikoku O. Nwamara, Ph.D.**

Introduction

Folk music is described as traditional music of the people, region or race which represents the cultural heritage, aspirations, norms and values of the people. The term 'folk music' is used to denote the musical traditions of the people living in different communities. Folk music connotes the music of the communities which the original composer is unknown. It was handed down to the Ogoni communities by their forefathers and mostly in call and response pattern of singing. Communities are proudly at their best when showing off their traditional folklore. Uche (2015) emphasizes that:

Traditional music among societies is a bonding force that serves as a medium for entertainment, social relationships and religious practices. It serves as a tool for learning their languages, proverbs, habits, histories, etc. and these are learnt through their folk songs (p. 2).

Traditional music of the Ogoni communities is a reflection of their culture and cultural practices. In Ogoni communities, traditional folk music provided avenues for musical expression through festivals, puberty rites ceremonies, rituals, works and recreation to generation with allowances for each generation to make sections and variations from the original without destroying its tones of continuity.

Traditional music of the Ogoni people is part of their culture and most often it has to do with the norms and values of the society. When you listen to Ogoni music attentively, then you understand the messages they convey. In as much as the music is in their language and in proverbs, metaphor, when translated in the general language is understood by everybody, the message is transmitted to bring peace, success, unity, uplift, love, progress, morals and create social stability in the community. Okafor (2005) affirms that “social comments, moral codes and guides are couched in music and songs” (p. 7). Nzewi (2005) supports that “music makes human; it supervises, explains and illuminates the human society” (p. vii).

This implies that music is likened to oil that lubricates, informs, sustains, regulates behaviour, and makes the human in the society. The place of music in the life of the Ogoni people cannot be trivialized. Traditional music are songs which represent the cultural heritage, aspirations, norms and values of the people. In Ogoni, music is used in expressing moments of joy, celebrating a birth or passage, ushering new season or making some significant milestone in the community. The Ogoni people from all parts of the country are proudly at their best when showing off their cultural heritage expressed through religion, costume, dance and traditional music. Agu (2011) confirms that:

The application of indigenous knowledge system in music education provides a strong cultural orientation for the child. This is because music is strongly attached to culture much more than language in the sense that the nature of feelings on the audience or listener is actually revealed by music with greater effect (p. 3).

In Ogoni, music learning can be achieved faster with Yaa puberty rite celebration if properly handled. Yaa puberty rite music has been discovered to have a strong connection with traditions of the people. Indigenous music serves not only as artifact and tradition but as a means of conflict resolution to bring peace and unity in the community. Chukwu (1999) asserts: “Traditional music instigates, it catalysis and perpetuates physical, verbal and mental clashes in beings. It induces, inspires, incites and excites. It also demoralizes as well as intimidates. It activates and reactivates gatherings, festivals, social or political rallies” (p. 6). The place of music in the life of the Ogoni’s is one that cannot be

overemphasized or handled with levity. Music is a reflection of the people who they are, what they do, what they believe in and how they live.

Music is as old as man in Ogoni and Yaa puberty rite music has become the most widely accepted and most accessible of all the events and universal as a cultural expression that it has come to be described as the major culture of the people. Yaa puberty rite music is generally recognized and applied by the effect it produces on the Ogoni people in order to resolve conflict. Music in Ogoni covers the physical, mental, emotional and social experiences and this contributes to the development of the community. Grant et al. in Mozara (2013) also confirms that:

Music has a huge potential when used in conflict transformation, to prevent or to resolve conflict by non-violent means. It can assist in processes of healing and rehabilitation. Moreover, the world of music often can be a place of comfort, consolidation and safe haven. It provides a sense of purpose and feeling of power. In addition, playing music facilitates empathizing which is crucial for peace building (p22).

Yaa puberty rites music is used to resolve conflict in non-violent way. The Ogoni youths through Yaa music adhere and listen to instructions because the music contributes to the development of the community, supply information to the community and also culture and behavioural attitudes of the people are also transmitted through Yaa puberty rites music. The music is also used by the elders for relaxation and educating of the young people to avoid violence because violence does not pay. The Yaa music is also an avenue for inculcating the young people the values, customs and traditions of the community and encourages social integration among members and their neighbouring communities.

Yaa Puberty Rites Celebration in Ogoni

Yaa puberty celebration is the most important and most expensive traditional celebrations in Ogoni land. Yirakina (2010) confirms that “the importance of the title, Yaa cannot be over emphasized as it is a cultural right made exclusively and reserved for all sons and male children of Ogoni kingdom” (p. 42). It is the celebration which initiates young men into manhood and make them strong men. A man who did not participate in Yaa celebration cannot take chieftaincy title in the

community and will not pour libation to appease the gods of the land. The participation in *Yaa* puberty rites are of two categories: it can be participated as a virgin and non-virgin if the participant is married. The virgin participants are referred to as *legbo Yaa* while the married that is, non-virgin participants are referred to as *alo Yaa*. The celebration comes up once in two years and lasts for nine (9) months. It begins in a year and ends in another year from May-January of the following year. The participation is for indigenes and non-indigenes who have lived in the community for more than two years. Also, as long as the celebration lasts, the *Alo Yaa* participants are not expected to have carnal knowledge of their wives. It is a spiritual exercise in which the participants are endowed with lots of powers, protection and they are also made heroes of the community. Traditional music played during the celebration makes the participants and community happy, confident, spirit filled and love and also embrace peace and unity for the progress and success of the community in order to avoid conflict among themselves and neighbouring communities.

About The Music

The main musical instruments used in playing music of the *Yaa* puberty rite celebration are drums (*kere*), metal gongs (*gira*), slit wooden drum (*kor*) and xylophone (*geregere*). These instruments are played for the participants by those who have participated in *Yaa* puberty rite years back.



The *Geregere* (Xylophone) instrument

The melodic form of Yaa music is classified under the call and response form. Agu (1999) explains that the call and response form is the commonest form in African songs in which the call differ either in text or melody or both from the response. Both parts, in many cases, even differ in rhythmic structure. An exclamation is preferred in its place of short leading phrase (SLP) in cueing in the response in the call and response pattern. This is usually done by the soloist who also uses the exclamation for effecting repeats as many times as he wishes the song to last.

Music of Yaa Puberty Rite Celebration


Song 1: *LEGBO*

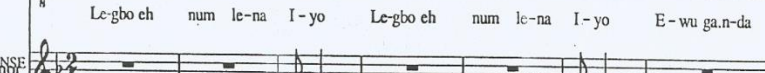
Folk Song	Literal English Translation
Call: <i>Wuga eh nan lena</i>	My sister said I'm no more her friend
Response: <i>Iyo</i>	Yes I did not play Yaa
Call: <i>Legbo ah nam lena</i>	I'm no more a man my mother's sister said
Response: <i>Iyo</i>	I did not play Yaa
Call: <i>Epwuga ndaka ko</i>	My father's sister said
<i>Nim bira Yaa</i>	I did not play Yaa
Response: <i>Iyo</i>	Yes
Call: <i>Me Yaa naa lubanda</i>	Yaa is not for me
<i>Kwugi naale ah iyo</i>	There is no money
Response: <i>Iyo</i>	Yes

LEGBO


OGONI FOLK SONG

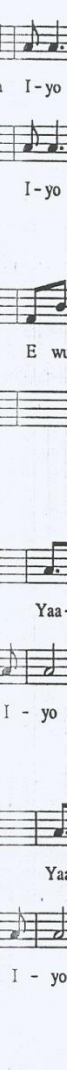
8

TCAL:  Le-gbo eh num le-na I-yo Le-gbo eh num le-na I-yo E-wu ga.n-da

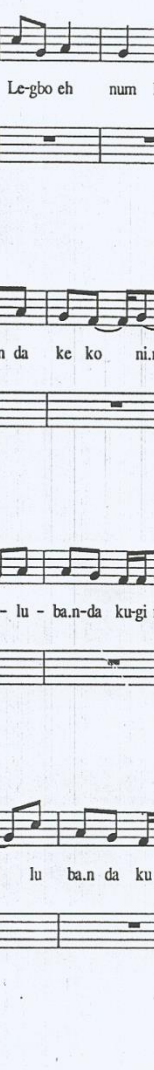
RESP:  I-yo I-yo


8

CA:L:  ka - ko - ni.m - b'rayaa E wu ga.n da ke ko ni.m - b'rayaa Ya - na - lu -

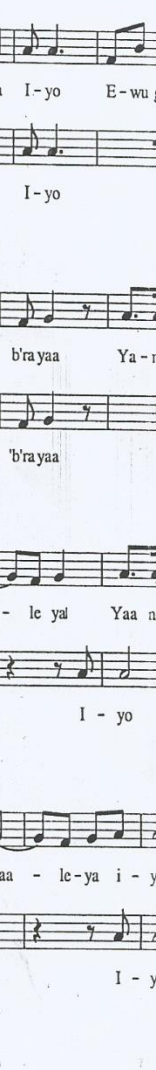
RESP:  'b'rayaa 'b'rayaa


14

CA:L:  ba.n-da ku-gi naa - le-ya Yaa-na - lu - ba.n-da ku-gi naa - le-ya Yaa na lu

RESP:  I - yo I - yo

20

CA:L:  ba.n da ku gi naa - le yo Yaa na lu ba.n da ku gi naa - le-ya i - yo

RESP:  I - yo I - yo

Yaa Puberty Rites Music and Conflict Resolution

Due to the expensive nature of *Yaa* puberty rite, the person who is of age to participate in the celebration laments on his treatment by the family members because he could not participate in *Yaa* puberty rite which makes him a full-fledged man in the community. The music is used to resolve conflict in the family because the family would realize that the person is interested in participating in *Yaa* puberty rite but due to lack of money the person could not participate. The family members and friends will contribute money to assist the person to participate in the *Yaa* celebration and this ushers in joy, love, unity, success, progress and stability.

Ibekwe (2014) affirms that “the country is flooded with healthy men, women and youths who are jobless” (p. 171). Lack of employment in the country has affected some youths and the inability to secure jobs within and outside the community has made most of the youths unable to participate in *Yaa* puberty rite celebration because they cannot finance the cost of the celebration by themselves. The *legbo Yaa* music brings peace, good relationship among siblings and neighbours to usher in bumper *Yaa* celebration.

Song 2: DO YA WA TERAA

Folk Song	Literal English Translation
Call: <i>Yaanuka, do</i>	<i>Yaa</i> is a thing of honour
Response: <i>Do Yaa waa ta ara</i>	Do <i>Yaa</i> don't run
Call: <i>Yaa nugia</i>	<i>Yaa</i> is for hero
Response: <i>Do Yaa wa ta ara</i>	Do <i>Yaa</i> don't run
Call: <i>Yaa nukwugi</i>	<i>Yaa</i> is for money
Response: <i>Do Yaa wa ta ara</i>	Do <i>Yaa</i> don't run

DOYA WA TERA

OGONI FOLK SONG

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of four systems, each with a 'CALL' line and a 'RESPONSE' line. The lyrics are written below the notes.

System 1:
CALL: Ya-nu-ka Ya-nu-ka Ya-nu-ka
RESPONSE: Do - yaa wa te - ra do - yaa wa te - ra do - yaa wa te -

System 2:
CALL: 7
Ya-nu-ka Ya-nu-kugi Ya-nu-kugi Ya-nu-gia
RESPONSE: ra do - yaa wa te - ra do - yaa wa te - ra do - yaa wa te - ra do -

System 3:
CALL: 14
Ya-nu-gia Ya-nu-ka Ya-nu-kugi
RESPONSE: yaa wa te - ra do - yaa wa te - ra do - yaa wa te - ra do - yaa wa te -

System 4:
CALL: 21
Ya - nu - gia Ya - nu - ka do - yaa wa te - ra
RESPONSE: ra do - yaa wa te - ra do - yaa wa te - ra do - yaa wa te - ra

The music has always been a useful instrument for conflict resolution; it is used to prevent disaster because *Yaa* makes one a hero and if participation in *Yaa* makes one a hero, the person will avoid any conflict both in the family, community and neighbouring communities. Upholding the above, Yirakina (2010) asserts:

Yaa qualifies an individual to touch ancestral antiquities, holy places and participation in elderly discussions and worship with the elders. Yaa also qualifies one to hold traditional titles. Rights to be allowed to eat, sit and talk with elders. It is a leadership training centre for the youths. The title is the beginning of maturity age. It qualifies every male child of Ogoni the rights to be given proper traditional burial when he dies. Only circumcised male children are allowed to participate (p. 42).

This implies that once the music of *Yaa* is played or sung, it reminds the participants of their roles in the community and the exalted office of *Yaa* as they are seen as the title holders and occupy leadership positions in the community and they would want to prevent crises both within and outside the communities. The music of *Yaa* in Ogoni land plays a significant role in conflict resolution in the community; it places the community to true morals and ethics and maintenance of norms and values in which Ogoni community is known for. Grant, M. J, Mollemann, R, Morlandsto, I, Muiz, S. C & Nuxoll, C, confirms that:

Music is very often used in order to promote peaceful solutions and to simply connect people. In the conflict transformation, music can sometimes be that highly needed bridge between a shared past and reconciliation. It brings people together allowing them to understand their own view of reality as well as the experiences of other group. It underlines common ground and communicates in both directions (p. 183).

The lyrics of the music of *Yaa* brings the people of Ogoni together for a common good. Once there is any conflict, the music of *Yaa* is used to resolve the conflict because *Yaa* music reminds them of their powers, intelligence, devotedness and they are protected by the gods of the land because it is their tradition.

Song 3: WAAKO 'DU

Folk Song	Literal English Translation
Ei - ye	Woman
Ei - ye	Woman
Waako'du	Woman goddess
Eiye	Woman
Oh ee aara tu eiye	Woman of fattening room
Oh ee aara du eiye	Welcome back from fattening room
Oh ee aara	Go from the house to the market
Bogo - eiye	Are you back from the market

WAAKO 'DU
OGONI FOLK SONG

CALL
Ei - ye cc.i - ye cc.i - ye o-we - a - ra-to

RESPONSE
Waa - koo du cc.i - ye

4
CALL
owe - a - ra du o-we - a - rato o-we - a - ra du owe a rato

RESP.
cc.i - ye cc.i - ye - cc.i - ye - cc.i - ye-

8
CALL
o we a ra du o-we - a - ra-bo - go

RESP.
- cc.i - ye cc.i - ye

Waako'du means goddess. The music is a tradition and they communicate with the gods of the land for the protection of their community from any conflict. The Yaa puberty rites celebrants are kept in a fattening room for six months and they are taught the music to encourage them from putting up any behaviour that will be inimical to other communities. The music serves as agent of self-control to them.

Song 4: YAAYAA

Folk Song	Literal English Translation
Yaa Yaa, Yaa, Yaa, Yaa	Yaa is Yaa, Yaa is Yaa ya,
Yaa, YaaYaa	Yaa, Yaa, Yaa
Yaaa ee Ee eh	Food is there
Yaa eh, Ee eh	Yaa is Yaa
Mi ee, Ee eh	Drink is there
Yaa ee, Ee eh	Yaa is Yaa

YAA YAA
OGONI FOLK SONG

The musical score is written in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature. It consists of three systems of call and response. The first system (measures 1-7) has a call line with lyrics 'Yaa ya yaa - yaa yaa - yaa yaa - yaa yaa - yaa yaa-cc' and a response line. The second system (measures 8-12) has a call line with lyrics 'yaa-cc yaa-cc yaa-cc yaa-cc yaa-cc' and a response line with lyrics 'Ee - ch Ee - ch Ee - ch Ee - ch Ee - ch'. The third system (measures 13-17) has a call line with lyrics 'zi - ya cc zia cc mii - cc yaa - cc' and a response line with lyrics 'Ee - ch Ee - ch Ee - ch Ee - ch Ee - ch'. The response lines in the second and third systems include 'PITCH BEND' markings above the notes.

YaaYaa puberty rite music is always sung on the last day of the celebration and it calls for merriment. When people are happy and celebrating, they will not involve in anything conflict that will destroy the community. The YaaYaa music makes them to protect their community from any external force because if their community is destroyed, there will be no merriment again and the community will be deserted, they will become refugees in another man's community. The YaaYaa music calls for unity and progress in the community.

Conclusion

The *legbo*, *YaaYaa*, *doya wa tera* and *waku'du* music plays significant role in conflict resolution in Ogoni land. The music stimulates and energizes the participants to protect their family compound and territories and reconcile separated siblings and communities. The Yaa is left in the hands of custodians of Ogoni custom and traditions and all the male folks that are qualified to participate in Yaa puberty rite. The Yaa puberty rite music ushers in success, love, creates awareness and preaches the message of peace and unity in the community and this fosters reconciliation and togetherness.

Recommendations

In view of the facts presented in this research, the researchers recommend that the Yaa puberty rite music should be sustained and maintained for future generations. Conflict is not good, therefore youths should be encouraged to accept peace through Yaa puberty rites music. It is also recommended that the music be produced electronically and distributed for more availability to members of the community in order to avoid conflict and embrace joy, success and love both within and outside the community. Yaa puberty rite celebration should be made less expensive so that more people would be able to participate in it and also embrace their culture, norms and values. This is necessary as families that participate in Yaa puberty rites are taught morality through the tradition.

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