

YORUBA CULTURAL IDENTITY AND CREATIVITY IN 9ICE'S AFRO HIP-POP MUSIC

Kayode Olusola, Ph.D.
and
Funmilola Onyesiku

Introduction

Music has been said to be the most common phenomenon in day-to-day activities of the traditional people of Africa. Yoruba people of West-Africa like any other tribe in Africa, exploit the use of music to express their inner-most conscience and emotions. There are varieties of music used by the African at different stages of life events and periods. The functionality of music for different purposes forms part of the aesthetics of music of Africans. These genres include music for religious worships, traditional folk, music for social purposes and dance, neo-traditional, popular and others; but a large number of music scholars have tended to rely upon a general division of musical types into traditional, popular, and art music categories. Yet in many ways the boundaries between these categories easily become blurred when put under scrutiny, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, these three categories are intimately intertwined and in conversation with each other. (Malczyński: 2011)

Olusola (2018) observed that voluble praise, encomium and reminiscence are always part of the traditional musical practice among the Yoruba and Africans in general. The hegemony of popular music amidst other musical types from the late 1940s has also resulted in its being the most patronized musical type in Nigeria. Just like in any other African and world society, there exist different forms of popular music in the Yoruba society which is the most frequently used and serves major function of entertainment in all social gatherings and recreation.

Hip hop originated from The Bronx in New York (Keyes 2004) while Nigeria's initiation into the hip hop culture began in the 1980s when the Sugarhill Gang's

'Rapper's Delight' prompted the emergence of local groups and MCs. The first rap album to be released in Nigeria was credited to Ronnie (Ron Ekundayo) with '*The way I feel*' in 1981 while the real mainstream success of the genre began with 'Sakomo' in 1998, the first hip hop hit song. This was followed by a series of transformations that ensured the genre's survival despite the ailing music industry of the 1990s.

According to Adedeji (2010) 'at present here in Nigeria a distinct sound has been cultivated'(BBC 1-Xtra 2008) and the country has finally arrived at its own variant of hip hop, Afro hip hop which is a unique blend of African beat and contemporary rap that has a distinct feature of multilingualism characterized by 'code-switching' or 'code-mixing', where the music is performed in a mixture of standard English and one or more indigenous languages'. In the opinion of Efe Omorogbe in Adedeji (2010):

The average Nigerian artist has been able to fuse a collage of [different] influences like reggae, dancehall, rap, techno [and] jazz to make music with strong appeal without being afraid to stamp his own identity or flavour into it, while people are not prejudiced towards this sound in terms of acceptance or comparison to international artists.(Pg..)

The major place of attraction and patronage of Nigeria's popular music is Lagos which is predominantly a Yorùbá speaking city. As Lagos has given birth to major popular music styles like Juju, Fuji, Highlife and Galala, In Nigeria, it is therefore not out of place to say that Lagos laid the foundation for the development of Nigeria's urban popular culture where the influence of Yorùbá language and culture is evident. Jùjú and Fújì were originally Yorùbá popular music that became a mainstream Nigerian popular music, and as might be expected their major language of delivery is Yorùbá, which is another area in which the Yorùbá culture has been able to permeate and represent the Nigerian popular music culture.

In recent times, creativity of the Hip-pop musicians in Nigeria have also inspired or informed by the popular Yoruba society and many of them have identified with Yoruba language and culture through their music lyrics, rhythms,

dance and costumes. This study is therefore, an inquiry into the Yoruba cultural identity and creativity in 9ice's (Abolore-Akande) Afro Hip-pop music in order to highlight the creativity in lyric contents, musical styles and techniques used which reflects the Yoruba cultural identity in his music. The data collected for the purpose of this study will also be collated for the purpose of musical and cultural analysis.

Theoretical Framework

This research rests on cultural theory Csikszentmihalyi's (2003) Creativity theory; and Identity theory of Rice (2010).

Creativity theory as promoted by Csikszentmihalyi considered the socio-cultural approach to the study of creativity and he posits that creativity cannot be investigated without taking into account its social function. Csikszentmihalyi's approach on the implications of a system perspective for the study of creativity offers a comprehensive model. It is capable of explaining the phenomenon of creativity in different artistic areas, which demonstrates that creativity is dependent on a number of social and cultural factors and occurs within a network. He observes further thus:

Performers work in the intersection between the composers' creative world and the audience, constantly exchanging and mediating between the different parties, so a performer's creativity can only be fully understood by considering the social and cultural networks within which they are situated. (pg.314)

Sawyer (2007) also argued that creativity is often understood as the same thing as originality, but the cultural, social and historical period in which creativity takes place, influences the way art is done and understood. 'Art is linked to a critical selection process in the community within which it takes place. Rather than going without being recognized during their lifetime, artistes exist within networks and communities. Sawyer explain further thus:

the assumption that creativity exclusively springs from the inner spirit of the individual is no longer tenable because formal training and deliberation, skillful, hard and conscious work, and the creating of new works out of a knowledge and awareness of tradition and convention are essential for the creative work of the artist.(Sawyer 2007)

In examining the creativity displayed in the music of 9ice, it would be discovered that the social and cultural factors of the society in which the music and musicians exist also play important roles as the source of creativity displayed in his music. Creativity also develops from different organized or spontaneous activities of the musician and that of other members of his band who are directly, or indirectly involved in the compositional and performance process of the music of 9ice (Abolore Akande).

The identity theory which is the second theoretical framework, on which this research rests, is that of Rice. It contends that a musical performance is the product of style identity of the producer or the identity of the society or culture in which such music exists or is being produced.

Rice has stressed the need for ethnomusicological writing on the relationship between music and identity to clarify or supply some theoretical framework informing the use of the term identity in order to make the discipline more grounded theoretically. He proposes that:

If we want to build a thematic brick, and thereby build our discipline in the domain of music and identity, where would we look for our theoretical moisture? It can come from at least three sources: (1) from general theories or paradigms we read from outside the discipline; (2) from reading on the topic of identity in other fields; and (3) from our own ethnographic work on music (Rice 2010: 321).

Rice stated further that “in recent times the relationship between music and identity has been one of the most common themes around which ethnomusicologists organize their work” (Rice, 2010: 319).

Adewale (2010) also explains that identity in its simplest terms mean the distinction or state of being oneself and not another: identity is what differentiates A from B and answers the question, Who am I? Apart from this, at times, identity can be a case of Who do I want to be? in which case it is by choice, a choice to identify with a purpose, a group or belief due to certain reasons.

Sequel to Adewale's assertion, David Newman in Mark (2000):

'Identity is our most essential and personal characteristic. It consists of our membership in social groups (race, ethnicity, religion, gender and so on), the traits we show and the traits others ascribe to us. Our identity locates us in the social world, thoroughly affecting everything we do, feel, say and think in our lives' (Pg.2).

Olusola (2019) posits that 'therefore no form of music can exist in isolation without the people and the society. The musical culture of a society, individual's musical background; experience and training are strong factors that contribute to creativity in the musicians and in the music which they produce.

The identity theory which also formed part of the theoretical framework of this research becomes necessary because of the societal factors which inform and influence creativity in individual musician, manifested in form of creating music in unique styles which distinguishes one music from the others, even if they are the same genre. These consistent unique differences in styles transformed into the musical identity of each musician or musical band.

Hip-Pop Music

Keyes (2002) in Olusola (2019) recorded that Hip-hop music is a genre or brand of music, developed in the 1970s, when Black parties became common in New York City, particularly the Bronx, a community well known for its large African American population. The term 'hip-hop' is often credited to Keith Cowboy, a rapper with the American singing group (the Furious Five) led by DJ Grandmaster Flash. It is believed that Cowboy created the term while teasing a friend who joined the United States Army by scat singing. For example, making melodies with the voice similar to musical instruments) the words "hip/hop/hip/hop" in a way that mimicked the rhythmic cadence of marching soldiers. Similarly, Douglas (2014) observed that:

Since hip-hop's humble beginnings in the streets and parks of the South Bronx in New York City, it has, in just thirty years, become a United States phenomenon and a global cultural and entertainment Movement.

Keyes identifies four essential elements of hip-hop culture: graffiti, break dancing, turn-tabling (or DJing) and rap. The most prominent of these in contemporary times is rap. Rap is a musical form that includes an underlying beat often created by a specialized beat-maker. 'In Rap aspect of Hip-pop music, the performer speaks rhythmically and in rhyme, generally to the beat' (Sakar, Winer and Sakar, 2005).

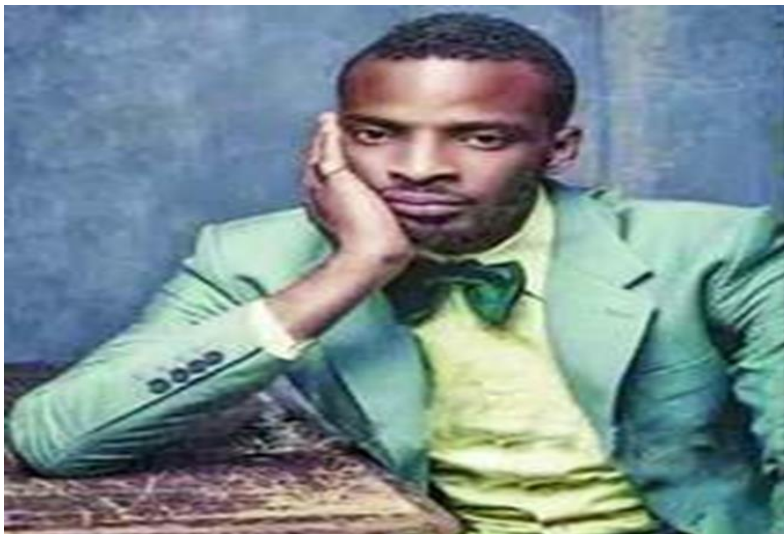
Nigerian Hip-Pop or Naija Hip-Pop Music

Nigerian hip-pop or Naija hip-pop music is a Nigerian local version of hip-pop which is made up of the contemporary hip-pop rhythm beats mixed with Nigerian local rhythm. Naija hip-pop music also involved the combination of English, Pidgin and local Nigerian languages, especially Yoruba language in the case of 9ice. Spoken-verses with coded words and slangs in a rap form mostly in Yoruba language constitute very prominent styles in performing Naija hip-pop.

Brief Biography of 9ice, Abolore Adegbola Akande

Abolore Adegbola Akande, popularly known as 9ice was born on 17 January 1980. He is a south-westerner from Ogbomoso in Oyo State but he grew up in the district of Bariga in Lagos. 9ice attended Abule Okuta Primary School and CMS Grammar School, and dropped out from his law course at the Lagos State University to concentrate on music. He grew up in a polygamous home of five wives and nine children. His parents found out about his singing career a year after it started around 2000. Before then, 9ice wrote his own songs, beginning at age 14; as a big fan of Pasuma Wonder, he kick-started his singing career with Fuji music.

He derives his inspiration from his environment, and music from the likes of Ebenezer Obey, King Sunny Adé, Tatalo Alamu, the late Alhaji Ayinla Omowura, and the late Alhaji Haruna Ishola . An oral interview with 9ice (2018) revealed that, after recording his first demo, 9ice joined the group Mysterious Boys, with whom he did a couple of tracks before going on to form his own, now defunct, group, 'Abinibi'. Having recorded his first demo, titled Risi De Alagbaja, in 1996, and his first solo song, "Little Money" in 2000, 9ice had to wait until 2005 before gaining recognition in the Nigerian music market.



9ice. (www.sunnews.com)

The first major break for 9ice came from his first single, "Little Money". Soon after this, he did collaborations with different Nigerian artistes that prompted the release of another hit single, "Ganja Man". ID Cabasa produced this single, which was released with other songs in March 2006. The reggae tone and playful style of the song made it an instant hit. 9ice later founded his own record company and released all other albums under that label, Alapomeji Records

9ice's first album did well, and included the songs "Little Money", "Ganja Man", "Make Dem Talk" and "Music Daddy". *Gongo Aso*, his second album, included songs covering success, originality, partying and women, as well as themes on the institution of marriage and gratitude. He has eight studio albums to his name which includes; *Certificate* (2007), *Gongo Aso* (2008), *Tradition* (2009), *Versus* (2011) *Bashorun Gaa* (2011), *Deluxe Version Versus & Bashorun Gaa* (2011), *CNN/GRA* (2014) and *ID Cabasa* (2016). He is recognized to be the first Nigerian hip-hop artiste to release two albums in a year which are *C.N.N* (Canceling Numerous Negativity) and *G.R.A* (Galvanizing Right Ahead).

Since late 2007, 9ice has featured prominently across Nigerian campuses in the Soundcity/MTN Campus Blast tours; 'Let's Go There' Tour with Ariya Entertainment in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Maryland in 2008;

Star Mega Jam in 2007-2010; and London Troxy in 2008 and 2010. 9ice performed at the Nelson Mandela's 90th Birthday Tribute concert (singing "Gongo Aso") in London on 27th of June 2008. All these shows and concerts were sold-out events. He also headlined sold-out shows in the Netherlands and Malaysia in October 2010 to mark the country's 50-year anniversary of independence. In 2010, 9ice embarked on an European tour through parts of Italy, Spain and Switzerland. He also performed live in Cyprus at Lions Garden, where many Nigerian students were in attendance.

Yoruba Cultural Identity in 9ice's Music

Oduola (2014) observed that 9ice is known for his use of the Yoruba language in his music, but mixes the Yoruba proverbs with English, pidgin-English, Hausa and Igbo language sometimes. According to her, 9ice's music has a spiky, twisty, very pavement-like dynamism, while his witty, intelligent lyrics convey a world of shiftless intellectual cranks. 9ice's development is shown, from precocious compositions adapting Yoruba and contemporary models in his hip-hop strums, to his individualist abstractions. Frankel (2006) also affirms that Yoruba music lyrics consists of so elaborate language, formulaic speech (metaphor, proverbs and poetry) and a deep tradition of oral history are central to traditional Yorùbá cultural identity. To a large extent, music of 9ice Abolore-Akande is unique in terms of the theme of its lyrics which focus majorly on Yoruba social issues, belief system and cultural phenomenon. The Yoruba cultural identity observed in 9ice's music are discussed below:

Use of Yoruba language: Adewale (2010) observed that Lagos as the most popular city in Nigeria, is a major factor that contributed to the development of Nigeria's popular music practice as exemplified in genres like Jùjú, Fújì and Afro-beat, and discovers that the Yorùbá language has gradually become the dominant medium through which artists express their musical identity as typified by current mainstream Hip-hop music.

From the year 2004 to date in Nigeria, Abolore Akande popularly known as 9ice was the outstanding Naija Hip-pop musician whom most of his song compositions characterized by the extensive use of Yoruba texts mixed with few English or Pidgin English. Most of his song texts consist of Yoruba adage,

aphorism, axiom, proverbs, folklores, and satires in Yoruba language. Example of such song is 'Gongo a So' (2008) as shown below:

Gongo A so

9ice

Gongo a so kutu-pu a wu Anywhere I deynow gongo a

so kutu-pu a wu any show I go now aji sebi Oyo laari Oyo o

sebi baba e-ni-kan I be double now gongo a so kutupu a wu

Translation:

Great things and ovations will happen
Anywhere I am
Great things and ovations will happen
At any show I perform
It's others that copy Oyo (Yorùbá) people
Oyo (Yorùbá) don't copy anybody
I'm double now
Times are changing, don't you see?

In the song above, 9ice the message of the music was communicated in Yoruba language while few words in Pidgin language just serves as supporting phrases. The reason according to 9ice in an oral interview in Adedeji (2010) was that:

'Yorùbá is what is selling for me... In the first album I made use of Yorùbá and English but in the course of marketing the album I realized that most tracks that people appreciate are the Yorùbá ones... Over the years in Nigerian music industry I've realized it [Yorùbá] as my number one selling point. (Interview, 2008)

Other songs by 9ice in this category include song title 'Gbamu Gbamu' (2010), 'Certificate' (2006) and 'Risi De Alagbaja'(1996) among others.

Yoruba religious believe system: It is also observed that numerous song compositions by 9ice consist of texts that express the Yoruba traditional religious belief in Olodumare (Supreme Being). Yorùbá religious belief is centered on belief in Olòdúmarè (the Supreme Being) and the many Orisas (deities) which form the link between Olòdúmarè and man. According to Omojola (1989) 'the association of music with language (words), dance, religions, social and other extra-musical ideas and activities is a common feature of musical performance in Nigeria'. (p. 111)

In 9ice songs tracks like 'Tradition', 'Olorunsogo', 'Ori Olowo', and Bashorun Gaa/Versus (2011), 9ice sang the attributes and praises of Olodumare (God) therefore identifying himself with the Yoruba traditional believe system which is centered on Olodumare.

Use of oriki (Yoruba praise chant/song): Each Yoruba individual is identify with his or her personal Oriki (Praise name) and each family lineage has its own Oriki which is applicable to all the members of that family. Singing or chanting of Oriki to identify and praise an individual or the attributes of a family, is one of the most significant phenomenon among the Yoruba people. Barber's work (1991) on Yorùbá oral poetry establishes the fact that oriki (a form of Yorùbá personal praise song) is fundamental to identity in that it is within the text of this oral poetry that memory is aroused, and a persona or identity is evidently dependent on memory as personal oriki are means by which a... man's reputation is established'

9ice in different tracks of his music has been identify himself with the praise name (Oriki) '*Adìgún Alápòméji*' (the cute one with two pockets). He also sang the Oriki of Ruggedman (another Hip-pop musician) as '*Opomulero moja lekan*' (the pillar that holds the structure) in the track 'Ruggedy Baba' This reflects the multi-faceted influence of Yorùbá culture of Oriki in 9ice's music depicts that his music in its totality, can be seen as representing the Yorùbá ethnic identity.

Exhibition of Yoruba traditional costumes: Generally, costume is part of the major features and the point of attractions among popular musicians. Musicians

appear in a manner that will make them look attractive and acceptable to their fans. Among all the Nigeria Hip-pop musicians, 9ice has been observed to have appeared in Yoruba native attires more than the other Hip-pop musicians. This is evident in his videos and live performances where he appeared in Agbada, Sokoto and Fila (native cap).



www.africahit.com

Another is shown in the picture below where 9ice performed with Ruggedman's video track 'Ruggedy Baba' where he sang the opening section 'Atewo mo ba'la'.



www1.pictures.gi.zimbio.com

In this video, 9ice appeared in a Yoruba attire known as '*Dansiki*' and '*Fila abeti-aja*' to create for himself an identity as a Yoruba musician

Creativity in 9ice's Hip-Pop Music

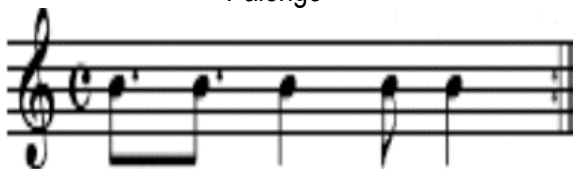
Creativity in vocal nuances: Creativity of Abolore Akande (9ice) in term of his vocal nuances is manifested in his synergy of Hip-pop with appropriated elements from fúji music ranging from vocal quality and delivery pattern, language use, and to production style in terms of sampling and instrumentation. As observed by Adewale Ayuba a prominent Nigerian Fuji musician while commenting on 9ice's music, to him, '9ice is a fúji musician. He now infused R'n'B and American rhythm into his music. That's not good enough because he only have voice that is fúji' (Ayuba quoted in Pius, 2009).

Ayuba's observation is evident in 9ice's voice quality and timbre which is closely in line with some Yoruba traditional and fuji musicians. 9ice have shown originality in his own peculiar vocal nuances of creatively blending Yoruba language with English and Pidgin English languages in such a way that the message in his music is well communicated.

Creativity in musical instruments and accompaniments: 9ice's has also displayed creativity in the instrumental accompaniment of his music by exploiting the use of Yoruba local drums like, Agogo, Sekere and Gangan (talking drum) which are instruments that plays major role in the performance of Juju and Fuji music, combined with western instruments used for the contemporary Hip-Pop accompaniment. This invariably gives his music a new texture and rhythmic flavor which is different from other hip-pop music but familiar and acceptable to his fans especially in Southern part of Nigeria.

The use of these Yoruba local musical instruments created a new sense of rhythm in the music. The 'konkolo' and 'palongo' rhythms which were typical of the timeline rhythm used in highlife, fuji and juju music were later adopted in some of his music.

Palongo



Konkolo



In his song track title 'Living Things' and 'Money' are the example of songs where 9ice made use of palongo rhythm. It is therefore worthy to note that 9ice displayed creativity by localizing hip-pop music and makes it a 'Nigerian version' or 'Yoruba version' of hip-pop music.



9ice in a stage performance (www1.pictures.gi.zimbio.com)

Creativity in dance-steps: It is evident in the 9ice's video productions and live performances observed that he creatively adopted different Nigerian traditional and locally created dance-steps into his musical performances. Dance-steps like 'Zanku' (Hausa), 'Galala' (by the Ajegunle boys), 'Etigi' (Efik/Ibibio) and 'Sakiti' (Agatu) among others are observed in the production of 9ice's music videos and live performances.



9ice in a stage performance (i.ytimg.com)

The adoption of these local dance-steps in 9ice's musical performances as observed by Adedeji (2010) and DJ Wolex (oral interview) is as a result of the exploit of local musical instruments and fusion of local Nigerian rhythms into his music. It was also observed in the cause of this research that, because of the adaptation of local Nigerian dances in the music of 9ice, it is therefore open and easy to dance by both old and young people irrespective of their cultural background or status.

Research Findings

In this study, research findings revealed that 9ice Abolore-Akande through his music has proliferated Yoruba cultural concepts, philosophy and aesthetics through the extensive use of code-switching in Yoruba language, musical instruments and rhythms. Also, the exploit of Oriki (praise chanting/singing) as well as the exhibition of Yoruba traditional fabrics and fashion style as costumes, both in his live performances and videos. It is therefore worthy to note that 9ice's music has serves as a projector and promoter of Yoruba culture and archive for preservation of Yoruba cultural precepts.

9ice also displayed his creativity through the fusion and blending of Nigerian local rhythms with the contemporary hip-pop rhythms. He has as well carefully and stylishly combine the use of Yoruba language which include proverbs, aphorism, axiom and folklores with the use of English language and Pidgin English with the

misplacing the messages in the music. Another is the adoption of some Nigerian traditional dance-steps by 9ice into the stage and video performances of his music.

Conclusion

Since the inception of Nigerian version of Hip-pop music in 1981 before it became flourished around the country in 1998, Nigerians have witnessed rapid development of the genre in the hands of Abolore Akande 9ice and other different musicians who have in one way or the other creatively contributed to this developments and its widely acceptance among the popular society in Nigeria.

The research concluded that most of the music of 9ice Abolore Akande promotes Yoruba cultural and moral values on which the Yoruba Cultural philosophies are based. Also 9ice's creativity is informed by the Yoruba community and culture because most themes are structured around day-to-day environmental and social phenomenon. Through all these, 9ice has been able to create an identity for his music and himself as a 'Yoruba Hip-pop' musician.

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Interviews

S/N	Name	Location	Date
1	Abolore Akande 9ice	Usborne Estate, Ikoyi Lagos	20th Dec. 2018
2.	Don Jazzy	Lekki phase 1, Lagos	22nd Feb. 2019
3.	DJ Chris	The Prime Studio, Ikeja Lagos	14th March, 2019
4.	DJ Wolex	Oriwu Complex, Ikorodu Lagos.	15th March 2019.
5.	I.D Cabasa	Omole Estate, Ikeja Lagos.	20th March, 2019.
6.	Akindele S.A	H.12, Mambilla close, Usborne Offshore Estate, Ikoyi, Lagos	22nd March, 2019.

Discography

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- _____ (2009) Tradition. Edge Records.
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_____ (2011) 'Versus'Alapomeji Records.
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_____ (2016) 'Id Cabasa' Alapomeji Records.
_____ (2018) 'G.O.A.T'Alapomeji Records.
_____ (2017) 'Living Things' Alapomeji Records.
Ruggedman featuring 9ice (2007) 'Ruggedy Baba' Rugged Records, 2007.