

TRADITIONAL MUSIC AS AGENT OF INFORMATION DISSEMINATION IN THE FACE OF COVID-19: RAZAQ ỌLÁYÍWỌLÁ'S FÌDÌMÓLÉ IN RETROSPECT

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Introduction

The noble Coronavirus global pandemic otherwise known as Covid-19 was first identified in Wuhan, China in December, 2019 as an isolated disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2). Like wildfire, the disease started spreading to other countries of the world. The rate of spread of the disease prompted the World Health Organization (WHO, date?) to declare the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International concern on 30th January, 2020 and declared it a pandemic on 11th March. The negative effect of the disease was felt throughout the world and this is evident in the fact that as at 18th September, 2020, there are more than thirty (30) Million cases and more than 944,000 deaths (Wikipedia).

Covid-19 was first noticed in Nigeria on 27th February, 2020. The arrival of the disease in Nigeria created panic in the country and its presence called for the introduction of various measures by the Federal government through its established health institution responsible for the control of diseases, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (N.C.D.C.), to curb the spread of the virus. Unfortunately, Nigerians considered some of the measures introduced by the Federal and State governments too stringent. For example, the total lockdown and restrictions on religious gatherings in the heat of the pandemic raised a lot of dust in form of controversies. Attempts were therefore, made by concerned citizens to assist the government in stressing the need to abide by the measures introduced and stay safe. One of the strongest means of disseminating vital information is

music. Many Nigerian musicians employed audio and virtual materials to support measure put in place by Government to curb the spread of Covid-19 and to encourage the already infected to seek medical attention. One of such musicians is Razaq Oláyíwólá also known as Òjòpagogo. Razaq's audio album titled "Fidímólé" is loaded with all information needed by an individual to stay healthy in the face of the ravaging coronavirus pandemic. According to Lomax (1968), African folk song style is dominated by the features of the Bantu-African hunter core. On this he wrote:

The major approach to song is choral and antiphonal, with the characteristic use of overlap, so that at least two parts are frequently active at the same time. A well - blended, rhythmically tight, often polyphonic choral performance is the norm in most areas. The major vocal style is clear and unconstructed, but with playful and intermittent use of high register, yodel, nasality, rasp and forcefulness (Lomax, 1968:94-95).

Nketia (1974), describing African textual rhythm, identified strict and free vocal rhythm. Strict vocal rhythm refers to the setting of songs texts to regular basic pulses, while in free vocal rhythm, there is no feeling of a regular basic pulse, no 'metronomic' background. Concerning melody, Akpabot (1998:32) identified characteristics of African strophic melodies as being short, repetitive, non-modulatory, tending to more downwards after a start and hovering around a tonal center.

Razaq Oláyíwólá

Razaq Oláyíwólá (Òjòpagogo) is an indigene of Ìsẹ̀yin in Òyó State. He was born over four decades ago in Alaodi Compound, Akẹ̀san in Òyó town. He started his educational experience at A.U.D Primary School, Ebedi, Iseyin. For his secondary education, he attended Otu Community Grammar School, Òtu, and Anwar ul Islam High school, Ìsẹ̀yin, all in Òyó State. He later proceeded to the Polytechnic, Ìbàdàn to study Music Technology.

Razaq started his theatre career in 1983 under Ìlúmòkin Theatre Group led by Jẹ̀lìlì Rájì Abòdẹ̀rìn popular known as Baálẹ̀ Lárinká and later join Àlàó Shórunké Theatre Group in 1985, where he spent five years. He, thereafter started his own group Young Star International in 1990. The group metamorphosed to Fúnmi

ÀkànkéOnisinimá and later became Razol Entertainment. Razaq has produced many films like Bàbá No Go Die (1996), Òdòdólgbà (1998), EjòOrí Àpáta (2000), Mákànjè (20001), Àyàn Àgalú (2002), Àsírí Ológbò (2003), Ayépéméjì (2004), Ìshòla Kúkù (2005), Àrà Kengé, (2005), ÌlúÀwọn Àjé (2006), ÌdòwúÒgbo (2006), Rántí Ilé (2007) Tí Mo Bá JéOlórùn (2007), Sabérédowó (2008). He has also directed over ten films including Afaségbèjò, ÀkànjìElégbèlsáná, Ìfè Kọ Fààrì, Owó BayéJé, Òrófó, ÌyàwóÀrèmo, Okùn Ìfè Yì, Òkúta Èlà, Ta Ló Lèbi, Kòngé Ire, Èjè Kan Nàà, Alápàárútu, Ìshòla Ògò. He has taken theatre to places like Cotonou, Ghana, Togo and Cote De Voir to mention a few.

Apart from been a theatre practitioner, he is also a musician. He produced sound tracks for some notable films like Oláníyọnu, ÌjàÀbíkú, ÀníkéÒgò, Ilèkùn Olórùn, Dèhinbò, Àfònjá, Bashòrun Gáà to mention a few. He has featured in many films like Àyànmọ by Late Chief Hubert Ogunde, Oju Oro, by elder Moses Omilani, Edan by Laja Ogunde, Eru Wura, by Prince Jide Kosoko, Ori by Muyiwa ademola, Kerengbe To Fo by Akin Olaiya, Agba Meta, by waheed ijaduade, Amope Olowo Sibi, by opeyemi Fajemileyin, Eto Mi by Late Funmi Martins, Aago Alaago by Moji Olaiya, Aso Funfun by Ade Adele and Asake Arogbon Dara, by Adebayo Salami to mention a few. Razaq Oláiywólá is married with children.

Razaq Oláiywólá is a member of Oyo state, Association of Nigeria Theatre Arts Practitioners (A.N.T.P.) and he was formally the Chairman of the association in Iseyin local Govt. He later rose to occupy the position of the Auditor at the State level. He has travelled both within and outside Nigeria and he has also received some meritorious awards like the Outstanding Actor of the Year 2003 by Federation of Oyo State Students' Union of Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta, The Icon of Dynamic Actor 20006, A.I.O.B.A.M.D.P 2004 by Association of Theatre Arts Students, University of Ibadan, Alagbede Ohun by Egbe Akeko Ijinle ede Yoruba of Oyo State College of Education, Oyo, The Cradle of World Civilization 2005 by African Youth Congress, Gambia, Outstanding Performance in Theatre Arts 2006 by Oyo State Agency for Youth Development, The Dynamic Actor of the Year 2009 by Association of Ibadan Indigene, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso, Aare Agbasaga Akomolede E Yoruba by Egbe Akekoo Yoruba, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu Ode. He is currently one of the notable Producers, Directors, Script writers and Actor in

the Nigerian theatre arts industry (Nollywood). Razaq is happily married with children.

Fidímólé and Covid-19

Fidímólé is rendered in dàdàkúàdà syle, a traditional music style common among the Yoruba people of Kwara state. The music composed and recorded by Razaq Oláyíwọlá is aimed at lending his voice to the global awareness campaign on the Covid-19 global pandemic. The emergence of the song became necessary as the world was in chaos and there seems to be no solution to the scourge.

The decision to release this type of song into the social space of Nigeria in general and the southwestern part of the country in particular was not out of place as the role of musicians in the traditional setting clearly support such contributions. According to Olaniyan (2005) 'Music in Africa is an art that has been integrated into the activities of the society'. He explained that the use and function of music as an intrinsic value in the general aspects of life of the people. In line with Olaniyan's submission, Merriam (1964:209) also stated that 'when we speak of the uses of music, we are referring to the ways in which music is employed in human society, to the habitual practice or customary exercise of music either as a thing in itself or in conjunction with other activities'.

While discussing the role of traditional musicians in government, Okafor (2005:9) stated that 'whether we are governing ourselves in the democratic way or authoritarian way, the musician has a role, first and foremost, because he is a musician and practices a certain type of art, which is useful to the society, which can guide the society, which reflects the society, and which can look back and record the society. He stressed further that:

He (musician) shares a role of keeping a watchful eye on the going-on in the society. He is, therefore, a social critic and guides his people according to the prevailing norms. He foresees and he reflects. He has his hands on the social control lever. (Okafor, 2005:10)

He, then summarizes his views by asserting that:

in the traditional society, 'the bulk of our people have grown straight out of that culture and profess, uphold, maintain and conserve it with all its tenets'. He explained that the traditional

society has its roles, its systems of government, its system of continuity and its system of maintenance of law and order. In it, the imaginaries, the world view, oral literature, the norms of behavior, and the ethics are founded straight on its culture. Okafor (2005:4).

According to Na'allah (1992), Dàdàkúàdà is a folk genre of music. Its lyrics are made of eulogy, ballad (ijálá), incantation, invocation and some abusive words. Close observation of the performance of dádàkúàdà revealed that it consists of both speech and music. The performance of dádàkúàdà involves musical activities between the lead singer, the back-up chorus, a complimentary vocal and the instrumentalists. The major instrument used in accompanying dádàkúàdà is the Kànnàngó, an hour-glass shaped drum of the dundun family. Other instruments are the Omele-akó and the Omele-abo also of the dundun family.

Fidímólé started with very short riff from kànnàngó after which there were various exclamations by the singers:

Lead: Yéèè!

Response: Ayéè

Complimentary vocal: Òjòpagogo káàbò (Welcome Òjòpagogo)

Lead: Ah!

Response: Ah!

Lead: Yeh!

Response: Yeh!

Lead: Un!

Response: Un! Ènú wá ká gbogbo wa pátá (We all have been forcefully subdued).

All the exclamations were made unaccompanied. Immediately after the exclamations, there is the speech section of dádàkúàdà in which there are conversations between the lead and the chorus with occasional complimentary statements from the complimentary vocal. There is a free rhythmic accompaniment by the drums as a background for the speech. The theme of the speech is about the fact that the emergence of Covid-19 compelled the entire citizens of the world in general and Nigerians in particular to adjust to certain protocols in order not to be affected by the virus.

Razaq, therefore, expressed his surprise about the whole saga and therefore expressed his views thus:

Lead: Àsé tèyàn òbá tìi sáré, olúwarè ò rí ònkan lée ni (so if someone is on a spot, there is nothing chasing him yet)

Response: Gbogbo ọ̀tòkùlù ilú wá di bàbá n pálò, (every influential personality is restricted to his living room)

tí gbogbo wọ̀n wá fidímólé (and they compulsorily stayed at home)

Complimentary vocal: Bẹ̀ni o (Yes)

Lead: Gbogbo olówó ti gbé jé, (every wealthy individual became gentle)

Response: Àwọ̀n mekúnnù náà wá se wọ̀ò lóḡḡè (as well as the low-classed citizens)

Lead: Gbogbo ẹ̀ni tó n sáréowó ká (aa da, aa da), (all those running after money)

gbogbo èyàn tó n sáré ipò tẹ̀lẹ̀ (those who were looking for positions)

Mo fẹ̀ di eléyíí, mo fẹ̀ di tọ̀hún (I aspired to be this or that)

kò wá jé ònkan lójúu gbogbo wa, a wá sẹ̀npẹ̀, (became meaningless to us, we were seriously subdued)

Response: la dáké ariwo, (we, therefore, kept quiet)

onikálukúu m̀t̀m̀wà ló wá fidimólè, la fidímólé (ta n fẹ̀ kú) (we all stayed at home)

Razaq, thereafter, admonished those who did not want to accept lockdown of activities in Nigeria thus:

Lead: Èrò tètè dé, èrò tètè dé (you need not be in a hurry)

Complimentary vocal: ọ̀we oniyèyè Tóyè (proverb of Toye the clown)

Lead: tẹ̀rò náà là n wí fẹ̀rò (the measures are to our advantage)

Ìjọba tó ní á fidímólé , ó yẹ ká máa lù wọ̀n lóḡḡ ẹ̀nu ni, (we should, rather, praise the government that asked us to stay at home)

To rii Covid-19, Corona virus ni wọ̀n níáfídímólé (it is all because of covid-19, coronavirus)

Wọ̀n ní á jòkòónlẹ̀ ká má baà gbé jonbo, (we are asked to stay at home to be safe)

wọ̀n ní á se gàyà diẹ ká má baà kárùn (we are asked to stay at home so that we could be free from disease)

Ọ̀lọ̀hun má febi ikú pa wá (God will not let us die as a result of what to eat)

Response: Ààmín o (Amen)

Lead: Bí kòró bá lọ tán, (when coronavirus disappear)

gbogbo ẹni ebí pa ni ó padà jayo (all those who are hungry will surely eat to their satisfaction) Complimentary: Bẹmii báwà, irètín bẹ (once there is life, there is hope)

Lead: Sùgbón téèyàn bá se hànran hànran (but if someone is too restless)

tó lébi n pà hun tó jáde (and go out complaining of hunger)

tó bọ sówọ kòró, ó tán nùun ò (and get infected with coronavirus, that is the end)

Àtenujè ní pawá o (we will not die as a result of what we eat)

Complimentary: Àmín o (amen)

Lead: Kíí sè wọ nikan lebi n pa (you are not the only one that is hungry)

Complimentary: à bí o (very correct)

Lead: Kíí sè wọ nikan ni ọn ní o dúró nílẹ (you are not the only one confined home)

Complimentary: arebi pa (a glutton)

Lead: Àbùkù tó bá ti kàn 'pọ̀lọ̀pọ̀nìyàn ó ti dà̀n kòò (this situation is same for everybody) Complimentary: ó d'ẹgbejọdà (uniform for all)

Lead: Ká rín ká pọ̀ (it is good to walk as a group)

Response: yíyẹ ní yẹni, (it will be good for all)

Lead: Ká rín ká pọ̀ yíyẹ ní yẹni (it is good to walk as a group, it will be good for all) orọkòró kọ, bẹ̀yàn bá rinrin iyà, (this does not apply to coronavirus, if you dear walk carelessly)

tópọ̀pọ̀ iyà tó jáde lékòró lówọ, ti ẹ̀báa nù un o (and get infected with coronavirus, that will be disastrous).

Hardly would one listen to *dàdàkúàdà* music without hearing abusive words. Therefore, the effect of the this is felt in the statement by the complimentary vocal who uses such derogatory words like 'òwe oníyèyẹ Tóyè' (the proverb of Toye the clown) and 'arebi pa' (a glutton) attested to this fact.

The next section is a song of call and response between the lead and the chorus. There were no complimentary statements at this section because it is purely musical. The theme in this section changed to how to keep ourselves safe during the Covid-19 pandemic. Razaq, therefore, itemize various measures needed to keep safe. The measures he itemized included staying at home and measures targeted at curbing the spread of the virus. He expressed his views thus:

Lead: Wọn niẹ gbé lée yín (you are asked to stay home)

Response: Wọn ní ẹ gbé lée yín

Lead: Ẹ má yọ fòkifòkì biẹkẹta itan (do not go about sloppily)

Response: Wọn ní ẹ gbé lée yín

Lead: Mi ò moun tẹẹ sonù tẹẹn wá kiri (I do not know what you lost and go out to search)

Response: Wọn ní ẹ gbé lée yín

Lead: Kẹ má lọ fara kó (to avoid getting into trouble)

Response: Kẹ má lọ fara kòn kan

Lead: Bẹ bá wá fẹ dè 'nàn an kòró (if you want to prevent coronavirus)

Response: Bẹ ba fewa de 'nàn an kòró

Lead: Wọn niẹ má t'owó bọ 'mú (you are asked not to dip your hands into your nose)

Response: Wọn ní ẹ má t'owó bọ 'mú

Lead: Bẹ bá fẹ sín ẹ figbón bo 'mú (cover your nose with your elbow when sneezing)

Response: Bẹ bá fẹ sín ẹ figbón bo 'mú

Lead: Ẹ fẹ wú'kọẹ figbon bo 'mú (cover your nose with your elbow when coughing)

Response: Bẹ bá fẹ sín ẹ figbón bo 'mú

Lead: Ẹ yé e má lọ s'áwùjọ (please avoid social gathering)

Response: Wọn ní e má lọ s'áwùjọ

Lead: Ẹ ta kété síra yín (maintain social-distancing)

Response: E ta kete sira yin

Lead: Mára f'owó rẹ nígbàgbogbo (wash your hand regularly)

Response: Mára f'owó re nígbàgbogbo

Lead: Ẹ fi sanitáísà pawó (rub your hand with sanitizer)

Response: Ẹ fi sanitáísà pawó

Lead: Bẹ bá jáde, tẹ bá wọlé (when you enter your house having gone out)

Response: Bí e ba jáde, te bá wọle

Lead: Aso tẹ báwò kẹe bọ (remove the cloths on you)

Response: Aso tẹe báwò kẹe bọ

Lead: B'òòrùn bá wàẹ yáa sa (spread them if there is sun)

Response: B'òòrùn bá wà ẹ yáa sa

Lead: Biò s'òòrùn, ẹ bọ, ẹ fọẹ (if there is no sun, remove the cloths and wash)

Response: Bí ò s'òòrùn, ẹ bọ, ẹ fọẹ

He concluded information on safety measures to curb the spread of coronavirus by advising those who noticed any symptoms of sickness to approach health workers for medical care. He expressed his suggestion concerning this:

Lead: Tẹ bá fura pófẹ dé síi yín (if you feel sick)

Response: Tẹ bá fura pọ fẹ dé síi yín

Lead: Ẹ ké s'áwọn elétòilera ni (consult health workers)

Response: Ẹ ké s'áwọn elétò ilera ni

Lead: Kí wọn ó le dáàbò bọ́ (so that you will be protected)

Response: Kí wọn ó le dáàbò bọ́

Lead: Ko má ba kúkúu corona (so that you will not die of coronavirus)

Response: Ko ma ba kuku corona

Lead: Ko má ba kó bá wọn tó kù (so that you will not pass the virus to others)

Response: Ko ma ba kuku korona

Lead: Coronavirus

Response: Coronavirus o

Lead: Covid-19

Response: Coronavirus o

He concluded the music with another speech in which he appealed to Nigerian citizens in general and the Yoruba speaking communities throughout the world to stay at home in order to be safe and prevent spreading the disease to others. He, therefore, referred to the world as a 'village'.

Lead (speech): Ẹ dákun ẹ fidímólé o, (please stay at home)

ẹ má jẹ́ẹ́ kó jaganjagan b'ára abúlé o (so that you will not put the villagers in distress)

Ẹ dákun, stay home, stay safe

Textual and Structural Analysis of Fídímólé

Text:

Africans generally, hold music in high esteem. They view music as a concept which touches all aspects of human existence. The same treatment is given to all elements that form music, especially song texts. The meaning of a song is buried in its text. This is better explained by Nketia (1974) who classified traditional African song texts as cradle songs, reflective songs, historic songs and general songs. Akpabot's interpretative classification of traditional Africa song texts are higher than those suggested by Nketia but are not consistent. In one of his works

(1998:95), he identified 14 categories, namely: historical, social control, insult, obscene, praise, children's, funeral, work, war, humorous, communication, women's, philosophical and ritual. According to him, these could be re-grouped under three main headings: (a) praise songs (b) songs of insult (c) songs for entertainment. According to Akpabot (1998), in Africa, all song texts serve special functions which constrain their form and style. He acknowledged the fact that African song texts are very important when he confirmed that in the African experience, the text of a song is more important than the time.

In line with the submissions of the aforementioned scholars on song text, the text used in *Fidímólé* clearly explained the meaning of the song. The song is expressing the need to adhere strictly to rules and regulations in order to be free of coronavirus that is presently rampaging our world.

Language:

Fidímólé is presented in Yoruba language except for some sections where code-mixing of English language with Yoruba. The code-mixing became necessary as a result of non-availability of Yoruba interpretations of such words. The English words used in the song include Covid-19 and coronavirus. Other English words are used to conform with the recent slogans attached to this period of pandemic, such words as 'stay home, stay safe'.

Form:

The main structure of the song is ternary (A:B:A), that is, speech - song - speech. The song is predicated on the call and response pattern of compositional techniques, which is evident in the entire song. This is not a surprise as one of the main elements of *dàdàkùàdà* is the conversation between the lead vocal and the chorus. The complimentary statement is just a confirmation of some views expressed by the lead vocal.

Instrumentation:

The song is accompanied by the group of hour-glass of the *kànnàngó* and the duo of the *omele*, *akò* and *abo*. The instruments serve mainly as a rhythmic background for the song.

Conclusion

The role of music cannot be substituted with any other means of communication. Music generally and the traditional genre in particular has been playing critical roles in creating atmosphere of understanding to issues that are germane to our existence in this world of ours. Many nutty nuts were cracked with the help of traditional music. Music is unique in the sense that human beings tend to hear messages in music better than in spoken words. Music is one of the best means of propagating ideas which are inimical to the existence and well-being of man. Ideas are better expressed in music than in ordinary speech. People are fascinated by music than by speech, maybe because of its organization and (or) because of some elements that abound in music but are missing in spoken words. For instance, music has such elements as tempo, dynamics and rhythm, which are absent in figure of speech.

Therefore, musicians should be encouraged to continue to operate under conducive environments adequate funds, musical instruments and equipment. When musicians are encouraged and supported, they become interested in issues of concern and contributed their quotas as expected. Traditional music is, therefore, one of the numerous blessings of nature to the world,

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