

THE RISE AND FALL OF *ERI OZURUMBA* DANCE GROUP OF AGBA NDELE COMMUNITY IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

EZEBUBE, AUGUSTINA CHIZOBA PhD

ORCID iD: 0009-0006-8237-3223

Abstract

Agba Ndele community in Emuoha Local Government Area of Rivers State, South-South Nigeria has existed for years as a peaceful community and lived together as one family. Eri Ozurumba in the community means 'dance whose fame reigns in all communities'. Its cultural dance is one of the best dance groups in AgbaNdele community where it serves as a unifying factor to the community. The crises which engulfed the community for three (3) years (2016-2019) negatively affected the dance's popularity. Membership of the group is open to all the members of the community both male and female. The aim of this paper is to x-ray the rise and fall of Eri Ozurumba cultural dance group of Agba Ndele community. The Eri dance originated from Choba, a neighbouring community. Primary and secondary research methods were employed, key members of the group were interviewed, books, journals, conference papers on related issues were also consulted. At the post-crisis stage when the community became peaceful again and members returned, the dance group abstained from performing the community's exclusive dance. To address this problem, community and the group leadership sought for membership drive and enlisted members for the Eri dance performance the community's exclusive dance. It is recommended that additional members should undergo training to serve as instrumentalists.

Keywords; Rise and Fall, Eri Ozurumba, Dance and Community

Introduction

Dance is part of every musical activity performed in any given community. It is the response or movement of the body by individuals to portray the rhythm being performed by the musical instruments. *Eri* dance is a cultural dance of *Agba Ndele* community and it plays a significant role among members of the community. The dance unites community members and ushers in joy, success and love among them. Onwuka (2012) affirms that "every community practices the art of music making and dancing, for ritual, ceremonial or socio-cultural purposes,(p.2)" The *Eri* dance of *Agba Ndele* is for ceremonial and socio-cultural purposes, they accept ceremonial invitations and display at various events in the community therefore the dance is performed both within and outside the community. Oguno and Nwamara (2014) posit that:

The present generation can learn a lot about the past life and values of his community by listening to and take part in folklores. Through folklores, proverbs could be taught and better appreciated in schools because examples are drawn from the child's immediate environment (p.116).

The elders and youths in the community learn the norms, values and genealogy of the people through the music and dance of this group and they get accustomed to their environment through the performance of *Eri Ozurumba* dance. The traditional songs (folk songs) of the community are learnt and preserved from generation to generation for the progress and unity of the community and to regulate social behaviors. Agu (1996) affirms that 'traditional music is rooted and perpetuated by the people, race, region or nation. It is more directly associated with traditional, religious and political systems' (p. 15) the *Eri Ozurumba* dance is associated with the culture, religious and political system of *Agba Ndele* community. They perform in political rallies, festivals, cultural events which has to do with cultural heritage and religion of the people, they are relevant both in sacred and secular performances. For years, communities may thrive in peace, relishing their rightful privileges. However, a sudden crisis can ignite turmoil, turning a tranquil community into wanderers in unfamiliar territory, an unhealthy situation for any family if not properly handled. In an oral interview, Chief Elder Stephen Wachuku on the 25th day of September, disclosed that the *Agba Ndele* community, a peaceful, loving, caring, successful, progressive and united community was thrown into crises which lasted for three (3) years between 2016 – 2019 and this affected the *Eri Ozurumba* dance music group which was a source of joy to the community and its environs. He further states that People of the community dissented the community and sojourned in other communities because of the crises which about the death of the *EriOzurumba* dance.

Historical Background of Rundele Community

According to Chief Elder Stephen Wachuku of *Rundele* community in *Azivudu* (personal interview, 2021), narrates that *Rundele* community is made up of five villages of which *AgbaNdele* is the last child. The villages that make up *Rundele* community are: *Mgbuolua-Rundele*, *Mgbulia-Rundele*, *Omofo-Rundele*, *Egamini-Rundele* and *AgbaNdele*. These communities lived together at *Mgbuolua* and *Mgbulia* land. *Ndele* had many children and one of the children *Ohia* was a great hunter. *Ohia*'s hunting expedition, led him to a thick forest until he got to *Sombrio* river where he saw a man fishing at the river. *Ohia* wanted to shoot the fisherman but the man beckoned on him not to

harm him.

The fisherman, *Obomate*, who hailed from *Bille* kingdom in *Degema* local government area of Rivers State, and whose father is known as Mr. Slink, got off his canoe and greeted *Ohia* the hunter with signs. They communicated with signs because they could not understand each other's language. Despite the language barrier, they exchanged food items, *Ohia* gave the fisherman roasted yams and in return, the fisherman gave him dried fishes, sparking a friendship. They agreed to meet again on a special day, exchanging a variety of food items. The place where this exchange took place is widely and still known as *Amakalabari*, a place that remains significant.

Ahia-gbo, now a bustling market, served as their meeting spot every eight day. The friends introduced the *Bille-Ndele*, *Ndele-Bille* greeting tradition, fostering a bond that transcended generations. The *Bille* kingdom regularly invites the *AgbaNdele* Community to its events, reciprocated with generous gifts during Chieftaincy coronations and cultural celebrations. After the exchange of gifts between *Ohia* and the fisherman, *Ohia* returned home and narrated to his father '*Ndele*', his encounter with the fisherman and how he discovered a thick forest good for farming. *Ohia* was betrayed by his father, he sent his brother *Ehior* and his wife to settle at the forest. The couple occupied large portion of the settlement which made *Ehior's* family to own the largest farm land in the community

Ehior established the "*AgbaNdele*" Community, alongside his brothers *Ozogwu*, *Orlu*, and *Okparaeri*. *Ohia*, followed by *Aita*, *Wodno*, and *Okne* came and settled their later. The families were known formerly as *Ozogwu* are now referred to as *RumuoZogwu* family, *Orlu* *Rumuorlu* family, *Kparaeri**Okparaeri* family, *OhiaOvhia* family, *AitaAtata* family, *WodnoEleke-Wodno* family and *OknemEleke-Oknem* family currently are the eight families that make up the *AgbaNdele* Community in *Rumunde* town, where ancestral rites are performed by *Ehior* family, *RumuoZogwu* family and *Rumuorlu* families.

AgbaNdele community members are predominantly farmers and fishermen, they produce the best yam and cassava in the whole of *Emuhua* Local Government Area, and they also produce one of the best *garri* through local processing methods. *AgbaNdele* community is also notable for its prestigious wrestling festival and dance performances during the 'new yam festival' celebrations. The community has some notable laws which when violated has severe consequences followed with punishments, some of the laws include no sexual consummation on the bare floor, no flogging of a member of the community with broom, no pouring water unnecessarily on any indigene,

no locking of a member of the community inside a room out of anger, an indigene of *AgbaNdele* must not commit abortion, among other laws. There are consequences for any violation, for example, if someone has sexual consummation on the floor and he or she does not confess for his or her action the person will be down with mysterious sickness which might lead to death and the person's corpse will be laid to rest in an evil forest. With the love of preserving their cultural heritage such as language, folklore, customs, arts, crafts, agricultural pursuits and sports, the highly cherished *EriOzurumba* dance is attached to festivities to sustain the community.

Origin of *Eri Ozurumba* dance music group in *AgbaNdele* Community

Eri Ozurumba in *Agba Ndele* community means “dance whose fame reigns in all communities” and it is popularly called *Eri* dance. According to Elder Stephen Wachuku (2021) in an oral interview, disclosed that the *Eri* dance started in 1985 and rose to an enviable height in the community; most of the originators of the dance are late. *AgbaNdele* tradition made it compulsory that any community leader coroneted as the *Oha* of *Rundele* automatically becomes the head and leader of *Eri Ozurumba* dance group. As at the time of this research, the 83 years old Chief *Ohana Odemelem Obodo* is the *Oha* of *Rundele* and the leader of *Eri* dance group, but because of his ill health, the next in command Elder Chief Stephen Wachuku is assisting to keep the group alive. Wachuku further narrates that *Eri* dance originated from a neighboring community called Choba community in Rivers State. He adds that after witnessing a captivating cultural showcase in Choba community, some *AgbaNdele* individuals became enchanted by the *Eri* Dance. Upon returning to their own community, both elders and youth convened to explore ways of introducing this dance in their community. After series of meetings, they agreed on the modalities given to them in order to introduce the dance in *Agba Ndele* community, steps were taken and agreements were reached with choba community, the dance was introduced and performed in *Agba Ndele* community. *Eri Ozurumba* dance belongs to the entire community and not an individual, membership is open to members of the community and proceeds realized from the performances belong to the community. The organizational structure of the dance group is made up of chairman, vice chairman and other executives, with the responsibility to organize and take care of the dance group. Chief *OhanaOdemelemObodo* has been the chairman of the group since its inception and still is. As at the time of this research, Other executives include Chief Anthony *Wigbudu*, vice chairman, Elder Stephen *Wachuku*, secretary, Chief Raphael *Ehior*, financial secretary, Elder *Nmekini Wigbudu*, treasurer and Elder Boniface *Agumagu*, member including Mr. *Alete* Monijor. These executive members organize and oversee the day to day activities of the *Eri* dance group for continuity and sustainability.



Photo 1:
Chief Ohnaodemelem Obodo (Oha of Rundele) the chairman of Eri dance music group



Photo 2: Members of the executives. From the right, the Chairman, Chief OhnaOdemelemObodo, Elder Stephen Wachuku, Secretary and other elders

Recruitment/Membership

Eri dance is a community affair, it is open to both youths and the elderly, male and female respectively are registered as members of the group and they had over 2000 members, there were no restrictions to membership. Seventeen (17) masquerades are attached to the dance and registration into the dance group is free because it is a communal affair usually performed during Christmas celebration, New Year festivals, cultural celebrations, Chieftaincy coronation ceremony, burial ceremonies and celebration of heroism in order to welcome home their illustrious sons and daughters who have done well within and outside the community. The group honours invitations from both within and outside the community. For invitations coming from outside the community the following items listed below must be presented to the Leader:

- a. Cash of one thousand naira (N1,000)
- b. 2 bottles of dry gin
- c. 1 carton of beer
- d. 1 crate of mineral

On presentation of these items to the leader, the leader invites all the members of the *Eridance* group and presents the items before them. They in turn accept these items and thereafter, honor the invitation as agreed. However, at the end of the performance, the invitees are obliged to provide another set of items to the performers. Items presented at the end of the performance to the dance group include:

- a. 1 big ram
- b. 10 tubers of yam
- c. 5 crates of mineral
- d. 4 cartons of beer
- e. 4 bottles of dry gin
- f. 2 crates of malt
- g. Kola and alligator pepper
- h. 1 fowl (cock)
- i. A bunch of plantain

These items are provided because of the number of persons that are involved in the performance since it is a community affair and the items presented are for their relaxation and merriment after the performance.



Photo 3: The Eri Dancers

Costumes

In 1985 when the group came into existence, they had a particular uniform but due to insecurity in the community, uniform was abandoned, replaced with plain George wrapper on white t-shirt at performances.

Rules/Regulations and Rites of Death

The *Eri* dance group of *AgbaNdele* community prohibits members from stealing or fighting within and outside the community and if any member goes against any of these rules, he or she is to fine a stipulated fee commensurate to the offence. At the death of a member, once the family informs the chairman and executives on the death of a member, on the burial day, the dance group put up performances in order to pay their last respect to the deceased member.

The Rise and fall of *EriOzurumba* Cultural Dance Group

In an oral interview with Elder Wachuku on the 25th day of September, who is the secretary of the group, he further disclosed that *Eri* dance is performed on a day fixed and agreed by the elders. On the agreed date and day, drummers arrange their instruments at the community field as early as 5am. As the drummers perform, jubilations in the community signify the commencement of D-day's celebration. *Eri* songs accompanied with drumming starts the performance proper at 12noon with performers and other community members dressed in uniform to suit the performance. Different cultural dance from various masquerades are exhibited. Masquerades performance includes *torki*, *ugo*, *nwabyimaranma*, *ogbuekinima*, *wodiria*, *agadinwanyi*, *egbene*, *obenekwe*, *evulu*, *ohia*, sweet and bitter, *aranorgba-mba*, *ortu*-

subar and *ozurumba*. Drinks, money, yam, plantains are presented to dancers and instrumentalists at the arena to usher in joy and interest to members of the community. Those who are unable to dance shake their heads and tap toes on the ground in appreciation. After the performance, proceeds are shared among members on an agreed date, part of the proceeds realized on the performance day are saved for the upkeep and maintenance of the group, the dance group rose to an enviable height during this period.

The *EriOzurumba* dance group became the best and most popular dance group in *AgbaNdele* community. However, the dance group collapsed in 2016 when the community was bedeviled by internal crises, arson, manslaughter, thugry and insecurity within the community. Members became scared for their lives, the *Eri* dance music group were forced to desert the community for safety.

The crises lasted for three years, from 2016 – 2019, *EriOzurumba* dance group was abandoned and not remembered but when peace returned to the community, members still found it difficult to re-organize the dance which used to be their pride.

Eri Ozurumba Musical Instruments

Musical instruments are the heartbeat of any performance; it produces the rhythm to which the dancers display dexterity on the dance. Onwuka (2012) affirms that “each musical instrument of a dance ensemble is socio-culturally chosen in consideration of its propensities to perform one, two or more socio-cultural roles. (p.47)” *Eri* dance musical instruments are chosen to suit the musical performance of the group and they are locally made. The raw materials used in the construction of the instruments are found in the community or its environs and they are also constructed in the community. Okafor (2005) affirms that “Nigerian musical instruments are virtually all made of materials sourced from the local governments. (p.66)” Agu (1990) supports that,

Nigerians are great lovers of music.
As they create and perform music
so also, do they manufacture the
musical instruments. The
production of the variety of
instruments by Nigerians was
made possible by their ability to
harness their environments as

much as possible making effective
use of local materials around them
with good results (p. 55).

The *Eri* dance musical instruments are constructed by experts in the community. The drums and slit wooden drums classified under idiophone and Membranophone families perform both physical and spiritual roles in the community. Onyekwelu (2011) agrees that “*oja* as a musical instrument in Igbo culture plays multiple roles and operates in both physical and spiritual worlds, implying that the two worlds share the same experience. (p. 41)” The *Eri* dance musical instruments when performed physically spur members of the community to gather and show dexterity. Spiritually the dance serves as a source of healing, emotional rave, motivation and love for members of the community. Onwuekwe (2011) informs that “apart from music making, Nigerian musical instruments perform other functions. These include solo instruments, communication, therapy, sorrowing and mourning, symbolism, and court instruments. (p. 141)” In *AgbaNdele*, the *Eri* dance musical instruments are not only seen as dance instruments but the instruments are perceived to have some curative properties, to energize farmers, laborers and help them to forget the burden of their tasks and fasten the work. The musical instruments of in *Eri* dance are:

Folk Name	English Translation
2 <i>okwo</i>	Big slit wooden drums
1 <i>Eukwaa</i>	Big drum
1 <i>Wezege</i>	Small three leg drum
1 <i>Ogele</i>	Metal gong



4: Wezege (Three Legs Drum)

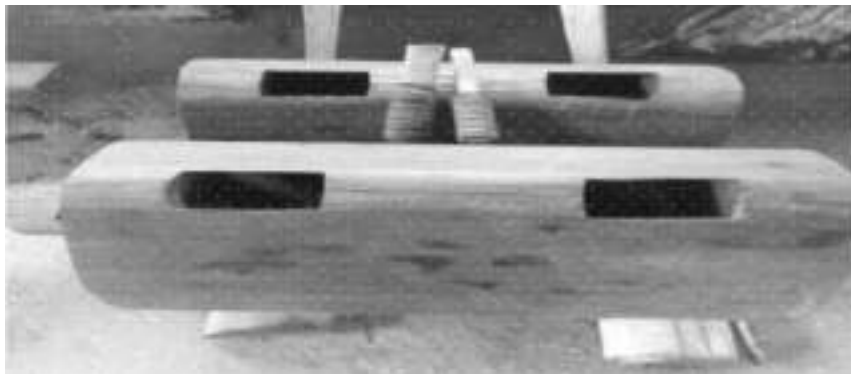


Photo 5: Okwo (2 Big Slit Wooden Drums)



Photo 6: Rattles (Ekperi for Masquerade Dancers)



Photo 7: Ngada(Chair) and Okwo(small slit wooden drum). It is only the Elderly members from 80 years and above that are allowed to sit on these Ngadachairs



Photo 8: Eri Dance Musical Instruments

All the above instruments are important and significant in the performance of Eri dance, however, the pair of okwo (slit wooden instruments) play very significant roles while other instruments play supportive roles. During performance, the small okwo (slit wooden drums) and the eukwaa (big drum) complement the rhythm, the long rattles are part of the instruments for the masquerade. Attached to the instruments are special chairs constructed in the community, these special chairs have three legs and those entitled to sit on these chairs are elderly members from 80 years and above, these chairs are kept for elders to sit on during performance or rehearsals.



Photo 9: Elders Special Chair

Conclusion

Eri dance music group is the most prominent and best dance group in *AgbaNdele* community. The recruitment is a communal affair. The economic life of the *AgbaNdele* community is based on fishing, farming and trading and these are the major sources of their income. *Eri* dance is a cultural dance of the people which brought to the community joy, love, peace, excitement and interaction of the people. The culture of a people must be maintained for posterity, although the insecurity, which bedeviled *AgbaNdele* affected the performance of *Eri* dance for three (3) years, but now that peace has returned to the community, it is about to be reorganized for the benefits of the community unlike other music groups that have gone into extinction because of internal crises. The *Eri* dance is sustainable in the community because its recruitment is for the young and old members of the community and the instruments used in the performance are locally made. The materials are always available and it also serves as a source of income for the producers within the community.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. *EriOzurumba* songs and dance should be properly recorded, scored and documented in the archives
2. Rivers State Government and Emohua Local Government should sponsor the performance of *Eri* dance for the upliftment and promulgation of culture and unity of the people at the local and state levels.
3. The *Eri* dance songs should encourage the youths to desist from social vices capable of destroying the community which was handed over to them by their forefathers.
4. Many instrumentalists should be trained so that there will be no vacuum in the performance of any instrument as this will aid in the fast rebuilding of the dance group.
5. The instruments should be preserved in the chairman's residence for accessibility and sustainability of the group.

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IMPROVING NIGERIAN MUSIC COMPOSITION: FOCUS ON THE INSPIRATIONAL MUSIC COMPOSITION STYLE OF ZABIYA NGO WATU YOHANNA.

Samuel Yohanna Davou PhD
&
Gozuk Alexander Joshua
ORCHID ID: 0009-0009-4626-4400

Abstract

The study examined the compositional techniques employed by the late Watu Yohanna, a gospel music composer from north-central, Nigeria, whose work is performed in churches throughout northern Nigeria and abroad. Watu Yohanna came to fame in the middle of the 1970s due to the amount of Christian music recorded in her musical albums with her singing group. Although, not much has been written about her musical exploit, her songs reflect and address day-to-day challenges faced by the minority Christians in northern Nigeria such as religious intolerance and bad governance, among others. Watu's songs played in almost all Hausa-speaking churches across the nation including Berom community on the Jos Plateau and environs. The study adopted quantitative approach, using interviews and historical, primary, and secondary sources. Watu's style of music is characterized by simple melodic lines based on pentatonic scale, adoption of memorable musical texts or verses from the Bible and maintains traditional compositional features such as, call and response.

Keywords: Music composition, Musical analysis, Documentation, Gospel music, Berom Music.

Introduction

In Africa, music is as vital as life itself. It permeates every aspect of daily existence, and nearly all sentient beings participate in one musical activity or another. In this regard, when music is played in Africa, everyone becomes an active or passive participant. However, not everyone is gifted with the ability to compose music in African society, but almost everyone becomes a participant. Just as the practice is among the Berom people of Plateau State of Nigeria, the general participation of people in music is common, but the act of composition music is considered secret and divine, and the ability for one to compose acceptable music across the community is considered a gift, given to certain persons anointed by the ancestors to create wonderful musical compositions for their subjects' delight.

ZabiyaWatu Yohanna, from the Berom extract, used the traditional Berom

compositional pattern in her music composition. In Berom traditional belief, the gift of music composition is clan-bound as it runs through blood and is believed to be hereditary as observed in the music of ZabiyaWatu. ZabiyaWatu Yohanna, was believed to be a reincarnation of Gawang, one of the greatest singers that ever lived in Berom land. According to myths, when Gawang sings, the rocks respond to the tune of the music. His harp, which is always hung on the wall of his shelter, plays on its own while the palm tree in his backyard dances to the music (Gyang Samson Warah Personal interview, 2023).

Musical practice among the Berom people is highly valued, as music is used to accompany every activity. Historically, among the Berom people of Gyel, Vwang Riyom, Du, and Zaang there has been a special form of musical practice known as 'Vwana music', performed specially to celebrate bumper harvest. Vwana is restricted to members of the royal family, seers and members of a particular musical clan. However, due to civilization, the restriction is no longer observed for fear of the group's extinction. The Supreme God according to Berom's belief is called Dagwi. Dagwi is said to be the creator of the universe and the ruler of all beings. Including people with special abilities such as sear, herbalists, musicians, craftsmen, blacksmiths and musical instrumentalists among others are believed to have acquired such gifts from Dagwi, or the Dagwi messengers (*cheng*), who are minor spirits (Chollom, 2007).

Among the gifts given to humanity by Dagwi, (Supreme God) music is regarded as the most precious. Musicians are believed to be the mouthpiece of God and one of the links between humans and supreme beings. As such, one must be upright and full of wisdom before he or she would be blessed with the gift of singing or music composition. As a belief stands among the Berom people, composing songs requires a treaty between the musician (medium), and the supernatural beings that will guarantee a song that will be acceptable by the entire community. The treaty by the musician and the spirit beings involves sacrifices and most of the music composers or artists often encounter deteriorated health challenge, early death, infidelity, death of children, or abject poverty.

The late music composer Zabiya Ngo Watu Yohanna had her own share of accusations that led to a convincing assumption about the gospel music composer Watu, from a clan that had a history of musical encounters and dealings with spirit beings. This led to people believing that Watu's musical endeavours are not ordinary but rather had the support of supernatural beings (Evangelist Da Nyam Dung, Personal interview, 2023). In the 70s and early 90s, there was a music composer popularly known as Ruku Gwahagai of

Tanchol Gyel of Jos Plateau. Ruku, who owns a beer parlor, releases songs annually, and all the songs he releases become very popular in the community. Prior to releasing the songs, Ruku walks around the neighbourhood telling his friends that God has given him a new song, which was sealed tightly in a pot that will be opened at the end of the year. Before the song began, Ruku threw a party for his friends and made available some local beer, which they cheerfully drank while singing the song (personal interview with Gyang Ezekiel Choji of TancholGyel on July 26, 2023).

'Soyin' By Ruku



Figure 1: Soyin' (Come and drink; soda with your wage.)

Another example of Berom traditional musicians believed to have had a treaty with the higher terrestrials is Mwantah Tok, who, before his demise, traveled to the United Kingdom for a musical exhibition. Despite how acceptable he was across Berom Land, Mwantah died in abject poverty and could not even afford clothes to wear as he often put on animal skin. Mwanta died and left behind an insane child. Dung Chollom, another great Berom musician who traveled to Kenya to record his long-play (LP) record, died in a Minin tunnel trying to feed himself and his family. There are several claims of encounters with the Supreme Being (Cheng in Berom), but Watu's claim is more pronounced.

Biography of Watu

Watu (1958–1993) was a gospel singer whose musical lyrics were based on biblical text and musical tunes based on the Berom traditional five-tone scale. Watu's musical styles were mostly in call and refrain. Her musical composition uses traditional methods of memorization and oral transmission in composing

and teaching her music to her choristers. The oral traditions which include oral narratives like epics, folklore, and explanatory tales, have long been a significant means of social interaction and the transmission of African history. Additionally, there are elements of poetry, which includes chants, hymns, and praise poetry, as well as epigrams, which are proverbs, puzzles, puns, and tongue twisters. They aimed at bridging between the past and the present, develop a common vision and identity, instruct young people, express political opinions, and offer amusement and aesthetic pleasure.

Being a member of the Christian women's fellowship of the Church of Christ in Nigeria, now the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), greatly influenced Watu's style of musical composition, as the church's main object is to build Christians whose focus is making heaven at last. Watu's musical compositions have biblical texts. She claimed that most of her musical tunes were gotten from dreams and revelations justifying why she spends most of her time praying and fasting for God to reveal in dreams and revelations musical tunes and lyrics (Davou & Johnson-Egomba, 2018).

The COCIN women's fellowship singing group TakumGyel, a group controlled by Watu, has contributed immensely to the growth of Christianity in Northern Nigeria. Many people were converted to Christianity through their music. Notable among them was Shaik Shehu Galadima. The group has made significant contributions to evangelical outreach in and around northern Nigeria, as well as in neighboring nations like Cameroon and the Niger Republic. Between mid-1970 to 1992, the singing group recorded twelve (12) albums with over 160 songs.

In most of the recorded songs in the albums, the lead singer sings above the chorus, followed by a brief refrain, and during interludes, the choir sings or hums quietly in the background to make room for brief passages and the interpretation of the song. A bible verse is often read to complement the music, this result in the women developing an overlapping call-and-response pattern with the soloist and choir alternating. By introducing the call and response/refrain singing style to places of worship in the Hausa and Berom-speaking regions, the women, via their song leader/composer ZabiyaWatu Yohanna, became popular that other churches began using the musical style..

The compositional methods used by Watu were exclusively characterised by call and response/refrain and through composed form. It also features a programme music in which stories about biblical heroes were emphasized, and the tones used in her composition strictly adhered to the pentatonic

notes. Her melodies were harmonised in parallel thirds, fourths, or fifths, humming interludes, and the texture is polyphonic. Watu' melodies are often short and easy to remember and are frequently extended through repetition and improvisation based on a five-note scale.

Watu's musical compositions' are based on Adedeje's (2015) categorization of African compositional sources namely; Logogenic, Melogenic and Pathogenic. In logogenic compositions, majority of Watu's musical compositions' lyrics are based entirely on the Bible. The melogenic features in Watu's musical compositions' are illustrated in the process by which an existing melody is taken and a text is added on top of it. Watu's music is a prime example of this technique, while the majority of her early songs were composed in the Berom language, over time she started to convert some of them into Hausa. See the example below.

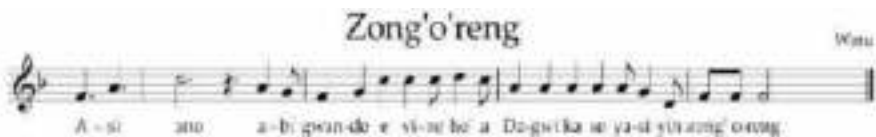


Figure 2: Zong'o'reng

The above melody was the first melody of the song in Berom, whereas the melody below was performed in Hausa with a little change to the melody to enable the words to fit suitably during word placement.

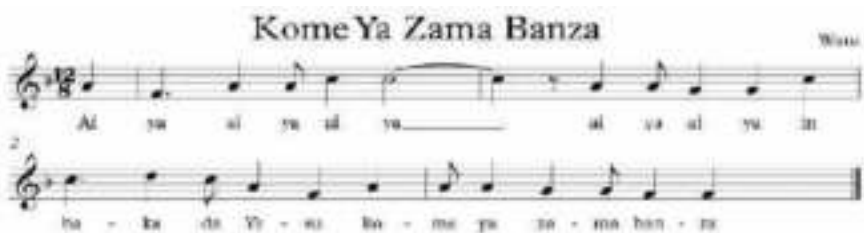


Figure 3: Kome Ya Zama Banza

Pathogenic composition is form of composition that is inspired. Watu was known for writing music of this sort, as she always claims that her music is inspired by the Holy Spirit through dreams and revelations. Such was realistic since she frequently spends time in the mountains fasting and praying, and during that time receives inspiration for her songs (personal interview

conducted with Rev. Dr. Davou Dung Pam, May 26, 2023). Watu had a natural ability for music creation, just like other creators of gospel music. Inspiration, in this context, might imply anything that sparks an idea, exudes passion, or yields something fresh (Adeleke, 2014).

Methodology

The study is quantitative in nature, relies on personal interviews with members of her group who are still alive as of the time of the research, as well as some personal information gathered from some journals that were written about the late singer, whose influence greatly affected the growth of Christianity in Northern Nigeria. Among the findings was the use of call and response/refrain and the use of biblical text that is used as the primary footing to Watu's composition, which makes the music gain patronage among the Christian minority in northern Nigeria that are facing persecution because of their faith.

The Biography of Zabiya Ngo Watu Yohanna Davou

ZabiyaWatu Yohanna (1958–1993) was one of the most famous evangelical gospel musicians in Northern Nigeria who greatly influenced the spread of Christianity in Northern Nigeria through her inspirational songs. In the 80s and 90s, Watu's songs could be found in many Christian homes in Northern Nigeria, as her songs were widely sung as choruses in many churches in Northern Nigeria. Watu used percussions such as pot-drums, wooden blocks, conga drums, rattles, and gongs in the accompaniment of her music. She was also a composer and a dramatist, as some of her musicals often dramatized some of their songs as they partake in the acting in order to give meaning to their songs.

Watu was a partisan politician before her death she sang a jingle for the Social Democratic Party (SDP). Not only did she compose gospel songs, Watu also composed and sang an advertisement for the late Maryam Babangida, the wife of the former head of state General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida's favorite project, MAMSA. Gospel music predominated in Watu Yohanna's compositions, but she also wrote a few songs on political issues. "Zabiya," as she is affectionately referred to by her admirers, is a Hausa term for "chosen" that is used for talented female singers in Northern Nigeria. Through her catchy style of music composition and performance, Watu demonstrated to everyone that watched her perform that she was born a musician.

She was Garba Wara's daughter a well-known musician who passed away just a week after she was born. She was born in Gyel, Jos-south Local Government Area of Plateau State. Her uncle Samson Wara the founder of

the “Holy Ghost Devotees Church” with its headquarters in Gyel, nurtured her as his biological daughter but later gave her out as a house help to Da Toma Tok Bot between the ages of eleven and twelve, Samson Wara, as a babysitter and for educational purposes. Staying in Reverend Toma's house gave Watu a strong footing in her Christian faith as Rev. Toma Tok Bot instructed Watu on the deeper knowledge of the Bible. ZabiyaWatu had recorded more than 160 songs in twelve audio CDs and three video cassettes with music and drama series based on biblical stories, including Naman in the Bible.

The Musical Compositional Style of Watu

Watu's composing style follows the Berom traditional music pattern with variation on the text depending on biblical text. In terms of tune and harmony, it however maintains cultural ideals. The diversity of compositional patterns that abound in Berom musical styles, among which are call and refrain, hocket techniques, polyphonic movement that characterises all traditional Berom music genres. Rhythm patterns that frequently mix voices and percussive instruments are all reflected to a large extent in the compositional musical pattern and performances in Watu's compositions. One can say that is the reason her songs became acceptable across most faiths in Northern Nigeria.

Call-and-response and refrain patterns are the main musical forms in Watu's compositions. The aforementioned is a clear representation of Watu's musical style, which stresses vocal text music with accompanying percussive instruments such as the potdrum, wooden block, membrane drum, and rattles. With regards to improvisation and the unique introduction of humming as the interlude by the choir, and in addition the interjection of the song with biblical verses to illustrate the song. Watu's music compositions also employ the pentatonic scale in their melodies. Her performance style encourages group participation as the audience readily responds to the performer's dynamism and fluidity whenever she performs the songs during outreach or any special event. Despite Watu's reputation for using traditional approaches to musical composition, some of her later works incorporated elements of the Western rhythmic pattern of simple time signature. This is because while the majority of Watu's songs adhered to the traditional compound time, she also experimented with new musical cultures and hybrid genres.

Watu's cultural sensitivity to the Berom musical pattern, the call-and-response/refrain singing pattern, employs relaxed tones and expressive techniques while singing. Watu's music is characterized by appealing melodic structure which makes it simple to recall. Musicians and audience actively participate in the performance because of the rhythmic and melodic simplicity. Watu was not in the habit of writing down the lyrics of her song, as she depended largely on memorization. Watu's music encourages improvisation,

which is a feature of traditional African music. Since her music is closely related to her spiritual practices as well as the Berom traditions the process allowed for creative expression and spontaneity in the music. The composition “Naman” has cultural significance as it tells the story of a king in the Bible.

NAMAN

Call. ♩ = 120 Wata

Shi Na' - man shu-gu -ben so - jo - ji ru a-ma Na - man

yu-na-da ci-wo kuu-ku-ta

Response

Shi Na' - man shu-gu -ben so - jo - ji ru

Call

a-ma Na - man yu-na-da ci-wo kuu-ku-ta

a-ma Na - man yu-na-da ci-wo kuu-ku-ta

10

ya-lu yi ya-ki da I-vel-la-wa sa-lu cin-pe I-vel-la-wa

Refrain

hamm... Hamm... hamm... Shi Na-man

hamm... Hamm... hamm... Shi Na-maa

14

sha-gu-ben so - jo - ji ne a-ma Na - man ya-na-da ci-wo kur-ku-ta

sha-gu-ben so - jo - ji ne a-ma Na - man ya-na-da ci-wo kur-ku-ta

Figure 4: NAMAN

YOHANNA 3:16

Watu

Yo-han - na si - ra u - lu... i - ya go - ma... sha-shi da ga-ma

Yo-han - na si - ra u - lu... i - ya go - ma... sha-shi da ga-ma

Yo-han - na si - ra u - lu... i - ya go - ma... sha-shi da ga-ma



Figure 5: YOHANNA 3:16

The easy-to-memorize melodic pattern in Watu's musical composition is a key factor in what makes Watu's music captivating. Watu used an easy-to-remember melody that is easy to learn, pleasing to the ear and easily assimilated.

Another factor that makes Watu music so popular is the collaboration that the singing group made with a renowned evangelical group known as the Sabon Rai Don Kowa (New Life for All). The evangelical group was led by a radical evangelist known as Paul Gindiriri. The evangelical group came into force at a time when the minority tribes in Northern Nigeria who are Christians felt betrayed as crises rocked some areas of the region and the government of the day put a ban on Christianity. This became a greater test for evangelism. At that moment, Watu and the singing group took advantage of the situation and composed songs of encouragement that were sung during big Christian gatherings. The songs told the story of the Christian struggle and hope for eternity, which many Christian believers viewed as songs of renewed hope for 'Mithais' and resistance.



Figure 6: Bishara (Even in death, we shall not stop propagating the gospel of Christ).

Watu used her compositions to address societal ills as well as fight for the freedom of the oppressed Christians in northern Nigeria. This attracted patronage from the minority Christians who were passionate about resisting persecution from the Muslim majority in the region. The songs' messages were evangelism and hope for eternity, with some universal themes of socioeconomic concerns that many people may relate to. Another element that contributed to Watu's music creativity and appeal is the inclusion of catchy hooks in each of her songs. These hooks can take the form of shouts, humming sections, or even the singer herself reciting Bible verses. The element of a song that people remember and sing along the most is typically, the hook. Watu's songs are particularly simple to remember since they follow a verse-chorus-verse-chorus-bridge-chorus format with a call-and-response/refrain pattern.

This structure helps create a sense of familiarity and allows listeners to anticipate the hook. Since Watu frequently used minor modes in her compositions, majority of her music is emotive. Her choice of words and vocal prowess with passion also contributes to the reason why people appreciate her songs. She always establishes an emotional connection with her listeners via gestures that cause many of them to cry. Watu made significant contributions by fostering harmony among the women fellowship singing groups among churches in northern Nigeria. Watu worked very hard to develop her singing pattern which is solely influenced by biblical verses. After she was done composing her songs, Watu would always invite those she believed were knowledgeable in the Bible to help in correcting the lyrics. Among them was Rev. Da Nyam Dung, a well-known evangelist who was persistent in his mission and a prayer warrior in charge of the New Life for All evangelical group's prayer and deliverance as at that time. Rev. Nyam Dung was so devoted to the Watu singing group that he assisted in editing each piece of music they created by paying close attention to it to ensure that it adhered to biblical standards. Another editor was Rev. Dalyop Zongo, a well-known theologian from Northern Nigeria who was a member of the team that

advised Watu on the usage of proper scriptural verses that fitted into every song written by ZabiyaWatu. These had another significant impact on Watu's music.

Conclusion

Nigeria as a country is greatly influenced by westernization that is detrimental to valuing and sustaining indigenous traditions. Though Nigerian music is gaining global recognitions and popularity, however, the need to emphasize the African musical arts, just like the late singer did, is paramount. This will help in the preservation of the African culture, which is fast going into extinction. African music corpus is used for spiritual purposes in addition to entertainment, therefore encouraging the African pattern of compositions will renew hope among African musicians and help propagate spirituality attached to African music composition. Watu's life and her songs are marred with many misconceptions that will require careful unraveling through empirical studies. For instance, Watu's mother had twelve children and all of them passed away while they were still young except for Watu who lived for 35 years before her death. Her younger sister, Mary, also passed away in her 40s due to heart condition similar to Watu. Based on the contentious issue surrounding the late singer and composer, one could ask, 'Is it true that talented singers in Berom deal with spiritual entities to gain inspirations, or could it be a simple coincidence'?

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