

IN-SERVICE TRAINING INFLUENCE OF MONI-NKIM MUSIC EDUCATION IN AKAMKPA

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Abstract

Moni-nkim music education is a holistic cultural training institute that is often accompanied with various performing arts. These art forms are carried out by maidens who are customarily circumcised and trained during the act of “*nkim-ebibre*” (passage to womanhood) and/or “*nkim-agut*” (purification after childbirth). The male counterparts are not exceptions to these art forms however they have their specific roles during the ensemble performances. The discourse highlights the in-service seclusion training of *moni-nkim* music education introduced to the maidens during the procedure at the “*nju-nkim*” (fattening room). Data were gathered through oral communication, observation, participatory, pictorial and archival methods. Results revealed that sustenance of the in-service training of the people's culture has dwindled considerably, thus recommended that the continuity of this instructive training be sustained. The approach to the female circumcision and the aftermath of the over pampered maiden leading to obesity which posed as threats to emotional trauma as well as human's health, should be abolished.

Keywords: *Moni-nkim*, *nju-nkim*, *moni-nkim* music education

Introduction

Prior to Western education and global civilization, Effiom (2019) asserts that the indigenous people of Ejagham Nation that spread across Akamkpa, Biase, Efut, Odukpani and Qua areas of Southern Senatorial District; Boki, Etung and Ikom areas of the Central Senatorial District and Ogoja area of Northern Senatorial District in Cross River State as well as the Ekok, Eyimajok, Mfum and Nsangharati Communities in Cameroon Republic believed that the female folks were only best at home making and craft work. In view of this, more attention was devoted to womanhood and postnatal training than to western education (women education), and socialization. Diverse social vices began to sprout and the elderly suspected that the presence of clitoris in a girl child promotes promiscuity. In the quest to proffer a solution to the menace, female folks were subjected to performing *nkim* (circumcision), to tame the suspected promiscuous act. A Female circumcision is a customary act of cutting apart or

completely removing the external female genital organ between ages 0-15(, online retrieved, 2023).

According to Takon (2016), Akamkpa activists believed that mutilating the clitoris will not only tame promiscuity but a traditional approach to family planning and a mark of initiation to womanhood. He added that the process is not limited to only the *nkim* act; however, goes along with other norms, crafts and performing arts were also inculcated during the period of seclusion and at the *nju-nkim* (fattening room). Asuquo (2015) affirms Takon's submission by emphasizing that the performing arts of singing, drumming and dancing often climax the maidens' *nkim-ebibre* (passage to womanhood) and *nkim-agut* (after child birth). This study observed and acknowledged that both Asuquo and Takon's submissions present *moni-nkim* music as a kind of music culture that is strictly for female folks. The music venerates Akamkpa people, while the cultural practice itself model the female folks with norms and cultural values which in turn promote sanctity, gender role specification and peaceful co-existence among the citizenry.

In affirmation to gender prejudice of cultural rites Traore(1972) in Okorens (2009) wrote:

To classify African dances; each is liked with specific gender activity. Some dances are reserved for those who have accomplished acts of valour and some minor ones for women (p.22).

Traore maintains that there are peculiar functions to gender sensitivity as nature demands, to him, *moni-nkim* dance movement is to the female folks while the instrumental accompaniment is specifically to the male counterpart; however, Traore's submission contradicts Aminu's(2014) opinion that both sex (male and female) can perform any given role in the compromising state of gender equality. While both submissions are factual in their content, however, Traore further analyzed the chronicles of *moni-nkim* in-service training with his highlights of various gender roles such as females' seclusion, circumcision ritual, ethical home-keeping training as well as practicing the *moni-nkim* dance steps which are ascribed categorically to the female, whereas the male folks only perform the instrumental accompaniments to the music as culture demands.

Moni-nkim

Moni-nkim is one of the symbolic traditions of the Ejagham people. This symbolic tradition spread across the Ejagham speaking people in Cross River State (CRS) and in some communities of the Cameroon Republic. Specifically, the Ejagham people in Akamkpa Local Government Area in CRS viewed *moni-nkim* *Ejagham* dialect as a two- in- one word. The prefix is

written as “*moni*” while the suffix as “*nkim*, the initial means “child” while the later implies “cut” or “circumcision”. By implication, the term *moni-nkim* simply means “child circumcision”; precisely, “female child circumcision”. Etim (personal communication 26th June, 2018) orally explains that female circumcision is a process where the clitoris of a female child is mutilated and that the Ejagham culture made them believed that it will help in curbing the act of promiscuity.

Speaking on mutilation, Hornby (2000) describes mutilation as “to be physically harmed, notably by cutting off or otherwise disabling a vital part, render imperfect or defective; also, an infliction of serious damage on someone”. Hornby’s description is a pointer that the custodians of Akamkpa culture are violating the law against human right, by customarily subjecting their maidens to the *nkim* culture as against their wish. Etim (personal communication 26th June,) orally affirms that the Akamkpa people believed that female folks are absolutely home-makers. Besides, they were easily prone to emotional instability, such that, investing in their Western education was considered as a waste of time and resources. Consequently, *moni-nkim* activities which include grooming a girl-child into becoming a good home-maker was adopted as the female education, circumcising the girl-child as a panacea for curbing promiscuity, and promoting the passage to womanhood were also adopted.

Etim (2018) further explains that the circumcision procedure is quite painful and harmful; chances of health hazard on humanity has over the ages claim the life of maidens while some acquired infections thereafter. The authors opined that the circumcision process is contrary to the human rights law. Current researches revealed that the right to life is one of the statutory laws binding every Nigerian. This was emphasized during the administration of former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan who signed the Federal Law banning Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in May 2015. According to Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, the enacted law is to set an important precedent to other African countries that practice FGM (, online retrieved, 2023).

Etim (2018) orally shares one of her experiences, stating that beyond the mutilation act, there are educative and moral values inculcated during the *nkim-ebibre* (passage to womanhood) which develops the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of every maiden. Based on Etim’s discussion, our study found the in-service training to be educative and morally grounded. A comparison between the old and new maiden practices speak volume on the recent increase in the rates of social vices, and a wish for the old time religion of the Ejagham tradition. In the light of this, while our

study hoped that the circumcision act is eradicated, the educative and moral values should be maintained for the societal benefits.

***Nju-nkim*(Fattening Room)**

According to an oral dialogue with Itaya (personal communication 28th August, 2023), the *moni-nkim* culture of the Akamkpa people entails that when a girl-child attains age fifteen (15), she is assumed attractive enough to be betrothed. Once the child is betrothed, her parents seclude her to a confined room known as *nju-nkim* (fattening room). Fattening room is therefore an apartment or a restrained room where a betrothed maiden is kept for intensive female moral values and arts training are carried out simultaneously. The duration of the *nju-nkim* process is a minimum of three (3) months and maximum of one year, during which the older women in the community conduct the various training as it was believed that children upbringing is a communal effort and not restricted to parental-based; but *nju-nkim* is restricted to intruders especially the betrothed.



Figure 1: *Moni-nkim* maiden receiving in-service training
Source: Moninkimimages.google search, (2023)

***Moni-nkim* Music Education as an In-Service Training**

Takon (2016) describes *moni-nkim* music education as a holistic cultural training institute that is often accompanied with various performing arts like singing, dancing, instrumentation, costuming and lots more. These art forms are being carried out by maidens who are customarily circumcised and trained during the act of "*nkim-ebibre*" (passage to womanhood) and/or "*nkim-agut*" (purification after childbirth). *Moni-nkim* music education is often practiced during in-service training while maiden are secluded at the *nju-nkim* (fattening room). Asuquo (2015) submits that *moni-nkim* music

education is guided by the hidden curriculum. Abott and Wallace (2011) explain the hidden curriculum as the informal or an unwritten education inculcated to learners across ages. Etim (2018) agrees with Abott and Wallace, stating that the female gender in Akamkpa environs were trained into womanhood using the unwritten or hidden curriculum. The maiden grew along with this unintentional manner however fits into the moral standard of an idealsocietal woman.

According to Etim (2018), *moni-nkim* music education simply refers to the informal education inculcated to secluded maidens during the *nju-nkim* (fattening room)tradition. In other word, it is the in-service training given to maidens during the seclusion period. Interestingly, the aged women who had also undergone the *nju-nkim* in-service training while they were maidens became the trainers of the new generation. The in-service training section comprises moral values, home-making, craftsmanship and the art of singing and dancing. *Moni-nkim* music education was indeed a prestigious tradition which every maiden in Akamkpa were clamouring at, and as an achievement to womanhood. Etim authenticates the above position when she informs that *moni-nkim* music education became competitive among maidens, thus they pray their seclusion into reality like a dream come through.

Etim (2018) highlights categories of in-service training that are imbedded in the hidden curriculum as follows: informal education, ethical values and various musical skills for individual's pleasure as well as for commercial purposes as the case maybe.

- Informal Education: on informal education, Effiom (2019) asserts that informal education is a system of education where instructions and directions are given to a learner outside the classroom setting. Effiom's definition aligns with Etim's description of the in-service training given to an Akamkpa maiden towards her transition to womanhood. Etim adds that such training is best inculcated within the traditional homes (*nju-nkim*) and not in any classroom setting. Hence, this becomes an informal education where the trainers inculcate cultural values to their upcoming generations and a continuous process. Specifically maidens received instruction on morals, cultural norms and womanhood training and how to do house chores such as sweeping, dish washing, clothes washing, knitting, cooking, childcare, body adornment as well as craftsmanship for home use and commercial purpose.
- Ethical values: Ethical values are conducts, morals and/or principles of morality that are peculiar to acting right or wrong in the society (Effiom, 2019). Etim expatiates that ethical values were paramount such that

during the seclusion period, the maidens received orientation on how to exchange pleasantries and respect their betrothed, in-laws as well as other societal people. Other ethical values inculcated during this period include:

- Responsibility to womanhood and motherhood
- Act of love to spur the maiden into expressing deep affection to her betrothed and among others
- Act of compassionate: the maiden is groomed on how to sympathize with people and in turn render helping hands when need arises.
- Fidelity: Akamkpa maidens were cautioned on how to manage their emotions and to be submissive to their betrothed both in character and during connubial rights. It becomes a taboo for an Akamkpa woman and in most African societies, to indulge in infidelity even when their male counterpart wishes to engaged themselves with many paramours.
- Music skills: the period spent by any maiden in the *nju-nkim* creates the platform for learning different art forms especially music which includes: the art of singing, dancing, costuming and how to design costumes especially the woven costumes. Etim (personal communication 2018) confirms that in Akamkpa community, virtuoso in singing, dancing and instrumentation were the major trainers who often visit the maidens during moonlight games to teach them on how to sing *moni-nkim* songs and the dance steps with instrumental accompaniments. The musical instruments employed were locally made and some of these local musical instruments include *akachak* or *bosasak* (rattle), *elung*(drum), *kokrok* (wood block) and *agongong* (metal gong). Apart from the *elung* (drum) which is traditionally peculiar to men, some of the secluded maidens were talented and trained in playing *akachak* or *bosasak*, *kokrok* and *agongong*.

Moni-nkim Music

Asuquo (2015) submits that *moni-nkim* music is a woman-centered music culture which is practiced among the Ejagham nation across the globe. It is a performing art that comprises songs, dance, instrumentation and costuming. *Moni-nkim* music is also a music culture that commemorates the passage to womanhood, initiation rites as well as cultural performances during festivals and ceremonies. The stylistic dance steps, rhythmic instrumentation and melodious songs of *moni-nkim* music often thrill the audience to the realm of fantasy and thus, announce the prowess of the Akamkpa people. Asuquo stresses that *moni-nkim* music is a cultural music that depicts the beauty of the Akamkpa maidens as well as the performing arts of the female folks in most African cultures. The music also serves as a cultural medium through which

maidens showcase their natural endowments, rich Nigerian-African artistic skills and an identity among others

Like every other cultural groups such as *ekombi*, *abang*, *nyok* and their likes, the researchers observed that the devotees of *moni-nkim* music employ laudable and colourful costumes which according to Etim were introduced to the maidens during the *nju-nkim* training. Takon (2016) attests that the aesthetics of a *moni-nkim* music dancer is connected to both the costumes and make-ups which were parts of the adornment training received during the in-service. Takon adds that the dancer's costumes and make-ups are symbolic and concretized. Indeed, the elaborate and artistic costumes worn by the maidens are symbolic, the serves as a mark of identity during their outing ceremonies especially while among other dancers. The *moni-nkim* costumes and adornments are appealing and thus promote the maidens' beauty. Such costumes and adornments include *ajigijag*, *asak*, *okpone*, *ndigi-ntung*, *aya-abei*, *ndimi-mbid*, *ebare-ofem*, to mention but a few. The costumes were translated into English equivalents by Takon (2016) as follows:

	Ejagham words	English Translation
✓	<i>Ebare-ofem</i>	white chalk
✓	<i>Nguayum</i>	leaf, animal skin
✓	<i>Ekui</i>	feathers
✓	<i>Mbua-ndib</i>	decorated cotton wrapper
✓	<i>Ndigi-ebun</i>	waist belt
✓	<i>Ajigijag</i>	waist beads
✓	<i>Asak</i>	raffia
✓	<i>Okpone</i>	wrists/ankles band
✓	<i>Ndigi- ntung</i>	twine necklace
✓	<i>Aya-abei</i>	breast divider
✓	<i>Ndimi- mbid</i>	shoulder cover



Figure 2&3: costumed moni-nkim maidens
Source: Moninkimimages.googlesearch,2023

Moni-nkim Ensemble

The instruments used to accompany the songs and dance of *moni-nkim* are moderate and symbolically selected to provide the right atmosphere for serenity, sacredness and ancestral presence and participation for purposes of blessing and acceptance of the various processes of *nkim*.

According to Takon (2016), the basic and standard instruments for *moni-nkim* are as follows:

Ejagham words	English Translation
✓ <i>Bosasakorrasagara</i>	Maracas/ rattle
✓ <i>Elungnjiefang</i>	Long Drum
✓ <i>Alungnmachingabai</i>	Double Small drums
✓ <i>Elungachod</i>	Talking drum
✓ <i>Kokrok</i>	Woodblock
✓ <i>Agongong</i>	Metal gong



Figure 4: musical instruments of the moni-nkim
Source: moninkim images.googlesearch,2023



Figure 5: moni-nkim musicians
Source: moni-nkim images.googlesearch,2023

Instrumentation of *moin-nkim* music

The characteristic features of *moni-nkim* instrumental music are rhythmic complexity and a varied tempo. Although the rhythm of the music is in compound quadruple time, observers could find it difficult at once to decipher such intricate parts that are woven together in the rhythmic movements.



Music notation I: Moni-Nkim excerpt



Melodic Analysis of *Moni-nkim* song: *Se okum'obaeeee* (let the music play on, so we could dance)

The Form

Se okum'obaeeee (let the music play on, so we could dance) song is categorised as 'call and response pattern' and at some point, in a 'solo and refrain pattern'.

The Rhythmic Structure

Se okum'obaeeee melody is dominated by notes of short durational values such as crotchet notes of one beat, quaver notes of half beat and semi-quaver notes of quarter beat respectively.

Phraseology

Se okum'obaeeee music contains short phrases. The motif of these phrases

is often repeated systematically in sections.

Tonal shift

Se okum'obaeeee is on small intervallic tonal shift of between major 2nd and major 3rd

Harmonic Principles and Styles

Se okum'obaeeee is mostly sung in unison, sometimes it is harmonised in two parts, the primary and the secondary harmonic principles. The second harmony could as well stand as a melody during the response.

Performance /Presentation Form

Se okum'obaeeee is performed with only one soloist who chants the melody, while the rest of the performers respond to the melody in a call and response pattern. New songs are introduced by either the soloist or the lead drummer. *Moni-nkim* Songs are generally presented and performed in an elongated manner of applying continued response repetition technique with some extemporizations from the *elung* (drum) and other instrumental music which often spur the performance into its climax.

The Text

Se okum'obaeeee is a recreational song that is usually sung to set the pace for the dancers, drummers as well as the audience. The song is structured in a call and response pattern but at certain point, chorused refrain pattern in which the choir repeats exactly what the soloist sings takes the lead till the next song is been introduced.

Analysis of Melodies

Se okum'obaeeee lyrics are indigenous in nature. They are orally sung in Ejagham-speaking dialect. The melodies are symbolic to the belief of the people, they are characterised by retaining dominant tonal inflexion on the language text and sectional repetition techniques to sustain the music till fade as can be seen in the song example '*Se okum'obaeeee*'

Ejagham words

Se okum'obaeeee
Call: *Se okum'obaeeee*
Resp.: *Se okum'obaeeee*
(repetition)
Solo & Resp: *nyenimon ma ee*
nyenimon ma ee

English Translation

let the music play on, so we could dance
let the music play on, so we could dance
let the music play on, so we could dance
see the mother of the child ee
see the mother of the child ee

nyenimon ma ee

nyenimon ma teberete

see the mother of the child ee

see the mother of the child is a great fit

Findings

- The study revealed that maidens often clamour for *moni-nkim* music. However, they feel threatened by the *nju-nkim* procedure as seclusion for the duration of three months to one year is devastating
- The seclusion processes often lead to obesity-a form of health hazard if not controlled.
- Medically, the unsterilized instruments used for the circumcision are mostly crude leading to infections.
- The in-experienced personnel engaged in the circumcision act often result in making the maidens to bleed to death thereby depriving them of their right to live.
- Finally, there are educative, ethical and musical values inculcated during the in-service training and these have been of healthy value to the society at large

Conclusion

Moni-nkim music education is holistic; it is an avenue for teaching various performing arts like singing, dancing, instrumentation, costuming as well as passage to womanhood through the in-service training experience and at the *nju-nkim* (fattening room). The ethical values, musical skills and aesthetic costumes project the uniqueness of the Ejagham culture as well as providing an identity for the indigenes of Akamkpa respectively. Undeniably, *moni-nkim* music is a dynamic music that is all encompassing. It teaches Akamkpa culture, and promotes the inculcation of acceptable conducts within the given society, thus preserving culture, allows for peaceful co-existence, and maintains family values.

Recommendations

Recommendations are highlighted as follows:

- Parents should create adequate time for moral upbringing of female children
- Custodians of culture and cultural devotees should engage maidens on the ethical values of *moni-nkim*, the aesthetics as well as the arts
- Medical practitioners should be more proactive in sensitizing the society against the health hazard of gentile mutilation.

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