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GELEDE MUSIC- A UTILITY FOR ECO-CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION WITH A VISION OF 2030 MUSIC ART: IBATEFIN COMMUNITY IN FOCUS

Abstract

Gelede music is a traditional form of Yoruba music performed during the Gelede Festival, celebrated annually as a cultural festival in the Ibatéfin community. The celebration of Gelede also spread through Awori, Egba, and neighboring settlements like Igboora, Ibarapa, and among others. The festival is staged to honor the essentialities of women in the community, teach community values, moral, and ward off evil from the community by revealing unknown secrets. Gelede music in Ibatéfin features rhythmic drumming, dance, and elaborate performances with colorful costumes and masks. The music serves not only as entertainment, but also plays significant roles in conveying community values, identity, and behavioral messages by expressing community values and uniting the community. Promoting musical arts with Vision 2030, this paper explores the essential power of Gelede music as an esteemed traditional art form and instrument for eco-cultural transformation within the context of the Vision 2030 musical arts initiative. This paper illustrates how Gelede music can be utilized to foster cultural preservation and community values in this contemporary environment within the framework of Vision 2030 musical arts. This paper adopts cultural ecology theory proposed by Julian Steward as concerned with cultural behaviors that are related to adjustment in a distinctive environment. This study also adopted a combination of archival and ethnomusicological approaches to source data. The approach relied on a qualitative method, where five (5) participants of the Gelede cult were interviewed within the Ibatéfin community. This paper argues that integrating traditional musical expressions and cultural heritage with contemporary environmental consciousness provides an innovative avenue for music scholars to see the need for collaboration with traditional music professionals to foster formal musical arts education and achieve productive goals of training individual talents as Vision 2030 initiative.

Keywords: *Gelede music, Transformation, Ibatéfin, Vision 2030.*

Introduction

Ibatéfin, a coastal and remote village located between Idi-Iroko and Ago-Shasha communities in Ipokia Local Government area of Ogun State, Nigeria, and about 90 kilometers from Badagry

town, is home to the Anogo people of Egbado land. Ibatéfin village, largely an agrarian community, has its inhabitants engage in fishing, farming, hunting, mat weaving, basket weaving amongst other menial jobs. The languages spoken in Ibatéfin are Yoruba, Ogu and Anago.

According to Chief Hossanni Hunogbehin (personal interview), explain that the word Gelede originated from Anogo and Ketu. Ketu is a town presently located in Benin republic while Anogo village of Ibatéfin is located between Agosasa and Idi-Iroko, Ipokia. The celebration of Gelede spread through Awori, Egbado, Egba and neighboring settlements like Igboora and Ibarapa. The Anogo people of Ibatéfin community are known as the Anogo. In Ibatéfin community, Gelede festival is the major festival celebrated annually with various activities comprising singing, drumming, choreographic displays; standup comedy involving the use of known and unknown secrets in the community. The festival is staged with the aim of cleansing the community of evil, correcting certain behaviors and settling of disputes within the community.

Adegbite (2010) stated that, festival is an annual event, usually staged by a community reflecting a unique aspect of such community. It usually involves series of performances which include singing, drama, dancing which portray identity of such a community. He explained that festivals provide a platform to share common traditions with friends, relatives, and well-wishers, and often leads to a renewal of friendship or formation of new ones. He stressed further that, festival can also be regarded as a season, or period at which the people reinforce their belief in the worship of gods, and other deities, involving the use of costumes, traditional drums and other musical instruments while magic, spectacles, dance, and singing are also prominently featured. The focus of this study is on how Gelede music can be utilized to foster cultural preservation and community values in this contemporary environment within the framework of Vision 2030 musical arts.

According to Mrs. Fagbohun Asisat (personal interview), Gelede is a friendly, jester, and entertaining masquerade that is widely accommodating no matter the age, status, or gender in the community unlike other masquerades. The outlook of Gelede presents as women with beautiful and colorful dresses. Gelede music is a traditional form of Yoruba music from south west Nigeria, intricately tied to the Gelede cultural festival. This festival is celebrated to honor and appease ‘mothers’ or ancestral spirits. Gelede music features rhythmic drumming, dance, and vibrant performances, often accompanied by elaborate costumes and masks. The music serves not only as entertainment but also plays a significant role in conveying cultural and moral messages, celebrating community values, and expressing the interconnectedness of the living and ancestral realms. Gelede music reflects the rich cultural heritage of the Yoruba people and remains an essential aspect of their artistic and social traditions.



Photo I: Gelede masquerade dancing during the festival.

According to Vidal (2012), Gelede costume includes beads, mirror, plastic materials, purse, bag and dolls. As a result of these materials, the Gelede masquerade is addressed as Olomoyooyo, literally meaning the benevolence deity that gives children. All materials used by Gelede masquerade are always donated by the community women. The combination of the colorful clothes used by Gelede masquerade, the numerous beads attached, the artificial breast and specially designed buttocks as well as the mask decorated as a feminine makes it unique and interesting. Vidal (2012) observed that, at beginning of the festival, Gelede usually performs some rituals and sacrifices to appease the deities for peace, prosperity, and orderliness in the community. The festival commences the night preceding the day of the main performance of Gelede festival with the performance of Efe. The Efe contains information relating to physical or moral weaknesses of individuals, groups, or the entire community. Some of these weaknesses are hidden from the public. These moral weaknesses may have been forgotten by those affected by such weaknesses. In tandem with promoting musical arts in Vision 2030, this paper explores the potentials of Gelede music as a traditional art form and instrument for eco-cultural transformation within the Vision 2030 musical arts initiative. It also illustrates how Gelede music can be utilized to foster cultural preservation and community values within the framework of Vision 2030 musical arts.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the Cultural Ecology Theory. The thrust of this theory is on the changing relationship between culture and environmental transformation. Steward (1955), outlined that cultural ecology look at cultural features in relation to specific environmental circumstances. The theory also examined the unique behavioral mood that are related to cultural adjustment within a particular environmental considerations.

Cultures are made up of interrelated part of human and environment. The degree of interdependence varies through the channel at which some traits have more influence than other characteristics: Language, Norms, Values, History, Socialization, acculturation, Education, and Religion, to mention few. Steward (1955), perceives culture as a means of adaptation to environmental needs. In this vein, cultural ecology became useful to explore the Gelede music of Ibatfein as a corrective channel to transform and preserve cultural values and moral needs that align with vision 2030 musical arts education.

Eco-Cultural Concept

Hays (2018), noted that eco-cultural concept could be described as any form of human culture that may demonstrate a strong ability to protect nature, preserve its material as well as legacy that built cultural heritage, as bearer of traditions, and provides countless examples of cultures of living in harmony with nature.

According to Franco (2022), Eco- cultures or Eco- cultural concept deals with human nature and the communities phenomenon that appreciate the mutual relationship between nature and culture, the need for nurturing ecosystem health, recognition of all life forms as sentient beings, and the importance of a healthy nature-culture relationship. These communities are characterized by

ethical principles that prioritize the nurturing of sociological and ecological wellbeing, recognize that wellbeing does not constitute of economic wellbeing alone, but also consider humans as a part of nature, and strive to conserve and sustain natural, human and social capitals

Therefore, Eco- cultural concept emphasizes the interconnectedness between ecology and culture, while recognizing that human societies are deeply influenced by their natural environments. It suggests that cultural practices, beliefs, and values are shaped by environmental conditions, while at the same time, human activities can significantly impact ecosystems and biodiversity. Eco-cultural studies seek to understand this dynamic relationship and its implications for sustainability, conservation, and the well-being of both human societies and the natural world.

Cultural transformation and environmental needs through Gelede Music

Dessier & Cams in Dua (2013), stated that cultural change is the modification or discontinuance of existing 'tired' and 'tested' procedures transmitted from the culture of the past as well as the introduction of the new procedures. According to Koentjaraningrat (2000:203) the cultural change is the process of shifting, subtraction, addition, and the development of elements in a culture. In other words, a cultural change is the dynamic that occurs as a result of clashes between elements of different cultures. Literature, as a form of culture, does not just describe the creative imagination that is built on the idea the author, but also a reflection of a society (Laurenson and Swingewood, 1972). By becoming a reflection of society, literature became a medium to express the various problems faced by the community. A copyright literature, as a result of human work, cannot be separated from the social conditions surrounding communities.

Cultural transformation refers to a significant shift in the values, beliefs, behaviors, and practices within an organization, community, or society. It often involves a deliberate effort to change the prevailing culture to better align with new goals, strategies, or societal norms. This transformation can occur in response to internal or external factors, such as changes in leadership, market dynamics, technological advancements, or social movements. It typically requires a comprehensive approach that includes leadership commitment, employee engagement, organizational restructuring, and continuous learning and adaptation. In this vein, cultural transformation and environmental needs through Gelede music can be expressed in the context of vision 2030 musical arts through parameters such as cultural fusion, environmental messaging, community engagement, symbolism in costumes and masks, and as a sustainable legacy.

Cultural Fusion

Specifically, cultural fusion describes how new development acculturate into the dominant culture and maintain aspects of their minority culture, while at the same time the dominant or host culture also fuses aspects of the newcomer's culture into the dominant culture to create a fused intercultural identity (Croucher and Kramer, 2016).

Cultural fusion is the blending or mixing of different cultural elements, practices, traditions, and influences to create something new and unique. It often occurs when people from diverse backgrounds come in contact with each other, leading to the exchange and integration of ideas, customs, music, cuisine, language, art, and more. Cultural fusion can result in the emergence of hybrid identities, cultural expressions, and forms of creativity that reflect the interconnectedness

of different cultures. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in multicultural societies and globalized contexts, where individuals and communities engage in cross-cultural interactions and collaborations, this musical form maintains a profound link to ancestral spirits, weaving a spiritual connection that transcends temporal boundaries, fostering a sense of reverence for nature. Therefore, Gelede music, deeply rooted in Yoruba traditions, presents an avenue for blending cultural heritage with contemporary environmental consciousness, embodying a harmonious fusion of past and present.

Gelede Cult Members at the Festival

Environmental Messaging

Vidal (2012) noted that Gelede music and festival propagate messages of compassion, solidarity, honesty, patriotism and commitment. As a result, the youth are educated to uphold the societal norms, values and culture. Gelede music communicates by teaching the community members who indulge in illicit acts to change for good. Chief Hossanni Hunogbehin expressed this in the song text entitled: Ogunlade. The song reveals the character of a thief called Olu. Unknown to him, somebody saw him and he was later publicly exposed through music during the Gelede festival.

Ogunlade	Translation
Ogunlade p`eran Olu lo sigbe wale,	Ogunlade slaughtered a ram for
Ogunlade p`eran Olu lo sigbe wale,	sacrifice, and it was stolen by Olu,
Eran dagun ja Olu un lo gbe wale,	but felt that nobody saw him
Eran dagun ja Olu un lo gbe wale o,	The sacrifice made to the god,
Ogunlade p`eranOlu lo sigbe wale.	Olu slaughtered the ram slaughtered to
	the god as a sacrifice

Table I: Yoruba Text and English Translation

The above song is usually performed to correct and eradicate stealing in the community during the Gelede festival in Ibatéfin community. In this vein, Gelede music serves as a conduit for conveying messages of best behavioural practices and environmental preservation, thus offering a unique platform within Vision 2030 musical arts to raise awareness and advocate for sustainable practices.

Community Engagement

According Mr. Timothy Amosu (personal interview), Gelede music unites people of various age groups, gender, and families. The festival is held annually and people from different walks of life troop into Ibatéfin to participate in the festival and ceremony. Gelede music and festival serve as a watch dog to the community. The music in particular according to Chief Hossanni Hunogbehin

is a communication tool and means of expressing communal feelings. It portrays the communal ethics, norms, values and heritage. Gelede music in Ibatéfin is also used to correct behavioral ills, settle dispute, and eulogize patriotic and heroic citizens in the community. Therefore, the thematic elements within Gelede music often celebrate the beauty of nature, instill a deep appreciation for the environment and reinforce the importance of living in harmony with the physical environment. Through vibrant performances, dance, and collaborative expressions, it promotes community engagements that align with Vision 2030's emphasis on inclusive and participatory cultural practices.

Symbolism in Costumes and Masks

The Gelede masks and costumes are profoundly rich in symbolism, deeply connected with the cultural fabric of the society. Mr. Timothy Amosun (in a personal communication) said that Gelede masks and costumes transcend mere artistic expression; they express wealth of cultural meanings and narratives, profoundly reflecting the values, beliefs, and societal structures of the community.



Photo II: The costume and mask

The costume and mask as shown above are also an amazing proof to the aesthetic of Ibatéfin art which convey complex ideas and foster communal identity of Ibatéfin, reflecting the interconnectedness of cultural expression and social integrity of Ibatéfin and contributing to a visual narrative that resonates with eco-cultural transformation goals.

Sustainable Legacy

Gelede festival is celebrated to ward off evil spirits which are usually manifested in form of conflicts and immoral behaviors. Also, the festival is used to resolve ethnic conflicts, to send messages of compassion, solidarity or satire among community members. This claim by Vidal

(2012) was also corroborated by Adedina (2019) who pointed out that festivals offer a stage to cleanse the community from all evil and solicit communal blessings. There are selected dancers and instrumentalists who move round the community, playing and dancing at the door steps of selected community members who are either praised or condemned by the Gelede masquerade in the Ibatofin community. The host usually patronizes the Gelede masquerade and its followers by either joining the dance or spraying money. Chief Hossanni Hunogbehin (personal communication) emphasized that Gelede music and festival provides a means of sustaining social bond and communal heritage. Gelede masquerade teaches the community moral values, correct negative behaviors, promote unity and harmony within the community and appease the gods for communal blessings. Its enactment is also geared to encourage indigenes in the transmission of eco-cultural values that align with Vision 2030's focus on sustainable practices and cultural richness.

Inference drawn here is that, when Gelede music is embraced within the Vision 2030 framework, it will provide basis to a sustainable legacy, and offering a dynamic example of how traditional art can actively contribute to shaping a more environmentally conscious and culturally vibrant future.

Recommendation

Gelede music, as part of Vision 2030 musical arts, becomes a vital tool for preserving cultural identity, ensuring that traditional forms of artistic expression play a pivotal role in shaping the narrative of sustainable development. African art composers should delve into the development of composing music that will captivate new developments in the environment and proffer solution to preserve and promote cultural moral and values in tandem with the framework of new environment. Additionally, Gelede's hosting communities and cultural institutions should adopt the staging of indigenous musical performance to mirror the community and environmental needs for continuity given the new environment, by so doing, collaboration between music scholars and indigenous music professionals will foster formal musical arts education and achieve productive goals of training individual talents that will be aligned with Vision 2030 musical arts education initiative.

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Interviews

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2. Chief Ogungbe (Secretary to Ibatofin community "oral interview dated 27th June 2023).
3. Mr. Timothy Amosun. (The informant. 13th December 2023)
4. Mrs. Fagbohun Asisat (The women leader of the Gelede singers, 13th December 2023).