

## ***Ìbejì* (Twin) Festival Music as a Resource for Music Education in Southwestern Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

A persistent issue in Nigerian formal music education is its European dominated contents and pedagogical reliance. The consequence of this is that music teaching has been less-culturally and socially relevant. In reaction to this phenomenon, researches in indigenous musical forms have been advocated as means to formulate music education contents with cultural and social relevance. This study, therefore, examines *ìbejì* festival music for the purpose of adopting and deploying the cultural values therein as learning material in schools, especially in southwestern Nigeria. With the use of non-participant observation and in-depth interviews, three aged women of above seventy years, who have given birth to twin-children and are vast in *ìbejì* music in *Ọ̀yọ̀*, as well as two of their family-heads, were engaged as informants. The data collected from the field were subjected to qualitative analyses. Findings show that the music, which is mostly oral, constituting recitative poetry of twin's panegyrics and song renditions, is embedded with some Yorùbá cultural identifiers such as food and some animal metaphors associated with twin-children – these can be veritable learning materials in schools. The music possesses some peculiar traditional music elements such as rhythmic complexity, short melodic phrasing of pentatonic and hexatonic modes, as well as responsorial singing format. It is, thus, submitted that the study of *ìbejì* music, like other indigenous socio-cultural practices, is valuable not only as teaching contents in schools, but also as a way of (re)enacting, instilling and sustaining indigenous socio-cultural practices in the contemporary time and beyond. Such indigenously based studies should be encouraged for relevant and effective music education in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Ìbejì* (twin), Yorùbá traditional festival, traditional music, music education

## Introduction

The Yorùbá of southwestern Nigeria can be said to be the foremost recipients of the Euro-American incursions and its attendant corollaries among the other ethnic groups in Nigeria. This is because the nineteenth century arrival of various batches of Euro-American missionaries and other emissaries were initially landed in Yorùbáland (Badagry to be precise) before spreading to the other regions (Vidal, 1986; Omojola, 1998; Owoaje, 2014). Consequently, European agencies like schools, churches, hospitals and colonial government, among others, were first established in Yorùbáland, making the people to be the first set of ‘westernised’ Nigerians. The arrival could be a plus, in a way, because it did not only equip the indigenous people with literacy skills, but also shifted the society from being exclusively oral and non-literate to lettered and literate society (Mudimbe, 1988), making the society fitted into the evolving global society.

Conversely, the arrival also came with its minus. First is the condemnation and relegation of the already existing indigenous traditions such as festivals and other socio-cultural practices, within which the societal ethos, indigenous educational resources and didactic lessons were drawn (Faseun, 2005; Samuel, 2013). The indigenous practices featuring various musical forms have been an agency for moulding and shaping the behaviours and total ‘man’ of the indigenes right from infancy through to the adulthood based on the conventional societal norms. Moreover, the education brought by the westerners at the onset was substandard because it was deliberately designed to produce ‘servants’ - catechists, typists, secretaries, civil/government workers, who were trained to run errand for the intruding Europeans in their selfish colonial activities (Obayan, 2002; Faseun, 2005), as well as those referred by Sanga (2013) as possessing ‘colonial mentality’. In the area of music, Adeogun (2015) notes that the bulk of the teaching contents was and still largely European in concept, deficient of indigenous materials, making it strange, quite irrelevant and ineffective, thus, making the comprehension problematic for the indigenous learners. It has been observed that the insufficiency of the indigenous materials in the formal educational contents has contributed to various social vices such as moral decadence, immorality and insecurity being experienced in the contemporary Nigerian society (Salami, 2013; Samuel, 2013).

There have, however, been advocacies and clarion calls from relevant bodies and concerned individuals to return to the ‘root’. Ethno-(musicologists) and music educators have been charged to (re)focus, (re)double and (re)deploy their research efforts to the collation and analyses of indigenous music for the prosperity of music education now and in the future (Omibiyi-Obidike, 2001; Samuel, 2013). This paper is, therefore, a response to the advocacy, by attempting a study and analyses of *ìbejì* (twin-child) festival music in Ọyọ for educational posterity and prosperity, in a bid to sustain, impact and impart the indigenous practices to the contemporary indigenous learners.

## Review of Related Literature

This study is anchored on the concept of ‘Double Consciousness’. Double consciousness is a post-colonial thought construed by Peter Childs and Patrick Williams. In their treatise – ‘*An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*’ (1997), the scholars conceived double consciousness as a purposeful discovery of one’s self or root, amidst ‘foreign’ or borrowed cultural practices. The term was further described simply as a realisation of the ‘lost native identities’. Such realisation applies to the current state of Nigerian music education, which has been dominated by western contents and somewhat irrelevant and inapplicable to the indigenous cultural experiences and

socio-cultural realities. In corroboration, Mudimbe' (1988) asserts in his *'Invention of Africa'* that most African arts in the contemporary time are of double representation of cultural mix, in which the 'borrowed' dominates the 'native'. However, Childs and Williams (1997) clarified that the 'consciousness' in this contexts does not mean total desertion of the borrowed, but a deliberate attempt of reordering the 'order' such that the native culture becomes the central while the borrowed becomes aids or enhancements of the native. In relation to Nigerian music education, indigenous music ought to form the bulk of teaching contents, while relevant European concepts and pedagogies become aids. This reordering can be achieved through purposeful researches into traditional activities in which the practice of traditional music is typically practiced and sustained, and by collation of relevant materials therefrom. A typical traditional activity which would serve such purpose is the traditional festival.

Festival has been defined as an annual event involving memorial and anniversary in remembrance of a god, spirit, ancestor, deceased king or historical occurrences (Ogunba, 1978; Vidal, 1987). Festival represents an event where the total cultural and historical beliefs and practices of a people are (re)enacted. Traditional African festival as an indigenous cultural activity is characterised by serious spiritual activities such as the veneration of a divinity or a deified figure, appeasement of divinity with rituals, sacrifices, atonement, supplications and thanksgiving, which are usually done to seek the happiness and kindness of the divinities who in return blesses the people (Idowu, 1973). Artistic performances also characterise traditional festivals, which includes singing, instrument playing, dancing, panegyric/poetic recitations, dramatizing, costuming, parade, and visual art displays.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study set out to study *ibeji* festival practices of Yorubaland, with a view to make textual review of the accompanying songs and highlight some specific indigenous values therein, for educational prosperity and posterity within southwestern Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

The study adopts qualitative research approach involving physical interactions with respondents on a personal level. Using non-participant observation and in-depth interview methods, three aged women of above seventy years in *Ọ̀yó*, who have given birth to twin-children, and who the authors know to be vast in *ibeji* music, as well as two of their family-heads, were selected as informants for the study. The generated data, constituting recitation of twin panegyrics and *ibeji* songs, as well as interview responses were recorded and reviewed.

### **Ìbejì Festival**

Literally speaking, *ibeji* is a pair of twin. The firstborn of the twins is known as *Táíwò* - textually broken as *tó-aye-wò* (taste the world), while the second one is called *Kéhíndé* (came last). *Kéhíndé* is considered the elder because of a myth that *Táíwò* is sent by *Kéhíndé* to examine and determine how fitting or comforting the world is for human living, before he/she arrives. Twins are regarded as special or unusual human beings - an *òrìsà* (deity) in Yorùbá culture. It is a belief that twins are magical and weird human beings, and had to be killed at birth in time past.

All the informants confirm that there is a deity known as *òrìsà-ibeji* (twin-divinity) in Yorùbá culture. This affirms the deified status of twin-children. Just like other deities, *òrìsà* are celebrated at times annually in what is known as festival. The veneration and celebration is considered

necessary not only to seek the fortunes of the twin, but also to avoid the danger of losing the second especially when one dies. This is due to a belief that the death of one of the twin signals bad fortune to the parents and their immediate community. This is because twins share joint soul, and when one dies, the life of the surviving is incomplete. As a result, the parents do commission a Babaláwo (herbalist) to carve a small wooden effigy of the *ìbejì* as a symbolic representation or substitute for the soul of the deceased twin.

The effigy (*ère-ìbejì*) is sacred image of the twins, signifying the departed one, which is considered real and powerful as the living one. It is, therefore, mandatory for the parents to take care of the figure like a real person. The parents do dress and decorate the *ìbejì* based on their own statures, using clothing materials of cowrie shells, beads, coins and paint. Therefore, the *ìbejì* figure is symbolically washed, fed and clothed on a regular basis, while special ritual is also carried out in their honour.

### Ibeji Festival Music

The respondents claim that at least once a year in some areas, a mother of deceased twin dances round the communities with their twin effigy, held tightly in the palms of their hands or tucked in the wrapper in the waist. On this occasion, the mother recites special poetic eulogy of the twin. The excerpt below is an example of *ìbejì* panegyrics:

*Èjìrẹ̀ ará ìṣokún,  
Èdúnjobí  
Ọmọ̀ ẹ̀dun tí ẹ̀rẹ̀ orí ẹ̀gí  
Ọ̀-bẹ̀-kẹ̀sẹ̀-bẹ̀-kàṣà,  
Ó fẹ̀sẹ̀ méjèjè bí ẹ̀ sílẹ̀ aláákùṣà;  
Ó salákùṣà donígba aṣọ;  
Gbajúmọ̀ ọmọ̀ tí gbàkúnlẹ̀ yà,  
Tí gbàdòbálẹ̀ lówọ̀ baba tó bí í lómọ̀  
Wínrinwínrin lójú orogún  
Ejìwòrò lojú yà ẹ̀  
Tani o bi ibeji ko n'owo?  
Èjìrẹ̀ okin  
Èjìrẹ̀ ti mo bi, ti mo jo  
Èjìrẹ̀ ti mo bi, ti mo yó  
Èjìrẹ̀ wo ile olowo ko ló  
O wo ile olola ko ló bé  
Ile alakisá lo ló  
Èjìrẹ̀ só alakisá di alasó  
O só otosi di olowo  
Bi Táíwò ti nló ni iwaju  
Béeni, Kẹ̀hìndé ntó lehin  
Táíwò ni omode, Kehinde ni ebgon  
Taiwo ni a ran ni sé  
Pe ki o ló tó aiye wò  
Bi aiye dara, bi ko dara  
O tó aiye wò. Aiye dun bi oyin  
Táíwò, Kehinde, ni mo ki*

Twin the native of *ìṣokún*  
Born with resemblance of Colobus Monkey  
Colobus Monkey's child that plays on the treetop  
The one that jumps here and there  
With two legs he jumps into a wretched house  
Turns the wretched to owner of two hundred cloths  
Honourable child who accepts homage of her mother  
That accepts the prostration of his begotten father  
Beautiful in the sight of co-wives  
Very adoring in the sight of his mother  
He who love twin should signify  
Twin-child like an eagle  
The twin-child born with dancing  
The twin-child born with joy  
Twin-child sees a rich house and refuses to go  
Glimpses to house of the honourable and refuses to go  
He goes to the house of the wretched  
Turns the wretched to owner of cloths  
Turns the wretched to wealthy  
As Táíwò goes in the front  
Same way Kẹ̀hìndé is following  
Táíwò is the younger, Kẹ̀hìndé is the elder  
Táíwò was sent a message  
That he should appraise the world  
Whether is good or not  
He checks and the world is sweet like honey  
both Táíwò and Kẹ̀hìndé I salute

*Eji woró ni oju iya ré*  
*O de ile oba térin-térin*  
*Jé ki nri jé, ki nri mu*

Very adoring in the sight of his mother  
He reaches the palace with smiling faces  
May you bless me what to eat and drink

Some common song renditions during *ìbejì* celebration were recorded. The excerpt below is an example of the songs:

Unkown

E po n be e wa n be\_\_ o, e po n be e wa n be o. A ya mi 'o ja\_\_

6

\_\_ o e a ya mi 'o ja la ti bi 'be\_\_ ji, e po n be e wa n be o.

### Translation

There is palm and there is beans/2x  
I am not afraid oo ee  
I am not afraid of giving birth to twin  
There is palm and there is beans

The respondents assert that the above song is the most common or popular *ìbejì* song throughout the Yorùbá society. Below is another *ìbejì* song:

Anonymous

E ni ma\_\_ bi 'be ji ko se 'wa wa ten\_\_ te re.

### Translation

He who desires twin should cook beans  
*Ten te re*

### Discussion of Findings

*Ìbejì* music is a socio-religious musical form based on the deified nature of the twin in the Yorùbá society. The music is mainly oral, constituting poetic panegyrics of twins and song renditions. The musical form can be classified as purely traditional which (Akpabot, 1986; Euba, 1977) have noted as often being unwritten, without a known author, and transmitted orally. The structural analysis of the *ìbejì* songs excerpt shows similarities in the traditional musical features such as short melodic line, call and response pattern, range not more than an octave, rhythmic complexity and tonal inflection among others (Adesokan, 1998; Nketia, 1975).

Some Yorùbá philosophical nuances, ideologies, traditions and worldviews are expressed in the songs. First, the significance of *epo-pupa* (palm oil) and *èwà* (beans) which are food items in the Nigerian society was well-expressed in the texts. Cooked beans mixed with palm oil are the most common meal being served guests or distributed within the neighborhood during *ìbejì* festival.

This affirms and expands the views of Bascom (1951) on the Yorùbá food, spirituality and religion. According to Bascom, one of the effective means the Yorùbá people use to venerate and appease their divinities is sharing of preferred food items and meals. Thus, spiritual beings do also accept food like humans. The scholar further enumerates some foods associated with certain Yoruba deities:

For example, the Orisa *Obatala* is associated with cool water, coconuts, milk, honey, shea butter, rice, bread and cookies; snails (preferably large African snails) and kola nuts; but *Obatala* is never offered liquor or palm oil. The mark of the Yorùbá religion is the sharing of their food with their divinities (*orisas*) (Bascom 1951: 42).

The above submission affirms that each particular deity has some preferred food items and meals with which they are worshipped and appeased. An informant states that food items like pap, beans cake, porridge are some common *ońje òrìsà* (deities' meals) in Yorùbá culture. However, caution must be taken in this regards as some food items can be a taboo to some deities. In the case of *ibejì*, palm oil and beans are preferred meals with which they are associated and satisfied. When this is served, it is believed that *òrìsà-ibejì* (twin divinity) will be happy and accepts the supplications of their parents and bless them in return.

The above Yorùbá worldview and practices of food and spirituality as expressed in *ibejì* music can be a teaching materials at all levels of education in Nigeria. For instance, the idea can be inculcated as teaching contents in the civic education for primary, social studies in the secondary, and courses related to sociology in the higher institutions. Indigenous contents like this can serve as agency for instilling socio-cultural practices into the learners in the modern time.

Poetry has been one of the major sources of Yorùbá oral genres loaded with proverbs and metaphors of diverse meanings and interpretations (Olateju, 2005). Poetic recitation of *ibejì* eulogy is an example of the Yorùbá oral genres. The poem begins with the praise and panegyrics of twins and projects twin-children as beautiful/handsome, adoring and admiring.

Twin-children are highly venerated to the extent of being idolised as capable of accepting parental homages. Paying homage known as *ijúbà* is an act of respect, especially to the elderly, and this forms parts of moral conducts among the Yorùbá. Homage paying is found to be the first routine of Yorùbá musical artistes before the official commencement of the performance at outings. This is done to seek the permission of *àwọn àgbà* (the 'elderly') for favourable and rewarding outing. The acceptance of parental homage by the twins, as expressed in the poem, contradicts the Yorùbá *omólúwàbí* (person of impeccable character) notion, which stipulates and places high premium on respect for parents and the elderly. However, 'acceptance of parental homages' in this context does not symbolise disrespect, but a regard of the spiritual nature and divinity status of the twin.

The foregoing brings to fore the Yorùbá indigenous education, which centres on, emphasises and articulates morality and good character in which respect is a part. Indeed, the Yorùbá educational aim and objectives have all been focused on good character (Olateju, 2005). The inculcation of this ideology into the school learning materials right from the elementary level is not only necessary but also essential to produce well cultured and nurtured individuals for the betterment of the society.

Characteristic traits of twin-children are symbolically associated with eagle and colobus monkey. Ordinarily, eagle is a bird known to be strong and dogged. This association mirrors twin-children as being strong and dogged. Again, Olateju (2005) identifies two characteristic traits of *edun* (Colobus Monkey) and its symbolic representations in Yorùbá culture. First, its connection with twin-children, and the second, its connection to ‘setback in fortune’ - like when someone is financially poor. While its association with twin-children is affirmed in the poem, its second representation is contradictory. For instance, *ibeji* is described in the poem, not as a ‘fortune setback’, but as a being capable of turning bad luck to good luck. It must be submitted that further exploration of this ideology as well as some related ones will be a valuable contribution to courses related to sociology and cultural studies in the tertiary institutions.

### **Conclusion**

The impacts of European incursions vis-a-vis its attendant influences of contents’ dominance in the nation’s educational system, necessitated an advocacy for a return to the ‘root’, by engaging in in-depth studies of indigenous socio-cultural practices and the accompanying musical performances such as *ibeji* festival music. This paper, therefore, examined *ibeji* festival music in Yorùbá society. Some Yorùbá cultural elements such as acceptable moral uprightness and conduct, food items and their spiritual connotations, as well as animal metaphors, as imbued and expressed in the *ibeji* music performances are found to be valuable as veritable teaching materials and can be deployed in Nigerian music curricula at all school levels.

It can, therefore, be concluded that *ibeji* festival music, like other socio-cultural practices, does not only constitute pools from which indigenous teaching resources can be drawn, but also a medium of enacting, sustaining and instilling indigenous socio-cultural practices into the contemporary learners. More of a study as this is therefore recommended for educational prosperity and posterity.

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