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The Emergence of Sacred Sound in African Indigenous Religion

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Abstract: *Sacred sound is not a term ordinarily associated with in African Traditional Religion, yet sound has been central to the invocation of the ancestral spirits, whether through the mediation of chanting, bleating animal, or idiophones. Overall, there has been little interest in indigenous religion or sacred sound in particular and this makes the concept of sacred sound in African Traditional Religion to be novel in religious scholarship. It is only recently that one of the first conferences to focus on sacred sound in African and diasporic religions have been announced for early 2015. The emergence of the investigation into the study of sacred sound as part of religious scholarship in African indigenous religion is beginning to take shape. This development reflects an increased recognition that sound and religion are significantly linked together for religious worship which can induce concentration and spirituality too. Insofar as sound as an intrinsic element of African Traditional religious practice has not been researched in religious scholarship, I propose through exploring the significance and use of sounds, to show that sacred sound is central, not only to other religious worldview, but also to African Traditional Religion in particular. I also propose to investigate its significance as sound is tied to ritual activation in African indigenous religion as a way to commune with the divine for spirit invocation and possession.*

Key Words: *Emergence, Indigenous, Invocation, Rituals, Religions, Sound, Spirits.*

I. Introduction

> "Heritage is not lost and found, stolen and reclaimed. It is a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B:1998).

The concept of "sacred" in anthropology had its period of glory in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, at a time when the discourse became highly enthusiastic in the origins of religious and magical synthesis, and of religion (Derion & Mauze, 2010:1). In his writings for the sacred in the Dictionnaire de l' ethnologie et de l' anthropolgie (Bonte, P & Izard, M. eds), and the Encylopedia Universalis, Dominique Casajus (1991) sarcastically asserts to the epistemological basis of the concept, which scholars basically used in extremely various ways. This primarily explains the present circumstance into which the concept has fallen into decay for most anthropologists, who are not keen to consider the sacred as single issue that can be isolated and examined as it pertains to African Traditional religious practice.

From time immemorial, sacred sound has been an important aspect of African life. The communication value of sacred music is however more apparent in Africa where it constitutes part of their rich cultural heritage (Mbiti, 1975:8). Hudgens & Trillo (1990:52) opines that nowhere in the world is music more a part of the very process of living than in Africa. However, Onwochei (1998:286) affirms that Africans express their musical heritage in so many ways in Africa, while Walter Rodney (1972:41) concludes that "African peoples reached the pinnacle of achievement in that sphere".

Before the inception of the resent trends in communication technology, Africans have their own indigenous means of communication and entertainment. Though these systems of religious communication may not

necessarily be efficient enough in terms of reaching a large number of audiences, but they are no doubt very effective, significant and symbolic; one of such medium of religious communication and entertainment is through the use of sacred sound. From the understanding of the ritual functions of sacred sound among the world religions, it has been observed that it is embedded on the sacred function of establishing and sustaining communication with the spirit world (Levine, 1997:196). Veit Erlmann (2004:6) affirms that sound is the chief medium for enacting transitions from one realm to another.

According to Jacob Olupona (1991), the study of African Traditional Religion has consistently been characterized by issues revolving round the colonial ideas about African beliefs, and the recovery of indigenous religious beliefs and practices. Thus, I propose to use a postcolonial theoretical framework because it allows for an approach to African religion that goes beyond the politics of exclusion and recovery (Chidester, 1996) that move to produce new forms of creative resistance and religious self-assertion. Through this study I propose to examine and critique how in the African paradigm, almost all social and religious relations are mediated through the sacred sound produced by chanting, animal sounds and the beating of drums that are classified as idiophones. Insofar as sacred sound encompasses chanting, animal sounds and sounds that are produced through the application of idiophones in religious thought, I also propose to investigate its significance as sound is tied to ritual activation in African indigenous religion as a way to commune with the divine.

II. Sacred Sound and World Religions

According to John Bulmer "music is as an element in Divine Service and an aid in public worship, it is hardly necessary to adduce arguments in favour of a connection which is felt by all to be a most appropriate one" (1881:67). For Bulmer religion is intertwined with music through the mediation of its sacred sound. Sacred music or sacred sound is believed to be used to invoke the mystical and facilitate communion between the divine and the human. It is this notion that makes all adherents of the world's religions to have high regard for sacred music. According to Jonathan Friedmann (2009:6-7) "sacred music is a conduit through which believers enter the religious dimension through the mediation of its drama of words and music which helps to inspire spiritual intension, and exemplifies music's potentials to enhance the experience of living". Likewise, music emanating from sacred idiophones can, in the words of Nicholas Cook (1987:1) "unlock the most hidden contents of [one's] spiritual and emotional being". Thus, we consciously or unconsciously relate particular sound stimuli to non-musical concepts, images, and qualities. Richard Viladesau (2000) argues that this also explains why such music can often be seen to be the height of spiritual expression or, alternatively, at the heart of sensual depravity. Likewise, Donatus Ohadike (2007) claims that sacred music is indispensable to African religious worship; without it, it is difficult to achieve a deep religious experience, while Aloysius Lugira (1999:75) posits that "music is an audible expression of African prayer''. He argues that because they are regarded as powerful means of religious expression, that African religious ritual would be lifeless without the accompaniment of music and dancing (Lugira, 1999:75). Ohadike (2007:6) reminds his reader that in Voodoo, Candomble, Shango, and Kumina worship, for example, it is difficult for devotees to experience spirit possession without the assistance of music produced from such sacred idiophones, animal sounds or chanting. Similarly, Moshe Idel (1997:163) writing from the Jewish context affirms that "music is portrayed as part of the rite, and it is quite plausible that the musical ritual of the Levites was conceived of as primarily enabling the ecstatic experience of the High Priest". He further observes that "in the Kabbalah, music induces a feeling of joy which contributes, according to the rabbinic literature, to the occurrence of the prophecy; or more spiritual type of perception" (Idel, 1997:185). Thus, Thomas Trotter (1987) concludes that since music emanates from the very being of every person, it has always played an important role in relation to religion and its practices.

Bruno Nettl (1983:160) writing about sacred sound from the Islamic point of view argues that the "adherents of Islam give it a role of low importance because, for them, this kind of mediation is not needed. A special device for addressing the supernatural - a priest or music – is not really necessary. It is nevertheless there, but technically not recognized as music". Veronica Doubleday (2006:111) affirms that Islamic legal scholars have generally condemned music through focusing on musical instruments, thus leaving unaccompanied song in a separate and less blame-able category. She argues that their belief in Qur'anic recitation is quite distinct from music and based on this, in Muslim cultures, a broad distinction is often made between musical instruments and singing (Doubleday, 2006:111). Ruth Stone (1989:75) complains that "though ethnomusicologists might

consider the call to prayer, and the chanted prayers which the gathered group performs, music, because of its sustained and rhythmically patterned tones, [Muslims] separate these two forms from the *musiqa* that contains texts which comment on things of the secular world". This is particularly true for example, in Afghanistan, where words for music [Persian *saz*, Greek *musiqi*] are synonymous with musical instrument, and singing [*Khandan*] is closely related to reading and speech (Baily, 1996:147-148; Sakata, 2002:46-48). Muslim legal scholars, however argues that all musical instruments has negative powers and that they can lure human beings to lapse into sin (Doubleday, 2006:111). John Baily observes that for many Muslims music possessed:

> [1] the power to engross and attract, thus distracting people from prayer, [2] the power to deflect people from work, [3] the power to lead people astray, indulging in illicit activities, especially sex and imbibing "wine", and [4] the power to bring people into contact with Satan (Baily,1988:146- 147).

Doubleday (2006:111) affirms that there is a visible conceptual nexus between musical instruments and Satan, especially regarding sexuality. According to Farmer (1929:26) "Abu Bakr, the Prophet Mohammad's father in-law and successor, is reported to have called one such instrument, *mizmar al-shaitan*, the pipe of the devil''. Nettl (1983:158) writes that "the different repertories within a culture can be interpreted as having specific functions. The music accompanying lascivious dancing in traditional night clubs has as its use the facilitation of dance. But beyond that, it functions as a force mediating between the human observer and the forbidden; it throws a cloak of formality over an otherwise unacceptable situation". However, Doubleday (2006) argues that generally in Islamic Middle East sexual symbolism is not commonly applied to musical instruments, but she affirms that erotic dancing to the rhythm of frame drums has a long history as an entertainment in palaces, harems, cabarets brothels and other places (2006:122).

The Sufis argue in favour of the sacred capabilities of musical instruments which aid them in enhancing their religious rituals and facilitate ecstatic dances in pursuit of a sacred union with God (Doubleday, 2006:125). Philip Bohlman (1997:62) stresses that "in any musical or sacred sense, however, the music of the Sufis is an invention, a mixture of sound and spirituality" which invokes celestial and infernal powers. This is because it serves as a spiritual medicine (Burnett, 2000). Henry Stobart (2000:27 & 31) argues that insofar as sound is an important dimension in ritual healing, that is why knowledge of music is not performed in a clinical context and from this perspective, sound is equivalent to life and its shaping in music may be seen as the shaping of life. Penelope Gouk (2000:173) asserts that "the activity of listening to or performing music may be conceived of as a remedy for particular diseases, as a general aid to convalescence, or conversely as a cause of sickness". Reynold Nicholson (1978) describes such sacred sounds as able to empty the soul of the self and fill it with an experience of the divine. Similarly, according to Baily the concept of music as "spiritual food'' actually finds clear interpretation and expression in Persian culture (Baily, 1988:152-155). Seyyed Nasr (1997:233) affirms that music is a vehicle for the journey of a man's soul to God. Rulan Pian (1997:238) writing from the perspective of Confucian sacrificial ceremony asserts that "ritual and music embody the basic spirit of education in China. That is to say, ritual represents order, while music harmonizes the spirits. They are used to discipline the people's temperament, to lead their hearts in the right direction, thus enabling the people to benefit from the legacy of the ancients and to raise the standard of morals". The implications of this according to Bohlman (2000:188) is that sound has been employed in order to invest itself with the power to control and maintain its external domination and its internal order. No wonder Michael Bull (2004:185) affirms that "the sounds of Caruso enable Fitzcarraldo to exert order and control over himself". Although, Bull (2004:178) again argues that the soundscape now encompasses sounds generally because "it appears that technologies of sound and their use disclose something about the user and the culture from which they come".

Today, modern and visionary scholars, have conducted intensive research in support of the uses of idiophones for religious purposes among Islamic cultures and it is against this background that Scheherazade Hassan (1980:11) argues that "the uses of musical instruments for religious purposes are incomparably more numerous and diverse than profane uses and also far less well known".

Carole DeVale (1989:97) asserts that such sacred idiophones "may serve as vehicle for communication between the world of the living and that of the ancestors and gods, the seen and the unseen". Edward Dickinson (1903)

writing on sacred music in the Christian context posits that insofar as the people had a share in the religious functions, vocal music is employed by them in hymns to assist the singers to preserve the correct pitch and rhythm, and to act upon the nerves of the worshipers and increase their sense of awe in the presence of the deity. He argues that "our knowledge of the uses of sacred music among the most ancient nations is chiefly confined to its function in religious ceremony and that all ancient worship was ritualistic and administered by a priest hood, and the liturgies and ceremonial rites were intimately associated with music'' (Dickinson, 1903:38).

III. Sacred Sound in African Religion

Presently, for some time now, scholars in religious scholarship have concentrated more in the areas of the concept of God, ancestor worship, rituals, and religious liturgy but in a way or the other, neglecting the sacred concept of sound as integral part and an element of religion. This concept of sacred sound encompasses dance and songs equally. From research, it has been observed that sound plays an important role among the world religions, but in the African Traditional Religion, the concept of sacredness in sound is drastically being over looked somehow. Lawrence Sullivan (1997:8) affirms that "the propensity of musical ideas to ground entire cosmologies and systems of thought, though long recognized, is not admired by all scholars today". Nonetheless, Kaufman Shelemay (1997:308) asserts that scholars are left with little time to consider the great promise these materials hold for cultural interpretation. Robin Horton (1968:626) suggests that "what is required in studying them is not an abstention from intellectualist analysis, but a delicate balancing of intellectualist with political, aesthetic and other analyses". Chidester (1996:261) warns that such study should not be a story with canonical closure, but rather than being subject to timeless repetition, should be opened and reopened by interpretation. In this way, it can "invoke the sign of the authentic in their defense of their position'' (Grifftihs, 1995:237). The reason is because according to June Boyce-Tillman (2000:148) "in indigenous traditions music has traditionally been used to control and modulate the spirits".

Overall in African religious studies, there has been little interest in indigenous religion or sacred sound in particular and this makes the concept of sacred sound in African Traditional Religion to be novel in religious scholarship. The emergence of the investigation into the study of sacred sound as part of religious scholarship in African indigenous religion is beginning to take shape. It is on this position that Horton warns that:

> It is fair to say that the emergence of the ideal of objectivity is something peculiar to modern Western culture. But anthropologists using this fact to rule intellectual interpretation in non-Western cultures seems to have misunderstood what is involved. Thus, the emergence of an ideal of objectivity does not mean growth of an interest in explanation where there is none before. Rather, it means the growth of a conviction that this interest, if it is to be pursued effectively, must be segregated from the influence of political manipulation, aesthetic values, wish-fulfillment, and so on (1968:626).

Due to the interest and emergence of indigenous sacred sound as the most influential narrative in the literary and historical canons, scholars of Religion reemerged in this twenty-first century to start carrying out intensive research on the significance of sacred sound. Recently, one of the first conferences have coincided with the emergence of the African diaspora as discrete areas of study to focus on sacred sound in Africa and African diaspora religions which has been announced for early 2015. There has been some work on Christian enculturation in Africa which began with the encouragement of local music in church service as early as 1958 (Tovey, 2004:124). In 2007 Donatus Ohadike published his book *Sacred Drums of Liberation: Religions and Music of Resistance in Africa and the Diaspora* within which he explores the use of sacred drums in practices of resistance, citing the use of drums in South Africa and in the Caribbean. Ademola Adegbite's 1991 article "*The Concept of Sound in African Traditional Religion*" probably represents a lone voice in the field of African religion which is mostly concerned with ritual practices. Adegbite (1991:45) asserts that "sound manifestation has much broader scope to the traditional African peoples than the superficial meaning attached to it. In those societies, the textual contents of music are not just mere words, but have mystical potency". Sacred sound is not a term ordinarily associated with African Traditional Religion, and yet sound has been central to the invocation of the ancestors, whether a bleating animal, or a drum or a horn being blown (Nabofa, 1994:39). Through exploring the significance and use of sound I propose to show that sacred sound is central, not only to other

religious worldview, but to African traditional religion in particular. Horton (1968:632) points out here that "the rightness of the current Western belief-system is in the nature of things transitory; and that in the sphere of higher human behaviour, at least, pre-literate belief-systems may from time to be the source of insights that seriously shake some Western foundations".

According to the National Teacher's Institute of Nigeria (NTI) "music would be described as the arrangement of organized sounds and silences. These different types of organized sounds and silences are heard in its different shapes and forms anywhere we go, anytime for our day to day activities be it religious, economic, socio-political and so on" (1990:7). Appollos Oziogu supports this idea that music is "a combination of vocal or instrumental sounds or tones in varying melody, harmony, rhythm and timbre to form structurally, complete and emotionally expressive compositions''(2011:1). Eyre Janes (1874:94) claims that during symbolic ritual practices in African Traditional religion music emerge to induce a powerful influence upon the believer, to the extent that such a person might not be able to discriminate between their own actions and that being induced. Writing from the perspective of psychology of religion as it pertains to traditional practices Oziogu (2011:1) asserts that "music is a refresher tonic to the trouble mind and the hunting; a spiritual appetizer, and an antidote to melancholic condition''. He claims that that music dispels negative feeling and replaces it with joy and encouragement'' (Oziogu, 2011:1).

Shelemay (2006:304) argues that music helps bridge challenging transitions; and writes that "from ritual to politics to entertainment, music has the capability to embody ideas and sentiments important for individual and collective wellbeing". According to Maud Karpeles (1973:3) folk music is the product of a musical tradition that evolved through the process of oral transmission. George Herzog (1950:1034) tactfully affirms that folk music is often said to be more functional in its use or application than cultivated poetry or music. Although, Schneider whose views, differs greatly from that of Herzog's, to that effect asserts that indigenous music "is bound up with everyday life and with many special factors: psychological, sociological, religious, symbolic, and linguistic" (1957:2). According to Timothy Cooley (2006) this dynamics between preservation and invention in the form of folklore celebrations or indigenous festivals is simply an appropriate modern ritual. Ademola Adegbite asserts that in any attempt to distill a concept of sounds in African traditional religion "we have to look for it in African's predilection for esoteric and the occult; in religion and mysticism" (1991:53). The communicative value of music is however more apparent in Africa where music forms a very important part of their rich cultural heritage. Ohadike (2007) argues that "Africans on the Continent and in the diasporas use music and dance to express their feelings and to preserve their culture and history'', and as a communication device, music also serves as a source and medium of record-keeping. Similarly Akinfenwa (2013) suggest that without music the impact of people's worship is almost redundant. As an echo from an earlier era, Arthur Leonard asserts at the beginning of the last century, that "the religion of the natives [Africans] is their existence and their existence is their religion. It supplies the principles on which their law is dispensed and morality adjudicated. In fact, the entire life of Africans is so interwoven with music that they cannot do without it" (1906:429).

It is on this position that Aylward Shorter wrote that "…Africans are notoriously religious" (1978:49), and Elizabeth Isichei particularly asserted that "the Igbo's are nothing if not profoundly religious, and all accounts of their life reflect the fact" (1976:24). Stephen Ezeanya (1980) also claims that in Africa "life is religion, and religion is life'' and more recently Emeka Ekeke concludes that "this means that religion could not be explained away in Africa and whoever tries it will be seen as a stranger to Africa" (2013:3). While John Mbiti (1970) claimed that religion is by far the richest part of the African heritage, John Chernoff wrote about West African belief systems as a "danced belief'' (1999:172). Olubusola Akinfenwa concludes that "the origin of music and dance is a mystery, but their importance cannot be over emphasized in religious circle" (2013:7). Heuser (2008) described African religious ritual as a form of worship that is visible and inherently attached to bodily action. Thus James Early in his article on sacred sounds and beliefs wrote that:

> In some belief systems music and sound vibrations are pathways for healing body, mind, and spirit. Among the wide range of human expressive behaviour, the capacity to infuse the joys, sorrows, and humility that characterize religious and spiritual beliefs into oral poetry, chants, songs, and instrumental music is certainly one of the most powerful and inspirational ways all peoples and cultures acknowledge the spirit of the Supreme in their lives (1997:1).

According to the NTI (1990:20) "scholars believed that it was from man's imitation of the movement of birds that dance was born". Maria-Gabriele Wosien (1992:17) affirms that "man was taught how to dance by the animals, which he observed closely and learned to imitate their habits and characteristics". Judith Ballard (2006:1) asserts that "the earliest religious rituals appear to have evolved to the beat of a drum". Scholars such as Hailey (1957) and Akinfenwa (2013) claim that music and dance infuses all the activities of African life from the cradle to the grave. It is on this basis that Joseph Awolalu claims that "the Africans are a singing race. A lot of their music is of a religious nature. In these songs, they portray their joy and sorrow, their hopes and fears. In each song there is a wealth of material for the student who will patiently sift and collate. Ritual songs and dancing follow prescribed patterns and a study of them will reveal a lot of the people's beliefs" (1991:132). Similarly, according to Ruth Stone "religious aspect of music is fundamental to the very being of many musical acts and cannot be stripped from the performance. Thus, it is only for analytical ends that we can, to any extent, pull the religious from the performance bundle from temporary scrutiny" (1994:391). It is thus through ritual sounds during liturgies and celebration through the mediation of musical accompaniment at initiations, and burial ceremonies that Africans demonstrates the rich texture of their cultural and religious heritage.

Kwabena Nketia (1989) argues that interacting and rejoicing with music and dance in the context of ritual and worship is also an important aspect of the African concept of religious expression and thus may be given free reign at religious festivals. Jonathan Lucas (1948) posits that feasts or other First Fruit Festivals are often followed by general merriment, including ritual processions and sacred dances. Reflecting on sacred sound and the ritual calendar in the Igbo tradition, Richard Okafor (1998:130) notes that "the Igbo would appear to be a people perpetually celebrating because in every moon of the 13 moons in the year, some communities somewhere are celebrating in Igbo land". Finally, Kwasi Aduonum (1980) notes that "music in Africa is the soul which is ultimately concerned with various customs and religious practices" and Mbiti asserts that music "helps to unite the singing or dancing group to express its fellowship and participation in life. Many musical instruments are used by African peoples" (1991:71).

IV. Sound and Symbols in African Indigenous Religion

Africans make use of certain sacred sounds to commune with their God[s] when religious communication is taken place which the indigenous mystics believe that only a person endowed with particular spiritual insights and inclinations would be able to decode, interpret and disseminate the messages being produced by such instruments (Srivastava, 2007:4). Sacred sound is the experience and expression of the divine disclosure or confrontation which according to Rudolf Otto (1973:5ff) is that which bewilders, terrifies, frightens, spells danger, but yet attracts and invites with a beckoning which is tantamount to absolute demand. Chesi & Wenger (1983:186) affirms that sacred sound is not simply a material or locus of the sacred power but "the most secret and horribly sacred expression". The vibration exuding from such sound is believed to be imbued with sacred significance and as such it is not only religious resources for social cohesion but also repertories of beliefs about world and the supernatural. The idea is that, it is only a person that has spiritual insight or well-trained person in the art of divination (Chidester, 1992:17 & Mbiti, 1970:222) that can interpret such messages exuding from such sacred sounds through chanting, animal sounds and certain indigenous idiophones which is my main focus in this paper.

Chanting

According to Monica Tunnell (2014:1) "the chanting of Mantra is based in the power of vibration as both healer and invoker. One does not need to subscribe to a particular religion or spiritual tradition to benefit from this practice". She further argues that "this powerful sound is one that is heard fairly frequently and this practice of chanting is based in the power of sound vibration". Frits Staal (1986:40) assets that "since ritual is one the main areas of research common to anthropology and science of religion, one might expect that the latter science should have been inspired by linguistics or logic as well". Deborah Kapchan (2013:138) writing from the Islamic perspective asserts that "chanting is part of the laws of Islam and individual meditation with a particular litany of prayers in the morning and sometimes at night; congregating with other Sufis to perform the liturgy in common once or twice weekly; chanting the names of God together, both silently and aloud; and singing praise hymns to God, the Prophet Mohammed, and other saints". She further affirms that it is in this way that "the

initiate in Sufism ascends in levels of gnosis that are experiential" (Kapchan, 2013:138). Brian Larkin (2004:96) asserts that "*Qadiriyya* Sufis gather at certain mosques for the public performance of the *dhikr*, the ritual that uses the *bandiri* drum to regulate the speed of chanting litanies". It is on this position that Deborah Sprague (2013:106) argues that "the limitations of our space affected our chanting practices. For effective chant, the body must find good posture ... From experience in chant; one attends to the breath moving through the body, the resonance of sound within the body as vibration of Holy breath, and the sound of the community as a whole". It is on this position that Regula Qureshi (1997:288) echoes that in the recitational soundscape of Moslem assemble, the sound of recited Islamic words envelops the individual and punctuates daily life, creating a sonic identity for those who share this tradition. Chappeaux Deschamps (1967:39) asserts that such ritual practice is "based principally on proverbs or maxims. Miller Ivor (2005:26) argues that the ceremonies consist of drum, dance, and chanting activities using esoteric languages and the knowledge of these chants has been restricted to members because its ritual language is enveloped in multiplicity of meanings. Michael Nabofa (1994:39) asserts that "those who are knowledgeable in this area can easily decode meanings from their various sounds and rhythms". Judith Becker (2004:54) holds that such "deep listener's share the ability to strong emotional arousal to musical stimulation". Bob Gluck (2005:39) affirms that "the experience is akin to chanting while engaged in traditional prayer movements". It is on this position that Nabofa (1994:73) affirms that chanting are always vehicles for conveying certain sentiments of truth and they are very powerful vehicles for communicating religious beliefs in Africa because they are usually short phrases which can be easily grasped and most of these are used both in worship and also in social activities. John Hausmann (2013:58) writing from Christian context affirms that by chanting the names of the Lord one will be free. According to DeVale (1989:107) chanting through the mediation of sacred sounds "may relate to healing, physical strength, farming and hunting, safeguarding villages, or help with family problems, and musical instruments may facilitate spirit possession and exorcism, or serve as vehicles for communication between the world of the seen and the unseen''. Ansara & Gass (1999:1) argues that "not only is chanting a form of meditation in itself, but chant is also an extremely useful adjunct to other spiritual practices. Because of its powerful ability to calm the mind, chanting can serve as a helpful bridge between our busy lives of work". Through, the symbolism it utilizes and the sacred ethos it invokes, however, it retains the power to influence the spiritual state of its performers and to play a role in the religious consciousness of a community by whom or for whom it is performed (Dunbar-Hall, 2006:59). It is on this position that Robert Wuthnow (1992:19) explains that chanting in "religious rituals provide mechanisms for containing the potentially disruptive experiences of mourning on the one hand, or of transcendent joy on the other''. No wonder Loren Kajikawa (2012:138) affirms that chanting as part of sacred sound of "African religions and black popular music are closely related and share a common spiritual function".

Animal Sounds

According to Puspa Damai (2007:132) "animal sounds and other ambience, which create a musical surreality in order to rupture and critique dominant modes of creating and appreciating music. It tends towards these babelian soundscape where the haunting of other voices, other sounds, and other forms of hearing is possible". Like the sheep in African indigenous rituals according to Armitage et al (1980:1174) their "sounds heard were characteristic and identifiable: drinking, eating, swallowing, rumination, and sometimes heavy breathing could be heard". Nonetheless, Dawn Benneth (1985:314) affirms that a frightened animal, for instance, makes a noise that not only sounds but also looks different from the sound made by an animal ready to attack and in that case, birds uses such sounds to give a distress call. But in African belief and practices such sounds are not ordinary because they are believed to be filled with symbolic meanings and through the mediation of such sounds, man tends to "manipulate ideas of ancestral power for political purposes, and ends with what is perhaps the most brilliant intellectualist analysis of African system of religious ideas yet made" (Horton, 1968:626). Nabofa (1994:72) argues that these produces a cacophony making it impossible for anyone to follow, the devotees feel that it is not a problem for the divine to decode what each worshipper is saying. The mysteries behind sounds produced by animals is that man tries to invent or mimic animal sounds by using some parts of the animals to produce sound that is similar to that same animal and in this form Daniel Turner (2012:146) affirms that there is a "connection suggestive of the totemic practice of imbuing the natural with sacred meaning". David Toop (2005:31) in his personal experience explains that "such sound tools was surprising enough, along with the

strange noise they produce, but I was also attracted to the fluency of movement between nature and culture: the way in which animal material were incorporated into the instruments, often to depict the sounds of birds or animals in a context of supernatural significance". In an example of an indigenous ritual drama, David Chidester (1992:9-10) affirms that "the bellowing of sacrificial animal was crucial to the ritual, because that cry opened up communication with the ancestors. The animal's cry carried the words of the ritual elders, although, in this case the cry of the sacrificial animal invoked the ancestors establishing communication with the ancestors and the ancestor spirit in the ancestral ritual". Nabofa (1994:39) asserts that "those who are knowledgeable in this area can easily decode meanings from their various sounds and rhythms". This is because in the thinking and belief of an indigenous African, they sound like heavenly music in the ears (Chidester, 1996:214). In African thought, such sounds according to Turner (2012:138) "can function as window into human culture for we look through objects because these are codes by which our interpretative attention makes them meaningful, because there is a discourse of objectivity that allows us to use them as facts". Gilane Tawadros (2014:25) affirms that such sounds are akin to state of ecstacy, madness or possession – becoming who we are [usually] not. Friedmann (2009:1) argues that "these developments reflect an increased recognition that not only are music and religion fundamental to the human experience; they are also inextricably linked in the context of religious worship".

Idiophones

In the study of ethnomusicology, these are those instruments which depend on the vibration of their whole body as source of sound production thereby transmitting certain symbolic messages which cannot easily be grasped, decoded and interpreted and they are most common varieties of instruments found in Africa (Okafor, 1998:175). Idiophones are functionally specialized for expressivity that is often attributed to sound symbolism (Nuckolls (1999). According to Genevieve Dournon (1992:258) "idiophones form this large and varied instrumental category, particularly resistance to systematic classification, and containing some of those calculated lacks with which any classificatory system must come to terms". According to Roger Blench (2009:6) "one of the problematic classes of idiophones is the lamellophones which are instruments that make noise with a vibrating tongue". He argues that a key division is primarily between tuned and untuned idiophones, while most sounding bodies produce a definite pitch, and these can either be treated as tuned, or arranged in sets according to a scale system (Blench, 2009:6). However, idiophones have the quality or tendency of producing sound by themselves [self-sounding wares], when stroked, pricked, pulled or pressed with the foot (Ibagere, 1994:91). He argues further that the sound they produce is of a different kind from those of other instruments and in this group are all the different sizes and shapes of gongs, woodblock, wood drum, bell rattle, earthen ware drum, and related instruments (Ibagere, 1994:91).

However David Lapp (2006:97) argues that the sounds produced when the pipes are tapped on their sides are fundamentally quite different from the sounds produced by the other instruments and that such musical instruments consisting of vibrating pipes or bars are known as idiophones. Bonaventure Umeogu (2013:26) affirms that sounds produced from these instruments that comprise of idiophone have specific meanings which are understood by the members of the community. According to Corazon Canave-Dioquino (2007:15) "there are metal and wooden [principally bamboo] idiophones". She explores the range of wooden and metal idiophones in the context of Philippines (Canave-Dioquino, 2007:15). Another musical instrument that is classified as an idiophone is *didjeridu* of the Australians, which Neville Fletcher (2007:62), describes as a simple wooden tube blown with the lips like trumpet, which gains its sonic flexibility from controllable resonances of the player's vocal tract. Idiophones as musical instruments speak the language of the communities; express their feelings, circumstances, situations and events of life among the people of different races, while it communicates different symbolic messages; some are considered to be sacred objects according to Derion & Mauze (2010:2).

As an "instrument of religious worship'' (Conn, 1998:41), in that wise, Nabofa (2005) posits that the temples of the *Igbe* an indigenous charismatic religious movements in Urhobo land are always flooded where such indigenous sacred musical object is used and it is important in the act of worship among the traditional worshippers in many parts of Africa because it "easily strike the divine signature tune'' (Nabofa, 1994:56). Bette Weidman (2006:193) asserts that "the music and the sounds of the language add to an understanding of the ceremony". Sean Patrick O'Neil (2013:242) sarcastically argues that such sounds "while sounding a great

deal like language, especially to the outside observer, these meaningless syllables have no regular semantics structure and no particular vocabulary...allowing members of each speech community to understand some of what is going on in any given performance". Nonetheless, Turkson (1992:70) affirms that the use of such idiophones always "reminds them of their root''. Gerard Kock (1989:12) argues that "within the liturgy, music is no longer something accidental for embellishment or ornament but it has become an essential and integral part of the liturgy itself. Music is itself liturgy''. William Jones (1801:126) affirms that sounds from inanimate bodies, such as musical instruments like the idiophones are "therefore, undoubtedly to be used in divine worship". The idea is that, musical instruments consisting of vibrating sounds, pipes or bars falls under the category of idiophones. Des Wilson posits that:

> Idiophones are sounding instruments or technical wares which produce sound without the addition or use of an intermediary medium. The sound or message emanates from the materials from which the instruments are made and they could be shaken, scratched, struck, pricked [pulled] or pressed with the feet. In this group we have the gong, woodlock, wooden drum; bell and rattle (1987:91).

Douron (1992:258) asserts that idiophones then are subdivided into seven modes of playing: concussion, striking, stamping, shaking, scraping, friction and plucking. Describing the wood drum as an idiophone, Akpabio (2003:14) asserts that "…the wooden drum is made from tree trunk. To enable it produce mellifluous sounds, the bark is removed and an opening is made at the top. This way when struck with a stick it produces sounds. The drums come in various sizes and shapes and it has various designations". Here, also they serve as instruments of social communication, tonal telegraphy, drum poetry and signal".

It is on this position that Blench (2009:7) laments that they "were in use in many areas as part of systems of long – distance communication but their communication function has been supplanted by telephones and fast public transport". Brian Tracy (2002:73) affirms that musical instrument like the idiophones as an art is a "beautiful piece of furniture, elegant and refined in detail, obviously a super of work which no one explains or dismisses its achievements as having been a matter of good luck''. Steven Friesen (2004:340) asserts that such instrument is a "delicately crafted gift that functioned within a system of exchange that easily transcended foreign conceptual boundaries such as sacred or secular''. On this ground, Okafor (1998:183) argues that "if the xylophone is the 'head or prince' of idiophone, *Ikolo* would precisely or rightly be described as the king in terms of structure, size, usage, and all it stands for'', which is "a firm descent and performance of ancestral rituals'' (Parrinder, 1980:11). Michael Marcuzzi (2010:151) asserts that "its mythical connection to an ancient patriarch establish the cult as the arch through which devotees approach the reproduction of the gerontocracy and the fecundity of the collective of male ancestors". According to Blench (2005:4) idiophones can be subdivided into tuned and untuned, although the only tuned idiophone is the xylophone, thus *Ikolo* is an untuned idiophone. According to Ogudoro (2012:1) "*Ikolo*– slit-drum is made from two types of different tree stems the yellow wood or the red wood because of its beautiful intense – natural red colour and its ability to resist insect termite/worms damage". She argues that "it is carved with slits or hollows and beaten with sticks to produce melodious sound and they are of different shapes and sizes and the bigger the *Ikolo*, the louder the sound it produces" (Ogudoro, 2012:1).

V. Conclusion

Today, sacred sounds have wide range of symbolic significance and uses, with or without other idiophones played in public or private performance context which are objectively or subjectively viewed as lawful, sinful, meritorious or divine. Sacred sound and idiophones generally are mediums of religious communication in African religions especially during traditional rituals and drama in religious liturgies. Indigenous sound deserves to be documented in its own right and preferably recorded both in audio and video. Changes in patterns and sequence of performance as a consequence of contact with world religions and modern recording technology are worthy of note. Ted Gioia (2006:24) affirms that "this deep faith in the transformational power of sound is so wide spread in traditional cultures that we are perhaps justified in calling it a universal belief and it is so deep-seated that its influence extends beyond the areas of magic and healing". It has been observed that through sacred sound and through the mediation of idiophones the African communities has demonstrated the coming together of their believe in the trilogy of their religions that comprises of rituals,

identity/dance and symbolism. Again, sacred sound acts as a spiritual and material conduit in planes of existence, in which it provides musical sound of valuable insight into the African metaphysical system, myths, and complex traditional religious thought and notions, and these affect and relate to the physical realm. In African Indigenous Religion, adherents believe that sacred sound is the direct access to the divine essence. The significance of the sound as it encompasses chanting, animal sounds and idiophones are basically made possible through the mediation of its symbolic functions they play. By these, our understanding of the religious, social, and psychological significance of sacred sound generally in the context of liturgy would be made available. Sounding of sacred idiophones in ritual festivals or liturgies would have both anthropological or sociological functions and undertones. Chanting, animal sounds and idiophones which produce sacred and symbolic sounds are equally used or played, during the installation of a chief and title-giving festival. Sacred sound plays social, therapeutic or magical role in some African festivals. However, there are some cases in which it is believed that mere listening to a particular music can heal or have some, other magical effects on the listener.

As agent of social control in some African communities, sacred sound is equally used in festivals as identified to freely express the feelings of the people. Stingy, corrupt and bad behaved members of the community are abused freely during the period. While, honest and generous, members of the community are praised or elated in such music and song during the festivals.

The type of sacred sounds that functions, either as part of a festival, or as a support material to a festival is basically determined by the celebration on ground. The sacred sound music performed for the yam festival could be out of place in time of burial ceremony. In fact, the point being made here is that the sacred sound for a rite, a ceremony or festival may not necessarily or normally be performed or showcased in another context unless there is some special reason for doing so. Where such happens, there is every tendency or probability that there will be difference in the "text" of the music for the two occasions. Frankly speaking, Chanting, animal sounds and idiophones of traditional religious communication among the African communities are basically used in various ways.

In indigenous community like the Aguleri in announcing the beginning of a festival or ceremony, idiophone like the *Ikolo* drum is beaten in distinctive ways and means, using its sound in drawing, the attention of the people to listen. From Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart*, there was a scenario where *Ekwe* was used to announce the death of Ezeudu who had been the oldest man in his village. While women were crying, their voices would not be heard, but the sound of *Ekwe* (*Ikolo*) carried the news to all the nine villages even beyond. According to (Achebe)[1], "the wailing of the women would not be heard beyond the village, but the *Ekwe* carried the news to all the nine villages even beyond" (1959:84).

Sound is also used as a medium of communication for ritualized festivals or ceremonies as the case may be. In the context of ritual, it becomes an extension of bodily experience and expression of devotion. They include facial expression and gesture, touch, pictures and visual signs, music, dance, words-spoken and written (Ayantayo, 2001:30). African indigenous communication from the scholarly point of view has been variously described. However, indigenous communication would be referred to as oral and aural media. Sacred sound in ritual festivals would happen as a means of passing message from man (the worshipper) to the gods in religious ritual festivals.

The partakers in such ritual festivals dance to such sound in order to entertain and to celebrate their being alive and well. Despite modernity and Christianity, the impact and significance of cultural affiliation to sacred sound is still or no doubt felt in our society today. Such traditional system of communication is a continuous process of information dissemination, entertainment and education used in societies which have not been seriously dislocated by western culture (Wilson, 1987:89). Summarily, sacred sounds enhance spiritual concentration and gives religious hope and joy during religious liturgy because there is a notion that where there is sound, there is liturgy. It serves as therapy for spiritual and psychological medication. It also aid in social and ritual announcement. It sustains ritual order. It equally covers ritual festivals and protects social identity for the

[1] Here, for Achebe to use the word ekwe instead of *Ikolo* is not a mistake but it was a matter of semantics or rather language choice. This is because ekwe and *Ikolo* is the same thing, is a matter of shapes and sizes that makes them to differ from each other.

initiates. It mediates social order and social relations. These significant functions have in common a favourable conception of sacred sound in religious ritual, and deep understanding that sound can communicate the spirituality of worship better than ordinary words. Through sound, meditational prayers forms part of inner-communication mode.

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