

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

THE UMUOKPU SONGS: A CASE STUDY OF UMUZOCHA WOMEN'S PERFORMANCE GROUP IN AWKA SOUTH

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Abstract

In Awka society of Igbo region of Nigeria, Umu-Okpu musical art is established and performed to stabilize and manage families, and the society employed its traditional method to achieve this purpose. This paper explores the polity of Umu-Okpu in Awka community, the performance practise of Umu-Okpu music, the analysis of the textual and musical structures in order suggest the possible adoption of the functions in correcting and building women of other culture. The research methods adopted for this study includes : observation, oral interview and literature review. In the end, it was discovered that over 90% of the women in the study area were knowledgeable in the umuokpu music and the lessons hidden in the musical lines. The majority of those not conversant with the music are in the range of 30's and those living outside the culture. Further studies can be done on the implications of these findings.

Keywords : Umuokpu musical arts, Umuzocha women's performance, Stability, Management of families, society.

Introduction

Music is an integral part of every culture. It is part and parcel of everyday life in every culture. Agu (1990:49) affirms that in African societies, all aspects of life ranging from birth to death are believed to be integrated with music making. Music is a powerful tool that promotes unity among people irrespective of their age and social status. Music accompanies every socio-cultural activity of the people. There are musical activities for every phase of the development stage of man on earth, ranging from birth to death. The above assertion is in line with Okafor (2005) who pointed out that “no festival can go on without music”(p.17).

In Igbo Culture, music is the pivot on which all cultural, religious and social activities rotate. Onwuka (2001) affirms that, “it does not only accompany many events of the life cycle but also helps to preserve and transmit societal norms, values and much of its cultural aspirations (p.1). Music is undoubtedly distinguished as one of the creative arts of indigenous African societies by which people express their culture and belief system through sound. African music both in conception and performance emerged as an oral tradition handed down to us from generation to generation and jealously preserved by its practitioners.

The Igbo are very musical people and therefore music features in almost all their cultural activities. The indispensability of music in all of their life's endeavors is perhaps rooted in the fact that they place very high premium on music's special ability to penetrate and permeate the innermost recesses of the human person and cause immeasurable changes in the behaviour (Ikemerike:2015). As a matter of fact, they have evidently used music to educate, train, inform and transform life of their kiths and kins in line with the acceptable and unacceptable attitudes,

behaviours, habits and norms of their social group. Blackings in Okpara (2006) opined that "music playing is not simply the exercise in the organization of sound; it is a symbolic expression of sound, and the cultural organization which reflects the values of the past and present ways of life of the human beings who create it". (p.2).

Music is a universal phenomenon which span through human life. In Africa, music is functionally used contextually in different societies. Since it is appreciated by every level of human society; adults, children, youths, women and men. Every society builds up their members in their cultural values and norms. Nigerian society is presently devoid of moral values especially, because of modernization, acculturation and other factors that shifted moral focus from traditional norms and values. This is reflected in the lives of people right from the family level which is the smallest unit that is capable of building up the nation. The impact of women in families is very important that they have roles to play in the development of Nigerian children who grow to become leaders tomorrow. Umu-Okpu songs functions to build women to be able to realize their values and perform their duties as women in the society, wives in the families and mothers of children. The song texts are emotionally inspiring, entertaining and didactic in nature. There are various music genres performed by different categories of individuals, who have some kind of blood tie or associative bond. These music genres are studied to investigate their usefulness in the society. Musical activities in Igbo land are not restricted to a particular class of people in the society. Such as the children, adolescent, youths (boys and girls), adults (men and women) and there are yet ones that involves both sexes and that whose membership does not have age barriers. This music group that forms the focal point of this study is designated for women. According to Nwamara & Okpala (2020), Majority of the music types practiced by these categories of people are fast fading away. This is as a result of negligence, flair for foreign music culture, influence of new technologies, religious belief and the likes" (p.44). Despite the lethal influences of these factors, a good number of traditional music has prevailed, Umuokpu Awka which form the object of discourse in this research work is among the prevailed music group in Awka community of Anambra State. This research work is necessary as it helps in portraying the rich musical culture of the people to prevent it from being obsolete or defunct. Traditional music genres should be studied and recorded so that the future generations will have something to lay hands on for promoting our cultural heritage.

Culture

Culture means the custom and beliefs, arts, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group. Culture can be seen generally as the aggregation of the pattern of human behaviors which are transmitted to succeeding generations. It is a people's whole way of life. It includes all the customary belief and social forms. Culture and tradition are closely related and are often used interchangeably, but culture is wider than tradition. In fact, tradition is only part of the cultural inheritance of a people.

Nwaodu (2014) explains the concept of culture when she said: "The culture of people is their general way of life and acceptable pattern of living or behavior. Most people's culture is reflected in their type of music" (p.24). Arazu in Umeh (1999) explains manifestation of culture thus:

The culture of every people is manifest in language or dialect, in religion, morality, laws and customs, in ways of constructing, in Modes of dressing and general attire, in ways of preparing food and eating habits, in arts and crafts, in political institution, in marriage, in ways of burying the dead and welcoming of newborn babies into the community, in farming methods, in fishing and animal husbandry, not to mention hunting. The culture of a people is the fabric into which everything about the people is woven and in which alterations are made by every new generation, for better or for worse. That is

why culture is said to be dynamic. It grows. It deteriorates. It dies. It can be rejuvenated (p.21).

In this work, culture shall refer to the totality of people's way of life, that is their world view, their interpretation of life's experience and prepositions for a healthy and purposeful living. Culture has values that are largely shared by their members. The values of a society can often be identified by noting which people receive honor or respect. This is because they are an embodiment of what a particular culture stands for and should be the basis for the behavior of its members.

The concept of culture cannot be separated from the concept of music. The music of people remains a total reflection of socio-cultural values of the people. Indeed culture is a mark of identity as it equally divides society. Each society has their identity and this identity is visible in their language, culture, customs, traditions, music, attire etc. Nnatu in Obiakor (2015) observed that most anthropologists and sociologists have tended to adopt the definition of culture as was given by Sir Edward Taylor in 1971 which views culture as: that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (p.50).

He went further to explain that there are two aspects of culture, the material and non-material. The material culture refers to those tangible and physical attributes which man created or acquired from his environment. These include clothes, houses, monuments, shrines, artifacts, furniture and musical instruments among others. These objects are used in the day to day activity of a particular group of people. The non-material aspect exists as a body of ideas, values, norms, mores, and belief systems, which influences man's interpretation of his immediate environment. It also includes music, festivals, folklore and rituals. In our contemporary society, traditional Igbo societies placed no limitations on the spheres in which women could exercise their influence. Therefore, women play active roles in the market, in homes and also in the inter-village relations or groups. As a result, Igbo women developed various means through which they could exercise their authority when needed ranging from clan meetings to other issues in the community. These women groups include the Umuokpu (Daughters of the soil), Otu Umuagbohobia (the maiden group), Out Nwunyedi (co-wives) and others. But the most powerful among these women groups is the Umuokpu. The scope of this study is limited to Umuokpu in Umuzocha in Awka Community.

Awka Community

Awka is the capital of Anambra State and the Headquarter of Awka South Local Government Area. It is located at latitude 6.21°N and longitude 7.077°E. Its elevation above sea level is 99meters. However, Dike (2013) submits that Awka is situated on a height of about 154.5 meters (515) feet above sea level on Awka-Orlu escarpment. He further states that: Awka is enclosed approximately by latitudes 6°10'N and 6°15'N and longitudes 7°1.4'E and 7°8.4'E. It lies about forty kilometres (25 miles) northeast of Onitsha and seventy-two kilometres (45 miles) southwest of Enugu and covers an area of twenty-five square kilometres (P.I). It stretches from about kilometer 40 north of Onitsha road to about 50 towards the south of the same road. No doubt, Awka is situated on a table land, not hilly or stony. There are no major rivers in Awka but there a number of streams and springs of water for household's chores to the inhabitant. The land is very good for farming. There are divergences in the composition of the soil, ranging from the rich loamy soil with immense agricultural potentialities in the north-east to the sandy soil in the south-west. Some areas of the land are composed of red soil which is good for road work and building of houses. These provide job for some of the indigenous and other people residing in Awka. Awka was recently accorded an urban status and this is greatly influenced by social life of the town, although the village is still operative, strangers made up of civil servants, businessmen, traders, teachers, university dons, technicians and labourers rent houses and thereby mix up with

the native in Awka. Dike in Nwamara & Okpala (2013) states that: The town dwells on a predominantly plain country with arable land composed of a little mixture of loose sandstones and clay soils as well as red laterite formation in scattered areas. Its vegetative cover consisted of patched forests and the entire area was drained or watered by a number of perennial streams and springs (p.44).

There is no traceable origin of the indigenous people of Awka, the history of the origin of Awka falls within the history in Igbo land which are said to be out of memory This gave rise to the popular saying recorded in Okafor (2002:1) which says “ Oka ful'efu, Enwerevbennanna, Onwereika e shivbebia (Oka grew out of the soil of Oka, they have not one father, there is no history that they came from somewhere).” On the otherhand, the origin of Awka also takes the pattern of most many centuries behind, when men in this part of the world wandered from one place to another in search of a suitable place to settle and toil for subsistence. Awka people believed that it was during such wandering that their ancestors found themselves in the land. There are other settlers who migrated from other parts of the country that joined Awka in their present location. These are part of the present Awka people and they have traceable origins. Presently, Awka town has developed into four main villages with 33 quarters all tied together by one common tradition. Due to migration from different places, there exist little differences in the peoples'cultural practices and local dialect.

They include:

Ayom- na- Okpala group : Umuayom, Umunnoke, Umuoramma and Umuokpu

Nkwelle Group : Achalloji, Umunamoke, Agbana, Umudiaba

Amachalla Group : Amachalla, Amudo, Umuzocha

Ifite-Oka Group : Enu-Ifite, Ezinato Ifite, Agbana-Ifite

Amikwo Group: Umudiana, Okperi, Igweogige, Isiagu, Obunagu

Ezi-Oka Group: Omuko, Umueri, Umuogwai, Umuogbunu 1, Umuogbunu 2, UmudiokamUmukwa

Agulu Group : Umuogbu, Umubele, Umuanaga, Umuike, Umujagwo, Umuenechi, Umuoruka. The custom of a people is said to be their life. Although the missionaries who came to Awka in 1902 succeeded in converting some of the people to Christianity, many remained steadfast to the traditional belief and untainted upto now. The Awka people performs many festivals annually and the period of each festival is determined by counting the appearance of the moon so that each native month has its own. These festivals include Imo Awka, Ukwunalje and the Otite or OnwaAsa.

All these festivals involve musical activities. Music is an integral part of everyday life in Awka traditional community. It is a very important aspect of their culture. Music accompanies every socio-cultural activity of the people. Besides its entertainment and aesthetic values, music in some context may either be a means of infusing a sense of unity and oneness in minds of the people (Euba 1969). During the Imoka festival which is the most popular and most important of the Awka traditional festivals, both the young and aged men take part in the ceremony. It is also a masquerade festival where the youth roam the street exhibiting youthful exuberance playing their ogene music.(P. Chukwuezugbo, Personal communication, May 3,2021).

Dance and music are aspect of festivals in which both the performer and the people are involved. This is in accordance with Onwuka (2012:2) which states that dance cannot be meaningfully performed without music. He further noted that dance is stimulated and accompanied by appropriate musical, which makes the wonderful art of traditional performances spirit-lifting and edifying. It is a physical participation in the celebration as people dance to the rhythm of the

music. Imoka festival for example is also known as the dance of the gods and it's a feast dominated with dance of various kinds. The women folk are not left out of the dance of the gods. During the early hours of the second day of the Imokafeast, the women folk alone with marching dance move to children in a procession led by ezenwanyi with a young woman singing praises of Imoka god.

The Meaning and Role of Umuokpu

Umuokpu/Umuada is a collective name of all the daughters of a particular clan, village, town or state whether old, young, single, married, separated or divorced. Umuokpu is a powerful socio-political block in Igbo culture, a functional forum for females. The Umu-okpu is used to refer to female children who share a relationship by virtue of being born in the same village. Okafor (2005) defines Umuokpu thus:

The Umu-ada or Umu-okpu (classificatory sisters) is used in the sense of female children born in the same village who are linked by bond of consanguinity. Because women must marry into a different community from that in which they were born, they are both the herald and ambassadors of their communities, particularly in disturbed times, and provide the cement, which holds the larger society together (p.70).

Umuokpu refers to women born in a particular town, married or unmarried, who trace their descent from the same patrilineal ancestors (Oreh, 1992). They exist in almost every part of Igboland and are regarded as holy, ethically sound, humble, but very powerful (Oreh, 1992). However, in view of the existence of different dialects of the Igbo language, the group is also known by other names. In parts of Igboland like Aguata, Njikoka, Idemili, Nnewi, Okigwe, Awka and Isuochi they are called Umuokpu. Among the Owerri people, Umuada are commonly referred to as Umungboto.

Umuokpu tradition is said to have originated from the Igbo traditional religious beliefs, specifically from the veneration of Ala (the Earth goddess), the symbol of fertility and giver of children and rich agricultural yields. According to the Igbo religious cosmology, the daughters were not only deemed to possess direct links with Ala but were also expected to live up to the wishes or attributes of Ala, by being upright, morally conscious, courageously truthful, and peace loving in order to be able to influence the actions of the deity in their natal communities, especially in favor of peace and success in life's endeavors. Umuokpu are bold, courageous, daring, and resolute and their decisions are deemed ethically sound and sacrosanct in matters that affect their natal, as opposed to the marital communities. As Ukadike (personal communication, May 3, 2021) observed, members of their natal communities, regardless of age and status, tend to avoid incurring the wrath of the Umuokpu because they usually go to any length to ensure that the offender is adequately punished, hence the popular saying among the Igbo that "the fear of Umuokpu is the beginning of wisdom."

Umuokpu were mostly noted for the maintenance of peace and justice as well as law enforcement in traditional Igbo society during the pre-colonial era which lacked a police force in the modern sense (Omenka, 1993). They not only enforced their own rules/laws but also those enacted by their natal families, kindred, villages and towns as well as the natural laws of the community, depending on the individual circumstances. So rather than physical force or strength, Umuokpu usually exert moral and spiritual force on the offenders and their tools of enforcement, depending on the situation, include imposition of fines, strikes and boycott of activities at their natal communities, sit-ins, ostracization and banishment of offenders, placement of curses on offenders, parading their naked and joining forces with the women married into their natal communities.

Ajowole (2013) remarks that " there are customs among the Igbo particularly in the funeral rite and moral laws, where council of the classificatory sisters have an important and often decisive voice"(p.62)). The minimization and entronement of peace in family and community is the function of Umuokpu. Where men fails in conflict management, the Umuokpu weigh a very big stick and their decision is final. Agbasiere(2000) opines " the Umuokpu and Umunna are the two categories of kin that have both mutual claims on an obligations to the conservation of the group's identity, which is the raison d' etre of any kinship system"(p.8).

Umu-okpu serves as the counterpart to Umu-nna((sons of the soil). There is no hard fact that men dominate in socio-political matters in Igboland but women mostly in complex conflicts of conjugal character. The Igbo society abhorred such morally and socially deviant acts like murder/manslaughter, stealing, rape, incest, desecration of traditional religious beliefs, places of worship and totems, and disrespect and maltreatment of aged members of the family/community." Usually, the Umuada carried out these tasks with an unequalled air of authority and were not dissuaded by the age, gender, or social status of the moral and social deviants That is why Okafor said that because women must marry into a different community from that in which they were born, they were both the heralds and the ambassadors of their communities particularly in disturbed times, and provide the cement which holds the larger society together".(2005:70). He further noted that women play a major part in social control by condemning the evil in the society.

The Organisation and Initiation into Umuokpu group



The Umuokpu Of Umuzocha in Awka community

The *Umuokpu* is a powerful and most revered functional women group in Igbo traditional society. In Awka community, the very important customary function that parent perform for their baby girl is to educate as well as initiate her into the prestigious Umuokpu group. This group is an association of all the daughters of the larger family. It is equivalent to Otu Umunna union which is an all male affair. When a baby girl is born into a family, automatically by right, she is referred to as Nwa-ada (a daughter). When she gets married into another community or village, and visits her father's house, it will be said that Nwa-adabia meaning a daughter visited. But peradventure she didn't marry at all or she was divorced by her husband or a widow, she is also referred to as Nwa-okpu, "Umu" mean children, now the association of many daughters is known as Umuokpu. It is necessary for every woman in Awka to be a member of this group because it's an all female affair. Any female member of the family who is not initiated into the Umu-okpu is regarded as not one of them. This entails that the Umu-okpu will have nothing to do with her in times of trouble, traditional marriage, difficulty, death or she pays a heavy fine imposed on her family for them to attend to any function related to them. She would walk as a stranger in her maiden home to which

she belongs. The oldest among them is the leader of the group. All the Umuokpu in each of the villages in Awka Community have their cultural practises and dialect according to where they migrated from. For example the researcher gathered through oral interview that some of the Awka indigenes especially in Umuzocha migrated from Igala. Umuzocha is made up of four kindred namely: Umu-mbute, Umu-nkiri, Umu-Arum and Umu-Obum. The Umu-mbute merged with Umu-nkiri while Umu-Arum merged Umu-Obum to carry out activities together as well as attend functions. Therefore Umuokpu in Umuzocha holds their meetings usually every first and last Saturdays of each month. Their meetings revolve around their members i.e. each member has a Saturday to hold the meeting in her house. In their meetings, they discuss about the welfare of their members, treat conflict issues, rehearse their songs, contribute their savings, eat and drink (if available), discuss functions at hand, pray together and many other things.

Ostensibly, according to Umah Patrick in Udobata Onunwa, the Umu-okpu acting through their leaders exercise such “moral powers” that no one questions within the community. They act as the last court of appeal in traditional and undislocated Igbo society of which Awka is one of them. In some cases where trivial issues arise, they would convene at the house of their oldest member who is also their leader to deliberate on such issues. A times they are invited to settle family disputes (except land dispute) that defy the orders of the elders of the land. Their power or right is derived from that of the ancestral founding fathers of the lineage and therefore should not be questioned.

The Popularity of Umuokpu songs.

The cultural implication of the roles and songs of Umu-okpu in Awka are highly effective and cannot be overemphasized. They are also musical association which entertains people especially their husbands and children with their songs, dance and musical instruments during ceremonies such as funeral, traditional marriage, new yam festivals, coronation and other social gathering. They have different uniforms for their different functions and performances.



The Umuokpu of Umuzocha performing their songs

Okafor (2003) notes that “in the mosaic of ceremonies, women play appropriate and sometimes cardinal roles; they pour out a variety of songs and dances to generate happiness, warmth and spectacles” (p.75). In most functions like title-taking, funerals, marriage and so on, the Umuokpu musical group add colour to the whole ceremony with their songs and dance. The Umuokpu Awka according to oral interview gathered by the researcher was

established in the olden days to achieve unity, constant communication and continuity. The UmuokpuAwka initially do not have central songs they perform together due to differences in local dialect but today, through copying and listening to other's song, they can perform many songs together irrespective of the occasion. This act of copying and adopting music from another culture or village is what Nzewi (2007) referred to as musical art borrowing. Buttressing this further, he opines: Musical arts borrowing in the indigenous setting bonded individuals and communities/societies, and had prescribed procedures, which implicated vast societal and human issues. It generated human-cultural interest, values and relationship far beyond musical arts matters. Musical arts borrowing as such occur when an organization or group in one community sets out to acquire a favoured musical arts style practiced by a group in another community or society (p.139). The researcher totally agrees with the submission above, really the act of music borrowing has encouraged healthy and friendly relationships between individuals and villages in Awka Community through the medium of their songs to achieve such objectives.

The Umuokpu sometimes go on march either to build or to destroy so as to draw the attention of the elders to what is irking them in the community or forcefully tell the errant wife or husband that enough was enough. Also in any traditional function they were present, they use their songs to notify the celebrant of their anger if they were not properly taken care of. They have through the medium of their songs in some areas been able to restore peace in various families, inculcate moral values in younger ones, get certain laws and customs modified or abolished, pointed crimes which are tenets of the community, discourage people from straying outside accepted social norms, erect schools and maternity, place taboos against certain markets, guide some parents in their attitudes toward their children, condemn immoral attitude and indecent dressing in some women and youths especially the female ones. In support of this assertion, Okafor (1988) notes that “women used music to rally around a given national cause or goal, to mobilize people towards a central attitude or action, and even correct some of the common misconception in the society”(p.25). Social control is a cardinal point of the corrective system of our society and Umuokpu often have their hands on the lever. Okafor further points out that there are many instances of the values of women dancing groups and musical groups in many communities but we cannot deny the fact that women are the great organizers of these. They make the necessary binding laws, and they have the necessary organizational structure to move a whole community-husbands and relatives, friends, kinsfolk and the general town people. When Umu-okpu Awkais performing for example, in a village or a function, virtually most of the spectators are moved either to dance with them or to spray money on them and the proceeds of the show maybe for desired purpose. According R.Ukadike from Umuzocha village, the last time the Umuokpu staged musical performance known as Ericowas in the year 1972/1973, since after that year, such performances never held till date and was later followed by Asa-nwodo.

Women in Igbo tradition perform music prescribed by tradition and do not exceed or go beyond their limit. They play major/important musical roles in matters of birth, puberty, marriage and death (the four major cycles). Other songs include songs of exhilaration and excitement etc. Throwing more light on that, Akpabot in Aniagbaoso (2007) says that “African vocal music can be a praise song, a folklore song, a song of insult, a funeral song or cradle song used by others to rock their babies to sleep. There are songs associated with men's, women's and children's groups only, divided according to sex and age, restricted by custom, to be performed by specific groups”(p.14)

It is widely known and accepted that Women are the first teachers of music. They chant salutation to announce the birth of a child and afterward lullabies to them. They sing as they go about their

domestic chores probably with the babies tied at their back, this help to implant the musical culture in their children and to ensure the continuity of Igbo music. In mosaic of ceremonies, the Umu-okpu as one of the women musical group is majorly involved in music making. Some of the chants, dances and songs used are in the prerogative of women and they are the main custodians. Looking at the theme(s) of their songs used in different ceremonies, they are the things that edify the society, excite, move and also motivate them.(Ajewole, 2013)

Music as we all know is an indispensable part of life and man's daily activities. That is to say that for every single activity engaged by man, there is music to accompany it. Nketia in Aniagbaoso (2007) writes that:

Music making is generally organized as a social event. Public performances therefore takes place on social occasions where members of a group or community come together for the enjoyment of leisure, for recreational activities or for the performance of a rite, ceremony, festival, or any kind of collective activity. He also mentioned that the basics of association for music making however, is usually the community, those members of the ethnic groups who share a common habit such as a group of the home stead, a village or a town, or a section of a town and who lives some kind of a corporate life based on common local traditions and common beliefs and values.(p.13)

Also, according to Onyiuke (2005) “Music making is associated with culture in Igbo land. There are different music for different occasion. For instance, in a community gathering, the type of music performed there will dictate the type of occasion being performed”(p.123). In every event of the community, music is the beauty of that event. There are many certain cultural activities in a community in which the Umu-okpu features and they do so with a collection of their music, depending on which suits the occasion. A good example is the initiation ceremony of the Umu-okpu. Nmah (2003) has this to say about their initiation ceremony:

Initiation involves inviting all the Umu-ada of the family and serving them with kola-nuts, very delicious food and tasty palm wine. Every one of them would eat and drink to their satisfaction. They would make merry, sing songs, dance and welcome new members into their fold. It is an all female affair, but if any of their husbands or male relations happens to be around, they would be equally entertained. (p.110).

Also, Nketia in Aniagbaoso (2007) opines that:

It depends not only on the musical demands, which activities and events are made but also to a large extent on its organization in terms of the participants. The women who meet in various situations for the enjoyment of leisure for the performance of rites and ceremonies, they do so because they share common interest, common ideal, beliefs which forms the basics of their community life.(p.15)

In Okafor's view (2005), he says that; the whole point about music in Igbo culture is that it is integral with life and closely related with the other art forms, under these circumstance, Music plays a double role as a medium of cultural transmission and as music itself. It is a life-long as well as a comprehensive activity. Every Igbo person is expected to make music or perform at a dance at certain points in life. All life rites have musical implications and involvements so that at

any point in time, somewhere, somebody is making music or dancing in Igbo land.(p.26-27).The Umu-okpuAwka attend other functions such as Ozo title of their brothers, Coronations, Ofala festivals and other ceremonies if invited. The Umu-okpuof Umuzocha is an active and functional women group inAwka community till tomorrow.

According to Amadiume in Ubani (2013), he declares that African women (especially during the traditional times) participated actively in public rituals and ceremonies that incorporated dances and songs. This active involvement not only enabled them gain access to the medium of communication, but also made them a part of the ideology making process (p.71). The Umuokpu Awka accompanies their songs with clapping and dancing during the funeral of a bachelor. According to one of their member, Mrs Odenudia, on other occasions, they accompany their songs with different local instruments such as Udu (pot drum), Alo (long metal gong), ichaka (maracas), Ogene (metal gong) and Igba (twin drum) etc. she further stated that in Umuzocha village, the number of Umuokpu that attend functions are between 80-100, this is an indication for their functionality. But for members who dont attend functions, they are to pay a fine of five thousand naira. However, there are major challenges faced by this prestigious group which include lack of respect by the younger folks towards the elderly ones. Also, some of the elderly ones find it difficult to dance during their performances due to old age or one ailment or the other while there are but few younger women among them whom these elderly women are working assiduously to ensure that they learn these songs and dance for continuity. Traditional songs play a very important role in shaping the life of the people.Through the lyrics of songs of Umuokpu, good behaviors are encouraged.Umuokpu songs are very short with repetitions, very easy to sing and are usually in Call and response and some in chorus form. “The lyrics of folk songs are so powerful that they can penetrate the heart of both the performers and the spectator resulting in the change of attitude and towards positive issue” (Okpala 2015,p.2002) Buttressing more on this, Okafor and Emeka (2013) rightly observed that “Igbos sing a whole spectrum of songs e.g social songs, songs of praise, love songs, religious song and songs of derision”. These songs mentioned encompasses the repertoire of Umuokpu Awka.The song texts carry messages that educate the people about various issues of life and is appropriate for every aspect of life.Below are the examples of the songs text;

Onye Ana Emeru Emeru

O-nye a-na e-me-ru eme-ru de-be i-re duu O-nye a-na e-me-ru e-me-ru

4 de-be i-re duu o - ji a-ka ya e-me-re o- nwe_ ya o-na e-me mgb'o-ji-

7 ri soo ya o-nye a-na e-me-re me-re n'a-ku ire gbam, gbam, gbam.

<i>Onyeana-emeruemeru debe ire duu</i>	One who is been provided for, should hold her tongue
<i>Oji aka yaemer'onweya?</i>	Does she provide for herself?
<i>O na-ememgb'ojiri so ya</i>	She spends however she wants
<i>Onyeana-emeruemeru</i>	One who is been provided for
<i>N'aku ire gbam, gbam, gbam</i>	talks unnecessarily

Through the song above, people are induced to have a sober reflection of their life and not to mock other people because of material possession. Through such songs people are made to be conscious of their actions, so that they will not be ridiculed. This song is in chorus form.

Nwanyi Di Ya Huru N'Anya

Musical score for 'Nwanyi Di Ya Huru N'Anya'. The score is written for two voices and includes the following lyrics:

Nwa-ya Di ye hu ru n'a-nya Nwa-nya di ye hu ru n'a-nya, A-

O-nye_ujo olu

5 pa-ta akpa ri - ce o - ri-sie A - pa-ta akpa beans o - ta-sia

O-nye_u-joo olu O-nye_u-joo

9 Nwa - nya k'a - nyi jee o - lu, A - na - ra me e -

olu

11 jee na di mu hu -rum n'a - nya.

O -nye_u - joo olu

Nwanyi DI Ye Huru N'anya

Musical score for 'Nwanyi DI Ye Huru N'anya'. The score is written for two voices and includes the following lyrics:

Nwa-ya Di ye hu ru n'a-nya Nwa-nya di ye hu ru n'a-nya, A-

O-nye_ujo olu

5 pa-ta akpa ri - ce o - ri-sie A - pa-ta akpa beans o - ta-sia

O-nye_u-joo olu O-nye_u-joo

9 Nwa - nya k'a - nyi jee o - lu, A - na - ra me e -

olu

11 jee na di mu hu -rum n'a - nya.

O -nye_u - joo olu

Nwanyi di ya huru n'anya, ony'ujo
olu *Apata akpa rice o risie*
Apata akpa beans o tasia
Nwanyi k'ayi jee olu
Anaram eje na dim hurum
n'anya Ony'ujo olu

Woman loved by the husband, lazy
one. Consumes a bag of rice, lazy one
Consumes a bag of beans, lazy one
woman, let go and work
I won't be going for my husband loves
me lazy one.

This is a song of derision. Going by the above text, folk songs is a viable means of inculcating the right behavioral patterns of life of a community into people. This song ridicules a woman who is not industrious but rely totally on the husband for support. Umuokpu encourages hardwork and support of wives to their husbands and therefore the performance of this song in any social function normally induces married women to have a sober reflection, through such song women are made to be conscious of their action, so that they will not be openly ridiculed. This song is in call and response form. The soloist calls in followed by chorus response.

Ogom nwoke nekwenu Ada
anyio Netekwe ya mma o-
Ada anyi nwanyi nekwe di
gi Netekwe ya mma
Ogo anyi nwoke ukwu akwa
'iri kwa onwa

Our in-law seeth our daughter
Take good care of her
our daughter seethur husband
take good care of him
our in-law buy for her ten
wrappers every month

This is a song performed during traditional marriage. Through the song above, the newly married couples are made to understand the roles expected as they live as man and wife. The husband is to constantly beautify the wife monthly with new wrappers whereas the wife on the other hand is expected to play a motherly role to the husband by taking good care of him. Even the older ones are reminded of what marriage is all about. This song is in chorus form.

Onye na nwanne ya
Ife nasia na nwanne ama ana

one with his brothers
things do fade away but brotherhood abides

This song is didactic in nature. It encourages solidarity and love among not just the members of the group but the entire society. The song text propels people to have a re-think about the kind of relationship they have with their brethren, to know what position they occupy in the development of their community, the impacts they have made so far in the lives of the members of their community and know whether they are building or destroying it. It further admonishes that brothers sticks closer than friends. The soloist starts the song by calling in (ifenanwanne) while others respond by chorusing (ifena-sianaNwanneama-nna)

Onye na Nwanne ya

O-nye na nwa-nne a, i-fe na-sia na nwa-nne a-ma na. o-nye na nwa-nne a

Voice 

I-fe na-sia na nwa-nne a-ma na.

Voice 

4 i-fe na-sia na nwa-nne a-ma na a-nyi je-ri a-kwa nwa-nne i-

Voice 

I-fe na-sia na nwa-nne a-ma na. I-fe na-sia na nwa-nne a-ma

Voice 

7 nyom u - mu o-kpu onye a-gha-na nwa-nne a i -

Voice 

na. I - fe na - sia na nwa-nne a-ma

Voice 

9 yom u - mu o-kpu onye a-gha-na nwa-nne a

Voice 

na. I - fe na - sia na nwa-nne a-ma

Voice 

11 i-fe na nwa nne, I - fe na-sia na nwa-nne a-ma na.

Voice 

na. I - fe na-sia na nwa-nne a-ma na.

Voice 

Ndi Otu m

N - di o-tu mu-wa n-che-kwu-be-lu, u - nu ga kwa-kwo-m ayi ga e

Voice 

4 jee mgba nu. N-di o-tu mu-wa n-che-kwu-be-lu, u-nu ga kwa-kwo-m ayi ga e-jee mgba

Voice 

7 nu. M-mu-kwa nwa ma mu-ru nwa u-nu ga kwa-kwo-m ayi ga e-jee mgbanu.

Voice 

10 M nwe - kwa e - go mu nwe-ghie - go kwaa - nu nu mee

Voice 

12 ayi ga e-jee mgbanu. kwee-nu ye a ayi-ge jee mgba-nu be chu-kwu ayi-ge jee mgba nu.

Voice 

*Ndi otum nchekwubelu, unu a-
gakwakwom Anyi ga ejee mgbanu
Mmuo nwa ma amughi
nwa, unu ga akwakwom
M nwe ego ma enweghi
ego Ayi ga-eje mgbanu
Ayi ga eje mgbanu be
chukwu Ayi ga eje mgbanu*

my people that I hoped on, will you bury
me we will not hasten to death
whether I give birth to a child or
not will you give me a befitting
burial? whether i am rich or poor
we will not hasten to death
we will not hasten to death to
God, we will not hasten to death

This is a song for funeral of the Umuokpu member. Once their member dies and they attend her funeral, they usually march into her compound with this song to create awareness of their presence. The song text is very emotional, indicating that whether in life or death, for richer for poorer and in any circumstances, they will show their solidarity and give their member a befitting burial. This song is in call and response form.

Conclusion/ Summary

This study reveals that music plays an important role in the social stability and cultural identity in Awka community. Through the lyrics of Umuokpu songs, they have tried to restore peace in various families, inculcate moral values in younger ones, get certain laws and customs modified or abolished, pointed at crimes which are tenets of the community, discourage people from straying outside accepted social norms, guide some parents in their attitudes toward their children and to condemn immoral attitude and indecent dressing in some women and youths especially the female ones. Also the people are reminded of their civic responsibilities, ill behaviours are condemned while good ones are commended. This no wonder must have been the reason for its sustainability and recognition in the whole of the eastern region of Nigeria. However, the researcher noticed that the young women among them who are married outside their community pay less attention and don't contribute much to Umuokpu activities therefore leaving the association for the old women to manage. As a result of some women's status and educational qualification in our present society, many women no longer deem it fit to have anything to do with Umuokpu group nor associate with them. While some women in quest for greener pasture or occupied with the kind of work or business they engage in do not pay interest to the Umuokpu groups in their various town. Also the modern urban lifestyle led to the development of mutually antagonistic feelings and divisions between the rural-based Umuada groups and their urban-based members. As a result of the influence of new religious orientations and modern 'civilizing' trends, some of the urban-based members not only dissociated themselves from the group entirely but also canvassed for the discontinuance of the Umuokpu tradition and songs which they termed archaic and fetish thereby breeding lack of respect by these younger generations. All these challenges and more have forced the Umuokpu to incorporate Christian songs and church hymns into their repertoire hence the need to document these cultural songs to avoid going into extinction. The researcher feels that she succeeded to an extent, in bringing to light some of the Umuokpu songs and is suggesting to other researchers to explore deeply on Umuokpu musical group, analyze and bring to fore the beneficial content of their songs for preservation and documentation.

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