

# CHAPTER 22

## EDUCATIONAL VALUES OF INDIGENOUS FOLK SONGS TO CHILDREN: A STUDY OF SELECTED FOLK SONGS OF AWKA TOWN, ANAMBRA STATE

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### Abstract

Traditional African society is characterized by music-making. Music is expressed in so many ways within a traditional African society. Due to its functional nature, there is music for virtually every happening in the surroundings. The folk music of a people represents the cultural idioms of a people, and also carries with it the values of the people. Lack of folk music practice, therefore, means a lack of a good measure of the cultural values of a community which helps to shape the behavioural pattern of its children as they grow. This work is an attempt to bring to the knowledge of the public, the educational values of selected folk songs of Awka people, as a measure to persuade them to return to folk music practice, which in turn will help to curb the menace of moral decadence which is common among the 21<sup>st</sup>-century children. Using the interview method, the researcher was able to collect the folk songs of the Awka people. From the findings of the research, Awka people are blessed with a rich heritage in their folk songs, which if practised, will help to build a better future for their children.

**Keywords:** Indigenous folk songs, Educational values, Traditional African society and Awka town.

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### Introduction

Nigeria is a country enormously endowed with a rich cultural heritage. Its multilingual nature is evidence of the numerous cultures which exist within its geographical boundaries. Folk materials are a part of the existing endowments of the Nigerian people. Folk songs are traditional songs which belong to the people, with no known composer, and are passed down from one generation

to another, through various means. (Samuel, 2013, Nnamani 2019, Erhiegeke 2020) Its original and initial mode of preservation and transmission was the oral tradition, especially in the ages before the era of technological inventions and advancements. Technology has however made the transmission and preservation of folk songs easy. People can now enjoy the benefits of folk songs from anywhere in the world without being physically present at the geographical location of their original owners.

Folk songs served numerous functions within traditional Nigerian society. One notable functionality of folk songs is the educational values embedded in them. Good morals were instilled in the younger generations with the practice of folk songs. It not only instils good morals in children, but it is also a good way to educate the younger generations about the traditions of the land since it cuts across virtually every human activity. There are folk songs for birth, weaning, marriage, puberty, work, war, initiation, title-taking, and funerals. (Ibekwe & Ojukwu 2020, Offor 2008).

This work is geared towards collecting and analyzing selected folk songs of Awka, to bring to the knowledge of the public, their educational values, as a way to encourage people, to return to abandoned folk music practices.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Moral decadence and juvenile delinquency are on the increase as the days go by. This is owed to the kind of upbringing people receive. Acculturation has resulted in a hybrid culture, where a great percentage of the existing culture is alien. This acculturation has affected almost every area of African culture, especially music. People have welcomed with open hands the musical cultures of the Western world. Some have added it to the already existing musical cultures of Africa, to form a hybrid musical culture that still possesses African traits, while others have completely abandoned their traditional and indigenous musical cultures.

African folk songs have been known to among other things, be a good source of education to its custodians, especially the children. It has helped to instil discipline in people and has helped in instilling good morals in children. It has also helped to educate the people on the cultural practices of their ancestors. A lack of practice in these songs will deprive people of their invaluable contribution to the growth and well-being of the people. This work is therefore a call to reawaken the practice of folk songs within the Nigerian communities, as a measure to reduce the influence of western music and its cultures on Nigerian people.

### **Method of Data Collection**

Data for this research was collected through oral interviews and document study. Several Octogenarians were interviewed to get some of these folk songs, and also know their educational values to the people. These interviews were done with the aid of recording materials to help with

recalling every single word that was said during the interview. Some documents were also studied to get more information about folk songs and their educational values.

### **Folk Music**

Folk music is the original and traditional music of a people, whose composers are characteristically unknown and which is passed orally from one generation to another. According to Nmadu & Nnam (2020), “folk music is transmitted orally from one generation to another and currently thrives in the rural areas, where the custodians of the various cultures of the people reside.” (p. 189)

“Folk music springs from the real ground or depth of culture and can develop or grow through the years imitating, enlarging, shedding but always maintaining its original genre” (Nnamani (2019:1). To Okafor (2017),

A folk song is one which people have found as an integral part of their culture...a composition that has grown with a race or a nation or even a community and whose authorship is enshrined amid antiquity, that is, whose origin is unknown but which can claim community authorship because generations of race, the community or the nation have grown with it and added to it.

From the above definition, folk songs must be accepted by the community from where they originated, to stand the test of time. It might lose some of its components as generations pass it down to others, but its original cultural ingredient is however always intact.

In their attempt to describe what a folk song is, Ojukwu, Oguno & Esimone 2014, posit that:

Folk songs are among the folk art forms that promote social cohesion and other forms of activities in every society in the Igbo community. It serves as a medium of expression of life and a carrier of cultural values since a particular ethnic group is identified through its performances. Personal thoughts as well as feelings are expressed through it. It is functional in the sense that it serves as an accompaniment to other human activities in society as well as entertainment and aesthetic oriented. It has the potency of capturing the trust of the people in the community and reaching people's inner thoughts because of its popularity and cultural values.

Traditionally, folk songs are created spontaneously. They do not require conscious and strict adherence to compositional techniques, and usually do not follow any rules. They are sometimes inspired by life occurrences, people's deeds, and available natural resources. To buttress this, Offor (2008) opines that “folk song composition does not require the technicalities involved in the composition of modern songs by modern trained composers. Most of the stories told in various communities are suddenly converted into music as the people gather together from time to time.” P26.

Nigerian culture does not exist outside of music. There is music making for every gathering. There is music for every activity.

Ojukwu & Esimone (2014) gives an extensive description of folk music. In their own words:

Folk music can be classified into three categories. The first category is the tale by skilful recitalists told in plain speech known as *ita akuko* in Igbo. The second category is a solo recital with chorus refrain form; here the song comes in at intervals. This type is called *akuko na egwu* (folktale/songs) in Igbo. The third category is a full-blown musical tale (folk song) where the story is sung throughout. The Igbo call it *ifo*. It should be noted that the two categories that are relevant to musical arts education are the stories that include narration and song, the 'operetta' model and the one that consists entirely of the song (p165).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This work is anchored on the theory of Enculturation. It is "the process by which a person learns the requirements of the culture by which he or she is surrounded, and acquires values and behaviours that are appropriate or necessary in the culture...If successful, enculturation results in competence in the language, values and rituals of the culture."

Folk songs are existential parts of African culture. They contain materials which if well harnessed can be a good source of education for people, especially children. The practice of folk songs will help to educate the younger generations and the generations to come, on cultural values. It is believed that a revisit and onward continuous practice of folk songs will go a long way in curbing the menace of moral decadence and juvenile delinquency which has eaten deep into the fibre of society today.

### **Brief Background of Awka**

Awka is one of the major towns in Anambra. It is the State capital. It is one of the 18 towns that made up the old Awka Local government. Awka is the headquarters of Awka South Local Government Area. It stretches from about 42 Kilometers North of Onitsha -Enugu road to about 55, towards the south on the same road. Awka is surrounded by other towns. Nibo shares a boundary in the south East with Awka, while Isu and Okpuno share boundaries with Awka in the West.

Historical accounts show that the coming of the British colonial administration into Awka in early 1899, and the activities of the white missionaries brought about social changes in the life of the people. Awka people are well known for their mastery of blacksmithing.

## Presentation of Findings

In traditional African society, folk songs play a vital role in identifying the cultural values of a society. There are folk songs which serve various occasions within a traditional African society. Presented below are some folk songs which serve the functional role of educating children.

### Song 1 Onye na ako ede

## Onye Na-ako Ede?

On-nye na\_\_\_ ko e - de e - de ma ra m-ma o-ku - ko On-nye na\_\_\_ ko e -  
 7  
 de e - de ma ra m-ma o-ku - ko I - fu-na-nya na\_\_\_ ko e - de e - de ma ra m-ma o-ku  
 13  
 ko Bles - sing na\_\_\_ ko e - de e - de ma - ra m - ma o - ku -  
 17  
 ko On - nye na\_\_\_ ko e - de e - de ma - ra m - ma o - ku - ko

	<b>IGBO</b>	<b>ENGLISH</b>
Call	<i>Onye na ako ede</i>	Who is planting cocoyam
Response	<i>Ede mara nma okiko</i>	Cocoyam is good to plant
Call	<i>Ifunanya n'ako ede</i>	Ifunanya is planting cocoyam
Response	<i>Ede mara nma okiko</i>	Cocoyam is good to plant

This song is performed during moonlight play, and it teaches children the importance of planting cocoyam. During its performance, the children engage in some kind of choreography. They bend their waist and jump to the rhythm of the song in unison, with their hands up and down between their legs. This song does not only teach children how to cultivate cocoyam, but it also teaches them the importance of hard work.

**Song 2**

**Nnem si m abuna uzo cho dim okwu**

N-nem sim e - bu-n'u-zo cho dim o - ku, n - na-mu sim e - u-n'u-zo cho dim o -  
 8 ku a-tum n'a - ta-ta a-ru - kpo-rom dim a - nya a-tum n'a - ta-ta a-ru -  
 15 kpo - rom dim a - nya Dim o - li n - ni a - kpu o - li - nni a - kpu o - li - nni a -  
 20 kpu Dim o - li n - ni a - kpu o - li - nni a - kpu o - li - nni a - kpu

**IGBO**

*Nnem sim ebuna uzo cho Dim okwu*  
*Nnam sim ebuna uzo cho Dim okwu*  
*Atu m na atata asu-kporo Dim anya*  
*Dim, oli nli akpu*

**ENGLISH**

My mother said I should not upset my husband  
 My father said I should not upset my husband  
 My chewing stick has blinded my husband  
 My husband is a fermented cassava eater

This folk song is performed by girls alone. It is one of the numerous Igbo folk songs which is focused on teaching young female children, the importance of keeping a happy home. It teaches the young girl not to do things that will infuriate her husband. The consequences might be fatal and she will have to live with it. It also teaches the female children the importance of being submissive to their husbands.

**Song 3**

**Tufue nu nwa melu alu**

Tu - fu - e nu nwa me-lu a - lu o - lue - chi a - mu - t'o - zo  
 5 Tu - fu - e nu nwa me-lu a - lu o - lue - chi a - mu - t'o - zo

**IGBO**

*Tufue nu nwa melu alu*  
*Elu echi amuta ozo*

**ENGLISH**

Throw away the child who has committed an abomination  
 Tomorrow, another will be born.

The above song is sung for a child who misbehaves. Other children of his age grade hold him or her with two hands and two legs, pretending to throw him away. This song creates awareness in children, that it does not pay to be naughty and stubborn, as punishments are awaiting an offender. It teaches them that being naughty is not good.

**Song 4.**

**Onye Ujo Akwukwo**

**IGBO**

*Onye ujo akwukwo  
 kwa aro oto na nli n shikwe*

**ENGLISH**

A truant every year, you keep repeating class

**Analysis**

Schoolchildren sing this song for their mates who keep away from school. They sometimes visit the truant at home and carry him or her to school. With this, the fear of being humiliated has been created through this song and the action that goes with it. It, therefore, goes a long way in correcting the bad habit of keeping away from school.

**Song 5:**

**Egwu Ogodo Ogodo**

**IGBO**

*Egwu ogodo ogodo*

*Ka nka*

*Ogodo ogodo kaa ogodo doka*

*Anyi akwachie*

**ENGLISH**

Dance with the worn out

Cloth

Cloth, If the cloth is worn out if the cloth is torn, we will patch it

**Analysis**

This song is performed by girls alone. They hold the tip of their cloth while dancing to it, and demonstrate the rhythms of the song.

**Song 6:**

**Mpio**

M-pi o\_\_\_ m-pi-o he-he M-pi o\_\_\_ m-pi-o he o - nye o-di-rom-ma ya pu ba a-pu- ba

he-he he-he

7  
 \_\_\_ he o-nye o - di-ro m-ma ya pu - ba a-pu-ba he - e n-gwa n- gwa\_ he - e o so

he - e he - e he - e

12  
 o so he - e Do go li be nuo he do go-li-be nuo he do-go -li-be nuo\_\_\_

he - e he - e he - e he -

17  
 do go-li-be nuo he do go-li-be nuo he do go - li-be nuo he do go-li-be nuo he-hee

e he - e he - e he - e he - e

**IGBO**

*Call: mpi o mpi o*

*Response: Ede*

*Call: Onye odi nma bia piolu kne ya*

*Response: Ede*

*Call: Onye odiro nma ya puba a puba*

*Response: Ede*

*Call: Onye odiro nma ya puba a puba*

*Response: Ede*

*Call: Ngwa Ngwa*

*Response: Ede*

*Call: Osiso*

*Response: Ede*

*Call: Pio helibe no*

*Response: Ede*

**ENGLISH**

Crawling Crawling

Ede

Anybody who likes should come and crawl

Ede

Anyone who is not interested should go away.

Ede

Anyone who is not interested should go away.

Ede

Quick Quick

Ede

Fast Fast

Ede

Crawling over and over

Ede

**Analysis**

Here, the children hold their hands together above their heads for easy passage of individuals. All participants must pass through the passage one after the other until they decide to stop the song.

**Song 7:**

**Kpu Kpu m kpu Ogene**

**IGBO**

*Call: Kpu kpu mpku ogene*

*Response: Ogene Ogene*

**ENGLISH**

*Kpu kpu mpku ogene*

*Ogene Ogene*

**IGBO**

*Call: Onye na akpo Ogene*

*Response: Ogene Ogenege*

*Call: Kpu kpu*

*Response: Ogene Ogenege*

**ENGLISH**

Who is calling Ogene

Ogene Ogene

Call: Kpu kpu

Ogene Ogene

**Analysis**

This is a playful song, which is performed by both boys and girls.

**SONG 8 Mama o Papa o**

**IGBO**

*Mama o Papa o*

*Nekwe ndi na aho cashew*

*Ebele banyi eji dekwe ha*

*Atutam azu ofe kedu haU*

*Ata go mie tufia ina asaka*

*Ole nja olenke kelesike hu*

*Onye ona ewe sike hu ala ndi oma sike hu*

*Ewu na okuku sike hu*

*Nwa nnem nwoke nwelie*

*Nwa nnem nwanyi nwelie*

*Abraske ske ske*

*Oji isi kwe skeske*

*Oji odu kwe skeske*

*Akwa nwa na ebe*

*O na atuto awa*

*Nke nke lenke nke*

*Egusi ogbono bu ofe*

*Iga alachaU*

**ENGLISH**

Mama o papa o

Some people are plucking cashew

Ebele has caught them

I picked fish, where is it?

I have eaten it, long throat

Ole nja olenke kelesike hu

If you are not happy, sike hu

Goat and fowl sike hu

My brother has it

My sister has it

Abraske ske ske

The head should agree

The tail agree

The cry of the baby

Is sweet awa

Nke nke lenke nke

Egusi and Ogbono are soup

Will you Eat?

**Analysis**

This song is performed by the girls alone. When performing this song, somebody will be in the middle and the rest will be throwing her up and down. The person in the middle will be falling into their arms and this will continue until her turn is over at the end of the song.

SONG 9

Kedu onye ga abu oyimọ

Ke-du o-nye g'a - bu o - yi - mo? Ke-du o-nye g'a - bu o - yi - mo? Ke-du o-nye g'a -  
 6  
 bu o - yi - m o - nye g'a-bu o - yi - mo? A - fu - go - mo o - yi - mo A - fu - go -  
 12  
 mo o - yi - mo A - fu - go - mo o - yi - m o - nye g'a-bu o - yi - mo?

**IGBO**

*Kedu onye ga abu Oyim*  
*Kedu onye ga abu Oyim*  
*Kedu onye ga abu Oyim*  
*Onye ga abu OyimU*  
*Afu gom Oyim*  
*Afu gom Oyim*  
*Afu gom Oyim*  
*Onye ga abu OyimU*

**ENGLISH**

Who will be my friend?  
 I have seen my friend  
 I have seen my friend  
 I have seen my friend  
 I have seen my friend

**Analysis**

The players form a circle when singing this song. One of them will be in the circle dancing around and looking for who will be her friend. When the friend is found, she will go back to the circle and the friend will dance around again in search of her friend. The song will continue until they all find their friends.

**Song 10:**

Onye enema anya n'azu

O - ny'e - ne - n'a - nya n'a - zu m - mo - nwu a - nyi n'a - ga n'a - zu  
 5  
 O - nye n'a - nya n'a - zu m - mo - nwu a - nyi a - pia - gbuo - ya.

## IGBO

*Onye enena anya n'azu*

*Mmonwu anyi na aga n'azu*

*Onye na anya n'azu*

*Mmonwu anyi apiagbue ya*

## ENGLISH

Let no one look back

Our masquerade is passing behind

If you look back

Our masquerade will flog you

## Analysis

The children form a circle in a sitting or squatting position, with one player standing out and running around the circle. The leader sings “*onye enena anya n'azu mmonwu anyi n'aga n'azu*”. The player standing out drops the twig quietly at the back of any player and continues running and singing. When he or she returns and the person he or dropped the twig for has not taken notice and picked it up, he picks it up and flogs the player who then runs around the circle before returning to his or her former position. If a child knows that the twig has been dropped behind him, he picks it up and repeats the action with those who have played. Each participant is usually alert since no one tells the other that a twig has been dropped behind him.

## Summary

Music is an indispensable component of African culture. There are songs for every activity. From funeral songs to songs for childbirth. There are also songs for work and play. Some songs are meant for adults while others are for children. These children's songs are usually practised when kids gather together to play. They also learn a lot of things from their folk songs. Awka is rich in folk songs, and these songs if well harnessed and practised will help in no small measure to mould the children of Awka into reputable men and women.

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