



The Impact of Music on the Sustenance of Democracy in Nigeria

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Abstract. This paper examines the impact of music on the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. It discusses music as a vehicle of expression and communication. The paper examines how music is used to mobilize people or rally them to solidarity. The study relies on the survey of selected songs from the albums produced by Nigerian musicians on issues bordering on the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. The outcome of the study reveals the use of music in the transmission of moral values; transmission of culture; media system; social reconstruction; political solidarity; electoral campaigns; electoral media; esprit de corps; corruption; communal clashes; political office arrangement; government policy; child abuse and women liberation; fight for freedom/anti-Apartheid crusade; social ill and social revaluations and National integration/patriotic song. The study concludes that music is a part of the process of living and has always been part of man. The study recommends that Nigerian albums should be censored before they are waxed to check and prohibit the dissemination of wrong messages to Nigerians.

Keywords: Music, Democracy, Nigeria, Function, Song.

1. Introduction

Music is a vehicle of expression to man throughout history, whereby his feelings are relayed or communicated. Music is culture-bound. Culture is the whole way of life which distinguishes a human community from another and the means by which it can be compared to one another.

Democracy according to the BBC (1992:300) is a system of government or organization in which the

citizens or members choose leaders or make other important decisions by voting.

Music is used to mobilize people or rally them to solidarity. The music of any people is a rallying point, a marshalling point for expression of solidarity. This paper highlights and discusses the impact of music on the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

2. Research Design

The methodology for carrying out research work relies solely on the survey of selected songs. Data were collected from the albums produced by Nigerian musicians on issues bordering on the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. In addition, the review of relevant literature on the various issues highlighting the impact of music in the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria was also made.

3. Issues on the Sustenance of Democracy in Nigeria through Music

The following concepts/issues are of great concern to the sustenance of democracy in the world in general and Nigeria in particular. Issues such as transmission of values and culture, socio-political issues, media system, social reconstruction, political solidarity, electoral campaign, electronic media, national music, spirit de corps, corruption, communal clashes, political officer arrangement, government policy, child abuse and women's liberation, fight for freedom / anti-apartheid crusade, social ills and social revolution and national interaction always determine the level of sustenance of democracy in any developing country. These issues are the thrust of this paper.

4. Discussion and Findings

4.1 Transmission of Moral Values

One of the most important functions of music is to transfer social values and morals. Parents in those days used folktales and didactic songs to transmit moral lessons to the young ones. Even in adult life, people were interested in what the musicians say at one point or the other in their songs. The musicians of any community always express the moral values of music.

They provided quotable quotes and even reference materials. They sing songs which guide the people on their pilgrimage of life. Such morals were transmitted through music and passed from generation to generation. Music is used in the teaching of moral lessons to the young ones.

Ajewole (2004:122) noted that, such lessons help in the moral development of an individual. Ten musicians; Tunji Oyelana, Zeal Onyia, Anike Ejiagha, and Oyesiku among others released fifteen albums on the functions of music to transfer moral values, this represents 35% of the total number of selected song albums. The track ‘Oro re o’ by Oyesiku, ‘Mo lo soko’, and ‘Bowo ba tan lowo alakowe’ by Tunji Oyelana, serve as a good example.

4.2 Transmission of Culture

Music is a very important element in the transmission of culture. Music features in festivals and in ceremonies.

As long as music is used the whole culture/ norms are passed down from one generation to another. And so, music becomes a vital instrument for the transmission and continuity of the culture. Eight out of the selected album, like Morocco Maduka, Nelly Unchendu, and Araba among other musicians performed several songs found in 10 albums (23%) on transmission of culture. The “potopoto” track Araba is a good example.

4.3 Media System

Music serves as a system of communication ‘The media’ as we know, is very powerful in a democracy. Okafor (2002:11) in support of this assertion notes that the musical system of a country, the ways people produce their music, the contents of the music, etc are all supposed to be part of their social system.

The great Nigerian social critic and musician – Fela Anikulapo Kuti was well-known for the way he used music to turn peoples’ attention to some of the things he considered unsavoury in society, such as abuse, the

arrogance of power, the question of ethnicity, oppression, international corruption, misuse of public resources, and grabbing of power as the military always do. These were some of the things Fela sang about, in his albums such as VIP, ITT, statement, Yellow Fever, Army Arrangement, Unlimited Liability Company and etike revo wetin. Lyrics by Wole Soyinka and musical performance by Tunji Oyelana and his benders – contain classics of social comment which are still relevant 20 years later.

Other musicians like Sonny Okosun, Ebenezer Obey, Lagbaja (the masked musician), Zeal Onyia, Onyeka Onwenu, Mike Ejeagha, Nelly Unchedu, King Sunny Ade, Sir Shina Peters, Oliver de Coque, Chief Stephen Osadebe, Morocco Maduka, Celestine Ukwu, etc. have also contributed songs, which are not merely critical but directing people at which course to go. These are the types of songs that have been used in national programmes like the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) election campaigns, registration of voters, health campaigns like immunization, programmes, the war against aids and the war against indiscipline (WAI). These are areas in which musicians, have contributed to the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. From the findings, 40 albums of 93% were released by these musicians, using music as a system of communication to sustain democracy in Nigerian societies.

4.4 Social Reconstruction

The use of music in social reconstruction and in character formation is not new. Aristotle, according to Harman and Metters (1962:40) declared that music should be used for character formation, especially among the youth. Those who transgressed on the norms of society in relation to music were ostracized. So, individuals benefit from the music played in his/her society. From the selected albums, nine Nigerian musicians such as Jaigbade Alao, Lagbaja, Ayinla Kollington, Celestine Ukwu, etc release 18 albums (42%) using music as a tool for social reconstruction. ‘Mass mobilization’ in the tract of Ayinla Kollington is a good example.

4.5 Political Solidarity through Music

In Africa, one cannot talk of the traditional political system without the place of music. Music therefore occupies a very important position in the courts of African kings. Similarly, one can remember that during the Nigerian Civil War, different songs were composed to communicate the feelings of the people at various ends. There was one record waxed in praise and support of ‘Gowon’. The Biafra also composed various songs to strengthen their unity and solidarity.

Findings from selected albums show that, eighteen musicians among randomly selected 25 (50%) express the political feelings of the people. The prominent among them are Hubert Ogunde, Ayinla Kollington, Salawa Abeni, Funmi Adams, Evi Edna Ogolis, etc. The tracks, ‘Yoruba Ronu’ ‘Oro Oselu Nigeria’. ‘All we Need is Love’, are good examples.

4.6 Electoral Campaigns

Music is a good tool for political rallies or electoral campaigns. Abiodun (2003:10) noted that all political parties in Nigeria have songs, which are heavily worded to get the support of the electorate or voters. NNP had this song as their party song:

NPP Nigeria people's party (3 times)

NPP we are the people's choice

Power, Power, Power to the people

Progress, Progress, Progress for our Nations

NPP we are the people's choice

These political songs helped political leaders to gain support and popularity. Bebey (1973:42) pointed out that, no electoral campaign is completed without the active support of music. He referred to or cited the 1960 elections where 22 (78 rpm) records were waxed within the period in Western Nigeria. The findings from the selected data indicate that twenty musicians released 30 albums (70%) using music for electoral campaigns, the tracks ‘Otito koro’, ‘Aye’, by Hubert Ogunde and King Sunny Ade ‘The Way Forward’ (Nigeria yi ti Gbogbo wa ni) are good examples.

4.6 Electoral Media

Radio and television media use music in their broadcasts either for advertisement of Government policy or entertainment. 100% of Nigerian musicians want their music to be played on electronic media to gain recognition and popularity. Obey’s track ‘Operation Feed the Nation’ Go on with One Nigeria and Better Life for Women’, is used in electronic media to portray government policy.

4.7 National Music

Many countries used their National Anthems to establish the ethos of their countries. For example:

Britain – Grant her victorious, long to reign over us.
Frustrate her enemies, confound their politics;
France – shall hateful, tyrants, mischief-making
affright and desolate the land, while peace and liberty
lie bleeding. To arms ye brave, march on, march on,
all hearts resolved on victory or death;

America – Does the star-spangled banner still wave
O'er the land of the brave and the land of the frees and
Nigeria – The labours of our heroes past shall never be
in vain...one nation bound in freedom, peace and
unity.

Within narrower confines, political, social, economic and self-interest groups always use music to rally around and mobilize their members and also express their feelings to generate sympathy and activity in society. Findings show that fourteen musicians released 10 albums (23%) using music to mobilize the members of the society. Among them are Bunmi Olajubu, Fela Anikulapo, Ebenzer Obey, King Sunny Ade, etc. ‘Save Nigeria Today’, ‘Who no know go no know’, and ‘Fire in Soweto’ are good examples.

4.8 Espirit de Corps

Music provides group solidarity among soldiers and policemen. During Nigeria the Biafra War (1967-1970), one of the products of that tragedy was a huge volume of songs, which were spontaneously composed which built up hope and drove people into action. They consoled. They gave hope. They banished fears and provided confidence and faith. Eight notable musicians released 56 albums (12%) using music to console and alleviate fear. Among them are Sunny Okosun, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, I.K. Diaro, Oyesiku, Bunmi Olajubu, etc. ‘Stop the war’, ‘Give peace, a chance’ and so on.

4.9 Corruption

Eighty percent (80%) of Nigerian musicians are sensitive to all that goes on in the country. Comments are made in the form of appraisal; questioning, persuasion, condemnation, appeal and warning. Popular among the musicians who condemn the act of corruption and looting of the national treasury was Fela Anikulapo Kuti’s album “ITT” in which he condemned the N2.8 billion missing money between Abiola (I.T.T Contractor) and Obasanjo, the then Head of State. I.T.T originally meant International Telephone Telecommunication but in Fela’s album meant International thief-thief. 36 albums (84%) centred on corruption activities in Nigeria as shown in the selected data.

4.10 Communal Clashes

Evi-Edna Ogolis’ album – ‘The World One Kilometer’, where she talked about ‘Nations fighting against each other’. Okosun’s album – ‘Give Peace a Chance’, and ‘Stop the war’, are indications of the musician's appeal for a peaceful community. 30

albums (70%) revealed the use of music as a means of settlement of communal clashes.

4.11 Political Office Arrangement

I.K Dairo's album 'Kasora' (Let us be careful) released in 1963 was the first to warn Nigerians about the civil war that eventually broke out as an aftermath of the corrupt practices of the 1964 election. Using the Western State experience in the 1964 election, Huber Ogunde's album 'Otito Koro' 'Yoruba Ronu', narrated the use of thugs after the manipulations of election results which resulted in the burning of houses' killing etc. Ogunde condemned the act and asked Yoruba to think (Yoruba Ronu). The song preached peaceful co-existence among the Yoruba. From the findings, other albums including Okosun's album – 'Power to the People', and Igbokwe's album – 'Mo loro yi so' were pleas for good governance. Ayinla Kollington's album "Oro ibo to Nbo cautioned the electorates about problems election malpractices could bring. Salawa Abeni's Album – 'Oro Oselu Nigeria', pleaded to Nigerians not to vote for money but for either SDP or NRC (The two political parties available by then) Jaigbade Alao's album, - 'President Obasanjo' traced the political history of Nigeria using banana plantation to represent Nigeria where everybody was waiting to eat ripe 'Banana'. He pleaded for fair distribution of the banana. 28 albums (65%) cautioned and exposed political office arrangement in the findings.

4.12 Government Policy

Ebenezer Obey's album – 'Operation Feed the Nation' released in 1977, was the first of its kind to talk about government policy. He emphatically warns that farmer's matter should not be taken lightly. Obey's album 'Austerity Measure waxed in 1982 and reflected on the economic implications of the policy. He later sang about 'Better Life Women' (Babangida Policy). Kollington's album – 'Mass Mobilization' was one of the different efforts of Nigerian musicians to join the enlightenment campaign to inform people about government policy. The finding indicates that 34 albums (79%) espoused Nigerian Government Policy.

4.13 Child Abuse and Women's Liberation

Christ Essien Igbkwe's album – 'Hear the Call' and Funmi Adam's album – 'Omode o' are albums that call on children to heed to parents' instructions, and avoid the use of drugs, and cultism, though they are youth today, they are the hope of tomorrow. On the other hand, Okosun's album – 'African Women Wake Up', talked about women's liberation and called for

their involvement in socio-political activities. 20 albums (47%) cautioned on child abuse and women's liberation.

4.14 Fight for Freedom/Anti-Apartheid Crusade

Okosun's is more popular in this area. His albums, 'Papa's Land 'My people Wake Up', 'Fire in Soweto', and 'Holy Wars are of International repute in the bid to call for freedom in Africa. Christy Essein's albums – 'We Ought to Fight for the Unity of Our Father and We Ought to Fight for the Unity of Africa', are part of the anti-apartheid crusade 17 albums (40%) out of the selected records call for freedom in Africa.

4.15 Social ill and Social Revaluation

Araba and his Rhythm Blues in his album – 'Potopoto' waxed in 1957 warned against prostitution which today is very relevant to the call "Beware of AIDS'. Oyesiku and his Rainbow Quintet in his album – 'Oro Re O' released in 1958 warned women to desist from gossiping – a social ill. In Ogunde's album – 'Aye' he called the drivers to lessen their speed (Onimoto Rora Sare o) Onimoto Rora Ni Corner o. 'Fela's social revolutionary records include 'Yellow Fever', 'Who no know go know', 'Trouble Sleep Yanga go Wake am', 'Don't Gag me', 'Chop N Quench', Unknown Soldiers etc. 41 albums (95%) warned against social ills.

4.16 National Integration/Patriotic Song

Many of Nigeria's Musicians recorded songs on the need for the country to unite and work together to move the country forward. Such songs include: Bunmi Adam's – 'Save Nigeria Today; Funmi Adam's album – 'All We Need is Love' and Ebenezer Obey's album 'Go on with One Nigeria (Gowon)'. Christy Essien's album – 'Ife' appealed for unity and canvassed for changes in the Nigerian system; and in the same vein Sunny Ade's album – 'The Way Forward' (Nigeria yi ti Gbogbo Wan ni). Several other songs were produced by fifteen (15) Nigerian musicians.

5. Conclusion

Music is a part of the process of living. Music has always been a part of man. It is the vehicle of expression to man whereby his feelings are relayed or communicated. The functional role of music cannot be overemphasized in the transmission of moral values, culture, media system, social reconstruction, political solidarity, electoral campaigns, and government policy. Music as a means of sustaining democracy in Nigeria stabilizes, corrects, educates, and mirrors the

society according to the acceptable and prevailing ethnic norms in the society. Music is very important in the development of the social and cultural aspects of society. It is through music that Nigeria can realize and utilize her resources in terms of norms, customs, folklore, and general traditions.

Music cannot be neglected by man. It continues throughout his lifetime and beyond. Besides spoken language, music is another vehicle of communication used in politics, commerce, education, information and social engagement which constitute man's ways of life. Every ethnic group has one type of music or the other that is relevant to its culture. Most cultural activities are interpreted, expressed, transmitted, exposed and preserved through music.

6. Recommendations

Nigeria's music mainstream is characterized by being full of young and old. Young musicians sing to entertain and praise people. Older musicians should try and redirect their orientation through counselling so that they too can contribute meaningfully and musically to move Nigeria forward.

Many of the song texts of the younger musicians are full of vulgar language. Their albums should be censored before they are waxed to check and prohibit disseminating wrong messages to Nigerians. More Nigerian albums should be played in Nigerian media houses rather than foreign albums. The message of Nigerian musicians is clear enough for Nigerians to understand. Music is dynamic and musicians in Nigeria should use music to transform Nigerians so as to promote Sustainable Democracy and Political Stability.

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