



## The Socio-Moral Functions of Amakaekwu Indigenous Music and Dance Ensemble of Agulu Community

### ABSTRACT

People's culture portrays their music, dance, talk, work, speech, and every ramification of their life in the community. Since music expresses tradition, it also enhance in the development of a particular society. Music and dance brings together people of different tradition through this, moral, social, religious, political interaction so on exist among each other. Music and dance bring people of difference race for celebration and merry making it also contribute to the development of life in the community where both united in event to produce progress and achievement. This paper focuses on evaluating the sociological & psychological impact of Amakaekwu dance ensemble of Agulu community. The method of data collection was participant observation, oral interview, and qualitative data collection. The paper discussed the Nketia's theory which says that, "interest of man is himself and dance is part of what he does and studies about himself. And theory of Mokwunyei (2001) which agree that these cultural demands cannot outside the control and behavior of the people.

**Keywords:** Tradition, Socio-moral, Social, Dance, Culture and Development.

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### I. Introduction

Traditional music and dance are inseparable. They are institutions that exhibit ax-ray, and display publicly and the concept of culture in a particular society. Music and dance is a Medium of passage in our African tradition they are ethnicity dynamic esthetic-cultural, embellishment of the community at large Okofor (2000: 47). In Nwauzor (2012, p. 192) sees it as "retention of permanent values and relevance in the society". Traditional music and dance in Agulu community setting symbolizes a spirit giving life and fertility. Aje (1995, p. 10) stressed that when music is created "it becomes a rallying point for the people to use it in accordance to the law of God and in conformity with the moral and social norms of tradition" music and dance has a significant effect on the people that own's it. Music and dance by its nature has a moving effect that influence people's culture and can also multiply many context which leads to the production of moral, and social functions of the community; in the areas based ceremonies, ritual/religious festival, ceremonies of rite of passage, celebration of community heroes, events of title taking, art-facts, marriages child dedication, puberty celebration, dance drama folklores.

Today music making in Agulu community is a reflective of past experience acquired from the tradition of old people handed down from generation to generation which leads to the discussion of music making in the traditional African society, especially of Agulu people of Anambah State music and dance is attributes of culture which involves every ramification of life ranges from custom, beliefs, habits, feelings and attitudes toward each other, values, norms and conduct which to be shared among the dancing group and community.

### The Origin of Awakaekwu Dance Ensemble

The origin of Amakaekwu dance ensemble cannot be properly traced but some oral history said that it originated from thus moon light music dance since time immemorial. This dance occupied a conspicuous outstanding of cultural pattern of Agulu community especially in the aspect of moral and social function in the community. Amakaewu dance derive its name from the village square called “Ama” it was where the villagers gather at night for moonlight night, as they gather they sing folk songs and dance specifically, the youths and old people tell stories with proverbs, adage and idiomatic expression (i.e. Inuejekwu Okwu) then “ka” is big, while the word “ekwu” is like where food is prepared/cooked like (tripod burner). These semantics of three words give the ensemble name as “Amakaekwu dance ensemble. Initially they were used to clapping hand techniques method in the performance and improvisation of instruments made from local materials like bamboo stem, Nkedelegwu, banana stem, sticks, Ojaswala at moon light, but as time goes on they started to introduce really instrumental materials by then it has taken shape and they are performing it in events in different occasion.

Nobody owns the dance but for the community as a whole, even though it was said to have started with Umu-ezekwem/Umuidu but later was brought to the town square where it was centralized for every participant to access, there is no any initiation requirement to be a member it is an open dance anybody can belong-irrespective of age.

It is a medium dance. The dance was re-organized with the concept of musical training in both aspect of the performance. It is one of the most popular in the community. According to Emeka, Okafor and Akuma (1994, p. 105) affirmed that “music is unquestionably the most practiced of the traditional arts in Nigerian. At any time of the night or day somewhere in the land, some music is being made”. And Onwuekwe (2005) stressed that “music is an art that is present in all cultures, Nigerians have their own music, although the music cultures vary from one ethnic group to another” (p. 101). The above statement supports the uniqueness of Amakaekwu music dance ensemble.

### **Moral Function of Amaka-Ekwu Music Dance Ensemble**

Although Amaka-ekwu dance does several function of musical performance in the community at large. The dance features in many occasions and events of different context as the writer has mentioned before but the most conspicuous message is moulding and shaping of the reputation in the society. The performers do not have face no matter the kings because they are secret revealer of the faulters. Any girl hiding a pregnancy without marriage, or a married woman that goes out to meet another man, will be revealed by the dance ensemble during performance the mischievous did of the young boys and girls in the society are revealed through the Amaka-egwu dance group by making music and telling someone his or her bad did indirectly through that with music Ikpe Ikpe. A girl who always standing out at night found at 7 PM her name will be used in the music, especially when you are leaving with your parents. Any Mabede girl who might have misbehaved will be told indirectly through Ikpe, Ikpe with music of Amaka-ekwu. This dance group, in the community among other dance group become a strong instrument of conduct of behaviour in the whole community for both boys and girls, in fact the whole people both young and old. Everybody is hiding and protecting his/her face by trying to show good example according to the traditional rules and norms of the culture of the society.

All these moral enactment with the Amakaekwu dance ensemble gives the true picture of people’s style of life with culture. It also shows a cognitive level of maturity/development within the community integrity. Amakaekwu dance group is like a cartoon to the society at large.

### **Social Function of Amakaekwu Dance in Socio-Cultural Development of Agulu Community**

The outcome of ensemble is purely cultural. Dance and music are significant concept in culture that place the role of unity and peace which bring all the community together in the performance of cultural heritage and it is a sign of cultural music and dance communication. Amakaekwu music group is media of passage of information in the culture through performance. The performance of Amakaekwu dance group is mandatory for a girl or those in the fattening room called nwa mgbede. They performed for the readiness of family life or womanhood preparation called “ino” gbede. A girl in this Mgbede is usually decorated with Ufie, Uhie, Nzu, Edo, Uvie, Uhie, Uli and so on these are to rub on the body for decoration and smoothing of the body while in the fattening room.

It also played for their husband for as housewife. It is also belief that without the featuring of Amakaekwu dance for the above mentioned, there will be no fruitful marriage until the performance of this ensemble, and this help community cultural integrity and in the child bearing.

Apart from all these performance, Amakaekwu dance is not isolated from performing in the wedding context, child birth, political context, title taking, chieftaincy taking, or coronation of Igwe, Ekwe ceremony or initiation and every other entertainment in the community at large.

Vital important was attached to this Amakaekwu dance by the community because through the media of the dance people are mindful of the reputation they exhibit, voiced out, and, level of penetration in the matters of the community Mokwunyei (2001, p. 128) support firmly that “these culture demands cannot exist outside the control and behavior of the people” and with this again Nwauzor, (2012) stressed, “And one of such behaviours is represented by bodily statement that gives way to free participation which then flows into recreation as a formal dancing seen in Ovia maiden festival” (p. 196).

Nketia (2001, p. 8) in his own view said “interest of man is himself and dance is part of what he does and studies about himself” this is a reprisal of Amakaekwu dance. Still Nwauzor in his own motion pined “since the culture is a bond of continuity, music and dance are used to renew and reinstate a human relationship to it and thereby creating cultural identity and integrity”. This is typical what the culture is all about in the development/socio-cultural awareness and belief of particular tradition.

### **Musical Background of the Members**

Music and dance have become part and parcel in our daily activities therefore to trace the background of the members can be abnucxious Agulu being part of Igbo like every other society in Africa have, and rich in their own type of folk tune and will not be in isolation of what Africans dance. Agulu people are notable dancer, singers, and play instruments as their complete part and parcel of life activities. It is a gene from the most family's heritage.

Though some community invites and negotiates to be taught but this Amakaekwu is exceptional it was big inspiration through this moonlight play dance-which they found useful to the entire community. As they dance and sing, that how they play their improvisational instruments, sing and tell stories with the songs and praise names with the same song. In fact most of them are gifted. An adage says one cannot be old in what he/she knowledge how to do best.

### **Orientation of the Members**

Since dance has being part of the orientation from the childhood, there is no uniqueness in the orientation. Dance is inspired, listening, instruction, watch, observes and participates. According to Nketia (1979) he says that “Natural endowment and a person's ability to develop on his own are essentially what are needed”. Well traditional African music as we all know is full of polyphony and polyrhythm, should need performers and listener's audience in order to achieve focus and perception for good dance steps. Variation of dance steps makes a dance. It gives the dance weight and name. It also makes the dance rich which is one of the characteristics of Amakaekwu dance.

The instrumentalist also plays with the introduction of the folk tune. They play as they were born with the instruments. They can improvise with the instruments; they play what they hear, with the facial explanation of the dancers and introduction of steps. They play with the rightful skills and imitation among themselves.

### **The Songs Texture**

The songs are art in call and response pattern more of responsorial and antiphonal. Responsorial soloist/chorus antiphonal chorus/ chorus there is a lead singer soloist is selected after a series of rehearsal or often rehearsals. She sings while other joins her. The lead singer is who can improvise, who is gifted in the improvisation of folk tunes who will be able to put what happen into song and have voice to project, pitch high or command language. She must be able to put new lyrics upon the old ones (tunes). One of the main features of Amakaekwu dance is criticism, quarrel culprits with folk tunes.

Everyone involve in the song and dancing. A dance leader is selected after a very well

scrutinized of her and her dance movement. The dance leader is beautiful is and presentable.

### **Membership and Organization in the Dance Ensemble**

The dance groups have a regulation that helps to guide the members from misbehavior and provide control measure for the performer and the recruitment order is free for everybody. There are bodies of authorities that manage the affairs of the dance ensemble. They have constitution that every member follows, the rules and regulations that keep the group. They have solely group organizers, patron, and matron and president, treasurer, financial secretary, plus other necessary post.

### **The Achievement of the Ensemble Dance**

They have maintained peace in the community.

They brought unity in the traditional society.

The dance serves as political and religious catalyst.

They have popularized catalyst the community.

They maintain law and order and integrity of the community.

### **Vocal Musical Aspect**

The musical text is Igbo dialect though Agulu dialect in tone which is not central Igbo. This may make it a little bit difficult for non-indigenes to understand. The lead singer calls the praise names of every woman in the group and they will do ululation, and leaves the dance formation with happiness. Call all praise of the group. At the aid of praise names the ululation comes in again. The song move from one another to three others, straight away.

Sometime the singers keep quite only the instrument, will be playing on, later she introduce another song Amakaekwu is dance for everybody. It is open air dance that accommodate. It is dance that preserves our culture so the vocalist must add these entire historical events into song. This music made the younger generation to know their lyrics.

### **Structure of Amakaekwu Dance**

The music analysis focuses on aspect of two analyses. Such as vocal and instrumentation. Initially Amakaekwu dance music ensemble was using a pair of Udu (port) Oyo and Nkpo Nkpo, Ogene but new other instrument have come to join such as Ekwe, (double slit wooden) drum Igba (member drum).

The udu start the music both are two toned instruments, the music the Nkpo nkpo follows, the rather plays an improvisation at an intervals. The membrane plays differently. Directing cueing music the first play and direct the steps of the dancers while the second drummer join to play together. The Ekwe plays a phrasing reference, which is marking time that inspires the dancers.

### **Performance Texture**

The styles of performance, Amakaekwu has stages of performance; the instrument introduces the music and the voice comes at interval with the support of instrument.

In variations styles, the instruments accompany and support the voice. In intervals, the soloist sings a considerably number of lines of songs; telling story of the song while the instrument accompany her and at the end, the chorus enter in responding the solo by the end of the respond the instrument will call with complex rhythm and high pitch but as the voice come up again the instrument declines.

This is the pattern of the music and instrumentation, the Amakaekwu has the songs and Lyrics in different types.

### **These are some of the Songs Performance by the Amakaekwu Dance**

Some of the songs Eze Agulu Oji Ayayo achi anyi, - chili ancfi gaba oooh

- |      |    |   |
|------|----|---|
| 2ice | 1a | Eze Agulu ojinyayo achi anyi              |
|      | -  | Chili anyi gaba oooh                      |
| 2ice |    | Eze adighiemegide anyo-odighieme gide ooh |
|      | 2  | Ome ego, ga emelu anyi ego na abani       |
|      |    | Ome ego, ga emelu anyi ego na abani       |
|      | 3. | Ugo bu onu turn ime ayo ooh               |

Ugo bu ona turu ime ayo ooh

### **Tempo and Rhythm**

Amaka-ekwu music ensemble has a fast tempo rhythm. The rhythm and tempo is fascinating that one can easily move by it. It has a polythimic nature, which leads to several instrument play different rhythmic pattern, at the same time for example the nkpo nkpo play making time while Ekwe plays variations.

### **Dance Pattern**

Amaka-ekwu dance perform several type of dance, moral, social religious aid so on. It performed in difference occasions. Dance technique varies in the performance. They apply the use lips, eyes, the hands and neck technique. It is energetic type of dance complicated, wriggling of waist and body movements responding to the rhythm of the instruments and songs. Usually the climate area normally influence the techniques of the dance movement, soil structure, peoples occupation and weight of work all these affect the songs dance instruments and behavioural pattern. Because of land and rock, the dancer move hard and acrobatic. The dancers move very twisting and swiftly, very complicating movement difficult. To learn at a glance. If not take several rehearsals to learn.

### **Dance Procedure or Procedure of Dance**

Dancer usually takes off in arena where the dance will be performed. The instrumentalist begin to play while the dances came out in single file or double file to from position either semi-circle, circle, hoof shoe or kneeling according to their desire with the help of the rhythm. The formation is not mandatory but the choose what they have rehearsed with the instrumentalist which is the first stage dance, this happen within between (6 & 10) six and ten minutes which usher them to second stage of really dance step.

Dance movement: It quickly shows movement graceful movement of the steps, open and close steps, wide responds of legs following the rhythm of the instruments, which may lead to move left, right turning jumping, squatting, climbing on the shoulder of each other, the dance listening to the instructs do likewise what they said to them that is dance ability to listen instrument and soloist at a time and dance the both, that is perfect dance. The dances dance in temp and rhythm following the play and cantor and knowing when to dance slow and high, especially when the master instruments narks it and incantation by soloist.

The music and dance has a high stylized nature of movement, is one of the concept of Amaka-ekwu dance ensemble. The variation of the dance is achieved by the various instruments each has a part to play. A move of touch was offered by the membrane in circling form which brings in all the instruments and the arena because hot and vibrating up and down this situation can move people to spread money any down. The dancers scattered and because energetic the ground. While phrasing reference is keepings time. Udu (port) is playing its percussion with a gene rather all contributed to grace the dance and the dancers was influenced by the music melody and soloist message consequently lead to step variation.

### **Costume**

Costumes have changed as it was before. It was initially pet coat beaded with tigidu round the waist but now wrapper with blouse white or yellow coloured infact they decide what costume to make with hand kerchief because swift movement of the dance. They also add rather ankle for graceful noise movement.

## **II. Summary and Conclusion**

The researcher summary in shout story the origin of the music and moral and social functions of the Amaka-ekwu music as music that unity and brings peace to the community of Agulu. The music is well known for its criticism which helps in the mould of character of the community the role it plays in Nwamgbedeagir in the fattening room. Through the Media of the dance people are mindful of their character. It is very vital to the community and they cannot do away with it or disorganize the music and dance.

In conclusion, I therefore conclude that Amakaekwuou music and dance is very vital and valuable to the community of Agulu as their traditional heritage.



Though Christina has affected it the community should re-organized it properly.

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