

GBARA AND ERE ORO MUSICAL GENRES AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOURS IN IKORODU TOWNSHIP OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

BY

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI, PhD

Department of History and International Studies

Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos Nigeria

Email: habebsanni12@gmail.com

&

Faruq Idowu BOGE

Department of History,

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Lagos State University (Foundation Programme),

Badagry Campus, Lagos

Email: bogefaruq@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Apart from modern and western models for discouraging antisocial behaviours in African communities, other traditional mechanisms persist. Aside from serving as important element of social gratification and cohesion, music and traditional songs have often served other purposes such as instrument for criticising antisocial behaviours, crimes, and criminalities. In the light of the foregoing assertions, this paper examines the contributions of folksongs towards dissuading antisocial and indecent activities within Ikorodu township of Lagos State, Nigeria. It specifically focuses on *Gbara* and *Ere Oro* traditional musical genre which have contributed enormously to the preservation of the tradition, culture, and history of the people of Ikorodu Township. In addition, the paper examines the traditional methods of intelligence gathering deployed by the *Gbara* and *Ere Oro* singers to unravel antisocial behaviours within the area of study. The study adopts a qualitative research methodology and a multi-disciplinary approach to data collections and interpretations. It argues that *Gbara* and *Ere Oro* musical genre are effective instruments for exposing and discouraging antisocial behaviours and social deviances among the people of Ikorodu township of Lagos State, Nigeria.

Keywords: *Folksongs, Gbara, Ere Oro, Apepe, Antisocial Behaviours, Ikorodu Township*

1. Introduction

A number of factors are instrumental for the sustainability of the cultures and traditions of communities across the globe. Prominent among these factors is the aspect of folksongs which has consistently reflected the cultural aspects of

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

a people and means of preserving their historical landmarks. Folksongs are therefore vital for social interaction and cohesion. The practice of folksongs is widespread and had existed for ages in Nigeria and other African countries (Akponome, 2014). Different groups such as the Balah music band among the Tiv, the Jawaran Dilla dance group among the Pankshin, the Ekpos masquerade performance group among the Ibibio, the Dundun and Bata dance groups among the Yoruba, the Ezeagwu Atilogwu dance group in Enugu State, and the Ovedje Ayonuwe music dance group among the Urhobo people render folksongs in different dimensions. Other forms of folksongs include *ewi*, *rara*, *ijala*, *iranmose*, and *ijare* among the Yoruba people. These traditional songs are chanted during socio-cultural occasions such as festivals, marriages, coronations and funerals. Basically, folksongs are integral part of the socio-cultural, political, and socio-economic history of people across the globe.

Lagos State being the epicentre of social and economic activities in Nigeria is nevertheless deeply engrossed in socio-cultural multiplicities (Okunade, 2003). Despite its comparative high level of urbanisation and socio-economic development, the practice of traditional songs persists in various parts of Lagos State. The *koregun olosa* drum music among the Lagos Islanders, the royal *gbedu* dance in Ikorodu, and the *akoto* drums orchestration among the people of Badagry are typical examples of machineries by which folksongs are rendered in Lagos State (Okunade, 2013). Ikorodu Township is strategically located within the north-eastern part of Lagos State, Nigeria. Its autochthonous settlers are predominantly of the Remo sub-ethnic groups in south-western Nigeria (Boge, 2014). Despite its increasing level of urbanisation, cultural and traditional activities are tenaciously held in high esteem by the people of Ikorodu Township where series of traditional festivals and practices are observed annually. Among these festivals is the *Oro* festival which features a number of traditional and socio-cultural activities. Famous among these activities is the *Ere Oro* (a socio-cultural folksong) where the *Apepe* musical genre is orchestrated. The songs that are composed and rendered usually reflect the culture and aspirations of the people. Apart from producing gratifications however, *Ere Oro* constitute instrument for criticising antisocial activities within the township. Outside the period of *Oro* festival, the *Gbara* is sung by a group of singers drafted from the *Oro* singers. Specifically, *Gbara* and *Ere Oro* are composed to appraise the socio-economic, cultural, and political transitions within the town and adjourning communities in the course of a particular period. This is in line with the broader usefulness and importance of music in Nigeria. For instance, both Fela Kuti and Dan Maraya often used their music to castigate oppression and exploitation of the masses in Nigeria. In this category also was Ayinla Omowura who used the instrument of his Apala musical genre to appraise government policies and criticise oppression and social misdeeds in Nigeria, particularly in 1970s and 1980s (<https://www.amazon.com/olodi-Alhaji-Ayinla-Omowura>).

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

Antisocial behaviours are integral parts of every society within the global space. Antisocial behaviours embody crimes and indecent behaviours such as public drunkenness, theft, armed robbery, drug addiction, vandalism, public nuisance, gangsters, promiscuity, and prostitution, among others that occur in every society (Hopkins-Burke and Hodgson, 2015). As Ikorodu township witnessed quantum rise with respect to socio-economic development, there was a commensurate increase in the rate of antisocial behaviours and criminal activities within the enclave (Boge and Isaac, 2020). Towards the curtailment of these rising incidents of criminal activities, a number of modern mechanisms such as policing, vigilante, and legal instruments exist. Most of these modern mechanisms became institutionalised during the colonial rule and had been one of the aftermaths of the cultural imperialism that attended colonialism in Africa. But apart from these modern mechanisms for restricting antisocial behaviours and improprieties, there are informal and traditional practices that are geared towards dissuading antisocial behaviours. One of these traditional practices is the institution of *Gbara* and *Ere Oro* which are occasioned through the instrument of the *Apepe* musical genre within the township. This study examines the institutions of *Gbara* and *Ere Oro* musical genre vis-à-vis their contributions to criticising and dissuading antisocial behaviours in Ikorodu township of Lagos State. The next section of the paper presents the conceptual discourse and a brief identification of the-state-of-the-art on the theme.

2. Conceptual Discourse and Literature Overview

The general notion that music is “a universal language” cannot be controverted and this is also applicable to folksongs. In Africa, a community without a daily sound of music and drum is likened to a dead community. Asobele (2002) simply sees music as the entertainment and informative aspects of culture. He further ascertained that music helps in re-organising the mental alertness of people. On the other hand, attempts have been made by scholars to conceptualise the term folksong. One of the simple definitions sees folksong as a traditional song that is passed down from generation to generation through oral transmission (<https://www.dictionaries.com/browse/folk-song>). This shows that folksong is embedded in socio-cultural manifestations of a community. In this vein, Miller (1960) defines folksong as “the unconscious expression in melody of racial feelings, character, and interest of the people”. Further to this, Lloyd (1968) asserts that folksong represents an integral part of a people’s heritage to the extent that there exists a feeling of common ownership regardless of knowing the composer or not. Ofosu (1989) further substantiate the cultural and historical aspects of folksongs when he averred that folksongs represent any traditional song which is rooted in antiquity and has survived generations as well as enjoy acceptance among the contemporary people.

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

Many functions of folksongs have been identified and these range from economic, socio-cultural, and political purposes. In attempt to explain the functions which folksongs perform in a society, Aluede and Braiman (2005) identify a number of typologies of folksongs which include historical songs, funeral songs, war songs, birth songs, songs for sales, songs of insult or songs of allusion, philosophical songs, children songs, and ritual songs. Though war represents some form of politics, these initial typologies seems not to incorporate songs for politics. In contemporary politics, traditional songs have constituted good instruments of electioneering campaigns and other political activities. However, Aluede and Braiman (2005) further broadly categorise folksongs into three based on the functions they perform within the society. The first category is economic function which includes using folksongs to mobilise people towards the purchase of certain products in the markets, for advertisement of products on the electronic media, to invigorate labourers during farming, construction, and communal works, and sometimes during protests by labourer to demand for better working conditions. In the political realm, Aluede and Braiman (2005) identified folksong as important element during the enthronement and dethronement of a monarch. They further asserted that folksong constitute integral aspect of palace activities in several African traditional political settings. In Ikorodu Township, the traditional song which reads “*Olowo l’oloye ooo, a ki f’oye l’omo abese*” is used to reinforce the fact that only people of well-off and worthy character are appointed into chieftaincy designations and political offices. Socially, folksongs are extensively used during occasions such as child naming ceremony, marriage ceremony, funeral activities and other social gatherings. It also constitutes instrument of consolation when calamity befalls a community or when an individual is bereaved. For instance, when an inferno consumed the mansion of Oba Salaudeen Afolabi Oyefusi (the late monarch of Ikorodu), a song was composed to console him by the *osere oloro* during the *Oro* festival of that year. Part of the traditional song reads *iji won koba jo mole, iji won koleri ma yee oo*, meaning “their wish was for the king to be burnt in the building, their wish was for the queen not come out alive”. Apart from the attempt to console the monarch, the song reflected the atmosphere of disunity and enmity between the monarch and some of his high ranking chiefs. In fact, a section of the community believed that the inferno had some magical undercurrent meant to destroy the “powers” of the king.

Among the purposes that folksongs serve is the preservation of the important past occurrences within a community. Preliterate African communities are deeply engrossed in using folksongs in the preservation of their past activities. Occurrences such as theft, lies, infidelity, natural disaster, wars exploits, and individual heroism among others are documented through the aide of traditional songs in many African communities. In some cases, folksongs are used to reflect the philosophical conception, worldview, and to project into what the future promises for a community. For example, in the 1980s a traditional *Gbara*

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

singer in Ikorodu Township composed a song to recount the socio-economic developments that were witnessed and projected what the future was holding for the town. It was chanted by Pa Muse Agbaku. One of the stanzas goes thus “*Ikorodu adi edikota, n’aju mi ooo*” contextually meaning “Ikorodu would become headquarters of socio-economic activities.” Akponome (2014) further emphasises the importance of folksongs when he illustrated that “traditional folk music has been a source of pleasure, recreation, and entertainment in most Nigerian societies.” This conception was further strengthened by Aluede (2012) when he emphasised that Edo folksongs were tangible therapies for health recuperation. Folksongs are also used to propagate good moral conducts and castigate immoralities, especially in schools (Odejebi, 2016). Fundamentally, folksongs are important elements of every society to dissuade improprieties and objectionable actions.

Antisocial behaviour is a complex global and ever-emerging social phenomenon. It is universal and a reflection of the norms and values that are upheld in certain communities. In essence, behaviours which are permissible in some areas are considered antisocial in others. For instance, while some societies accommodate such activities as abortion, prostitution homosexuals, and gambling, other societies considered these as antisocial and unlawful acts. However, it must be asserted that certain social behaviours and activities such as theft and vandalism are globally categorised as antisocial. Hopkins-Burke and Hodgsons (2015) see antisocial behaviour as the umbrella terminology used to describe the day-to-day incidents of crime and incivility that make the lives of many people in a community difficult. Due to its complex nature, antisocial behaviours have been categorised into nuisance, personal, and environmental (Hopkins-Burke and Hodgsons, 2015). According to this categorisation, nuisance antisocial behaviours encompass the incidents that provoke inconvenience and sufferings within a local community in general. This set of behaviours usually constitutes threats to public health, public safety, and quality of life. Unlike public nuisance, personal antisocial behaviours affect individuals or a group of people in a community. The negative impact of this category of behaviours is borne by the individual or the group. Theft of personal property and promiscuous relationships or extra-marital affairs may be categorised under this form of antisocial behaviour. Environmental antisocial behaviours affect human surroundings including the natural, built, and social environments. In this category is pollution which may include noise, air, litter, and sewer burst among others.

Generally, among the negative impacts of antisocial behaviour on the social system is that it hinders harmonious community living and disrupts social cohesion (Polycarp, 2016). The absence of social harmony and cohesion constitutes serious impediments to socio-economic development and political stability within a community. Therefore, measures such as effective policing, intelligence gathering, and legislative instruments are consistently introduced

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

by the government to curtail antisocial behaviours. Apart from the formal measures however, informal and traditional mechanisms are used in many African communities to discourage antisocial behaviours. Prominent among these mechanisms is music which folksongs constitute a substantial aspect. In Nigeria, many singers and musicians have used the instrument of their songs and music to chastise antisocial behaviours such as skin bleaching, fornication, and general social misdeeds. The Ikorodu township of Lagos State is not exempted as series of songs and music are produced for criticising and dissuading antisocial behaviours. Notable among these songs are *Gbara* and *Ere Oro* musical genres.

3. Assessing the Antisocial Behaviours in *Gbara* and *Ere Oro* Folksongs

Oro cult is a prominent socio-cultural guild among the Yoruba people of south-western Nigeria. In particular, the people of Ijebu sub-ethnic group are deeply engrossed in *Oro* cultism as there is hardly any Ijebu and Remo town that *Oro* activities are not practised. The *Oro* deity is described as a spirit of the ancestors which is manifested through the sound of a bullroarer (Nolte, 2010). Prior to the formalisation of modern system of administration, the *Oro* cult was responsible for numerous civic and executive functions. These functions include the interment of deaths which are perceived to be unnatural such as those of the young people, pregnant women, and suicides, the execution of criminals, performance of rituals for the purification of the society and prevention of calamities, and appeasing the ancestors and deities (Ibid.). In addition, *Oro* cult abhors social misdeeds and rebukes them through the tradition of mockery, exposure, and abuse. *Oro* festivals are celebrated yearly in most of Ijebu towns. The female folks are confined indoors during the *Oro* festivals and it is an abomination for them to catch glimpse of the *Oro* outings (Ibid.). Public places such as roads and markets are closed during the festivals to prevent females from other places from either entering the town or encountering with *Oro* activities. In modern time, announcements are made in the mass media to conscientise the public about the outings and days of *Oro* festival. Even the efforts by interest groups to pressurise the abrogation of this confinement and restriction of movements had been unsuccessful. It is generally believed that the sacrifices that are performed during the annual *Oro* festival purify the community of calamities and disasters.¹ On the other hand, it has been claimed by some residents and observers that the *Oro* festival (especially the *Isemo*) are constraints to economic activities and fundamental human rights of freedom of religion and movement.

The institution of *Oro* cult is very pronounced in Ikorodu Township. This is adjudged by the presence of a number of *Oro* grooves (*igboro* or *uti*) within the

¹ Oral communication with Otunba Adeolu Afolabi (Otunba *Osere Oloro* of Isele), 54 years, at Ikorodu, 30 October 2020

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

town including the *Magbo*, *Liwe*, *Liworu*, *Segun*, *Lowa*, and *Elegbejeun* grooves. Despite the increasing rate of socio-economic development within the town, the annual *Oro* festival is held sacrosanct by many locals and residents. In fact, unlike some other societies, Ikorodu *Isemo* (that is the one-day confinement of women) is observed biennially during the annual *Magbo* and *Liwe Oro* festivals. Prominent among the gyration activities of the annual *Oro* festival within the town is the institution of *Ere Oro* (that is *Oro* musical play) which is anchored by *Osere Oloro* (*Oro* singers). One of the major instruments for orchestrating of *Oro* songs is *Ape* (bamboo tree cut into seizes) which is beaten with stick to produce musical sounds. It is from *Ape* that the sobriquet, *Apepe* is generated to refer to the art of using *Ape* to produce musical genre. The sound thus produced is supported with the sounds produced by *Abebe* (a sort of hand fan that is made from animal skin and a stick). The two sounds complement the melody from the songs produced by the singers. An *Osere Oloro* group is comprised of a leader (who is the lead-composer, lead-singer, and the group's director), the lieutenant singers, the choristers, the *Ape* beaters, some dancers, and other followers. The orchestration from this group is regarded as *Ere Oro* rendered during the period of the annual *Oro* festivals. *Ere Oro* is strictly a male affair. The *Osere Oloro* groups have specific days of outings during the two separate annual *Oro* festivals. These displays, which are done at mid-night, are occasioned on the days called *Ere Iwaiye Oro*, *Ere Ita*, *Ere Ojo keji Obu*, *Ere Ojo keta Obu*, *Ere Iwole Isemo*, and *Ere Ojo Oro*. Summarily, save for the two days set aside for the *Iworo* and Ebute markets owing to the influx of many people from different backgrounds into the township, the *Osere Oloro* are usually on display during the mid-nights of the other five days.

On the other hand, *Gbara* musical genre is also performed majorly by members of the *Osere Oloro*. *Gbara* has all the characteristics of *Ere Oro*, but it is performed outside the *Oro* activities and festivities. It is commonly orchestrated during important ceremonies such as the coronation of traditional chiefs, opening ceremony of an event, burial arrangements of an important personality, *woro* occasions and political campaigns. Another thing that distinguishes *Gbara* from *Ere Oro* is that drumming is added to the orchestration of the *Gbara* musical genre. While *Ere Oro* is strictly a male affair, women are permitted to catch glimpses of *Gbara* musical rendition and display.² Ikorodu Township has produced foremost *Gbara* singers which are renowned throughout Ijebu land (Allison, 1982). Their popularity and exceptional musical renditions promoted Ikorodu into a hub of socio-cultural exposure vis-a-vis its neighbours.

The popularity went to the extent that other *Oro* singers and well-wishers from across Ijebu land usually come to Ikorodu during the annual *Oro* festivals to listen and appreciate the songs rendered by Ikorodu *Oro* singers. This serves as

² Oral communication with Otunba Adeolu Afolabi (Otunba *Osere Oloro* of Isele), 54 years, at Ikorodu, 30 October 2020

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

a sort of socio-cultural tourism where indigenes and visitors from neighbouring communities and the diaspora attend yearly. Both Muse Agbaku and Bombata Oshikabala were prominent *Gbara* lead-singers whose generations have become renowned for this musical genre within Ikorodu. In addition, the three traditional principal divisions (that is Isele, Ijomu, and Aga) of the Ikorodu Township have their separate *Gbara* and *Oro* musical group. These groups usually engage in annual musical contests whereby people from different places gather to listen to the contents and systematic orchestration of their musical compositions. The contests are performed either at the popular *Ajina* market square or at the *Ojude Oba* (the palace's frontage). The contents of their songs were usually commentaries on issues of major concerns to the Ikorodu society, national, and global issues. Traditionally, the *Osere Oloro* group expected to use the instrument of its musical genre to condemn socio-economic misdeeds and hidden crimes within the community (Allison, 1982). Once the songs are released, they linger in the lips and memories of the community people for at least up till the following year. Those with good memories can recall and repeat songs of twenty or more years back accurately.³ In modern days, series of social technology and musical instruments are now used to preserve *Gbara* and *Ere Oro* folksongs.

Each group deployed local intelligence gathering mechanism to gather information about antisocial and criminal activities with a view to proscribing negative morals and prescribing good morals through their songs. The society monitors its own activities and issues about misdeeds which are discussed in public and private places such as markets and places of relaxation. One of the unique attributes of *Ere Oro* is that there are occasions when the songs that are composed to chastise a socially wrong doer are rendered at the frontage of the person's house. Sometimes, the wrong doer dances to the song composed and even provide the singers and their followers with refreshments.⁴ Both the elites and the common people within the society are not exempted from these social criticisms. There are occasions when the king, members of the council-of-chiefs, and influential people among others constitute the subjects of chastisement of *Osere Oloro*. Theft, promiscuity, fornication, violence, hooliganism, drug abuse, armed robbery, shoplifting, conspiracy and other forms of criminalities and socially unfit behaviours are strongly condemned by the *Osere Oloro* through the instrument of *Ere Oro* and *Gbara* songs. However, it is good to note that the some of the songs are also composed to appraise good conducts and heroic activities within the community. The excerpts below identify some of the *Gbara* and *Ere Oro* folksongs that had been used to castigate antisocial behaviours.

Salamalekun Onile

Peace be onto this house

³ Oral communication with Otunba Adeolu Afolabi (Otunba *Osere Oloro* of Isele), 54 years, at Ikorodu, 30 October 2020

⁴ Oral communication with Mr. Lukman Ayeye, 65 years, at Ikorodu, 25 November 2020

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

*Onile mo ma ka abo
Alashe Itunmaja mo dee,
Boge weso
Mi wen t'oko, wen tule,
Aworo m'woye
Ki wen ba se t'omo Atoba ku
Oro we ane wosiyan
Wen tu 'gbo Ota
Wen tu ta'gbala
Wen yin ma ta saman ken yi ku*

Dwellers of this house, I am here
Alashe of Itunmaja, here I am
Boge, I greet you
You have sold the village and town,
The Aworos are observing
If you fail to give Atoba's son his share
This issue would be escalated
You sold the Ota groove
You also sold Agbala area
Definitely, you will still sell the sky⁵

The foregoing *Ere Oro* song was rendered in response to the changing methods of land acquisition and appropriation in Ikorodu. Under the customary land tenure system in Yoruba land, land is held communally under the trusteeship of the family head or community chief (Ward Price, 1933; Oshio, 1990; and Namnso, 2014). But owing to factors including colonial experience, increasing socio-economic developments, proximity to the administrative and commercial capital of Lagos State, and continuous demographic swell, land had become highly valued, commoditised, and extremely competitive in Ikorodu. Apart from engendering series of violent conflicts, family and community heads including avaricious individuals began to engage in the unilateral sales of ancestral lands contrary to customary land tenure system (Omirin, 1999). This scenario became very prominent in Ikorodu during the twenty-first century and led to the emergence of the *Ajagungbale* phenomenon where groups of armed syndicates engaged in the forceful occupation of landed properties (Boge and Isaac, 2020). The song was therefore composed to chastise the improper appropriation of the people's ancestral lands by the two leading chiefs of the Itunmaja area. The chiefs in question sold large portion of their communal heritage in the Ota and Agbala outskirts leading to deprivation of other members of the community. The proceeds from the uncustomary sales were usually spent on frivolities such as buying expensive vehicles, taking extra wives, throwing sumptuous parties, and excessive drinking of alcohol among others. As a result of the illegal sales of family land, large portion of agricultural lands were sold making many farmers to be deprived of their means of economic sustenance. This is also one of the banes of food security in Nigeria. Though the two chiefs became the object of that song, a number of other chiefs and family heads were blameworthy of the anti-social activity. The song was meant to serve as deterrent to other individuals who were also engaged in shady land dealings. Some of the *Ere Oro* folksongs were also used to disabuse extra-marital relationships and illicit sexual intercourse. The following excerpt was composed in that regard.

Asiri, Asiri wen ti tu ooo l'Ogolonto

Your secret at Ogolonto had been exposed

⁵ *Ere Oro* song composed and rendered by Chief Kamoru Bombata and recalled by Otunba Adeolu Afolabi

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

*Alowonle, osi ma rubo enu
image*

*Iyawo Awori omi la gba ooo
Mafowore muna sile*

Alowonle, you need to savage your public

The wife of an Awori man you want to snatch
Do not try to set your own house ablaze⁶

In Yorubaland and many other parts of African societies, such inter-personal relations as promiscuity, adultery, fornication, and snatching of wives are regarded as antisocial behaviours. Though many African societies traditionally accommodate polygamy, issues of infidelity and adultery are scornfully treated with various levels of punishment (Anaana, 2016). This is not to emphasise that adultery and fornication are not very common among Africans, the practices have been there from time immemorial. One of the cognomens of Ikorodu people is *ase ale jeje bi eniti koni obirin nile* meaning “a man who takes gentle care of concubines as if he has no wife at home”. Some indigenes are of the opinion that the cognomen only depicts the active social life of the people and not really the immoral extra-marital relations.⁷ But it seems to be a reflection of how Ikorodu men are engaged in concubine and extra-marital activities. The Ikorodu high chief who was the subject of the above song was not only a member of the town’s elite but also a socialite by every sense of the word.⁸ Aside from having wives, the high chief was discovered as having affairs with a married woman at the Ogolonto outskirts of the town. The song was therefore composed to dissuade him from the antisocial behaviour and to remind him of the consequences of illicit sexual cohabitation and wife snatching. Apart from being a community of the low-income earners, Ogolonto is predominated by Ikorodu minority ethnic groups such as the Awori and Ilaje. The huge difference in the social statuses between the high chief and the Awori man even made the case more precarious. Though there is the concept of *olowo gbaja iyawo* (meaning “the rich snatch the poor’s wife”) among the Yoruba people, people of low social status could go to any length to seek revenge for wife snatching including the use of African juju. Some of them insert *magun* (a deadly poison usually made for injuring adulterers) on their wives. It was on the basis of the perceived danger that the last line of the song advised the high chief not to set his house “ablaze”.

Efote yin, Efote yin

Ki wen mama ro, enu ro oo

Ote mose nu ijoba we to

Oni ebimo s’ile ko wo ote se oo

Ewen omode ilu mede s’ote ooo

Oni emi a tun aiye se ooo

Iyen ifi oro mi san roo

Eni won poo nigi n’asiko ote

siko fiyen para

Let conspiracy be suspended

Stop thinking about it, it does not worth it

My involvement in conspiracy is enough

The one who has children should avoid conspiracy

The younger generation, I am not a conspirator again

A society builder,

would not be revengeful

Those defeated during the crisis,

should forgo the past

⁶ *Ere Oro* song composed and rendered by Chief Nurudeen Bombata and recalled by Mr. Lukman Ayeye

⁷ Oral communication with Chief Mufutau Adaboyan (Baale of Aleke), 65 years, at Ikorodu, 27 November 2020

⁸ Oral communication with Chief Mufutau Adaboyan (Baale of Aleke)

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

Ema ro, enu roo Stop thinking about it, it does not worth it
Ope eniyan ri adanwo deba n'ote oba People lost properties during the installation crisis
Oludumare kofowo ran lekun ooo May God console them all⁹

Prior to European intervention and colonial rule, the selection of a new king in Yorubaland was seemingly less complicated and devoid of crises. But with international events such as the trans-Atlantic slave trade, legitimate trade, and colonial rule, the socio-economic and political status of various kings in Yorubaland changed drastically (Orewa and Adewunmi, 1983). In fact, with colonial rule, many of the kings were put on the pay roles of the colonial masters. The changing status attracted stiff competition and crises to the position. Ikorodu Township was not exempted from this scenario as the town's traditional monarch gradually emerged as a paramount ruler within the Ikorodu district of the Lagos colony. Ikorodu was plunged into crises in 1953 during the process of installing a new monarch after the death of Oba Adenaike Alagbe (the first crowned monarch of the town). Two contending candidates emerged and the society was partitioned along this line. Conspiracy and mischiefs became the order of the day leading to violent conflicts, loss of lives, and loss of properties (Nigerian News). Owing to this situation, socio-political and economic activities within the township were paralysed. After few months of violent clashes and prolonged conspiracies, the preceding *Gbara* song was composed and rendered to dissuade the local residents from the antisocial behaviours. Aside from the strong words against *ote* (conspiracy), the song endeavoured to dissuade acts of revenge and encouraged the opposing camps to embrace peace and progress.

Cocaine, heroin (2 times)

Cocaine, heroin (2 times)

Leesi gbe cocaine losi ilu Oba Who smuggled cocaine to the overseas?
Won mu Oba mole, won ti lekun The king was arrested and locked up (2 times)
Opelope Benson re je ki Oba wale It was Benson that secured the release of the king¹⁰

The periods of 1980s and 1990s were notorious in the annals of Nigerian history for criminal activities such as advanced financial fraud (popularly known as 419) and drug-dealings. Apart from some youths becoming drug entrepreneurs and addicts, the smuggling of hard drugs to Europe, Asia, and America was common among Nigerians. In fact, drug-dealing was a very lucrative business and people of high status in the society such as celebrities were drug barons. Ikorodu was not shielded from this scenario as there were cases where people of Ikorodu extraction were caught in the drug-dealing activities (Boge and Isaac, 2020). Due to local intelligence gathering, it was discovered that the monarch was enmeshed in most of the shady drug-dealings and was

⁹ *Ere Oro* song composed and rendered by Chief Adekunle Bombata and recalled by Otunba Adeolu Afolabi

¹⁰ *Ere Oro* song composed and rendered by Chief Nurudeen Bombata and recalled by Otunba Tunde Bombata

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

apprehended in the act. The society found this very embarrassing and therefore had to condemn it in totality. It only took the intervention of a prominent Ikorodu indigene to orchestrate the release of the monarch. To this extent, the preceding song was composed to chastise not only the monarch but other residents who are into or willing to be involved in drug mafia.

Baba olowo mi sin win

Ogbara ti di elelufa,

ede ma be bi se

Oti tapa si awon ebi onbo migbe

The rich-man has gone crazy

Ogbara has become a Muslim,

And has parted with his family

He has severed relationships with his family¹¹

The concept of *ebi* is a place in high esteem among the Yoruba people of Nigeria. It is a concept that portrays inextricable bond and ties among extended family members. To that extent, rich members of the family are expected to constantly provide succour to the plights of the needy members of the family. In some case, a wealthy member could single-handedly erect social facilities that would benefit the entire family. Any rich man that fails to perform some of these responsibilities is tagged as social miscreants, rigid, inconsiderate, and callous. In fact, he and members of his immediate family would immediately become subjects of ridicule and stigmatization. The song above was rendered during an *Oro* festival to castigate a popular rich man in Ikorodu who was accused of not yielding to the plights of his family members. Despite his numerous houses in most parts of Lagos State, the rich man in question refused to assist his family to renovate the dilapidated and collapsed building, initially constructed by the rich man's father. Though the rich man usually made some philanthropic gestures to people (especially during the Islamic month of Ramadan), he was found culpable of not attending to the challenges facing members of his extended family. It was on the basis of these socially unacceptable dispositions that prompted the composition of the song which was first rendered at the scene of the collapsed family building. Apart from re-drawing his attention to the collapsed building, the song called the rich man's attention to the importance of family bonds. The song became a reference point to other privileged people in the society who were also engaging in such asocial characteristic.

Ole eee, ole ooo

Kukuru sanbe

Baba oloja esi we je

Ti ita Kamoju

Tabi t'obun oke ee

Thief ooo, thief ooo

A stunted man

Who install you as a market leader

Is your title for the Kamoju area?

Or for the Obun Oke (Up-town market)?

¹¹ *Ere Oro* song composed and rendered by Chief Nurudeen Bombata and recalled by Mr. Lukman Ayeye

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

Baba Oloja egbe oni gbana

You are a market leader for the touts¹²

Avarice and excessive desire for title and positions are widely regarded as antisocial in different parts of the world. People in the society are usually careful dealing with an avaricious personality because of his insatiable desires including what belong to other people. One of the bases of economic activities of Ikorodu people is trade and therefore there are markets in different parts of the town.¹³ Though each market has its executive committee headed by an *Iyalode*, a person is always appointed as the *Iyaloja* (female market leader) for the entire town. Because some men also participate actively in the market activities, a male market leader is also selected for the entire town. Selection of a man market leader is usually from men that are closer to the market and have gained popularity among the market people. During the 1990s, the market people and their executive committee members agreed to nominate a man who was very close and popular among the marketers for the approval of the monarch and his chiefs-in-council. The nomination could not scale through because another man who was known for avarice approached the king and his chiefs for him to be appointed. Eventually, male market leaders emerged within the township creating some form of confusion with respect to market administration within the town. In order to scold him of his usual avaricious tendencies, the preceding song was composed and chanted in various parts of the town.

4. Conclusion

The study illustrates the links between folksongs and antisocial behaviours. Sequel to the argument of scholars on the potentiality of folksongs for the promotion of social interactions, the article reveals that folksongs are also vital for discouraging antisocial behaviours in many African communities. The *Gbara* and *Ere Oro* musical genres are unique form of folksongs and are very common among the Ijebu people of south-western Nigeria. Like many other forms of folksongs, *Gbara* and *Ere Oro* musical genres are important for numerous socio-economic activities within the society serving as a preservation of the people's traditions, culture, and history. Crucial among the functions of these musical genres, particularly in Ikorodu township of Lagos State is the social critic aspects whereby series of traditional mechanisms are deployed to unravel social misdeeds committed by individuals and groups in the society. With the revelation, songs are therefore composed to castigate and discourage these socially unacceptable actions. The reactions of the accused to the songs composed against is something very unique because tradition requires him to absorb the criticism, internalise it, and standardise his behaviours. Therefore, the musical genres serve the purpose of social cohesion among the people of

¹² *Ere Oro* song composed and rendered by Chief Nurudeen Bombata and recalled by Mr. Lukman Ayeye

¹³ Oral communication with Alhaja Sekinat Shoneye (Member, Allison Market's Executive Committee), 58 years, at Allison Street, Ikorodu, 22 November 2020

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

Ikorodu Township. In essence, apart from the modern methods of preventing crimes and socially unfit activities, there are traditional mechanisms of orchestrating these in many African communities. A major weakness of the folksong, particularly *Gbara* and *Ere Oro*, is that it could be subjective and be used for personal vendetta.

REFERENCES

- Akponome**, A. O. (2014). Folk music in contemporary Nigeria: Continuity and change. *PhD Diss*, Ahmad Bello University, Nigeria.
- Allison**, A. N. (1982). Ikorodu and her immediate neighbours in the nineteenth century – A study in intergroup relations. *BA Long-Essay*, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Aluede**, Charles O. (2012). Music as Edae: Implications for music therapy in Nigeria” *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, volume 13(1), 2012 <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ujah/article/view/83231>
- Aluede**, Charles O. and Braiman, Abu A. (2005). Edo folk songs as sources of historical reconstruction” *Stud Tribe Tribals* 3(2): 123-128
- Anaana**, V. T. (2016). Sexuality and marriage abuse in the contemporary Christian church in Nigeria. *Religions: Journal of the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions*, volume 26(2), 20-32.
- Asobele**, S. J. Timothy. (2002). *Historical trends of Nigeria indigenous and contemporary Music*. Lagos: Rothmed International Limited.
- Boge**, F. I. (2014). An Administrative History of Ikorodu, 1894-1960. *Lagos Historical Review*, volume 14, 135-150.
- Boge**, F. I. and Isaac, M. D. (2020). A historical analysis of crimes and security challenges in Ikorodu local government area of Lagos State. *Anyigba Journal of History and International Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 pp. 66-89
- Hopkins-Burke**, Roger and Hodgsons, Philip. (2015). Antisocial behaviours, community and radical moral communitarianism. *Cogent Social Science*, volume 1(1), 1033369, Dol:10.1080/23311886.2015.1033369
- Lloyd**, Normen. (1968). *The Golden Encyclopaedia of Music*, New York: Golden Press, 1968.
- Miller**, H. M. (1960). *History of Music*, New York: Barnes and Noble Inc.
- Namnso**, Udoekanem and Adoga David. (2014). Land ownership in Nigeria: Historical development, current issues and future expectations. *Journal of Environment and Earth Science*, 4 (21).
- Nigerian News**, “Ikorodu and Oba Oyefusi”, September 2001, p. 8
- Nolte**, Insa. (2010). Obafemi Awolowo and the Making of Remo, Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc.
- Odejobi**, C. O. (2014). Yoruba indigenous folk songs as veritable sources for revitalising moral education among pre-school children in Osun State, Nigeria” *International Journal of Innovation and Applied Studies*, volume 9(4), 1786-1796.

Gbara and Ere Oro Musical Genres and Antisocial Behaviours in Ikorodu Township of Lagos State, Nigeria

Habeeb Abiodun SANNI & Faruq Idowu BOGE

- Ofosu, J. O.** (1989). Folk song tradition of the Urhobo: A case study of the Abraka clan. *MA Thesis*, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Okunade, A. A.** (2003). Images of Lagos in Nigeria Music. In Ajetunmobi, Rasheed (Ed.). *The Evolution and Development of Lagos State*, Lagos: Centre for Lagos Studies, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education.
- Okunade, A. A.** (2013). Music education and music activities in Lagos: Then and now. *EJOTMAS: Ekpoma Journal of Theatre and Media Arts*, volume 4(12), <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ejotmas/article/view/120656>
- Omirin, M. M.** (1999). Land tenure systems versus house builders' requirements for security: The Lagos experience. *The Lagos Journal of Environmental Studies*, volume 2 (1), 42.
- Omirin, M. M.** (1999). Land tenure systems versus house builders' requirements for security: The Lagos experience. *The Lagos Journal of Environmental Studies*, 2 (1), 42.
- Orewa, G. O. and Adewunmi J. B.** (1983). *Local government in Nigeria: The changing scene*. Benin: Ethiope Publishing Corporation.
- Oshio, P. E.** (1990). The indigenous land tenure and nationalization of land in Nigeria. *Boston College Third World Law Journal* 10 (43), 45-62.
- Polycarp, A. I.** (2016). The communal basis for moral dignity: An African perspective. *Philosophical Papers*, 45(3), DOI: 10.1080/05568641.2016.12458.
- Ward Price, H. L.** (1933). *Colony and protectorate of Nigeria: Land tenure in the Yoruba provinces*. Lagos: The Government Printer.