
**Application of the Commentary Role of Akata Songs of Ibibio to Contemporary Social
Issues in Nigeria**

BY

**Ime S. EKPO, *Ph.D*
Department of Music
Faculty of Arts
University of Uyo
Nigeria**

ABSTRACT

Societal-ill is as old as man's creation and has currently appeared as a symbol of modern-day society. Some cultures of the world have however, devised measures for the protection of their vital tenets or pillars from erosion. In Nigeria, for example, the Ibibio traditional community has customarily enforced social-control in its area of authority through indirect means such as model behaviour of older members, fairytales, folksongs and numerous forms of traditional music and games. Varieties of songs exist in Ibibio whose texts are of criticism, calumny, and destruction which the people accept and use as weapon of defense. This study, on the commentary role of Akata songs seeks to critically, investigate into how the Ibibio people use Akata song-texts to check the ills of the society; how the texts can be effectively utilized to provide information on social-control philosophy and, how they can be applied to contemporary social issues in Nigeria. To accomplish these, interviews and well planned participatory observation and discussion were authentic techniques through which information was gathered. Also, related research works on historical, socio-cultural perspectives of Akata music were of immense help. The study reveals that, Akata has its song-text themes as comments on social-issues which serves principally as an effective weapon for minimizing societal-ills. The text of these songs expose violators of public norms through commenting on them and the ills so committed. The study concludes that, Akata musical art is an effective weapon for checking societal ills and recommends that, similar subtle measure should be developed in Nigeria and elsewhere hoping that legal backing will be given to such cherished means of minimizing people's excesses in the country.

KEYWORDS: *Akata Song-texts, Commentary Role, Application to Contemporary Issues*

Introduction

Before the advent of the colonial masters in Nigeria, information dissemination was very difficult as radio, television and newspaper were not accessible to the people. Even though a few Nigerians had access to them on the masters' arrival, Nigerians were still faced with difficulties because they could neither read and write, nor communicate in English which was the language of the masters (Akpabot, 1986). During that period, traditional musicians of various groups were carriers of information and their music succeeded to educate and inform the people on certain issues of community interest and concern in addition to exposing their wrongdoings.

Like language, music is a unique human form of communication. Although there is no general agreement as to exactly what music communicates, Nigerians believe that it possesses great power of communication thus increasing the consciousness of the benefits derivable from creating and making the music. Expressions of emotions, love and hate, joy and sadness, or praise and satire, may run through different contextual categories of songs. Nketia (1975) notes that, in addition to songs of a personal, topical, or historical nature, there are those that deal in general way with philosophical and general themes, or with specific problems of man's existence on earth. Till date, the functionality of music remains a common phenomenon in Nigeria, where music is an integral part of all cultures. In such cultural integration, music serves as a social instrument intended to achieve certain goals.

Although music is part of every culture in Nigeria, its performance differs among cultures in style and structure. One can easily identify music as belonging to the Hausas, Yorubas, Igbos, Ibibios and Efiks. Likewise, some musical instruments such as the Hausa trumpet (*Kaakaki*), the Igbo flute (*Oja*), the Ibibio horn (*Oduk Uta*), etc., can be so identified. While music takes care of the entertainment and artistic needs of the society, it also goes beyond its sonic borders. Music can address its crucial objective of moderating the social lives of the people and dispensing required doses of social, moral and cultural values and norms intended to shape and build credible people with esteemed personality and integrity within the society. Nigerians usually employ musical groups as agency of entertainment to maintain the moral norms of their citizens, such as crime control and avoidance of nonstandard behaviours through the lyrics of the songs as well as performance dynamics. Ajewole (2011) points out that, music is a useful tool for social identification and culture communication and an agent of social change. Also, music has the ability to see through social circumstance of a time or period in question. Ekpo (2019) acknowledges that, some traditional festival songs are excellent means/media of social control by Ibibio people and that, social-control have been successfully enforced by them through music.

Music in Nigerian communities is a human-centered art. Perhaps, Nzewi (1999: 23) may have had Nigeria in mind when he defined music as "a feeling and communal therapy, a humanizing communion, a sharing in human-being-ness." Also, Agu (2012) may have had the same feeling that Nzewi had when he claimed that traditional societies do not necessarily conceive music purely for its own sake as an expression of sheer artistic/aesthetic expertise, acumen or intellectual cum physical deftness as such but rationalize it as an integral part of human life meant to provide major and support services to human social and cultural life and events in acceptable ways. In Agu's perspective, the two concepts, "social" and "cultural," are linked to theories about society in terms of organization of people and their activities. Aside from its entertainment role, the essence of traditional music practice and creativity in Nigeria is for social and cultural leadership, guidance, and propagation of established social values in given contexts. Since every society is constructed and constituted by individuals, it is believed that the ideals, actions and inactions of those individuals converge to shape the societal integrity. Thus, the integrity of Nigeria as a nation is by implication, an aggregate of individual social and cultural uprightness brought to bear on the image of Nigeria.

The homegrown music of Nigerians is generally a communicative structure and its power of communication cannot be over emphasized. Different varieties of Nigerian music can be used for expressing individual or societal ills; it can also be used for correctional purposes or training for moral adjustment. Families, villages, groups of villages and clans make laws for the

governance of all units. For the enforcement of these laws, each community has one or more social groups which also present themselves as musical genres. Examples are *Akata*, *Ataat*, *Ebre*, *Ekpe*, *Ekpo*, *Itembe*, *Obon* and *Uta* groups of Efik and Ibibio communities. Apart from providing entertainment, the people use them to create music; enforce conformity to societal laws and norms; provide warnings and instructions to law breakers.

Generally, the Ibibio people love to express in songs, the intent of their hearts, including feelings of joy and sadness; they use songs to express protest and resentment; to praise and worship their Creator and minor gods, and to invoke spirits; they create songs that dwell on vices like hatred, greed, naughtiness, laziness, lousiness and many more. Devine, Favour and John-Paul in separate interviews in 2021, expressed the prime importance of traditional music in Ibibio when they stressed that, social control is enforced through subtle means, like an evildoer being criticized and mocked during traditional musical performance. They all agreed that, most traditional songs contain words that threaten people which, outside the primary criticism and appraisal essence, also entertain people in a humorous manner. Traditional songs may also be fashioned to encourage good virtues for a healthy society, such as love, peace, unity, affection, and more (Ekpo, 2019).

It is incredible that, despite the proliferation of musical groups in Nigerian, and the vast social relevance of music to the people, they are yet to attract proper attention from individuals, groups and even governments. The need, therefore, to provide documentary material and information on traditional musical art in Nigeria becomes the primary objective that inspires this study. It is the quest for a controlled contemporary society through a musical means which this study attempts to discover how *Akata* musical art of the Ibibio people can be applied to contemporary social issues not only in Ibibio but in Nigeria at large.

Concept of Music

The word ‘music’ was first used in the 13th century and its origin can be traced to the Middle English *musik*, Anglo-French *musike*, Latin *musica*, and Greek *mousikē* denoting any art presided over by the Muses, especially music (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). In Rome, music incorporated poetry as well as instrument oriented music. In the middle ages, music referred to the order of the universe perceived as having a form of music without any implication of heard sound. Blacking (1973) defines it as an organized sound that pleases the ear. Agu (2006) describes it as an aesthetic art of combining or putting together sounds that are pleasant to the ear. Music is in everywhere and forms that it exists, according to the people’s culture, whether Western or African. Ekpo (2019) asserts: music is what gives a society life and cultural identity. People all over the world value music as part of their culture. Its transmission starts from the home and its continuity is propagated by the larger society.

Ibibio – Origin, Location, Name and Meaning

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is made up of thirty-six states and the Federal Capital territory, Abuja. It has over three hundred and seventy-four (374) ethnic groups. Ibibio is one of these groups and the next largest after Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba. Akwa Ibom and Cross River States of Nigeria are the two states where most Ibibio people inhabit. However, there is no state in Nigeria where Ibibio people are not found. Many others are also scattered all over the

continent of Africa and other continents of the world. For effective study, the scope of this work is limited to the Ibibio inhabiting Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

Geographically, Ibibio is located in South- Eastern corner of Nigeria. In the North and North East, they share a common boundary with the Ekoi of Cross River State; in the West and North West, they are bounded by the Igbo of Abia State; in the South-West, they are bordered by the Ijaws of Rivers State, while in the East, they share a common boundary with various ethnic groups of the Western Cameroons, while the Bight of Bonny washes the Southern boundary. Ibibio has a coastline which stretches from Akpayafe River at the Nigeria-Cameroon borders in the East to Andoni River in the West, a distance of about 130 kilometers. From the Southern coastline at Ibeno, they extend to more than 110 kilometers northwards to Itu Mbonuso, Nkari and Iwerre in Ini Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

In spite of many historical accounts, the origin and meaning of the name 'Ibibio' is not clear. Eminent scholars such as Udo (1983), Akpabot (1986) and others, have attempted to trace the origin and explain the meaning of the name Ibibio, but their explanations seem to be insufficient, unsatisfactory and in most cases, inconclusive. The origin has not been scientifically established. One account of its origin is that, the people originally settled around the estuary of the Cross River, known as Akwa Akpa, while another is that, they settled at Ibom, a town now in Arochukwu which was probably named after their great ancestor. Udo believes that they probably may have migrated from the Bantu area of Central Africa. Whatever may be, the Ibibio people have occupied their present territory in Akwa Ibom State for many decades now. They are probably the indigenous natives from whom most small ethnic groups of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria are descended. Their early settlement in the area led to the development of a number of clans and other smaller groups which are geographically aligned to form the present Ibibio entity.

In his contribution, Abasiattai (2005) recounts that, by 7000 BC, permanent settlement of some of the ethnic groups in Ibibio land had already begun and that, their language, also known as Ibibio, is probably the most ancient of all the semi Bantu languages. On the strength of preliminary ethnographic survey, their sub-groups comprise Asutan, Eket, Etinan, Ibeno, Ibesikpo, Ibiono, Ikono, Ikot Abasi, Ini, Itu, and Mkpat Enin. Others are Nsit Atai, Nsit Ibom, Nsit Ubium, Uruan, and Uyo. The people are also related to other sub-groups, namely: Andoni, Annang, Eastern Obolo and Oron. Despite these different groups, there is relative homogeneity in their cultural belief, and shared customs including music, mode of dressing, food, and child rearing system. Also, there are numerous music types common to all, which function effectively in them

On the meaning of Ibibio, Jeffrey, quoted by Ekpo (2019), the name may have come from *Igbo-obio* which can be resolved into *Ibi-ibio*. *Ibi* comes from a root meaning people or else from another root *gbo* which means slave. *Obio*, comes from a root, which means country, bush, or forest. The name *Ibibio* is either from *Ibi-obio* which means people of the bush (or bushmen), or from *Igbo-obio* meaning slaves of the bush (or bush slaves). In Udo's (1983) and Akpabot's (1986) considerations, *Ibibio* means short, brief and precise. For them, it is because the Ibibio people do their things in direct and precise manner. Be that as it may, Udo's and Akpabot's assumptions are not satisfactory. Although the Ibibio are precise and straight forward in their dealings with people, yet, to relate this to the name is not only an exaggeration but illogical.

Origin of Akata

Akata is a traditional musical genre whose history is difficult to trace. The answers to its origin, where, when and how it started are still not clear and there are no conclusive answers to most questions pertaining to its origin. Because the *Efik* people of Cross River State call it *Ekpri Akata*, Akpabot (1986) assumes that, because of the word *Ekpri*, there is the speculation that *Akata* has its root among the *Efik* people located in the present Cross River State of Nigeria. *Ekpri* is an *Efik* word for small while the *Ibibio* refer to small as *Etok-etok*. Akpabot adds that, it may have originated when the *Efik* and the *Ibibio* people lived together in Uruan, a community in Akwa Ibom State. He further claims that, if it originated from *Ibibio*, it would have been called *Etok-etok Akata*. This claims by Akpabot is not a confirmation that *Akata* originated from the *Efik* rather than the *Ibibio* or vice versa, but a mere speculation that attempts to establish its origin.

Akata Music and Musicians

Every community in Nigeria has what it lives by – cherished traditions, hallowed secrets, and revered institutions – and usually ensures that, violators of societal norms and values are severely punished while those with model character are encouraged. Some of the traditions are however outdated and abandoned while others are still upheld. For example, the *Ibibio* people had elaborate social control systems – to protect their institutions, punish unacceptable conduct and prevent trespass. Up to late 1960s, *Ekpo Nyoho* (*Ekpo* Masquerade) was used to enforce discipline and anyone who went contrary to established practice faced serious consequences. Also, *Unek Usuenne Ino* (thief's disgraceful dance parade) was popular in many rural communities even till early 1970s where suspected and confirmed thieves were paraded and forced to carry the stolen property on his/her head and made to dance naked round the village or market square to songs of ridicule. In modern *Ibibio* society, such methods are condemned in entirety. *Akata*, the creators of ridicule songs and carriers of people's chronicle are still in use in modern day *Ibibio* because of its subtle nature and mode of application. Indeed, *Akata*, erroneously believed to be spirit manifestation, a vivacious prophet that sojourns with people on earth, only to be heard at night contributing through songs for the betterment of the society, is highly cherished in the modern day *Ibibio* society. Its primary function is to create, compose, arrange and perform music that check the ills of the society without physically presenting the culprit to the public or inflicting any corporal punishment on him/her. Members of each *Akata* musical group are creative musicians and their information is always given in songs of ridicule or satire; they possess a large repertoire of the people's traditional songs, but brew them together at their convenience; they serve as principal licensed agent-propagators of rumours and latest gossips; they monitor and check the vices and expose them unreservedly, for the purpose of reprimanding culprits. Such vices include theft, rape, fornication, bribery, dishonesty, fraud, corruption, exploitation, sleaze, backbiting, assault, scandal, etc.

Akata lead singer dwells more and extensively on corrective gossips and so, community dwellers are always conscious of their conducts in order to escape the brazen publicity on them if their misdemeanours are exposed to the public. Most times, names of violators are barely mentioned but, by carefully following to the texts of the songs, people get to know the vice acts of those they may have held in high esteem. The culprit cannot challenge the actors because the information is always given in the dark night and the reporters are neither seen nor known and their voices not recognized. Also, the disclosures had been carefully scrutinized and certified as

being true before being disclosed to the public. Undoubtedly, the reporters always conduct thorough investigations to unravel the truth. In many instances, the offenders are highly embarrassed so much that they either elope from the community or vow openly never to repeat such acts anymore.

Akata musicians delight in camouflaging their musical communication, thus making their voices to sound nasal in order to give a ghost effect. They sing with unusual tones and the lead singer sings into a musical instrument called *Ekpamkpuud* which looks like the kazoo of the Western world. The instrument is covered with *mba mkpekpem* (wing of a bat) or *mfefere ofoñ* (nylon material) at one end and kept open at the other to distort the tone produced. The most prevailing form of songs performed by the members are those composed, arranged or improvised out of reaction towards non-conformity to the norms of the society by some individuals or groups of individuals. The lead singer and supporting voices routinely start with loud invocation repeated again and again until every household is awake, after which they commence their reports. As the *Akata* musicians approach each household with songs and instrumentation, an elderly, male member of the household appears and listens attentively to grasp every bit of information carried by them. At the end, he appreciates them in cash or kind and they depart to another household. Their activities may seem outrageous but the musicians are always given legal backing by the chiefs and elders of the community, provided that they operate within the confines of the societal law and order. To protect themselves from enemies as well as scare those who would want to express anger, molest or attack them, the musicians carry some self-protective weapons. They are, however not permitted to carry weapons that would inflict injury or harm to people.

Membership of *Akata* Ensemble

In any organization, association or group, certain qualities are usually expected of members if their aims and objectives must be achieved. Groups may be formed for social, cultural, political, religious or economic reasons. Depending on their goal, ideologies or beliefs, membership may be restricted to males, females or a cluster of both sexes; it may be exclusively for age grades such as toddlers, teen-agers, adolescence, maidens, elderly men, elderly women, or a combination of two or more. In whatever category, admission depends on ability to meet the group's set rules and regulations. Membership of *Akata* ensemble is not an all-comers affair but exclusively meant for strong and energetic male youths of reputable character. Because of the commentary role it performs, selection of members is done with caution and requires thorough screening to avoid admitting unprincipled youths into the group. For someone to be enrolled in *Akata* group, Akpabot (1986) informs that, he must,

- (i) be an indigene of the community where the *Akata* musical genre is organized;
- (ii) not have been found guilty of any offence in the society;
- (iii) come from a good family background;
- (iv) be strong, courageous and energetic;
- (v) register as a financial member of the group;
- (vi) take an oath to abide by the rules and regulations governing the conduct of group;
- (vii) be someone who can keep secrets no matter pressure or inducement people;
- (viii) accept to be fully committed to the activities of the group; not for any reason, disclose the secrets of the group.

Some *Akata* Songs and their Commentary Role

Songs in *Akata* context are not necessarily intended for invoking the spirit, rather, the most distinctive songs are those motivated by social-ills in the community. *Akata* songs are primarily fashioned to disclose individuals or groups that have breached communal trust or acceptable behaviour with the utmost aim of reprimanding or re-socializing them. Such songs function essentially as tool for social control. Ekpo (2019) notes the prime importance of *Akata* Songs when he acknowledges that social control is enforced through subtle means like an evildoer being criticized and mocked in the night of *Akata* musical performance. Characteristically, the songs remain an important object of exposure to those who have gone contrary to the societal norms as well as caution to probable law breakers.

Akata musicians are entertainers and story-tellers who narrate songs in the most ridiculous and systematic manner. They know a lot of folktales and folksongs but take the liberty of arranging them to achieve desired aims and objectives. The lead singer could start a tale in an interesting manner but, in the course of it, diverts the listeners' attention by punctuating the story with ululations and allegories, or brings in excerpts from other well-known stories. Towards the end, he poses a puzzle which an intelligible person could resolve. The puzzle is the ridicule which is the main essence of the song. Cases of violation of societal norms like theft, adultery, fornication, rape, husband or wife snatching, promiscuity, witchcraft, falsehood, injustice and greed are some of the major themes addressed in *Akata* songs. The leader is always courageous and fearless and the group's success depends on his ingenuity.

Akata songs project messages in a concise language, yet in a very clear statement that can enhance optimal assimilation. The lead singer, being the message carrier, does not, in any way, figure the song-text-language because he is sure of the consistency of the message in the song, and well backed up with the incontestable customary supremacy of the song in its context. The language is always deliberately direct and free from ambiguity. This practice authenticates Akpabot's (1986) opinion that the language of any commentator on any social issues must always be clear and precise, readily available to the listeners and free from ambiguity. Ekpo (2019) acknowledges that, for *Akata* songs to project their communication effectively, the texts must be short in length, plain in language and simple to understand. Texts that are prevalent in *Akata* songs possess four principal sections in succession, thus: opening section, culprit's identity, the ills committed and conclusion. These sections are discussed thus:

Section 1: Opening Section

Section I, The introduction, which constitutes the first section of *Akata* song performance, is always handled by the lead singer who presents it in a singing-speaking manner, that is, half sung and half spoken. The song in this section features as a signature tune which, apart from waking up members of the community, keeps them awake and ready to receive the oncoming message. As a commentator on contemporary social issues, the lead singer's language is always clear and precise, readily available to the addressees who keenly listen to capture the message as exact as possible. The tune of the song depends on the lead singer's initiative. An example of introductory or signature tunes is as presented in example (i):

Example i:

Ibibio

Nditọ ette, ekom do – o!

English

My people, greetings to you-o!

<i>Ekudaiya aba – o!</i>	Sleep no more – o!
<i>Ñkpo atippe ke obio – o!</i>	Something has happened in the community – o!
<i>Ekpañ utoñ man ekop nyin – o!</i>	Listen so that you can hear us – o!

The lead singer in the above example starts by sending warm greetings to all the members of the household visited. He continues by beaconing on them to stay awake, keep their eyes open so that their ears can encode the latest news in town.

Section 2: Culprit’s Identity

The individuality, distinctiveness or personality of the offender are disclosed in section 2. The knowledge is very important because if the culprit’s identity is mistaken for an innocent person, it is viewed as an unforgiveable offence and treated accordingly. However, there has not been any verbal or documentary evidence to establish that the *Akata* musicians have ever made such mistake. Some of the facts needed to identify any culprit are, name of culprit, complexion, body structure, special body identification mark, village of origin, residential address, family unit, etc. Examples for each are given below:

- **Name of culprits and the probable coined versions**

Real Name	Twisted Version
Arit	Mmadet
Affiong	Fimma
Inyang (meaning river)	River
Okon (meaning night)	Night
Margaret	Mankinini
Ekpenyong	Ekpes
Christopher	Christo
Joseph	Jojo
Effiong	Effibaba
Asukwo	Asumkpe
Inyene (meaning riches)	Richee, etc.

- **Complexion** – The complexion or skin tone can be *Afiafia* (Fair) or *Obubit* (dark). If the culprit is an albino, he/she will be referred to as *Mbakara Obot Ikot* (Unfortunate European).
- **Special Body Identification** – The culprit may be identified with one or more of the following: *Ufañ Eded* (Open Teeth), *Atuak Ñkat* (Bow Legged), *Eka Iwuod* (Big Headed), *Etok Iwuod* (Small Headed), *Ñkene Okpo* (Liny Legged), *Eka Idib* (Big Stomach), *Eka Efaɔ* (Big Buttocks), *Mkpamkpa Efaɔ* (Flat Buttocks), *Ikpọ Enyin* (Big Eyes), etc.

- **Village of Origin** – The name of the culprit’s village is always coined as illustrated below:
 - (i) Ikot Udo, where Ikot means bush and Udo means second son. The Akata may coin the name to read Udo Bush or Bush Udo.
 - (ii) Ikot Uyo, where Ikot means Bush and Uyo means Biscuit. The coined version can be Bush Biscuit.
 - (iii) Etim Ekpo, where Etim means beat and Ekpo refers to masquerade. The coined version can be Etim Masquerade.
 - (iv) Edem Ekpat, where Edem means back and Ekpat means bridge. The coined version can be Edem Bridge, etc.
- **Residential Address** – Residential address can be given described in the song as suggested below:
 - (i) *Nsakiso Urua mbubreyo* where *Nsakiso* means opposite, *Urua* means market and *Mbubreyo* means evening. The coined version here can be *Nsakiso evening market*.
 - (ii) *Ufok Mben Idim* where *Ufok* means house and *Mben Idim* means bank of the river. The coined version can be *Ufok Mben River*.
 - (iii) *edem ufok Abasi* (behind the church) etc.
- **Family Unit** –for example, *Nnun Udo Eno* (*Udo Eno* family) or *Nnun Etok Akpan* (*Etok Akpan* family), etc.

It is however not a rule that real names should not be mentioned. Sometimes they use real names and at other times, they use coined names to send messages to the people as in example ii below:

Example ii:

Ibibio	English
<i>Yak ikow Mmadet o!</i>	Let us sing Mmadet o!
<i>Mmadet, ọdān mben idim o!!</i>	Mmadet, who lives beside the stream o!
<i>Yak ikwo Mmadet o!</i>	Let us sing Mmadet o!
<i>Mmadet, afia mma, kwo!</i>	Mmadet, the fair woman, sing!
<i>Yak ikow Mmadet o!</i>	Let us sing Mmadet o!
<i>Mmadet, etippe enyān keed, kwo!</i>	Mmadet, the one-eyed woman, sing!
<i>Yak ikow Mmadet o!</i>	Let us sing Mmadet o!
<i>Mmadet, ino iwa, kwo!!</i>	Mmadet, the cassava stealer, sing!

Section 3: The Social-Ill Committed

This section is also very necessary. The societal norm violated by the named individual in section 2 is captured in a clear, direct and brilliant manner as shown in example 111 below:

Example iii:

Ibibio	English
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<i>Mmadet, ino iwa!</i>	Mmadet, the cassava stealer!
<i>Afia Mma, ayip iwa owo!</i>	The fair woman, stole someone's cassava!
<i>Mmadet ayip ino nte ewa!</i>	Mmadet steals like dog!
<i>Mmadet, amedia ndok.</i>	Mmadet, shame unto you.

In example iii above, the culprit's name is Arit, but twisted to read Mmadet in this context. If any other woman answers Arit in the community, the father's name would be twisted and added to differentiate the thief from the other Arit. For instance, if the father's name of the thief is Inyang which means river, the culprit will be addressed as Mmadet River, which everybody in the community would understand as Arit Inyang. The thief in the song is described as being fair in complexion, and accused of stealing cassava from someone's farm. She is rated as having dog's nature which we know dogs as animal that steals often, etc.

Section 4: The Conclusion

The fourth and the last section draws conclusion from all the other sections. The concluding section ridicules, faults and pours curses on the culprit, with such statements like *ataa asaksak ino* (a faceless thief), *añwan ndok* (shameless woman), *owo ñkan ewa añwan* (woman with doglike nature), etc.

Example iv: Concluding section

Ibibio	English
<i>Mmadet, Ataa asaksak ino!</i>	Mmadet, a dreaded thief!
<i>Owo ndok eyen añwan!</i>	A barefaced lady!
<i>Owo ñkan ewa añwan!</i>	Worse than dog woman!
<i>Afo! Anana enyin obuut!</i>	You! Shameless woman!

Some *Akata* songs by a famous *Akata* musician, Uwemedimo, from Afaha Ediene, an *Ibibio* community in Akwa Ibim State of Nigeria, are here presented in examples v, vi, vii and viii below:

Example v: Yak Ikwo Mmafiong Ikpon

In an *Akata* music performance in Okoro Atai, a *Ibibio* community, a song was cast on a woman whose real name was Affiong Ikpong who was fun of stealing other people's edibles such as cassava, yam, cocoyam, fish, plantain, banana, etc. A song was composed and performed by *Akata* to let her know that the community was aware of her notorious activity and could not bear it anymore. The song said that Affiong Ikpong was a disgrace to womanhood and disclosed her involvement in what a cultured person would not want to be identified with. The theme of the song is "Disgrace to Womanhood" and the title is *Mmafion Ino Iyak* (*Mmafion*, Fish Stealer). The song starts with an introductory section as presented below:

Ibibio	English
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Mmafion, Ino Iyak

Ikot nnyin immukom-o!

Edemere K'idab-o!

Ekpañ utoñ-o!

Mmafion Ikpoñ,

Asuene ubon iban;

Ауар iyak Adiaha.

Mmafion, afia mma

Ayip ino akan ewa.

Mmafion, Fish Stealer

My people, we greet you-o!

Wake from sleep-o

Listen-o!

Mmafiong Ikpong,

A disgrace to womanhood;

Stole Adiaha's fish.

Mmafion, the fair woman;

Steals more than dog.

Example vi: Ette Idun Udo Masquerade

In another Ibibio community, a song was cast on *Ette Idañ* (Village Head) by name Udoekpo Inyang, who habitually raped teenagers in the community. When the ill was made public by Akata musicians, there was serious uprising between the community elders and *Ette Idañ*. The respect earlier accorded the *Ette Idañ* by his subjects was no more and he became a subject of ridicule before his people. The word *Inyang*, the *Ette Idun's* second name or surname, as the case may be, means river. In the song, titled, *Udoekpo River Akpara*, (Udoekpo Inyang, the Rapist), the Akata musicians ridiculed the *Ette Idañ*, stating his misdeeds abusively. The song informed him in clear language that his subjects were aware of his forceful sexual relationship with some teenagers in the community and that they reject in totality, his continued posing as their leader and that, all the elders of the community have unanimously passed a vote of no confidence on him. By implication, the *Ette Idañ* was indirectly ordered to resign from the throne, as a matter of urgency. He was, in addition, given many names to describe his notorious activities. Such names are: Udoekpo, *ekpo akpara* (Udoekpo, the devilish fornicator), *Ette Idañ*, *ewa idun* (village dog), Udoekpo River, *idiok oboñ* (bad leader), *Ette Idañ*, *owo ndok* (man of disgrace), etc. See the song below:

Ibibio

Title: Akpara Ette Idun

Ette Idañ! Udo River!

Afo odo ntun.

Ette Idun! Udo River!

Akpara nkene

Ufonno k'ikim ebot!

Ufonno k'ifia!

English

Fornicator Village Head

Village Head! Udo Inyang!

You are a fool.

Village Head! Udo Inyang!

Chief fornicator

Good for nothing!

Good for nothing!

<i>Men iso akpara mfo</i>	Take your fornication,
<i>K'akpa k'ikot.</i>	Go and die in the bush.
<i>Ette Idung Udo Inyang!</i>	Village Head, Udo Inyang
<i>K'akpa K'ikot</i>	Go and die in the bush.

Example vi: *Timma Ayip Iwa*

Another instance was that motivated by the indolent life of one Atim Udo, a wife of a prominent man in the community, whose life style left her vulnerable to stealing. She neither owned a provision store, nor a farmland but whatever she needed, she stole from people's stores and farms indiscriminately. She was a suspect for a long period of time until one day, luck ran out of her and was caught in the act, harvesting cassava in her neighbour's farmland. When she noticed that she was sighted by a young man who incidentally was an Akata member, who was passing by to another farm to harvest his palm fruits, Atim took to her heels. A few days after, Akata members composed and rendered a song about Atim to inform the entire community of the ill she committed. It marveled the whole community to know that it was Atim Udo that was caught in the act of stealing. The song below explains Atim's misdeed, thus:

Ibibio	English
<i>Timma, iwa oro akamade do,</i>	Timma, the cassava you are harvesting,
<i>Idihe afo enyene! Idihe afo enyene!</i>	Is not yours! Is not yours!
<i>Unyeneke ikot iwa, unyeneke iwa,</i>	You neither have cassava farmland, nor cassava,
<i>Ananam didie eyip iwa o?</i>	Why steal someone's cassava?

It is heartwarming to note that, during the subsequent years' planting seasons, Ikwo Udo woke up to her responsibility and got involved in farming to stop further embarrassment by the members of the community. Seeing this, she was forgiven by her people and later assumed a cultural folk.

Example vii:

On the theme of promiscuity, there is a popular Akata song that has been featuring for decades now. Issues that relate to such theme automatically use the already existing songs and tunes by mere replacing the old violator's name with that of the current violator. For instance, the old culprit's name may be Edoho but replaced by Nkakak, being the new culprit. Besides replacing the name, every other text of the song remains the same, thus:

Already Existing Song:

Ibibio	English
<i>Edoho, Kla iso kan idun;</i>	Edoho, Keep on flirting;
<i>Ka iso yam idem!</i>	Keep on selling yourself;
<i>Afo edi nkuku unyenek' uton</i>	You are a butterfly without ears
<i>Nam k'inwan, nam k'urua</i>	Sell in the farm, sell in the market

Usen keed onyon aya 'yan ebok

One day, tortoise will fall from the tree

Violator's Name Coined:

Ibibio

English

Inyene, Ka iso kan idun;

Inyene, Keep on flirting;

Ka iso yam idem!

Keep on selling yourself;

Afo edi nkuku unyenek' uton

You are a butterfly without ears

Nam k'inwan, nam k'urua

Sell in the farm, sell in the market

Usen keed onyon aya 'yan ebok

One day, tortoise will fall from the tree

The song challenges loose girls and sex workers whose main occupation is sex marketing or commercialization. Akata musicians informs such girls that they stand the risk of not getting married because they had already sold their privacy to the public. It is not fallacy to say that such persons so exposed by Akata musicians try to redirect their ways, turn a new live and become accepted by the community. Those who remain adamant are usually addressed by Akata musicians as “die-hear” people. In a number of cases, they experience social stigma which keeps them susceptible to difficulty in not only securing husbands within their community but also in associating with their chums and other members of their community.

Application to Contemporary Social Issues in Nigeria

Nigerian musicologists from Ibibio extraction, including Akpabot (1986) and Ekpo (2019), have acknowledge that, Akata songs have been the people's watchdog, corrective agent, object of caution and ridicule that challenge the individuals so addressed, to re-examine and re-direct their obnoxious life style. Traditional Ibibio communities are solidly in support of the activities of Akata musical groups which outside the primary criticism and appraisal essence also aim at entertaining the listeners. The Akata members who have genuine comments on social issues are granted journalism-freedom by the host community and the right to uncover people's wrongdoings through their songs. Their song-texts have been the people's regulator, corrective agent, object of mockery and caution that challenge violators of societal norms and values in a bid to reprimanding and correcting them.

Certainly, the creators and performers of Akata songs have the customary right to expose every misconduct perpetrated by people irrespective of age, sex, class, status, political or religious affiliation through those songs. The supposed journalism-freedom granted the members is what contemporary Nigerian, African and even journalists all over the world need as a pendulum to a controlled contemporary social order. Nigerians and other nations have therefore realized that it is easier, safer and more effective to project social information through songs than mere spoken or written words.

Akata, the commendable traditional means of social control in Ibibio communities is too treasurable to be left unharnessed in the face of contemporary social issues in Nigeria. Therefore,

- (i) its likeness of the song-text media in terms of purpose and role can be applied to the contemporary social order settings;
- (ii) the means, style, technique and medium of propagation should not only continue in oral form but should be documented for posterity;
- (iii) in addition to live performances, presentations should also be made on electronic gadgets such as radio, television, MP3, audio and video machines, etc., so as to reach a wider and even global audience;
- (iv) in addition to the original song-text language (Ibibio), the texts should be translated to cover the nation's major languages (Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo), English language and even 'pidgin' English for wider consumption;
- (v) life performance context and time should be made annual and can also be fixed as a weekly, monthly or quarterly programme across every local, state and national media;
- (vi) it can be performed on a local day such as the new yam festival day, state day such as state creation day, or national day such as independence day, respectively.

On the view of applying the commentary role of Akata songs to the contemporary social issues in Nigeria, those whose song-text message are authentic should be encouraged in cash and kind while those who base theirs on victimization should be made to face the wrath of the law. Moreover, policies that can enable Akata commentators on contemporary social issues to air his views through the songs on the media free-of charge should be established by the law makers. On the other hand, the States or National Assemblies should make laws that can prosecute those who may use the art to cause undue damage to deform people's character

Conclusion

Traditional music is a useful tool for social identification and cultural communication and its power of communication cannot be exaggerated. It is an agent of social change and has the ability to see through the social circumstance of time. Traditional musicians of various groups are carriers of information. Akata musicians, for example, thrive to educate and inform the people on certain issues of community interest and concern and most importantly, expose people's wrongdoings. This study has demonstrated that Akata is a very important agent of social control. Because of its consistency in operation, members have got the customary right to project any social issue through singing such songs that can cause perpetrators of evil to re-direct their ways. This means of checking the ills of the society has left everyone as the people's watchdog.

Akata musical groups are reputable and identifiable. They are prolific composers and most of their stories are told in songs of ridicule. They possess a large repertoire of the people's traditional songs, but they most often brew them together at their convenience. They do not only receive training on general musicianship but also on general behaviour and conduct in the society. Through the training they receive, moral values and principles are being imparted.

Akata spirit manifest is an entertainer and a story-teller who narrates songs in the most ridiculous and unsystematic manner. He knows a lot of folktales and folksongs but takes the liberty of arranging them to suite the current issue. He could start a tale in an interesting manner but, in the course of it, diverts listeners' attention by punctuating the story with ululations, allegories, or brings in excerpts from other well-known stories. When he approaches the end of the story, he

poses a puzzle which any intelligible member of the community would resolve. The puzzle is the ridicule which is the main essence of the song.

Recommendations

On the perspective of preserving positive cultural heritage, the *Ibibios*, her surrounding communities and the entire people of Nigeria should realize the positive roles of Akata music and revive/improve the theatre. Since Akata has the potentials of affecting the social life of the people positively, governments at the local, state and federal levels should approve the customary license granted to the commentators. Also, they should come to the aid of Ibibio communities and enact laws to protect the rights and privileges of the commentators so that their activities can be displayed in the open, without molestation.

One should at this point acknowledge the initiative of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), the regulatory body of programmes on Nigerian electronic media that recommends 60:40% ratio of airing local and foreign music. That is, 60% local and 40% foreign content. Since Nigeria is struggling to come out of her socio-cultural menace, the researcher recommends that, the radio and television media should capture and showcase Akata music to take at least 20% of the local music content.

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