

## MUSIC AND SOCIOCULTURAL RELEVANCE OF IPESE FESTIVAL OF IDO-EKITI: THE ABA LÁGÙNRIN'S PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

This paper delves deeply into the intricate role that music fulfils within the context of the Ipesi festival, shedding light on the festival's profound socio-cultural significance among the Ekiti people in Nigeria's contemporary society. Through a meticulous research methodology that leveraged the instruments of Key Informant Interviews (KII) and participant observation, the study meticulously examined the festival's essence. To achieve a comprehensive understanding, the research design incorporated the robust and interactive platform of Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Within the fabric of the festival, music emerges as a central pillar, serving multifaceted roles that encompass entertainment, cultural heritage preservation, fostering connections and unity, as well as facilitating profound spiritual and emotional experiences. Moreover, the study unearthed a rich tapestry of effects that the festival's music exerts on its targeted audience. These effects encompass a spectrum of emotional impacts, infusion of energy, sparked enthusiasm, deepened cultural appreciation, and moments of introspective personal reflection. By spotlighting the intricate interplay between music and festival dynamics, this research extends valuable insights that carry significant implications for academic advancement. Its findings not only offer a nuanced perspective on the evolving relationship between music and cultural celebrations but also serve as a crucial reference point for a diverse array of disciplines, including music education, ethnomusicology, musicology, history, sociology, anthropology, religious studies, and beyond.

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### INTRODUCTION

Music can be described as an organized sound that is generally accepted and appreciated by the populace. It is the product of the behaviour of any human group. Music is also an art that has been a vital and functional part of the people and its environs. Music therefore is an essential part of culture which is seen as "the people's way of life" (Bebey, 1975). The concept of music varies from one society to another, hence it is necessary to understand what sounds and kinds of behaviour different societies regard to as music. Blacking (1974) opines that music is not an isolated art but describes it as -a humanly organized sound. Okafor (2005) further explains that though there are many sounds in creation, some natured, others made by living things; only sounds which have been deliberately organized by man to specific ends-expressions of emotion, communication of ideas, touching the senses and the emotions, calming the nerves or turning the minds to certain plains of communication and worship- qualify to be called music. Culture, as the people's way of life covers their total shared common behavioural patterns that make up their tradition.

These traditions also follow some rules that include their social, religious, and cultural practices. Traditional music among societies is a bonding force that serves as a medium for entertainment, social relationships and religious practices. It serves as a tool to learn their languages, proverbs, habits, histories etc, and these are learnt through their folk songs. Onyeji (2012) also notes that - as an art form, Indigenous music of Africa reflects the culture of Africa as well as it is a cultural form in its own right. Music is therefore a part of people's culture; hence to study the music of a particular society is to study the culture. Merriam (1964), notes that "music is clearly indispensable to the proclamation of activities that constitute a society". Every cultural activity (ranging from birth to death) is portrayed with music; music for ceremonies, music for circumstances and so also music for festivals.

Ipesi festival is an annual festival held in Ido-Ekiti, Ekiti state. No festival can be judged successful without an accompaniment of music which depicts the mood of the people in relation to the ceremony. Music can be interpreted from the faces, the steps and gestures of the celebrating community. Okafor (2005) posits that people digest and consume music as entertainment while it leaves a mark on the psyche that redirects them towards a new personality and a new activity. This statement confirms the significance of music as a common medium of communication and expression in African culture. Music is used in certain customary activities of a people during festivals in the continuity of their yearly exercises. Music, thus, re-establishes people's relationship with their creatures, ancestors, gods, heroes, etc. Okafor (2005), further states that "as long as music in ceremonies is ancient in origin, music becomes a vital instrument for the transmission and continuity of the culture". He also states that "without music, those ceremonies and rituals and festivals will not be complete". The concept of festivals has emerged from the desire to celebrate achievements among the indigene of the land. The celebrations also display their craving for change and hope for what the future holds. This paper examines the role that music plays in Ipesi festival and the socio-cultural relevance of the festival, in the contemporary society among the Ekiti people, Nigeria.

The role of music and its sociocultural relevance in festivals arises as music contributes to the sociocultural aspects of festivals both globally and locally. (Dwyer, Forsyth & Spurr, 2010). Festivals are events that bring people together for the purpose of socializing, celebrating, and promoting culture. In these events, different forms of music and sociocultural activities are featured, which have significant impacts on the participants and the event hosts. However, there is a growing interest in the impact of music and its sociocultural relevance in festivals on both the individual and the society especially in the modern context.

McKeganey & McIntosh (2000), pointed out that these effects range from positive outcomes such as building social cohesion, promoting community integration, and improving mental well-being to negative consequences like the spread of drugs and other irresponsible behaviours. One of the key issues facing festivals that feature music and sociocultural activities is the impact of drug use.

Research has shown that festivals are some of the most common places where drug use occurs, with organizers often struggling to control drug use and its associated risks (McKeganey & McIntosh, 2000). For example, some festivals have recorded drug-related deaths and other harms. Other studies have examined how festivals can foster cultural tourism by promoting cultural diversity, enhancing the local economy, promoting cultural exchange and understanding, and enabling global connections (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011).

However, the good side of drugs can only be realized if the festivals are adequately planned and managed. To address these issues, the festival organizers must take proactive measures to prevent drug use and other negative outcomes, while maximizing the benefits of music and sociocultural activities to their attendees. This can include the provision of essential services such as healthcare facilities to manage drug-related harms and the creation of a code of conduct outlining the expectations of festival-goers. Therefore, this study examined music as a corrective tool in the socio-cultural activities of Ipesi festival in Ido Ekiti, Ekiti state south western Nigeria.

The aim of this study is to lay out the role that music plays in the socio-cultural activities of Ipesi festival. The objectives are to describe the roles of music in Ipesi festival, to identify the effect of the songs on the targeted audience and to notate and analyse some of the songs used during the festival.

Ipesi festival is an annual cultural celebration that takes place in the town of Ido Ekiti, located in Ekiti State, Nigeria. During the festival, various sociocultural activities, including traditional ceremonies, rituals, and performances, take place, as well as musical activities. The festival is of significant cultural and historical significance to the people of Ido Ekiti, as it is seen as a time of renewal, reconnection, and celebration of their cultural heritage.

The Ipesi festival provides an opportunity for the community to come together to celebrate their shared identity, history, and customs. However, this study focused on Agunrin compound in Ido Ekiti because the Alagunrin who is responsible for the leading of the festival is from the Agunrin compound. This study provides insights into the relationship between music and festivals, which has implications for academic development. It will be useful for music educators and will serve as a reference for ethnomusicologists.

## **Music and Culture**

Music has been an essential part of human culture since time immemorial. It is through music that humans express themselves, and the different genres of music reflect the diverse cultures of the world. Moreover, Nigeria is a country with a rich cultural heritage that is steeped in music tradition. It has produced some of the finest musicians in Africa and has influenced contemporary music genres worldwide. As a result, Nigerian authors have written extensively on their country's music and culture. In this literature review, we shall highlight some of the books written on music and culture.

One of the most interesting studies on music and culture is by Colby et al. (2019). The authors examined the role of music in shaping cultural identity and found that music plays a fundamental role in shaping the identity of both individuals and groups. The study suggests that music not only reflects culture but also shapes it. Hargreaves et al. (2017) investigated the cultural aspects of music listening. The authors found that culture plays a significant role in determining musical preferences and that people's musical tastes and identities are often linked to cultural factors such as ethnicity, social status, and age.

Moreover, the impact of globalization on music and culture is a topic that has been explored by several researchers (mention some of them). In a study by Buetner and Buettnr (2019), the impact of globalization on traditional music was investigated. The study found that globalization has led to the adoption of new musical styles and instruments, resulting in the loss of traditional music. This loss, according to the study, has a detrimental effect on cultural heritage.

A study by Di Giovanni and Sachdev (2018) examined the role of music in intercultural communication. The authors suggested that music can serve as a powerful tool for bridging cultural divides, promoting cross-cultural understanding, and facilitating dialogue between cultures.

## **The Place of Music in Festivals**

Lawrence (1982) in Onipede (2017) festival could mean a re-enactment ceremony or hegemonic ritual that many societies used to articulate events that hold significance, not only for individuals and families, but the larger society, as well as their ancestors.

"Music and Festival in Britain and Ireland" edited by George McKay, (2013) is a comprehensive exploration of the role of music in British and Irish festivals. It covers various genres of music such as folk, rock and classical, and how they are curated within festivals. The book also delves into the socio-cultural and economic aspects of music festivals, and how music and festival co-create meaning and experience for festival-goers. "The Routledge Handbook of Festivals" edited by Chris Newbold, Jennie Jordan, and Paul Kitchin (2018) provides a wide-ranging overview of festivals worldwide. It includes various forms of festivals, from cultural and religious to arts and music, and how festivals impact local and global communities. The book also explores the management practices and challenges of organizing festivals, such as funding, marketing, and risk management.

However, Nigeria is a country rich in cultural heritage, and one of the main components of this heritage is music. Music is an important aspect of Nigerian cultural festivals.

## **Ipesi Festival**

The Ipesi Festival: Ritual and Performance in Nigeria by Toyin Falola and Ogunfolakan Akinwumi (2009) provides a comprehensive overview of the history, significance, and cultural practices of Ipesi Festival in Nigeria. It examines the festival's social, economic, and political impact on the Yoruba people and includes references to various myths and legends associated with the festival.

The Ipesi festival is a significant cultural event in Ekiti State, Nigeria, celebrated annually by the Ipesi people, who predominantly belong to the Ekiti ethnic group. This festival holds both historical and cultural significance for the community and typically takes place around September.

**Cultural Significance:**

**Celebration of Ancestry:** The Ipesi festival is primarily a time to honour ancestors and celebrate the community's cultural heritage. It involves rituals, ceremonies, and traditional performances that connect present-day Ipesi residents with their historical roots.

**Community Unity:** It serves as a unifying event for the people of Ipesi, fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity among community members. It's a time for families and friends to come together, strengthening social bonds.

**Spiritual Renewal:** The festival often includes spiritual elements such as prayers, blessings, and rituals conducted by traditional priests or leaders. These activities are believed to bring blessings, prosperity, and protection to the community Activities during the Festival:

**Traditional Processions:** The festival typically begins with colourful processions through the streets of Ipesi. Participants dress in traditional attire, often adorned with beads, feathers, and other symbolic ornaments.

**Cultural Performances:** Dance, music, and storytelling are integral parts of the Ipesi festival. Traditional drumming and dance performances are showcased to entertain and educate both locals and visitors about the community's cultural traditions.

**Ritual Offerings:** Offerings of food, drinks, and other items are made to ancestors and deities as a sign of respect and gratitude. These offerings are often placed at sacred sites or shrines within the community.

**Feasting and Merrymaking:** Like many festivals worldwide, the Ipesi festival includes feasting on traditional dishes. It's a time for communal meals where people share food and enjoy the bounty of the harvest season.

**Sports and Games:** Some festivals incorporate sports competitions or traditional games that add an element of fun and friendly competition to the festivities.

**Historical Context:**

The Ipesi festival's origins are rooted in the history of the Ekiti people, reflecting their journey, struggles, victories, and cultural evolution over time. It serves as a reminder of the community's resilience and identity in the face of historical challenges.

### **Contemporary Relevance:**

In modern times, the Ipesi festival continues to play a crucial role in preserving and promoting Ekiti cultural heritage. It also attracts tourists and visitors interested in experiencing traditional Nigerian culture firsthand. Overall, the Ipesi festival of Ekiti State stands as a vibrant testament to the rich cultural tapestry of Nigeria, celebrating community, spirituality, and the continuity of traditions across generations.

### **METHOD**

The research design adopted was by deploying the use of Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key Informant Interview (KII) and participant observation methods. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a method of collecting data which involves that a certain number of informants are gathered with the researcher employed. The researcher in turn throws questions at the members of the group for answers and debate as far as the topic is concerned. Key Informant Interview (KII) is a qualitative in-depth interview Method of collecting data with respondents who are conversant with the happenings in the community.

These respondents are regarded as experts in their fields, irrespective of their age. One of the major roles of Key informant interview is the collection of data from various people who have been tagged experts by virtue of the first-hand knowledge that they have been blessed with. These experts help provide answers to the numerous and seemingly unending questions provided by the study. Participant Observation method of data collection is one of the vital tools employed in ethnographic research.

This method of data collection involves that the researcher or researchers snap the tiny rope which sets them apart from the group of people whose study is being carried out. By actively and indiscriminately participating in all the activities of the group of people whose study is being carried out, they feel more comfortable and divulge all necessary information. This is owing to the fact that they strongly believe that they have already become attached to the researcher. Participant observation method of data collection was employed during the process of this study. Through the process of observing the activities of all respondents and actively taking part in all such activities, the objectives of the study were carefully and critically examined.

This method of data collection gives room for thorough description and adds to the already existing quality of data collection and interpretation. By actively taking part in the activities, there's room for spontaneous questions which may arise from interpretation and understanding of answers that have been provided on the field. This helps to improve the quality of data collected.

The population of the study covered the participants and the chief priest (known as Aba Lágùnrin) of Agunrin compound, Oja Odo street, Ido Ekiti, Ekiti State. There are numerous festive activities in Ido Ekiti, Ekiti state. But Ipesi festival is different from other festival due to its uniqueness. The study could not cover the over 500 participants who grace the festival ground every year to worship, the specific population of the study was further streamlined to the three elders of the community who participated in the festival, the group

comprise of 10 participants, one group discussion (group discussion for the participants of Ipesi festival. Two Key Informants which consists of head of the group and the Chief priest (Aba Lagunrin). Ten participants of the festival, Ipesi festival Ido Ekiti, Ekiti State.

This study adopted the use of purposive sampling technique. A total number of fifty respondents were selected for this study. These fifty respondents include both male and female members of the participant of Ipesi festival Ido-Ekiti, Ekiti State. This study used the instruments Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Participatory observation was done. Through the process of observing the activities of Ipesi festival and actively taking part in selected part of the activities due to gender restrictions, the objectives of the study were carefully examined.

The use of Focus Group Discussion was employed on selected members of Ipesi festival Ido Ekiti, One group discussion (both male and female participants of Ipesi festival Ido Ekiti, Ekiti State), the group comprising of 10 participants of Ipesi festival Ido Ekiti, Ekiti State. Two key respondents such as head of the Ipesi festival group and the chief priest (Aba Lagunrin) were used. The respondents were engaged in the process of key informant interview which comprised of direct one-on-one interviews with the respondents. The Key Informants' responses were recorded on various recording devices such as phones, voice recorders and cameras. The transcriptions of the interview were then extracted from the recordings. Owing to the fact that the data collected on the field are descriptive, this study engaged Content analysis to analyse the data generated. Mostly, the data generated are descriptive which involves verbatim quotation from the respondents which were gathered through key informant interview and supported by participant observation among the respondents.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Music and Socio Cultural Activities in Ipesi Festival in Ido-Ekiti.**

Ekiti State High Chief (Alagunrin of Agunrin compound) describes music as the soul of every festival. He made us realize that many events of importance are celebrated with music. Participants of Ipesi festival Ido Ekiti also testify to the fact that music is a universal language and is an important part of the society which cannot be pushed aside or overemphasized. According to one of the respondents. Mrs Avisatu Adunni said, as far as festival is concerned, "music is a combination of words which are used in melodious ways which help in ensuring that morals are passed to people and lessons are not forgotten." She goes further to explain that "music aids in the assimilation of lessons being taught". This, she explained is only applicable in the case of didactic songs.

The chief priest took us down memory lane by telling us how this festival IPESI came to Ido Ekiti. It was said that the then Alagunrin was a king in his own village but one of the chiefs ONMILA in Ido town saw how the ipesi festival was celebrated in the village of Agunrin and he decided to invite him over. Alagunrin declined at the first attempt but later agreed to come over to Ido town. Alagunrin came directly to Imila street in Ido Ekiti and a compound was given to Alagunrin and those who followed him.

When asked about the place of music in Ipesi festival, all respondent including the chief priest ALAGUNRIN made it known that music is the life of Ipesi festival. It was said by the chief priest that the larger part of the festival involves music. While some respondent believe that music in Ipesi festival is for entertainment. To make people feel merry and alive, some other participants also believe that music has some spiritual effect on the people who are participating in the festive process.

### **Role of Music in Ipesi Festival**

Ipesi festival celebrates the rich cultural heritage of our community, and music is an integral part of our traditions. It serves multiple purposes throughout the festival. These are the roles that was discovered during the festival:

**Entertainment:** Music is a source of joy and entertainment during Ipesi festival. These performances create a vibrant atmosphere and help in engaging festival-goers. During the source of the research, it was discovered that the targeted audience also participates in singing and dancing and this also serve as a source of entertainment for the people. **Cultural Preservation:** Music serves as a medium to preserve and showcase our cultural identity. It allows us to share our traditional music, dances, and narratives with the younger generation, ensuring that our heritage is passed down and cherished. Owing to the fact that different genres of

music are used during the festival, but traditional music is most used while singing against the targeted audience.

**Connection and Unity:** Music has the power to bring people together. During Ipesi festival, the songs that were sang brought about social interaction and creates a sense of unity among attendees. People from different backgrounds connect through the shared experience of enjoying the performances, fostering a spirit of togetherness and community. Many of the participants testify to the fact that the only reason why they participate in the festival is because of the music.

**Spiritual and Emotional Experience:** Certain musical performances during the festival are deeply connected to spirituality and emotional expression. Traditional chants and hymns are sung, creating a solemn and reflective atmosphere. These moments allow attendees to connect with their inner selves and find solace in the music. And when taking songs like these they remember those that are dead and pray for their spirit to find rest.

**Education and Learning:** Ipesi festival also serves as an opportunity to educate and expose some social people to ills and ways to curb them. Music also serve as correction tool in the festival. When the participants are singing, they make sure the reasons for their action reflects in the lyrics of the music and at the same time make corrections on what has been done. Overall, music enhances the Ipesi festival experience, adding colour, joy, and cultural richness to the event. It serves as a unifying force, connecting people, and preserving our traditions.

### The Effect of the Song on the Targeted Audience

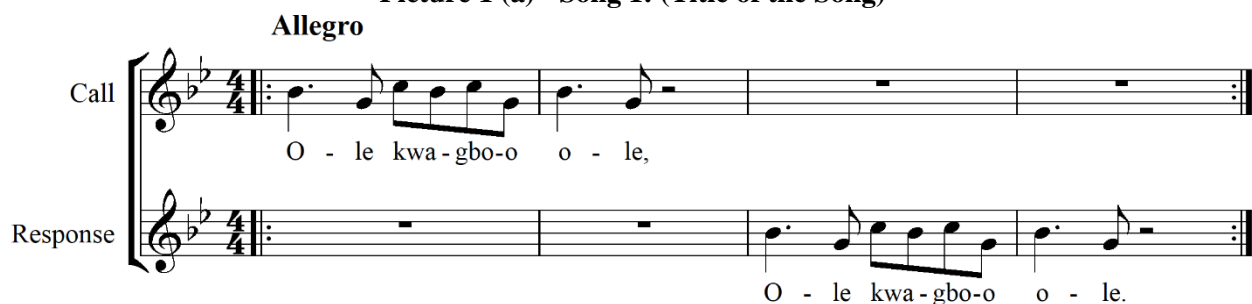
The effects of a song on the targeted audience in Ipesi festival can vary, but generally, music has a powerful impact on people's emotions and experiences. Here are the effects the songs had on the targeted audience:

- **Emotional impact:** One of the participants who had been a victim before belongs to the school of thought that a well-performed song can evoke strong emotions in the audience, such as joy, excitement, or even sadness. It can create a sense of unity and allow individuals to bond over shared feelings. He shared his experience when he was a victim and how the songs that were used made him feel bad and caused him to change.
- **Energy and enthusiasm:** Music has the ability to energize and uplift people. In a festival setting like Ipesi, a catchy and uplifting song gets the audience dancing, clapping, and singing along, creating a vibrant and enthusiastic atmosphere.
- **Cultural appreciation:** Music often represents and celebrates the culture of a particular community or region. In Ipesi festival, songs that highlight the local culture, traditions, or history help the audience feel a sense of pride and appreciation for their heritage.
- **Personal reflection:** Most of the songs used during the festival have introspective and thought-provoking lyrics that encourage listeners to reflect on their own lives and experiences. This can lead to a deeper connection with the lyrics and a sense of personal growth and introspection. But overall, music has the ability to touch our hearts, uplift our spirits, and bring people closer together.

### Notation and Analysis of the Selected Music Used in the Ipesi Festival

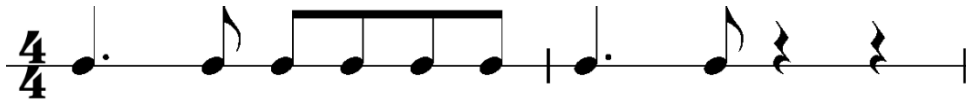
**Picture 1 (a) - Song 1: (Title of the Song)**

**Allegro**



The musical notation is presented in two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Call' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Response'. Both staves are in 4/4 time and feature a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of a sequence of notes: a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, a quarter note B4, an eighth note C5, a quarter note D5, and a quarter note E5. The lyrics 'O - le kwa - gbo-o o - le,' are written below the notes. The 'Call' staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots, and the 'Response' staff also ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

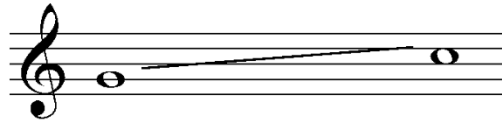
**Picture 1 (b) - Structural element: It is a folk song in repetitive call and response.**



**Melody** : The melody is word conscious. It is more of conjunct movement of short leaps. The highest interval in the melody is a fourth while the shortest is unison. This peculiarity makes the melody sonorous and logogenic.

**Rhythm** : The rhythmic structure of the melody contains two musical notes of different values; dotted quarter note and eighth note. However, most notes in the music are eighth notes of different pitches. It starts on a syncopated strong beat in common time.

**Picture 1 (c) - Tessitura: The range of the music is from G to C**



**Harmony** : It is in unison. This connotes conventionality, communality and unity of purpose among the people of Ekiti, especially during a significant event, such as Ipesi festival.

**Texture** : The texture is monophonic in nature

**Tonality** : The melody is rather tonal. It is on the key of B flat major.

**Picture 1 (d) - Scale: It is on a three tone scale (tritone)**



**Tabel 1 - Textual Analysis of Song 1**

<i>Text</i>	<i>Translation</i>
<i>Ole, kwagbo o ole</i>	Thief, listen, o thief
<i>Ole, kwagbo o ole</i>	Thief, listen, o thief

**Picture 2 (a) - Song 2: (Title of the Song)**

**Presto**

Call   
 O - do - ko ja - ja lo

Response   
 O - na - mu - shu re ti - li ti - li

**Picture 2 (b) - Structural element: It is a folk song in simple call and response.**



**Melody** : The melody is word conscious. It is more of conjunct movement of short leaps. The highest interval in the melody is a third while the shortest is unison. This peculiarity makes the melody sonorous and logogenic.

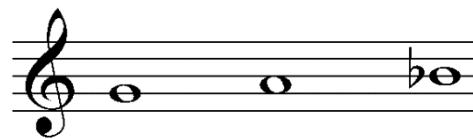
**Rhythm** : The rhythmic structure of the melody contains the music notes of different values; dotted quarter note, quarter note and eighth note. However, most notes in the music are eighth and quarter note notes of different pitches. It starts on a syncopated anacrusis in compound duple time.

**Picture 2 (c) - Harmony: It is in unison**



**Texture** : The texture is monophonic in nature  
**Tonality** : The melody is rather tonal. It is on the key of E flat major.  
**Tessitura** : The range of the music is from G to C

**Picture 2 (d) - Scale: It is on a three tone scale (tritonic)**



**Tabel 2 - Textual Analysis of Song 2**

<b>Text</b>	<b>Translation</b>
<i>Odoko jaja lo</i>	She's more promiscuous than a dog
<i>Onamushu re tili tili</i>	Her female organ has become ugly

**Picture 3 (a) - Song 3: (Title of the Song)**

**Moderatto**

Call



Response



3



5





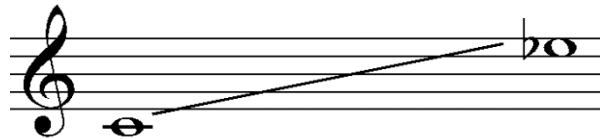
**Structural element: It is a folk song in simple call and response.**

**Melody** : The melody is word conscious. It is more of a conjunct movement of short leaps. The highest interval in the melody is a fourth while the shortest is unison. This peculiarity makes the melody sonorous and logogenic.

**Rhythm** : The rhythmic structure of the melody contains the music notes of different values; dotted quarter note, quarter note and eighth note. However, most notes in the music are eighth and quarter note notes of different pitches. It starts on a syncopated anacrusis in compound duple time.



**Harmony** : It is in unison  
**Texture** : The texture is monophonic in nature  
**Tonality** : The melody is rather tonal. It is on the key of E flat major.  
**Tessitura** : The range of the music is from middle C to Eflat



**Picture 3 (b) - Scale: It is on a six tone scale (hexatonic)**



**Tabel 3 - Textual Analysis of Song 3**

<i>Text</i>	<i>Translation</i>
<i>A pa o nipa uya, a de o mogi oro</i>	You'll be beaten mercilessly, you'll be tied to a tree
<i>Ao si fun o ni garri cup kan lojojumo</i>	You'll only be given a cup of garri everyday
<i>Cup kan lojojumo</i>	One cup everyday
<i>Cup kan lojojumo</i>	One cup everyday

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