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## Music and Dance : The Second Nature of Ibo Folk and the Sense of Aesthetics in Ibo Culture

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### Abstract :

*The importance given to fine arts such as music and dance in a society shows the sense of aesthetics in that particular culture. The Ibo culture of Umuofia emphasizes these aspects. Music and dance constitute the second nature of the Ibo folk. The language of drum is one of the most significant and fascinating features of Ibo culture. No wonder the most sophisticated and modern version of this instrument and its operation have their origin in the deep obscure jungles of Africa.*

**Key words :-**Folk songs, Music, Dance, Drums, Ibos, Cultural Art.

### Introduction :-

African folk songs mirror the wisdom and insight of the African people. These folk songs are musical pieces and are sung to the accompaniment of drumming and dancing. Music, dancing, painting and wrestling are the stock elements of Ibo culture. If the crops are good harvesting follows with much fun, frolic and feasting. It is during this period that musicians, dancers and mask – wearers entertain the people. The folk songs and folk literature show the vitality of the life. The African folk-songs contain the work view and the joys and sorrows of the African people.

For all occasions the Ibos have songs accompanied by dance. The flute provides background for nearly all occasions. During the New Yam feast, singers and musicians provide music to mark a good harvest. At least three days are spent in fun and frolic. During the season after harvest musicians are in demand not only in their village but in the neighbouring villages where they are invited to teach new songs and dances. We recall that it is to these pleasures that Unoka, father of Okonkwo dedicates his life. He plays on his flute with great happiness. When he was banished to die a lonely death in the 'evil forest' Unoka takes his flute with him.

Drum is an inseparable part of an Ibo man's life. The Ekwo, Udu and Ogene are three of a variety of drums that not only provide musical entertainment but are also used in delivering messages and announcing important proclamations. The drum is used during all the ceremonies, celebrating birth, marriage, death, wrestling contests, title-taking ceremonies and feasts. Drum reflects the pulse of the clan's life, echoing the very life rhythm of the people.

In Umuofia there is an old saying : As a man danced so the drums were beaten for him.

There is a different drumbeat to mark every event of a man's life, during the windy season of rain, when the sun rises with dazzling beauty and with this glorious beauty of sunshine when kites are seen in the Ibo land, children sing songs welcoming the first kites of the season and they also sing songs of welcome to rain,

*'The rain is falling, the rain is falling*

*Alone Nnadi is cooking and eating;*

In Nwoye imagination, Nnadi is a character in Ikemefuna's colourful story where the ant holds his court in splendor and the dance forever. (Things fall Apart, 1958, P.32).

During wrestling contests people's excitement could be discerned in the accompanying drums. If a wrestling match is to take place, the drums go on persistent and unchanged irrespective of the goings on the village. Ikemefuna, the boy hostage from Mbaino, who is adept at making flutes from bamboo stems to elephant grass, is also good at singing and story-telling. On the occasion of the New Yam Feast, when Okafo, a young man of Umuofia emerges the winner in a wrestling match with the neighbouring villages, young men sing in his praise thus :

*'Who will wrestle for our village ?*

*Okafoa will wrestle for our village.*

*Has he thrown a hundred men ?*

*He has thrown four hundred men.*

*Has he thrown a hundred cats?*

*He has thrown four hundred cats,*

*Then send him word to fight for us' (p. 36)*

One can feel not just the excitement and the physical movement of the wrestling but the very rhythms of life in the pounding of the drums and the resilience of the prose. Like Olympic games, which were an expression of the love of sports and adventure in the ancient Greeks, the harvesting time provides the right atmosphere for the Ibo spirit of sport, which represents agility and courage.

Wedding songs are of great importance in the village community of Umuofia. The musicians with their wood, clay and metal instruments, sing song after song at the weddings, addressed to the bride, while she dances to their accompaniment. They leave after the wedding, still singing as they go.

If there are songs celebrating various occasions reflecting a joyous and cheerful frame of mind, there are also songs of mourning and sadness, indicating that the sense of tragedy overhangs all human beings.

*'For whom is it well, for whom is it well ?*

*There is no one for whom it is well.'* (P. 95)

The drums are arranged according to their sizes, in a long wooden and there is a total absorption in the drummers. The metal gong with its powerful gome, gome, gome sound, occupies the place of normal drums during the more solemn occasions. Its process of relaying the news of death to all the nine villages is impressive. First it names the clan, the name of the man who is dead is announced at last,

*'E-u-u, Ezeudu is dead'*

The habit of song-making and investing lyrics with soulful tunes remains the same with the people of Umuofia even after the appearance of the white man in their midst. The white man's presence made no dent in their innate and innovative musical talent. When titled men are imprisoned and made to work, the younger men sing songs of rebuke and ridicule addressed to the court messengers, in tune with the strokes of their matchets cutting grass.

*'Kotma of the ash buttocks,*

*He is fit to be a slave*

*The white man has no sense,*

*He is fit to be a slave' (p. 123).*



Whatever be the nature of occasion, be it gay, solemn or sad, there is a song readily composed and tuned and a dance designed to go with it.

**Conclusion :-**

Thus Music is the second nature to Ibos. The people of Umuofia live in close proximity with nature. No wonder nature inspires them to weave poetry that abounds in lyrical beauty. A close examination of every aspect reveals that the ancient society of Umuofia is almost perfect. Its well-knit ethic is the outcome of a fine culture that guarantees economic security, political safety and religious sanctity to all sections of people. It excels in its various cultural arts. The fragrance of the Ibo poetic imagination and its singsong quality appeal to any sensitive soul.

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