

Egbanegba Musical Type as Medium of Communication among People of Alavanyo in Ghana

Vincent Kodzokuma¹, Selorm Divine Ndah², Ruben Kpesese³

^{1,2}Seventh – Day Adventist College of Education, Koforidua, Ghana, Department of Creative Arts

³Dambai College of Education, Ghana, Department of Creative Arts

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this paper is to explore how Egbanegba musical type could serve as a communicative medium among the people of Alavanyo traditional area as well as to highlight the socio-cultural values of the music, and its effect and the structural relationship between the music and the life of the people. Through observation and interview, it is evident that the thematic content of Egbanegba song texts and their interpretations form an integral part of the components of performance which is indicative of its communication channels. The population of the study consisted of Musicians, Historians and cultural coordinators in the area. The paper concludes by portraying the artistic cultural values in the music and how the people express their sentiments through the musical type. The study recommended that Egbanegba musical ensemble should be well packaged to help promote cultural values of the people in Alavanyo. In addition, the youth should be encouraged to take active part in its performance so as to ensure its continuity and for social benefits. Besides, Cultural festivals in both the schools and the community should be strengthened so that this musical type could continue to showcase the cultural assets of the people

Keywords: Communication, Socio- cultural, Values, Traditional Music

INTRODUCTION

Music performs several functions across different ethnic cultures. People use music to create and express their emotional feelings: woo lovers, guide moral behaviors and communicate effectively even more than spoken language. Musical performances enable people to understand themselves as a social group which they sustain for posterity. According to Ndah et al (2021), taking part in musical activities brings about social integration, cooperation, unity, love and community ethos. The social activity of music making enables people to gain meaning into the communicative process of issues and messages presented to the audience during performance. The thematic content of Egbanegba (**Recreational musical type**) song texts and their interpretations form an integral part of the components of performance (drumming, dancing and singing). The attention paid by audience sitting or standing around during Egbanegba performance is evident of its communicative medium and its relationship to society.

Some scholars in ethnomusicology such as Amuah and Wuaku (2019) Aasoglenang, Miller & Kanlisi (2014) and Adjei (2016) discuss the communicative nature of music in different cultures. This is evident in the production of Egbanegba musical sound from singing, accompanying instruments and the dance movements in communicating messages to individual performers and the audience. Traditional medium of

communication involves the use of local resources such as poems, stories, song texts, games, riddles, proverbs and others in conveying an idea or intent. However, Song texts and dance movements as components of Egbanegba music functions as a traditional medium of communicating messages, with meanings in the context and situations of performance of the music. Alavanyo, is a community located in the Hohoe Municipality in the Volta Region of Ghana. The people are well endowed with musical and cultural assets. People of Alavanyo traditional area use Egbanegba song texts and gestures mostly to cast insinuations, correct wrong behavior in the society, criticize people in authority including the rich. This musical type is as well used through the dance movements to dramatize unacceptable behaviours in society.

Scholars have conducted study in Alavanyo and its environs. Some of them are Amlor (2016) who studied on the Agblehawo (farming songs) as well as songs for the hunters among the people. Kodzokuma et al (2024) as well wrote on the musical types and their gender orientations. However, critical observation shows that much empirical studies have not been done on socio- cultural values in Egbanegba musical type and how it serves as a communicative device.

It is in view of this that this study is done to showcase the values in Egbanegba as well as its communicative roles among the people of Alavanyo.

The focus of the study therefore is to investigate the socio- cultural values in Egbanegba musical type among the people of Alavanyo; and also to explore how Egbanegba musical type could serve as a communicative device among the people of Alavanyo.

The study seeks to answer the following questions.

1. What are the socio- cultural values embedded in Egbanegba musical type among the people of Alavanyo?
2. To what extent could Egbanegba musical type serve as a communicative device among people of Alavanyo?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Historical Overview of Egbanegba Musical Type

There are several musical types in Alavanyo traditional area. These include Akpi, Adevu, Bobobor, Egbanegba, Akayevu, Asiwa and Avadogboto (Kodzokuma et al 2024). Each musical group plays a fundamental role in the community, be it recreational, religious, socio-cultural or political. According to oral narratives among the people, Egbanegba music group was formed by Gbolo Komla and his wife Biasah in 1927 as a recreational dance. The group performs in the evenings after a hard-day's work as a form of entertainment. This ensemble is performed by adult males and females from the community. During performances, women were seduced including the married.

This brought about misunderstanding between the group members and the husbands of the women who participated in the performances. The chief of the town asked Gbolo Komla, the founder to dissolve the group. But all efforts by the chief were to no avail. This resulted into a serious fight between the group members and other men from the town resulting in the death of one person. The chief went to the district capital (Kpando Police station) to cause the arrest of all group members. They were sentenced to jail at Kpando but the leader Gbolo Komla was sent to jail in Accra. He was released after serving one year term in jail. After his release from jail, he (Gbolo Komla) re-organized the group and said they do not care whether the drums get broken when played. They would play the set drums until they got broken, hence the name 'Egbanegba'. 'If it is broken let it be broken'.

Musical types among the people of Alavanyo

People of Alavanyo hold their culture in highest esteem. They showcase the cultural values through music and dance during festivals. According to Ayi et al (2024), many traditional musical types are found among the people in the study area. They identify some of the musical; types as Akpi, Adevu and Borborbor. The rest they state as Akayevu, Avadogboto, vuga and Egbanegba. They continue that, in every social event in the area, these musical types are display.

Ndah (2014) as well, posits that, many communities in the Northern part of the Volta Region of Ghana such as Logba, Hohoe, Kpando and Alavanyo have the similar musical types that are used for various functions. He shares that; these musical types are mostly classified as the court musical types such as Akpi, Adevu and Vuga. The recreational types are also identified as Borborbor, Obrim and Egbanegba. He identifies another class of musical type that is performed during funerals. Such types are stated as Avihawo and Akayevu.

It could therefore be deduced from the authorities above that people of Alavanyo and their neighboring communities have similar musical types which they perform during social events.

Role of Musical types in Ghana

Music making has become part and parcel of Ghanaian society. In every social and cultural event, music is seen taking its rightful place. Authorities such as Ndah (2014), Ndah (2021) Aniadze (2023) and Kodzokuma et al (2024) have share that, music among Ghanaian is used for communication through the use of the text in the songs and the dance movements as well as gestures that are shown during the performance of the musical types. Music is equally used during worship. During Christian worship, music is used to connect the congregants to God. The traditional religious worshipers also use music to relate to the gods and lesser gods. Music making among Ghanaian serves as a career to those who perform them for money. Music also helps to socialize members in society. This is because when there are life cycle events, music is performed to bring people together to dance and socialize.

Music is also performed as a recreational activity. When people are happy they make music; when they are celebrating a joyous occasion, they make music to express their joy (Otchere – Twum 2024). He adds that, Music is as well display to show cultural identity; portraying diversity in culture

An inference could therefore be drawn from the assertion of the scholars above that, music mirror events in Ghanaian society

Music as a communicative Device in Ghana

Music communicates with members in society. According to Adum –Atta, Dodzro and Asare (2019), music communicates among Ghanaian through verbal and non verbal means. They posit that, the verbal communication form deals with the text that is used in the music. They assert that, those words send direct message to society. They further share that; the non verbal form of communication in music has to do with the dance movement, gestures and the costume that are used in performing.

Adjei (2016) equally asserts that music is one of the ways messages are sent to members in Ghanaian community. He cites an example that, among the people of Kona in Ashanti Region in Ghana, music is used to associate with events that take place. He collaborates that, every occurrence directs the kind of music and its text that should be performed. He shares that, apart from the text in the music, other objects equally send messages non verbally. He identifies the regalia in the chief palace as some of the objects that are used to communicate to society through non verbal means.

Ndah et al (2021) also shares that, messages are communicated in music orally and non orally. They discuss that, through songs, poems and drama, messages are communicated to Ghanaian society directly. They further discuss that; the colours in Ghanaian society that are worn during performances also communicate with society through non verbal means. They posit that, when colour red is used as a costume during performance, it sends a sad signal and when the message is about joy, white costumes could be worn.

It could therefore be observed from the assertion of the authorities above that, music in Ghanaian society could be used to communicate directly through the lyrics of the songs to the people and also the dance movements, gestures and costume could equally communicate messages non verbally to society.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive technique of the qualitative research has been employed in the study as the study sought to identify the various songs and their socio cultural values among the people.

Population of the Study

The study targeted Musicians, Historians and Cultural Co coordinators in the area. These categories of the population were involved in the study because they were considered stake holders in the topic under study. Musicians perform musical types during functions in the area, historians are familiar with the historical antecedents of the musical types and the cultural co coordinators equally organize cultural festivals where such musical types are showcased. For the above reasons, these categories of the population were involved in the study.

The accessible population is seen on a table below:

Table 1: Target and Accessible Population of the Study

Target Population	Accessible Population
Musicians	10
Historians	10
Cultural Co ordinators	5

The population was drawn using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Snowball was used to select the historians whilst musicians and cultural co coordinators were selected purposively.

Interview and observation were some of the data collection instruments that were used to gather data for the study. The data collected was sorted using **Thematic Content Analysis** approach which sought to collate items as they appear on the interview guide and judgement pass on them appropriately.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The accessible population of the study consisted of Ten (10) Musicians, Ten (10) Historians and Five (5) Cultural Co – ordinators. Their responses are as follows:

Musicians Category

In response to what they know about Egbanegba, 6 of them (60 %) stated that, it is a musical type that has

been established by a native of the study area called Gbolo Komla and that the musical ensemble was for entertainment. Three (3) of them thus 30 % equally explained that, the ensemble was first created to entertain Gbolo family members and it later caught up with the whole community.

One of them stated that:

“The ensemble was first for entertainment purposes

But later it was performed to encourage promiscuity

So it was ban in the area “

All the respondents in this category have however accepted the fact that the musical type in current era has socio- cultural values that are embedded in them which are beneficial to society.

In identifying some of these values, 5 of them stated that the musical type cautions society against bad behaviours, it encourages hard work as well as preaching unity.

The remaining respondents also identified that, the musical type exposes wrong doers in society as well as updating the community of current issues happening in society. They also added that, the ensemble helps to appreciate and preserve culture of the people of Alavanyo.

They all agree that, the ensemble could be referred to as a communicative device; these were some of the responses gathered for this item on the interview guide:

“The words of the songs in Egbanegba communicate directly with us.

“The gestures and the dance movements display in Egbanegba have meanings which we understand “

Historians Category

On the historical overview of Egbanegba, they all stated that the ensemble was created by a man in the area known as Gbolo Komla and his wife who were using it to entertain them. They confirmed that the musical type was created in 1927.

All the respondents in this category agreed that there are socio- cultural values in the musical type. Four (4) of them identified that, the musical type is performed in all life cycle events in the area thereby helping to foster socialization. In addition, they stated that, the ensemble helps society to appreciate their cultural heritage and assets.

The remaining of the respondents share that Egbanegba helps to shape behavior in society. They also said that it helps to serve as a ground for development of talents. And also, it is an avenue to express the Ghanaian language properly. One of such respondents has this to say “The words of Egbanegba are so rich in proverbs, idiomatic and figurative expressions which help to make good use of the Ghanaian Language (Ewe)

They all admitted the fact that, Egbanegba musical type could serve as a communicative device among the people. Some of them asserted that, Egbanegba songs could serve as satirical to tease some wrongdoers in society; and once such songs are sung to tease them, they change their behavior and with that, the musical type has help to shape society. Others also explained that, the dance movements in Egbanegba musical ensemble are equally communicative enough since society could decode and interpret such movements and

gestures. One of the respondents justified his stance as:

“You can be a leader or big personality in the community

But when you go wrong, Egbanegba songs could be sung

To criticize you to change “

Cultural Coordinators Category

All the officers in this category explained that Egbanegba is a recreational musical type that is performed by the people of Alavanyo. They added that, it is one of the favourite musical types that is performed by society including students during cultural festivals.

They admitted that, there are many cultural values that are portrayed in Egbanegba ensemble. Three (3) of them stated that Egbanegba helps to manifest cultural identity in the area; it also serves as a room for socialization and harmonious living.

The rest of the respondents also explained that, the musical type serves as avenue for exploration of talents hence career for those who want to perform it for money. They opined that, the musical ensemble serves as a source of recreation during festivals and other social gathering. They added that, the musical type helps to shape the use of the Ghanaian Language spoken in the area.

The researchers being music educators equally observed Egbanegba being performed in the study area, and also during cultural festivals by the first and second cycle students in the area and they have agreed with the respondents on the focus of the study.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that, socialization and harmonious living which are some of the essential elements in communal living is acquired from Egbanegba musical type as audience and performers all come together to perform.

It was also brought out that, the musical type could be used to communicate or send messages to the community. The words of the songs send direct messages. The dance movements and gestures as well as costume equally communicate a message to the community.

The ensemble teaches society how to make good use of the Ghanaian Language. This is because the text of the songs employs proverbs, wise sayings and figurative expressions.

The ensemble helps to shape behavior of members of society. Songs of Egbanegba often are satirical and seek to expose evil doers in society. So for fear of been teased or expose in songs, people are extra careful not to do wrong.

Young people who want to enter into music performance as business use Egbanegba as a ground for practice and exploration of their talents. They perform in this musical type to prepare themselves for professional career in music performance.

Egbanegba musical type helps to project communal spirit. Because the ensemble is a recreational musical type, during life cycle events such as festivals and funerals, it is performed to entertain the audience.

It was also brought out that, the musical type could be used to communicate or send messages to the community. The words of the songs send direct messages. The dance movements and gestures as well as costume equally communicate a message to the community. Themes of song texts are selected to match with specific social events in the community. This assertion is further clarified below:

Naye Naye

Mother, mother

Vifavi megbea noa yom o

Weeping child will always mention his/her mother

The above song could be sung by the children who have lost their mother to death in the study area. The musical illustration is seen on Figure 1 below:

10

Na ye na ye na ye--- na ye na ye na ye na

ye na ye na ye-- vi fa----vi-- me-gbea noa yoo-----

Dumeza mile

The future is unknown

Agbeno xexeame ee

We are living in dilemma

Dumeza mile lo

The future is unknown

The above Egbanegba song could be performed when something tragic such as death and other natural disaster have occurred. The musical illustration of the song is seen on Figure 2 below:

an

Du me-za mile lo---- aye-- dume-za mile lo---- yo---- agbe

no xe-xea me--ee--- du me-za mi-le lo----- a---ye-----

Nyadeke meli mado o

I don't have anything to say

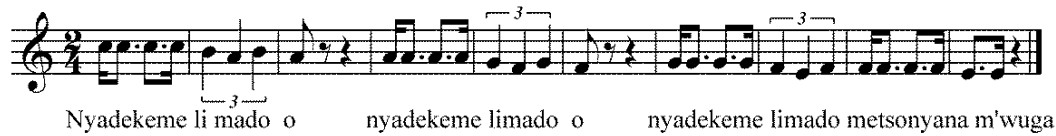
Nyadeke meli mado o

I don't have anything to say

Metso nya na Mawuga

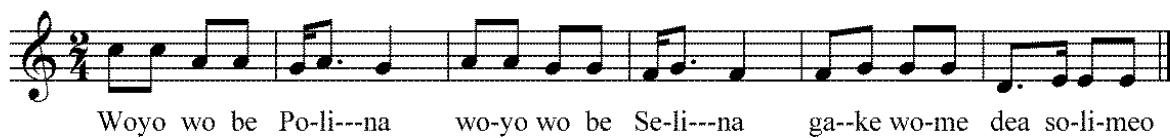
I have given it to God

The song above could as well be performed by anyone in the area who feels injustice has been meted out to him or her. Or has been cheated. Musical notation of the song is found on figure 3 below:



<i>Woyo wo be Selina</i>	You are called Selina
<i>Woyo wo be Polina</i>	You are called Polina
<i>Gake womedia solime o</i>	But you don't attend church
<i>Solime gadi loo</i>	Church bell rings

The above song is performed to mock at those who have good Christian names but their behaviors in society do not depict the character of Christ. In the song, Christian names such as *Polina* and *Selina* are mentioned to represent section of Christians in the community. The song is intended to tease them to change their character for good. See the notation of the song on figure 4 below:



<i>Amama wodzim</i>	I am born naked
<i>Nyeme tso naneke ve o</i>	I came with nothing
<i>Amama magayi</i>	I will go back naked

There are some wealthy individuals in the community who do not share with others in times of need. Egbanegba music always reminds them of coming naked to the world and will surely go back the same. The above song is then sung for them to remind them. Musical illustration is seen on Figure 5 below:



in

Ama ma ye wo dzim nyeme tso na ne ke veo ama ma---

ma ga yi o a--ma ma ko ma ga yi

The findings of the study have confirmed the assertion of Ndah (2014 and 2021), Kodzokuma et al (2024) Amuah et al (2019) and that of Amlor (2016).

CONCLUSION

Taking part in musical activities in Alavanyo traditional area brings about social integration, cooperation, unity, love and community ethos. Music making as social activity enables the people to gain meaning into the communicative process of issues and messages presented to the audience during performance. The use of song texts as a means of action directed toward the solution of problems which sometimes plague the community can take the form of ridicule, advice, shame or provide psychological release for the participants.

The study reveals how deep-rooted meanings or interpretations are generated based on individual's perception. It is also clear that Egbanegba music reinforces the people to relate more closely to certain experiences which come to have meaning in their social life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made from the study:

1. The Egbanegba ensemble should be well packaged to help promote cultural values of the people in Alavanyo.
2. The youth in Alavanyo should be encouraged to take active part in performance of Egbanegba so as to ensure its continuity and for other social benefits.
3. Cultural festivals in both the schools and communities in the area should be strengthened so that this musical type could continue to showcase the cultural assets of the people

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