

Songs as Tools of Motivation for Occupational Activities in Tiv Land

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Abstract

A song is piece of music with words for singing. Songs are consciously or unconsciously sung by an individual or a group. They are memorizable, and as such, they are used to refresh a person's memory, boost their morale, soothe a target audience, mock an enemy, and praise a heroic deed. Therefore, people have different reasons for singing. In Tiv Land, for instance, songs are primarily used to strengthen one's own side, or weaken the opponent's in wars, on the farm, in a dance, or in any occupational activities, like cloth weaving, knitting and dyeing, wood carving, etc. Songs thus make or mar a person's performance in whatever they do. This paper examines the contribution of songs to occupational activities and productivity in Tiv Land.

Keywords: Culture, Occupation, Sounds, Activity, Contribution and Performance

Brief Historical Background of the Tiv People

Tiv, people living on both sides of the Benue River in Nigeria; they speak a language of the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo family.

The Tiv are subsistence farmers whose main crops are yams, millet, and sorghum, all of which are eaten as porridge or are made more palatable by their combination in sauces and stews. Although goats and chickens are plentiful, few cattle are kept because of the tsetse fly. The polygamous Tiv family occupies a cluster of round huts surrounding a reception hut; brothers usually live next to one another. Tiv social organization is based on patrilineages that are closely associated with particular geographic features; in segmentary lineage systems such as the Tiv's, a given lineage may be associated, more or less exactly, to a particular village, a group of lineages to a larger district, and so on. Genealogies go back many generations to a single ancestor; the descendants (through the male line) of each person in the genealogy thus form a territorial kinship group. Institutions such as age grades (groups of men of about the same age who provide mutual assistance and allies against lineage pressure), cooperative groups, and institutionalized friendships balance the force of patrilineal descent, while dominant in Tiv institutions. Although traditionally the Tiv had no chiefs (lineage elders made political decisions), the British administration established a paramount chief in 1948. The Tiv's complex system of exchange marriage was outlawed in 1927 and was replaced by marriage with bride wealth.

Some Tiv have converted to Christianity, and a lesser number have adopted Islam; but their traditional religion, based on the manipulation of forces (*akombo*) entrusted to humans by a creator god, remains strong. The *akombo* are manifested in certain symbols or emblems and in diseases that they create. An organization of elders who have the ability to manipulate these forces meets at night to repair those manifestations of *akombo* (e.g., epidemics) that affect the group; these phenomena require human sacrifice or its metaphorical equivalent. The Tiv numbered about 2,500,000 in the late 20th century. (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc; 2016)

Introduction

Songs touch all aspects of our daily living, cognition and the need for occupation therapy. Among children, songs help a great deal to assist their learning process; a concept that is rarely and hardly learnt via reading but easily and quickly learnt via songs. As the child choruses these songs, he memorizes them with interest and therefore, easily retains them for further reinforcement. Songs therefore, provide experience in childhood development and provide evaluations and treatment in a variety of skills. In Tiv land for instance, work songs are closely attached to their culture, as different songs connect to different types of work. These songs are either sung while conducting a task or usually to coordinate timing or linked to a task which might be a narrative, description or protest. The tone, lyrics and pitch determine the task attached to the songs. According to Cohen, (1993) Songs sung while working and songs about to work are interconnected: songs work: agriculture, domestic, pastoral, chants of direction and street cries.

Gionia (2006), however, divided agriculture and pastoral songs into hunting, cultivation, and herding songs and highlighted, the Industrial or proto-industrial songs of cloth workers, factory workers, seamen, lumber jacks, cowboys, miners. He also added prisoner songs and modern work songs. In ancient and modern Tiv land, both categories are applicable but the agriculture and pastoral songs outweigh the latter, because of the major exceptional activities carried out by Tiv people; agriculture, fishing, hunting et cetera. Songs are therefore, used for calling fellow kinsmen together for a collective tasks like hunting, livestock keeping. These activities needed able young men and boys from their settlements and with long hours to pass. Hence, these activities tend to produce long narratives songs often sung individually dwelling on the theme of pastoral activity or animal designed to pass the time in the tedium of work. Hunting songs, however, often incorporated distinctive whistles

and yodels (yodel) so that hunters could identify each other's location and those of their preys.

In Agriculture, (timber sawing, cloth dyeing, weaving and knitting, grave digging, heaps and ridges making) this is the major occupation of the Tiv people, work songs were rhythmic accappella songs intended to increase productivity and to instill fear to the enemy while reducing feeling of boredom, cowardice.

In the words of Cohen (1993) sometimes, drums were involved to synchronize physical movement in groups coordinating sowing; hoeing and harvesting; verses in such songs were improvised and sung differently each time. For instance, slaves on farms improvised verses to mock and insult their masters, hirers or overseers expressing frustration and share dreams of escaping. The styles of slave songs were usually a "call-and-response" format where the leader raises a song and the other responds with the chorus.

Sometimes, Tiv young men who go to their neighbouring ethnic groups, like the Udam in Cross-River State, Idoma in the same Benue State, Jukun in Taraba State among others, to farm for money or a wife, could sing songs of nostalgia, endurance, or to raise their morale and to withstand hardship as their activities were energy demanding: threshing rice, rolling log, breaking and cutting timber, shucking corn, making heaps and ridges, grave digging et cetera.

During funerals and burials, dirges were sung to appease the gods to forgive the deceased; some dirges were sung to sooth the bereaved family relatives and some to show the heroic deeds of the dead person. The tone was very sentimental, sympathetic, pitying and appealing; so much so that it could make the light-hearted cry.

For the women, they sang songs, whose thematic pre-occupations were those lullabies, alienation of affection from their husbands, quarrel, and pride among others. And these were done during corn threshing or grinding, fishing, planting, fetching water from the streams, knitting

clothes et cetera. In addition, they mostly sang at funerals. These songs therefore cover many musical styles and themes but are usually referred to narrative songs that use traditional melodies to speak on particular topics. Topical songs commonly express something about life that exist, existed or about to disappear: usually inherited from our ancestors, hence, nobody can claim ownership/piracy of these songs, as they are original to every occasion and performance giving room for improvisation. The Tiv people encompassed songs in their daily lives; dance, story-telling, ritual and burials. These were all grounded with songs and became noted that when one often sings a dirge, it was an omen! That needed a soothsayer-meaning death was likely to befall him or his relative.

Songs play integral parts in the rituals of birth & puberty, at marriages and death, in secrets society, initiations, and I rituals of live hood, hunting, farming, and gathering) Songs were also used to comment a good relationship with neighbor villages.

A type of command sharing has greater importance in Tiv songs, as compared to the western styles where a performer does his work and the audiences only listen and clap. There is no formal school where Tiv songs are learnt and taught, but people simply acquire them as others sing during occasions

Musical sensibilities are therefore actuated, developed and reinforced through the widespread use of tonal languages, where a single word can have several meanings, depending on the pitch or implication applied. In many areas of Africa, children thus learn to distinguish differences in musical pitch through language. African languages acquire an inherent musicality as pitch acuity and melodic differentials are combined to the rhythmic accent inherent in all languages. Words spoken for reason of commutation take a musical aesthetic; a conversation between two individuals easily develops the rhythmic pacing and pattern of a quasi-musical performance. (Ekundayo, 1933)

Songs in Tiv land have instruments that accompany them. These

instruments are classified based on the matter and manner of their sound production. Example: chordophones (stringed instruments), idiophones (instruments that are struck or shaken) membranophones (instruments covered with skin) aero-phones (wind instruments) excluding electrophones which were not used by the Tiv people. However, the talking drum was highly popular as it was capable of modulating melodically through a wide range of pitches when the lather cords connecting the top and bottom heads receive pressures from squeezing and relaxing then with arm motion.

The Tiv instruments are distinguished from their western peers because of their outstanding characteristics: polyrhythmic, heterophonic, polyphonic, melodies like every African song. Tiv songs also consist of two balanced phrases: there is often a leader/chorus relationship in performance and polyphonic performances are generally structured so that two parts or two groups of vocalists after performance antiphony.

Rhythm is the most important factor in Tiv songs-through shifting of accents.

Songs are also used as therapy in Tiv land. Prominent among the users were herbalists who were skilled in the use of herbs and animals parts to treat human ailments.

Native/witch doctors also use special songs and drums, usually consecrated before use. Mothers usually sang lullabies to suit their non sleeping infants, suiting songs were performed during circumcision, bone setting, and fractures to reduce pain associated with these rituals. These practice of healing with songs originated from the bible account of King Saul and David, 1 Samuel 17 verse 10, "King Saul was killed over night by the power of David's harp" Therefore, they curative properties of Saul and not just known in religious circle alone.

Songs has been used to sooth bereaved family members, healing patients tormented by spirits.

The death of a family member is always a wound in ones heart. The

natural reactions associated with such news are initial shock; disbelief, denial, emotional numbness, guilt feelings, anger (Watch Tower Bible Track Society, 2000) expounding this further, they posited that: acute grief may include: memory loss and insomnia, extreme fatigue, abrupt change of mood, flawed judgment and thinking bouts of crying: appetite change, with resultant weight loss or gain, a variety of symptoms of disturbed health, lethargy, reduced work capacity". This moody situation caused by death is usually dispelled by songs. This kind of songs though dirges are very philosophical as it talks of life and describes this present world as a market place where people meet and retire to their abodes. Such songs also talk of hades as the final resting place for all mortals.

People on errands have usually blown flutes to make song without lyrics. Marriage in Tiv land are either by trade by barter called '*yam she*' or by eloping called '*kor kwase*' with the woman in question; usually working for or was arranged by Parents- which ever- way, songs were accompanied to elaborate such marriages, and such songs had themes of love.

Songs were also sung to put away spirits or to appease them. When a woman cut firewood which is believed to be habitant of fairies or spirits, they would sing to please them so that they do not disturb their rest. There were stories of women hitting axes on the tree without singing and an unseen hand knocking their heads.

In those days, when there were no grinding engines, woman sharing mortars for pounding, (food melting/ rice threshing) touch pestles between strokes to create syncopation and complex cross rhythms, or ; fishermen may take the natural rhythm of their peddles and develop rhythmic and tonal variety by tapping the sides of their canon to accompany their songs (Ibid). These arts became cultural as they were repeated each time these tasks were performed.

Conclusion

Songs are therefore a way of life and an integral to the culture of the Tiv people with various ceremonies been preceded. There are therefore diverse genres of songs like hymns, dirges, lullabies, panegyrics, incantations, tongue twisting, yodel, ululation et cetera that create mood and feel for the occasion. Hence occasion and activity determine the songs and themes to be sung. Tiv songs are used to interact, collaborate and relay historic events. They are forms of communication and play a functional role in Tiv culture, history and land

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