

**SIGNIFICANCE OF SOUND IN AFRICAN RELIGIOUS WORLD VIEW(S):
A CONTEMPORARY REFLECTION OF THE ULTIMATE BEING**

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Abstract

African Religion is Africa's indigenous religion handed to them thousands of years by their forebears. Sound in African religious worldview permeates every aspect of human existence in both cosmic and non physical worlds. Ultimate Being is responsible for creating the universe which has in-depth religious significance in the African worldview, that manifest itself in various facets of men's interaction with physical beings and non physical beings both worlds as created by the Ultimate Being. The paper is aimed at unveiling the religious significance of sound in African religious worldview: A contemporary Reflection of the Ultimate Being, which pervades all spheres of men's existence as it involves inter-play of forces between the physical and spiritual worlds. The paper adopted prescriptive, descriptive and analytic methods of research. Data were collected from the field by experiences and consultation of books. The paper discovered that, Ultimate Being sustained the vibration which creates a corresponding pattern as it reflects the mood and behaviour of people that present the wisdom of the cosmos as reflected in the body's musical composition and the natural expression of sounds in the cosmos. Thus, there are different forms of sound, the human voice, sound of nature, and the waves of energy which impress on people and speak volumes to their religious wellbeing, with emotive and creative impact. People should learn to manipulate potent psychic forces for religious affiliation with the visible and invisible beings. Also, Ultimate Being should be seen as a mystery which integrates the living and the departed, and should be differentiated from other uninspired human sounds. People should try not to make themselves isolated from religious sound because because; Ultimate Being as defected in sound is the live wire of transmission of ideas and reflective purpose of human to divine relationship in the two worlds. Furthermore, inspired sound should be sift from uninspired or from the un-reflective one. The human existence cannot do without genuine and inspired sound

because, Ultimate Being is the prime force responsible for relating and bringing reflective purpose between the sacred and profane in the African worldview that consist of interactions with physical and non physical worlds of the living and the departed which calls for further reflection in our world polluted by secular and un-inspired sound.

Keywords: African Religion, Sound, Significance, Ultimate Being and Worldview

Introduction

Sound in African religious worldview is the divine manifestation of the Ultimate Being creative geniuses, who is responsible for bringing things into existence in the cosmic world. Mbiti was not wrong to have reiterate without mincing word about the religious nature of Africans by asserting that, "Africans are notoriously religious" (1). In this regard, for the Africans, the whole of existence is a religious phenomenon, and man is a deeply a religious phenomenon living in a religious universe (15). Thus, the African universe is a world of interaction between the living and the dead, between the natural and supernatural. African community is also comprised of plants, everything and every person is a duality. No good without bad, no life without death, no happiness without sorrow, no strength without weakness, no pride without shame and no pleasure without pain (Adodo 8). Sound to Africans is a divine, emotive and creative in their religious world view(s). We can see this even in infant responding to hit of sound, and also the African is able to evoke and manipulate potent psychic forces for his use (18).

It is worth asserting that, religious significance of Sound in African worldview is permeable in the entire body of Africans having a religious pattern and which originated from the Ultimate Being. Thus, no one can make for himself or herself an isolated from Ultimate sound. Thus, there is an Ultimate Being with religious connotation and is not without relevance (Oborji17). Furthermore, the life of the Africans is religiously tied to Ultimate Being as an indispensable aspect of their relation to physical and non physical created beings.

Sound is the live wires that transmit signals, ideas for various intended purposes whose origin is from God. It will be devoid of any meaning to say that sound has no any religious significance to the African. Man is a spiritual and physical being. He interacts with sound as living idea between physical world and the spiritual (agents). Thus, man communicates to mean through sound signal and in view also, he realizes sound as signal and seek for reply through the use of coordinated sound pattern as the case may be (Gbenda 17). Furthermore, Bonzena also

maintains that, "sound in African religious worldwide is also interpreted by mediums depicting various themes and actions or events because there is an Ultimate Being" (14).

Hence, the African worldwide cannot be annihilated from man's interaction with the two worlds; physical and non-physical because sound is the manifestation of the awe sparing vital force responsible for the existence and sustenance of every creature. Hence, sound permeates aspect of every man's life which manifest in every facet his relationship with his fellow, and other existing realities in the two world worlds because in the two worlds inhabited by both human and spatula agents, God and ancestors are interwoven in the share of interflow of divine vitality I'd force of sustainability.

Since sound is the life wire of vital force which man is dependent on, virtually all aspect of the power of sound is symbolized in people's mood of joy, sorrows, worries, anxiety and suffering. Hence, there is link with departed living and the vital force of all life. Since the power of sound is spread as religious idea for long period of time (Shishima 8), it came to mean that, sound originated from the Ultimate Being. Iso, spirit agents communicate with the physical beings through sound signal and in view of that also, men realized and seek for reply through the use of coordinated sound as they case may be (Gbenda17).

Sound in Africa religious world views as maintained Adodo "is indeed inseparable emotive and creative force which sustains the universe" (18). Sound is first created by the Ultimate Being which has high sense of religiosity with the physical and spiritual realities in divine and profane relationship. When sound is sustained, the vibration begins to create a corresponding pattern. This pattern is reflected in the mood and behaviors of people. The different forms of sound, the human voice, sound of nature, the wave of energy which they impress on us speaks volume of the sound in religious life of Africans (21).

We cannot separate genuine and reflective sound from human existence because, sound brings forth existence and existence is based and sustained by sound, and sound is live wire which link the physical and spiritual worlds; between the living and the departed. It is undeniable to say that sound has no any relevance as it encapsulate men's material and spiritual affiliation. This paper is going to examine the significance of sound in African Religious worldview: a contemporary reflection of the Ultimate Being.

Elucidation of Key Words

African Religion

African Religion has been defined by various authors. However, some of these definitions are sampled below: African Religion is the indigenous religion of the African people that has handed to them from their ancestors, which has aboriginal origin to the African soil. Anyacho posits on African Religion thus "it is a term that used to describe the religion that was founded by the forebears of Africans. Thus, it is that religion that was communicated to the Africans by their ancestral parents" (242).

In another elaborate of definition of African Religion, Oborji posits in this manner:

African Religion is seen as an African institutionalized system of symbols beliefs, values, which are focus on questions of ultimate meaning to different African societies which was handed to them from their ancestors since time immemorial. African Religion in not shell,it involves the totality of life (12).

Worldview

Worldview according to Emefie "is people's perception and relation with the physical and spiritual universe. People' worldview may also be considered as the complexity of their beliefs and attitude concerning the origin, nature, structure of universe and the interaction of its beings with particular reference to man" (48). In another recap, Gbenda summed worldview to mean "how the world is conceived, contemplated, perceived, and observed by people who live in it, based on their cognitive perspectives which again depend on the human environment" (2). Going further, Kalu sees worldview as "the intellectual or rational explanations of the order which one word girds human lives and environments. The pattern of this underlying order could be derived from myths taboos, customs and proverbs of a community" (38-39).

In another manner,Worldview is the understanding of the universe a person world view is his understanding of his relationship to the physical and metaphysical world. It beliefs, actions and in -actions, hopes fear, aspiration thought, all that pertains to his beings social structure cosmology or what the Germans called *weltanschauung* (Gaiya 7). Thus, the African is dependent upon nature. But nature is also dependent upon the African as the centre of the world,

the African gives meaning, order and way to nature which defines worldview for the Africans.

Nature of African Religion

The religious nature of African Religion is encapsulated in the mysteries experienced in the world. Thus the inherent urge in man makes religion a matter of ultimate concern. Idowu also reiterate that "it makes also for the common interest in religion whether the interest is in embracing it or fights a defensive battle against it" (3). Furthermore as reiterates Mbiti, "each generation take them up with modifications suitable to its historical situations and needs" (3).

Idowu further buttress on the nature of African religion that, "it is in itself so much a part of human life and deeply engraved in every person" (3). Hence, the powerfulness and cosmic mysteries as man reflected and discovers that, there is a force responsible for creating the universe. Furthermore, the powerfulness of God as the creator and provider of the universe formed the nexus of the nature of African religion. Shishima also posits on the nature of African religion to have born as a result of man experience and interaction with his environment" (12). However, African Religion is tied to the inter-relation between the two worlds; physical and spiritual which involved man sharing in the spiritual and physical ties.

Furthermore, the living force interacting with other living forces gives a true picture that African Religion is African umbilical cords of existence. In African Religion, the existence of a supreme beings - creator and source of all power and energy cannot be annihilated because daily experiences reveals the universal vital force that animated and energized all created things whose real essence consisted not in matter but infused in them. Thus, the nature of African religion as observed Asante "is aboriginal and being passed to succeeding generations because the African is akin to all creatures - god, spirits and nature whose ;life is given meaning in his religious practices and been created by supreme being" (290).

Origin of Sound

Sound was first brought into existence by the super being that Africans called in their various languages like *Kpanti-laa*, *Aondo*, *Daa*, *Chuckwu*, *Oludumare* and *Allah*. The Supreme Being according to Oborji "is the Ultimate Reality that is above all history and that he is the root of religious formulations of the Africans" (3). Thus,

the world was created through sound by the Greatest Force whom other forces are dependent on Him.

Messages of the Ultimate Being and other human agents can only be vividly be understood only through sound. Primordial sound still resounds at the creation and is the force behind the cosmos. The big band theory of the evolutionist schools or the creative world of the creationists schools of thought are simply re-affirming the widely held idea that the world came into being through sound (Adodo 18). The drum is the Supreme symbol of God's, incarnation of His presence among us, and logos, is the creator of sound. Sound as religiously concerned is the divine work of God in bringing creation into existence (25).

Before the world was, God is, and He brought forth creation as His own mark of identity and supremacy over his creatures hence, sound further is recognized as god's mighty self that created and controls the universe. Emotive and creative force is sound recognized in the presence of logos (God) (18). Thus, God's presence is symbolically represented by sound of thunder "Giriri" meaning rain is about to come. However, we cannot roll out the significance of sound as proof of the existence of the Ultimate Being in African religious worldview.

Sound is a religious phenomenon in African Religion worldview which us, it cannot be suppressed, repudiated or rejected in one form as it present itself with its organic life as created by the supreme being, who is the origin of the creation of sound. The initiative insists and lies ultimate in itself (Adasu 13). Sound is part of the religious experience of the Ultimate Being, Spiritual and human agents is manifested and experienced in the intensity of contemplation (13). Hence to say that sound is without origin is for African religion to be built in excommunication from entire life of the society (18). Hence, with this understanding, Ultimate Being as the common origin of all created things and medium of human communication between human and human, human and divine, sacred divinities which are involved physical and non physical inter relation in sustaining the universe. Thus, reflective sound is Ultimate Being symbol of living, existence and communication. Sound is seen as the creator- animator from whom everything in the universe derives its values and life from. Asante in this manner opines succinctly that "the African is depended upon nature, because interactions and relations to nature are unity and order" (290). The creator who created all things in the universe is also the animator who animates that which He created (289-290).

Religious Objects of Sound

Virtually, sound in African religious worldview is associated with expression of creation and communication with the sacred and other aspects of socio-religious human affairs between the physical and the spiritual. Various agents and recipients are communicated with various objects as shall be seen here. Religious objects of sounds are used to produce religious sounds depicting various thematic religious themes and activities, either for life celebration, initiation into cultic confederacy, burial ceremonies, marriages, and even worship and healing sessions.

These objects include sacred gongs, drums, cymbals, harps, stones, flutes, or tambourine. Sound produced by these objects depicts various religious moods of multifaceted nature that links the living and the departed (God, ancestor, divinities, man and host of others). Clapping and whispering are signals with deeper religious expression used by Africans in socio-religious life. These religious objects as Zango rightly asserts "are highly respected in communication for various themes. Every sound of these religious objects communicates messages meaningless to strangers unless they are interpreted" (96).

Relevance of Sound in African Religious Worldview : A Contemporary Reflection of the Ultimate Being

The African worldview cannot be excluded with the particular portion of Ultimate Being as the core original stuff responsible for the coming of the world . Thus, there is evidence that the Ultimate sound is real, and that there is existence and medium of communication in human and even spiritual agents' relation. Hence, this paper shall adumbrate some of the relevance of sound in African religious worldview: a contemporary reflection of the Ultimate Reality:

- i. Sound permeates the human beings. The body is a living entity of intelligent beings with its own laws received from the Ultimate Being to function. Thus, wisdom of the cosmos is reflected in the body and the body in a musical composition of sound having origin from the Ultimate Reality. The different forms of sounds, the human voices, sound of nature; the waves of energy which they impress on us speaks volume of the place of sound in religious life of Africans from time immemorial to present.
- ii. When sound is sustained, the vibration begins to create a corresponding pattern; this pattern is reflected in the mood and behavior of people that are present. Sounds according to Adodo "help to affects the pulse,

- breaths, blood pressure, body temperature, muscles and tissue of the listeners to be to be alert and ascertained its relevance" (21). Ultimate Being brings healing or alertness to ascertained whether the sick or people are alive or stopped working.
- iii. *Giriri* is among the Mumuye of North Eastern Nigeria for instance is associated with the sound of rain which Ultimate Being send to water the earth. Hence, *Aondo* gbah in Tiv means God has fallen; meaning rain has fallen, which vividly portrays religious connotation of Ultimate Beings providence. Hence, some religious sounds are heard by *shon-hanang/zan-ganang* or *nee gbal zala* (diviners or medicine men (Bonzena 16). As Nyazing further buttress that "*Giriri* is a sound of mighty and (God) that sends down rainfall especially the *Giriri* sound which symbolizes rainfall" (29).
 - iv. Sound in African religious worldview is viewed as the drum beat of the world, the primordial sacred by which the world came into being. Sound to the African is emotive and creative. Thus, one can see this in an owe spring lullabies of its matter or of a snake or praying mantis swinging to vibration sounds of flutes, and of a monkey swaying to a tune. Through sound the African is able to evoke and manipulate potent psychic forces for his good and that of his fellow men (Adodo 18).
 - v. Sound was created first by Ultimate Being , and is also used in expelling evil spirit during exorcism. For instance among Bambuka -Bikwin people, blowing of horns, banging of cymbals, broken calabash are use to exorcised the possessed, who is charging with desire kind of sounds (Zango 7). Similarly also, when a person is possessed by evil spirit among the Dong-Mumuye according to Dauda " strong men hold him and is taken to exorcism site where the (*vaa siina*) will make some sharp sounds that will frightened the possessed person to jerk. It is believed the spirit will finally leave him when gongs or cymbals are hit " (6).
 - vi. Sound is used in initiation into Mashikalko secret cult where 5- 10 children formed a cult of circumcision. The cult produce sounds like *guden -gudeng gudeng* using smaller sticks. This sound is not without religious connotations, but one that brings uniformity and atmosphere of religious relevance during worship (35). Also, during birth, dead, funerals, hunting sound made, signifies the mood of such an occasions. Hence, various socio-religious related sounds are made and which only convey deeper meaning to those who hard or made them. The

significance of sound in African religious world view symbolizes a religious idea for long period of time (Shishima 8). As also affirmed "during new yam festival, blowing of flutes signify that the new yam is ripped and preparation for such festival is about to be ushered which has religious significance" (Nyazing19).

- vii. Sound is also used for entertainment through which meaningful words are formed and produced .For instances, the *vaa zopi* among the Mumuye is represented by a pestle -like logs of wood of various sizes through which holes are bored so that they produced beautiful music when blown. Hence, it is mostly use for entertainment and honoring distinguishes personalities (26).Sound has socio-religious connotations during marriage, initiation, announcement of news of dead, arrival of new birth of a child,burial, funeral, merriment and sober reflections are dearly portrayed in sounds.
- viii. Sound is used to communicate locations of things and warn others of impending dangers. It has been observed also that , it is an official medium of communication to disseminate information in times of war, festivals, and alertness of the birth of a new person or the demise of a person in the community(Zango 96-97).

Recommendations

The paper summed up the below recommendations as part of adding credence to the religious relevance of sound in African religious worldview: a contemporary reflection of the Ultimate Being which cannot be erased from human existence especially among Africans:

- i. Human beings should continue to give Ultimate Being credence; respect and worship being the originator of life and the universe, and without Him, humanity vanished. Ultimate Being is sound and sound must be seen as his creative presence which is evident with humans as co pro-creators of it, and used by them for various purposes in the religious worldview of every aspects of the society.
- ii. Sound should be distinguished from un-inspired and inspired one. Thus, un-inspired sound its essence does not connotes existence from those that are religiously significant as they pertained to interactions between men and spiritual beings in the physical and spiritual worlds. Hence, religious sounds should be upheld for the creative impacts they have in the universe

without ceasing in men's interactions in the universe because there is a link with the Ultimate Being.

- iii. Sound which have socio-religious impact should be accorded relevance also in peoples live because, without it, there is no pointer to the origin of the cosmos, and link between living and spiritual agents also ceases. Thus, intermediaries and those seeking help from Ultimate Being and restoration of fortunes, sound is the master key to unveiling His presence, and it should always be widely acclaimed (Adodo 13).
- iv. People should learn to respect and make judicious use of inspired sound effectively well for the purpose of creation and relating in all facets of the universe for peaceful and harmonious living among mankind. Hence, inspired Sound should reflect a sacred entity among people as responsible for interacting in co existence of humanity and other beings. The mighty sound is self sufficient and created, He should be identified always as the real and Ultimate Being (18).
- v. The providence of Ultimate Being who is referred in Mumuye, Tiv, Igbo and Birom as *Kpanti-Laa, Aondo, Chineke or Chuckwu* and *Daa* is realized through inspired sound especially the fall of rainfall, birth of human, and of people, and blowing of breezes recognized the goodness Him, which humanity must continue to accord due allegiance to Him by doing all that would please Him. Ultimate Being gives, and He takes, and this is manifest of His creative genius, which sound brought forth, and He must be respected as the live wire for men's existence. Furthermore also, due to cognizance of the intensity of contemplation of sound is it self an examination of the entire life which the society is religiously tied to it as a gift from God(Adasu 18).

Conclusion

In the foregoing the paper tried to examined the nature of African Religion, origin of inspired sound, religious objects of sound, and relevance of sound in African religious worldview. Furthermore, the paper adumbrates some relevance of sound in African religious worldview :a contemporary reflection of the Ultimate Being and some recommendations also proffered. The African worldview is religiously tied to inspired sound as responsible for bringing creation into existence. Ultimate Being which is responsible for the coming of existence of reality in the African understanding of the universe, and every event that happens is forth brought up by Ultimate Being, which permeates every aspect of human

existences in the cosmos. We cannot run away from nature power, which came as a result of Ultimate Being, which produce and strengthens sounds relationship with the living and the departed. Thus, Ultimate symbolic drum is responsible as a primordial sacred sound by which the world came into being. inspired sound to the African is indeed emotive and creative, and the world can only be understood only through inspired sound, which is the heart of creation and the force behind the cosmos.

Thus, cosmic universe is composed of mysteries which man reflects and discover that, there is Ultimate Being responsible for creating it, and man's interaction with other created sound in the physical and spiritual beings form parts of that inseparable working union between the dependent and Independent Sound. Thus, the fact Ultimate Being is an indispensable phenomenon responsible for the coming and going of things in the created universe, there should be sift between inspired and un-inspired sounds in men's reflection about the mysteries of the universe. Thus, inspired sound is the Ultimate Being underlying principle of life, which due credence and worship must be accorded him. Hence, God is the greatest inspired sound that other sounds are dependent on for their existence.

Inspired Sound in African worldview is the unraveling of nature's mystery, the primordial sound which still resounds at the heart of creation and is the force behind coming of universe into existence and men's interactive force here and the next world. Thus, life is sound, creator, and existence must be listened and respected in all faceted aspects of the creation of the universe. To remove inspired sound from creation is to say that creation has no origin and meaning. Ultimate Being is creation, live link with which the living and departed members of the community came through it, and they must returned. Hence, there is need to sift between inspired and un-inspired sound, and the necessity to reflect upon a greater inspired sound as Ultimate Being responsible for the coming of the world.

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