

SOUNDING THE NIGERIAN POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT WITH THE CONSTITUENT OF APALA MUSIC OF ÀYÌNLÁ ÒMỌWÚRÁ'S “ÈYIN ÒSÈLÚ WÁ”



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Abstract

Àpàlà Yorùbá indigenous music genre evolved with similar genres such as, Fújì, Wákà and others, which have their root in the traditions of the Yorùbá people with bias in the Islamic religion. The main characteristic of Àpàlà is the application of percussions with emphasis on the talking drum. This musical genre was popularized Àyìnlá Òmọwúra, popularly called "Anigilaje" will be used in this study to sound the political environments in Nigeria. This paper therefore investigates the application of the constituents of Àpàlà music of Àyìnlá Òmọwúra as a sounding tool to reflect on the Nigerian political environment and its ethical challenges through rhetorical strategies of abuse, ridicule, praise, and proverbs to philosophically comment on ethical problems in the Nigerian political environment. The paper applies content analysis method to explore the lyrical and musical constituents of one of Àyìnlá Òmọwúra's music “Èyin Òsèlú wá” (Our politicians) to establish how Àpàlà music has sounded the political environment in Nigeria. Findings of the paper reveal that Àyìnlá Òmọwúra has rhetorically sounded the Nigerian political environment on the problems of bad governance, injustice, and corruption as parts of the unethical values in African cultural practices. The paper therefore concludes that Àyìnlá Òmọwúra has been able to apply his music, “Èyin Òsèlú wá” to sound-sensitized the Nigerian political environment on the need to be more sensitive to the yearnings of the masses and give a better

concern to democratic issues especially, during electioneering campaign to elect another set of political leaders in Nigeria.

Keywords: Sounding, Political Environment, constituent, Àpàlà music and *Ẹ̀yin Òsèlú wa*.

Introduction

Indigenous music is created from the traditional constituents; this places Apala music as one of the several indigenous musical concepts in Yorùbá land. Others that fall within this category include Wákà, Àwùrèbe, Fuji and Sakara music which Eúbà (1988) refers to as traditional music of the Yorùbá people. Majorly, most indigenous music is used as a tool for entertainment, recreational, corrective and educative purposes which have formed as integral parts of lives and living from morning until evening. In this connection, this paper focuses on the Àpàlà music of Àyínlá Ọmówùrà, using one of his musical tracks “*Ẹ̀yin Òsèlú wa*” to investigate the application of its constituents as a sounding tool in reflecting on the Nigerian political environment and its ethical challenges through rhetorical strategies of abuse, ridicule, and proverbs by applying the elements of philosophical comment on ethical problems in the Nigerian political environment.

Although, Àpàlà music is accrued to Islamic religion, the reason for this accrurement is provided by Ọmójolà (1995); who traced the origin of Àpàlà to its contact with the Islamic religion but, Nketia (1975), relates all indigenous music to “historical, social and cultural background of musical organisation of people, musical practice and the significant aspect of styles in African music”. Ọlágúnjú (1979), distances his opinion from Ọmójolà and Nketia and posits that Yorùbá indigenous music “is a function of social structure in four principal ways; religious rituals, social organisation, recreation and as a means of expressing world view”. From this position, it could be established that indigenous music could be applied as a sounding force in religion, social, cultural and political environments; this is the focus of this paper. Music as a unifying sounding tool has several roles to play in shaping and reshaping the social, cultural, religious and political nature of the governed and the government in a particular living space.

Researchers like Waterman (1997), Barber (1997), Olúkòtún, (2005), Omójola (2006) and Mano (2007) have certified the significance of popular (Apala) music in different African social orders where it has referred to political correspondence. For example, Waterman (1997) examines the bringing together impact of both Juju and Fuji famous music genres among the Yoruba, while Fádípè (2009) explores on moral reorientation of Àpàlà music in the general public activities. Much has not been finished on the capacity of Apala music for sounding the Nigerian political environment as portrayed by Ayinla Omowura in “*Èyin Òsèlú wa*” (our politicians), which is the focus of this paper.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this paper is premised on the “Agenda Setting Theory” applied by Szymanski, Moffitt and Carr (2010). This theory provides an important framework for understanding, researching, and intervening, through media (Music), to address and to improve a swindling social situation in a given environment. This theory is applied to drive the salient issues raised by Àyínlá Omówùrà to sound the political environment in Nigeria through advisory musicology with emphasis on the roles of the political electors and elected. The beginning of agenda setting theory can be traced as far as 1922, when Walter Lippmann expresses his concern on the vital role that mass media can do in influencing the setting of certain image on the public’s mind (Lippmann, 1922: 9-16). One of the most significant researches, which contribute to this theory is written by McCombs and Shaw (1972). They observe on the capacity of mass media in influencing the voters’ opinion on the presidential campaign of 1968.

Agenda Setting Theory was first applied in 1972 in *Public Opinion Quarterly* by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw. However, this theory was coined as a concentrate on the 1968 official political decision between Democratic officeholder Lyndon B. Johnson and Republican challenger Richard Nixon. McCombs where Shaw studied about one hundred (100) inhabitants of Chapel Hill, North Carolina on their thought process on the main political issues with regards to political race and how that contrasted with what the nearby and public media announced (McCombs and Reynolds: 2002). This theory premised on what the public thinks about governance and how the people should think about issues of governance and in governance,

the theory also explains why the governed prioritise the same issues as important. The application of this theory provides a clear demarcation between positive and negative, good and bad, desirable and undesirable, acceptable and unacceptable, lofty and mundane, fashionable and unfashionable, as all forms of narratives or discourse as found in the Nigerian political terrace and are used as subtle factors of relationship to this paper.

The trajectory of Àyínlá Ọmọwúrà musical Career

Archival record has consistently revealed that Àyínlá Ọmọwúrà was born in 1933 in Ìtokò, Abẹ̀òkúta South Local Government Area of Ògùn State. His music profession began in the mid-1950s with a brand of music called *Ọlálọmí*. *Apàlà* as a new musical genre sold him into the musical spotlight, and became a renowned Apala musician among the youngsters in the southwest. However, the popularity of his first album disappeared in a very short period of time. Àyínlá Ọmọwúrà's second forward leap in his musical profession came during the 1970s when he joined Electric and Musical Industries (EMI) Nigeria record company to recorded a solo collection named *Ajá tó f'ojú d'ekùn* in June 1979, this was followed by *Ànjànú eléré*, *Dánfó ò sièrè* and *Emá tori owo pàniàn*. It was accounted for that the arrival of these hits earned him an excess of 50,000 duplicates in record deals in the primary long periods of delivery. He turned out to find success to the point that he was a symbol to the majority, especially among the public vehicle drivers, and the merchants to specify a couple.

Àyínlá Ọmọwúrà was on EMI where an excess of about twenty (20) collection records were recorded. His long stretches of musical recordings were frequently listened to at amusement parks motor garages and beer parlours and social gathering parties. Sadly, *Ayínlá Ọmọwúrà* died in 1980 because of a head injury sustained from a feud between him and one of his band members name *Báyéwùnmí* in a beer parlours (oral interview with Akeem Àyínlá Ọmọwúrà on May 2, 2022). Sekinat (2012) corroborates this view,

Ayinla Omowura waxed a number of musical albums, these include "Danfo o siere", "Challenge Cup", "25x40", "Festac 77", "Late Oba Gbádébọ", "Cabbies", " *Ajá tó f'ojú d'ekùn*", *Áánú won ló še mí*", and "Owo Udoji".

Àyínlá Omowúra waxed about twenty-two (22) albums in his musical career, apart from these listed albums, "*Áwa kii se Olódì won*", and "25 by 40" were posthumously released after his death in 1981.

Applicable Musical Instruments in Àyínlá Omowúra Apala Music

Àpàlà music is a well-known indigenous musical genre in southwestern states of Èkìtì, Ògùn, Òsun, Òndó, Òyó and Lagos, Nigeria. This position catalyzed its popularity and commercialization among the Yorùbá people. It was advocated by musicians like *Hárúnà Ìshòlá*, *Lìgàlì Mùkàibà* and *Àyínlá Omowúra*. Writing on the popularity coverage of *Apala* music, Olusoji (2008), posits that "*Hárúnà Ìshòlá*, Y.K. *Àjàdí*, *Túnjì Sótímírín*, and *Femi Lewis* cannot be extracted from the advances *Àpàlà* music popularity". Without doubt, Àpàlà musical culture is a combination of the two major medium of the African musical performance; vocal and instrumental, which were jointly applied in Àyínlá Omowúra's music. However, the collection of musical instruments in Àyínlá Omowúra Apala music include percussive drums (*Ìyá-ilù*, *omele ilù* and *Àkùbà*), *Şẹkẹrẹ* (a clatter gourd), and *Àgídìgbo* (a thumb piano with four or five metal strips mounted on a reverberating box). The distinctive musical instrument is the talking, which dominates the music all through and used as sting for melodic creativity and development of intra-themes within major theme in Ayinla Omowura's music. *Adéwolé Oñilùolà*, the master drummer holds and dictates the flow of the melodic and rhythmic patterns all through the songs of Àyínlá Omowúra.

Sounding the Political Environment through Àyínlá Omowúra's Music

The most significant issue that has given prominence to Ayinla Omowura's Apala music is the concern for Nigeria's political environment. Apart from the fact that Àyínlá Omowúra has addressed other issues bothering on advise to women as reflected in his song "*Áánú won ló se mí*", transportation and the attitude of "Danfo" drivers (Public commercial bus in Lagos) as expressed in "*Danfo o siere*", arrogance, as sang in "*Ajá tó f'ojú d'ekùn*", wealth, as reflected in "*Owo Udoji*", football, as released in his album; "Challenge Cup", culture, when he sang "Festac 77", homage to traditional rulers as reflected in "*Late Oba Gbadebo*", malice, as sang in "*Awa kii se*

Olodi won", and power and politics in "*Èyin Òsèlú wa*", which is the focus of this paper.

Àyìnlà Ọmọwúrà has adopted a transformative singing style to address the issues of mismanagement of resources by the Nigerian politicians. The theory of Transformative musicology as propounded by Adédèjì (2010), this theory postulates that "music could be used as a vehicle for transformative processes as required in any society". According to Daszko and Sheinberg (2005), "a theory of transformation means there will be profound change in structure that creates something new". Also, Olúsojì (2008) comments that "a portion of the pieces of Àyìnlà Ọmọwúrà's music has been directed to political messages to call significant attentions to certain political characters in the general public".

The analysis of the selected song of Àyìnlà Ọmọwúrà has been specifically limited to the following issues in the Nigerian political environment. These include (a). Nationalism: This classification is about any reference made in the chosen tracks to pardon and meeting up of political, fighting groups for the nation's prosperity, (b) Administrative Quality: This class makes reference to commendable authority characteristics in the Nigerian political setting. (c). Thuggery: Reference is made in this classification to the people who disturb discretionary cycles. (d). Civic Duties: In this class, reference is made to the two exercises during the political decision period and the resident's normal community obligations and (e). Praise singing of Leaders: This classification refers to singing the commendations of a few political forerunners in the chosen tracks.

In sounding the political environment in Nigeria, Ayinla Omowura as bothered by this phenomenal sings as excerpted from Ayinla Omowura's music- "*Eyin oselu wa*" (Our politicians).

Lyrics

L'ójó òlā ẹ lèdì káúnsèlò

nínú ilé tí ẹ bá kó

Lá láì kòntẹ̀sì

Èmi á rìn lójú títì

Pèlú ọ̀bọ̀kún ọ̀lọ̀yẹ́ tá rá yé ñwárí

fún

Meaning

In future you may be councilor Minister

Even minister in your own house

Without contesting

You'll be walking free on the road

With your saloon car that people adore

*Nínú isẹ tẹ ẹ ni l'ówó**From your handiwork*

Chorus *Leader*

Lo-jo-o-la E le di Kan-se-lo, Mi-ni-si-ta ni-nu i - le ti E ba ko.

La-la - i kon-tes - ti, E me-rin lo-ju ti-ti, Pe - lu O-bo-kun o-lo-ye t'a

ra - ye n wa-ri fun, Ni-nu i - se te ni lo - wo.

This expression has been complemented by Adémóyèga (1981), that “the Nigerian political elites have frequently been condemned for their part in political undertakings since the accomplishment of self-administration in the sixties”. Many have been challenged because of their roles in the problem plaguing the Nigerian nation. The 1979 political transition in Nigeria has been a severe phenomenon until the moment because the nation is yet to come out of the traumatic establishment of that transition which has continued to serve as a benchmark for political misconception and misunderstandings until date.

In addition, Àyìnlà Òmọwúra sounds the political environment in the area of unwarranted strife that has influenced our political arena in Nigeria, the issue of feud and enmity among politicians has been a bane to the development of the nation. The problem of political parties engaging in words of war have been a concern to the artiste. Here, Àyìnlà Òmọwúra expresses his disappointment on the attitudes of politicians using indigenous proverb as seen in the lyrical and musical excerpts below:

Lyrics*Leader: K'ókùnrin rí ejò,**kí obìnrin paá**kí ni àwa ñfẹ**Chorus: kí ejò má se lọ là wá ñfẹ**k'álágbádá kò k'ágbádá**ká jọ máa ẹ l'jọba kò 'lèwò***Meaning***If a man sees a snake**And killed by a woman,**what else do we want?**Than the snake not to escape**Be it civilian or not,**let us govern together*

*ki Nàìjíríà sá ti r'ójú**Provided Nigeria is at peace.**(Ayinla Omowura, volume 16:1:1)*

K'O-kun-rin r'E-jo, K'O-bin rin pa, Ki la wa n fe, K'E-jo ma ti lo la-wa n

4 fe, K'A-ta - ro - go - do ko go ri o - ro K'a-la - gba - da__ ko k'a-gba-

7 da, K'a-jo ma se 'jo-ba ko l'e - wo Ki Nai-ji - ri - a o sa ti r'o - ju.

From the above musical example, it could be overwhelming to understand the use of analogical inferences drawn by Ayinla Omowura, through the use of indigenous knowledge as observed in K'ókùnrin r'ejo/K'óbìnrin paá, in the type of the similarity of the corresponding obligation including man and woman in the killing of a snake, through this proverbial stand, the artiste has addressed unwholesome quarreling among political leaders instead of supporting the nation to be administratively successful. Ayinla's inquiry about *kí là wán fẹ́?* (What do we want?). If not to kill the snake in order to accomplish a common goal of our political ambition to move the nation forward in the interest of shared objective of nation building. However convenient as this caution might have been then, at that point, considering the unpalatable experience of the first republic, the subsequent republic too faced a similar outcome as the past one. Clearly, political leaders paid assuming this exhortation at that point; there would have been less political strife and more political steadiness in the Nigeria in this century.

Sounding the Act of Thuggery in the Nigerian Political Environment

The application of music and musical activities cannot be divorced in political activities especially, in Nigeria. Politicians have established music and musicality as a way of facilitating political gatherings during campaigns. Several cases of popular artistes have been recorded as working for selected political figures in Nigeria. These musicians are paid purposively to sing

praises of the politicians. A very good figure worthy of mention in this instance is Wasiu Àyindé Marshal (KWAM 1) who featured very prominently in all the Mohammadu Buhari led All People Congress (APC). Àyínlà Ọmọwúrà deviates from this position of singing praises of the politicians but, was more concerned with the attitude of thuggery in the process of electoral campaign which are often sparked off singing praises of certain musicians who, during electioneering campaign, pervert the main purpose of African music which is played as tool of unity rather than hatred and thuggery.

Commenting on the use of music in Africa, Idolor (2002), Ọmojólà (2006) and Fáníran (2008) lays out how music has been an innate element in African culture and society since the earliest time as a tool for unity and development. Similar authentication has been obtained as related to the functions of African music as a component for a socially stable community. Thuggery is an element of destruction commonly experienced during any electioneering process in Nigeria, a good example was the June 12, 1983 election and its eventual annulment by the Banbagida led administration but Àyínlà Ọmọwúrà being concerned with this phenomenon, raised the use of clubs, knives, cutlasses, guns and other dangerous weapons to cause mayhem in the Nigerian political activities. The song lyric as stated below attests to this claim:

Lyrics

*Ta la rí bá wí
Bí ò ṣ'awon ko ni je aiyé
Mi ò fẹ ẹe káńṣẹlọ o
Ká Àyínlá ẹe Mínísítà
Ká f'àbọn yọ
Ká gbẹ kùmọ yọ
Ká ní wón nṣe tọ̀ògì
Ení dán n wò
Á délé ẹjọ*

Meaning

*Who is to blame
But the stiff-necked electorate
I don't want to be a councilor
And let Ayinla become minister
Only to suddenly come out with gun
And to carry clubs
for thuggery intention
Whoever attempts this
Will be prosecuted at the law court*

Ta la ri ba wi bi o s'a-won ko ni je a-ye, Mi o fe se Ka-n se-lo, K'A-yin-la se Mi-ni-si-

5 ta, Kan fa - bon yo kan gbe ku - mo, Kan so pa - won

7 n - se to - gi, E - ni dan - wo a de - le e - jo.

Out of non-comfortability with thuggery use of music, Abdullar (2009) opines that the traditional African cultures did not separate art from life; the two elements were inextricably intertwined. In many African cultures, musicians are the acknowledged authorities on history and mythologies. The position of Abdullar here indicates that the African musical elements is to be utilized to make peace rather than political unrest and disputes. Other musicians like Fela Anikulapo Kuti has equally referred to political thuggery as “*Babańlá Nonsense*”. Ayinla Omowura concludes that the only way out of political thuggery is to accommodate the spirit of sportsmanship where the winner wins and the loser loses without any grudge or else, such politician/s would be made to face litigation.

Sounding the Nigerian Political Environment on Voting as a Civic Duty

African music, largely, are created to educate, inform, orientate and to direct. Ayinla Omowura in his song “*Eyin Oselu wa*” has not left out these possible functions. It is a civic duty of an electorate to exercise his/her franchise as stipulated in Section 33(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN: 1979). Realizing the bias against voting, probably resulting from negative voting experiences by the voters, Ayinla Omowura used his music to educate, inform and reorientation Nigerians on the need to perform their civic duties by participating in the electioneering process as expressed in the lyrical excerpt below:

Lytic

Ká d'ìbọ ká da rí wálé
Isé yén n'ìjọba fún wa se
Bó rán wa n'ísé ẹrú

Meaning

Let's vote and return home
That's our duty by the constitution
if you're sent servitude errand

E jé ká jẹ t'omọ
Ká má kọ ja ààyè

Accomplish it legitimately
Without stepping out of our bounds

Chorus

4

Ka - di - bo, Ka da - ri wa - le, I - se yen n'I - jo - ba fun wa

se, E ma yo 'ko, o - fa da - ni ra - ra.

Ayinla Omowura has established himself and his purpose of musical activities to go beyond just musical entertainments. Lásísi (2012) certifies that Ayinla Omowura's native music ought not to be viewed as just engaging in entertainment alone but in addition to utilize his songs for social change. This alludes to how Ayinla has utilized parody to remark on policy-centred issues in Nigeria. In addition, Waterman (1997) did a concentrate on the binding together of Fuji and Juju music structures among the Yoruba nation in Southwest Nigeria by exploring the music and verses of King Sunny Ade, Chief Ebenezer Obey, Sikiru Ayinde Barrister and Chief Kollington Ayinla to have also engaged in calling attention to political order in Nigeria.

It would be recalled, the Nigerian experience at the People's Democratic Party (PDP) presidential primaries with the involvement of money bag politics and the corruption of delegates in the choice of the party's flagbearer in the 2023 presidential election. According to the news trend, a sum of \$15,000, \$12,000 and \$10,000, an equivalent of N12m, N10m and N8m per delegate. This is just one of the several corrupt practices of our political leaders.

The impact of these musicians on individuals' lives cannot be underestimated. Emielu (2010) likewise reveals that however famous a musician is, he/she is generally viewed as a performer, his/her verses are imbued with philosophical underpinnings which address significant issues in their social orders. In the present political reality, Nigerian politicians are known to be very corrupt and are referred to as agents of destruction as far

as the nation economy is concerned. Long ago as 1972, Àyìnlà Ọmọwùrà has already described the menace of political activities in Nigeria as that of “sharing the national cake” especially with what is happening in Nigeria today. The arrest of Ahmed Idris, the accountant general of Nigeria in connection with the diversion of funds and money laundering activities up to the tune of N80 billion. (<https://guardian.ng/news>). This is an evidence that most of our leaders who parade themselves as lovers of the masses are not.

Conclusion

Having perused the constituent of Àyìnlà Ọmọwùrà’s Apala music to sound the political environment in Nigeria, findings have shown that Apala popular music genres of Àyìnlà Ọmọwùrà “*Èyin Ọsèlú Wa*” has engaged mainly the issues of political lies and enmity among leaders in Nigeria by citing most of his arguments on the southwestern states as reference points to provide a national attitudes of politicians in Nigeria. Therefore, this means that Àpàlà popular music has been applied to address the salient issues of political deceit and mind set of the electorate and the politicians alike on the government and public responsibilities that concern politics and elections.

The musician has engaged the political issues such as thuggery and civic duty regarding electoral rights and duties of the elected and voters as well. Besides this, findings also establish that Àyìnlà Ọmọwùrà’s music provides the needful potentiality to assist in the development of the nation and national peaceful integration especially, in the governance and administrative processes. The Agenda Setting Theory has been applied in this paper to establish the need for the Nigerian politicians to set agenda of purpose to achieve and work towards its subsequent achievement. Àyìnlà Ọmọwùrà sees this as a vital factor to campaigning and eventual election into public positions in the society. Therefore, there is a need to research more on the use of other indigenous popular music genres for political advisory contents to make Nigeria political environment more conducive for the citizens.

This paper recommends that politicians should guarantee straightforwardness and responsibility in the discharge of political duties and exercises, especially in monetary exchanges and fulfillment of campaign

promises. Citizens, especially political leaders and government employees should have the will tackle corruption in all spheres of life in Nigeria. Legislators should be given exhaustive re-direction through orientation concerning cultural and ethical qualities. Finally, the National Assemblies should make laws to prevent vandalism, thuggery, and hooliganism and these laws must be implemented without discrimination. This will make a flush of the wrong concept of political and financial misappropriations in Nigeria.

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Discography

Alhaji Ayinla Omowura & his Apala Group LP "Eyin oselu wa", vol. 16.

Label:	EMI – NEMI (LP) 0422
Format:	Vinyl, LP, Album

<i>Country/Region</i>	<u>Nigeria/Southwestern</u>
<i>Genre</i>	Indigenous Popular
<i>Style</i>	<u>African</u>

<https://www.discogs.com/release/9572174-Alhaji-Ayinla-Omowura-His-Apala-Group-Eyin-OseLu-Wa>