

COMBATING AGITATION FOR SECESSION FOR NATIONAL AND RESOURCE CONTROL THROUGH MUSIC

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Abstract

In recent time, agitation for secession and resource control has become a general phenomenon in all geo-political zones in Nigeria. This phenomenon has remained unaddressed for quite sometimes in the history of the nation's democracy, and the overbearing consequence of this scenario has led to retardation of national development. The over lingering of this situation could degenerate into total breakup of the various segments that constitute the Nigeria state. In this regard, this paper discusses the instrument of music through proper musical education of the older and younger generation, societal enlightenments, creativity and musical tourism in combating the agitation for secession and resource control. The paper suggested the effective application of music as a tool for enhancing national growth and development.

Key words: Secession, Music education, Creativity, National development.

Introduction

Agitation for secession and resource control by the geo-political zones and various ethnic groups that make up the Nigeria state has been in existence right from the time the northern and the southern protectorates came together as a nation (Nigeria) in 1914 through amalgamation by Lord Lugard. The issue of secession became noticeable when “the Eastern region declared secession from Nigeria, proclaiming itself the Republic of Biafra on 30th May 1967” (Oweh, 2014:11). This development led to the first major civil war in 1967 between the Eastern Region (the Biafrans) led by colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu and the rest of other geo-political zones in Nigeria led by the Nigerian soldiers. However, before the situation was brought under control, much damage leading to colossal loss of over 600,000 souls were wasted. These souls were wasted as war victims. Ever since then, other regions have been clamoring for secession and resource control because, it was discovered that there was lack of equity in the sharing of the national resources by successive governments. Many regions and notable personalities had aired their voices by lending support to this issue of secession and resource control. In the present republic, the issue of recession and resource control has become uncontrollably louder than the period of previous administrations which has led to formation of various associations and pressure groups such as; the MASSOB group of the South East, the Niger Delta militant group of the South-South, the *Arewa*, the Boko Haram and the Fulani invaders from the North, the OPC and the *Afenifere* groups of the South west. All these groups are fighting for the right of their respective ethnic groups. From opinion polls and observation, the views on related issues to secession as expressed in various quarters, geo-political zones and by notable individuals reveals that from the South west, the worldwide Yoruba think-tank organization “Oodua Foundation with headquarters in the United States and with members in various countries across the world has been intensely busy over this. Day after day, they have been contacting the Yoruba leaders of all political parties and groups urging them to commit themselves to peace in Yoruba land and to step forward to appeal to Yoruba people against involvement in violence. In their worldwide campaign, they have made contact with many governments and several international agencies.

The success of these activities by Oodua Foundation has been due to the Foundation’s policy of sincere and transparent nonpartisanship and integrity. The organization was founded in 2006 with a resolve to dedicate itself to working at a highly intellectual level for the well-being

of the Yoruba nation. In their policy papers, they intend to do everything possible for the progress of the Yoruba nation in the Nigeria context. But if in the other way round the other geo-political zones in Nigeria make things difficult for the Yoruba nation to progress, they will be left with no option than striking out for the secession of Yoruba land from Nigeria. In their reckoning, every Yoruba person is important to the struggle for Yoruba progress. (Apata 2015).

From the Northern geo-political zone, Amodu (2014) reports that ‘the centenary speech of the former vice president, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar on the celebration of the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates, cautioned that agitation for the breakup of a united federation would not automatically translate to freedom and economic prosperity, citing the experience of Southern Sudan’. He went further to explain that the current situation in Southern Sudan serves as a reminder to all Nigerians who are drumming for divisions and pursuits of ethnic superiority that the secession of a group of people from a nation based on ethnic, racial or religious identities does not guarantee freedom from life’s struggle rather, it only deepens the trivial divides which distracts us from our common heritage and co-existence. In this regard, the gaining of independence in Southern Sudan instead of blessing is turning out the other way round as the nation is erupted with trouble smoke because of inter-ethnic rivalries and hostility at the expense of unity

From the South east/Middle belt, in their quest for secession and resource control, the southern middle belt leaders’ forum has accused the past leaders of intimidating Nigerians in some parts of the country with military operations. In its communiqué read by John Dara, the group condemn military operation python dance in the South East geo-political zone and asked the President to urgently initiate the process for the restructuring of the country. Consequently, they called on the Federal Government to reconsider similar operation that the army is embarking on in South west and South-south zones which are peaceful areas. The group rightly pointed out that the present federalism practiced in Nigeria was not properly constituted right from the beginning “as the structure is over centralized, unjust and anti-development and therefore unacceptable. It further added, there is no gainsaying the fact that this is at the core of the many agitations across the country with some delving into separatists’ feelings. Citing Adegboyega (2017), ‘the group further pressed for the restructuring of the federation in order to restore federal principles as enshrined in the 1960 and 1963 constitutions. They expressed their

worries over the spate of kidnappings, rapes and extortion across the minority areas of Northern Nigeria which they said had become major threat by the militia herdsmen. Also, they strongly condemn the incessant invasion by the herdsmen which they believed aimed at dispossessing their agricultural lands for their settlement and grazing, the forum stated.’ These developments and agitations showed the state of displeasure and unhappiness by Nigerians.

The people of the Niger Deltas also expressed their feelings as the unusual terrain of their land, the psychology of the people and the everyday reality of the environment make it easy to form groups and to carry out their aims. But unlike the Boko harams that target the civilian population indiscriminately, the militant groups of the Niger Delta rarely terrorize civilians. Their style of terrorism makes it possible for them to mingle with members of their communities who understand reasons why their wards take up arms against private and public authorities. These are basically the same things the larger Nigerians’ population has been fighting (Abidde, 2014).

Music is a ready tool for national growth and development, it is against this background that this paper explores the instrument of music as a tool in combating the problem of agitation for secession and resource control.

Reasons for Agitation for Secession and Resource Control

The issues of agitation for secession and resource controls by various ethnic groups and people of the geo-political zones in Nigeria had existed right from the first republic. At the beginning, the Nigerian constitution stipulates the rotation of presidency across the geo-political zones after independence but this agreement has not been strictly followed. Besides, the issue of federal characters in the appointment of political office holders was also abused by successive governments. Nigerians have not been fortunate to elect and appoint the right persons into position of governance which has become a reoccurring situation over many decades. To worsen the situation, many of our past and present leaders are corrupt and are deeply enmeshed with serious allegation of embezzlement which is seriously impacting negatively on national development. The reasons why various geo-political zones are clamouring for secession and resource controls include the following amongst others; (i) Lack of federal presence and access to basic human needs (ii) Environmental degradation of the Niger Delta areas (iii) Debouched

governance by the leaders in the helm of affairs at federal and states levels (iv) Exclusion from decision making bodies at federal level (v) High rate of unemployment leading to kidnapping and robbery with violence (vi) Election rigging and perversion of justice by the authority at the centre (vii) Incessant bombing and killing by the Boko Harams leading to lives wasting (viii) Incessant invasion, killings and destruction of valuables by Fulani herdsmen (ix) Inequality in federal appointments and so on. Recently, it was discovered that federal appointments into most of the political offices were lopsided as most of the lucrative and most sensitive appointments are seeded to particular geo-political zones that produce the presidents. All the aforementioned and many other problems are reasons why various sections of the country are agitating for separation and resource control.

Combating the Problem of Agitation for Secession and Resource Control through Music

Music as a discipline has been found worthy as ready tool in diagnosing and combating the problem of agitation for secession and resource control. It has played and still has major roles to play in dousing the tension already created by the attendant problem of agitation for secession and resource control as expressed in previous paragraph by various ethnic nationalities across the various geo-political zones. Music is the most widely practiced and accessible of all the arts; it is so easily available in all aspects of societal events and programmes. These include religious activities, educational purposes, naming, burial, chieftaincy titles, festivals, relaxations, entertainment etc. Music is associated with all these activities and many others that some people hardly pause to ponder its implication in the social and economic development of a country. Research has shown that many countries earn a lot of revenue through music in areas such as creativity through performance and artistic display, cultural nationalism and musical tourism. Modern technologies have also encouraged the export of good music qualities for wider markets such that the artiste and promoters of good music earn more and also attracts revenues into their respective countries. According to Okafor (2005);

The cultural diversity of Nigeria is a huge potential for the export of music and dance, other cultural exports and vigorous tourism. And yet, in spite of this and the tribute paid

to music and dance in Nigerian educational and cultural policies, these potentials have not been exploited or harnessed (p. 269).

Music performs various functions in African societies such that if properly harnessed it will offer solution to the problems plaguing the nation and enhance national development. The roles of music include the following amongst others: (i) Proper music education (ii) Societal enlightenment through music (iii) Skills acquisition and musical creativity (iv) Musical tourism

Proper Music Education

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), education in Nigeria is no more a private enterprise, but a huge government venture that has witnessed a progressive evolution of government complete and dynamic intervention and active participation. The Federal government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development..... Nigeria's philosophy on education, therefore is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system (p. 5, 7).

The process of music teaching and learning is generally referred to as music education. It is a process of development of musical literacy, the acquisition of musical skills and the growth of musical appreciation (Ritchie, 1976). Through informal education in Nigerian society, music forms an integral part of education for both the older and the younger members of the society. In the traditional society, a musician is often expected to practice other areas of the arts and occupations while in our modern society, a musician can remain without practicing other occupations. It therefore means that the modern society has made music an abstract art or discipline, that is, a specialized subject one could study apart from life and the activities of the immediate environment or the local community. The objectives of music education are to impart knowledge in individual, empower and transform the individual to become a productive member of the society. Proper music education thus has great impact on the moral lives of people in the society. It helps in checkmating the unruly behaviour of the younger generation through satirical songs. Furthermore, proper music education promotes sound knowledge, improves cognitive reasoning and enhances the moral upbringing and the growth of children.

Musical Creativity and Skills Acquisition

The studying of music encourages cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning. These are educational domains that expose learners to both theory and practical aspect of music. The end result of musical training is to bring out the skills and the creative ideas in learner. According to the National Policy on Education (2004);

In order to encourage aesthetic, creative and musical activities, government will make staff and facilities available for the teaching of creative arts, crafts and music. In order that these functions may be discharged efficiently, a cadre of staff is required in adequate numbers and quality at the different operational levels in the local, state and federal institutions (p. 13, 14)

The policy of the government with the affirmation to encourage musical creativity and musical skill acquisition is a welcome idea. If necessary, apparatus are set in motion and implemented from elementary through secondary to tertiary levels of musical education, it will raise the literacy level of the people. According to Okafor (2005);

If we interpret the above policy fully, it means that the product of music in Nigeria, that is, the person who has received quality music education, must be able to function as a musician at the best and highest levels of the nation's living economy. The individual must not only earn his living but must be able to use music for national development (p. 212). Acquisition of musical skills and ability to create through music education empowers an individual for productive ventures which will further impact positively on societal progress and national development.

Societal Enlightenment through Music

Through music education, the society is enlightened through various songs to correct the evils in the society. One major role of music in the society which most musicians are well recognized is through satirical song, that is, songs of criticisms against societal evils. One of the notable musicians of the 80s was Fela Anikunlapo Kuti, the Afro beat exponent was famous for his satires and his criticism of the populace through music. Some of his compositions and songs include, *Zombie* which satirizes the intelligence of the military and the police; *'Yellow fever'* which was a criticism of the sophisticated city girl who bleaches her face, arm and legs (Okafor,

2005). There are many other folk songs which are sung to warn evil perpetrators and also rid the society of evils. These include songs against stealing, murder offence, bed-wetting, ritual killings etc

Musical Tourism

Music tourism is another medium through which the nation could douse the tension of the geo-political zones agitation for secession and resource control because, Nigeria is endowed with rich music cultural heritage across all geo-political zones. According to Okafor (2005);

Music can claim to be the expression of art that is most accessible to human beings in any situation in their lives - crisis, work and worship, play or war, recreation or reflection. Music is implicated in life, and people go all out to use music to communicate, to move, to express emotions and ideas, and to mobilize people as a rallying point, and a marshalling point for expression of solidarity (273).

Nigeria has diverse and rich musical cultural heritage which is readily available as huge tourism potentials for all geo-political zones. There are musical activities capable of showcasing tourism, these include, songs in various languages, the dance steps of the ethnic groups, African orchestra such as drum ensembles, xylophones ensembles, metal gong ensembles, rattles e.g. gourd or basket rattles ensemble. Recently, Ogun state, one of the states in South west showcased drummers on various types of drums in a festival tagged “Abeokuta Drum festival” (African drum festival) at Olumo rock. The occasion attracted dignitaries and representatives from the six geo-political zones in Nigeria and beyond as drummers from other countries in Africa participated in the festival with many participants who won awards of best performers who also carted away many cash prizes. Many dignitaries such as Prof. Wole Soyinka and other intellectuals graced the occasions at the conference which opened the festivals. This drum festival has been an annual event, but the year 2018 event was well packed such that it showcased both the conference that engaged the intellectuals in national/international discourse on rhythms, the role of drumming in musical tourism and in child education.

The conference component of the African Drum festival (2018) was “conceived as a new dimension to the annual event, specifically to bring intellectual to the character and content of the project. The main objective of the event was to position the drum as a tool for education,

socialization, cultural and economic advancement” (Ajeluurou, 2018: 29). There, drumming for advancement became the apt theme for this section. The intellectual aspect of the festival took place at the foot of the historic Olumo Rock for which Abeokuta is renowned. Indeed, it seemed to be a glorious return to the ancestral root with drum offering. Arrayed at the foot of the huge rock that towers into the sky were various performing groups with their drums as if on mission to summon the gods from their abode. Meanwhile inside the hall, the conference and intellectual part of the festival was in full gear as drum and dance scholars from across Nigeria and Africa gave scholarly impetus to the fiesta. But it was not the usual conference where only theorizing holds sway, rather, it was a demonstration conference where theory marched practice (Ajeluurou, 2018). The conference demonstration section had Salisu Mashi, Abegwa Alu, Goiserey Louba Landry and Mukanyandwi Claudine – all master drummers from various parts of Africa. During the occasion, past master drummers of notable musical groups were honoured at the event.

The scholars at the conference emphasized the importance of music education via drums, and advocated that drumming should be inculcated and entrenched into the younger generation so as to preserve the culture of drumming. They also, identified different types of drums and said African music producers use the rhythms and tonal sounds of African instruments to produce music that is commercial and globally acceptable. Besides, Prof. Jeleel Ojuade, a master drummer and expert dancer, who holds a Ph. D. in performance studies, with emphasis on Yoruba Bata and Dundun dances from the institute of African studies, University of Ibadan, spoke on Drumming for Socio-economic Development: The application of Dundun and Bata Drums. According to him, culture is a way of life as it includes the totality of the arts. He noted that drumming is one of the ways values is brought out of any socio-economic endeavour without words. From all indication, music education through drumming festival is an avenue for tourist attraction through large gathering of people to the tourist site. Also, if properly harnessed, it will create employment for many and also attract huge revenue to the geo-political zones who invest in musical tourism and also enhance national development. In this regard, if the unemployed youth are engaged through musical tourism, it will douse the tension in the land and also, combat the problem of agitation for secession and resource control.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper x-rayed reasons why the geo-political zones were agitating for secession and resource control. It also discussed the role of music as a tool in proffering solution to the problem of discourse through, proper music education, societal enlightenment through music, musical creativity and skill acquisition and musical tourism. In the light of this development, the paper recommends; proper music education to Nigerian children right from the elementary class through the secondary and tertiary education. Good morals are inculcated through music and if well implemented, it will engage the youth in legitimate ventures that will add value to the society. Besides, music is a universal language and as such, employment opportunities abound through musical creativity, skill acquisition, musical tourism and by joining musical group or association in one's immediate community. In this regard, the government at federal, states and local government are encouraged to properly harness the use of music as a tool in combating the problem of agitation for secession and resource control. In the long run, this will create job opportunity for the unemployed youths' population and also attracts great revenue to the nation through tourism for national development.

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