



Musical Representation on Deforestation and Environmental Health in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria's musical scholarship has been trending on social issues. Very little is directed at the issues of environmental sustainability, especially issues related to deforestation in Nasarawa State in Nigeria. This is due to the destructive tree falling that has led to erosion in some parts of the state. Deforestation is a direct result of human activities, especially the constant falling of trees without replacement has brought unprecedented floods and drought to the state. This paper, therefore, examines the musical representation of deforestation using ethnographic methods and textual analysis. The paper hinges on ecomusicology theory. We argue that musical narratives on deforestation have great potential to enumerate the emotions and degradation on land and the health of the people in the community. We conclude that the current climate change could be addressed through musical advocacy that could help bring greater awareness to deforestation and its reduction in several continents of the world.

Keywords: Deforestation, Ecomusicology, Environmental Sustainability, Nasarawa State, Nigeria, Folk songs

Introduction

Environmental degradation through deforestation as a global phenomenon raises some fundamental questions about the safety of human lives, farm produce, environmental pollution and related health hazards that are prevalent in modern society. Recent documentation and exploration of environmental degradation through deforestation have revealed that deforestation is becoming one of the greatest environmental disasters in the world (Bassey 2013, Timsar, 2015). However, the use of indigenous music in the representation of deforestation and its environmental degradation in Nasarawa state has not

been adequately engaged. This paper is driven by the desire to fill this gap and, in the process, provide an informed critical assessment of the state indigenous music on deforestation and its environmental degradation discourse. It will examine how the selected folk singers represent deforestation and its related themes.

The choice of indigenous music and musicians is premised on the discourse of environmental degradation and deforestation narratives that are noticeable in these collections. This study engages with Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence and environmentalism of the poor in which the texts of songs are used to explain global social and environmental degradation. This gives some insight into the problems and values of the Nasarawa state as a signifier in the global environmental crisis. Musicians whose works represent the dominant trends in environmental degradation and deforestation in Nasarawa state include Timothy Goza Maikasawa and community singing groups. The fact that there is little narrative and scholarship relating to music and deforestation in Nasarawa state makes this study imperative and serves as the basic justification of this study. The study promises to contribute to the evolving studies in energy humanities and climate change using immediate popular cultural materials like music. The study is significant in the sense that it gives some insight into the outlook of the Nasarawa on the environment as projected in the works of the selected musical works. It also promises to inspire studies that will engage other aspects of environmental awareness in Nasarawa music. We use primary methods, which entail interviewing the musician and the community members. We also engaged with textual analysis and functions of music on deforestation and environmental sustainability in Nasarawa State.

The Communities Selected in Nasarawa State

Nasarawa State with the slogan "Home of Solid Minerals" is a state in North Central Nigeria; it was created on 1st October 1996 by the Sani Abacha-led military regime. Nasarawa state was carved out of the present-day Plateau State and has in the north Kaduna, in the south Kogi and Benue states, in the west The Federal Capital Territory and the east Taraba and Plateau states as neighbouring states. Nasarawa State capital is Lafia. Nasarawa State covers a total area of 27,117 km² (10, 470 square miles) and has a population of 1, 869, 377 people. The State has three National Senatorial Districts (South, North and West). Nasarawa State consists of thirteen Local Government Areas.

Nasarawa State is a host state to numerous tribes and ethnic communities each with their indigenous language and cultural practice. About thirty-one (31) languages are spoken in Nasarawa State. Nasarawa State is home to over 300 settlements and villages, settlements due it is majorly an agricultural state with husbandry and farming as major fields in its agricultural exploits, cash crops are planted which are then sold to other states. Mineral Resources are also mined in the state some of which are salt, baryte, and bauxite. Nasarawa state is located in the Northern part of Nigeria, North Central quadrant of the Nigerian geo-political zone, with its state capital in Lafia. The current study focuses on three communities in Karu Local government Area of the state. They are predominantly gwarri ethnic group in the community. Munatarie Village originated from a prior village/settlement called "Pendace", the migrating settlers arrived in another settlement called "Sagiyi" in 1845. The head of the "Sagiyi" settlement that was known as "Munatarie".

The first settlers in Munatarie village were: Kure Tukuru, Jezhi Shokwomwo and Yeliwa Mwaza. These three settlers arrived and named the settlement Munatarie. After Kure Tukuru, Yahaya Kure the son of Kure Tukuru became the next chief of the village and was crowned on the 17th of April 2009. Munatarie village is a Christian settlement, influenced by missionaries and other churches in the early and late 1900s. The indigenous language of the

Munatarie village is Gbagyi, the villagers' main source of income and livelihood is farming but with the coming of civilisation, other menial forms of labour are being practised i.e. Hair Saloons, Small Retail outlets, etc. Zokonu was formerly known as Shadnagun, Zokonu migrated from Kurape in 1860. The person who founded the Shadnagun is known as "Zokonu" today. Zokonu was a hunter, and found out that the land he came hunting in was good for settlement, he went back to Kurape and told the people that he saw a place they can settle, the people agreed to leave Kurape and come down to where Zakwai saw was a good land for settlement and they eventually settled there (Personal communication with Timothy Goza 23rd June 2019).

About the Singer: Timothy Goza Maikasuwa

Timothy Goza Maikasuwa was born on the 10th of May 1986 in Maiganga village, Karu LGA Nasarawa State. His Parents Mr & Mrs Auta and Titi Goza, both resided in Nasarawa State, they had a total of six children, five females and two males (one of the males being deceased) of which Timothy Goza is the sixth child. Timothy Maikasuwa had most education in Nasarawa State, his primary school education in the year 1995-2000 at Rafin Kwara Primary School (First School Leaving Certificate), his secondary school education in the year 2000-2006 at Government Secondary School Karshi (WEAC & NECO), he had his tertiary education at Igbaja Kwara State at the ECWA Theological Seminary for a Certificate and Diploma in Theology both in the year 2009-2013 & 2013-2016 respectively. Timothy Goza began another degree (B.A) in Theology in 2019 at the Karu Theological College Nasarawa State.

Timothy Goza is currently a pastor in Iwasabo village, Karu Local Government Area Nasarawa State, with some 145 members in his congregation which is quite a large number for a village settlement. Timothy Goza is a figurehead and held in high esteem in his local community and home as disputes in the community are brought before him to judge and resolve. Timothy Goza married Josephine Timothy in March 2017, and she gave birth to a son whom they christened TrustGod Gaza Timothy. Timothy Goza grew up in the church and was active in the choir as a member. He is a composer and has composed quite a number of unpublished choir and women's songs in the church.

Ecomusicology as a Theory and Field of Study

Ecomusicology is a theory and a multidisciplinary field of study, as it deals with the triangularity of culture, environment, and music (Allen and Dawe 2016). The field of ecomusicology is well articulated (Feld 2012, Titon 2013, Taylor 2011; Titus and Titus 2017, Grimley 2018, Titus 2019a, 2019b Titus 2021). Ecomusicology is the study of music, culture, sound and nature in a period of environmental crisis (Titon 2013). Taylor argues that ecomusicology is the intersection of music and environment, and it provides new opportunities and challenges to music creators, new sonic experiences to audiences, and new objects of study, as well as prompting revised perspectives of earlier works. Discourse on ecological music and environmental degradation, hostile environments and climate change are issues with which scholars need to engage. Some studies have examined ecomusicology and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), such as Dirksen (2019), Seeger (2016), and Simonett (2016), especially with the relationship of humans and non- or super-humans and their soundscapes Ecomusicological studies of popular music has had some momentum (Pedelty 2012, 2013, 2016; Rees 2016, Guy 2009, Ramnarine 2009, and Silvers 2015, 2018). These studies emphasise the urgent need to engage popular and folk music which art/classical music scholars have hitherto neglected as an area to examine in environmental issues. This study also engages with Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence and environmentalism of the

poor in which the texts of songs and chants are used to explain global environmental degradation. This gives some insights into the problems and values of the Nasarawa state as a signifier of the global environmental crisis where deforestation has brought unwanted flood and gully erosion.

Deforestation all over the globe is a threat to the sustainability of the environment. As of 2005, Nigeria has the highest rate of deforestation, between the years 2000 and 2005 Nigeria lost 55.7% of her primary forests, and the rate of forest change increased by 31.2% to 3.12% per annum (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2018). Nigeria's forestry is majorly cut down for logging, timber export, subsistence agriculture, and also the collection of wood for fuel. The allowance of deforestation for fuelwood is a major cause of deforestation in Nigeria, 60% of the Nigerian populace rely on fuelwood for their day-to-day activities and as a source of income which shows the rate of poverty and unemployment in Nigerian society. One major effect of deforestation is desertification. Desertification is the encroachment of the desert on land that was once fertile and covered in trees. Northern Nigeria is the most affected part of the Nigerian society that sees and suffers the environmental hazards that desertification brings. States such as Niger State, Kano State, Nasarawa, etc. show the effects of desertification by deforestation. Nigeria has five broad ecological zones: Swamp forest, Tropical Rain forest, guinea Savannah, Sudan Savannah, and Sahel (Okpara et al., 2013), three of these are in the Northern region of Nigeria: Guinea Savannah, Sudan Savannah, and the Sahel.

WRI (1992) and Barbie (1999) state that land degradation and conversion in Africa are mostly caused by agricultural activities. This also applies to Nigeria with Nasarawa State as a case study. For example, we see the effects of land degradation acts such as tree felling for fuelwood and timber production and pastoral land expansion and agricultural intensification (Macaulay 2014).



Figure 1 shows stacks of felled logs of wood, cut down for fuel and merchandise. (Source: Authors).



Figure 2 shows a woodcutter felling a tree with mechanical tools for industrial purposes. (Source: Authors).

Adebayo (2010) states that poor living conditions and illiteracy are the causes as well as consequences of environmental degradation. Ogunwale (2015) states that deforestation constitutes one of the global development challenges. Specifically, it is the most serious long-term environmental problem facing the world and Nigeria is not an exception. Bringing these facts to terms, deforestation is a serious means of environmental, economic, and societal decline if not handled and curtailed swiftly. Deforestation accounts for 20% of all greenhouse emissions. The causes of deforestation are complex; though it is generally acknowledged that the biggest factors are the cultivation of soy and palm oil, logging for the production of paper, pulp, and board, and the rearing of cattle. All of these commodities are major ingredients in the supply chains of Fast -Moving Consumer Goods companies (FMCG).

Other causes of deforestation include fuel, cattle rearing and husbandry, settlements i.e. village migrations, woodworks, carving, etc. Entire villages sometimes do migrate and move from one settlement location to another, the causes of these moves may vary from wars, famine, drought, etc. A new location for settlement once found by the migrating people is cleared to suit the need and culture of the people, and this leads to deforestation.

Themes in the Songs on Deforestation

Several themes could be deduced from the texts of the songs. Songs are generally themed into historical, moral and didactic, satirical, entertainment songs among several others. Songs have over time in the African community served as the first means of informal education given to children by their parents who in turn received these songs and teachings from their own parents. The songs in the article teach about the effects of deforestation and its causative harm to the environment and people. In song 1, *Kuche la Miya*, the song expresses the effects of falling trees and personifies the forest as a person that can fall. See the song texts below in a call-and-response pattern:

Song 1. *Kuche la miya*

Call- *Kuche la miya*

Chorus- *A gake-gake in la twu*

Call- *Kuche la miya*

Chorus- *A gake-gake in la twu*

Call- *Kuche la miya*

Call- Forest has fallen

Chorus- And gully remains

Call- Forest has fallen

Chorus- And gully remains

Call- Forest has fallen

Chorus- *A gake-gake in la twu*
Call- *Kuche la miya*
Chorus- *A gake-gake in la twu*

Chorus- And gully remains
Call- Forest has fallen
Chorus- And gully remains

The lyrical contents of song 1, as indicated in the song text above, talk about the effects of deforestation and the causative effects of the absence of trees: erosions and gullies. Here, the forest is 'personified' as a being that is falling. This further explains the place of forests to humans as partners, friends, and cohabitants of the planet, Earth. The falling of forests explains the community results in erosion, which brings about other devastating effects such as bad roads and poor soil for farming, which results in famine and loss of shrubs for livestock feed. Trees and forests preserve the ecosystem and reduce excessive heat. The falling of trees and forests exposes the earth's surface to heat, which increases climate change and the emission of heat. It is generally believed that the forest is inhabited by superhumans who cohabit the nature. The fall of the forest displaces supernatural forces and further brings terror to the earth. As Titus (2019a and 2019b) notes, there are supernatural spirits that dwell in the forest trees and water bodies among the Yoruba people of Nigeria.

It is therefore imperative to recognize the personality of the forest in the fight against climate change if man will ever win the battle. The gross deforestation by multinational companies, especially in the global north in different parts of the world, is very much disheartening. The song texts, therefore, call the attention of not just the community members who are used and thereafter paid pie nut, but the policymakers, the executive members and the non-governmental organizations to rise and preserve the forest for posterity. The loss of forests has witnessed a phenomenal loss of animals, plants and insects that help keep the environment sustained and inhabitable. Because of the fall of forests, Nasarawa State has witnessed devastating floods and drought at different times, as confirmed by Ayuba Elisha (personal interview, 7th January 2020). This assertion was rightly supported by Ogunwale (2015) says the effects of deforestation have brought terrible erosions, which have been very harmful and damaging to the communities' surrounding environments, making it difficult for vehicles to access the village for smooth sales and transportation of their farm produce. And with this, he stated that definitive measure was taken to combat erosion and to make sure their farm produce got to the market for sale.

Another theme in the song text, as can be seen in song 2 below, is the power of water in deforested areas and erosion during heavy rains. The singer wails about the effects of erosion and environmental degradation on their social, economic, health and family life. See the song texts below:

Song 2: *Ah nuwa byenu ah nuwan*

Ah nuwa byenu ah nuwan
byenu ko ku agwangwan bura
Ah A wuyi nuwa byenu wnu kwa bye paye
Ah woyi ke nuwan bye in kwagya
Ayaya ke nuwan byen in kwa gyepya
Yi te koce nyinze nuwan pya in kwa gyepya
Ah yayi tekokeye aya gbabyi yiya ajenu
Mye ma lo fa ofa makeye nyinze la shado

Oh flood has come and carry
up things in the rivers
water flowing down
with the washed-up things.
Oh our land is finished
because of our people,
the water is coming with his power
and I am not telling lies.

The above excerpt speaks about the causative effects of erosion and its activities, it is seen that erosions and floods carry with them many washed-up things as they flow. Some of these objects have been washed away, ranging from lightweight objects to heavy tree stumps

and foliage, and on rare occasions, vehicles and machinery are swept away in these floods. Some of these washed-up objects go on to block the path of these floods, which to say is also the cause of the floods in the first place. The song goes on to explain that floods go on to become stagnant water bodies which breed mosquitoes and other threatening insects which are not only harmful to the people of the community but also harmful to their livestock. Land deforestation and its effects are potential sources of environmental degradation, which can lead to health issues in affected communities. Erosion after heavy rainfall in its course of washing away debris, tree stumps and other discarded materials can become stagnant water, thus leading to the breeding of mosquitoes, tsetse fly, and other biting insects, which affects crops, livestock and humans. Titus (2018, and 2019) corroborates the effects of oil extractions on the rivers in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, and flood disasters in the southwestern part of the country.

The song warns against water floods, which may develop into hurricanes, tsunamis and other tragic waterfall experiences that are happening in other parts of the world, and that life is no longer secure, as the future is no longer guaranteed due to frightening devastation and future destructions that are coming due to deforestation in the communities. As noted by Adebayo (2010), deforestation accounts for 20% of all greenhouse emissions. The causes of deforestation are complex, though it is generally acknowledged that the biggest factors are the cultivation of soya and palm oil, logging for the production of paper, pulp and board and the rearing of cattle. All of these commodities are major ingredients in the supply chains of Fast-Moving Consumer Goods companies (FMCG). Other causes of deforestation include fuel, cattle rearing and husbandry, settlements, i.e., village migrations, wood works and carving.

Music is a very powerful force sometimes likened to a part of nature itself; the ability of music to bring a sense of togetherness and unity amongst individuals is surreal. Music plays a key role in social and cultural development. It is often said that the two main aspects in which cultures can be distinguished are the language and music of the culture. Thus, music is an important aspect of any culture. Societal gatherings hardly go by without the presence of music in it; even in modern-day societal functions, music is employed as a means to liven the atmosphere and for entertainment. Music is sung and employed at festivals, ballroom events, concerts, orchestras and even in political gatherings as a form of oath or commitment to a Nation or country. As it is accepted even down to a subconscious level that music is an important aspect of human society, it can be said that music can be employed in correcting societal ills and social vices, the use of indigenous vernacular in music especially from an individual foreign to that culture automatically endows the individual and ultimately the music of the said individual to the hearts of the people whose cultural vernacular is being patronised, which has successfully shown the socio-cultural importance of music.

Some of the selected songs bring about a sense of devotion and unity in the community and teach about how the forest has become a plain land, i.e. why a forested piece of land ceases to exist. It speaks about how trees' being cut down gives way to the flow of water, which carries away the properties of the forest and over time turns the forest into a plain. Music has been and can be used as an agent of change in society and other human areas. Selected songs show the corrective power music possesses if constructed and tailored to a specific cause or societal ill. Apart from the educative function, the songs of the Munatarie community also speak on corrective ways in which deforestation can be avoided, and practical steps and proverbs embedded in the lyrics of songs teach ways to curb the effects of deforestation.

Song 3. *Sha nuwa bwe koyi Kwalebwaya ma*

Call- <i>Sha nuwa bwe koyi Kwalebwaya ma</i>	Floods comes down with detractions
Chorus- <i>Agya koba sha kuta lama</i>	But it can't carry the hills
Call- <i>Aya mwalo in nuwabe Koyi kwaya</i>	Floods comes down with detractions
Chorus- <i>Agya koba sha kuta lama</i>	But it can't carry the hills

Song 3 explains the hills' strength and the flood's inability to wash the hills away, which teaches that for the causes and washing away of things the river carries with it, stones or things as sturdy as stones i.e. trees and river blocks be built to prevent erosion. Flooding is an environmental issue that could bring terrible floods to a whole community, cars, houses, and great properties. In addition, the song teaches how we could avoid erosion and deforestation so that we could avoid the devastation of the flood. The songs dedicated to the curbing of deforestation and its effects are also taken as songs for entertainment. They are usually sung during festivities in accompaniment with local instruments, which are played in the familiar polyrhythmic nature of African songs, giving an upbeat feel and groove to the music and making it possible for dance and acrobatic jumps to be displayed at these communal festivities, such as yam festivals, among several others.

From the songs selected, deforestation, which is the direct result of climate change, increases flood disasters, which are commonly experienced in several parts of the world. This has great implications for the safety and health of the people. According to an interlocutor, "deforestation has affected our farm productivity, our health and our safety". There is a need for mobility from deforestation to reforestation in the area. However, another interlocutor notes that in some of the communities, people cut down trees to make charcoal due to the poverty level of the community. The public health of the selected community has also been affected due to air pollution, and this is not just only to the community but several communities in Africa. For instance, Titus Expresses the effects of air pollution in Lagos due to vehicular and industrial pollution and also in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria due to gas flaring and crude oil exploration.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have described the relatedness of ecomusicology to the study of indigenous music that focuses on deforestation in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Reflecting on ecomusicology, which entails humans, the environment and culture, we show its centrality in the discourse of the environment and its sustainability, possibly by keeping the forest intact and massive planting of trees. This article contributes to understanding the discourse on ecomusicology from a Nigerian point of view. Future studies could engage ecomusicology more critically by looking at the trajectories of Lake Chad in the northern part of Nigeria in relation to land grabbing, killing and the conflict between the pastoralists and farmers.

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