

Review Article

Beyond Entertainment: Dissecting Indigenous Knowledge Models in Select Nigerian Folksongs

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is essentially to analyse the folksongs of Esan and Enuani people of Edo and Delta states in order to identify and interpret their potentials as culture carriers and as indigenous knowledge models. While indigenous knowledge system means the totality of a people's traditional practices and belief system experienced over time, the term 'indigenous knowledge models of folksongs' in the context of this essay, refers to the way folksongs represent culture. There have been a lot of studies on folksongs distinct from indigenous knowledge systems, and so it is rare finding any dedicated to establishing the affinity between folksongs and indigenous knowledge systems and analysing them as signifiers which encapsulate cultural practices and belief systems. To achieve its aim, the study adopted the ethno-anthropological approach in data collection as ten folksongs, five from Esan, the other five from Enuani, were subjected to textual analysis based on Risdianto's three-dimensional model for analyzing folksongs which comprise the contextual, grammatical and semantic dimensions. Amongst others, the study found that folksongs are themselves a custodian of the people's beliefs, identity and shared values. The study finally affirms that Esan and Enuani folksongs reinforce a deep sense of indigenous knowledge systems and models in terms of their representational function and stylistics and in providing knowledge of some of the cultural beliefs and practices of the people and their cosmogony.

Keywords: Esan, Enuani, traditional music, folksongs, indigenous knowledge

Nigeria is made up of over three hundred and fifty ethnic nationalities that speak independent languages (Olaowo, 2020; Otite, 1990). While some of such languages may be akin to others perhaps because of their historical traditions of origin or geographical proximity to one another, others are distinct. In spite of the seeming differences in language, food, culture and religious beliefs, what music is, what it is used for and what it does in these communities is relatively the same (Akpan, 2018; Anizoba and Davis, 2019; Schippers, 2018). Music making in these communities rely fully on the utilization of the people's indigenous folksongs for not just entertainment but a myriad of other related activities. The Esan of Edo state and the Enuani of Delta states of Nigeria have a plethora of folksongs which are deployed in everyday use. And to contain any form of abuse, their use is dependent on a multiplicity of determinants. These determinants range from who should sing the songs, play the musical instruments, the type of event that necessitate the performance, the time of performance, to the season of the year when the performance is to hold, among others. This article interrogates select collection of ten songs – five from

Esan and the other five from Enuani communities. In these two communities, folksongs are performed for entertainment and non-entertainment purposes. The eclectic and extra-musical functions of their songs have yet to be given any serious scrutiny nor are their song texts examined in available literature and important studies. Neither has a good attempt been made at studying the poetic composition of their folksongs. From the lens of the culture carriers, this study examines song texts beyond mere lyrics thereby unveiling the underlying craftsmanship of their composers who have crafted a collection of songs of multiplicity of themes. To us, this is a significant and relevant contribution to current research indigenous music of the traditional people. This approach stems to clear controversies, gaps, inconsistencies in the literature that the music of indigenous sub-Saharan Africans and indeed Nigerians is still at the elementary stage of evolution. Consequently, this article is poised to examine ten folksongs which address childbearing, living right, healing, death and reincarnation within the Risdianto's three-dimensional model for analyzing folksongs which comprise the contextual, grammatical and semantic dimensions.

The Esan and Enuani People from the Lens of History and Geography

The locale within which this research was conducted is Esan in Edo State on one hand and the Enuani people of Delta State both in Nigeria on the other. In today's scholarship, the term Esan is used in triple ways: the language spoken by the people found in the Edo central senatorial district of Edo State, the general nomenclature and means of identity a people found in the land already referenced above and a name given to the landmass occupied by the same people. From the lens of the tradition of origin, Okojie (1994) and Okoduwa (1997) believe that these people are a spinoff of the great Benin kingdom, the social – political organization of the people akin to the Benin structure (Okojie, 1994; Okoduwa, 1997). As a matter of geographic evaluation, the Esan occupies a landmass of about 2,814 square kilometers (Oseghale, 2019). Put simply, the Esan is bound on the north by Edo communities, on the south by other Edo communities on the east by the river Niger and the south eastern part by Idumuje-Ugboko, Agbo and Ebu (these communities are within this paper referred to as old Aniocha¹ people). From a historical perspective, Mordi and Opone (2009: 49) opine that

Four broad groups can be identified in the Enuani area. The first and largest group claims a definite Benin origin. This is the Ezechima group, which makes up over ten communities east and west of the Niger. Among this group are Obior, Issele-Uku, Onicha-Ugbo, Onicha-Olona, Onicha-Ukwu, Obomkpa and Ezi, in the Enuani area. The second group claims origin from Nri and Nri-related communities or the Igbo groups east of the Niger. They are found in Akwukwu-Igbo, Asaba, Ibusa (Igbuzor), Isheagu, parts of Ubulu-Ukwu, Issele-Ukwu and Illah, among others. A third group claims origin from neighbouring communities but still strives to link its founders to Benin. Notable in this regard is the Ubulu clan of Ubulu-Ukwu, Ubulu-Uno and Ubulu-Okiti, Ashama and Adonta. The fourth group claims origins from Yoruba and Igala areas of the southwest and the Niger-Benue confluence of Nigeria. These are found in Ugbodu, Ukwunzu, Ebu and Illah, Ubuluku, Obomkpa, Okpanam, Okwe and Oko.

These communities of Enuani are located around the eastern side and the south eastern base of Edo State of the present-day Delta State of Nigeria. Enuani is a general term that encapsulates the Aniocha and Oshimili districts in Delta State, Nigeria. Without contradiction, they are Igbo ethnic group who speak Igbo language with few dialectical variances. The south-eastern part of the rural town of Idumuje-Ugboko shares common boundaries with Ohordua, Ewohimi, and Ekpon to the north-west (<https://www.idumujeugboko.com/history-of-idumuje-ugboko>). Historically, Idumuje-Ugboko was founded in the 19th century by the descendants of Ogbeide, a Benin chief who, for unknown reasons, left Uzebu quarters, an area in the old Benin kingdom.

MATERIALS AND METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

This study finds Lebaka's (2018) approach of utilizing anthropological research methods of in-depth ethnographic social scientific inquiry to address key research questions, whilst maintaining sociological concern with obtaining data relevant. This research domiciles in the sociological and cultural areas. Thus, his pattern of a triangulated approach of the collection of data, which consists of: (i) Ethnographic observational data, (ii) Interview data, and (iii) Literature searches is consequently deployed here. Here, we keyed into the use of (iv) Data Quality Analysis (DQA). This study investigated ten communities; five each from Edo and Delta states. Considering the geographical scope of the field of investigation and the numerous pockets of communities in the area, we selected to studying five communities each in-depth to enable us get best in the wake of the research duration and the

¹ Originally, the old Aniocha local government area was split into more local government councils for administrative convenience.

available resources at our disposal. Against this backdrop, we chose Ewohimi, Emu, Uromi, Irrua and Ekpoma in Edo State and Agbor, Asaba, Idumuje-Ugboko, Ubuluku and Akwuku-Igbo in Delta state. These towns were chosen in line with their nearness to our informants and interlocutors who complemented the efforts of the researchers who are also parts of some of the selected communities. Their musical ensembles and village groups were studied with a view to examining the contexts and contents of music in specific settings such as rituals, social events and funerals. These were the types of music collected and analysed. Their music was analyzed in terms of lyrics, performance style and context of performance.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Models

Quite a lot of scholars and corporate bodies have examined Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) from diverse viewpoints. These viewpoints range from its attributes to its definition. For example, the World Bank (2004) opined that indigenous knowledge is constitutive of the skills, insights and experiences of the people deployed to better their lives. According to Zegeye and Bamba (2006), indigenous knowledge as the local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. African countries, like other countries of the world, possess knowledge systems that are indigenous to them, which are believed by many to have the potential for development. Besides having a coordinated outlet for transferring such knowledge, some claim that Africa is the origin of knowledge or the foundational ideas that rule the world scientifically and technologically. From the point of definition, Rugambwa et al. (2023) remarked that indigenous knowledge systems refer to the Knowledge, innovation, and indigenous practices of local communities in Africa developed from experience over centuries and transmitted by the word of mouth from generation to generation. Examined from the point of characteristics, constituents or definition, indigenous knowledge system is all about a people's traditional practices that could be technological, religious, economic, agricultural, cultural and ethno-medical practices that are associated with any given people which is orally transmitted and has been practiced over a long period of time based on their traditions of origin (the cultural aspect is our primary concern). According to Aluede and Okakah (2022: 153), Indigenous Knowledge Models (IKM) is a spin-off of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). These models have synonymous status with peculiar universals which are religiously respected. In contemporary times, knowledge has grown to the extent that there is often a general assumption that such models are somewhat infantile and without empirical and medical basis. Such views are not only wrong but capable of truncating genuine investigation of a people's cultural practices.

Folksong and Song Text Studies

Folksong and its performance in Africa has received quite a lot of scholarly attention from time immemorial. In them is the culture of crafting songs in both civil and uncivil ways. Whichever way they appear, they are civil to entertain people, report good deeds, talk of knightly acts, express philosophical cum ethical views, or uncivil to address irregular conducts in the society, satirize certain conducts or draw attention to a trending departure from age-old and well-established cultural codes. While examining the peculiarity of African songs, Chernoff (1979: 94) observed that:

A crying African child is attracted and soothed by lullabies with rhythms that cut across the rhythm of the arms which rock and comfort him. African children play games and sing songs displaying a rhythmic character quite different from that of the games and songs of Western children, and African children learn to speak languages in which proper rhythmic accentuation and phrasing is essential to meaning.

In his view of African songs, folksongs perform multifunctional purposes. They are goal directed in the sense that they are calmativ, teach rhythm, entertain, teach morals and language, impart cultural values and engenders physical exercise. Chernoff (1979) further adds that in African contexts, the symbolic, esoteric or moral meanings of songs and dances are certainly significant, but common knowledge of these meanings is not as important as we often imagine it to be for the effective integration of a community in a musical context. Presenting a situation in Nigeria using the Tiv as a case of study, Keil (1979) talks of different attributes of songs of the Tiv; which include praise, teach, insult and entertain. These performances according to Keil, are associated with class distinction. The performer and the expected audience. Speaking specifically of their song texts, he observes that these songs are filled with onomatopoeic sexual connotations.

Among diverse cultures, song poetry is an important element in song creation. Relying on the Papua Guinean scenario, Feld (2012: 34), reveal that: 'Song poetry goes beyond pragmatic referential communication because it is explicitly organized by canons of reflectiveness and self-consciousness that are not found in ordinary talk'. He further observes the spontaneity in song creation in certain religious settings and maintain that their songs are context bound.

Feld's observation of Papua Guinean songs has very positive correlation with the African situation. There may be some variables responsible for this development. Even when we do not intend to discuss issues extraneous to this study, it is important that we refer to the works of Pagani et al. (2016) and Mondal et al. (2025) who found a

genetic semblance with Africa in present-day Papuans that suggests at least 2% of their genome originates from an even earlier, and otherwise extinct, dispersal of humans out of Africa. This may be the crux of connection of their functional use of songs.

A quick but detailed search of previous studies on folksongs in the last decade in sub-Saharan Africa has concentrated on the idea of documentation for posterity (Okafor, 2019; Udoh, 2024) their significance (Quan-Baffour, 2019) and functions (Okpokwasili, 2023), their history (Adesipe, 2023), gender stereotyping attack on womanhood (Aluede and Uche, 2023) and their didactic might (Adesipe, 2024) to mention a few. There is paucity of information on the nature and the inherent attributes of folksongs of these people under investigation. It is as a result of this background that this study seeks to examine some folksongs relying on relevant analytical theories through whose lens certain authoritative declarations could be made. For example, according to Zengin (2016: 301–302),

intertextuality provides an area of study of influences, adaptation and appropriation of texts into not only the written or literary texts but also the other media or non-literary fields. It is also a method for the analysis of any text constructed in culture and a way of interpretation of any cultural phenomenon correlated with non-literary arts and the current cultural epoch. Therefore, songs, movies, buildings, photography, paintings and sculptures can be viewed as texts having interdisciplinary connections with each other. Intertextuality becomes relevant in the study of these texts because it allows the examination and aggregation of these relations, connections and associations to be made between texts, social and cultural processes and contexts.

Consequently, this study relies on the three-dimensional approach to song text examination by Risdianto (2016) which are contextual, grammatical, and lexical dimensions.

The Concept of Child Bearing in Nigeria

According to Ajibade (2005: 103), Childbearing is one of the three principal things that the Yoruba people consider as the attributes of their vitality in life. Others are wealth and longevity. Therefore, they do not treat marriage with flippancy because of the importance that they attach to childbearing. Among the Igbo speaking Nigerians, child bearing is an important aspect that involves a lot of cultural activities which begins from when the traditional marriage is carried out. Everybody begins to look forward to seeing the new wife pregnant. This feeling and expectation is usually accompanied with prayers and high expectations and when this occurs, activities that follow are one of joyfulness. When children have not come into a family, it brings a lot of friction and unhappiness hence child bearing is an important occurrence in indigenous communities which are part of their cultural practices. Songs for child bearing are therefore meant to encourage, console and calm the couples. These songs act as medium of expectations and they address the situation they represent, both for consolation, expectation and for thanksgiving as well as joyfulness. In the song, Bhanemengbere, we see a clarion call for a collective celebration of the arrival of a new child. In most Nigerian communities, rubbing and spraying of white powder on the face, neck and forehead are indicative of great joy that may be occasioned by victory in elections, court cases, surviving a motor accident or the safe delivery of a new born baby. The song that goes with such facial makeups pointedly tells the onlookers the reason for the celebration.

Song 1a: Bhanemengbere (Help me spray native powder)

Text in Esan and English translation:

Bha ne men gbere	Help me spray native powder
Agbe bhike gbe bha alo	Spray both in the front and back
Bha ne men gbere	Help me spray native powder
Agbe bhike gbe bha alo	Spray both in the front and back
Agbe bhike gbe bha alo	Spray both in the front and back
Agbe bhike gbe bha alo	Spray both in the front and back

In a similar vein, the nursing and nurturing of the child in these communities is considered a collective affair. The song Onulu Akwa Nwa-e whose text is below rendered is quite explicit on this mutual collectivism.

Song 1b: Onulu akwa nwa-e (When one hears the cry of a baby)

Text in Igbo and English translation:

Onulu akwa nwa-e aa eh	When one hears the cry of a baby
Onye nulu akwa nwa	When one hears the cry of a baby
Bulu nkata	Don't ignore it
Obu ofu-onye mulu nwa	Is the child meant for only its mother?

The song above captures the way in which these indigenous communities see child bearing as a communal activity. This principle governs the woman's antenatal period – right from when a woman gets pregnant, through the periods of pregnancy, during labour to when the child is born. The song reflects on fertility, communal development, and cultural participation. It encourages everyone that hears the cry of a child to give the desired attention because every child belongs to all in the community. To ensure active community participation, these songs are usually in call and response form and they are sung by women to the accompaniment of handclapping and sometimes the gourd rattles. It is within this background that Ogbeide and Arzak (2022) note that, a childbirth event is a formal occasion which takes place before, during and after the delivery of a baby. It is believed that a child belongs to everybody in its community, hence the upbringing especially, morally is the job of every member of his/her community. Every member of the community is expected to partake also in the birthing of a child, both actively, psychologically and in other ways. Beyond fertility, child bearing or procreation is a sign of great achievement which calls for celebration and cultural display among communities especially if the child is a boy child. This is understandably so because in these two communities are agnatic and the firm grip of patrilineality has not been moved even by modern-day gender equity moves.

The Art of Living Right

According to Odunuga and Yekini-Ajenifuja (2018: 109),

Music has been found to be an instrument used in transforming lives because of its effectiveness as an agent and medium of transmitting information to the populace. It is used to pass crucial information, impart knowledge, soothe emotions, and affect lives. Music affects the ways and manner of its hearers positively....

In these two cultures under references, evidence abound as to how music is deployed as an instrument in admonishing everyone to be virtuous, live a life of integrity and avoid evil ways. Below are two songs, one drawn from each of the communities that advocate living right.

Song 2a: Olueminkholo (An evil doer)

Text in Esan and English translation:

Olueminkholo rie min	An evil doer is going
Urie urie no rie	Going, going, he will go
Oa re gbe ebhe gbo okhokho	Even when he sacrifices goats and hen
Urie urie no rie	Going, going, he will go

Song 2b: Mali nwanne-o (Know your sibling)

Text in Igbo and English translation:

Mali nwanne-o!	Know your sibling
Onye obuna mali-nwanne	Everybody relate with your sibling
Onye obuna mali-nwanne	Everyone recognize your siblings

The above song specifically calls on everyone to live well with both relations and neighbours in order to maintain peace amongst them and uphold cultural norms and values which hold a strong belief in positive living. The song is a social medium means of portraying law and orderlies as an indicator of cultural and communal life among communities. It is a song used during social activities, and other celebrations such as marriage, title taking and social aspect of burial ceremonies. The above song specifically calls on everyone to live well with both relations and neighbours in order to maintain peace amongst them and uphold cultural norms and values which hold strong belief in positive living and is portrayed through this song. The song is used as a social medium of portraying law and order as well as an indicator of cultural and communal life among communities. It is a song used during social activities, and other celebrations such as marriage, title taking and social aspect of burial ceremonies. The song being in a call-n-response form portrays the cultural commitment by the communities in encouraging one another to live in harmony and relate well with one another to encourage sustainable development.

The Healing Propensity of Music

It is considered vital to first of all identify what health is before addressing the concept of healing or music healing. For example, the World Health Organization (WHO), defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. In traditional African settings, health is not just about the proper functioning of bodily organs. Good health for the African consists of mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional stability of oneself, family members, and community; this integrated view of health is based on the African unitary view of reality. Good health for the African is not a subjective affair (Omonzejele, 2008:

120). Illness and its causation have been interrogated by scholars of different backgrounds and we do not consider any emphasis necessary here. From field investigation, both the Enuani and Esan people consider illness as a state of being in and uncomfortable and unnatural situation or condition. They all believe in multiple variables in illness causation and they also see social dysfunction as illness. Thus, long years of bachelorhood, spinsterhood, bareness, spirit possession and poor financial status even when someone is gainfully employed is considered as illness. To resolve such challenges calls for prescribed music healing. Put simply, healing is the process of making or becoming sound or healthy again. Beyond the application of medicine in the episode of healing, music enjoys a well-acclaimed testament of playing a major role in healing. In many Nigerian communities, there are music healing traditions whose origins are as old as human existence in these areas. For an instance, while commenting on the roles of music healers and music healing traditions in Nigeria, Nzewi (2002) observed that the music healer knows and manipulates the appropriate phonic energy for tackling the nature of an illness. This will include the instrumental tone, ensemble texture, the structural configurations of sound and form, also the individuality of the sick person. He disclosed further that the bad energy that disables normal tissue or soul resonance could be eventually stressed and dispelled. At the resolution of conflict, the embattled human body or soul needs to be further re-tuned to normal through the agency of music. The music healer knows and manipulates the appropriate phonic energy for tackling the nature of an illness. This will include the instrumental tone, ensemble texture, the structural configurations of sound and form, also the individuality of the sick person (Nzewi, 2002).

Why music heals has a strong physiological basis. In the first case, man is a biological creation that is made up of over seventy-five percent of liquids and sound travels faster in liquids in comparison with other matters. In the view of McClellan (1991: 38),

The human body consists of a large number of interlocking and interdependent vibrational systems of various frequencies and densities within an environment of fluids which are encased by a highly elastic perforated outer covering. Known as the physical body, it is the sum total of all the organisms of which it is made and a vehicle for spiritual evolution in the physical world. The substance of the body is a virtual symphony of frequencies, sounds and biological, mental and emotional rhythms in a state of continuous flow which seek to achieve and maintain the state of perfect balance and equilibrium.

From the physio-acoustic sense, music tonifies the body causing it to quiver, rock, role, sway, vibrate and lots more and in the course of these actions, neuropeptidergic activities occur enabling neurotransmitters to secrete biochemicals responsible for healing into the human brain. Attesting to the healing forces of music, Toko (2021: 1) aver that:

Music can be evocative, it can help release emotions which may be suppressed, and it can help transport someone towards a world of plenitude and well-being. There is music of a mystic nature which can call upon the intervention of supernatural or mystic forces, music which can be object-oriented, incantation music, meditative music which can provoke positive feelings, music for relaxation and music for healing and self-healing

These understanding underlines why these two Nigerian communities rely heavily on music in healing and as an accompaniment to other healing rituals. Among the Esan of Edo State, song number 3a is quite often performed for a convulsive child after rubbing on it palm kernel oil or native balm. This healing song whose song text is 'Do not carry, the wind does not carry the little dove' is laden with figurative expressions. In most Nigerian communities, the mother doves build nests on tree branches where they lay eggs and later hatch them. The nests of doves are quite unique because they are made of very sturdy materials. Thus, it is practically impossible to be blown off by wind storm. Within the healing context, the wind is seen as evil force/ death. The song is therefore saying that the evil forces / death capable of taking a sick child's life should not do so because since, the baby dove is never blown off its nest, this child should be healed and not die. Below is the full text and translation of the song.

Song 3a: Omidulu (The little dove)

Text in Esan and English translation:

Hae mu	Do not carry
Ahoho i muo mi idulu	The wind does not carry the little dove
Hae mu	Do not carry
Ahoho i muo mi idulu	The wind does not carry the little dove

Song 3b: Ahum adagbue mo (My body is strengthened)

Text in Igbo and English translation:

Ahum adagbue mo	My body is strengthened
Oh ahu muo o	Oh my body
Ahum adagbue mo	My body is strengthened

Oh ahu me-ee	Oh my body
Ahum adagbue mo	My body is strengthened
Oh ahum-ooo	Oh my body
Ife-ahum gi ada-muo	Why is my body strong
Bu maka osi-ike-o	It is because I am healed

The song 3b above is a didactic one – a song which has public health implications and importance. It is usually a repertoire sung by women while reflecting on the importance of healthy living through exercises, application of cleanliness and positive thinking. The song promotes healthy living in the wake of life's challenges such as physical, psychological, marital and social dysfunctions to mention a few. The song spurs individuals to strive and imbibe healthy living. It portrays the joy one derives when one is healthy.

The Idea of Death and Dying

The processes of dying and death itself are well-covered in the folksongs and proverbs of these people. There is a thin line between their songs and proverbs. This is so because most indigenous proverbs are the song texts that are put into use in their songs. From an examination of their songs, one finds their impressions of death in these pithy lines such as: Death knows no king. Death does not know a scanty village to spare. One cannot be sick to the extent of not being able to die. Death is no respecter of anybody. He who is not dead cannot be unduly exposed. Death is no problem; it is sickness who is the great destroyer. Everything done early is good except death. Death spoils all things. All of these allude to the fact that death truncates life. In the opinion of Ilogu (1983: 109), the philosophy behind the people's concern about life and death is that all the visible world and the invisible world beyond, the divine and the human, the past and the present, the living and the dead – all form a harmonious entity. Death is one of the dissonances of life disturbing this entity, but because the dead themselves belong to this harmonious entity all that is necessary is to ensure that the balance of life's harmony is not upset when one member of the group is transformed through death to another level of existence. Ilogu's position represents the Igbo construct of death to which Enuani belongs in particular and the entire Nigeria in general. While talking specifically of the Esan, Alli (2011: 25–26) opined that Death in Esan is regarded as a transition from one state of existence to another. It is the last of the rites of passage that a person has to go through on earth. Akin to Alli's position, the duo, Airoboman and Osagie (2016: 1) posited that: Death is the cessation of life. It is transition into a spirit world. It is mostly conceived as something bad, a monster, and its occurrence causes grills, anxiety, chill and fear in people. Death is an irreversible phenomenon, an irreversible cessation of life. It is this conception that gave rise to the song below.

Song 4a: Olenlen (The evening sun)

Text in Esan and English translation:

E e e	Oh, oh oh
Olenlen ri okun oe	The evening sun has gone to roost oh
Ogene rie o	It is truly going
Olenlen ri okun oe	The evening sun has gone to roost oh
E e e	Oh, oh oh
Olenlen ri okun oe	The evening sun has gone to roost oh
Ogene rie o	It is truly going

Song 4a above is sung for the elderly person who has passed away. The text reads that 'Oh, the evening sun has gone to roost. Oh, it is truly going, the evening sun has gone to roost'. Even when one feels that these traditional people are not learned in the Western sense, their choice of words and lexical construction is amazing. For example, in this song, the evening sun represents an elderly person who has reach an appreciable old age and going to roost implies that the elderly has died and gone to rest. Here we consider some elaboration necessary. In tropical Africa, the evening sun has a golden colour as against the early morning and mid-day sun whose colour is yellowish. Just like the white colour is well-respected among these people, the golden colour is also highly respected. Thus, the dead who is a octogenarian, a septuagenarian and octogenarian eminently deserve the performance of this song in his or her funeral.

Below is an Enuani song that interrogates death from different standpoints. It asks a plethora of rhetorical questions on the identity of death – is it hose, food, title, dress etc.

Song 4b: Onwu bulu uno (If death is a house)

Text in Igbo and English translation:

Onwu bulu uno	If death is a house
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Onye ge bide we?	Who will live in it?
Onwu bulu alo	If death is title
Onye ga kpada wa?	Who will take it?
Onwu bulu akwa	If death is a dress
Nye ge yideweo	Who will wear it?
Onwu bulu nni	If death is food
Onye ge-lhi de we-o?	Who will eat it?
Umu Adoba	Adoba's children
Ife me-na bhe-nyi-o	Something has happened to us
Umu Adoba	Adoba's children
Nmadu wu	Somebody has died-
Na b'enyi-o	In our community

In song 4b above, death is personified by the singers and this is also followed by rhetorical questions that do not wait nor expect answers. It therefore signifies the way death is viewed by the people. The questions that are rhetorical further reinforce the personification, implying that death, now dressed as a garment for example, can be worn by someone and these questions in the above song further create a thought-provoking and imaginative scenario where death is compared to things that are basic necessities for the living. In the context of the above song, death is an unacceptable phenomena. The song promotes the cultural norms and values attached to the mood and mode of presenting the state of a community when someone dies among them, whether young or old, and also considering the contributions of the deceased to the family and the community. Ogli and Okpeh (2021) noted that among the Idoma, the psychological pain and trauma that death brings to loved ones and how the community responds to an incidence of death is largely determined by the manner of the death and the age of the deceased at the time of death, whereas the Enuani communities see death as an instrument of total separation that puts an end between the deceased and his people despite their belief in life after death. The song is meant to mourn and also portray the negative effects of death in the community even if it is unavoidable. The series of questions asked the singers point to the inevitability of death.

The Idea of Reincarnation in Song Texts

In many Nigerian communities, reincarnation is one strong belief which the people tacitly believe in that their new-found faith has been unable to erase. The subject of reincarnation has received scholarly attention in the past two decades in Esan. The contributions of Izibili (2008), Ukpokolo (2012), Airoboma (2023), and Isaac (2024) are quite insightful. While giving this subject a profuse interrogation, Airoboma (2023: 45–46) succinctly maintained that

Reincarnation, called *iroso* in Esan, is the belief that, after death, the individual can be born again into the human family. There is no age range as to who reincarnates. Essentially, people are believed to reincarnate into the same lineage. This reincarnation may be immediate or delayed. The reason(s) for this immediacy or delay is not obvious. People reincarnate amongst others to reciprocate the privilege or affection they enjoyed from a particular person or family; to irritate a person or a family who hates the reincarnate in his previous existence, or to establish a union with such family, since it is now a child to the family. People may also reincarnate to punish a family for the harm or evil done the reincarnate by becoming sickly or deformed, or by becoming a burden to such a family in any other way.

In the opinion of Oyekunle and Mkhwanazi (2024: 3157), reincarnation is,

The belief that the human soul, or life-giving principle, is immaterial, immortal, and can occupy another body after death to continue living is held in many civilisations. This idea requires the understanding of a human being as a mix of material (body) and immaterial (soul) elements, and of death as the annihilation of the former.

The positions above as presented, capture the entire gamut of what reincarnation is to both Esan and Enuani people. In times of frameup or terrible lies and unfounded rumours that are capable of threatening mutuality in the community, women in a given area (a very common practice in Esan) often dance to the market at midnight to go and openly curse the perpetrators of such vices while children and men are indoors. Song 5a below is an apt example of the song often sung during such ritual observances. We are probably going to look beyond the efficacy of such curses because it is presently outside the remit of this research rather we will be examining the context of performance which we have already established and tease the lexicological craftsmanship employed in the composition. The song reads: 'Whoever has told this lie, whoever has told this lie, will not come with penis, will

not come with vagina; will be a neuter'. Here, we see suspense, we see crescendo in the logical and systematic ordering of the texts. From the lens of the people, we see the idea of reincarnation to be firmly rooted in their cosmology hence, it being said that whoever that has told this lie in his or her next earth life, will neither come as male or female but rather as a neuter. Below is the song in reference.

Song 5a: Otonotana (Whoever has told this lie)

Text in Esan and English translation:

Ono to no ta na	Whoever has told this lie
Ono to no ta na	Whoever has told this lie
Ohi re ekue de	Will not come with penis
Ohi re edin de	Will not come with vagina
Deghe deghe o ha ye	Will be a neuter

Song 5b: Oyenye nwa ada-oba ana-o (Oyenye child of adaoba is gone)

Text in Igbo English translation:

Oyenye nwa-doba ana-o	Oyenye child of adaoba is gone
Nwa-ado ba n'aba olima	Adaoba's child has gone to her rest
Oga nata kwa-o	He/she will come back
Ona be-we-o	He/she has gone to the ancestors

In a similar strain, the song above portrays the strong belief of the Enuani communities in life after. Some of their songs uphold these cultural beliefs and practices inherited from their fore-fathers. Song 5b gives a clear view to the community's belief in reincarnation and life after death. It presents this belief in songs and further uses it to console the bereaved. Within the context of this song, Ada-oba means the child of royalty/king and in as much as every female is addressed as Ada, in this case, Adaoba is regarded as unisex. The song is usually sung and performed by the women in the community. In the song we are first told that the dead has gone, has gone to rest and will also come back. Given a critical examination, from the song text, we could decipher that death to this people a phase of human existence. Firstly, when someone dies, and is interred, it means it has gone to the eternal home to rest. Secondly, after some rest, the soul comes back for another earthly life. While we do not have the capacity to verify the veracity of such claims, one thing however stands out clearly that through a careful study of these communities' folksongs, their beliefs could be elicited from them.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Judging by the nature, scope, relevance and context of performance of the ten Esan and Enuani indigenous folksongs selected, discussed and analysed for this study, the following findings are summed up below to validate the thrust of this essay.

- i. Esan and Enuani folksongs are indeed indigenous to their people and societies. This is however not in consonance Seeger's (2010) view where he noticed that in most countries (including Nigeria), there is no legal recourse for traditional societies upset about the use of their music. Musical rights are complex, and protecting musicians and indigenous people from exploitation will not be a simple task. Thus some traditional melodies drawn from folksongs often get caught up in such webs of anonymity without any form of credits to their original owners.
- ii. The folksongs are well-known by the communities that originated them (Clark and Wylie, 2021; Rivera, 2021). This is in part contrary to Allen and Cecily's (2009) position. According to him, as technologies continue to develop and enter the market place at an exponential rate, current laws and guidelines struggle to keep up and protect rights holders while encouraging innovation. Thus, Ogisi et al. (2019) shared thoughts on folksongs and their links with communities, cultures, and societies tend to grant the genre any reserved right. In Nigeria with the evolution of the roles of polyglot musicians, originators of some folksongs have become difficult to decide. Much earlier, Seeger (2010) opined that indigenous songs are often considered public domain and a mainstream musician can turn them into individual property.
- iii. Most times the original composers of the folksongs are unknown and no peculiar person or group can lay claim to ownership, composition right or copyrights. This view aligns with the opinion of Ofosu (1989: 63) when he maintained that:

Folksong refers to any traditional song which is of obscure and indeterminate antiquity, but has passed into general currency and acceptance. By implication therefore the origin, in terms of composers or

creators is not known. However, it is always closely bound to a culture within which it fulfils a positive functional purpose.

- iv. The songs are timeless with universal meanings because the context of performance is part of the people's existence. For example, there will always be childbirths, deaths, traditional marriages, age grade ceremonies, family thanksgiving, lazy members of community and people who are hardworking, women's adultery, social deviants, community members with exemplary conduct, festivals, initiation, chieftaincy title taking, etc. Obviously, these avenues provide basis the performance of folksongs. To think that these songs will fade away anytime soon is delusive because are further being parodied and used in many forms (Ogisi et al., 2019).

The views above is also supported by Ikumapayi (2023), when he observed that folksongs are agents of cultural transmission, a commodity that is always needed and thus cannot be abandoned bur always alive in the lives of the people .It is in this connection that Aluede (2024) maintained that it is no longer safe to think some of Esan folksongs are extinct because they reincarnate in new forms. It is this reincarnation which provides resource materials for folk guitar and highlife bands and art music among others.

- v. Folksongs in Esan and Enuani are not only for entertainment, they are of different genres performed for different occasions and purposes in the cultural life of the communities. The use of folksongs beyond entertainment is also well-attested to by Ibekwe (2014) when she admitted that among the Igbo people of Nigeria, music is used to teach morals, correct ills in the society because music makers perform the roles of gatekeepers by being community watch. The above view is further supported by Agu and Okpara (2019:160) when they observed that among the Igbo, it is believed that music-making among the children serves, not only as a medium for entertainment and social relationship, but as an intricate part of the development of their mind, body and soul.
- vi. Some of the indigenous folksongs evoke laughter, some are social commentaries, some laced with deep philosophies, some are didactic, some are celebrative, some are dirges, some are exaltations, some are lampoons, some are cynical, etc. This is one of our personal findings which makes this study fresh and it correlates with the view of Keil (1979), when he talked of different attributes of songs of the Tiv to include praise, teach, insult, entertain, and are associated with class distinction.
- vii. The meanings of the songs are derived from the figurative and literal use of language in the lyrics of the folksongs. The way songs are used and interpreted in these two communities aligns with models of Risdianto's (2016) three-dimensional model of song analysis which entailed the contextual, the grammatical and semantic dimensions to provide our readers figurative and literal dimensions in the lyrics of the folksongs chosen.
- viii. A study of Esan and Enuani folksongs reinforce a deep sense of indigenous knowledge systems and models in terms of their representational function and stylistics and in terms of providing knowledge of some of the cultural beliefs and practices of the people and their cosmogony. Beyond entertainment, in folksongs Schippers (2018), Quan-Baffour (2019), Okpokwasili (2023), and Adesipe (2024) aver that their salient extra-musical functions, history and culture can be deciphered.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we examined ten folksongs that were drawn from ten communities in Edo and Delta states of Nigeria. Through a careful selection of songs, the study did a textual analysis of the selected songs. It has been noted first of all that every community's indigenous knowledge system is unique because it is tied to their environment, traditions and culture in general terms. Such indigenous knowledge encompasses all they are involved or engaged in as a community and their folksongs are quite eclectic. They encompass myriads of subjects. The study of the select folksongs reveals that the people's folksongs are intertwined with the indigenous knowledge systems which encapsulates their history, philosophy, religious belief system, culture, idea of health etc., philosophy, religious belief system, culture, idea of health remain the thrust of this paper. It is thus evident that one can trace these knowledge systems through the communities' folksongs, which are also an integral part of their culture. Music therefore, is a very powerful tool that communities have had to rely on to exemplify their cultural heritage. It is thus reasoned that through a thorough and systematic research into the people's folksongs as 'frozen cultural magma' the indigenous belief systems and practices of communities can be unveiled.

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