Women's Participation In The Production Of Drums In Aloyinlapa Drumming Institute, Lagos, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Historically, in traditional Yoruba societies, women were restricted from participating in the production of traditional drums due to the patriarchal nature of the Yoruba culture and tradition. This is evident in existing studies on Yoruba traditional drum practices, which have largely focused on the *Àyàn* family lineage, usually dominated by men. Despite the importance of women in the musical landscape, the traditions have led to a significant setback for women's involvement in the production of traditional drums from time immemorial. On this note, this paper examines the emergence of Alóyinlápá African Drumming Institute, where women are trained in the construction of Yoruba traditional drums, such as Bata, Dundun, and Sakara drums in urban spaces. Through the Ethnographic method, the paper also explores the methods of training women in the production of traditional drums and the materials used at Alóyinlápá African Drumming Institute. The paper hopes to contribute to the cultural, social, and economic empowerment of women in contemporary societies while establishing the roles of training centers in

the preservation and sustainability of Yoruba indigenous knowledge in contemporary society. Findings revealed that the emergence of established training centers such as Alóyinlápá African drumming institute in Lagos has created an avenue for women to learn the production of drums, for social, economic, and cultural empowerment. Therefore, stakeholders, including the Ministry of Women Affairs, should embrace this initiative and collaborate with established training centers to empower women in the production of traditional drums to preserve and transmit the knowledge system for future generations.

Keywords: Alóyinlápá, Tradition, Women, Yoruba, production of the drum.

Introduction

The diversity of Indigenous knowledge systems across Africa exemplifies the distinction of cultural, geographical, and socio-ethnic dimensions, reflecting numerous unique philosophies, practices, and traditions within and across different societies. In southwest Nigeria, the Yoruba ethnic group is known for its masterpiece of tangible and intangible heritage, passed from one generation to another through oral methods. This is reflected in their traditional drumming system predominated practiced by men due to patriarchal ideology and mythology that led to significant setbacks for women's participation from time immemorial. Euba (1990) affirms that due to notions of patriarchy that tend to encourage an imbalance of power based on gender, the Yoruba music profession has predominantly foregrounded men at the expense of women (Pg.27).

In support of Euba's assertion, Samuel (2014), describes the patriarchal nature of Yorùbá society, which is generally expressed in asymmetrical power relations between men and women, as evident in several of its traditional institutions and practices, such as kingship, masquerades, and cults''(P.7). The Yorùbá Indigenous belief system sees women as a supporting agency rather than a rivalry, which over time undermined their capacity in the social, economic, political, and musical landscape. Omibiyi-Obidike (1989) affirms that

> women in contemporary Nigeria feature prominently in the production and performance of music, albeit within specified cultural limits. Female musicians in Nigeria are mostly singers

> since drumming or playing any traditional instruments apart from rattles is usually exclusive to men. She also notes that female musicians have distinguished themselves as soloists as well as leaders of singing and dancing groups and have operated as performers in the various categories of music (p.103).

Despite the patriarchal notion that prohibits women's involvement, and looking at the trends as exemplified in Aloyinlapa African Drumming Institute in Lagos, women are now prowess in the production of traditional drums such as Bata and Dundun drums for social and economic empowerment, making this work significant. The increase in the participation of women in the production of traditional drums in contemporary Yoruba society has become increasingly evident, reflecting a significant shift in gender discrimination, challenging age-long male-dominated traditions to enrich culture and the musical landscape. This study also recognizes the artistic innovations woven by women in the construction of traditional drumming, It underscores the significance of their creative agency in the sustainability of cultural heritage and in fostering social cohesion. Through the life experiences of the women trainers and trainees in Aloyinlapa African Drumming Institute, the study discusses the training procedure and the materials used in the construction, and how it empowers. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to break the silence about women's involvement in the production of Bata and Dundun drums in Yoruba land. The specific objective is to ascertain the relevance of the training to their musical careers and economic empowerment in the urban space of Lagos. Women's involvement in contemporary Yoruba society has become increasingly evident, and their contributions have not only shaped the musical landscape but also served as a catalyst for empowerment and social change. The construction of traditional drums has gradually become a medium through which women express their musical skills and careers, as they venture into the production of Bata and Dundun drums to challenge the age-old male-dominated musical profession.

The Life of Akeem Atanda Ayantunji Aloyinlapa

Akeem Atanda Ayantunji Alóyinlápá is the founder of Alóyinlápá, African Drumming Institute in Lagos. He was born in Oyo Ile, Tapa, in Old Oyo Empire,

Nigeria, in 1978 to the family of Mr and Mrs Shittu Àdìó Àyánléye Alóyinlápá, a well-known traditional drummer, who was the Are Ilu of all traditional drummers in southwest Nigeria between the years 1997-2019. Alóyinlápá was given to his forefather, a well-known traditional drummer who played for many musicians and artists during his lifetime, including the famous musician and artist, the late Herbert Ogunde. Alóyinlápá connotes a sweet sound from his arm (*A-LÓ-YIN-LÁ-PÁ* – one who has honey in his arms). Mr. Akeem Alóyinlápá migrated to Lagos from the Tapa area of Oyo State for a better quality of life and improved social and economic prospects. His father, who had worked in various musical bands and tours with musicians in many Southwest States, including Lagos State, encouraged him to relocate to the city for a more profitable career, Unfortunately, he could not get a better job than expected because of his low academic qualifications. Therefore, he worked as a commercial bus conductor, dry cleaner, and bakery attendant for many years, but he was unsatisfied and unfulfilled; this prompted him to return to the village and get his bàtá drum and dùndún drum to Lagos.

His first engagement as a drummer in Lagos, his love for Yoruba culture and tradition, and the money he realized made him think of starting a business of repairing and training people on how to drum. He started the Alóyinlápá, Drumming Institute in October 1996 in Agege, Lagos, which became an avenue to sustain Yoruba culture; he observed that many of those who left as drummers had abandoned the profession and pursued another form of business. He also shows concern for some traditional drums that have been abandoned because people are no longer playing them; one of the instruments is the gúdúgúdú drum. Mr. Akeem Alóyinlápá is a member of the Association of Professional Drummers of Nigeria (APDON) Lagos chapter and served as secretary to the association. Also, a member of the bàtá dùndún Drummers Association of Lagos. Mr. Akeem Àyàntunji is happily married to Mrs Fasilat Folake Adunni Ayantoyinbo Alóyinlápá, and their marriage is blessed with four children: Rokeeb Ayandiwura Alóyinlápá, Zainab Asake Ayantayo Alóyinlápá, Faruk Ayangbemisola Alóyinlápá, and Samod Akorede Ayanbukola Alóyinlápá. Mr. Akeem Àyàntunji Alóyinlápá attended Ilado Baptist Primary School, Iseyin, Oyo State, between 1988 to 1994. He also proceeded to Muslim Secondary Grammar School, Iseyin, Oyo State, from 1995 to

2000. After his Secondary school Education. Akeem Àyàntunji was unable to further his education because his father was not financially buoyant.



Researcher and Mr. Akeem Ayantunji Aloyinlapa

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theory of" **feminization of the labor force " first used by Guy Standing of the International Labour Organisation in 1989. He observed that around the world, there has been a rise in female labor force participation and a relative, if not absolute, fall in men's employment, as well as a ''feminization'' of many jobs traditionally held by men.** Akorso (2016) theorizes the subject as a framework for analysis, explaining the theory of feminization of labor as the shift in gender roles and sex roles and the incorporation of women into a group or a profession once dominated by men, as it relates to the workplace. This theory is germane as women are involved in the construction and production of traditional drums, which has been a male-dominated profession, facilitated

by *Aloyinlapa* Drumming Institute in Lagos. On the other hand, the main concern of this theory is the feminization of the workforce in the presence of a challenging male-dominated profession that happens daily. This theory becomes relevant as a premise to gain new insights into the feminization of the labor force in the teaching and learning of the construction and production of traditional Yoruba drums in the urban area.

Women in the African Context

A woman is a female gender, counterpart to a man, typically characterized by biological and physiological attributes, saddled with lighter work and responsibility due to patriarchal ideology that sees women as a weaker vessel. Gender discrimination, especially among the Yoruba ethnic group, started right from birth, as families prefer a male child over a female child, and some went to the extent of denying their female child quality education, exposing her to inhuman and difficult conditions. In most cases, women's career development is not taken seriously, which makes them vulnerable to vices, and negative treatment with stereotypes and biased judgments that undermine their potential, capabilities, and contribution to society.

Family is the first point of call for women; thus, it serves as their natural environment where their potential has been undermined and subjected. Women have been underscored right from home, for example, a girl child is consciously raised for house chores; to frequently stay at home to take care of the house, while the boy child is allowed to be socialised. In other words, there is more concentration on the character of a girl's child rather than her skills and career.



Typical African Women
Source: Google picture

This tradition is also reflected in the way they are been treated in society as a lower being rather than a counterpart to a man. Despite the women's crucial role in shaping society and their active contribution to various aspects of humanity, such as social, political, cultural, religious, and musical landscapes. However, within these age-old practices, the role of women has often been relegated to the background, with their contributions grossly neglected. This was a result of the patriarchal nature of many African societies. This phenomenon has led to a significant setback in their endeavors, which, by prudence, will be beneficiary to the cultural, social, political, economic, and musical landscape.

Nevertheless, in recent times, despite the dearth of knowledge on women's involvement in Yoruba traditional drumming practices, new Institutes like the Alóyinlápá African Drumming Institute are opening new ways to engage and preserve Yorùbá drumming practices among young women, to be trained in the act of drumming, performance, construction, and production of traditional drums in the city of Lagos. It is obvious that Women, however, are born with the potential to multitask, performing various roles as wives and mothers, and also explore their potential in the musical landscape. Now, women acquiring Indigenous knowledge are involved in the construction and production of drums such as the Bata drum,

Dundun drum, and Sakara drums, and for social and economic benefits, having in mind that women and money are entwined.

Women's Participation in the Production of Traditional Drum

The production of African traditional drums showcases the unique skills and wisdom of African ancestors, which is expressed through various forms of art and science, passed down from one generation to another. Ajayi (2017) affirms that

> before the tree earmarked for making Dundun drums is cut, oracular divination is made to ascertain the suitability for the purpose. Sacrifices are made to decipher the gender of the tree before it is cut. Propitiation is equally made to Ayanagalu, the god of drums (p.8).

Euba (1990) asserts that "few rites, taboos, and rituals are associated with the construction of the Dundun drum" (p.45). The explanation for this phenomenon could be attributed to the strenuous activities carried out during the construction process. These activities encompass the rigorous process of wood cutting and crafting to attain the desired shape for the drums, among other related tasks. In more recent times, the traditional practices of Bata and Dundun drumming have evolved to encompass a wider range of social and economic functions.

This evolution has led to a shift away from the exclusive training and construction of these drums within the Ayan family lineage. Now, individuals outside of the *Ayan* family are also involved in the training and construction processes. This is evident in the *Aloyinlapa* African drumming institute, as the institute trains women on how to repair and construct traditional drums like Bata, Dundun, Sakara, Agogo, and Akuba.

Training Procedure

The art of drumming is a skill developed over a lifetime among the Yoruba people. Ajay (1987), in Sasan (2014) ''drumming is an art that requires skill and perfection that cannot be attained without adequate training. (p.40). Alóyinlápá African Drumming Institute provides an opportunity to train young and old, men and women, to learn the art of playing traditional drums, the production of traditional

drums. In an oral interview with Mr. Akeem Àyàntunji Alóyinlápá (2023), the founder of Alóyinlápá African Drumming Institute, explains that the traditional training of drummers in Yoruba land has changed drastically, civilization and technology advancement have contributed to its acceptability by the young people. The traditional drumming practices and activities that surround the training of traditional drummers can be found online on social media platforms, which makes it accessible to the general public. He further explains that the training of traditional drummers has been commercialized, and the training is not done in a confined place but in a public domain to attract the younger generation.

The training at Alóyinlápá African Drumming Institute is divided into two categories. The first categories are called the theory class, while the second is called the practical class. The training is held every Monday to Friday, except during official holidays. According to one of the female participants, Darasimi (2023) states that they are expected to come for rehearsal every day of the week. Although there are specific days which are Tuesday and Thursday of every week, on these two days participants are trained on a particular rhythmic pattern which they will practice and perfect before the next class the participants over time going through the training every week, they add to their knowledge. Omibiyi (1975) in Titus (2006) explains that musical universalism, which remarks that every culture has a system of introducing members into its musical tradition. This is applicable in the training of traditional drummers at Alóyinlápá African Drumming Institute through apprenticeship. One of the first methods adopted at the institute in the training process is that of conscious imitation, often expressed as "do what I do". By this method, the instructor, who is usually an expert, takes the drum and sets the example to be imitated by the participants.

Systematically, the training is done in phases as the learner practices what the instructor instructs him or her, which may include a technique of changing tones on the drum by adjusting the tension placed on the membrane with an arm or stick. As soon as a certain level of mastery is achieved, the learner thereafter attempts to put the phrases or variations together and use them during performance. With a good deal of imitation and steady repetition during the training session, personal practice at other times, and participation during outing performance, a higher level

of mastery is gradually achieved. Moreover, the Observation method is also in use in the Alóyinlápá African drumming institute. By this method, the participants observe the master drummers during performances. Through diligent observation in a context of organized performance and some things at informal sessions, rehearsing, the participants gained dexterity and drew freely from the master's artistry to express through improvisation. The mastery of traditional drumming in Africa is determined by their involvement and sensitivity to several aspects of the art. The participants must demonstrate an ability to observe and imitate the rhythm as observed during rehearsal. Euba (1990) discusses the nature and methods of training Dundun musicians in Africa and notes that''

> The training of the Dundun artist begins as early as the age of five, or as soon as he can understand what drumming is all about. The first instrument he is given to play is the Kanango, which he uses as a toy. The kanango, being the smallest of the hourglass drums, is, of course, suited to the stature of the young player. After toying with the kanango, proper training begins with the gudugudu. From the Gudugudu, the pupils proceed in turn to isaaju, Ikehin, and Kerikeri (P. 104).

Going by Euba's assertion, research revealed that the aforementioned methods of training dundun drummers have not been in practice in this contemporary Yoruba society. Mr. Akeem Ayantunji Alóyinlápá (2023) in an oral interview explains that this process can only be achieved now if the participants come from the Ayan family, whereby the set of drums is already available, except that having the set of drums now is capital intensive, no participant would be able to avoid it. However, at Alóyinlápá African Drumming Institute, the training of drummers starts by introducing the participants to sekere (Maracas) or Agogo (Gong), which helps him or her to keep a steady rhythm for a long time, after which the participants are introduced to the main drums gradually. Mr. Ebunlomo (2023) shed more light by saying that we are in the jet age, and people learn faster due to the help of technology. Holistically, the participants are not just taught to play, construct, or perform traditional music, they are exposed to the historical background of traditional drumming.




Female artisan-in-training repairing dùndún drum velum.

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According to Nketia (1988), Samuel (2012), affirmed that in discussing the nature and methods of training of traditional musicians in Africa, it is noted that although the acquisition of musical knowledge by individuals is in slow stages, nevertheless, this practice tends to widen his experience of his musical culture through the social group into which he is gradually absorbed and through the activities in which he takes part. In supporting this assertion, in an interview with Aduni Balogun, Miss. Adeoluwa confirms that the training procedure involves steady and gradual exercises that involve participation, observation, imitation, and practice.



Aduni Balogun constructing a new Omele Bata drum.

Explaining the process of training to the researcher, Ayantunji Aloyinlpa a Bata drummer and the convener of Aloyinlapa African Drumming Institute, in an oral interview, says, in the first instance, the participant learns about the art of drumming, the historical background of the drums, the parts of the drum, and a brief explanation of the material used in construction. He said that the training usually takes place in the afternoon because many of the trainees are primary and secondary school students. Although the training does not take place within the four walls of a school system, it is systematically organized to accommodate trainees who are still going to school. Olorunsogo (2019), Olaniyan (1993), and Ogli (2002) posited that music training in the Dundun ensemble is most often through apprenticeship. The trainee must follow the laid-down (oral) syllabus of gradual progression from one drum to another, depending on appreciable mastery(p.38). The training is often done through oral methods. The art and science of the Dundun drum are purely African wisdom, locally developed, with the materials sorted locally without any form of material from the Western world.

Materials used in the Construction of a Traditional Drum.

The materials are usually obtained from the soil, wood, and animals. Popoola (2021) posits that traditional drums are musical instruments made from African resources, usually materials from nature, like wood, gourds, turtle shells, animal horns, animal skin, thread, and many other materials locally available. Oyindamola Adebisi affirms and highlights some materials and tools used to construct the Dundun drum.

There are common materials used in the construction and production of traditional drums. The following materials are common materials used for the Dundun and Bata drum.



Animal Skin (Awo ole)

This is used as the velum to cover the surface of the wooden hourglass. It is usually obtained from a fetus's goat skin.

Osan Ilu

This is another major material used in the construction of the Dundun drum. It is used as the tension cord. Osan Ilu is made from goat skin and is usually used to control the drum's tone.





Ogan

Ogan is another material used in the construction of the Dundun drum. It is obtained from an animal. Ogan is like tuning a rope around the leather ring within the surface membrane.

Odo or Igi Ilu

The wooden resonator, which accommodates other materials.



Ora Eran

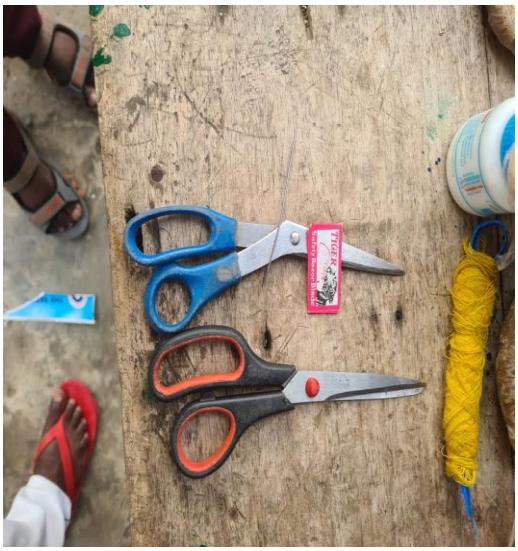


Egi

This is another material used in the construction of the dundun drum.



Tools for construction include;



Scissors and blades; used for cutting.



Perforator: used to create a hole



Tread and needle



Fufu and Top bond

Conclusion

In conclusion, women's participation in the production of traditional drums will not only bring about the sustainability of cultural heritage but also serve as a powerful tool for skill acquisition and social and economic empowerment. This gives them the opportunity and encourages them to pursue their dreams beyond the confines of tradition. The involvement allows women to challenge societal norms, break gender barriers, and gain a sense of self-confidence and pride. This paper explores the contemporary system of traditional drumming practices in the urban space of Lagos among the women in the Aloyinlapa African drumming institute. The study discussed women's involvement not only in the playing of Bata and Dundun drums but also in the repairs and building of new drums for economic empowerment. This paper concludes that the patriarchal notion forbidding women among the Yoruba people from playing traditional drums is either no longer available or is not effective in the urban spaces of Lagos, or civilization has overwhelmed its effect.

Recommendations

Based on the study carried out, the following recommendations are made:

1. Stakeholders, including the Ministry of Women Affairs, should embrace this initiative and collaborate with established training centres to empower more women in the construction and production of traditional drums for the preservation and transmission of the knowledge system for future generations.

2. Government and Private individuals should encourage women to acquire skills in traditional knowledge, as it helps their cognitive thinking and affects their social life by acquiring skills and providing job opportunities in vocational careers.

3. Public and private individuals should support the practice, promotion, and preservation of Yoruba traditional culture through the construction and production of traditional drums by women for posterity's sake.

4. The public and private organizations should support Aloyinlapa Drumming Institute by providing a bigger venue for the training.

5. Public and private institutions and primary and secondary schools should encourage the use of traditional drums in schools. Tertiary institutions should embrace this initiative and create centers for traditional knowledge systems, whereby traditional instruments are taught to preserve Yoruba cultural heritage for

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