



### Indigenous Knowledge System and African Songs, Dance and Drumming as Information Source in the Society

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#### Abstract

*This paper seeks to heighten awareness on the need to indigenous knowledge system (IKS) and African songs, dance and drumming as information source in the society as a body of knowledge acquired by the local people through accumulation of both formal and informal experience, including understanding the environment in a given culture. However, indigenous knowledge in Africa helps to meet the broader objectives of the society by conserving the environment and, developing sustainable agriculture and ensuring food security. Firstly, its protection encourages the maintenance of traditional practices and lifestyle. Secondly, it plays a vital role in the ecological relationship and natural resources management by providing the cumulative wisdom passed on from generation to the next. Lastly, songs, dance and drumming are the purest and commonest forms of emotional and psychological and social entertainment in African world and realm in all cultures. It also generates rhythmic movement often go hand in hand, in a complex mutual enhancement and ethic communication. Lot needs to be done in this area and more researches have to be undertaken in indigenous knowledge. IKS needs to be documented and preserved properly to facilitate retrieval and dissemination.*

**Keywords:** *Indigenous Knowledge System, Oral Tradition, Information Source, Africa*

#### 1.1 Introduction

It is commonly said that African culture is basically oral; this is due to the fact that the components of our culture are passed from generation to generation through the words of mouth. African Librarians and Archivist most times, have professional challenges of documentation and preservation of oral archives, which is a veritable source of information in the library and the society. Indigenous knowledge has long been misinterpreted or frowned upon in African

particularly Nigeria, however, it is just recently that indigenous knowledge began to gain attention in African society due to enlightenment on indigenous knowledge in Africa. African culture plays a vital role in the ecological relationship and natural resources management, for instance conserving the environment, developing sustainable agriculture and ensuring food security, while its protection, encourages the maintenance of traditional practices and lifestyle. It also helps to meet the broader objectives of the

society; in addition, it provides the cumulative wisdom passed on from generation to the next. To indigenous people; knowledge and ecosystem plays a crucial role in protecting their environment and their communities rely upon it for disaster risk reduction. The revival and application of such knowledge and practices can support ongoing efforts to increase the resilience of coastal communities. Indigenous knowledge systems make a significant contribution to sustainable development through conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity .i.e. a clear need to strengthen indigenous knowledge practices and cultures by protecting and recognizing the value of such systems and preventing their loss emerged.

Indigenous knowledge can also be referred to as cultural knowledge, environmental knowledge, community knowledge, local knowledge, traditional knowledge, farmer's or pastoralists knowledge, folk knowledge, traditional wisdom, traditional science, people's knowledge and also as a sub-set of traditional knowledge. According to George (2017) indigenous knowledge is the basis for local level decision – making in food security, human and animal health, education, and other vital economic and social activities. It is the systematic body of knowledge acquired by local people through accumulation of both formal and informal experience, including understanding of the environment in a given culture. For knowledge to be important, valid and reliable, it had to be lasting. Knowledge is universally tacit, and this is a challenge as a result of its fragile and often intangible nature.

## **2.1 Review of Literature**

### **2.2 Indigenous Knowledge**

Is the unique knowledge confined to a particular culture or society, this knowledge is generated and transmitted by communities, overtime, in an effort to cope with their own

agro-ecological and socio-economic environments. The 1972 standing conference of African University Libraries Western Area (SCANLWA) resolutions are further evidence that for indigenous knowledge to be important and reliable for research, collection and preservation are very necessary, because, it has not been easy especially in the area of traditional medicine. In most Nigerian Societies, this aspect of culture is mostly restricted to families and kindred. It is a herculean task trying to compel or coerce the practitioners to divulge their medicinal secrets. Most other communities are known for taking care of psychotic patients. This type of knowledge is perceived as exclusively preserves of designated groups and periods of apprenticeship may not be tolerated outside of the group. The problem of indigenous knowledge is the method of dissemination. This is better appreciated against the backdrop of the fact that indigenous knowledge is individually based. In most African Societies, the priest comes from certain lineages, and only they can serve the deities, as noted by (Anafulu, 2005).

Most times, the priest double as village heads and succession goes to the oldest living member of the lineage. It is the same with other aspect of culture like dance, food and crafts. The locals monopolize these cultural values and stubbornly resist any form of documentation. Their only fear is that of losing grip of their cultural heritage. Since, it is a truism that a people's culture is adequate for the users; the issue of monopoly is disturbing. For the fact that indigenous knowledge is powerful source of information, the locals are not willing to share their knowledge, probably because knowledge is power. This is better appreciated in the words of Kalu (2002), who observed that, organizations, companies or individuals with marginally better information and systems tend to pull ahead of their competitors.

However, the fear of cultural extinction, misrepresentation and outright theft, may be assuaged by the introduction of information technology. Electronic preservation of oral archives, oral history or indigenous knowledge ensures cultural continuity, and to some extent guards against cultural imperialism.

Indigenous information systems are dynamics and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems. Grenier (2001) defines indigenous knowledge as “the unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around specific conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular geographical area.

### **2.3 Indigenous Knowledge Systems**

These are the couple set of knowledge and technologies existing and developed around specific conditions of populations and communities indigenous to a particular geographic area. Sometimes it is also seen as specific systems of knowledge and practice, developed and accumulated over generations within a particular cultural group and region, and as such are unique to group and region.

#### **Attributes of Indigenous Knowledge Systems**

The attributes are given from the definitions of indigenous knowledge as specific systems of knowledge and practice, developed and accumulated over generations within the culture or society. The attributes are:

- i. Indigenous knowledge,
- ii. Technology,
- iii. A particular cultural group practicing and developing indigenous knowledge and
- iv. Generations long experienced.

In the simplest form, indigenous knowledge system can be defined as knowledge systems, that are composed of informal knowledge and

technologies and which are practiced, accumulated and evolved over generations within a period or specific region, to epitomized the locality with that specific knowledge. Most importantly, indigenous knowledge system is a representation of the relationship between indigenous peoples and their surroundings.

#### **The Sources of Indigenous Knowledge System**

The sources include:

- i. Indigenous people,
- ii. Technology,
- iii. Community environment and
- iv. Community gate keepers, databases, website, and people who manage and codifies indigenous knowledge system.

In addition, they are the maps of how indigenous people manipulate the indigenous knowledge which have built up, grown experience and practiced for generations. Indigenous knowledge systems are especially important for the poor, as they are dependent on them for their day to day needs in terms of food security, health, education and natural resource management. Examples of some of the indigenous knowledge systems are traditional indigenous knowledge systems for environmental management; health systems and ecological systems. However, indigenous knowledge system means the entire infrastructure needed to collect, generates, archive, maintain and disseminate indigenous knowledge including human technology, information, financial and physical resources.

#### **Indigenous Knowledge System and Africa Interest**

Because of increase in accepting the fact that knowledge is indispensable for social, economic and technological development and the importance of indigenous knowledge in the sustainable

development has been acknowledged due to the fact that community around African has some sort of indigenous knowledge that has attracted global attention. Although the western knowledge system still dominates the African culture and the society and as such the world especially African today even, the scientists, librarian and information professionals are beginning to accept that the concept of sustainable development can never be fully appreciated without including indigenous knowledge in the development process.

#### **2.4 African Songs, Dance and Drumming as Part of Indigenous Knowledge Systems**

In general terms, the lyric poem is a short personal poem composed to be sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument such as the lyre, lute, guitar, gong or rattle. It is worded music or music in worded form in a rhythmic mode. Its subject matter is very often of a very personal nature and expressed usually in a language of full of emotion. These emotion or ideas expressed may be of love, sorrow, joy or grief or complaint. Many traditional African songs associated with marriages, funerals, work are examples of lyrics.

Songs, dance and drumming are the purest and commonest forms of emotional and psychological and social entertainment in the African world and realm in all cultures. Songs, dance and some forms of drumming which generate rhythmic movement often go hand in hand, in a complex mutual enhancement and aesthetic communication. While, drumming enhances musicality and music and singing invites drumming as its correlate. It generates rhythm and rhythmic sensations touching the heart, brain and the imagination and soul of the hearer. However, euphoria is also a form of music and harmony that carries melody and use of words accompany the drumming and rhythm to

generate intense pleasure which stimulates the imagination. In addition, songs and drumming have both female and masculine arousal functions. It stimulation both gender in some forms of sexual energetic, aesthetic, culturally building and image releasing to rhythmic drumming gyrates the body almost involuntarily, automatically releasing, emotions of pure happiness, grief, war, romance, sexuality and dancing or even contemplative moods depending on the nature of the musical form and instrumentation.

Dance and body movement are the body's response to the rhythmic energy of the drum and song, while drums are linked to ritual, worship and belief. They are cultural artifacts, they can be secular or sacred, male or female, ancient tribal or modern, drums, dance and songs that are in the hearts of African artistic imagination, image making, creativity, inventiveness and social entertainment. Vehemently, the drum and its dance have its root and seat in the African soul heart and imagination.

#### **African Songs Dace and Drumming as IKS**

In the western literary tradition, lyric poetry is often considered to have originated from early Greece-Roman poetry. In this particular the idea of lyric poetry arose out of the practice of composing short personal poems which were usually sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument called the lyric (hence the term lyric). Research into the oral traditional of various societies does however show that this particular poetic form is not only a genre of the poetic tradition of early Greece or Europeans. It is also a very dominant form of poetry in nearly all traditional societies. In particular, it features most-prominently in the oral literature of all Africa rural societies in which song and poetry mingle in a creative alliance. In its modern literary usage, the term needs not have a musical accompaniment. In fact,

what is often described as “Lyric” need not be sung at all. Instead, the term has been applied to any type of short poem especially of intense feelings and experience expressed in the poem and its musical qualities. This quality of poetry and melody often described as Melopoeia is achieved through a combination of soft consonant and vowel sounds. The following highlights some of these qualities of short sounds effects:

Sometimes I sing, sometimes I sigh  
Sometimes I laugh sometimes I sigh  
As one to doubt, this is my saying  
Have I displeased you in anything?

Songs normally assume a variety of forms some are rich, imaginative and elaborate in the play of words, rhythm and melody as in the case of many Dinka songs as presented by Deng in the Dinka and their songs and in folk ballads, bridal chants and funeral song in many cultures. But some can be meaningless rhythmic sounds in a pithy form.

### **Themes in Lyrical Songs**

The broad lyric types which have been breasted, and the different experiences and ideas which these express suggest the wide range of musical-poetical forms which are commonly referred to as “Lyrics”. What is worth emphasizing that lyric treat a wide range of subject matter, and are drawn upon in a wide variety of social occasions in the traditional African context. The subject treated in the lyric form includes:

- i. love,
- ii. jealousy,
- iii. the sense of loss,
- iv. the praise of the loved one, the abuse of one's enemy or rival and moral advice

The nature of these themes suggest that in per-literate societies songs are not just song like the modern literary poem, they are means which individuals or group adopts for creative communication of a wide range of ideas for

either personal satisfaction, for the education of people, or for meeting the special demands of the occasion.

### **The Literary Aspects of Lyric**

The role which songs play in the Africa societies imply that the Africa songs dance and drumming is not only a song or dance which is sung for its melodic effects it is also highly poetic and literary in the sense that it fulfils some of the role which a poem normally fulfils. Three points may be noted. Like the modern poem, many lyrics provide a context for the imaginative expression of personal feelings, ideas and wishes.

Many lyrics like the examples given above are highly stylized. They manifest the creative use of language, rhythm, and other poetic modes of communication. In this regard, it may be said that while there is a clearly established frame work mode, there is also a conscious or unconscious control of the resources of language towards the aesthetic expression of ideas or mood. In addition to 1-2 traditional artist's kind to draw little or no water light division between poetry and songs.

### **2.5 Reasons for Indigenous Knowledge System Attraction to Africa and Global Interest**

Anthropologists abiding interest in people's knowledge systems have foster the synergy that brought about the complimentary relationship between indigenous knowledge and biodiversity

Participatory role in decision making for sustainable development, which led to the growing recognition of the importance of indigenous knowledge in people's daily lives and the growing awareness of the need to empower the poor in community with locally available knowledge that led to increasing realization of the indigenous knowledge system commercial value of indigenous knowledge. Lastly, indigenous knowledge

often provides cost-effective solutions to the problems faced by local and rural communities, which in turn brings about the attraction to Africa and global interest.

### **Benefit of Indigenous Knowledge System**

Using indigenous knowledge in research gives the research legitimacy and credibility from researchers to builds local capacity and empowerment, which could help the indigenous people to provide valuable input in the local environment for the efficient use and management of local resources through the indigenous knowledge readily available at little or no cost. Though indigenous knowledge in African cultures are getting known better to the global society, in such a way that it's become vital for ecological sensitive and socio-economic activities in trying to manage indigenous knowledge. Some of the cost African traditions and information are being discovered, as such it contributed to sustainable local and national development, economic development. This is evidenced by the explosion of herbal products onto the global market.

### **3.1 Major Areas of Application of Indigenous Knowledge System**

#### **i. Agriculture**

Indigenous knowledge facilitates agriculture, horticulture, and forestry. Indigenous knowledge can determine favourable times and how to prepare, plant and harvest gardens and farms, ways to propagate plants, seed storage and processing, and crop planting.

#### **ii. Ecosystem**

Indigenous people have knowledge of the ecosystems where they live and know how to use natural resources sustainably. They use their indigenous knowledge for natural health, sustainable agriculture and sustainable resources management.

#### **iii. Medicine**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2002-2005) tradition medicine (TM) saves the health needs of almost 80% people in developing countries, as other medical facilities are expensive and beyond affordable for the common person.

#### **iv. Conflict Resolution**

Traditional conflict resolution modernisms in African are generally closely bound with socio-political and economic realities of the lifestyles of the communities.

#### **v. Traditional Attire**

This plays a vital aspect in the identification of a certain culture, dialect, ethnic group, tribe and countries and helps to sustain the indigenous culture. In African particularly Nigeria a presidential politics, Khaki signified military rule, while Agbada denotes civilian rule. In the quest of an uncompressing nationalist identity Luanda people rejected the style of their immediate colonizers, the Portuguese. Instead, they combined western and African dress practices as a hallmark of their chosen cosmopolitan identity, one that was removed both from the traditions of their parents and the imperialism of their colonizers (Kimani, 2004).

### **3.2 African Initiatives on Indigenous Knowledge System**

Most Africans particularly Nigerians deem its fit to initiate indigenous knowledge system to aid in the way of life of people in the society, some of the initiatives are:

The National Research, Foundation (NRF) of South Africa publishes an indigenous knowledge system Newsletter to develop theoretical and methodological paradigms to understand indigenous knowledge system, shed light on the role of indigenous knowledge in nation building, and develop research capacity in indigenous knowledge in south African (NRF n:d).

The Indigenous People of Africa Coordination's Committee (IPACC) is a network of indigenous people organization in Africa, which is also promoting, recognition for indigenous peoples in Africa, strengthening leadership and organizational capacity of indigenous civil society in Africa by promoting tolerance and understanding of the cultural, spiritual and language diversity of Africa and supporting sustainable economic development based on indigenous knowledge (IPACC, 2007). Botswana is working on a project to explore how indigenous knowledge and western scientific ideas can be used to control the AIDS epidemic in the country (Nakaar, 2005).

The African Ministerial Council on Sciences and Technology (AMCOST) was established in November 2003. It is a free network to promote collaboration in science and technology in Africa. It also helps to consolidate science and technology programmes of the Africa's Development (NEPAD). AMCOST (2006) stated that the overall objectives are to strengthen African's capacity to harness and apply, as well as project indigenous knowledge and technologies.

### 3.3 Challenges of Indigenous Knowledge System in Africa

Since indigenous knowledge system is the resources for establishing the African identity and for the sustainable development of the continent. It is however, gradually displaying by the influence of other cultures and traditions. This is happening as a result of modernity and globalization. The different culture of indigenous people and their identity, their economic activities, economic activities, religious beliefs, and traditional ways of managing natural resources are often regarded as backward and superstitious. Due to the development of society and the rapid evolution of information and communication technologies, in indigenous knowledge

system seem to be dying. In spite of growing interest in indigenous knowledge, it continues to be derogated in many ways. The currents challenges are:

- i. Distortion of indigenous knowledge with western technologies i.e. mismatch between, local people knowledge contents and western developed models
- ii. Capturing, recording and storing indigenous knowledge without the participation of those who produce and manage it every day.
- iii. Determining the conceptual framework for Africans indigenous knowledge system.
- iv. Use of indigenous knowledge for national building and development for sustainable growth.
- v. Western styled education system.
- vi. Intellectual property rights of indigenous people has to be safeguarded against distortion
- vii. Lack of implementation of policies and procedures.

### Conclusion

The complexities of modern life are mainly characterized not only by the avalanche of recorded information but also by the need to collect and preserve oral records. Africa as a continent may lose her identity if conscious efforts are not made to document and electronically preserve her cultural heritage. In this age of information technology, it is no longer fashionable to rely on memory for transmission of relevant and reliable information. The elderly ones, who are mostly the custodians of indigenous knowledge system, may form dementia and hence, a whole lot of information is gone. Therefore, the cost of types notwithstanding, collection and preservation of oral Archives using information and communication technology (ICT) is long overdue. Librarians and archivists should no longer shy away from

their laudable goal. Posterity may hold us guilty if we fail to act now.

However, it is apparent from the foregoing discussion that various activities and initiatives are taking place in order to manage and promote IKS. Despite all the recognition, contributions and promotions, IKS are not satisfactorily promoted and protected in most African countries. The provision of intellectual rights to indigenous knowledge holders is weak in most countries. There are weak links between the formal research and development institutions and local communities that hold and use the knowledge. This has denied Africa the opportunity to better understand and use its indigenous knowledge base for development.

Nevertheless, important questions with respect to IK are: whose knowledge? For whom? Who will benefit? Unless these questions are answered, the current concern for IK will be just specified by the outsiders, for the outsiders (Charyulu, n.d). If indigenous knowledge is not properly documented, analyzed and disseminated it may be lost forever, within one generation. Indigenous knowledge is well cited in the context of African renaissance, "the new dawn of the African renaissance will only be a reality when we use knowledge fully, including African indigenous and local knowledge in partnership with modern scientific knowledge" (Masoga, 2004). Hence, indigenous knowledge should be considered instrumental for the sustainability of African identity.

In conclusion, a lot needs to be done in this area and more researches have to be undertaken in indigenous knowledge. IK needs to be documented and preserved properly to facilitate, retrieval and dissemination. As indigenous knowledge varies from one country to another, its practices and resources need to be integrated and harmonized with local needs and ideas. The original creators of this knowledge (local

peoples) should be the final authority over the knowledge that is recorded and exchanged within all such systems. As Madley (2000) reminds us on the fact that such knowledge has often been over looked by development planner's presents developing countries with a powerful asset.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Western technology should not be allowed to be used to destroy the local indigenous knowledge system. All imported models should be adapted to the local environment, available facilities and resources, culture, finance, telecommunication infrastructure and local people needs.
- ii. There should always be some flexibility to adjust and adapt indigenous knowledge system as the true and environment demand.
- iii. Indigenous knowledge system is a community based, it should be captured, recorded and stored with the proper interaction and participation of those who produce and manage it.
- iv. Determining the conceptual framework of Africa's indigenous knowledge system is the most challenge, and the African Governments should consider this issue as one of their priorities.
- v. IKS should be treated as national commodity for sustainable development as well as cultural heritage to be preserved.
- vi. IKS should be introduced into the educational school curriculum through Africa as it is done in other African countries like Uganda, South Africa and Botswana.
- vii. The intellectual property rights of indigenous people of Africa should be protected and safeguarded to ensure that indigenous people remain the custodians



of IKS.

- viii. The existing policies should be reviewed time to time to come up with policy strategies and action plans for the protection and development of IKS.
- ix. Universities in Africa can influence the social, economic and cultural developments using IKS-based approaches, by meeting the people through IKS based model means of helping in development of indigenous knowledge and consequently developing the nation socially, economically and culturally.
- x. Africa should actively participate in global IK initiatives.

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