

## **Now That Women Play Apiiri Music in Ekiti Nigeria**

**Dr. Femi Abiodun**

*Department of Music, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife Nigeria*

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**ABSTRACT:** *Studies recently focused on gender, sexuality and feminism in musical studies to show that women have a place in the music profession. However, less studies have focused on the consequences of women performing on drums especially “forbidding drums” that women now play where culture does not allow them. Apiiri drumming is such a phenomenon that culture does not allow a woman to play in Ekiti culture. Adepeji Afolabi however, played the drum. The result of that action is discussed in this paper. It argued that women cannot play Apiiri drums is a misunderstanding of the law of probability and a parabolic trajectory. The study concludes that the parabolic curve does not bridge the traditional myth and has not affected the performance structure of the music. It has not also distorted patriarchy phenomenon in Ekiti culture. Apiiri drumming in the hand of the women is an extreme paranoia and ironic amusement.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Apiiri drumming, consequences of action, parabolic curve, patriarchy, traditional myth.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The story dates back to 1964 when Adepeji Mojisola dared Apiiri music performance. Apiiri is a male music in Ekiti Yorubaland. There was a time when Ekiti woman was never considered a performer of Apiiri music. They performed another genre of music like Airegbe and Alamo (Omojola 1989: 140-147). Women in Yorubaland never performed on dundun drums, bata drums, juju and hip-pop music until recently. No written or unwritten law forbids women from performing music; but no woman dared performed the Apiiri music until 1964 when Adepeji ventured into the performance. This research work gives the musical and extra-musical implications. With time and over again women have proved that with little effort, hard work and dedication, they can attain the musical status of male musicians. The working question is why did they venture into the performance of Apiiri? Any challenge or musical and non-musical; social or political; religious or moral implications? Does it attract any consequence? Other agitating questions include:

Any additional responsibility as a result of playing Apiiri music?

Does it affect crucial part of the economy?

Any social taboo attached?

Does it create a change in the mindset of Ekiti people?

Does it require developing a new identity different from men: musical and non-musical?

Any physical limitation?

Does it require the approval of men?

Are the women treated equally with male counterpart in Apiiri musical scene?

The guide approach in this paper is observations, investigations, descriptions, analysis and prescriptions. The result of the in-depth interviews conducted on 10 Apiiri women group for a period of 6 months is analysed in this paper.

### **II. CLARIFICATION OF THEORETICAL CONCEPTS**

Within the radical feminist theory, both females and males who identify themselves as feminists disagree on many things; nonetheless, there is a proportionate agreement that both sexes should strive for change towards gender equality where female or male can play the drums without any discrimination. This will expand human choice, enhance freedom of interest and talents in musical performances without any conflict with the status quo. This theory also articulates eliminating gender stratification that may limit what part a female for instance may play in a musical performance. Out of the three forms of feminism, radical feminism justifies the argument in this paper in that it diagnoses the gender inequalities of ‘no woman can play this drum syndrome’ rather than putting up argument about legality of playing a drum which liberal feminism emphasizes. Studies show that men dominate many affairs in Africa. The patriarchy system favours the social feminist theory that sees the society as men’s world where men are ‘historically dominant’. The action of the women to break the jinx of playing Apiiri drums is a radical approach that aims at dismantling patriarchy and reducing oppression to economic inequality as women now play the music for a living. Radical feminism opposes patriarchy, not men and it is not a struggle about equal power by the men but freedom to play Apiiri

drums. When radical feminists speak of “degradation,” they apply the term within the social context and not moral allusion. After all the women still respect the men’s drumming expertise. It is therefore not about the right or wrong behavior.

Within the probability theory, the law of total probability is that a woman may play Apiiri drums which is a fundamental rule relating to marginal probabilities to conditional probabilities. That a woman is marginalized is to treat them as if they are not important in the issues about drumming. They are marginalized because they are women. (Marginal Probabilities) That some conditions are put in place before a woman could play the drums is a theory of conditional probabilities. This paper measures and expresses the total probability for the outcome of women playing Apiiri drums which have been realized through a regular drumming of Apiiri drums. The law of total probability for women playing Apiiri drums is the proposition that  $\{B_n:n= 1,2,3,\dots\}$  which is a finite or countdown infinite partitions of a sample space. (Infinite number of performances) That if therefore, a woman continues to perform on Apiiri drums; there is the probability that one day, she will be a master of Apiiri drumming.

On the other hand, the law of total probability can also be stated for conditional probability. Women can only play the drums on conditions that may be logical, cultural, ritualistic, musical, patriarchy, gender or trivial. Proving the  $\{B_n:n= 1,2,3,\dots\}$  statistical index; (the infinite number of times a woman can perform on drums) and assuming the conditions above are met; there is the probability that women can perform (later) with no conditions attached. (Logical Implications)

The law of total probability is sometimes taken to mean the law of alternatives applied to discrete random variables. This is interpreted in this study to mean that women playing Apiiri drums are “discrete variables” in Apiiri drumming practices. They are seen as being not part of the drumming scenery (scenario). Taking part in Apiiri drumming is alternative to the original (men on Apiiri drums). This is further interpreted to mean that women can play Apiiri drums when men are not available to perform or when men are not part of the musical events that is, performing music in a women’s social events like the maiden’s song (ekun-iyawo), ladies puberty ceremony where only women can participate and events around women celebrations where only women can take part. In another study, we have considered the law of total expected ratio of men to women that are performing on the Apiiri drums (empirical study). We also have considered the law of total variance in the techniques of Apiiri performance (comparative study) and yet in another study we considered the marginal distribution of performance ability of the women on Apiiri drums (10 women drummers were studied). These studies give credence to claims on the basis of evidence of women performing on Apiiri drums.

The action of the women is also argued within the conspiracy theory that agitates the involvement of women in the performance on Apiiri drums. Conspiracy theory explains an event or situation that involves people (called conspirators) working secretly to obtain some goal which in this study is performing on Apiiri drums. Before the open performance and appearance of Adepeji playing on the drums in 1964, there must have been “secret” rehearsal of performing on Apiiri drums which is tantamount to an agreement among women to break the rules at some time in the future. Etymological explanation suggests an event or a phenomenon occurring as a result of a conspiracy between a group of interested parties who could keep the “secret” secret. The women in private rehearsals over a period of time learnt the art of performing on Apiiri drums in what can be termed “conspiracy of ravens on drums”. These are women who obtained by “simple violence” with great eagerness the art of drumming on Apiiri drums. This giant step does not suggest a pejorative connotation that the women are conspirators with any oppressive intent. Jesse Walker (2013: 23-54) identified five kinds of conspiracy theories.

The Enemy Outside

The Enemy Within

The Enemy Above

The Enemy Below

The Benevolent Conspiracies

Two of the kinds were adopted in this study. The ‘enemy within’ which in this case are the women (ordinary citizens) living in Ekiti community among men who “conspired” to perform on Apiiri drums. On the other hand, the women are seen as “Benevolent conspirators” who worked behind the scene to adopt the art of drumming and to help themselves economically. Their intention was not to overturn the social order (the Enemy Below Theory) or to manipulate events for their gains (the Enemy Above Theory). The actions of the women are outside the systematic conspiracy theories (Barkun 2003) in that they were not meant to stage dominance over men in Ekiti community but rather a shallow conspiracy that is overtly beyond the greed of “who benefits” (Murray Rothbard 2006: 17-51).

Parabolic curve (Analytical framework)

The actions of the women are equally analysed within the parabolic curve as an indices of the outcome of the women’s action which in this case is performing on a forbidding drum- Apiiri drums. The drum in this case is the object that was thrown up in the air by women and have fallen on ground in different places

producing a parabolic curve that gave the music a new identity. The parabolic trajectory shows a spread of a new music as shown in the analysis below:

### **III. MUSICAL PRACTICE OF APIIRI**

Apiiri is a vocal music with instrumental accompaniment. The name is derived from one of the musical instruments called Pipiri. The musical instruments are pot drums made from clay with one side covered with animal membrane. It is the music of the Ekiti people, a sub-group of the Yoruba in Southwest, Nigeria. Music is a communal activity that often establishes a framework for communal integrity. Chernoff (1979: 261) reiterated that “the extent to which music-making is a group activity points to another dimension of the integration of music and culture as an institution”. This ascertains what Nketia (1972) as quoted by Chernoff (1979: 254) stressed that “a village that has no organized music or neglects community singing, drumming or dancing is said to be dead”. People participate in music-making and the issue of performer versus audience does not exist in African music performance context since everybody participates in it. Music as a communal activity was investigated in this paper to establish its validity in the social and religious activities since Ekiti people sing and dance freely in Apiiri music performance.

There is a network that binds the Yoruba people. The different groups (Ekiti, Egba, Ijebu, Owo, Ijesa, Oyo etc) left Ile-Ife at different time to their present abodes. For this singular reason, the music of the Yorubas has common characteristics. Music practiced in Ekiti therefore, belongs to the “musico- stylistic pattern” of Yoruba music. Ekiti music on stylistic ground can be grouped along the Yoruba traditional, neo-traditional and popular music. These related musical traditions are within a network whose musical cultures have its historical roots in Ile-Ife. Nketia (1974: 23) noted that “the musical cultures in African societies do not only have their historical roots in the soil of Africa, but also form a network of internal pattern, basic procedure and contextual similarities.” The internal structure of the women’s version of Apiiri is highlighted in contrast to the men’s version which in this case is the display of A (the women’s version) to show what B is not (the men’s version) Contrastive musicology (Abiodun 2010: 45).

Training concept in Yoruba music has a structural pattern. It starts from the mother who introduces some rhythmic patterns while she lulls the child to sleep. The training continues with game songs organized by children in the society. “Those born into Ayan family are trained by ascription while others through apprenticeship process. Training in this perspective does not arise in the women’s performance of Apiiri music at the initial stage when the women were helping each other to learn without strict apprenticeship. Findings in this study showed that the women were not from ayan family.

The utilitarian use of music is one of the basic concepts of music among the Yoruba. The functionalist school of thought believed that music in Yorubaland is meant to perform such functions that are social, political, rhetorical and historical. Omojola (1989: 143) noted that “musicians as poets, historians and philosophers are regarded as fountains of knowledge”. While (Vidal 1977:90) pointed out that “the (Yoruba) aborigines devoted much time to religious rituals and used music mainly as a functional element for rituals” Olukoju (1987: 114) mentioning the drums associated with Yoruba gods, reiterated that the “functions of the music seem to be closely bound with the nature of the deities and their worship”. Music in Yorubaland is tied to the fabric of everyday social and political life. Yoruba traditional music is rich and it is as historically ancient as the race itself. The tradition is passed down orally and relies on this oral transmission for its data collection. Traditional Yoruba music is generally performed with functional intent in different celebrations: naming, wedding, chieftaincy celebration, funeral and in different festivals. Apiiri music is equally used for these purposes. Oriloye (1994: 21-32) studied the Principle of tales with expansible images in Ekiti culture. The study submitted that songs are used in the performance of tales with expansible images in Ekiti culture. Songs therefore, become the structural focus of the story. This submission is a confirmation of the fact that most Ekiti musical traditions are vocal. Bewaji’s (1994: 45) study of Recreational folk song in Ikole-Ekiti showed that though recreational folk songs are meant to entertain, they still perform aesthetic and utilitarian functions. This study further proves that music in Ekiti is not only used for entertainment.

Omojola in his book (2006) *Popular Music in Western Nigeria, Theme, Style and Patronage System* did a survey of the patronage system of popular music in western Nigeria. He discovered that the patronage of night clubs and club-related live music performance have collapsed in Ekiti towns. Nevertheless, he observed that popular music continues to grow in popularity and new musicians and types of popular music have continued to emerge. Apiiri music is one of such “new types” of music in Ekiti that is maintaining a dominant presence and providing social obligatory services in Ekiti. Adegbite (1988:17-25) in his article *The Nigerian Talking Drum* mentioned Apiiri as one of the membrane drums in Ekiti. Apiiri is a membrane drum used in Apiiri ensemble and the name of a musical genre in Ekiti. Agbaje’s (2002:32-37) study of *Orin Ajagbo in Ilawe-Ekiti* revealed that musicians in Ekiti do not perform to solicit for gift either in cash or kind. Their main objectives are to move the minds of the public, to ridicule bad morals and make the ‘victims’ change for good.

These characteristics have been found to be true in the men's version of Apiiri music. This will be verified and investigated in the women's version of Apiiri Music.

Analysis, Findings and Discussion

#### IV. MUSICAL DESIGN OF APIIRI MUSIC

Design as used in this study on the one hand means among other things the pattern of the music in terms of the melodic, harmonic and the rhythmic pattern as they affect the sonic plan of Apiiri music. On the other hand, design connotes the purpose of the music in terms of functions- social, religious, political, ritualistic, physical and metaphysical. This cuts across the different eras. Discussion of what has changed is historical narrative of what has been in practice by the men group and the changes that took place in the hand of the women. Akpabot (1998: 45) notes that "examining cultural tradition structure side by side to find out how a piece of music is put together and why it is so conceived is a design of form, function and style. This is flexible unlike Western music structure which is in the main, absolute. The thought, belief and feeling of the musicians are the mental configuration of the musical design. Though cannot be measured, it can be predicted when associated with the context of a musical practice rather than a performance practice.

The internal design of Apiiri music in a social performance of the music can be predicted. Two social variables were considered. The first is the voluntary musical practice of the women within the social context of the obligatory service. For instance, celebration of the death of a woman in a family compound (comprising a number of families by blood relationship). In this musical practice, the plan can be predicted. The women sit in a circle; no "musical leader" is proposed. The drummers and lead-singers emerge as the performance unfolds. When a "better drummer" comes the initial drummer relinquishes the drumming to a better hand. (they know themselves through long practices). Within the circle, two or three drummers form part of the performance with lead singers in succession as better singers were identified as the performance continued. The plan of the performance can be predicted within a musical structural model.

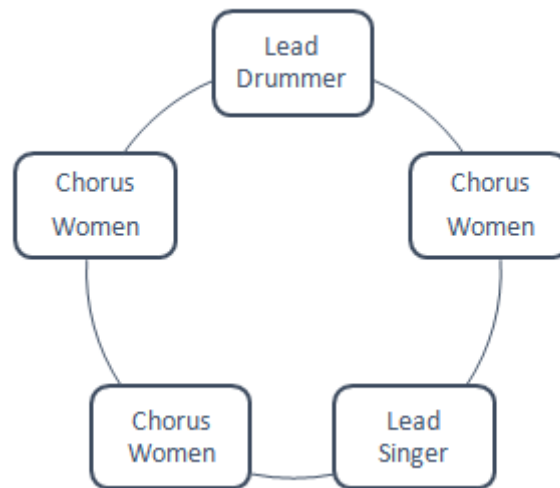


Fig.1

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The women have no permanent seat. The Lead Singer or Drummer could sit anywhere to perform. Figure 1 above represents the performance area. The stage is set in a way that dance can take place within the circle. The audience sits or stands around the circle.

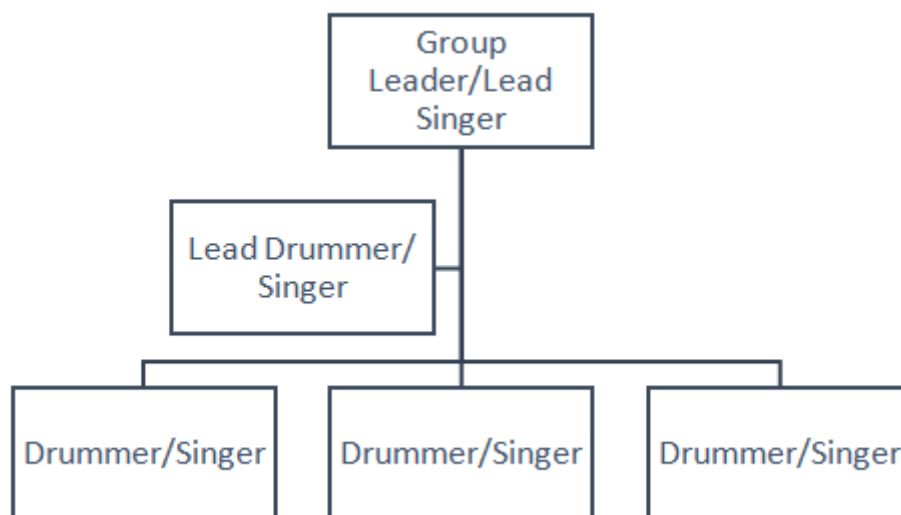


Fig. 2

The performance arena of the men group is vertical. There is always a leader who always is the lead-singer. Nobody starts the performance when he is not there. The lead drummer who is also a singer does not share the leadership position with the Lead Singer. The drum which he plays (lead drum) ascribes him this position. Any of the drummers can assume this position as long as he plays the lead drum. This was the performance arena until the women in 1964 changed to the position described in Fig 1.

#### Systematic typology of time structures in Apiiri Music

The era in question is defined within the tenacity of playing on Apiiri drum. Tenzer (2011: 373) notes, that “Music and time are embodied phenomenon, but every musical utterance filters this perception and it is subject to diverse and sometimes depending on production, reception, context, history, affinity and many other known factors.” All this according to him is semiotics. The period between the transition of Apiiri music from men to women performance is fundamentally a different experience of time which is a function of their era, age, experience, capacity, and background. Though these variables are relative factors in determining what constitutes “time interval” of music, in a way it provides a clue to the systematic classification of Apiiri musical types. The year 1964 to date can be termed a musical era; defined within a time period of indeterminate length that marked the appearance and beginning of women on Apiiri drumming saga. Within this period; which is classical, Apiiri musical practice has spread to over 50 towns and villages in Ekiti state. The axiomatic position of Apiiri music in the women era therefore, is that the music is more instructive. This in itself is subjective as different context may suggest different functions. Analysis of functions of the music is a function of the musician’s era, age, experience, capacity and background.

#### Voicing and Compositional Technique of the Women

Women’s pre-composition technique is paramount in the women’s performance. This is the art of women composing in preparation for a musical event as different from the men’s spontaneous melody composed for situations around the performance at hand. Men sing around situational events as they happen. This is the art of spontaneous compositional technique. The melodious and subtle voices of women make a great difference in the performance of the men and women. Women’s falsetto voices as a result of the many voices of the group members often lead to “all sorts of voices”. Use of the hocket technique was predominant among men. (See Gyimah’s definition). Women exhibit free rhythmic pattern as they sing in a relaxed mood to entertain themselves. Contrast to this is the men’s strict rhythmic pattern as they perform in a hot rhythmic pattern. Gyimal (2013:207) reiterates that whatever the compositional technique, African composer would have to develop idiosyncratic methods of expression that will reflect particularity and peculiarity. Findings show that the composition of the women are more original and authentic. This was tested using MekiNzewi’s index of composition. (Abiodun, 2012)

Glocalization and as different from globalization differentiates the music of the women from other musical concept and content of Apiiri music. The co-presence of both universalization and patronizing tendencies differ significantly, Roberston (1997:221). The basic idea of glocalization is the simultaneous promotion of what is, in one sense; a standardized product for particular markets, in particular flavours. Women Apiiri music represents the glocalization phenomenon because over the years, they have created a different market for Apiiri music. This was garnished with a particular flavour.

The findings of this long-term investigations also indicate that over the years, while this music still features some similar performance technique, one can notice some desperations. The particularity of each case is representative of the genre in the two separate groups (men and women group). The music in the hand of the women is used in serving religious events throughout Ekiti Community of over 63 towns and villages in what is now called Ekiti State. Examining the performance groups and their performances, the performance is indigenous and unique to women style which is now called Alakutu in order to differentiate the women version of the music. The men even now do not accept that the women play Apiiri music even though the performance style is similar. The music in the hand of the women exhibits prominently the cultural dance prevalent among the girls at the primary and secondary pupils. The women also dance it in the musical and non-musical events. Two Ekiti indigenes introduced guitar music flavor into Apiiri music rhythmic pattern to develop their own style of juju music. The two musicians; Micho Ade (Ikere-Ekiti) and JossyGboye (Ifaki- Ekiti) derived Juju music featuring Apiiri melodies, rhythmic pattern and more significantly, the use of Ekiti dialect. Demand for folk performing groups has been higher and competition among such groups has been intensely stable. This practice is rampant among popular musicians who maximized their chances of being hired and earning more money. This contemporary trend had geared the Apiiri women musicians to make their performances more attractive for economic and social reasons. Adepeji group has produced about 27 albums. The first was in the year 1974; ten years after the group started.

Cases demonstrating the religious implications are discussed here to show the links between the sound behavior and conceptualization of the women type. The primary significance of Apiiri sonic system within the church service in Ekiti for instance is using the “right song” with the “right text” and within the “biblical configuration” during the service. The Deontologist maintains that some or all actions are right or wrong in themselves, because of the type of actions they are, whether or not they produce the best consequences. This type of view is less easy to systematise than the Consequentialist view. That the women play Apiiri drums is not right or wrong in itself, but the focus here is what is the consequence of the women’s action?

It is equally germane that the songs are relevant to the liturgical process that may provoke secular argument. Chen-Hafteck (2007: 337-353) advocated for the right music and not singing the wrong song for temple rituals. The paper gives an overview of music and religious ideology to manifesting the “right place” and in the “right company”. In this study, the tune of Apiiri music is predominantly domiciled in the church service without contextual elements of the music in the “appropriate” context. In such situation, the sound, the form, and the performance of the music are devoid of original context. The questions asked by Yang (2012:25) is equally relevant here: What is the emic explanation of the rationale most prevalent in the local society for such practices developed by women. My findings showed that the priests of the churches shared the same regional attitude in that 90% are Ekiti indigenes. They speak Ekiti dialect (a variation of Yoruba language) while delivering sermon message. The singing which is also in the dialect complements the sermon. Yang (2012:25) holds the opinion that “the religious symbolism or significance of such singing resides in the text and not in the music. The choice of the music can be flexible” as long as it has a church liturgical content. The music within Islamic context has a social content and performed outside Islamic worship in Ekiti (see Abiodun 2010).

In general the result showed that the shape of the women drum was different from that of men. To men, the cultural implication is that the women have not played the Apiiri drums but alakutu drums; a name adopted for the women type of Apiiri drum. The result also showed that women are not stooage to men in a musical event. The discussion which is also premised within the conspiracy theory argued that women cannot play Apiiri drums is a misunderstanding of the law of probability and a parabolic trajectory.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that the parabolic curve does not bridge the traditional myth and has not affected the performance structure of the music. Gender or feminist principles have not been distorted in any way and have not dismantled patriarchy phenomenon in Ekiti culture. Apiiri drumming in the hand of the women is an extreme paranoia and ironic amusement.

Now that women play Apiiri drums, the music has transpired beyond its original performance status. The previously secret men’s Apiiri music performance was transmitted to women not by consensus but conspiracy arrangement in a secret-open transparent jury. Till today in Ekiti community, the jury is still out on women’s performance of Apiiri drums. People do not yet ask questions why women play Apiiri drums nor apportion blame on women for playing the drums. While they were not treated equally on performance status, yet no physical limitation is played on women’s performance of Apiiri music. The performance by women does not require approval by men. Now that women play on Apiiri drums, some women maintain the original performance technique, others varied them and some innovated new technique with popular music flavor. Even now that women play Apiiri drums, the old Apiiri drumming patterns are still around in the community and MEN are still the master drummers. It has remained a constantly shifting arts pattern where men pride themselves.

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