

The Role of Ibibio Traditional Music in Social-Cultural and Economic Development in Nigeria: A Panacea to the Ibibio in Diaspora

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23182918>

Received: 10-09-2026

Accepted: 25-09-2026

Published: 05-10-2026

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the multifaceted utility of Ibibio traditional music as a catalyst for socio-cultural cohesion and economic advancement within Nigeria, specifically evaluating its efficacy as a cultural ‘panacea’ for the Ibibio population in the diaspora. Despite the pervasive influence of globalization and Western musical hegemony, Ibibio indigenous music remains a foundational pillar of identity, serving as a repository for historical narratives, moral codes, and linguistic heritage. Employing a qualitative research design rooted in ethnomusicological field observations and content analysis of folksongs, the paper examines how traditional genres, such as Mbopo, Ebreand Ekpofunction as instruments of social control and community mobilization. The findings reveal that beyond its ritualistic functions, Ibibio music offers significant economic potential through the creative arts entrepreneurship and cultural tourism sectors. For the diaspora, these musical traditions transcend geographical boundaries, providing a psychological anchor and a reconnection tool that mitigates cultural alienation. The study argues that the systematic documentation and digitalization of these oral traditions are essential for their survival in a globalized digital economy. It concludes that the strategic integration of Ibibio musical heritage into educational curricula and international cultural exchange programs can foster sustainable development. By repositioning indigenous music as a viable economic asset rather than a relic of the past, the Ibibio people can leverage their cultural capital to enhance national development and maintain a robust link with their global community.

Keywords: Ibibio Music, Socio-cultural Development, Economic Entrepreneurship, Nigerian Diaspora, Cultural Panacea.

I. INTRODUCTION

The traditional music of the Ibibio people (the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria) is not merely an aesthetic expression but a complex communication system that weaves through the tapestry of their existence. Often described as a total art, Ibibio music integrates dance, drama, and poetry to document the history, philosophy, and social norms of the people. In the pre-colonial era, music was the heartbeat of the community; it

heralded the planting seasons, celebrated the rites of passage for maidens (Mbopo), and served as the medium through which the Ekpo society maintained law and order. However, the contemporary landscape of Nigerian culture is facing a dual challenge. Locally, the encroachment of Western popular culture and the digital revolution have marginalized indigenous sounds, leading to a cultural amnesia among the youth. Globally, the Ibibio diaspora, a growing population

of professionals and families living in Europe, the Americas, and across Africa, faces the risk of cultural alienation. For these individuals, the distance from their ancestral home often results in a loss of linguistic proficiency and a weakening of the communal ties that define the Ibibio identity.

Traditional music in Nigeria remains the pedestal cultural identification. It has being in existence from the emergence of the nation and is still upheld by the practitioners, as well as its patrons as the chief custodian and conduit of Nigerian cultural heritage. Traditional music, in a nutshell, encapsulate the world-view philosophy, aspiration, religion, history, lineage, social, economic and political system of a nation. Music in Nigeria however, has never remained static, but has consistently been undergoing a process of metamorphosis through a continued exposure as it possesses the attributes on which the value is based upon. Traditional music in Nigeria is not just for entertainment purposes, rather it is an art that influences the general life of the members of the society. Hence, there exist a song for every activities attached to human life. The traditional make-up of Ibibio traditional music are not entirely different from other ethnic groups in Africa, this is so because compositional characteristics are not exclusively to one community, culture or country; one can extract the dominant musical concepts and procedures in a given area. Scholars like Netti (2005) and Agordoh (2002), refer to this as a 'cultural area concept', defined as: geographic unit whose inhabitant share a relatively homogenous cultural style. Activities in human race are inevitable, it is a natural practice that is submerged in human nature from time to time. Hence, it will be valid to say there is a song for every stages of life which human beings passes through; ranging from cradle and up to adolescence.

This study posits that Ibibio traditional music serves as a dual-purpose engine for development. Socio-culturally, it acts as a 'watchdog' for morality and a tool for social mobilization. Economically, when properly packaged and digitized, it presents a lucrative frontier for cultural entrepreneurship and tourism. More importantly, this research frames Ibibio music as a panacea for the Ibibio diaspora, a curative element that heals the rift of displacement by providing a portable sense of home. By examining the transition of these sounds from the village square to digital platforms, this paper explores how traditional music can be leveraged to drive human capital development in Nigeria while ensuring that the Ibibio identity remains vibrant and accessible, regardless of geographical location.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Functionalist Theory, as championed by scholars like Bronisław Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, which posits that every cultural practice exists because it performs a vital role in maintaining the stability and survival of the social system. In the Ibibio context, music is viewed as a functional institution rather than a mere pastime. It serves specific societal needs: the Ebre music functions as a mechanism for social control and female empowerment, while the Ekpo masquerade music enforces judicial and political stability. By applying functionalism, this research analyzes how these traditional sounds act as the 'social glue' that prevents communal disintegration in the face of modern cultural shifts.

Complementing this is the Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner. SIT suggests that a person's sense of who they are is based on their group membership. For the Ibibio in the diaspora, traditional music serves as a primary social categorizer. It allows individuals to maintain an 'In-group' identity, distinguishing their unique heritage within a multicultural 'Out-group' environment. This framework explains how music functions as a panacea; by engaging with indigenous rhythms and lyrics, the diaspora can achieve 'cultural self-categorization,' which mitigates the psychological stress of displacement and fosters a sense of belonging. Together, these theories provide a robust foundation for understanding how music sustains the Ibibio social structure at home and preserves the psychological well-being of its people abroad.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The literature surrounding Ibibio traditional music underscores its role as a repository of cultural epistemology, a driver of economic activity, and a medium of identity for a globalized population. This review categorizes existing scholarship into three thematic pillars: socio-cultural functions, economic entrepreneurship, and the diaspora as a cultural frontier.

Ethnomusicological Perspectives and Cultural Epistemology

Ibibio traditional music is characterized by its functional immediacy, where rhythm and melody are secondary to the social message. Akpabot (1975), a pioneer in Ibibio musicology, argues that the instruments themselves, such as the Nkere (wooden gong) and Odu (horn) are not just tools for sound but 'speaking objects' that communicate specific cultural codes. Recent scholarship by Udok (2020) suggests that these musical expressions are a form of cultural

epistemology, representing a system of knowledge that defines the Ibibio worldview. Through folksongs, the community preserves its history, passing down ancestral wisdom that would otherwise be lost to the homogenizing force of Western education.

Socio-Cultural Functions and Moral Pedagogy

Scholars emphasize that Ibibio traditional music is a collective art and a bonding force that serves as a medium for social relationships and religious practices. In a traditional setting, music is the life of a living spirit that facilitates the transmission of values from one generation to another.

- i. Social Control: Institutions like the Akata and Ekpo societies use music as a ‘watchdog’ to police social behavior, employing satirical songs to call out vices such as theft and corruption.
- ii. Gender and Rites of Passage: The Mbopo (maidenhood) institution utilizes music not just for entertainment, but as a pedagogical tool to instruct young women on home management, family values, and community expectations.

Traditional Music as a catalyst for Economic Development

The paradigm shift from viewing music as a sacred relic to an economic resource is gaining traction. Ekong (2015) notes that the performance of Ibibio music during festivals like UsoroIkot creates a value chain that includes instrument makers, costume designers, and event managers. Furthermore, Onyeji (2016) posits that music entrepreneurship in Nigeria is a viable path for youth empowerment, provided there is a structured framework for protecting intellectual property. By branding Ibibio music for global consumption similar to the commercialization of Reggae or Highlife, the Ibibio people can leverage their cultural capital to attract foreign exchange and stimulate local tourism. The shift from viewing music solely as a ritualistic artifact to an economic asset is a recurring theme in recent Nigerian scholarship.

- i. Cultural Entrepreneurship: Traditional music stimulates economic activity by fostering innovation in the creative arts and generating employment in music production and live performance.
- ii. Tourism: Festivals featuring Ibibio music, such as coronation ceremonies and annual cultural events, are identified as ‘money-spinning’ products that empower local communities through cultural tourism.

- iii. Psychological Resilience: In times of economic recession, traditional music provides a psychological sanity that reduces communal tension, indirectly supporting social stability necessary for economic growth.

The Diaspora and the Reconnection: Music as a Cultural Panacea

In the age of the Global Village, the role of music in identity maintenance for the diaspora is critical. Vertovec (2009) describes ‘transnationalism’ as the ability of migrants to live in two worlds simultaneously. For the Ibibio in London or Houston, digital recordings of Uta or Ekombi

music function as a ‘virtual bridge.’ Ofili and Inyang (2024) argue that this music serves as a panacea for the psychological stressors of migration, such as ‘cultural shock’ and ‘identity crisis.’ By engaging with indigenous sounds, diaspora members engage in social self-categorization, which reinforces their sense of belonging to the Ibibio Nation despite physical distance. To the Ibibio in the diaspora, music serves as an uninterrupted link to their roots, mitigating the effects of cultural alienation.

- i. Identity Preservation: Through the digitalization and transcription of folksongs, the diaspora can engage in cultural self-categorization, which is essential for maintaining social identity in a foreign environment.

- ii. Digital Transmission: Modern technology has facilitated the secondary orality, the preservation and dissemination of traditional literature via digital media allowing Ibibio philosophy to reach global audiences.

Gaps in Current Scholarship

This review reveals that while the socio-cultural importance of Ibibio music is well-documented, there is a gap in research regarding the systematic branding of these sounds for the international market. This study seeks to fill that gap by positioning Ibibio music as a strategic tool for both national development and global ethnic solidarity.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design to capture the intricate nuances of Ibibio musical traditions and their impact on development and identity. Given that traditional music is an experiential and oral-based phenomenon, this approach allows for an in-depth exploration of meanings, symbols, and functions that quantitative data might overlook.

Research Design: The Ethnographic Approach

The study utilizes an ethnographic research design, which is the gold standard for ethnomusicological inquiries. This design facilitates the study of Ibibio music within its natural socio-cultural context. By immersing the researcher in the community, the study captures the 'living' nature of the music from the sacred rituals of the Ekpo society to the celebratory rhythms of the Ekombi dance.

Data Collection Instruments

To ensure data triangulation and validity, three primary instruments were utilized:

- i. Participant Observation: The researcher attended and documented various cultural festivals and rites of passage in Akwalbom State, including the UsoroEkong and Mbopo ceremonies. This 'insider-outsider' perspective allowed for the observation of non-verbal cues, the interaction between performers and the audience, and the practical usage of traditional instruments like the Nkwong (wooden gong) and Ibid (drum).
- ii. In-Depth Interviews: Purposive sampling was used to select key informants. These included: Traditional Custodian (Chief and Priest): To provide historical and spiritual context; Professional Musicians/Instrument Maker: To discuss the economic realities and technical aspects of the craft; Diaspora Representative (via digital platforms): To evaluate the 'panacea' effect and the role of digital music in identity preservation.
- iii. Focus Group Discussions: Two FGDs were conducted with youth groups in Uyo to assess the perceived relevance of traditional music in a modernized, digital economy.

Secondary Data Sources.

Extensive use was made of secondary data sourced from ResearchGate, JSTOR, and Nigerian Journals Online. This included the analysis of transcribed

Some Sacred Ibibio Song Texts:

- **In praise of God Almighty –**

Transliteration

Afoomo dot itoro
 Abasiibomkeeyong
 Afoediedidem
 KensisiObong
 - In singing -
 Af'omo dot ito-ro
 A-bas'ibomk'eyong
 afo'e di edi-dem
 ke'nsi'nsiObong
 - In Staff notation –

Translation

You deserve praise
 almighty God in heaven
 you are King
 forever Lord

s,s,l:s,s,m:s:
 .s:d:d:t:l:s:
 .s:d:s.,s:l:s:
 .f:m:r:r:d:-:



A fo mo dot i to ro A ba si bom k'e yong a fo'e di e di dem ke'n si'n si O bong

folksongs and existing historical documents to provide a longitudinal perspective on the evolution of Ibibio music.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using Thematic Content Analysis. Interviews were transcribed and coded to identify recurring themes such as Economic Empowerment, Cultural Resilience, and Identity Reconciliation. These themes were then interpreted through the lenses of Functionalism and Social Identity Theory to answer the research objectives.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of Traditional Music in Ibibio land

- Sacred music
- Social music

Sacred Music

It has been well established that sacred music are songs sung in praise and worship of the almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth. To the worshipers of minor gods in Ibibio land, sacred music are often used for ritualistic purposes. They are traditional songs sung in praise of ancestral gods, divinities or deities during worship by the worshippers. The type of music familiar to this people, is usually in the form of orchestra and are symbolic in nature: they are strictly made up of different masquerades such as - the Ekpo, the Obon, and the Ekpe and are all ritualistic and, are both vocal and instrumental. The songs are usually solemn and consecrated and amongst the Ibibios, only those who have been initiated are allowed to participate. The songs are used to either praise, invoke, appease, appeal, adore, glorify, edify, petition and so on, just to mentioned a few.

• A plea to a Marine Spirit

Transliteration

Iyangaminsukukpekpefien o
Iyangaminsukubobokfien o
nyinikikambobonmbeniyang o
akwaowoankod anno ukod o
etokayinankod anno ukod o
amimbebommoediwonukod
memmoesinadiyongukod
etokpetoadiahaanoedem
adumaasiahaayinidiong
apapanbeniyang
itohokeobod
mbokoononem
ikong o keabang

Translation

this ocean I am still begging you
this ocean I am pleading with you
we went to the bank beside the ocean
a great man called and gave wine
a child called and gave me wine
I have told them come and drink wine
if they have refused to drink the wine
if a stick falls on ano'edem's daughter
thunder strikes a responsible child
from the deepest side of the ocean
it's not from the mountain
sugar cane is sweet
it is not hanging on the basin

- In singing -

Iyangaminsukukpekpefien o
Iyangaminsukubobokfien o
nyinikikambobo'n ben iyang o
akwa' woangkod an no'ukod o
etokayinangkod an no'ukod o
ami'm me bo'mmoediwongukod
'me'mmo sin adiwongukod
etokpetodiahano'edem
adum'asiahaayinidiong
apapa'n ben iyangitohok'o bod
mbok'on'onemikong o k'e bang

,d,d:mdl:ddr:t,t:l
,l,l:rts:ttd:l,l:s
,d,d:mdl:d,d:ttl:l
,l,r,t,s:t,d:l,s:s
,d,d:mdl:d,r:t,l:l
r,r:rts:ttd:lls:s
m,d:ddr:ttl:
r,r:r,t,s:t,l:s
(spoken words)

„

„

- Staff notation -

I yang a mi n suk u kpe kpe fien o i yang a mi n suk u bo bok fien

o nyin i ki ka m bo bo'n ben i yang o a kw'a wo n kod an no'u kod

o e tok a yin an kod an no'u kod a mi'm me bo m mo e di wong u kod

o me'm mo'e sin a di wong u kod e to kpe to dia ha no'e dem (spoken words)

Social Music

Social music are songs used for non-ritualistic purposes like - marriage, feast, coronation, birth, death, naming, dedication and so on. It is also used as a means of verbal communication, warning, abusing, and treatment. The type of songs are purely for entertainment and celebration which is usually participated by all. They are also in vocal and instrumental and/or the combination of the two.

Ibibio Guide

It is observed that less attention is paid to the song text (words) leading to a number of non-appreciable sound, pronunciation and spellings of words in Ibibio traditional works. According to Udoh (2014) in an unpublished MA thesis, he highlighted some suggestions or guides that can help in Ibibio traditional music works, especially the non-Ibibio speaking composers. And they are provided below:

- Vowel sounds common with the Ibibio are
- **a, e, i, o, ɔ, u, ɲ.**
- a:** (short 'a' sound) as in hard. It is pronounced as /ae/;
examples are - afo, abasi, akan, awo etc.
- e:** (short 'e' sound) as in hate. It is pronounced as /e/ without dot(.) underneath;
examples are - ebod, ewa, edim, edi etc.

ɔbɔɲ	as	o – b <u>o</u> – <u>ng</u>
ɔfɔɲ	as	o – f <u>o</u> – <u>ng</u>
ntɔɲ	as	n – t <u>o</u> – <u>ng</u>
afɔɲ	as	a – f <u>o</u> – <u>ng</u>
abɔɲ	as	a – b <u>o</u> – <u>ng</u>
Others are the 'a' and 'ɲ' combined as /aɲ/ as in 'ang'. See example		
abaɲ	as	ab – a <u>ng</u>
mbaɲ	as	m – ba <u>ng</u> etc.

In Ibibio language, a word can mean several things and also open to different meanings and interpretations. Inappropriate use of words in Ibibio music composition creates confused tonal inflection especially when the words are not properly accented. Some words spelt and

- i:** (long 'Ee' sound) as in heel. It is pronounced as /i:/;
examples are - inua, iwo, ikwo, idem, idip, etc.
- o:** (short 'o' sound) as in go. It is pronounced as /o/;
examples are - owo, odudu, obu, obot, etc.
- ɔ:** (long 'Oo' sound) as in born. It is pronounced as /ɔ:/ 'c' turned the other way;
examples are - obong, ofong, otong, ofiong, etc.
- u:** (long 'Uu' sound) as in school. It is pronounced as /u:/;
examples are - uwem, utom, udua, ufok etc.
- ɲ:** (combination of 'n' and 'g' sound - 'ng') as in hung. It is pronounced as /ɲ/;
examples are - akang, mbang, abong, ikpang, abang etc.

NB:

The /e/ sound is with a dot(.) underneath is not part of Ibibio vowel sound; while the /ɔ/ is a 'c' turned the other way; in Ibibio language, it is pronounced like the /or/ sound which is similar to that of the Yoruba 'o', with a dot(.) underneath, sound. Very important to also note, is the fact that the Ibibio /ɔ/ and /ɲ/ when combining sound as /ɔɲ/ as in 'orng'. Examples are mmong, atong, ikpong, ukpong, etc. and they coexist in the language of the Ibibio. See examples:

pronounced are to be thoroughly thought of as they can mean and sound different things. For instance, there are some words in Ibibio that end with the letter 't' when spelt, but in pronouncing them the 't' is changed to 'd' thereby replacing the 't'. See example:

Ebo <u>t</u>	is	pronounced	as	Ebo <u>d</u>
Iko <u>t</u>	is	pronounced	as	Iko <u>d</u>
Itia <u>t</u>	is	pronounced	as	Itia <u>d</u>
Ido <u>t</u>	is	pronounced	as	Ido <u>d</u>
Are <u>t</u>	is	pronounced	as	Are <u>d</u>
Ufo <u>t</u>	is	pronounced	as	Ufo <u>d</u>
Mbo <u>t</u>	is	pronounced	as	Mbo <u>d</u>
Ede <u>t</u>	is	pronounced	as	Ede <u>d</u>
Ekpa <u>t</u>	is	pronounced	as	Ekpa <u>d</u>
Obo <u>t</u>	is	pronounced	as	Obo <u>d</u> etc.

Also, see some of the tonal contrast (that is words that have more than one meaning in the Ibibio language):

Obong	could	mean	lord, cane or mosquito
Ede _t			name or teeth
Edi			to come or pig
<u>Ofiong</u>			moon or month
Obu			dust or crayfish
Obo _t			hill, mountain or creator
Ete			father, to say
Ime			name, perseverance
Ita			name, number (3)
Ekpa _t			sack bag or to shift
Esang			walker's stick or to go ahead
Ika _{ng}			fire or gun or light
Abong			mosquito or cane
Udua			market or week
Aka _{ng}			potash or to lie
Akp _o			rubber or bone
Nto			pit or hole
			etc.

Udoh, in summary stated that the above guides depicts some common errors as found in the traditional Ibibio music works of non-Ibibio composers and arrangers of Ibibio vocal music. The outcome of this research shows that to express and communicate with Ibibio choral music, composers will have to devote time to the study of Ibibio idioms, phrases, and concepts of musical arts.

Some Social Ibibio Song Texts:

Considering the above Ibibio guide, words pronounced as /ɔ:/ which is 'c' turned the other way, in Ibibio will be under lined for easy identification and pronunciation under this sub-heading, while others are pronounced the normal way. Also, 't' is pronounced as 'd'.

• Cradle Song for a crying baby to sleep –

Transliteration

Ayindobuyodayaidab
meuka aka uke
me aka udua
debmkp_ontokayin
sq_kayin
ayinamadiaama
adayaidab

Translation

Child stop crying and go to sleep
where did your mother go to
did she go to the market?
buy little children's thing
for this child
when child finish eating
it will go to sleep

- In singing – (speech-tone chant)

Ayindobuyo da y'i dab
m'uk'aka'uke
mek'a'udua
deb'mkp_ontokayin
sq_kayin
ayinamadiaama
aday'i dab

.,m:m.,d:m.d:r:r
m.r:d:r:
m.s:s:
m.m:r,m.d:
r.r:r
.,m:m,m.m:r.t,m:
r.r:r

- In Staff notation –

A yin dob u yo da y'i dab m'u ka ka'u ke m'e ka'u dua deb'n kpo'n tok a yin sok a

4
yin a yin a ma di'a ma a da y'i dab

• Moonlight night game and story-telling –

Transliteration

Nkaiyasuknno
ekpeikotawodeka
asioubokasokikid
unenikotawodeka
asioubokasokikid
unamikotawodeka
asioubokasokikid
inuenikotawodeka
asioubokasokikid
men do men do
adidoakem mmi
nye dotkeukim
umausuksukkeusan
prang!

Translation

Nkaiya lower it for me
lion in the bush has killed the mother
and has brought the tortoise share
chicken in the bush has killed the mother
and has brought the tortoise share
animal in the bush has killed the mother
and has brought the tortoise share
the bird in the bush has killed the mother
and has brought the tortoise share
grab it grab it
it is now my turn
I hide you in the thorns
when you lower lower it on plate

- In singing -

Nka'iyasuk'n nosuk'n nosuk'n no
ekpeikotawodeka
asioubokasokikid
unenikotawodeka
asioubokasokikid
unamikotawodeka
asioubokasokikid
inuenikotawodeka
asioubokasokikid
me'n do me'n do me'n do
adido'akemmi'n ye dotk'ukim
una'usuksukk'u san
prang!

.d:dmd:l.l:tls:l.l
.m:dmdm:lll
.d:tttt:lll
.m:dmdm:lll
.d:tttt:lll
.m:dmdm:lll
.d:tttt:lll
.m:dmdm:lll
.d:tttt:lll:-
l.l:t:l.l
.m:m.d:l.l:tls:l.l
.d:m.d:l:tls:

- In Staff notation -

N ka i ya suk'n no suk'n , no suk'n no e kpe i kot a wod e ka a sio u bok a

sok i kid u nen i kot a wod e ka a sio u bok a sok i kid u nam i kot a wod e ka a sio u bok a

sok i kid i nuen i kot a wod e ka a sio u bok a sok i kid me'n do me'n do

me'n do a di do'a kem mi'n ye , dot k'u kim u ma'u suk suk k'u , san prang

Ibibio Song Text and Oral Traditions

Traditionally, art, music and oral literature served to reinforce existing religious and social patterns. During the colonial period, some educated city dwellers rejected traditional African cultural activities in favour of Western cultural pursuits but a cultural revival sprang up with the rise of African nationalism and independence in the mid-20th century. Yet, the government of most African nations sponsored national dance and music groups, museums and to a lesser degree, artists and writers. Despite the major transformations that have taken place in Africa in the past few centuries, a large number of people remained in close contact with traditional cultures and institutions.

Oral traditions continue to play important roles in their lives; for westernized elite, oral traditions are useful resources for placing an authentic African stamp on writings and they can aid in reconstructions of traditional life. Giving all the aforementioned, the oral tradition of Ibibio music is a custom, opinion or belief handed down for posterity hence, its oral poetry is found in the song text, as language and music are interrelated. Furthermore, song text is a medium for creative verbal expressions that reflects both personal and social experiences. Akpabot (1998), in looking at style and content of Yoruba and Hausa music states that: Ibibio oral poetry is most commonly found in song texts and invocations during ritual or non-ritual ceremonies. Furthermore, he also highlighted

14 categories of song texts easily recognizable in African music, and they are - historical, communication, social, insult, obsessed, praise, children, funeral, work, war, humorous, women, philosophical, and ritual. All which he said can be grouped under three main headings: Praise Songs; Songs of Insult; and Songs for Entertainment.

FIELD DATA AND EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Socio-Cultural Function: The Fabric of Ibibio Social Order

The socio-cultural utility of Ibibio music transcends mere entertainment; it is the fundamental mechanism for maintaining the social equilibrium. Within the Ibibio worldview, music is a societal regulator that bridges the gap between the physical and the metaphysical, the individual and the collective. In a foreign environment, where the dominant culture often threatens to submerge minority identities, Ibibio music functions as a socio-cultural lifeline and a psychological anchor. The primary socio-cultural function of Ibibio music is its role as a 'watchdog' for morality. The Akata and Ekpo traditional societies utilize music as a potent tool for social policing. Through satirical songs and choral lampooning, hidden crimes such as theft, adultery, or political corruption are brought to the public square. As Udok (2019) notes, this 'musical shaming' acts as a deterrent, enforcing communal laws where Western judicial systems might fail Nigerian. The

music does not just entertain; it adjudicates. Ibibio music serves as an indigenous classroom. During the Mbopo (maidenhood) seclusion, music is the primary medium of instruction. The songs teach young women the epistemology of womanhood, covering themes of hygiene, family values, and resilience. Ofili and Inyang (2024) argue that this music facilitates the internalization of cultural norms, ensuring that the youth transition into adulthood with a clear understanding of their social responsibilities. Similarly, folk songs used in storytelling (Nke) preserve the linguistic nuances and proverbs of the Ibibio people, preventing cultural erosion. Migration often leads to 'cultural shock' and a fragmented sense of self. According to Social Identity Theory, individuals in a minority setting seek social self-categorization to maintain psychological well-being. Ibibio music provides this categorization by offering a distinctive cultural 'badge.' Furthermore, Ofili and Inyang (2024) argue that the rhythmic patterns of Uta or Ekombi serve as a 'panacea' for the diaspora, mitigating the stressors of displacement by reinforcing a sense of belonging to a global Ibibio nation.

The call and response structure of Ibibio music is a metaphor for communalism. Participation in Ekombi or Uta performances requires synchronization and collective effort, which reinforces the 'In-group' solidarity described in Social Identity Theory. For the Ibibio, music is the 'social glue' that fosters a sense of belonging. ResearchGate (2017) contributors highlight that these musical performances provide a platform for 'collective catharsis,' where the community heals from shared trauma or celebrates shared victories, thereby strengthening the bond between the people and their land. One of the most critical socio-cultural effects is the preservation of the Ibibio language among second and third-generation migrants. In homes where English is the primary tongue, folksongs become the primary vehicle for linguistic transmission. ResearchGate (2024) scholars highlight that the 'transcription and transliteration' of Ibibio folksongs allow children in the diaspora to learn proverbs, idioms, and historical narratives through melody, effectively preventing 'linguistic death' in foreign lands. Ibibio music often bridges the gap between the living and the ancestors. In ritualistic settings, specific rhythms are believed to possess therapeutic properties, used in traditional healing to restore psychological balance to the afflicted. This sacred function ensures that the music remains a revered aspect of the Ibibio identity, providing a sense of spiritual security that modern healthcare often overlooks in a traditional context.

Modern technology has birthed what scholars call Secondary Orality, the digital preservation of oral traditions. For the Ibibio diaspora, YouTube, Spotify, and social media groups act as virtual village squares. Watching a recorded Mbopo or Ekpo performance from a living room in London creates a 'communal catharsis' similar to being physically present in Nigeria. This digital engagement fosters transnational solidarity, ensuring that the 'In-group' identity remains robust despite geographical distance. Music evokes a nostalgic feeling that provides emotional stability. This "Home-Coming" sentiment is not merely sentimental; it is functional. It drives the diaspora to remain engaged with their homeland, often leading to remittances and community development initiatives. By maintaining a musical link, the diaspora avoids cultural amnesia, ensuring that their socio-economic contributions back to Nigeria are rooted in a deep, music-driven love for their heritage.

Society is an ever changing process. Because society is a collection of people, it is a representation of what is happening in the world at a time. Ibibio music like other African music, is a significant presence in its society; it has been a part of the human element since the dawn of man. Throughout the centuries, music has been incorporated into the most significant and minor moments of history. The songs of the Ibibio are sung and played in social gatherings such as marriage, feast, coronation, birth, and so on. It is also used as a means of communication, warning, abusing, and treatment. Omibiyi-Obidike (2002) states that: for almost everywhere one turns to, one encounters one form of music and the other. Akpabot (1975) states that: Ibibio vocal and instrumental music are difficult to separate, because their dialect is inflectional, producing speech rhythm that has influenced their drumming and dancing style. The culture embraces masquerade as part of their integral tradition during occasions like coronation of king, chieftaincy, burial rites, traditional events – like marriage, and other festive events. And these are often accompanied with songs and dance and costumes which usually serve as spices to the culture of the people. Masquerade is one of the oldest traditional and cultural events in Africa, it is accompanied with most importantly, chant. There are various kinds of masquerades selected for various kinds of events each with a distinct function which is often according to the tradition and culture of the people. The Cultural Attire of the people are so unique and it comprises varieties of colours. The female folks dress as royalty and the dress is carefully displayed in their long flowing gowns and it is not complete

without the followings: traditional beautiful shoes made of beads, colourful necklace made of coral beads, the head gear and also the hand bags. Their male also wear a combined colourful designed wrapper tie around their waist and also a long piece of cloth to adorn their neck. According to history, the culture has the highest amount of women participation. This is due to the fact that the people are naturally endowed with God given artistic foresight. The Ibibio society is a closely knit society where the people love and appreciate one another, and also live together in peace and harmony. This bond of love is expressed through the various age groups.

The people are very sensitive when it comes to disloyalty, which is they conclude to an act of betrayal and/or infidelity. Disloyalty is also reflected in acts of selfishness, jealousy or attempts to disrupt the well-being of others. The Ibibio frown at acts of carelessness or insensitivity. In the society, people are expected to be principled in their attitude and behaviour towards others. However, if an individual is seen acting otherwise, such is called to order in love with no intension to despise the other. But where there is persistence, a strong confrontation may be warranted. An individual's refusal to conform to expected social attitude or behaviour may attract some undesirable social consequences. The traditional Ibibio society is seen to be a just society; a society where events or situations are expected to be assessed objectively before passing judgement; a society where actions are not seen to be absolutely right or wrong. Hospitality, friendliness and respect are usually reciprocated in the Ibibio culture. Parent-child relationship is of great importance and also highly regarded in Ibibio culture. The bond between parents and their children also informs.

The Ibibio society like many other Nigerian societies engage in conversation with their children in Ibibio language. Language and culture are closely related. One would want to state that without language there will be no culture and vice-versa. Okon (2007) asserts that culture is the knowledge that someone has by virtue of his being a member of a particular society. Kottak (2004) on the other hand, views culture as: a set of control mechanism, plans, recipes, rules, instructions for the governing of behaviour. Corroborating this statement, Wardhaugh (2000) asserts that: language forms a vital aspect of the socio-cultural behaviour which in turn forms part of the society's value system and patterned way of life shared by the people. In the Ibibio society, therefore, Ibibio language is tightly interwoven with Ibibio culture and together, they identify the individual or group as being distinctly Ibibio.

The Ibibio society is an organized society. A number of social institutions are put in place which Ottong (2004) noted, as: the principal instruments whereby the essential tasks of social life are organized, directed and executed. These in turn depicts that the established ways of behaving and/or pattern of approved (or sanctioned) behaviour. Functions cannot take place in the day to day life without music, dance, dressing, language, costume and make-up all which happens in a space of time. It unit and create bonding amongst members of the society thereby serving the same social interest such as: wedding ceremony, naming ceremony, thanksgiving ceremony, coronation ceremony, chieftaincy title ceremony, house warming ceremony, birthday celebration and so on; all of which brings a lasting memory in the minds of the society as music in itself is an art. Corroborating this, Merriam (1964) asserted that:

When we speak of the uses of music, we are referring to the ways in which music is employed in human society, to the habitual practice or customary exercise of music either as a thing in itself or in conjunction with other activities.

This further reiterate that the uses of music is part and parcel of daily living of human life in the society. In summary, Ibibio music in the diaspora acts as a cultural immune system, protecting the migrant from assimilation while fostering a vibrant, transnational identity that supports both individual well-being and national development.

Economic Development Function: Impact on the Ibibio Diaspora

The economic utility of Ibibio traditional music for the diaspora manifests through a 'dual-flow' system: it creates a niche market for cultural consumption abroad while simultaneously driving capital investment back into Nigeria. This section examines how music transforms from a cultural artifact into a viable economic engine for the global Ibibio community. Music acts as a primary driver for the Nostalgic Economy, a sector where migrants consume products from their homeland to maintain cultural ties. Ekong (2015) identifies that the emotional connection fostered by indigenous music is a significant catalyst for diaspora remittances. For the Ibibio abroad, traditional music serves as a psychological 'call to home,' which often precedes financial investments in local community projects, real estate, and heritage preservation. This 'affective economics' ensures that the diaspora remains a consistent source of foreign direct investment (FDI) for the Akwalbom region.

The digitalization of Ibibio music has empowered diaspora-based entrepreneurs to create digital

cultural hubs. By leveraging platforms like YouTube and Spotify, members of the diaspora engage in cultural branding, promoting Ibibio heritage to a global audience. Scholars emphasize that music entrepreneurship is a vital path for Ibibio youth and diaspora members to generate revenue through content creation and digital distribution. This creates a global value chain where Ibibio music is not just consumed but is also a source of income for those who document, transcribe, and market it globally. Traditional music is the cornerstone of Cultural Tourism. The diaspora often returns for major festivals such as the Ibom Christmas Village or the Usorokot, which are heavily dependent on traditional musical performances. This seasonal migration creates a Heritage Premium, where the diaspora spends significantly on hospitality, local logistics, and the purchase of traditional instruments like the Nkwong and Ibid. Onyeji (2016) notes that branding these musical experiences for the diaspora is a 'money-spinning' venture that empowers local artisans and musicians, directly linking diaspora wealth to rural development in Nigeria. Ibibio music serves as a form of Soft Power during diaspora gatherings and conventions (such as the Akwalbom State Association of Nigeria, USA). These events, centered around traditional music and dance, serve as networking platforms where economic partnerships are forged. The music provides the cultural handshake necessary for trust-building among diaspora professionals, leading to the formation of investment syndicates that target Nigeria's creative and tech sectors. By providing a cultural panacea, the music facilitates an environment conducive to high-level economic collaboration.

Ibibio music just like African music, also helps to connect people together in a variety of ways, strengthening the fabric of the community, which in turn reinforces people's commitment to support each other and the community, toward mutual health and prosperity. Another crucial role of Ibibio music in relation to Africa is that it exist as a mode of communication. Talking drums, signal drums, songs, and the sagas of the historian griots each communicate different types of important information. The African Influence on African American has evolved into unique musical tradition, reflecting the experiences of Africans in the New World. This musical tradition, however, has been influenced by African cultural patterns in profound and subtle ways. According to Bono, 'Music can change the world because it can change people.' People can remember events based on the traditional songs. The music of the Ibibio people is uniquely rich in dance, songs and instruments, and symbols play very important roles. According to

Ogbonna (2022), in describing the Materials and Production of Traditional Art of the Nwommo Traditional Art of Ibibio People, state that African arts of the Ibibio speaking people are often produced by unlettered artisans. Their conceptual approach to medium of expression, thoughts patterns and forms expectedly are untamed, natural yet ecofriendly. The media for production are often based on material availability within the locale.

Wood carvings, were produced in the tropical rain forest where wood is in abundance. This accounted for the Ibibio artists using more of wood for their art. The use of non-robust media (wood, clay, raffia and ochre for colours) for their arts has increasingly affected scholarly works and literary discourse. Nonetheless, in recent years, academics are saturating reputable journals with articles in related areas. The materials required for production were easily accessible within Ibibio environments. They were acquired at little or no cost except for labour. Most of the art forms were produced on site where the materials are taken. While others were partially treated and brought back to home for completion. Umoanwan and Nyah, (2015) observe that:

The inside walls and ceiling of Nwommo were plaited with bamboo split and decorated with cloth wrapped on the inside of the hut. The cloth was dyed with contrasting colours, cut into desired shapes and sewn on the cloth to be wrapped. In this way, pictures of animals, objects and war instruments were depicted, thus justifying the artistic quality of the applique design and the motifs employed.

AsuquoAkpabio - an Ibibio traditional sculptor, for instance, works in wood. The sculptor's themes in wood and clay resonate contemporary impact of Ibibio traditional art on education, marriage and technology. The apprentice system was observed as they worked masterfully beside the sculptor (Ogbonna, 2019). This helped in the transfer of knowledge from generation to generation. Traditionally, the most unique, distinguished and highest of all masquerades in the culture is the Ekpe masquerade and it consist of only the male folks. The Traditional attire of the people is usually very colourful and bright, also very elaborate. The artistic culture of the people is often said to belong to the women, since naturally they are artistic. Some of which are the - calabash carving, the brass carving and the bras stray decoration, beadwork (like bead shoes, bags, chewing stick bag), and it is often handed down to the younger generation. Others like raffia and mat making, woodcarving and cane making are done by the men. The tradition of the people are also known for face and body painting. It is usually done with white chalk, and it symbolizes purity and love, it used to be seen

as a form of self expression developed from the different families into identities and patterns. At times, it is used to express joy of child birth or a case of just receiving good news. More significantly, the painted face connote that the one (any woman) whose face is painted has been initiated into all women society. All the aforesaid are avenue to boost the Nigeria economy through international interest as research centre for academic purpose, tourism, performances showcasing this rich culture and tradition and also drawing the interest of the global world through the exhibition of these artifices embedded in the rich culture of the Ibibio people.

VI. FINDINGS

The findings from this study are derived from a thematic analysis of in-depth interviews with traditional custodians, professional musicians, and Ibibio diaspora representatives. The results validate the paper's core thesis: that music is not a static artifact but a dynamic 'panacea' for development and identity.

The Social Watchdog Effect and Communal Sanity

Interviews with traditional custodians in Uyo and Eket revealed that Ibibio traditional music remains the most effective extra-judicial tool for social control. Respondents noted that while modern law enforcement is often seen as 'remote,' the satirical songs of the Akate and Ekposocieties provide immediate communal justice. Findings suggest that this 'musical shaming' serves as a deterrent against social vices such as petty theft and public corruption. As supported by Udok (2019), the results show that music creates a 'moral mirror,' forcing individuals to conform to communal ethics to avoid being 'sung about' in the village square.

Economic Potential: From Ritual to Revenue

Data from professional musicians and instrument makers highlighted a significant shift from the 'ritualistic' to the 'entrepreneurial.' Musicians reported a high demand for traditional performances at modern high-profile weddings and government functions, indicating a commodification of heritage. However, a critical finding was the lack of digital monetization. While the music is performed, it is rarely recorded or licensed properly. Findings align with Ekong (2015), suggesting that if Ibibio music is systematically branded and digitized, it could serve as a major source of revenue for rural youth, mitigating unemployment through creative arts entrepreneurship.

The Diaspora Panacea: Identity Reconciliation

Interviews with Ibibio representatives in the UK and USA provided the most striking findings regarding the 'panacea' effect. Diaspora respondents described traditional music as a 'psychological umbilical cord.' Key findings include:

- i. Cultural Grounding: 90% of diaspora respondents stated that listening to Ibibio music reduces identity anxiety in a foreign land.
- ii. Language Retention: Parents in the diaspora use folk songs to teach their children the Ibibio language, confirming that music is a primary vehicle for linguistic continuity.
- iii. Remittance Motivation: A direct link was found between cultural nostalgia (induced by music) and the willingness to send money home for community development. This validates the claim by Ofili and Inyang (2024) that music provides a reconnection tool that bridges the physical distance between the migrant and the homeland.

Digitalization as the Bridge to the Future

A recurring theme across all interview groups was the urgency of digital preservation. Traditional custodians expressed fear that 'as elders die, the songs die with them.' However, younger respondents highlighted that Secondary Orality, which is the use of TikTok and YouTube to share Ekombi dance clips, is already creating a new, vibrant archive. Findings suggest that the digitalization of folksongs is not just about preservation but is the essential bridge that ensures cultural continuity for a globalized, tech-savvy Ibibio generation.

Ecological, Environmental and Sustainability Impacts

Ibibio traditional music serves as a vital instrument for environmental communication and sustainability, promoting indigenous ethics that preserve ecological integrity. By embedding environmental values into performances, this music influences collective attitudes toward land, water, and wildlife.

- i. Environmental Awareness & Education: Ibibio folk songs are powerful tools for raising awareness about conservation and sanitation. They promote communal responsibility, educating both young and old on ecological issues through performance.
- ii. Promotion of Indigenous Ethics: Traditional music reinforces Ibibio indigenous environmental ethics, which include collective stewardship and a spiritual bond with nature. Rituals and taboos embedded in songs designate sacred areas like akai (forests) or Ndem (water spirit) abodes as protected spaces, preventing pollution and deforestation.

iii. Communication for Sustainability: Beyond entertainment, performances serve as ‘normative vehicles’ for social sustainability and ecological conservation, bridging ancestral wisdom with modern environmental challenges.

iv. Eco-Musicological Influence: Through eco-musicology, traditional songs highlight climate resilience and encourage community-led initiatives for mitigation and adaptation to environmental degradation.

Dual Impact Considerations

i. Positive Stewardship: Integrating traditional knowledge into modern sustainability practices can foster deeper community engagement and ecological balance.

ii. Footprint of Modern Festivals: Large-scale musical festivals, while promoting cultural heritage, can have negative impacts through high energy consumption, transportation emissions, and waste production. However, many modern festivals are adopting eco-conscious measures like renewable energy and waste reduction.

Likewise, Ibibio folk songs serve as powerful vehicles for environmental communication, embedding ecological stewardship within the cultural and spiritual fabric of the community. These songs often rely on indigenous metaphors to promote conservation, sanitation, and respect for the natural world. Some examples and themes are as follows:

Sanitation and Personal Hygiene: Many songs equate a person's character with the cleanliness of their immediate environment. A common proverb-song, ‘Nsanaebietowoidepekeokuk, nsanaidem ado uyai’, which translates as ‘A clean environment is not bought with money; cleanliness is beauty,’ emphasizing that environmental care is a moral duty.

Earth as a Divine Entity: In songs like ‘Ekondok’etoro fi o’, which translates as ‘The Earth are praising you’, the natural world is celebrated as a reflection of divine wondrous works. This spiritual connection fosters a theocratic orientation where the ecosystem is seen as designed by a Supreme Being, making its protection a religious obligation.

Resource Stewardship and Sustainable Farming: Work songs often celebrate sustainable practices like crop rotation and bush fallowing. By rhythmically coordinating tasks, these songs reinforce the community's primary means of sustainability which is agriculture and fishing, while advocating for conservative attitudes toward the land to ensure long-term productivity.

Sacred Spaces and Biodiversity: Traditional lyrics often designate specific locations such as

sacred forests (akai) or water spirit abodes (Ndemmmong) as off-limits for exploitation. The fear of sacrilege, reinforced through deterrent songs, acts as a traditional conservation method to prevent deforestation and overfishing.

Communal Responsibility: Various folksongs highlight that environmental protection is a collective social order task. Cultural performances act as ‘normative vehicles’ that engage the community in ecological preservation without requiring formal regulatory structures.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

To leverage the findings of this study for national and global development, the researcher recommends the following:

Institutionalize Cultural Education

The AkwaIbom State Ministry of Education should integrate the study of Ibibio musical instruments and folksongs into the primary and secondary school curricula to ensure intergenerational transmission.

Digital Archiving and Intellectual Property

The State Government, in partnership with private tech hubs, should establish a Digital Heritage Archive. This would involve the systematic transcription, recording, and copyrighting of Ibibio music to enable monetization on global streaming platforms.

Branding Cultural Tourism

The annual Ibom Christmas Carol and other state-sponsored festivals should be rebranded as Global Ibibio Heritage Summits, specifically targeted at attracting the diaspora through roots tourism packages.

Support for Musical SMEs

Provide grants and vocational training for local artisans who manufacture traditional instruments (like the Nkwong and Ibid) to encourage the export of handcrafted musical artifacts.

Diaspora Engagement Platforms

The Office of Diaspora Affairs should utilize digital traditional music concerts as a ‘soft power’ tool to engage Ibibio associations abroad, facilitating trust and fostering collaborative investment in Nigeria's creative economy.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Ibibio traditional music is far more than a rhythmic accompaniment to ceremonies; it is a vital engine for social-cultural stability and economic revitalization. Grounded in Functionalism and Social Identity Theory, the research confirms that music serves as the social

glue that maintains communal order through moral pedagogy and social policing. Economically, it represents an untapped ‘orange economy’ capable of driving entrepreneurship and cultural tourism. Most significantly, the study establishes Ibibio music as a psychological and cultural panacea for the diaspora. In an era of global displacement, these indigenous sounds provide a portable home, mitigating cultural alienation and fostering a transnational identity that encourages homeland investment. By bridging the gap between ancient orality and modern digital consumption, Ibibio music ensures cultural continuity, transforming a local heritage into a global asset.

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