

GENDER SPACE AND THE PARADOX OF SELF-ASSERTION IN AMADASONG PERFORMANCE IN KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA

Oluwatoyin Bimpe Jegede¹ And Maryam Yusuf Magaji²

¹Department Of English University Of Ibadan

²Federal University,wukaritaraba State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Amada music performance is a form of Hausa art that is given motivation by the impulse to change certain cultural and religious restrictions placed on the female gender. These restrictions, like the Kulle system of marriage, have also constrained scholarly interests in Amada. However, the few studies in Amada performances have mostly focused on the origin, literary techniques, thematic preoccupation, forms and features of Amada with none paying attention to the performer's attempt at refusing oppressive gender traditions. The current study therefore examined gender and the paradox of self-assertion with a view to identifying elements and strategies of performance which affirm and transgress gender cultural norms.

Womanist theory provided theoretical orientation because of its regard for women's struggle and maintenance of cultural family values as instruments of true emancipation. Data were collected through field-work, oral interviews, and participant -observation methods. Two live performances of two Amada musicians (Yan Asharalle and Asiya Mai Zairo) were recorded in audio and video compact discs at formal and informal occasions while Barmani Choge's performances were downloaded from the internet. Purposive selection method was used to obtain the three samples for the study: "Asharalle", "Song of the Buttocks" and "Unwind". The data were transcribed, translated and critically analysed using the womanist theory.

Four elements were found to be important in the process of gender and self - assertion: visibility, audibility, Hausa culture and Islamic religion. These elements shaped the content of Amada and influenced its performance strategy. The performers' rejection of invisibility and inaudibility (seclusion), made them to reconfigure and extend their spaces beyond limiting cultural ones by moving from private to public spheres. Their love for family life motivated their preferences for certain Hausa/ Muslim values and hatred for others that they considered oppressive. Their struggle for self and gender emancipation within cultural framework brought about conflicts that created paradoxes in the songs. The feminine was inscribed and discursive spaces were opened up where feminine difference was articulated. They did not seek to achieve emancipation by hating men; rather they negotiated their ways through oppression and attempted to maintain a middle space as an alternative to patriarchy. This was realized through metonymic construction of musical instruments in all the songs. Items such as bowls and calabashes were used for drumming. Such items, associated with women, are normally used for cooking, washing and

bathing; but were put to counter use in the performance. In that sense, the performances paradoxically affirmed the women's cultural stereotypes as cooks, launderers and homemakers while they reject the same stereotypes. Choge's synecdochic description of women as "buttocks and robust buttocks" was complemented with other narrative strategies like transgressive idioms, ambiguity and body poetics in "Song of the Buttocks", whereas, both Yan Asharalle and Asiyamai Zairo deployed the use of repetition and naming strategies in "Unwind" and "Asharalle".

Gender and self-assertion through negotiation around cultural and religious oppression produce paradoxes. Therefore, Amada music performers cannot remain the same within traditions that undermine them.

Keywords: Gender and self-assertion, Paradox, Negotiation, Narrative strategy, Amada music Performance.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Hausa is one of the three prominent ethnic groups in Nigeria and one of the largest in West Africa. parts of Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, Togo, Ghana and Sudan. The largest population of the Hausa is found in North Western Nigeria and their cities and towns in that area include Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Zaria, Abuja, Bauchi, Birnin Kebbi, Lafia, Makurdi, Suleja and Yola. Katsina State is situated in the North West geo-political zone of Nigeria. It was carved out of the former Kaduna State in 1987 and its capital is Katsina. Before the Fulani conquest of 1807, Katsina had been an important seat of learning and commerce for the Trans-Saharan trade and it provided one of the earliest education centres of the North. As the commercial heart of Hausaland, it became the largest of the seven Hausa city states and was known to be one of the most vibrant and strongest in arts and crafts in addition to commerce. Its history of western-style education dates back to 1922, when the Katsina Teachers' College was established. The state's indigenes are mostly Hausa and Fulani.

The Hausa were, according to Graham Furniss (1996: 3), worshippers of spirits (*Bori*) until the reform movements of Usman Dan Fodio and their subsequent conversion to Islam. After their conversion, they gradually inculcated Islamic and Arabic ways of life until most of their customs were subsumed in their new religion. Even though their religion (Islam) constitutes the most important aspect of their lives, traditional beliefs continue to influence their lives and direct the roles they play according to their gender as male or female.

Gender has been defined as a phenomenon of the division of people into categories of masculinity and femininity; especially when they are considered with reference to the social and cultural differences between them. It has more to do with socialisation processes than biological endowment; there is nothing to determine if a man is a better artist than a woman in any way, if he will be a better judge, teacher, singer, dancer or tailor; nothing in fact that even determines who becomes a provider and who becomes a dependent. It is a social creation in

which the female is given a marginalised existence and is constructed as the 'other'. Social institutions and legal forces continuously reconstruct gender, with each sex having associated roles. The man is assigned the role of provider and protector while the woman is the cook, nurse and child bearer of her family. The woman is considered the weaker sex, to be provided for and therefore to be confined to the house. In Hausa communities like in other patriarchal communities, the woman's role is subservient; one is born a female but one becomes a woman (Simeone de Beauvoir, 1947:295) through impressions, role segregation and interpersonal processes such as legislations, traditional and religious beliefs. The woman is subtly trained and raised to play supportive roles so that she eventually accepts her roles in her family and can fit into a new family when she grows up and gets married. The roles and stereotypes are imbibed in such a way that one of the sexes becomes dominant and the other, submissive. This is why Oyeronke Olademo (2009: 12) described gender as a process filled with the notions of differences and oppositions which sometimes widens the differences between the two sexes and often translates into the domination of the male and oppression of the female.

Hausa Female and Social Expectations

Among the Hausa like in most African communities, there are certain social and cultural expectations attached to being male or female. These guide their ways of thinking, behaviour, aspiration and appearance. For example, traditionally, the girl – child is considered a danger to the society if she is not married off by the time she attains puberty; besides, it is expected that a woman should be fully and suitably covered at all times when she appears in public and she is discouraged from aspiring to professions such as law or medicine like the male members of her family because that would not only mean she would be competing with the men, she would be visible and exposed; it would mean an association with men who are not related to her and her ability to perform favourably in those professions would challenge the age old beliefs that boys are more valuable than girls. Most especially, the girl-child must not be a singer of any kind, especially one who appears in public. According to Hauwa Kassam (1997:116) "The women are discouraged from participating in the performing arts which is considered a male sphere and when a few of them like Barmani Coge dare to embrace it as a profession, they are stigmatised."

One of the reasons for discouraging women from such artistic productions is largely to stop them from seducing men with their voices as well as their dancing which involves swinging their hips and moving their bodies.

Gender, Hausa Custom and Oral Performance.

Gender roles in oral performances are based mainly on Hausa custom and partly on Islamic religious prescriptions. Traditionally, the woman in Hausa custom is put in seclusion through a system called *Kulle* (wife seclusion) and it is almost mandatory and expected that the woman should be invisible and inaudible. She is not allowed to mingle with men who are not related to her. In addition to being a female, the Hausa woman is expected to be feminine in her dressing and behaviour. She is expected to be a good wife, a good cook, a good mother, silent, and

submissive to her father, uncles, and brothers and later to her husband. Her voice must not be heard by men who are not her kin.

Despite these social constraints, Hausa girls and women have been singing in seclusion from time immemorial. A form of traditional performance done by girls is *Shantu* which is performed in the evening, after a day's work as a form of entertainment. It involves exposing part of their legs, so it is performed only in the privacy of the harem (Beverly Mark, 2004: 45) Women's traditional performances include lullabies, work songs and *Asauwara*, an energetic dance done by women during festive seasons such as the Eid festivals. These are sedate with no overt vulgarity. *Amada* is another musical form by women. It is evident that seclusion brought out the women's creativity; they had to find ways of easing their boredom and creating some form of entertainment to fill the time they spent indoors during the day. Paradoxically, the fact of the seclusion is the source of their creativity. Within the dictates of culture, women's oral performances are done only for their fellow women. However, during such performances, under aged boys and male relations may come in and go out at will. Whereas, men's performances are mostly in public and have been recorded frequently, the women's performances are rarely recorded because they are performed in private female quarters.

Statement of the Research Problem

Amada music performances are forms of Hausa art that are among other reasons, given motivation by the impulse to change certain cultural and religious restrictions placed on the female gender. These restrictions, like the *Kulle* system of marriage, have also constrained scholarly interests in *Amada*. The few studies in *Amada* performances have mostly focused on the origin, literary techniques, thematic preoccupation, forms and features of *Amada* music. Among these are Sabitu Tanko's (1990) study in which the origin of *Amada* is discussed from a historical perspective, and the contributions of Uwaliyama *Amada* to Hausa poetry, are examined. Attention is given to Uwaliyama *Amada*'s style of performance; and her use of repetition, improvisation and tonal variations. Maryam Ibrahim's (2010) study is a comparative study of three *Amada* artists from Katsina and Kano states. She discusses their backgrounds, styles, use of acoustic equipment, and their individual talents. Maijidda Ahmed Shuaibu's (2012) study titled *Wakokin Amada a Fadar Kano* (*Amada* songs performed in the Palace of Kano) explains the origin and forms of *Amada* and the role of the Queen Mother's *Babbandaki*, (big room), under whose supervision the performers choose their songs and tailor them to suit patrons and occasions in the emir of Kano's Palace.

Specifically, Shuaibu and Tanko's studies are concerned with *Amada* performances in Kano while Maryam Ibrahim's (2010) study covered performances in Katsina and Kano states. In our opinion, the most vibrant performances are found in different locations in Katsina State. The previous studies focused only on thematic preoccupations and stylistic felicities of *Amada*. In addition, none of the studies gives consideration to gender and the female performers' attempt to assert themselves. This study fills the gap by interrogating the attempt made by *Amada* musicians to refuse oppressive traditions. The current study is therefore concerned with gender and the paradox of self-assertion in selected *Amada* musical performances in Katsina State.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to examine the paradox related with gender and self-assertion in selected Amada musical performances from Katsina State. The specific objectives are to:

- i. describe elements and strategies of performance which affirm and transgress gender cultural norms which subordinate women; using them as bases for examining space, stereotypes and naming in performance;
- ii. discuss instances of contradictions in ambiguous moves made during performance;
- iii. explore body poetics in Amada as a source of resistance, power and information.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the elements and strategies used in Amada performances?
- ii. Do contradictions exist in the moves made by the performers?
- iii. How is the body used as a technique of resisting or affirming cultural values during performance?

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to 3 Amada music performances by three women's groups in Katsina State. The songs are WakarDuwaiwai (Song of the Buttocks), 'Asharalle' and A warware (Unwind) by BarmaniChoge, Yan Asharallena SabonUnguwa and AsiyamaiZairo respectively. The songs were purposively selected based on their popularity in Katsina and thus, the extent to which they can reach a wide audience. They were also chosen because of their thematic relevance to the current study.

METHODOLOGY

Data for the study were collected through field work and recorded in audio and video compact discs at formal and informal performances as well as oral interviews. These were carried out through participant-observation method. The researcher paid five visits to the performers in Katsina and also witnessed a few events in Kano and Kaduna. The researcher visited each group and spent 6 days each with them in order to conduct informal interviews and observe them as they performed. This included accompanying them to various events within Katsina City. The performances were transcribed and translated.

Relevant archival materials were used. Audio and video recordings of the deceased but popular Amada performer, BarmaniChoge were downloaded from the internet and others collected from Television houses and subsequently transcribed and analysed. Data were subjected to critical literary analyses.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for the study is African Womanism. It is a theory that centres on the need for positive gender self- definition within historical, geographical and cultural contexts. It encourages women to raise consciousness and seek emancipation with consideration for collective values. It acknowledges the complementary roles of men and women and respects the family unit and motherhood. Womanist theory is used in analysing movement of space, rejection of stereotypes and construction of new images in Amada musical performances.

The Amada Musical Form

In an interview conducted on 26/6/2014, Professor Sa'idu Muhammad Gusau explained that Amada was introduced into the Hausa culture after the emergence of Islam and was originally a religious performance where praises of the prophet Muhammad were sung by clerics. The name "Amada" is said to have been coined from one of the prophet's names- "Ahmad". The early performances, as previously stated, were strictly religious, and only the prophet's attributes and praises were chanted. With time, this and the singers changed; the clerics were no longer the singers and frivolity was introduced into the performance. In all the performances, though, the performers still begin with one or two songs praising the prophet before they veer into revelry.

Amada performance is done exclusively by women on invitation at home for female audiences at wedding / naming ceremonies or in royal courts. During performances at weddings and naming ceremonies, the audience dance and appreciate the performers; whereas in the royal courts, dancing is controlled when the emir and his court are around. The audience of Amada performance is restricted to women or both men and women depending on the place of the performance; if it is done in the courts, men are allowed to be in the audience to watch the performance.

Amada music is a combination of words and melodies and is an important part of Hausa folk music. It is one in which a group of women beat calabashes placed face down on the floor or in up-turned, water-filled bowls, using short, whittled sticks, slippers or the palms of their hands, providing background music to a singer. Its themes include women's empowerment, education, marriage, jealousy and politics.



Fig. 1. The Amada ensemble



Fig. 2. Yan Asharallegroup at a formal event

In spite of all the restrictions placed upon women, they have been challenging and contesting patriarchal values which have become deep-rooted and accepted by all. Scholars like Beverly Mack (2004), PrabinShrestha (2013) and M. C Onyejekwe&E. S Ikeokwu (2013), have argued that music is one of the significant mediums with which women fight patriarchal suppression and oppression. They use it to express dissatisfaction, grievances and anger about their lives

and some of them even make a profession of its performance. Among them are BarmaniChoge, BintaZabiya, Hassu Baduhu, Asiya and HajiyaTabawa, who were mostly stigmatized for their career choice.

Sa'adatu Barmani Choge was a reknowned Amada artist and one of those who brought Amada to the notice of the public, not only in Katsina State and northern Nigeria, but also in Nigeria as a whole. She was born Saadatu Barmani and the nickname 'choge' was added to her names after one of her first songs 'Wakar Coge'. Her singing career began as an impromptu, opportune performance which served to entertain women and gain her more invitations to perform and slow popularity. Her style of singing differed from other female performers around at that time who sang praise or religious songs. She would also begin with doxology but veer into revelry and serious issues concerning women.

Her songs contained messages for women; she was bold and forthright, raising matters that concerned women in their homes and the society at large, discussing problems between women, matters between women and men and criticising cultural and religious laws that did not favour women. This made her appeal grow among women because of her ability to discuss those issues. She not only criticised unfavourable laws, she also criticised certain characteristics in women, encouraged them to get gainful employment and chastised indolent women. One of her songs, 'Sakarai ba ta da wayo' (silly one, she is not wise) for instance is about a woman, one of three wives who is lazy and lives off the good will of the other two wives. Another song, 'Wakar Duwaiwai' (song of the buttocks) is a song which portrays the physical attributes of women and how they are necessary in their homes.

Apart from BarmaniChoge, there are other female groups in Katsina, like Yan Asharallena Sabon Unguwa and Asiya Mai Zairo whose themes are basically the same as hers. The songs are often composed spontaneously depending on the context of the performance.

Corresponding Performances

Similar performance traditions exist between the Hausa and Yoruba and this confirms the idea of the diffusionists who maintain that cultures are contagious because they spread from one place to another. They also uphold that cultures are imitated. OluwatoyinJegede (2002) had referred to Yungba performance in Oyo kingdom with analogous instruments.

Amada performers use calabashes and bigbowls among other items that are used for cooking, washing and bathing, as their musical instruments; these items are usually associated with women. Their musical instruments can therefore, be described as metonymic because they are items that are associated with women and their stereotypes. So, in that sense, the song texts affirm the women's cultural stereotypes as cooks, launderers and homemakers.

However, the instruments are used outside the kitchen and they are not used for cooking. Rather, they are used for drumming. This usage indicates the women's rejection of their stereotypes as cooks and launderers. These two positions show the paradox that is involved in their attempt to assert themselves.

Furthermore, the paper affirms the position: “By hitting the calabash and singing by themselves, the women subvert men’s roles and establish their own authority and independence...and resist traditional power relations and ideology of the day which place the man above the woman”(Jegede, 2006: 236).

Claiming Her RelaxationSpace

The performance of Amada music is one way by which women redesign or reconfigure their spaces the way they want them. Jegede (2002& 2006) had argued that women create their own spaces and within their world, create their music. It is like what happened in the palace of the Alaafin of Oyo, where royal wives beat the calabash. When they do this, they perform with little restraint. This is what has happened in Amada performance. The woman’s space is traditionally limited to certain areas in the home where she takes care of her family. Such places include the kitchen, bathroom and compound. The Amada performer rejects this by moving from the private (compound) to the public space(stage/palace). The performance affords her the opportunity to do something for herself and say things the way she sees them; she sings, drums and dances, creating for herself a place of relaxation and enjoyment in contrast to the space of boredom created by culture. By being audible and visible, she moves from the margin to the centre. Ironically, her desire for cultural acceptability mostly restrains her to do this within the limits of her confined space. Only a few daring performers like BarmaniChoge dared to perform outside their husbands’ compounds.

Women’s roles and empowerment prevail at home; that is in the private domain. The study affirms Mary Kolawole’s (1997) view that “women’s domestic empowerment sometimes shapes public issues”. In most cases, when women move from private to public spaces, it is as a result of the support they receive from home. A few husbands actually allow their wives to be performers and even give permission for them to travel out of town when they are invited for events. A few of the women who did not care about stigmatisation performed in the public space with domestic empowerment:

Hausa

Jagora: HajiyaMairo to ninagode

Amshi: Godiyasakallah

Jagora: A yimulki in da mulkiLead: Rule **when** there is the **right to rule**,
a gaisheki Greetings to you

... ..

Jagora: A yimulki in da mulkiLead: Rule **when** there is the **right to rule**
 (“Unwind”, lines 11-15)

English

Lead:HajiyaMairo,I thank you

Chorus: Thanks, may Allah reward you

The woman’s right is subject to her husband’s permission and the woman’s ability to create the right atmosphere. This is a profound depiction of the women’s reality, inscription of their cultural value and their affirmation of the same. Paradoxically, a performance provokes and elicits positive and negative responses. It begins a set of role appropriations and criticisms that establish women’s subordination and at the same time questions their fundamental premises as women, as Hausa and Muslims. Mary Kolawole (1997) had argued that women

had to “create their own terms of emancipation rather than adopt externally imposed criteria of struggle” (202). Since African Womanism is closely aligned with humanism, every gender struggle is done within the framework of what is humanly acceptable. African womanist ideology upholds the family and the complimentary roles of men and women in it. It shows great respect for the family unit. It encourages women to work together and fight for their rights from within their family units. The Amada performers take up men’s roles as drummers in performance, yet, they want to retain their homes and their roles as wives and mothers in them.

Naming as Site of Identity Sharing

A name is a form of identity which, according to Judith Butler (1993), leaves the bearer open as ‘a site of contested gendered and sexual meanings’ (154). In oral performances, naming is an important performance strategy. It forms the basis for praising the individual. Names could either be given at birth or acquired after birth. The given names range from personal to family ones while the acquired ones come through a person’s association, behaviour or activities in which the individual is involved. In “Song of the Buttocks”, two members of the chorus are described by their affiliations to their husband and father. They are referred to as “Audu’s wife, owner of the calabash”, and “the butcher’s daughter” (line 16). “Audu”(husband) and “the butcher” (father) are only present as names while their wife and daughter are present as figures.

Hausa	English
Jagora: Ta Audumasukwarya	Lead: Yes, Audu’s(wife), owners of the calabash
Amshi: Dole a zauna	Chorus: One must live (with them)
Jagora: Ke ma kiyikidan duwaiwai	Lead: you too, do the beat of the buttocks
...	...
Jagora: To aidiyarmahauta	Lead: Ok, you too the butcher’s daughter
Amshi: Dole a zauna	Chorus: One must live (with them)
Jagora: Mata mulamulanduwaiwai	Lead: Women, robust buttocks
Amshi: Dole a zauna	Chorus: One must live (with them)
...	...
Jagora: Da abokan zaman duwaiwai	Lead: With the companions of the buttocks
Amshi: Dole a zauna	Chorus: One must live (with them)
Jagora: Da injinniqantuwon	Lead: Even the grinding machine
Duwaiwai for the moulded buttocks.	
Da chikomoron da ke	Even the Moroccan hair style that is in
Duwaiwai the buttocks	

(“Song of the buttocks”, lines 11-24)

The individuals are identified by their male relatives- their husband and father; they are not called by their own names and this accounts for their subtle effacement and lack of identity. It then appears as if they have no personal importance and their importance is only in the context of their family settings. What is evident here is the womanist respect for the family unit, which is in tandem with Hausa culture.

Naming in this context becomes a site of disguised recognition of marital and familial authority. These are serious adoptions/arrogations. The descriptions further position the feminine as subsidiary and their identity as ancillary. It is a site of identity sharing with the one who is present (the artist) being attached to the absent ones (husband and father). The absent husband and father are foregrounded. The literary production therefore portrays a world where male and female co-exist and where representation is only complete with the ‘materialisation of women and their paradigmatic relationship with men’ (Richard OkoAjah, 2011:101). This affirms the traditional portrait of women as people under male dominance.

Paradoxically, attention is drawn to their drumming skills when they are described as the “owners of the calabash”. Thus, competence and lack are combined in the description; the women are good drummers but they have no identity. One is done openly while the other is done subtly. There is therefore a (de)stabilisation of the female gender and sexuality in this effacing description of the women. They are important as drummers but not as women in their own rights but rather, as appendages of men. They are recognised only as attachments to male characters who are either their husbands or fathers.

Patronymic name is a proprietary name; the bearers (women) are branded and become private properties of their families. Naming also secures and structures the subject, producing a subject on the basis of a set of laws that differentiates subjects. Thus, the compulsory legislation of sexed social “positionalistics” (154) ... identification is a sign of loyalty and affiliation (Butler, 143).

According to Judith Butler:

The social function of the name is always to some extent to stabilize a set of multiple and transient imaginary identification, those that compose for Lacan, the circuit of the ego... it is the function of the name to secure the identity of the subject over time (152-3)

Essentially, names are durable and they confer recognition on their bearers. Besides, they are endowed with authority and if it is a patronym (family name), it carries with it an enduring and viable identity. However, the feminine name and identity is never permanent because it depends on paternity and marriage. The feminine name is exchanged, transferred and

substituted over time. It is this same act that determines the continuity and permanence of the patronymic name. In the performance, their names are erased.

Another form of naming in Amada performance is metaphoric eulogy. It is a figure of speech in which metaphor is combined with praise of the subject. In self adulation, and through inversion, the performer identifies with the might of an elephant. The woman becomes an object of admiration and adoration:

Hausa

Jagora: Giwanakeyar Garba

Amshi: Asharalle

Jagora: Ni nafi gabanyaro

Amshi: Asharalle

Jagora: Allah, saibabanyaro

Amshi: Asharalle

...

Jagora: Ni nafi gabantarko

Amshi: Asharalle

Jagora: Ai saimaitarko

English

Lead: An elephant I am, Garba's daughter

Chorus: Asharalle

Lead: I am greater than a boy's front

Chorus: Asharalle

Lead: By God except the boy's father

Chorus: Asharalle

...

Lead: I am greater than a trap

Chorus: Asharalle

Lead: Except the owner of the trap
("Asharalle", lines 68-76)

The Stage as Expression of Opposition

In "Song of the buttocks", the singer inscribes the buttock, the human body and "robust buttocks" (100) which specifically refer to the woman. The song affirms and destabilizes generally accepted views about gender and sexuality. This attempt is made to validate women's identity through the creation of an absent centre (husband and father) and binary opposites. This affirms Judith Butler's claim that "identity emerges as a result of lack or an absence". She argued that the self finds fulfilment and completion only when the 'other' is incorporated.

The self only becomes a self on the condition that it has suffered... a loss which is suspended and provisionally resolved through a melancholic incorporation of some 'other'. (27)

What occurs here is also what Adrienne Rich termed "an expression of the obscure bodily hatred peculiar to women who view themselves through the eyes of men" (1977: 220). In this case, the 'other' is the woman's husband and in the second case, her father. By establishing the presence of husband and wife, womanist praxis is combined in the musician's critique of women's misrepresentation, stereotypes and construction of 'acceptable women's image'.

Transgressive Idiom in the Discourse of the Body

The robust nature of the woman's body which, in traditional sense is considered to be the source of her beauty is projected in "Song of the Buttocks". The "beauty myth" which according to Naomi Wolf (1990) is created by cultural patterns reduces the value of women to their physical appearances or the beauty of their bodies (Jegede, 2013: 214). The woman's body is inscribed into the music in such a way that the singer explores the erotic as a source of power and information and as an assertion of the life force of the woman.

On the other hand, through the use of synecdoche, the woman is represented by a very sensitive part of her body; the buttocks. By this act, Choge brings out this private and secluded part as a symbol of the woman's (secluded) cultural experience and the sum total of her being as a mere body that can be treated as an object for sex and a body ornamented like dolls (Jegede, 2011:213). In 'Song of the Buttocks', several references are made to buttocks as synecdoche for women ('women, robust buttocks', line 21 and 23, 25, 27, 109, 111, 115 etc.) The repetition of buttocks establishes the stereotypical description of women as sex objects and mere bodies and the robustness and roundness of their bodies as the source of their beauty. Flaunting their bodies physically as well as verbally, the women draw attention to their bodies, thereby rejecting the custom which tries to neutralize the female body, and at the same time, challenge age old customs which cast the female body and everything associated to it to the realm of the inferior 'other'.

Performance as Transgression

Ambiguity is a strategy of resistance that is used in Amada performance from some site located outside of power. The performer (in "Song of the buttocks") reels out names of Northern towns that can be considered seats of political and religious power and challenges the authorities to their face. The context of performance (social) is outside of power:

Hausa

Jagora: Mu koma Sakkwatowasa
 Mukoma Sakkwatowasa
 Nan ma nakiradu waiwai
 Katsinan Kabirunayiwasa
 Jagora: A Kanon Dabo ma nayiwasa
 Nan ma nakiradu waiwai
 Na koma Kazaurewasa
 Nan ma nakiradu waiwai
 A Zariyan Shehu Kenan
 Dukga Zagezagezaune
 Amshi: Dole a zauna
 Jagora: Nan ma nakiradu waiwai
 Na yi Kaduna ganga
 Na komo Kaduna ganga

English

Lead: Let's go back to Sokoto to perform
 Let's go back to Sokoto to perform
 There I also referred to buttocks
 I performed in Kabiru's Katsina
 Lead: I performed in Dabo's Kano
 There I also called buttocks
 I went to Kazaure to perform
 There, I also called buttocks
 In Shehu's Zaria
 With all the Zaria men seated
 Chorus: You must live
 Lead: There I also called buttocks
 I also played the drum in Kaduna
 I went back to Kaduna drumming

Amshi: Dole a zauna
Jagora: Kaduna naGwamnaKenan
Nan ma nakiraduawai

Chorus: You must live
Lead: That is Governor's Kaduna
There, I also called buttocks
("Song of the buttocks", lines 65-

93)

Sokoto, Katsina, Kano, Kazaure, Zaria and Kaduna are important Northern towns and seats of religious and political authorities and Sharia, the Islamic system of law is in operation in all of these towns. It is therefore doubtful if the performer could have achieved what has been claimed in a Muslim community where the Sharia law is in practice. The references that are made here are consequently, attempts to reclaim women's voices in these Islamic thresholds and also before dignitaries who hold the reins of power in those areas.

It is a transgression for any woman to speak in public because a woman's voice is attractive and enticing and can be a distraction to men; it is shameful as well as disgraceful for them to sing in public and worse still to mention a woman's body part privately or publicly. The singers are labelled as wayward because the conventional ethic of decorum in speech is transgressed.

The song thus becomes a transgressive speech act (AderemiRaji-Oyelade2012:89), a violation of religion, a deviation from culture and a strategy of resistance against patriarchy. These performances are considered dangerous and may lead many astray. In these references, the feminine is inscribed and discursive spaces are opened up where feminine difference is articulated (Sophia Phoca and Rebecca Wright, 1999:50). This is done in a playful manner. It also provides alternative to patriarchal discourse. It further emphasizes the performers' visibility and audibility. They have found their voices in a hitherto socially dangerous environment for such a social activity and they have survived many forms of physical attack.

In an interview with Asiya Mai Zairo on 31/1/2016, the researcher learned of an incident which occurred during one of the group's public appearances- a wedding ceremony to which they had been duly invited. They went to the venue of the event only to be stopped during the performance by the groom's enraged father who threw their equipment out of his house and even stoned them. Two of the singers sustained minor injuries and the lead singer scraped her knees from falling on the ground as she tried to evade the flying calabashes.

Within the context of culture and religion, the propriety or the quality of their social behaviour in performance is questionable and the performers are ostracized. Ironically, the attempt to counter patriarchy is from within the institution of marriage rather than from a site outside of it. Thus, the institution places constraints on the performer as the women have to obtain permission from their husbands to leave the house and perform for other women, and most men do not allow their wives or daughters to invite Amada performers into their houses during their events.

Of the six members of Yan Asharalle group interviewed on 30/1/2016, all said they had difficulty getting their husbands' permissions when they started out as performers. One of them

said she could do as she wished now because she was now old and since several of them were now widows and divorcees, they did not need anyone's permission. The mere act of performing denotes and indicates complicity with or resistance to hegemonic systems of culture and religion. Their actions of seeking permission from their husbands, performing only when they are invited, as well as performing within the confines of their spaces vacillates between submissiveness and rebelliousness, using their bodies to continually challenge a system that privileges masculinity over femininity.

The effrontery that the performers displayed in their impudent action of drumming and referring to buttocks in performance and boasting about their repeated reference to buttocks, "with all the Zaria people seated" (line 88), is an indication of a disruptive process of an intentional confrontation that culminates in the final declarations "I cannot do it, living with enmity" (line 95) and "I am unable to do it, living with enmity" (118). They reject the hatred that comes from the segregation of men and women and indeed their seclusion, which generates hatred in them. The Amada music performers cannot remain the same within these traditions that undermine them, although their attempts at self-assertion from within the institution of marriage means that the freedom which they seek, cannot be achieved.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that tribe and culture/ religion are important elements in the struggle for gender and self-retrieval. Amada performers uphold acceptable Hausa/ Muslim values and deconstruct those that they consider oppressive with a view to remaining as wives and emancipated women. The feminine is inscribed in their music and discursive spaces are opened up where feminine difference is articulated. They do not seek to achieve emancipation by hating men; rather they negotiate their ways through oppression and attempt to maintain a middle space as an alternative to patriarchy. Gender and self-assertion have been explained as emanating from the performers' attempt to reconfigure and extend their spaces beyond limiting cultural spaces. This is realised through metonymic construction of musical instruments, and narrative strategies such as naming, repetition, transgressive idioms, ambiguity and body poetics.

Their attempt at asserting themselves becomes paradoxical because in one breath they maintain their Muslim and Hausa norms, and in another, they uphold deviant cultures which counter Islamic and Hausa cultural norms. The poetic bodies that occur in their performances, sustain and enhance their creativity, disavow and celebrate femininity, define and redefine sexuality while challenging confining and restrictive customs. What is certain is that the women want freedom from oppressive traditions, they have spoken for their gender (audible), and they are seen by some people (visible); but not much has been achieved from their performances with regard to their emancipation.

Thus, the current study has foregrounded the elements and strategies of performance which affirm and transgress gender cultural norms in selected Hausa performances; as sources of

resistance, power and information with a view to emphasizing the paradoxes that emanate from such attempts.

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