



GSJ: Volume 7, Issue 9, September 2019, Online: ISSN 2320-9186

www.globalscientificjournal.com

THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNICATIVE SYSTEM AND THE CREATION OF INTERACTIONS IN BENDE, ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

There seem to be less enthusiasm in the commitment of the use of drum, *ikoro*, *ekwe* and other communicative modes in the dissemination of information in Bende society due to western urbanization. Prior to this, these indigenous communicative systems and other channels of communication aided the creation of interactions and had direct impact and considerable influence in the public sphere, which was defined as the socio-political arena, through institutional provisions in ancient Bende, South-east, Nigeria. The advent of colonialism and certain of its policies put these channels of communication down, notwithstanding the fact that these traditional communicative channels define and explain the people philosophical worldview. Either in dance or verbal communication, they remain essential parts of the people's cultural heritage being anchored as vehicles for moral rectitude and social mobilization. The overriding concern of this research is therefore to demonstrate the significance of these communicative tools through which communication transverses in the Bende traditional society. The paper analyzes both the historical and sociological perspectives and also engages the essence of these modes and agencies through which information is disseminated, as well as the achievements and challenges of the channels in Bende. Among the findings, the emergence of a vast array of fast modern and sophisticated means of communication have changed the once closely-knit Bende society to lack the ability to enforce its social norms thereby dampening the commonness the people have with one another. Furthermore, the underlining argument of this paper is a simple and straightforward one: the affirmation of the fact that *ikoro*, *ekwe* and other traditional communicative tools among the Bende people, must be renewed if social order is to be restored because these traditional communicative channels remain the foundation of the Bende cultural values, and in them are the people more united; caution should be exercised in the craze to confine them to the past. The study is qualitative in nature and approached from a functionalist perspective. Data were sourced from both primary and secondary sources.

. **Keywords: Drum, Ikoru; Ekwe; Ogele; Radio; Newspapers**

Introduction

Society arises and exists through communication. Drums, wooden gongs and other channels of communication among the Bende people, in the pre-colonial era, had direct impact and considerable influence in the public sphere, which was defined as the socio-political arena, through which ideas, information, values, knowledge, feelings, etc, with other people and the sharing and exchanging of news, views and so on are disseminated and appreciated. However, the advent of colonialism and certain of its policies put these channels of communication down, notwithstanding the fact that these communicative tools define and explain the people philosophical worldview. Either in dance or verbal communication, they remain essential part of the people's cultural heritage as they are anchored as vehicles for moral rectitude and social mobilization.

The transmission of information, knowledge and attitudes from one community to another, one individual to another, employing these traditional communicative tools, is as old as Bende itself. Indeed, human communication in Bende is the life-wire of social existence because it involves the stimulus response and feedback process (Luthans, 1992). For Inyang-Abia (2004), it is a defining feature or sign as well as a necessary condition for being alive. Likewise it is the most important single feature of the environment within which every individual conducts his life. In other words, it involves an individual initiating (the sender) the process by passing on a message through a medium to another individual (the receiver) at the other end. The receiver, upon receipt, tries to decode the message as encoded by the sender and tries to understand it. The (receiver) then replies (this time taking the position of the sender) to the message and here the sender (the individual who originally initiated the communication process) assumes the position of the receiver. Thus, no one can be said to be knowledgeable about oneself and one's environment unless one understands communication, its nature, structure and functioning because it is the key to social order.

Traditional modes of communication, is a powerful and purposeful socio-political symbol and strategy for the effective mobilization of the people in the exercise of power and maintenance of identity among the Bende people and also increasing the commonness the people have with one another. The channels affect all realms of life and constitute the foundation of the people's cultural values, and in them are the people more united. Therefore, communication is central to the nature of man, to the development of the person and to the functioning of political, economic and social institutions in any given society of which, Bende society is no exception.

In this vein, Kalu (1974) avers that communication in Bende is not limited to the simple expression or sharing of ideas, feelings or messages with one another. Rather, it stretches to that complex expression of the people's thought and emotions about their gods, deities, other super-natural beings and general world view. These expressions normally find vent through music, religious or ritual obligations by the use of drums and other vital communicative tools. Like in other societies, communication is not a one-way affair from a source to a receiver but entails a critical feedback component without which its effectiveness is incomplete. Thus, a viable ingredient for a successful conduct of affairs of any society depends, to a large extent, on the ability of the leaders and the governed to understand one another and determine in cooperation with one another the aims, objectives, goals of the society.

2. Anthropological and Geographical Location of the Study

The Old Bende people reside in south east Nigeria. They are culturally conservative; less title conscious, while comprising Umuahia Ibeku, Arochukwu, Ohafia, Abiriba, Uzuakoli, Ntalakwu, Umuhu, Nkporo, Itumbauzo, Alayi, Ezeukwu and other autonomous communities in Abia State, Nigeria .

The primary occupation of the old Bende people is agriculture. The standard farming implements are the special type of hoe, made of large circular blade and measuring a foot or more in diameter, cutlasses, and diggers. Bende land is fertile, the major products being yam, cassava, maize, melon, palm oil, pineapple, plantain and rice. Bende land is located in the rain forest belt of Nigeria. The farming practice of leaving extensive tracts of exhausted farmlands fallow for a number of years to regenerate their fertility has encouraged the systematic search of virgin land.

Owing to the significance of agriculture, land plays a key role in the life of the Bende. The earth spirit (ala) is the most prominent deity in Bende communities. Almost every community has its own earth deity in whose name laws are made and oaths sworn, thus, providing the ritual and political focus for the unit. Certain conducts such as homicide, kidnapping, suicide, and yam stealing are regarded as offences against *ala* and have to be ritually cleansed to avert disasters in the form of bad harvests and famine or premature deaths in the

community (Forde and Jones, 1950). Apart from the role of agriculture and land in Bende religion, they also have largely determined the settlement patterns. Most Bende villages are made of homesteads clustered around a centrally located market place with their backs to the farmlands. The idea behind this pattern of residence is to provide enough land for subsequent habitation and farming with increasing population, and thus curtail friction among neighbouring communities arising from encroachment on territorial rights.

3. Research design

Data for this paper were obtained from three major sources. Firstly, some data were collected through being participant observers. As members of Bende traditional society who have resided in different communities, we were attracted as insiders, with the gagging of both the print and electronic media in contemporary society, to study how the employment of drums, *Ikoru*, *Ekwe*, *Oja*, *Osa* or *Oyo* and *Ogele* (metal gong) as traditional channels of communication guaranteed freedom of information and social order in the entire old Bende society. Secondly, we conducted focus group discussions and interviews in different Bende communities over a period of about four years since 2014 on the relevance of these modes of communication which are instrumental to music creation, information dissemination and celebrations. Thirdly, some data were gathered through secondary sources-documented works on related study.

4. Theoretical framework

4.1 Functionalism

In the social sciences, specifically sociology and mass communication, functionalism also called functional analysis is a sociological perspective that originally attempted to explain how social institutions, not as collection of isolated traits, but as collective means fulfill individual biological needs. Later, it came to focus on the ways in which social institutions fill social needs, especially social stability. In other words, it stresses how the institutions of culture operate to satisfy the needs of individuals and that of the society as a whole. Functionalism is therefore based around a number of key concepts. Firstly, society is viewed as a system – a collection of independent parts, with a tendency toward equilibrium. Secondly, there are functional requirements that must be met in a society for survival such as reproduction of the population. Thirdly, phenomena are seen to exist because they serve a function (Holmwood, 2005:87).

Thus, the word function from which functionalism is derived, explains the orientation towards given ends, such as the direct or indirect satisfaction of human needs, the socialization and molding of human beings, the integration of a group.

Succinctly put, functionalism attempts to explain the parts institutions play within the interrelated whole of a culture. Thus, the argument is that every communicative channel in every culture, particularly in mechanical societies such as Bende, has a function, the satisfaction of the needs and that when the needs of individuals are met, who comprise society, and then the needs of society are met. To Functionalists August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Alfred Radcliff – Brown, Bronislaw Malinowski, Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton and others, the feeling of people, their motives, are crucial knowledge to understand the way their society function: These functionalists have demonstrated in their various approaches on how order can be restored and progress ensured. In essence, the methods employed were basically similar because functionalism came into being as a result of an attempt to restore order after the French and industrial revolution in Europe and their ideas, in one or another led to the restoration of sanity in these societies.

. The conservative tendencies of functionalism with its preoccupation with social order provide a similarly predictable analysis. The concern of the functionalist approach is in discovering the basis of stability and order. From this perspective, communication is seen as reinforcing social norms and values and promoting social solidarity, all of which are required for a stable and smooth running social system.

5. Clarifications of concepts

5.1. Membranophones:

Among the old Bende people, one of the most important modes of communication is the drum. As early as their migration to their present habitude, the drum was used to summon people to the village square. The drum falls into a category of musical instruments whose surfaces are struck or beaten to generate sound vibrations. The drums (ukele, abia) have a variety of names and sizes, and these in turn account for the type of messages each of them conveys. Abia is the generic name for drums of various shapes and sizes made from hollowed wood with one or both ends covered with soft animal membrane (akpukpo) adjustable at the sides to regulate the tautness and sound (Okonkwo,1985).

They produce a unique beat that gives Bende music a peculiarity that sets it in a class by itself and makes it identifiable from a distance. The creative value of instruments in music is best appreciated in the popular Bende adage, *nkwa ji egwu*: instrumentation is the anchor of music. Drums and flutes speak in abbreviated tonal language decipherable by the initiated or the connoisseur, conveying messages much like words. Music creates a magical aura, with intricate, complex performance, that evokes special memory and a sense of nostalgia. Music is synonymous with celebration and speaks volumes in terms of phrases and feelings, drawing from traditional idioms, proverbs, riddles, folklore etc. flutes, harps, drums, megaphones, rattles, etc. produce harmonious sounds that carry far and wide and permeate the air with the exiting mood of the moment. It appears that in the traditional setting the use or manipulation of some instruments like ukele, opi, and otuleka is the exclusive preserve of men while women are restricted to the agogo, udu and ishaka.

Music is a universal language. It is an important mode of communication that contributes to the maintenance and persistence of the religious, political and social systems of which it is part. In this context, Mbiti (1975) observes that a lot of African music and songs deal with spiritual ideas and practices. The religious rituals, ceremonies and festivals are always accompanied by music, singing and sometimes dancing. Music, he says, gives an outlet to the religious passions of the people and it is a powerful means of communication in African traditional life. In another strand, Cutter (1968) as quoted in Tunji (1988) puts it: the African musician is a singer of deeds and action. In this vein, Tunji (1988) argues that some musicians function variously as historians, genealogists and the bards in their various communities. Through their musical expressions, rulers reaffirm their sovereignty; communities preserve their history for posterity while the young are socialized into values of the society. Among the Bende people, music is one of the highest expressions of our humanity; it is one of the few powerful means for the preservation and transmission of our culture that has not been completely eroded by globalization and modernism. It defines and explains the Bende philosophical worldview. On the other hand, communication is seen as an interactive process involving the imparting of ideas, information, values, knowledge, feelings, etc, with other people and the sharing and exchanging of news, views and so on within society. The Bende people have a rich culture of music and effective modes of communication anchored as vehicles for moral rectitude and social mobilization. Music and communication in the traditional Bende chronicle events criticize or praise establishments and extol virtues just like the press in modern day democracy.

Music is often, if not always, accompanied with dance (*egu*) which gives it a further meaning. Dance comes in measured steps laced with charisma and galvanizes every part of the body. *Itegwu* is a rib-jerking epic dance response to music involving intricate measured movements of the outstretched, sometimes crossed arms and practiced deployment of the feet. It co-opts every part of the body, especially the ribs, shoulders, arms, feet and waist. The sing-dance-clap and the call-and-response pattern are popular features of Bende music that exhibit the folkloric tradition of the Bende people and portray the wealth and beauty of this version of African culture. Music serves as a catalyst, a moral teacher and a social crusader that stabilizes the moral hygiene of the society. Lyrics are articulated in rhythmic and harmonious progressions to communicate meaning in culture, economics, literature, philosophy, politics and social commentary.

The social commentary function of music takes a new approach. It is a medium employed to make statements on the failure of leadership, condemn ills plaguing society, document history and contribute to the development of a vibrant leadership culture. However, the introduction of western ideas saw the harmonious incorporation of modern musical instruments into Bende music has moved the crescendo, producing a blend that is not just Igbo but uniquely Bende. The guitar, microphone, trumpet, keyboard and modern drum-sets joined traditional instruments to revolutionize Bende music and produce a new genre rich in tempo and texture. The embellishing effect of the guitar on all registers-high, medium and low- for instance produces an evergreen rendition of melodies. Modern Bende traditional music consists of high tempo beats characterized by blaring flutes or horns, guitar, keyboards, percussion, talking drums etc. The product compares to a new brew rich in taste, flavor and colour. However, a dangerous trend is currently emerging in Bende music, that of importing words and phrases from other languages. It is noticeable among many musicians of latter breed. The danger in this trend lies in its potential to adulterate and corrupt Bende language and also threaten its existence and rob Bende people of their God-given lingual heritage. If unchecked, Bende language runs the risk of extinction or subordination to Igbo language or any other language for that matter. It also further compounds the Bende crisis of identity, which often makes outsiders either to mistake them for or subsume them under some of their neighbours. Bende is a unique and distinct language created and endowed by God on the Bende people. Its

similarity with any other language should not be taken for sameness, just as the similarity of most extant European languages with Latin or with one another does not confer synonymy on them. Bende language is the very essence of our being Bende and we all, including particularly our artistries, have a duty to protect and project it. The Igbo or any other people with whom the Bende have lingual affinity or common border do not sing in Bende language. It is permissible if we sing, illustrate or subtitle our music in English language as a way of giving it universal appeal beyond our borders. But we should jealously guard what is ours by being proud of our colour, culture and language even to the point of extremism.

5.2. Idiophones

This category of Bende traditional musical is self-sounding, producing sound from the interaction of materials from which they are made. The idiophones replace the drum as a mode of communication. Most important among this class of talking instruments is the *ikoro*, the Bende wooden slit-gong. The *ikoro* is synonymous to the Global Satellite Mobil phones (GSM) of the modern world. A discussant, Chukwu Dike (2018: PC) in the Focus Group describes the *ikoro* as a big tree trunk, shaped and hallowed out with a long narrow cut or opening for an effective sound production. The *ikoro* is a massive wood trunk employed for serious information dissemination: send messages, summon people into assembly and recite people's names and titles (Chukwu, et al, 2013).



Fig 1 The *Ikoro* at Amakwu, Ezeukwu before it was carted away by unknown persons

The *ikoro* is the most sacred. As result, it is beaten only on special occasions such as summoning people in times of dire emergencies like war. Its sound portends ominous danger and a call to duty. It is therefore not sounded in vain; it is a call in time of imminent danger. When the *ikoro* is beaten, particularly at night, the entire community and its neighbouring villages will understand that either something is amiss or a festival is to commence. Often than not, it is sounded to report breaking news or in times of emergencies such as war (*agha*), death (*onwu*) or kidnap (*ituru madu*). It is the fastest means of communication which could be heard at about seven kilometers away. As other villages pick the message, they pass it on to more and more distant ones, thereby giving the messages wider publicity (Nkwo, 1984).

One of the things every man learned, according to Achebe (1958) was the language of the hallowed-out wooden instrument: ***Diim! Diim! Diim!*** boomed the cannon at intervals. As soon as the *ikoro* is sounded, the male adults move for the venue armed, knowing that a serious issue needs to be discussed while women and children put on worried faces, straining eyes and ears. Ogbonnaya Michael (2011: PC), a respondent, pointed out that decisions taken in some of such meeting are usually kept secret for some time for security purposes.

The *ikoro* is not just a cylindrical hollowed trunk. Many have on their bodies, inscriptions of carved objects and some of which depict human and animal forms or ancestral figures. This no doubt, is responsible for the uniqueness *ikoro* has among the *Bende* traditional drums and its esteemed importance among the people.

Besides, *ikoro* is often associated with legends, and is generally housed in a fairly big hut known as *Agbala ikoro* (*ikoro* house) which occupies the central portion of *Ama* – the community meeting square. Chukwu Dike (2019: PC) concludes that the *ikoro*.

In Bende, the *ikoro* has another function of stimulating lily-levered men, those men who cannot withstand the sight of blood into acquiring that perfect masculinity, the spirit of fearlessness, and thirst for blood expected of men. This it does by singing praises of past war heroes and people of distinguished valour. The *ikoro* would pamper these heroes, giving them strong verbal decorations. Such praises, fortifiably tensed, enrich these heroes with more inspirations, to the feeblest, the feeling of humiliation, rejection, emptiness that can ginger and transform them into men of courage. The praise songs have a lot of psychological impact on the life of the Bende people. They give an instant and didactic judgment to people; praising those who merit praise and rebuking those with various moral shortcomings. It is to sustain the life force of *ikoro* that a white cock is annually sacrificed to it before observing any major community festivals such as *Ozara*, *Abah*, *Omumo Uzo*, *Ila-oso* and other festivals. In festivals, when an *ikoro* intones, successful Bende men, according to Chukwu, et al (2018) moves:

Running and dancing towards the direction of the invocation, armed with the proofs of their past successes or braveries; On getting to the Agbala ikoro, the warrior, in the case of a war hero, would dance, a musical dance drama, demonstrating and illustrating in live graphics his military prowess, skills and agility in an imaginary struggle or duel between him and his opponent at war and how he ultimately beheaded him; displaying the proofs: series of human skulls, exhibiting them for the audience to see. For warriors, the message of directs the tempo of the dance steps as they dance forward (advancing or attacking), backwards (retreating) and forward again. A smile of victory spreads across their lips as they dance forward, sometimes on one foot, to announce and attribute their victories to the support of the community title holders gathered before them, who all this while had been watching, commenting, assessing and nodding at every step and gesture, recalling the great military feast of the community.

In the same vein, the renowned farmers proudly exhibit the best of their harvest which is mostly yams, craftily demonstrating too the magic behind their success in yam production. Likewise the hunters (*Nd' igbugba*) would do the same; coming out in file with bunches of skulls and skeletal bones of the animals they had so far killed. Those of them who were opportune and strong enough to have killed lions received the greatest ovation. They come in, exhibiting and brandishing the colourful hides of the lion. Equally not left out are the mask wearers who also feature, displaying their artistry. While the *ikoro* continues to sound, the frenzy of the dance springs spectators from their seats to shower generous gifts of money on the different men of valour and join in the dance. The surging crowd of spectators is kept under control by whip-wielding attendant.

In a bid to know why the Ezeukwu community believes that her *ikoro* is the most intricate and sends information with much vigour and vibrations than any other, a representative of the focus group discussion explained that, the men who built the *ikoro* were slaughtered and their blood sprinkled on this sacred object so that no replica of it would be found anywhere within the neighbouring villages. In the same strand, Okonkwo George (2019: PC), another respondent, averred that the blood of the carvers sprinkled and sacrificed to the *ikoro* was responsible for these special qualities, especially in sound productions. Secondly, the complexities involved in the carving of the community *ikoro* have made its replication elsewhere difficult. However, the entire community woke up one morning to discover that her highly treasured *ikoro* had vanished into thin air. A representative of the focus group I worked with informed me of the theft and demanded that since I had taken a snapshot of the *ikoro*, I should intimate the world about the disaster that awaits them if it is not found within a reasonable time frame. But the questions that agitate my mind for answer since its loss remains:

- a) Who carried such a gigantic trunk away so successfully?
- b) Is it possible for such a sacred trunk to disappear into thin air leaving the community baffled without an accomplice within?
- c) By what means therefore was the sacred trunk taken out of the community?

Aside the wooden idiophones, metal ones such as the iron bell or gong which form the largest number of idiophone musical instruments are used to carry messages, signal danger and warn people of curfew. One of the advantages of using the metal idiophone is that it has a high carrying power, and thus, able to penetrate longer distances. The iron bell or gong is therefore an important musical instrument for the town crier, the master drummer, the ritual chanter or singer, the chorus leader and the group dance director. Each of these role players uses the iron bell either as an accompaniment to or as a signal for the beginning or ending of a performance.

5. 3. The Human Voice as a Mode of Communication (Town crier)

Dissemination of information is an essential part of the people's cultural heritage. In Bende traditional society, the onerous responsibility for the performance of this all important task devolves on the town crier and other designated individuals in the community. The human voice is an important aerophone in Bende. The town crier is an important message bearer who uses his voice as the principal mode of delivering messages from the rulers to the ruled. The message may vary from announcement or curfew, the dawn of festivals to the death of an important personality in the town.

For messages/ information to be disseminated, the ruler/elders send out the town crier, the official announcer with the message. According to Okonkwo George (2018: PC), a respondent, the town crier makes himself loud and clear in order not to be misunderstood. He is bold and proficient in the language and has a resonant voice and retentive memory to recall instructions. Flowing from this is the fact that he shares in the blame or praise for the state of the society at any point in time. This is because as a town crier, he can inform and misinform, educate and mis-educate, instruct and mis-instruct, advise and mis-advise, gladden and sadden, boost morale and lower morale, elevate and distress, solidify and disintegrate, cultivate and antagonize.

The communicative tool used by the town crier to disseminate information is the ekwe (wooden gong) which shares the same basic structure with ikoro, though very much smaller in size. Unlike the ikoro, ekwe is used for verbal and non verbal communication. It helps the town crier to disseminate messages. When the ekwe is beaten, particularly in the night, automatic quietness usually descends on the people as their interest is aroused for the town crier's message. As I walked and observed the town crier stride through the different villages with his small wooden gong on his shoulders; I could appreciate how the human voice carries him far, near and clear. *Gome, gome, gome, gome*, boomed the wooden gong. With cheerful docility, the message comes: *All listen! All men! All women! Everybody! Every child! The young! The old! And strangers alike! Listen:* he disseminates the messages in the evening when people have returned from their daily chores and beats his gong again to signal the end of the announcements.



Fig 2: The town crier disseminating information and his gong

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The town crier strikes his gong thrice: *gom, gom, gom*. He paused for a while, and then speaks loudly at the top of his voice. 'Our people of Ezeukwu, I greet you all. I have been sent to deliver these two messages to you.

Na nu nchii (All should listen, open your ears). Onye obula nbu nwoke (Anyone who calls himself a man) Pusa l' ama tonwa (Proceed to the village square now)

No sooner had he finished than the messages began to ejaculate variety of sensations from the people. The information would include the date (*ubochi*), time (*oge*) and venue (*ebe nzuko*) of such meeting and the category of people whose attention is required. The vicinity of the residence of titled and respected individuals and popular junctions are some of the strategic places where the town crier must stop over to make his announcement known. A general embargo on those summoned from going anywhere else for the duration of the meeting is imposed and the consequence of failure to attend, usually a fine (*iwu*) is specified. An announcement by the town crier constitutes due notice to all.

5. 4. Aerophones:

Beside the voice, other important aerophones used as modes of communication in Bende are the horns, trumpets, clay bass pot (*udu*), wooden flute (*oja*) and ivory flute (*opi*). These classes, otherwise called wind instruments, employ air as the medium of producing sound and are usually blown or piped with the mouth or struck. *Udu* is a big, round, earthen pot with a small side opening with a soft, the normal opening at the top. When struck on the top opening with a soft, padded object compressed air is forced to escape through the side vent. The rapidity and variation to the strikes determine the volume, tenor and rhyme of the bas sound produced. *Opi* is a flute made from animal horn or ivory, horizontally against the lips. It has a wider open end, a sealed pointed or tapering end and a small orifice in the middle on which it is blown while one hand manipulates and

controls the exit of air at the open end to produce variations in sound. Oja is a wooden flute with an opening, held vertically against the lips.

Beside the signal, the speech and the symbolic modes of communication, a fourth mode which the aerophone plays in musical ensemble vis-à-vis other instruments may be called the music mode. The music mode consists of musical expression or compositions which are played on a number of specific occasions. This category of music includes all forms of herald music, welcome music, praise music and processional music when, for example, music ensembles accompany a monarch /title men at public appearances. In this mode, an aerophone can either play melodic structures of a phrase or sentence or play verbal texts.

5. 4.1 Chordophoness

These are stringed instruments that produced sound through vibrations set off by plucking the chords and include the traditional piano or xylophone (akpata, ubo, une). Akpata is a small, cuboid wooden box with wooden strings at the upper surface end and a small round hole in the middle like a guitar. It produces a pleasant vibrating sound when the strings are plucked with the fingers. Une is a curved stringed musical weapon that passes for a traditional violin with a small stick for striking the chords to give a wailing, vibrating sound.

They include the bell (mgbiligba, ukolo), beaded calabash or maracas (ishaka), rattles (iba), wooden gong (okpokolo), clanging sticks (nkwa), metallic gong (agogo), live-size metallic gong (ibome) and the bottle gong (ogo). Ishaka is a calabash stringed with a net of beads, which rattle a tweeter sound when shaken. Okpokolo is a bamboo cutting with both ends closed and a side vertical opening. It reverberates sound when struck with a small stick. Ufie is a bigger replica of Okpokolo made of wood. Mgbiligba and ukolo are metallic bells, the latter, which hangs on the waist of a dancer being a special type with unique sound. Iba is stringed rattles, made from shells of a special fruit, tied to the ankles of dancers for a rattling output that rhymes with the dance steps. Nkwa is a carved pair of sticks struck together to generate a clanging koi-koi sound. Agogo and Ibome are conical-shaped hollowed metallic gongs. The farmers is small and can be single or paired while the latter if life size. Ogo is a glass bottle gong. The ingenuity of the Bende transforms empty bottles into musical contraption for merriment.

5.5. Ese(talking drum) and Ogele (metallic gong)

Ese (talking drum) is another tool of non-verbal communication commonly used in the traditional Bende society. The talking drum (ese) is a hollow, cylindrical shape made of tree trunk with one end covered with well stretched leather parchment, hides or skins of animals (Nkwo, 1984:85). Among the people of Bende, the drums are designed in variety of sizes and shapes, depending on the group or set of people using them and what they are used for. In Ezeukwu, the *Okombo* drums have rectangular forms, the *Ikpa* drums are abstractedly elongated with pointed ends while that of *Ajonkwu* is short and thick-set. Nevertheless, the sound production of these drums depends to some extent on their sizes. The big ones have a deep high sounding effect, unlike the little ones which produce thin but sharp sounds. It is known as *ese or ikperikpe*.

Talking drum is not of similar footing with *ikoro* in terms of sacredness. It is more secular and less awful and highly indispensable object in the ritual life of the people. *Ogele*, otherwise called metallic song is another form of Bende traditional musical instrument. It is made of pure metal and constructed in variety of forms. There are outstandingly large types with straight or curved handles. There also exist two smallish set of tiny ones. This type is referred to as *Ogele mkpi abuo*. Like the *ekwe*, *Ogele* is used in summoning meetings and in keeping order in family discussions and public gathering in general.

Beside spreading information for burial, ritual or ceremonial purposes, drums, with the exception of *ikoro*, are intended for music. There is always, according to Nkwo (1984), a complementary music to every aspect of life, from its beginning to the end. In addition to its flavour, music gives these celebrations the greatest level of concentration and psychic force capable of making the presence of the ancestors felt. Of all the musical instruments, drums rank first in social importance among the Bende. Such ceremony is non-existent that does not make use of drum. In fact, it is upon drums that the people's social ceremonies are built.

In the Bende traditional society, every *ekwe* is identified with a particular festival or cult on the basis of its size and the consequent sound production. The *aku* cult, the *Obong or akan*, *ekete*, *ikpa*, *ariso* and musical groups like *the Ogu George*, *Ayakata*, *Ohuba*, *Okombo* have their respective peculiar sizes of *ekwe* and pattern of beating them. Whenever an *ekwe* sounds in festival, people impulsively identify the very group performing. In case of the talking drum (*ese*), the drummer produces sound by beating it with either his fingers or with two

sticks. The quality of the sound produced depends on the beating mechanisms and what section of the drum surface is hit.

Ogele is a melody playing instrument used in conjunction with other drums. In Bende traditional society, when an herbalist or diviner otherwise called *dibia* consults his oracle in the traditional Bende society, he makes some religious music not meant for dancing with his small *ogele*. The sounds are normally produced in slow and solemn successions, a symbolic language which the diviner and his gods only understand. Immediately the *ogele's* sound stops, the gods' reply follow with ostensibly straight and deep rumbling voice. He will repeatedly beat this *ogele* as he requests to know more from the gods. According to Parrinder (1961), these individuals "seek to interpret the mysteries of life, to convey the messages of the gods, to give guidance in daily affairs, and settle disputes, to uncover the past and to look into future".

5.6. *Okputum*

Okputum, like drums is an instrument of non verbal communication in the traditional Bende society (Chukwu et al, 2013). The body is made of wood and metal. A series of shots from this gun, repeatedly coming at interval, convey message that an important person has died. Beside this, a gun-shot in marriage ceremonies in some parts of Bende (*Abam* and *Ezeukwu*) conveys an idea of conclusion; that is to say that such gunshot declares a man and women legally married. *Nkpo n' ala* is another form of traditional Bende gun normally buried beneath the earth because of its explosiveness. It is highly explosive and produces behaviour far-reaching sound than the *Okputum*. Like the *ikoro*, *Nkpo n' ala* is used in Bende to convey to the distant villages information regarding some of her important celebrations which in most cases is a burial ceremony of an important person. *Nsi egbe* (gun powder), *igu* and *nzuzu egbe* are other objects employed during funeral rites.

5.7. *Nzu* ((Kaolin chalk in a form of slab) and *Nkpola* (spirally coiled metallic object)

Nzu (white chalk in a form of slab) is a widely used symbol in traditional *Bende* communication systems. According to Ogwo Okorofo (2018: PC), diviners convey the information that they are men of oracles of great powers, who are able to divine hidden mysteries by merely rubbing this chalk on their eye lids. But in a traditional home in many parts of Bende such as *Ezeukwu*, *nzu* is offered, first thing, to a guest to rub on his wrist as a mark of welcome. A woman visiting another who has just had a baby expresses her joy by rubbing her neck and elbow regions of both arms with white chalk. In the same vein, when visitors arrive to celebrate the birth of a child, *Azuonye* (2007) averred that the nuclear or extended family to which the child has been born present *Nzu* (Kaolin chalk) to them. Most people would snap off a few pieces and throw them into their mouths, and then mark their necks, faces and hands with the rest. Others would melt the chalk in water making a nice tasty cream of some sort and apply on some parts of their body. In most cases, the guests are presented with this in an elaborately carved wooden disc known as *Okwa nzu*. This disc is so much associated with *nzu* that it has become its symbol. The *Nzu* used in sacrifices is called *Oguru nzu* with a smallish cylindrical shape. It is an essential propitiatory object to *Obasi* and *Agwu* figures in *Bende*

Nkpola is a spirally coiled metallic object constructed in a variety of sizes. It is a ritual object sometimes worshiped as a figure but mostly serves as a symbol of medicinal power. *Nkpola* is also used in the *Bende* burial ceremonies where it is buried together with the deceased. The people believed that *Nkpola* makes the deceased's journey to his ancestors a hitch-free trip as well as serving as a measure of the deceased affluence and personality which he is bound to present to his forebears. It should be noted that where a person dies without having an *Nkpola*, such a person is buried with none since burying him with one is a abomination that could bring the wrath of the gods on the entire village.

5.8. *Oba* and *Nkpaka* or *Nkpaka nd' ichie*

Oba is one of the Bende traditional bowls commonly found in every home. It is organic in that it is got from a carpet-like plants called *Oba* in the in the family of melon. From the farm, *Oba* undergoes series of processes before it is finally due for use. It is of variety sizes. Besides its utensil purposes, *Oba* has got a projection of function among the people of *Ezeukwu*. In the view of Madam Nkennediya Michael (2012: PC), *Oba* has become indispensable element in the burial of women. When a woman, mostly old women, dies, she is buried together with his traditional bowl, beautifully decorated with black lineal patterns. This, the people do on the basis that life does not end in the grave; therefore the *Oba* serves as an eating bowl to the deceased in the next life. Inquiring why this concept is not extended to the burial of males, Mama Nkennediya Michael (2012: PC), retorted: *Nnaghū Q na-ewuru nneghu ih' oriri?* (Is it your father who cooks for your mother?) From this perspective, one understands that *Oba*, in *Ezeukwu* symbolizes the concept of child-care characteristic of an

African woman. Among them, *Oba (calabash)* becomes *Ogwa-akpa* figure when it is inflicted with herbs and other mystic elements or concoctions. This figure is the guardian spirit to the females both young and old. They only worship it.

In traditional Bende, *Nkpaka* or *Nkpaka nd' ichie* (staff or walking stick) is another communicative tool of importance. Among the people, *Nkpaka* is a symbol of old age. Therefore, it is accorded the same respect as due to the old men or elders who carry them. In Bende, it is a great curse for an old man, out of provocation, to point his staff at anyone. When this happens, people would believe that such person *a-anaghi agba nga* (would never see good).

Verbal Modes

The various modes of communication described in this paper can be classified into two main groups: verbal and non-verbal modes. Verbal Communication is one of the commonest and most effective forms of interpersonal interactions. This can take place on face-to-face basis at the interpersonal, group, or even public level. The face-to-face verbal communication has the advantage of the parties taking in the non-verbal cues to enhance their comprehension. In fact, nonverbal cues serve to re-enforce verbal communication.

Non-verbal Modes

As the name implies, non-verbal communication is that which is not spoken or verbalized. Luthans (1992:474) defined nonverbal communication as “non-word human responses (such as gestures, facial expression).....” it is essential the body language expresses through such body movements as gestures, signs, facial expressions, body odour, head-nods, handshakes, etc.

Although there are cultural universal, body language may vary widely with groups as well as cultural background. Thus, while head-nodding is found in many cultures, its meaning may vary from culture to culture. In our culture, nods means yes, approved or acceptance, yet in Chinese culture, it may mean the exact opposite. Although non-verbal cues could be misconceived or misinterpreted, it is a very essential component of the communication process in Bende. In fact, non-verbal communication functions to reinforce verbal communication. Thus one can be speaking and at the same time using gesture and/or facial expressions to reinforce spoken words. Although these symbols vary from one situation to another, one group to another, one culture to another, they mean essentially the same (Argyle, 1972)

5.9. Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated the significance of the traditional modes of communication, both verbal and non-verbal. Thus, the place of *ikoro*, *ekwe*, *ogele*, *ese* through which communication occur cannot be overemphasized because they are important modes of communications through which norms and values of Bende society are preserved and transmitted to successive generations. However, modern modes of communication such as television, GSM telephone, electronic and the print media are, currently better able to carry on these functions without much ado, but the once closely-knit Bende society is, today, lacking in the ability to enforce its social norms. Channels of communication have become more dynamic, complex and sophisticated than ever before. There has been a change in the modes of communication in Bende. Be that as it may, some traditional modes of communication such as *Ikoro* and *ekwe* (wooden gong) and *ese* (talking drum) are still being used today to some extent, even though many are no longer able to satisfy all the communication needs of the people. Nevertheless, these traditional communicative tools still remain the foundation of the Bende cultural values, and in them are the people more united. The people related more meaningfully to and with the village square meetings. Moreover, the people tended to give greater credence to information emanating from traditional rulers. In a nutshell, traditional modes of communication have the singular advantage that their infrastructural needs are always minimal. By contrast, most modern modes are usually capital-intensive in their infrastructural requirements. Thus, caution should be exercised in the craze to confine traditional modes of communication to the past. The paper concludes that drums, *Ikoro*, *ekwe* and other communicative tools in the traditional Bende society enhance effective communication among the people. Communication, which is the transmission of information, knowledge and attitudes from one individual to another, is as old as Bende itself. It is not limited to the simple expression or sharing of ideas, feelings or messages with one another. Rather, it stretches to that complex expression of the people's thought and emotions about their gods, deities, other supernatural beings and general world view. These expressions normally find vent through music, religious or ritual obligations by the use of drums and other vital art objects.

5.10. Recommendations

1. All channels of communication should not be confined to the past thereby denying the new Bende the art of learning the various signals employed to achieve a social order and cultural unity.
2. Research studies should be carried out on similar channels of communication in other societies because of its great psychological effect on the people so as to appreciate a cross-cultural relationship between Bende and her neighbours.
3. Government should make increasing use of the non-verbal modes for effective communication.
4. As a way of promoting and encouraging the communicative culture of Bende, other Igbo societies should arrest the dwindling nature of the traditional art and science of Bende communication in order to emphasize the greatness of their land and its people as well as identify the hopes and aspiration of the people.

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