

**URHOB0 TRADITIONAL SONGS AND RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS:
A MODERN DEFINITION.****Authors & Affiliations****Emusi, Samson Ikuvweariegbe**

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Abstract

Urhobo traditional songs and religious teachings have a significant impact on the country's cultural heritage. These songs serve as a reflection of the Urhobo people's history, beliefs, and values. In recent times, there has been an increasing interest in defining these traditional songs and religious teachings in a modern context. This modern definition aims to preserve the essence of these cultural elements while adapting them to contemporary society. These songs often revolve around themes of love, nature, and nationalism. The paper maintains that traditional songs with didactic themes emphasize religious teachings of Urhobo tradition that could come across as offensive, warn against immoral behaviour, and deter society from adopting it. It advocates a preservation of our traditional songs and their religious teachings. The paper recommends that there should be a vigorous campaign to educate both old and young people on the importance of preserving those aspects of our traditional cultural values and the ethical values of traditional songs that can lead to a better society. The paper revealed that Urhobo traditional singers have the ability to respond to contemporary issues and proffer solutions to such issues through the thematic preoccupations of their songs.

Key words: Urhobo tradition, traditional songs, religious teachings, modernity and sociality.

Introduction

Urhobo traditional music is referred to as traditional songs. According to Emusi (2024), traditional songs represent a communal heritage of society; consequently, all members of the community participate in musical activities that reflect their cultural identity. These songs belong to the common people, and their texts are grounded in the people's beliefs, worldviews, philosophies, and occupational experiences. Nzewi (1999, in Emusi, 2024) describes traditional music as *feeling and communal therapy, a humanizing communion, a sharing in human-being-ness*. Thus, Urhobo do not conceptualize music as an art from existing merely for its own sake; rather, they understand and rationalize it as an integral component of human life, intended to provide essential and supportive functions for social and cultural events in ways considered acceptable within the community (Emusi, 2024).

Traditional songs are highly significant because they function as a major means of communication among

the people, especially in societies that did not maintain a written tradition. Through these songs, members of the community learn their history, belief systems, and acceptable moral behaviour. Traditional songs also contribute to emotional well-being by helping individuals express, process, and regulate feelings such as joy, sadness, and stress. In addition, they provide a rich medium for cultural and creative expression.

Moreover, traditional songs play an essential role in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage and identity across generations. Many of these songs contain historical narratives expressed through storytelling, thereby safeguarding important cultural events and the collective history of the people for future generations that is the reason Oghiator (2018) defines traditional songs as authentically African melodies that have been passed down through the generations.

Within the framework of this research, traditional songs are pieces of music composed and performed by well-known Urhobo musicians and elders that serve as didactic teaching tools for morality, social norms, and values. As a result, these songs' didactic messages - which highlight moral principles - may contribute to a moral revolution, essential to character development and emphasize the importance of purging evil and immorality from our lives. In agreement with this, Meiring (2003) asserts that traditional songs serve as a means of educating people about positive values, social norms, and the cultural aspects of their community. It is true that providing a detailed explanation of traditional Urhobo songs and their religious teachings will aid in the preservation of Urhobo culture, customs, beliefs, and practices for future generations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to understand and appreciate the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Urhobos, as well as to find relevance and meaning in these traditions in contemporary times. A modern definition of traditional songs and religious teachings can provide new perspectives and insights into age-old traditions. It can help bridge the gap between the past and the present, allowing contemporary Urhobos to connect with their roots while also finding relevance in these traditions in their daily lives. Studying traditional songs can provide insights into the history and evolution of Urhobo music. It can also highlight the unique characteristics of Urhobo music, such as its use of intricate vocal techniques, poetic lyrics, and regional dialects. By analyzing the important songs from a modern perspective, one can appreciate their beauty and significance in a new light.

Scope of the Study

The study's goal is to define the religious teachings and traditional songs of the Urhobo people. There are currently 24 kingdoms that comprise the Urhobo nation. Situated in the north-western portion of Nigeria's Niger Delta, the Urhobo nation is found in southern Nigeria. According to the most recent census, it has between six and seven million residents (www.britannica.com). Apart from the eight local government districts that comprise the Delta Central Senatorial District areas, where the Urhobos are the major ethnic group, Urhobo people also populate nearly every local government council in Delta State. However, for the purposes of this study, the Urhobos in the 24 Urhobo kingdoms will be the focus of this study.

Urhoboland is located in Southern Nigeria, near the North Western Niger Delta with a population of about seven million (<https://joshuaproject.net/people/-groups/>). Urhoboland is situated on Latitude 6° and 5°,

15°North and Longitudes 5°, 40° and 6°, 25° East in the Delta State and the Bayelsa State of Nigeria. They live contiguously with the Isoko on the South-East, the Itsekiri on the West, Bini on the North, the Ijaw on the South, and Ukwani on the North-East (Otite, 2011).

According to Ekeh (2005), Urhoboland is currently made up of twenty-four kingdoms, namely: Agbarha-Ame (Agbassa), Agbarha-Otor, Agbarho, Agbon; Arhavwarien, Avwraka-Orhurivie, Avwraka-Umiaghwa, Eghwu; Ephron-Otor, Ewreni, Idjerhe, Mosogar; Oghara, Ogor, Okere-Urhobo, Okparebe; Okpe, Olomu, Orogun, Udu; Ughelli, Ughievwen, Ughwerunand Uvwie.

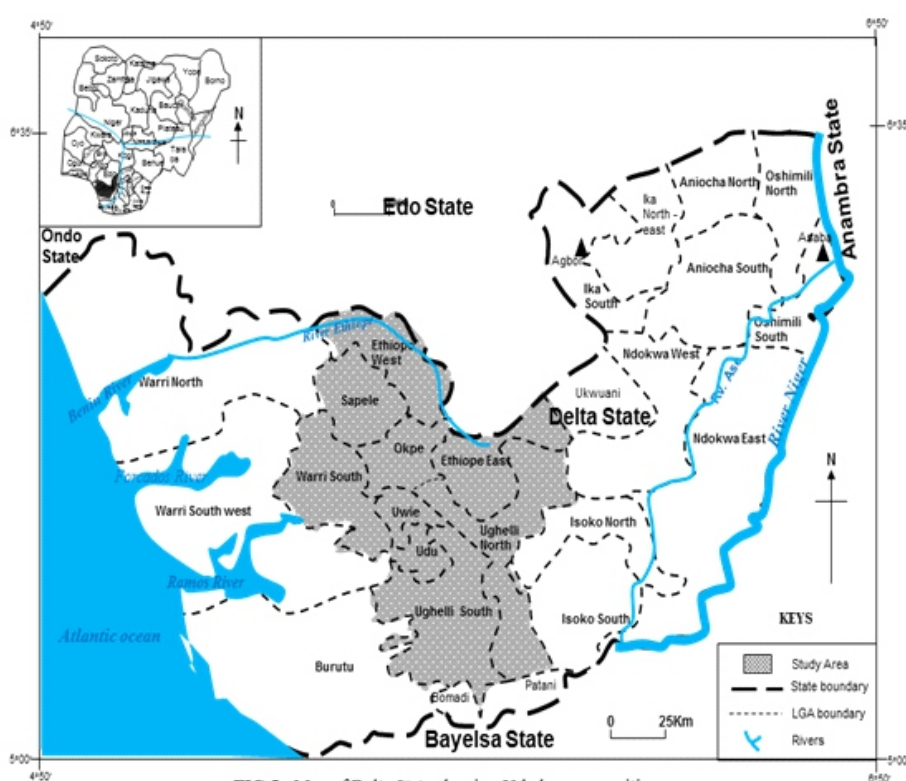


FIG.1: Map of Delta State showing Urhobo communities
Source: Modified After Ministry of Lands, Survey and Urban Development, Asaba, 2008

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this work is the Culture and Identity theory as propounded by Collier and Thomas (1988). Culture is understood as the values, beliefs, thought patterns and behaviour learnt and shared by a group of people which serves as an identity to that group, ensures their socio-political survival, and enhances a feeling of belonging. The theory analyzes a relationship between inter-cultural competence and cultural identity. It emphasizes how people express, think, construct, and form their cultural identities and relationship in particular group. The theory argues that an individual's message during social interaction contains a lot of variables such as nationalist, racist, ethnic, class related, sex, gender based, political and religious cultural identities.

The study adopted the descriptive research design. Descriptive research deals with information and data collected or obtained through questionnaires, interviews, rating scales, and observations and published materials as secondary sources to describe things, events and phenomena as they are. In this research, data collection was done through secondary source of published books, journals, internet materials and traditional songs, a few interviews among others.

Urhobo Traditional Songs

The art of traditional songs has been an essential and useful component of Urhobo communities and their surroundings. Urhobo traditional songs are a recreational medium that communities participate in alongside other activities. In Urhobo, music plays a crucial role in culture, which is regarded as the way of life of the people, which includes all of their collectively shared customs and behavioural patterns. These customs adhere to established guidelines that encompass their cultural, religious, and social customs. Nearly all social, cultural, and religious events held by Urhobo communities include music. According to Hickok (1993), there is nowhere in the world where music more an integral part of daily life than in Africa. In Urhobo, singing and dancing and drumming are commonly heard during group events and are interdependent and are rarely seen apart.

Music according to Nzewi (2007) plays a significant role in how Urhobo (African) communities manage their political, religious, health, economic, educational, and social affairs. He emphasizes further that everyone in an indigenous African community learns the fundamentals of music as they grow up through required participation in any capacity, in suitable venues for the performance of musical arts, since childhood, even at a young age, great expertise is acknowledged. Therefore, Urhobo traditional music came to be as a result of a community's collective effort. In an indigenous society, music - vocal and instrumental, or a combination of the two - heralds every organized activity. The typical accompaniment to these performances is clapping and music. Urhobo social interactions, religious rituals, and entertainment are all facilitated by traditional music, which unites societies.

Urhobo music is all embracing and is in line with, Merriam (1964) that sees music as unquestionably essential to the dissemination of the activities that make up a society. Every cultural activity in Urhobo - from conception to death - is represented through music. Examples of this include the music played during labour, games played by children, lullabies, festivals, funeral rites, marriages, childbirth, circumcision, and so on. That is one of the reasons Urhobo has its own distinctive patterns of behaviour; almost all of which are represented or heralded in folk songs and dances, which are typically accompanied by traditional instruments.

Urhobo tradition music (Udoh , 2012) also possesses spiritual qualities that are communal in nature and encountered by everyone. This unites the people and brings them to a state of wholeness where their traditions and conventions are genuinely preserved. Urhobo traditional music and culture are therefore inextricably linked because music follows the Urhobos through life's stages, reflecting events at each one as well as differences in the Urhobo tradition. Nzewi (2005) notes that, music monitors, clarifies, and illuminates human society - it is what makes us human.

Culture and music both elucidate and explain society. According to Blacking (1976), music is a humanly organized sound rather than an isolated form of art. The implication here (i.e., on Blacking's statements) is that, music is humanly organized sound and it should not be subject to arbitrary rules like game rules because

it is too deeply concerned with human feelings and experiences in society and because its patterns are frequently created by unexpected outbursts of unconscious celebration. This is not say, that all kinds of music follow the same pattern. There is religious and ritual music, which is typically governed by arbitrary rules that are adhered to rigorously both stylistically and intellectually. Agu (1990) summarizes this by pointing out that - music serves not only as a medium for entertainment and social relationships but as an intricate part of development of the mind, body and soul. To further buttress the above, Onyeji, (2012) gives a general philosophy of indigenous music where he states that, - indigenous music in Africa is a human-centred art, quoting Nzewi, (1999), who maintained that, - indigenous music is feeling and communal therapy, a humanizing communion, a sharing in humanness.

Therefore, music among communities in Urhobo is a functional art as well as a communal art and the songs, through their texts, are used to portray the kind of music being performed.

General Philosophy of Urhobo Traditional Songs

The overall concept of Urbobo traditional songs which is African indigenous music is a human-centered art form. Maybe the most profound meaning of Blacking's (1976) description of music as "humanly organized sound" can be found in Urhobo.

According to Nzewi (1999), indigenous music is feeling and communal therapy, a humanizing communion, a sharing in human-being. As it is, Urhobo societies rationalize music as an essential component of human life intended to provide both major and supporting services rather than viewing it as an expression of pure artistic/aesthetic expertise acumen, or intellectual cum physical deftness. The philosophy behind the creation and practice of Urhobo music is that it is not isolated from human social life or created purely for introspection, unrelated to the social and cultural needs of the people, even though it is appreciated as a creative art in and of itself. More people are supposed to be integrated by this art than to be divided by it. It is thought of as a form of art in which the melodies and harmonics of it are "laced" with the emotions, values, beliefs, and worldviews of the people who create it. Though, musical activities in Urhobo societies tend to possess dynamic qualities in that they are frequently a means to an end (Wells, 1994).

.Gunter Schuller (cited in Wells, 1994), opines that African music originates in a total vision of life, in which music, unlike the 'art music' of Europe, is not a separate autonomous domain, but is rather inextricably caught up in a web of domestic, social and political activities. As such the Urbobo musical arts of Africa reflect and reveal facets of cultural values, beliefs and modes of life of the people and as well as strive to conform the people. In the Urhobo (African) culture, music is an entity rather than a mere mental creation or conception. It reflects and interprets the man in a specific environment and is often the key, which opens the gates to spiritual, mental, emotional, psychological, social and mystic realms (Okafor, 2005). As an art form, indigenous music of Urhobo reflects the culture of Africa as well as it is a cultural form in its own right.

Urhobo traditional music is social and primarily human-oriented in its creative and performance ramifications. This philosophy informs the general and well-known notion of Urhobo music as a social art well discussed by various pundits of African music (Akpabot, 1986; Nketia, 1974; Nzewi, 1991; Okafor, 2005, etc). According to Nzewi (1997), the philosophical foundations of the African (Urhobo) musical

environment and phonofacts are not always music specific. They derive from a more holistic philosophy of life and the cosmos. Being a social art therefore, “music cannot be properly understood and appreciated without some knowledge of its social and cultural context (Nettle1998). Music therefore, is a social phenomenon in Urhobo traditional societies.

Urhobo music is very often celebrated as social organizer, moderator, agency, mediator, indicator, therapy as well as vehicle for social integration and cleansing. “In a very lucid study of folk music in Nigeria, Nzewi (1980) describes it as a communion of both the living and the dead. His study points to folk music as significant element for societal cohesion as well as social and cultural mobilization in Nigeria (Onyeji, 2006). Being a social art, it is intentionally structured to affect the people in certain ways hence, its contribution to the construction of human social and cultural integrity.

Traditional Songs and Sociality

Theories concerning society's organization of individuals and behaviours are connected to the notion of social (Olsson, 2007). According to Deflem (1999), social facts are ways of being that include (ideal) representations and (material) actions. The nature and trajectory of societies are typically the focus of social science research (Risner and Costantino, 2007). The social facts theory is an inbuilt evaluation of material behaviours and modes of existence that align with societal objectives; given that every nation or society is built and behaviours are connected to the notion of social (Olsson, 2007).

Given that every nation or society is built and social and scientific studies of music in recent time have revealed the efficacy of music in the formation of the human mind. It has also been linked to behavioural patterns, social identity and transformations. As such, many experts have vigorously pursued focused enquiry on the latent and potent qualities of music in the shaping of the human personality. Such studies led to findings that music is a valid platform for social transformation. Guided by the perception that the words, thoughts and deeds of individual human beings are profoundly influenced by the nature of the social circumstances in which they occur (Martin, 1995; Mueller, 2002), studies in the sociology of music have focused on “music as a social product, social resource and social practice” (Martin, 1995 in Olsson, 2007), and “music as a device of social ordering; music's social powers” (DeNora, 2000 in Olsson 2007).

It is becoming increasingly clearer that music may influence people's conduct, experience of the passage of time, and feelings about themselves, others and situations (DeNora, 2000). Hargreaves, Marshall and North (2003) believe that all musical behaviour is social because musical meanings are socially and culturally constructed. Musical thought not only promotes social cohesion, but communicates many messages through song texts and dance features (Kruger, 1999). According to Skyllstad (2007), music plays a positive role in facilitating social integration and conflict transformation. Corroborating the above submissions, evidence from the present research shows that music is a potent tool for social change as a result of its intrinsic nature to influence and effect change in people.

Macdonald *et al.* (2002 in Smith 2006) argue that music can “act as a medium through which people can construct new identities and shift existing ones in the same way as (through) spoken language.” It has also been similarly argued that music creates a platform for the realization of non-musical facts that promote positive social identity (Dibben, 2002; North, Hargreaves and Tarrant, 2002). Music provides people with a feeling that they are still connected to themselves, their emotions and the community (Stokes, 1994).

Nussbaum (2001) posits that “music has deep connection to our emotional lives” and well-being, “the means of communication between souls.” Musical performance invokes several means of communication, namely: moral, visual, kinesthetic, auditory, olfactory, proxemics and tactile. That is why music is a unique aspect of cultural systems that allows adaptively valuable information to be communicated between people (Hanna, 1977).

Within the framework of African cultures, the learning of music can be a process which can build the self-confidence and self-worth of the learners (Smith, 2006). A valid conclusion from converging views on music as a tool for social and cultural integrity formation is that as part of cultural experience and heritage, processes of social change in Nigeria cannot be fully realized without considering music. Music, therefore, is an essential and valid platform on which social and cultural integrity construction, evaluation and reconstruction could be investigated.

Socio-cultural values of Urhobo Traditional Songs

The fundamental purpose of Urhobo traditional music, practice and creativity is social and cultural leadership, guidance, and propagation of accepted societal values in specific contexts -aside from its role as entertainment. This leads to the widely acknowledged feature of African indigenous music, of which Urhobo is a part, as a practical art form. Every indigenous music practice has a social and/or human motivation.

Functionality of music is a common phenomenon in Urhobo, where music is an integral part of culture. In such cultural integration, although music may, very rarely, be made for its own sake in Urhobo traditional, it is, most often, a social instrument intended to achieve certain social goals. As an entertainment art, Urhobo traditional music fulfils its objective of convening people together to enjoy the art of music creativity and share fellow-feelings which is “basic to the development of human cognitive processes and capacities, and ultimately human social adaptability” (Blacking, as cited in Kruger, 1999). While music takes care of the entertainment and artistic needs of the society. At the same time goes beyond its sonic borders to address its crucial objective of moderating the social lives of the people. And it also requires social, moral and cultural values and norms intended to shape and build credible people with esteemed personality and integrity within the society. It ultimately questions the acts and dispositions of everyone while binding the society harmoniously. As a socio-cultural educator, music presents certain templates and processes to members of the society to adhere to. It x-rays and analyses existing socio-cultural anomalies in order to vindicate its stand on societal issues while motivating people to adhere to the best position or choice.

Research to date demonstrates that the goal of Urhobo music and musicians in Nigeria is to foster the development of individuals with social and cultural integrity both inside and outside of their particular musical group. Recognizing the power of music to shape character and personality, Urhobo musicians have investigated every aspect of music to support appropriate Nigerian branding by creating educational and instructional musical materials that are frequently dismissed as archaic, for the underdeveloped, and somewhat irrelevant in modern Nigeria.

Religious Teachings of Urhobo Traditional Songs

Urhobo traditional songs showcase the culture and customs, proverbs, and values, reflecting on a variety of goals from socio-cultural values to the teaching of Urhobo moral values. The Nigerian people and society have benefited from these experiences in developing their moral character. These morals are taught through

elders' counsel as well as folk songs and other traditional songs. The people learn about moral behaviour and bad behaviour from the Urhobo traditional songs.

Since people enjoy singing and dancing, traditional songs may be a good way to instill moral values and habits in society (Momodu, 2013).

African philosophy with its humanistic bent, has always supported humanity's struggle against injustice, discrimination, immorality, and the appraisal of all values. Urhobo traditional singers are making a lot of efforts to address the unique social issues in African traditional songs because of this (Momodu, 2013). Momodu (2013) emphasized that traditional music functions as a tool in portraying the various moral values (good neighbourliness, togetherness, the spirit of give and take in friendship, sense of duty and tolerance) that hold people together.

Moreover, Momodu (2013) declared that traditional songs are vehicles of satire to expose ills and those sordid things in human institutions, society or in individuals. Some themes in Urhobo traditional songs are part of reality that serves some social purposes and offer a more poetic background for entertainment. Most Urhobo traditional songs are used to educate people about various aspects of life and to create awareness about some refrains and restrictions. The traditional songs equally decry human weaknesses which can morally lead to the down fall of a man.

In some cases, Urhobo traditional songs portray or raise the curse that would befall a person that engages in some immoral. Most traditional songs according to Agoro (2011) show that in every man, there are human weaknesses that if not controlled can lead to the down fall of a man morally. The portraying of what is right or wrong through Urhobo traditional songs does not amount to coercing or manipulating the people into thinking that conformity is bedrock of society. But if it is to enable them be full moral agents building on what they already understand of moral concepts of right and wrong then it is surely the heart of traditional songs (Agoro, 2011).

In Africa (Urhobo), certain attributes such as honesty, patience, humility, good behaviour, peace and so on are regarded as moral values (Adedeji & Omasilade, 2018). These moral values, Adedeji and Omasilade (2018) note are normally passed across in form of proverbs and parables and have deep seated meanings. These moral values are also transmitted through the medium of Urhobo religions traditional songs (Adedeji & Omasilade, 2018).

Urhobo Traditional Songs in Contemporary Contexts

For the Urhobo, their worldview is distinct and sets them apart from other ethnic groups in Nigeria. These beliefs are deeply embedded in their songs, composed by Urhobo musicians, which function not only as entertainment but also as repositories of cultural wisdom.

Urhobo popular musicians are individuals who primarily earn their livelihood through music making. They are frequently invited to perform at various ceremonies - including marriage rites, funeral ceremonies, and other social gatherings - where their services are required. These musicians are regarded as articulators of morality and custodians of traditional history and cultural beliefs. Their songs, whether consciously or unconsciously, reflect and express the belief system and worldview of the Urhobo people.

Musicians often face the challenge of gathering information about events occurring in their environment and conveying them to the public through performance. Idamoyibo (2006) describes musicians as *overt and secret*

observers, and silent listeners who continually monitor events unfolding around them. He further explains that within the context of performance, musicians provide social commentary, educate the public, and entertain simultaneously.

Darah (2005) examines the songs of Urhobo popular musicians primarily from literary and political-economic perspectives. He demonstrates how, historically, songs were employed to correct societal ills, respond to colonial and post-colonial politics, and later shift from satirical compositions to eulogies or praise songs for profit. In Urhobo communities, songs of insult (satire) are performed to publicly shame individuals engaged in dubious behaviour, while panegyric songs are used to commend those who lead upright lives. Other categories of songs include work songs, war songs, entertainment songs, and ceremonial songs.

Given the role of musicians in maintaining social decorum, Idamoyibo (2006) refers to them as *mass communicators*. Musicians are often regarded as the conscience of the society, refusing to accept bribes to falsify information affecting the community. Dick-Duvwarovwo (2008) observes that “*art does not only prescribe polite ways for saying impolite things, nor provide ways for expressing the inexpressible; music provides license for saying the fearsome and irritant truth.*”

Urhobo popular musicians base their songs on the beliefs and worldview of the Urhobo, emphasizing moral values and the consequences of violating the community's ethical norms. Their compositions are often highly philosophical, requiring thoughtful reflection from listeners, as they frequently address the transience and vanity of human life.

Urhobo songs/music began with words fused or put together to form satirical song (*ile r' eka*) that is capable of influencing one or a positive change. Later, they introduced bell (*agogo/ama*) and drum beat (*obo r' ukiri*) to produce music and dance step(s) (*owotoigbe*). Much later, songs of praise (eulogy) (*ile re jiri*) were introduced alongside with the satiric songs (*ile r' eka*). At present, Urhobo songs/music has metamorphosed from old pattern of song/music to the modern music with difference types of songs/music. Most of these patterns are trying to transform the Urhobo music pattern to Western (English) music lyrics, whereby everybody can enjoy the music and the lyrics of the song.

Urhobo musicians such as, Sally young, Senior Dancer and Nathaniel Oruma, have introduced piano, guitar and jazz band to their music, just to mention a few, and has attracted the interest of the youths towards Urhobo songs/music.

Urhobo Traditional Songs, meanings and Contents.

Urhobo tradition has songs composed to minister to people in different areas of life. Urhobo songs refer to the traditional music of a people most of which are composed extempore in the course of one activity or the other. These songs are composed by them as they carry out their daily activities which could be, domestic activity, working in their farm lands, rocking their crying babies or during leisure hours in the evenings, especially on moon-lit nights or at various traditional functions. They could also be as a result of the death of a loved relation or as a reflection on life generally. Through these songs, they are able to express their joy or pain, their fear or hope and also to demonstrate their reactions toward indecent behavior in the society.

Based on the textual analysis of the songs, Urhobo traditional songs can be classified into:

- Philosophical songs
- Historical songs

- Work related songs
- Satires
- Children related songs
- Ceremonial songs and
- Story-telling songs etc.

Below are some Urhobo traditional songs with meanings and contents.

No. 1 Song

Urhobo	English
Akpo vwe rhe	life is sweet
Avwanre ria kpo rhe	we come life well
Ole te ha ghal' ofe	yam will sprout despite the beetle
Erhovwo r'ose ko ye nen' omo	the prayer of the father is with the child
Emo r'urhobo re ri'akpo rhe	urhobo children that came to life well

Analysis of the songs below reveals that, the Urhobo people uphold hard work as a core value and they strongly condemning laziness in all its forms. Their songs also reflect a conviction that the destiny of a child cannot be destroyed by malicious forces, a belief that is deliberately instilled in younger generations through oral performance. This song provides a vivid illustration of that worldview.

No. 2 Song

Urhobo	English
Ko-ko-ko-ko	ko-ko-ko
Amono sh'urhe oboyi?	Who is cutting tree there?
Mevwe Eyayogho	I am Eyayogho
Di'emu wo vw'urhe ru?	What did you need wood for?
Urhe me vwokar' odo	the wood with which to carve mortar
Di'emu wo vw'odo ru?	What do you need mortar for?
Odo mi vwo duvw' egu	I need it to pound yam
Di'mu wo vw' egu ru?	What do you need pounded yam for?
Egu mi vwo gher'emo	I need it to feed my children
Di'emu wo vw' emo ru?	What do you need children for?
Emo mi vwo yer' akpo	I need them to live life
Di'emu wo vw' akpo re ?	What do you need life for?
Akpo mi vwo j' eghwo	I need it so I will not die

The structure of this song follows the pattern of question and answer, a style commonly referred to in musical terms as call-and-response. The narrative centers on a man named Eyayogho, who is engaged in cutting down a tree. Upon hearing the sound, another person inquires about the source of the noise and the purpose of the activity. In response to these questions, Eyayogho explains that he intends to use the wood to carve a mortar, which will serve as a tool for pounding yam to feed his children. This simple exchange carries a profound message about responsibility and legacy. By providing for his children, Eyayogho fulfills his role as a

dedicated father while also securing the assurance that his life has meaning. The children, in turn, become the bearers of his memory, ensuring that he does not “die” in the cultural sense of being forgotten, since they will continue to preserve his name.

Another song illustrates themes on youth's responsibility, continuity, and communal values.

On waywardness, Urhobo never want their children to be wayward - smoking high cigarettes, drunkards, drugs addicts, sex-workers, robbers, flusters, killers, kidnappers, and evil vices. Egbeku (2025), and his Urhobo blessed band, advises Urhobo youths to be diligent in all their endeavours. The song goes:

No. 3 Song

URHOBO

1. Emoha rokena,
2. Avwewe kpoto;
3. Iyutu rokena,
4. Avwoe we kpoto,
5. Akpo re manomano,
6. Ino de pae,
7. Akpo yerhe re gidigidi;
8. Noti dey

ENGLISH

1. Nowadays youths,
2. Should be laws abiding,
3. Nowadays youths,
4. Should be laws abiding,
5. Life of rascality,
6. Is full of trouble,
7. Life of waywardness,
8. Is without a reward.

This song exegetically, express the Urhobo philosophy of exemplifying life. It advises the youths to be careful and diligent in all their dealings with fellow human beings, because waywardness and rascality has no gain. Again, Korhokorho and Orumah (2025), condemn too much smoking of high cigarette and taking of dangerous drugs. The song says:

No. 4 Song.

URHOBO

1. Omome jovwo jovwo,
2. So ma bruche
3. Kenoma no be ri whohwo,
4. Omome jovwo jovwo,
5. So ma bruche
6. Kenoma no be ri whohwo.
7. Okerhie tramado,
8. Okekpo tramado,

9. Tramado na bi pepemete
10. Kenoma no be ri whohwo.

ENGLISH

1. My child deviate from evil,
2. Take precaution,
3. From all that kills.
4. My child deviate from evil,
5. Take precaution,
6. From all that kills.
7. Day break,
8. Tramadol,
9. At night,
10. Tramadol,
11. Tramadol is not peppermint,
12. Be careful of all that kills.

The song is a general warning to our youths in particular and the elderly in general that we should be careful with the usage of high drugs and cigarette. He emphasizes that excess of drugs like tramadol kills; therefore, one should not be addicted to it, Orumah, interviewed (2025).

No. 5 Song (Satire)

A satire is a play, novel or song that deals with topical issues, folly or evil that beset the society (Dick-Duvwarovwo, 2008). The purpose of satires is to expose evil and anti-social behaviour by members of the society irrespective of their social status. According to Darah (2005), the primary function of satire is to identify and expose evil in its broadest sense, the practice carries the implication that the public exposure or censure helps to check those given to anti-social behaviour and mischief. Therefore, the primary aims of the satirist is to effect a moral reformation of the society. Thus anyone involved in any act of indecency is incorporated into songs which serve as moral guides or checks of the excesses of human behaviour. In Urhobo communities, there are satires for boys and girls, men and women. The song below is used to satirize any pupil that failed to take his bath before coming to school;

Urhobo

Ikribekpe twa vwe en

Emete 'vo hero ikribekpe twa

Emeshar' evo hero ikribekpe twa

Ikribekpe twa vwe en

English

flies do not follow me

flies follow some girls

flies follow some boys

flies do not follow me

The song above inculcates the habit of neatness and good personal hygiene into school children; so that before coming to school, they must wash themselves very well. Dirt and offensive smell often attract flies, so anyone who is dirty and emits foul odour will definitely experience flies around him, hence the song. Moreover, the

song is also used to satirize those involved in immorality and other social vices that are offensive in the society. Because they exhibit anti-social behaviour, they are seen as emitting unpleasant odour that attracts flies. Those involved in singing this song is telling those being satirized that they are upright in character hence flies does not follow them (*ikribekpe twa vwe en*). The song therefore is a call for Urhobo sons and daughters to be upright in all their ways so that they can emit savory smell.

Gossiping and backbiting are vices that are highly abhorred in the society; so any one found gossiping or backbiting is satirized with the song below;

No. 6 Song

Urhobo	English
Dan sh' egbagba	fall on light soup
Ono <u>w</u> e	this is you
Dan sh'owho	fall on oil soup
Ede wo dan sh' ukodo bo	the day you will fall ukodo
Oma we ghwiere	your body will peel

The song reflect the stages of gossip; one may start within the home, then to the neighborhood and then to the society at large. At this stage, he will see the repercussion. Pepper soup is used to signify the beginning, while *owho* (oil soup of the Urhobo) signifies the second stage and *Ukodo* (pepper soup containing yam and plantain) is the last stage when he will receive the punishment. The song is therefore a warning to gossipers to desist from it if not it will lead to his destruction.

Liars are not left out in the purification of the society through songs; the song below is used to satirize liars.

No. 7 Song

Urhobo	English
Yellow, yellow, yellow	Yellow, yellow, yellow
O vwon re fian	is a liar
Omot' vo esi yellow	a girl called yellow
Esi blackie	called blackie
Ovwon re fian	is a liar

Since names are not mentioned in the course of performing satires, the complexion of the victim can be used as shown in this song. “A girl that is fair in complexion, dark in complexion is a liar”. Even though names of defaulters are not mentioned in the songs, indirectly, people will be able to decipher those involved. Liars are therefore kept on guard; in this manner, thieves and promiscuous girls and boys, men and women are embarrassed.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates the value of Urhobo traditional songs and religious teachings in shaping society. This

concise overview delineates the definition of Urhobo traditional songs, the generational philosophy behind them, their social dimension, the socio-cultural values they uphold, and the Urhobo traditional religious teachings and its impart.

In conclusion, the modern definition of traditional songs of Urhobo and religious teachings is a vital aspect of preserving and promoting the country's rich cultural heritage. By adapting these knowledge and elements to contemporary society, they can continue to inspire, educate, and unite people across generations and cultures. The above moral values are intended to serve as a medium of influencing the society towards the right direction. Urhobo traditional songs and religious teachings say that morality is deeply interrelated in terms of functionality.

The paper recommends that, there should be a vigorous campaign to educate Nigerians on the importance of preserving those aspects of our traditional cultural values that can lead to a better society, workshops and seminars be held on a regular basis to educate the Nigerian public of the ethical values of traditional songs, rather than seeing them only as a form of entertainment, Urhobo traditional musicians should be trained on how to use modern musical instruments in communicating the messages embedded in their songs and the Nigeria Government and Urhobo cultural groups, such as the Urhobo Progress Union, should work together to ensure that Urhobo traditional singers and musicians adopt digital recording and accompany their songs with English interpretations and visuals.

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Oral Interviews with resource persons (Elders and Musicians)

S/No	Name	Sex	Age	Place	Interviewee Status	Date
1	Believe Emusi Ughegbe	F	75	Okwagbe	Mrs	15/01/2024
2	John Ohorie Onoghuvwu	M	95	Oghior	Papa	20/12/2025
3	Oresiri Kpomah	M	98	Otor Udu	Chief	10/11/2025
4	Nathaniel Orumah	M	53	Agbarha Otor	Musician	28/12/2025
5	Egbeku Kenairu	M	56	Ujevuwu	Musician	30/12/2025
6	Korhokorho	M	51	Sapele	Musician	31/12/2025
7	Benson Omojuku	M	63	Oghara	Musician	03/01/2026