

THE FEATURES OF DRUM LANGUAGE AS A  
MEANS OF COMMUNICATION  
IN NIGERIA

*BY*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined musical linguistic components of the drum language elucidated the use of drums in Nigeria's socio-cultural context and identified, the connection between theory and practice in drum language communication. This was with a view to revealing the importance of drum language as a special means of non-verbal communication.

The field aspect of the research was done through oral interview with various traditional drummers in Nigeria as well as participation in and observation of drum performances by the drummers. Data were collected through interviews with four master drummers in the National Troupe of the National Art Theatre, Lagos; three Egba Ndi Eze master drummers in

Umuahia. Abia State; two master drummers of Ogago music in Ikare Akoko, Ondo State; three master drummers of Iyaalu dundun in Lagos; and two Tambura Hausa master drummers, in Lagos. Performances of the various forms of drum patterns were recorded, transcribed and analyzed, using musical notation. Related literature was also consulted for verification and confirmation of some information contained in the raw data.

The result showed that there was a tonal relationship between human languages and drum tones. Drum patterns in each locality were found to be

based on tonal inflections of the language of the people in the locality. It was also discovered that the distribution of musical instruments among the people of Nigeria was based on geographical location, which in turn determined the raw materials for drum-making. Dundun and Bata drums found in the southwestern part of Nigeria were made from animal skin (membrane). Pot drum and (Ikoro) slit drum found in southeastern part were made from clay, gourd and logs of wood. Tambura drum found in the Northern part was made from thick animal hide. Drum language had four functions namely musical, symbolic through visual appearance, signaling, and as a surrogate for the human voice.

This study concluded that the symbolic function of drum language communication transcended the aspect of nonverbal and verbal communication and was one of the important virtues of the Nigerian cultural heritage.