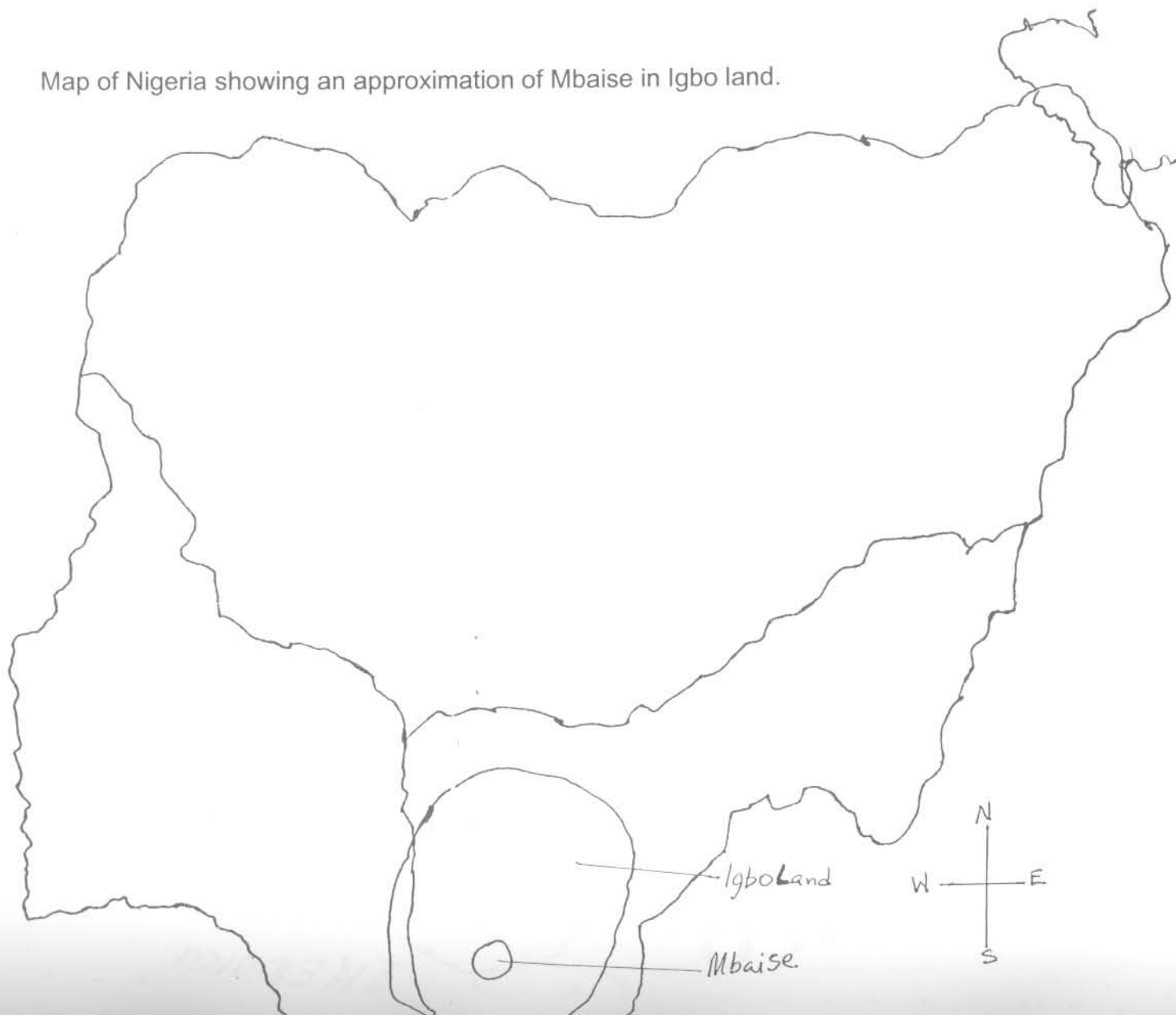


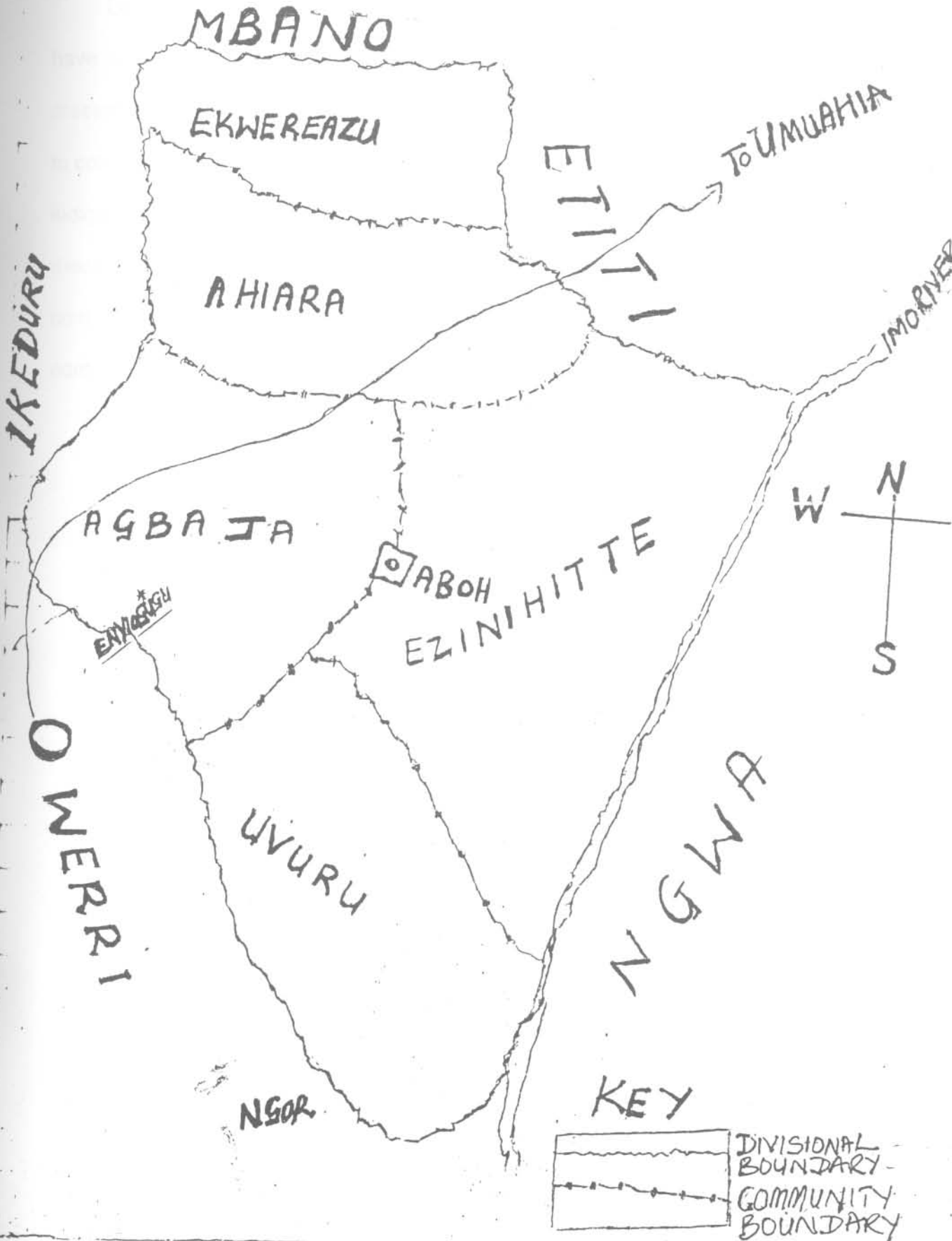
# PART

# ONE

Map of Nigeria showing an approximation of Mbaise in Igbo land.



# MBAISE DIVISIONAL MAP



## CHAPTER ONE

### RESEARCH OUTLINE.

#### 1.1 Background.

Leading Ethnomusicologists and composers of different nationalities have made scholarly contributions relating to the main concern of this research work, Research-Composition. Research-Composition is an approach to composition in which in-depth ethnomusicological research on the indigenous music of a given culture informs the creative and compositional theory of a modern art music composition. Strong note is taken of the contribution by Agawu (1984) in his discussion of Ephraim Amu's compositional style. Agawu's position is that :

The first and most important task is the collection of traditional music... It is not only to collect this music, whose chances of survival are lessened daily by the strong forces of acculturation, but to study its structures thoroughly. Bela Bartók is, of course, our model here and the parallels between his development as a scholar-composer and Amu's are suggestive. Both composers collected traditional music (Bartók more than Amu); they both consciously cultivated a compositional style from this music; both were educated in the Western European musical tradition and sought to create a synthesis between this "foreign" tradition and their native traditions. (70)

Agawu's leaning to research-composition is evidenced by the above position.

Bartók had earlier taken the lead in research-composition. His expeditions to the remote parts of Hungary, assisted by Zoltan Kodaly, resulted in the recording, on wax cylinders, of thousands of peasant tunes. Bartók,

having discovered the existence of a deep layer of native ore beneath the pyrites of Gypsy ornamentation, he set out in 1905 to mine it, an undertaking which led him eventually to investigate and classify scientifically the peasant music of Romania and Slovaks, Walachians, Turks, even the Arabs of North Africa; moreover to reconsider his aesthetics, to find a style upon the assimilated essence of peasant music, and to determine the direction of the art music of Hungary for years to come. (Stevens 1953:23)

Bartók, in addition to his recordings of peasant music, placed great emphasis on the transcription and analysis of the music before incorporating elements from the peasant music into his original work. His method involved a "detailed examination of the melodic and rhythmic characteristics of the peasant tunes, and by the derivation of harmonies from them, the discovery of the intrinsic nature of Magyar peasant music, and finally its amalgamation with the techniques of art music." (Ibid: 24)

Bartók's contributions mark a turning point in the history of European art music compositions. His works draw attention to the inherent creative potentials of the human music of the people of Hungary. His method is of inspirational value to this work.

These two positions are evidence that the main thrust of this work is of global musical interest. The attempt would not be to document all the scholarly contributions by different experts as well as their positions relating to the subject matter, rather a closer look at the musical activities in a specific research area would be undertaken. This necessarily leads to more detailed study.

The primary area of focus in this work is Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the West African countries. It has Cameroon to the east, Benin Republique to the west, Niger Republique to the north and Atlantic Ocean to the south. It has a land mass area of 923768 square kilometers. (Murray 1993: 147) Nigeria has a population of about 120 million as at 1991, the currently official census. The national languages include English, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. Nigeria, although a multicultural society, shall be discussed as a single art music area for purposes of this study. The evidence of some level of homogeneity of art music style and similarity of source of formative and creative influences (European classical music education) informs this decision. The platform for the discourse shall be the Igbo culture area from where the research material for this work is derived. The projections will be for Nigeria, Africa and the world music practice at large.

Many leading modern composers in Nigeria have called attention to the need for modern literary music composers who are not entirely western in their orientation to aspire towards the creative continuum of Nigerian music, by drawing compositional materials from the authentic indigenous music of the Nigerian cultures. Some postulate that competent knowledge of the creative principles and procedures of the music traditions of Africa is a



prerequisite for a creative process that will capture the essence of African music, and give unique theoretical frame to the new music. Nzewi advocates that it is the duty of modern literary musicians to draw from the abundant music types in Africa to develop modern music that will be a creative continuum and not a continuation of African music heritage. He proposes modern literary music that will evolve from its traditional counterpart.

He argues that:

The role of modern musicians who are catering for a New World audience as well as new trends in music appreciation will not be to repeat tradition... The role of the literary, modern composer or performer is to ensure that his or her creations are a logical continuum, not a continuation or bastardisation of tradition. By a continuum, we imply the fish bone theory-a contemporary development deriving from the traditional creative philosophy and principles with respect to texture, form, harmony and thematic development.

A continuum implies the non-contextual rationalised representation of the musical essence of traditional event-music. Bastardisation on the other hand implies abstracting an essentially African melody or rhythmic pattern and inserting same as a token African gesture in an essentially Western classical music composition, which is, therefore, treacherously and insincerely dubbed modern African composition. (Nzewi 1997:71-72)

Discussing the creative activities of some modern literary composers, Uzoigwe points out that “many countries in the world have produced composers at one time or the other, who have in various ways sought inspiration from the traditional music of their country for the creation of a written art music that would represent its local sources and as well be international in its communication” (Uzoigwe 1992: 9). He gives some examples as Ralph Vaughan-Williams, Benjamin Britten, Zoltan Kodaly, and Bela Bartók etc. He went on to say that “most of them made both conscious and unconscious efforts to draw on the folk songs of their people” (ibid).

He further states that:

Many of the Nigerian composers are not only accomplished musicians in the European tradition, but are scholars in ethnomusicology and therefore, among the leading spokesmen and women on the traditional music of their peoples. However, Nationalism in the music of these composers is of a different kind.

They have been born into cultures, in which music making forms an intricate pattern that conveys the people's ideations and material constructs of their existence. As such, their main aim is to explore the creative potentials, which are inherent in their musical traditions, and to recombine the various elements in a new order, that would not be a departure from, but an enhancement of the evolutionary process and



continuity of their musical cultural heritage... The composers seek to extract the new art music from the event performance situation of traditional music and confine it to the concert platform... In spite of all this, there is a desire to maintain a bond between the old traditional art, and the new art and this means that the composers have to exploit in their works, those musical elements that can serve as common bond between the two. Hence, one observes in their works the invocation of African characteristics such as the speech mode, dance mode, polyrhythmic and various types of tonal organizations. (ibid: 10)

Though the experiment of fusing African and European elements in a new music creation by modern literary composers who have acquired European music education has been on for a generation or two, Uzoigwe observes that "the synthesis appears to have been successful in the hands of some composers, while others are seeking new approaches"(ibid: 10)

In a similar view, Akin Euba argues that "an intimate knowledge of the theory and practice of traditional music is a key to the discovery of new creative and performance techniques based on African models" (Euba 1987: 32). He also believes that "African musicians cannot command world wide attention, unless their modern idioms (like traditional music) project a strong African perspective, irrespective of whatever foreign elements go into the making of these idioms" (ibid). He goes on to recommend that the basic creative elements for a neo-African musical language must be drawn from the

totality of the African traditional idioms. In view of this, he rejects the assumption that certain works by African composers in which folk tunes serve no other purpose but to give an African flavor, should be considered as representing a truly Neo-African Idiom. These arguments buttress the position that for any meaningful creative continuum of Nigerian indigenous music in modern art form, modern art music composers aspiring to contribute to the creative vision should first carry out cognitive study of the indigenous music types. The composition approach that backgrounds in-depth ethnomusicological research of indigenous music is termed "Research-composition" in this work.

In Nigeria today, works by Fela Sowande, Ayo Bankole, Adam Feberesima Lazarus Ekwueme, Okechukwu Ndubisi, Felix Nwuba, Bode Omojola exhibit attempt at a synthesis of elements of Nigerian traditional music and Western music. However, most of these works show great influence of Western compositional techniques and idioms to the extent that the Nigerian musical elements are either overshadowed or greatly blurred in the new work. This is, in part, the outcome of the approach that these composers adopted. Ndubisi's works, for instance, show evidence of abstracted melodic or rhythmic lines from Nigerian musical traditions that are used in essentially Western classical compositional style of functional harmony, modulations and chromaticism of the late Romantic period.

Uzoigwe had earlier noted that some Nigerian composers had scholarly training in ethnomusicology. This is a fact. However, some of these composers had independent training in ethnomusicology, without relating it to composition at the same time. All of them had training in Western

compositional techniques and musical appreciation as well. While they later turned to composition, their Western classical background still dominates. Ekwueme's works for solo voice and piano are notable examples.

It seems that all such works that bear insignificant Nigerian traditional musical elements are at the moment regarded as modern Nigerian art music types that derive from Nigeria's traditional music. The writer regards these as tokenistic efforts. They contain Nigerian musical elements in Western classical structures. Most of them do not project the compositional principles and theoretical contents of Nigerian traditional music. There is conflicting understanding among the younger generation of what constitutes modern Nigerian art music. This situation has led to all kinds of conclusions. It therefore becomes necessary to crystallize a sense of direction. The commitment of this work is, therefore, to present systematic ways of drawing out relevant materials for creative work from an identified indigenous music. In other words it aims to furnish a frame of reference.

There exists a great number of authentic indigenous music types in Igboland, one of the major tribes in Nigeria, east of the Niger. The term, Igbo, typifies the normative human attributes, personality, worldview, language and cultural practices of a people. Igbo music has not received much international attention in ethnomusicological studies, and yet offers abundant resources for art music composition. The writer is convinced that the unique creative elements and stylistic content inherent in Igbo music types contain boundless resources for literary creative musicians to explore authentically Igbo, modern art music.

In a contribution to the ongoing process of creative continuum of Igbo music, the writer had explored the creative potentials of an identified Igbo traditional music type that is conceptually contemplative, for the piano (Ufie: 1995). Ufie is a generic name for large wooden slit drum in the Anambra area of Igbo land. It is also the name for a special music type in which the Ufie is the master instrument. This music is exclusively for titled men. It, therefore, features during title taking, burial or funeral rites of titled men, Ofala festival (anniversary festival of the traditional ruler) or on other special occasions that concern members. Titled men that enjoy the right to dance to this music type undergo the initiation rites. This involves elaborate feasting and show of wealth that has inherent motivational influence on the younger generation to strive for greater achievements. The dancing and acting to the music are the exclusive reserve of the initiates. However, on festive occasions, the wives of initiates may dance to the music. There are specialists that perform the Ufie music, who may not be titled men themselves.

Ufie for piano is the writer's attempt at a synthesis of the elements of rhythm, dance, polyrhythm, texture, melorhythm and stylistic features of Ufie music for a new medium, the piano. It is a three-movement work of contrasting tempi. A ten-note scale made up of two pentatonic scales derived from the Ukom music of Ngwa community is used in the work. The second movement of the work is, however, in bitonality. This is derived by transposing the pentatonic scale an augmented fourth up, and then a combination of the two scales was used. This approach to the tonality of the work was a developmental process that gave the work a unique sound. The experience of the work in re-creating the essence of the traditional music type in a new idiom inspires the present



work, which proposes to cognitively-creatively explore another ensemble music type, for a larger modern medium, the symphony orchestra. This work is, therefore, the writer's further contribution to the development of research-composition based on the Igbo music.

Abigbo is the name, both for a style of traditional choral-dance music typical of South Eastern Igboland, as well as the performing group. It is essentially social music and for a long time has been an indigenous popular music type of the Mbaise people in the Imo State of Igboland. The Abigbo music type is characterized by satiric/lamprooning text.

Mbaise is made up of five autonomous communities: Ekwerazu and Ahiara in the North; Ezinihite in the East; Uvuru in the South and Agbaja in the West. Enyigugu is the Local Government headquarters (see the map approximation). The particular Abigbo material for this study is taken from among the Okwuato community, in Agbaja, Mbaise West, made up of Ibeku, Lagwa and Umuhu villages.

## **1.2 Personal Motivation**

There is incredible variety of highly creative and aesthetically attractive music types indigenous to the Igbo people. A survey by Nzewi (1991:36-37) documented 38 different music types and styles in the Ngwa community, with a population of 314,840 (Ibid: 35). Music types and styles could be as varied as there are sub-ethnic/dialectical groups, such that at the surface level, extremities of Igbo land manifest differentiated musical practices as well as dialectical unintelligibility. As such, there is stupendous abundance of stylistic and typological models of music that could become the inspiration for modern

creative explorations. Igbo music remains highly anchored on humanistic ideals in creativity and practice.

The desire to demonstrate the use of the theoretical and stylistic resources of Igbo music to produce new music that would demonstrate international relevance and creative originality motivates this research. The composer's personal desire to document the principle of research-composition based on Igbo music for the benefit of interested scholars and researchers is additional motivation for this work. In other words, it is the desire of the writer to contribute to modern African composition as an ethnomusicological process.

The writer derives great motivation from the numerous works of leading Nigerian neo-African composers such as Meki Nzewi (many of whose works the writer has performed), Joshua Uzoigwe (particularly his Ukom, for Piano, Talking Drums for Piano, Egwu Amala, Atilogwu etc), and Akin Euba.

It could be said that a combination of sheer interest, inspiration from existing works and the desire to contribute to the creative continuum of Igbo indigenous music through a definitive method-research-composition together motivate this work.

### **1.3 Need for the study**

The ephemeral nature of musical styles and tastes has necessitated the search for diverse ways of arriving at "definitions" of music. This has also led some creative minds to explore potent elements in folk music, leading to the creation of new forms of music. Bela Bartok and Frederic Chopin are notable European composers who used elements from folk music in



composing new music. Composers in different African countries, including Nigeria, have also pursued this creative disposition with varying degrees of success. Drawing creative inspiration from folk sources as well as utilizing such materials in assembling modern art music is not new to most Nigerian composers and arrangers. However, the degree of sophistication in the manipulation of folk materials differs.

The abundance of different kinds of traditional music in Nigeria makes it imperative for modern art music composers that need to give their works cultural identity, to draw relevant materials from such music types. The study of Nigeria's musical heritage that would offer deeper analytical-theoretical insight into the musical and sociological interests of the various musical traditions, is imperative to the Nigerian art music composer that does not aspire to merely copy the Western approach to composition. The need to document as well as explore the unique features of Nigeria's musical heritage is critical and has been emphasized by many Nigerian writers.

Proper understanding of structural and formal theoretical merits of traditional Nigerian music, vocal or instrumental, is a key to composing original music, which will be African in general content and Nigerian essentially. The need to establish a creative paradigm that is authentically African, deriving from Research-composition is urgent in the face of the Euro-American classical hegemony. This project aims to provide re-orientation and re-direction for the younger generation of African composers.

#### **1.4 Aim of the study**

This work shall be in three parts: an ethnomusicological field research and analysis, an original composition, and a musicological analysis of the

composition. The ethnomusicological study of Abigbo Choral-dance music, of the Okwuato community of the Mbaise in Imo State of Nigeria, aims to identify the relevant stylistic devices that will inform the new orchestral Abigbo. As far as possible, the traditional compositional style shall provide the model as well as creative idioms for the new work.

The second part shall be an original composition for a modern symphony orchestra in art music form incorporating the stylistic idioms and thematic materials obtained from the traditional Abigbo. This original composition shall be in three movements of contrasting tempi.

The third part of this thesis will be a comprehensive analysis of the new music, Abigbo for Orchestra. This will discuss the necessary compositional procedures adopted and how they are utilized in the composed work.

It is projected that where possible, the work will also be performed and recorded, for purposes of practical, scholarship assessment as well as general audience appreciation.

### **1.5 Methodology**

The following working methods and research techniques will be employed for this thesis.

There would be an ethnomusicological fieldwork as well as transcription-analytical study of Abigbo Choral-dance music. The ethnomusicological study will entail fieldwork for audio tape recording. The field research technique will entail participant study, interviews and control experiment. Thereafter transcription and analysis will be undertaken.

An original composition for a modern symphonic orchestra shall be undertaken, applying the elements of the Abigbo choral-dance music. A

musicological analysis of the new Abigbo for orchestra shall follow. It is envisaged that there shall be a practical and performance direction of the orchestra.

The knowledge background for this work shall rely more on indigenous knowledge from Abigbo musicians and from Igbo musical theories and philosophies than it will rely on secondary, published sources. This is necessitated by the fact that there is very little literature already existing on Abigbo music as well as on Research-Composition. In addition, this approach will ensure that authentic and reliable indigenous musical knowledge that is not foreshadowed or influenced by Western musical thought is projected.

### **1.6 Value of the study**

It is the intention of this work to help in contributing authentic literature, theoretical contents, creative procedures and performance practices on the fast changing or otherwise disappearing music types of Africa. The exercise will popularize as well as advance indigenous African music knowledge in new contemporary form by adopting literary documentation and presentation techniques. The composition will demonstrate that indigenous music knowledge can constitute the creative model for African art music, when cognitively understood. This work subscribes to the yet inchoate research-composition advocacy in African music studies.

### **1.7 SCOPE**

Ethnomusicological research for this work shall be limited to one traditional music type, the Abigbo Choral music and dance. Detailed study of Abigbo music is deemed more instructive than cursory study of different musical genres. Mbaise is a large Igbo group with Abigbo groups in many component

communities. Therefore, this research work will be based on the Abigbo music ensemble of the Okwuato community.

The modern composition shall be for an orchestra. The orchestra shall be made up of a selection of some Western orchestral instruments (piccolo, flutes 1 and 2, clarinet, horn in F, B flat trumpet 1 and 2, trombone, timpani violin 1 and 2, viola, violon cello and double bass), and some African (Igbo) music instruments (medium size membrane drum, rattle, small twin bells, medium size metal bell, knocker and brass bell.) There will also be a choral part for male voices. Conscious attempt will be made to capture the creative and performance idioms of Abigbo music in the orchestral work.

The second movement will have a choral part necessitated by purely aesthetic reasons. A performance and recording of the composed work is envisaged and will be presented for audio appreciation and evaluation.

## **1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The attempt to survey relevant literatures relating to this work in order to discern the perspectives of other music scholars did not yield much result. This is because this approach to music composition is new. It has been sparsely studied, particularly in Nigeria. The writer did not find detailed literature presenting systematic method for research-composition by Nigerian scholars and composers. Many of the Nigerian composers who have attempted a fusion of Nigerian and European musical idioms did not present literary discourse of their works as well as their methods to guide further research or study of their works. However, available literatures relating to this work are surveyed.

Agawu observes that:



Most African composers often adopt individual solutions to the problems of reconciling various, sometimes conflicting, formative influences. For some it is not a question of conflict; different orientations simply enrich the resources available to them. Any model that seems suitable for a specific composition purpose is adopted irrespective of origin.

(1984:53)

Agawu's observations present the underlying truth about Nigerian art music composers. Most Nigerian composers still grapple with conflicting influences. There are two main formative influences. Western classical music training through Western music education and traditional music education acquired hereditarily or through conscious exposure to traditional musical practices. A greater part of the traditional music influence is lost during the Western music training due to over emphasis on Western classical music education. As such, the creative out put of most Nigerian composers draw more from the Western classical idiom than from the traditional musical idioms. In their works therefore,

foreign models are frequently adopted in place of indigenous ones. The few attempts to give these compositions an African flavour are done from the outside in a somewhat "neoclassical" fashion rather than within the African tradition itself. In certain cases, the composers are simply unaware of the creative potentials of the traditional music. (Ibid: 53)

This influence is evident in Uzoigwe's earlier works such as "Egwu Amala", "Lustra Variations", "Atilogwu" and "Olurombi". The works of Ayo Bankole, Akin

Euba (earlier works), Fela Sowande, Adams Feberesima (particularly, Opu jaja) also show such influences. The younger generation of Nigerian composers is also caught in the dilemma. Very many of them do not have clear grasp of the creative potentials of traditional music. Some avoid composing in the traditional music idiom while others merely abstract a melodic or rhythmic passage for a tokenistic contemporary composition.

Slawson identifies some problems that non-Western musical cultures may place on indigenous composers. He says "the first kind of constraint is said to arise from a felt need to reach both an audience "at home" and one that is international in scope."(1989:317) He goes on to argue that Westerners, at least Americans, are free from the constraints implied by composing for one's neighbors and one's national and international colleagues at the same time. But non-Western composers have the difficulty of having audiences that are conditioned by traditional or popular genres in which innovation is not greatly valued. The writer does not agree with Slawson's argument about audiences in non-Western cultures. His conclusion that innovation is not greatly valued in the music of non-Western cultures is unfounded. The writer is aware that there are cognitive audiences for composed art music of different styles in Nigeria, at least. In Nigeria, there is a modern art music center in Lagos- Musical Society Of Nigeria (MUSON) center, where international composers and performers of art music of different styles perform regularly. It is quite misleading to imply that all non-Western audiences are not able to transcend their traditional music backgrounds to appreciate modern art music. It is also unfounded to conclude that non-Western music, traditional or popular, do not greatly value innovation. All



forms of the arts are dynamic. They assimilate changes according to time, taste or environment. There is little need to belabor the fact that traditional music has always absorbed changes and innovations from generation to generation. These are evident in costumery, harmonic structures, stylistic designs and general musical content. His observation regarding home and international audiences is not a major constraint. The universal and communicating power of music as language overcomes such constraints. The background of audiences is not a perceived constraint to the application of African traditional musical idioms and principles in modern art music compositions.

Mensah identified three groups of African composers:

Those who work strictly according to Western rules of composition. Those who seek to blend Western and African musical elements in original compositions for enjoyment as authentic African contributions.... The third group also may consciously or unconsciously, use Western structural models; but they apply to their compositions heavier doses of African musical elements from African music. These composers include Serukenya, Kyagambiddwa, Riverson at times, and Euba during his second period. (1998:222)

The list must be enlarged to include Meki Nzewi and Joshua Uzoigwe. In the first category, we have some Nigerian composers like T.K.E Phillips, Fela Sowande, Ayo Bankole and Dayo Dedeké. The second category includes some composers as Okechukwu Ndubisi, Sam Ojukwu, Dan Agu, David Okongwu, Adams Feberesima, Felix Nwuba and Bode Omojola.

Njoku observes that:

An encouraging development in Nigeria's musical tradition, and one that has importance for the history of composition in Nigeria is the transformation of folk songs into art songs and other genres. Ikoli Harcourt-White's choral compositions, Bankole's art songs for voice and piano, Felix Nwuba's "O Nwa Mmuo Ka Mkara Gi", Ndubisi's "Sese Isantim", and Ekwueme's "Nwa Neku Nwa" drew textual and melodic materials from Nigeria. (1998:237)

Within the prevailing music scene in Nigeria, there is over dominance of choral music. There is a dearth of instrumental music of symphonic scope. The art music scene in Nigeria does not give a balanced impression of the creative potentials of the composers. It does appear that most of the composers are leaning more to choral compositions or that they are incapable of composing instrumental works. Most of the composers are satisfied with arranging folk songs for voice and piano or for mixed voices (S.A.T.B.). Many have not also shown their ability to compose original works other than folk song arrangements. On the other hand, few Nigerians that have composed symphonic works face the problem of unavailability of trained performers and symphony orchestra in Nigeria. A national orchestra has just been set up last year, 2001.

Nzewi (1997:72) argues that:

A composer of African modern music should enable a listener to appreciate the quintessential African harmonic, developmental and textural-structural idioms. Otherwise the

composition is of no consequence to a continuum of African creative integrity. It will be a disservice, in fact an insult, to Africa to categorize it as African modern music. It could be a modern African's music.

This position supports the perspective for this work. In order to capture the compositional idioms and evoke the essence of the traditional Abigbo music in the orchestral work, a detailed study of the traditional music is essential. Research-Composition is therefore, a necessary method for modern African art music compositions.

Euba argues that:

Some of us are so preoccupied with producing symphonies, faithful to the European classical styles, that we are oblivious of the "symphonic" potentialities of African traditional ensemble music. Others are intoxicated with the pop music culture of America and remain ignorant of African rhythms, whose danceability will outsell the most commercial disco from America.(1987:32)

Abigbo for Orchestra is aimed at exploring the creative potentials of a typical Nigerian music type as a creative model for Research-composition. African art music composers have the great challenge to adopt the method of Research-Composition in order to ensure Africa's traditional music continuum in modern global music scene.