

# AFTER THE COLLECTION, WHAT NEXT? CHALLENGES OF PRESERVATION OF FOLK MUSIC RECORDINGS IN AN UNSTABLE CLIMATIC ENVIRONMENT IN NIGERIA (LIBRARY OF FOLK MUSIC OF NIGERIA PROJECT IN FOCUS)

Elizabeth Onyeji and Christian Onyeji

## Introduction

In 2005, the collecting of recordings for the Library of Folk Music of Nigeria Project began. The purpose of the project, its processes, funding challenges, effect of COVID-19, and other details relating to the project have been documented<sup>1</sup>. The driving force for the project is to stem the tide of the continuing extinction that plagues indigenous music of Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. The published articles argued for the need to rescue the endangered folk music tradition of Nigeria through deliberate and active field recording, digitisation and preservation for future performance, research,

---

Christian Uzoma Onyeji holds a Doctor of Music degree from the University of Pretoria, Republic of South Africa. He is professor of music at the Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria, and an internationally recognised music composer, educator, and scholar who specialises in research–composition, which applies ethnomusicological procedures in the composition of African art music. His compositions for different media are performed within and outside Nigeria. He specialises in African music research and is working on a folk music library project aimed at recording folk music of Nigeria for documentation and preservation. He is a member of the editorial board or advisory board of various high impact international journals. He was the Dean of Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2016–2018, after having held various administrative positions as Head of Department and Associate Dean of Faculty of Arts and School of Postgraduate Studies at the University of Nigeria. He is a member of various professional bodies within and outside Nigeria.

Elizabeth Onyeji holds a Diploma in Music Education with distinction, a Bachelor of Arts degree with first class, and a Ph.D. in music education, specialising in voice performance education. A lecturer at the Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka Enugu State, Nigeria, her recognition as a soprano soloist enabled her participation in the Nigerian National Orchestra and Choir as a member and soloist. She is a researcher on voice pedagogy and performance, music education, and African music. She is particularly interested in the collection and preservation of Nigerian folk music as a resource for vocal art music composition and performance. She has published and co-authored articles nationally and internationally and is a member of various professional bodies.

1. See Christian Onyeji, 'Rescue of Endangered Folk Music Heritage of Nigeria: Library of Folk Music of Nigeria Project', *Fontes Artis Musicae* 53, no. 1 (January-March 2006): 21–30; 'Library of Folk Music of Nigeria Project: The Current State', *Fontes Artis Musicae* 55, no. 2 (April-June 2008): 263–269, and Christian Onyeji and Elizabeth Onyeji, 'COVID-19 and Field Recordings for the Library of Folk Music of Nigeria Project: Disruptions and Challenges of Access in Pandemic Time' *Fontes Artis Musicae* 69, no. 1 (January-March 2022): 43–52.

scholarship, and creative purposes. Adequate motivation for concerted efforts to preserve the folk music of Nigeria was discussed in the articles eradicating any doubt as to why the Library is of necessity.

Critical to the Library is the preservation of recorded folk music material collected in the field. As such, consideration is given to the fragility of the music material as well as the environment for preservation of the collected recordings. Preservation here implies not only the act of ensuring their existence over a period of time but also the mechanism by which their preservation is assured, the environment that ensures the preservation and the ultimate guarantee for their maintenance in good climatic condition. According to Schuller<sup>2</sup>, 'Long-term preservation of audiovisual materials is, in its principles, well understood. Audio and video recordings can only be preserved by adopting a new paradigm of preservation: Any attempts to preserve the original—the classical paradigm of archives and museums—would be in vain, as carriers are sooner or later bound to deteriorate so much that their contents cannot be retrieved'.

He goes on to argue that audio and also video preservation must concentrate on content, by digital (= loss of data) migration from one preservation platform to the next. Content from analogue carriers have to be digitised first. Very important is the provision of necessary requirements and techniques needed for the preservation of the recorded items in the location of the materials. Elizabeth Hill argues that the only way for these recordings to be saved for future generations of researchers and scholars is for libraries and archives to make every effort to preserve them<sup>3</sup>. Preservation of delicate music recordings is well understood. Its implication for the overall need to quell the regular disappearance of music materials is also clear. However, the critical resources required for the preservation of the recorded material in this project were not put in place before the field recording began. As such, the project is now confronted with the lack of proper preservation structures. The excitement to move into the field to rescue the folk music was overshadowed by the need for onsite preservation and resources to be put in place first. Given the strong desire and motivation to rescue the endangered folk music of the country threatened with imminent extinction, the critical issues of preservation and fine details of how the delicate materials would be handled were overlooked before venturing into the project itself. Several years later in the project, we have come face to face with the same issues that necessitated the project in the first place: loss of the folk music and preservation. The nagging question at the moment is whether the project required a preservation system in place before it began or the field recording before the preservation process? The challenge is great, given the time, energy, and funds that could potentially dwindle if nothing tangible is done. The problems associated with preservation in the Nigerian context include harsh and volatile weather conditions, humidity, security, decay of electronic CDs, and lack of adequate and dedicated space for the storage of materials. Considering the state of the collected material held and the lack of adequate preservation methods, the thought and search for ways to handle the situation were paramount. It became necessary to re-evaluate the project in the light of its original intent, the projected benefits, research, and the creative potential of the material within the

---

2. Dietrich Schuller, 'Audiovisual Research Collections and their Preservation', *European Commission and Access* (2008): 1–38.

3. V. Elizabeth Hill, 'The Preservation of Sound Recordings,' *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (2012): 88–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10588167.2012.675843>, accessed 22 May 2023.

context of the prevailing situation. Questions arose on the issues and challenges facing the project and to be able to deal with them in the current realities of the project.

There are many issues arising from the project and the proper preservation of the materials. While the recording project is proceeding at its own pace and within financial constraints, the critical question is what is next after the recording process? What happens to the recorded folk music? Do we have the required means of preserving the materials? Is there a way to mitigate harsh climatic conditions that pose extensive challenges to the lasting preservation of the materials? Would it be a case of taking them from the field only to lose the collections later due to lack of adequate preservation methods and environmental conditions? The ultimate issue is whether there is any need to proceed further with the recorded collections if they cannot be preserved? Many challenges and issues are collectively affecting zeal for the project. It seems therefore that there is need to bring this to the attention of experts and seek ways to mitigate the challenges affecting the project. The project requires expert advice on ways to secure the materials from impending damage due to weather challenges. Sharing the situation of the collected recordings is, in our thinking, one way of arriving at an expert method of securing the materials, at least, in the short term. While there is no funding at the disposal of the project to set up adequate storage and preservation facilities, it could be taken to be a wild goose chase of some sort. Our desire to preserve and store the recorded materials in an adequate and well-maintained space with appropriate environmental conditions seems unattainable given the lack of financial support for the project at the moment. But hope is not lost, we believe. We are seeking a way around it to ensure our efforts are not in vain.

### **Music as Cultural Heritage in Nigeria**

Cultural heritage among the Nigerian cultures encompasses a variety and diversity of materials, both tangible and intangible. It goes beyond the artifacts, to the spiritual essence and well-being of the people. It is both representative and the embodiment of the soul of the people, encompassing all things that identify them, the creative outputs, technological representation, architectural, social, psychological, emotional, and spiritual life that they put together over time for later generations to inherit. Quite significant is the intangible component that is passed on to different generations by deliberate communications and by sheer social assimilation. Thus,

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH), made up of all immaterial manifestations of culture, represents the variety of living heritage of humanity as well as the most important vehicle of cultural diversity. The main 'constitutive factors' of ICH are represented by the 'self identification' of this heritage as an essential element of the cultural identity of its creators and bearers; by its constant recreation in response to the historical and social evolution of the communities and groups concerned; by its connection with the cultural identity of these communities and groups; by its authenticity; and by its indissoluble relationship with human rights<sup>4</sup>.

This significant part of human heritage is intensely absorbed within a cultural setting, expressing a people's way of life and social identification. Due to its significance in

---

4. Federico Lenzerini, 'Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Living Culture of Peoples', *The European Journal of International Law* 22, no. 1 (2011): 101–120. doi: 10.1093/ejil/chr006, accessed 22 May 2023.

the cohesion and cultural identification of a people, 'the international community has recently become conscious that ICH needs and deserves international safeguarding, triggering a legal process which culminated with the adoption in 2003 of the UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage'<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, 'cultural heritage can contribute towards well-being and quality of life of communities, can help to mitigate the impacts of cultural globalization and can become an incentive for sustainable economic development'<sup>6</sup>.

In 1960, an influential thinker of the twentieth century wrote that culture cannot be condensed down to its tangible products, because it is continuously living and evolving. Therefore, it includes all immaterial elements that are considered by a given community as essential components of its intrinsic identity, as well as of its uniqueness and distinctiveness in comparison to all other human groups. In other terms, the culture of a people is composed by the totality of elements representing the very heart of its distinctive idiosyncrasy<sup>7</sup>.

In general, cultural heritage is a significant and valued part of a people's life and spiritual wellbeing. This is more so with the intangible cultural heritage that is assimilated and absorbed by the people over time in the construction of their social and spiritual meaning of events in a given community. It is believed that intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity<sup>8</sup>.

Intangible cultural heritage is known to consist of, inter alia, '(a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; (b) performing arts; (c) social practices, rituals, and festive events; (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; (e) traditional craftsmanship', on the condition that they are 'compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups, and individuals, and of sustainable development'<sup>9</sup>.

Of course, our focus is on the musical aspect of Nigerian cultural heritage that spans both tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the people. While the sonic material and output belongs to the intangible cultural heritage, the resources for creating the music belong to the tangible cultural heritage. In specific terms, what the people lay claim to as their indigenous music (vocal and instrumental) for a variety of occasions, events, and rites and which they proudly cultivate, promote, celebrate, and transfer to other generations constitutes a part of their cultural heritage.

Heritage is pointedly significant, relying on the transfer process for its relevance. In clear terms, cultural heritage must be created, valued, essentialised, utilised, serve a purpose in a given time and space within a generation, and transferred wholly or in parts to other generation(s). Cultural heritage must satisfy these criteria to be defined

---

5. Ibid., 101.

6. Indrė Gražulevičiūtė, 'Cultural Heritage in the Context of Sustainable Development', *Environmental Research, Engineering and Management* 3, no. 37 (2006): 74–79.

7. Lenzerini, op. cit., 101–102.

8. Ibid., 107.

9. Ibid.

as such. Indigenous music of the Nigerian cultures is significantly well placed as cultural heritage, bearing all the indicators, transmitted from one generation to another among the people. Indigenous music of Nigeria is not only a cultural indicator, but also culture in its own right, celebrated and appreciated for its variety of roles and cultural essence within the Nigerian cultural milieu.

As in many African societies, Nigerian cultures are deliberate in creating music for cultural purposes. Music for different ages and sexes are practiced in the communities. Training and education of the young in and through music is deliberately pursued by the older generation to ensure the transfer of indigenous knowledge of musical arts, and the sustainability of the creative arts. The preservation of the musical arts is given priority and sustained through festivals, cultural activities, ceremonies, and life rituals, sometimes deliberately organised by the society to promote creativity and musical artistry. The overall inclusive mode of musical practice among the Igbo promotes the heritage process by enabling the young to learn by direct and active participation in the context of music making. Direct and indirect instructional processes are applied in the training and cultivation of new breeds of music makers in different musical groups and ensembles. The ultimate goal, however, is the subtle but very effective transfer of musical skills, knowledge, and creative capacity to the next generation. Indeed, as a cultural heritage, a music performance among the Igbo is not an end in itself, but often a transmission process for the younger generation to own the musical art and re-process or refine it for use by that generation. While written tradition ensures the transfer process in the West, active music performance and participation by all generations in a community ensures the transfer process albeit at different degrees, but continuously, by socio-cultural assimilation in the context(s) of music presentation(s). In essence, indigenous music performance is a cultural heritage process in action. It is a cultural creative process, a cultural transfer process, and a cultural heritage process. Its significance and value support the need for its preservation for the well-being of the people. 'Of course preservation of cultural heritage is first and foremost organized to maintain and enhance cultural values, though numbers of studies have demonstrated positive economic benefits of cultural heritage preservation'<sup>10</sup>. In all, 'it is evident that protection and maintenance of immovable cultural heritage plays a crucial role for the sustainability of communities, because all the cultural assets theater, music, visual arts, crafts, local customs and traditions, are inherently connected with and enhanced by the physical context within which they were created and evolved for centuries'<sup>11</sup>. Indigenous music of the Nigerian people is therefore crucial, significantly valued, and inherently connected to the life of the people, defining the customs and traditions of the people. Its preservation is crucial and inherently beneficial to the people.

### **Summary of the Project**

Folk Music of Nigeria is a valuable resource requiring the need for preservation. Beyond being an art for entertainment, it is a cultural heritage transferred from one generation to another, often through oral processes. The rate of disappearance of the

---

10. Gražulevičiūtė, op. cit., 74–75.

11. Ibid., 76.

folk music heritage of Africa has become alarming. It was Maud Karpeles who raised the initial alarm long ago when she said 'folk music is disappearing as a traditional art . . . Immediate steps must therefore be taken to preserve our remaining heritage, not only for our own use, but for that of posterity'<sup>12</sup>. Heritage preservation seems a moot point among Nigerian cultures, as it is with many indigenous communities. While there is the desire to preserve cultural items, creative outputs, and all other social products of the people, this becomes a constant striving for the near impossible. There are various social impediments that constrain the loss of such materials in the communities. Without a collective preservation process and determined mode of action, most of such products rely on individual interests, preferences, and opportunities for their survival over time. What a generation values so much may have little or no import to another. Such generational preferences determine what survives and what gets destroyed. Some ritual and spiritual objects may survive the generational 'migration' process due to their embodiment of the societal spiritual essence. Other purely social materials are quite often discarded, creating a vacuum that exists today with many ramifications for heritage preservation. Indeed, there is no collective determination of what a cultural heritage of a generation constitutes as people move from generation to generation, due to lack of uniform and collective action on preservation contents, modes, sites, sustainability, and their roles in different generations. In the Mbari arts of the Igbo people of Nigeria for instance, the communities recreate the arts annually or in four-year cycles and thereafter leave them to perish<sup>13</sup>. Issues of preservation and sustainability have constantly engulfed cultural heritage, making them quite vulnerable to time and space, and constraining a constant cycle of production and loss that are not accounted for. In essence, what survives the generational journey is but a fraction of the body of what is actually created by the people. Most worrisome therefore is the constant loss occasioned by an overdependence on human memory for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage in many indigenous societies.

The Library of Folk Music of Nigeria Project began in 2005 as a private project for the collection, documentation, and preservation of the existing folk music of Nigeria from different ethnic areas of Nigeria. Of note is that the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) Music Library, where the project began, is not just poorly stocked with music recordings, but in what is the first indigenous department of music in Nigeria, no recordings of Nigerian folk music exist at this time. There is also no collection of transcribed folk music of Nigeria in the library. The library contains a small number of books, but mainly with outdated information. Most of the material are orchestral scores, but the UNN has no standard orchestra to play them. The situation is quite critical and requires urgent action be taken to not only provide current knowledge to students but also to ensure that indigenous knowledge of Nigerian traditional musical arts is preserved for the coming generations that may be interested in such music. The situation at the UNN Music Department is a clear reflection of the situation in other departments of music in Nigeria. Indeed, these other departments of music are even more poorly stocked. It is unimaginable that such a situation exists in the institution at the moment. In order to

---

12. Maud Karpeles, 'The International Folk Music Council', *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 2, no. 3 (1965): 308–313. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3814150>, accessed 22 May 2023.

13. Christian Onyeji, 'Audiovisual Archive and Igbo Cultural Heritage', *Journal of the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA)* 23 (2004): 22–37.

create a collection that records and preserves the current state of folk music in Nigeria, the Library of Nigerian Folk Music Project was begun at the UNN that seeks to make field recordings (audio and video, where possible) of folk music performances.

The initial approach to the project was to personally engage in finding the music and recording it. This was quite cumbersome and without much result due to the need to travel to different locations. In order to enhance and increase the quantity of recordings, music students were co-opted to assist with some performances from their various localities. Some UNN music students were then assigned to bring in between five and ten recordings of folk music from their areas. This was limited to students taking courses on African music. Each recording is transferred to a duplicate tape for archival purposes, the information about the performance (participants, ceremony, tribal affiliations, situation where recording was made, name of person making the recording, date, etc.) is systematically collected, and the tapes are kept in a secure location. For some collections, the music is recorded in audiovisual form on DVDs or only in audio format on CDs. In some instances, postgraduate students assisted with the recordings, particularly those in African music studies. The project has largely proceeded in this manner since then.

### **Environmental Conditions**

Nigeria is a tropical country having warm weather throughout the year. The temperature fluctuates from time to time but ranges from nineteen to fifty degrees centigrade in some parts of the north. Nigeria is noted for its two major seasons (the rainy and dry seasons). The rainy season, which is between March and October, often includes various millimeters of rainfall. According to Burns, the rainy season lasts until October, with a slight break in August, and is followed by another short tornado season<sup>14</sup>. This is generally heavier in the coastal states in the south toward the Atlantic Ocean. The rainy season is also the planting period with the environment saturated with moisture. Many items absorb more moisture and become heavier. Some acquire mold and are easily degradable. The rainy season presents the challenge of a faster rate of absorption of moisture that affects many products. The dry season, which occurs between November and March of each year, is further marked by a seemingly winter period called *harmattan* between December and February that causes heavy winds, dust, and cold wind in many parts of the country. 'During the *harmattan* the nights and early mornings are cold, but the days are very hot, and it is during this period that the maximum diurnal variations of temperature occur, a variation of as much as 50° being recorded within a few hours'<sup>15</sup>. Burns goes further to say that the lowest mean temperature is recorded in July and August, and the lowest minimum temperature in December and January, during the prevalence of the *harmattan*; the highest temperatures, both mean and maximum, are, as a rule, recorded in March and April.

During the dry season, the temperature may rise up to forty-two to fifty degrees centigrade with many areas experiencing tremendous heat and dryness. Also during this season, parts of the country close to the north experience heavy winds and so much dust via the north-east trade winds from the Sahara Desert. Figures 1 and 2 show the

---

14. Alan Cuthbert Burns, *History of Nigeria* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1929).

15. *Ibid.*, 27.



Fig. 1. Nsukka earth colour showing its effect on objects.





Fig. 2. Nsukka earth colour showing the effect of dust on items.

unique earth colour of Nsukka soil and the effect on materials, particularly during the dry season.

The location of the project, University of Nigeria Nsukka, where the main collectors work and reside, is on the northern fringes of Igbo land bordering Kogi and Benue states that are both north central states. North-east trade winds that bring harmattan down to southern Nigeria hits the area first before travelling downward. The harsh effects of the period are stronger and felt more in the areas than in other parts of the south. The period also lasts longer in Nsukka environs than in other places. Nsukka is strongly affected by harsh weather conditions, particularly the dry season and harmattan periods. During these periods, the environs, being very close to the north, experience so much heat and dust. The harmattan period comes with heavy winds travelling at high speed as well as a dryness that withers the leaves. There is also the challenge of termite infestation (see Figure 3). All material is grossly affected and damaged in some cases. Nsukka is therefore not a good place to keep sensitive materials such as cassette tapes and audio CDs without proper protection and preservation in a controlled temperature.

Such items become unavoidably prone to damage or harsh effects. Audio tapes sometimes bind together while CDs bend due to sustained heat from the rising temperature. Nsukka is also not spared by rainfall. The area is heavily saturated and moist during the rainy season due to frequent and high amounts of rainfall. The area witnesses heavy morning dew and cold that leaves everything damp and muggy. In essence, the project location bears so many environmental and weather conditions that are detrimental to exposed and unpreserved music materials. These issues bring to the fore the current



Fig. 3. Nsukka environmental challenge showing termite infestation in the location of the recorded materials.

state of the recorded material and how the lack of adequate preservation can mean imminent damage to the items.

### **Current State of Preservation of the Recorded Material**

As presented in our previous articles on the folk music project, collections/recordings of music have been ongoing. Many of the collections are on audio cassette tapes while others are in audio CDs and audiovisual DVDs. There are approximately one hundred cassettes that contain more than 500 playing hours. The CDs and DVDs number about ninety-five, containing more than 600 playing hours. These tapes and CDs/DVDs are currently in private locations in personal offices and homes, specifically the garage (see figures 4 and 5). These are the current places available for storing the items.

At present, there is no provision for adequate storage and preservation of the recorded items. This situation exposes the recorded materials to environmental challenges that are likely to affect the recorded sound. It is quite demoralising to realise that keeping the recorded works in a very unfriendly environment is as good as not recording the music.

The recordings are currently exposed to heavy dust in Nsukka, particularly during the dry season. The materials are also affected by severe heat that affects the tapes and discs. Also, during the rainy season the materials absorb moisture that certainly affects them. These are the conditions that have persisted for as long as the project itself, casting doubt on the viability of the project if there is no enduring means of preserving the



Fig. 4. The recorded CDs/DVDs in their current location in the garage.



Fig. 5. CDs of the recordings in their current location in the garage.

recorded music. This situation seems beyond the control of the project facilitators due to the lack of the funds needed and the support to have a dedicated place for the recordings. Without a stable environment for keeping and preserving the recorded music, the question of what is next for the recordings is crucial. What happens to the tapes and CDs/DVDs over time? Would they be lost just like the music would be lost over time in the communities? Is it really worth the trouble engaging in the field recordings if they end up disappearing? The clear challenge of preservation could be the reason this issue has not attracted the attention of indigenous music researchers and consumers. It seems a herculean task to raise the funds required for the project. An underlying reason is the poor value placed on music by Nigerian society. There is generally a poor acceptance of music as a vocation and means of livelihood. According to Richard C. Okafor, 'the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, was the first institution in the country to elevate the musician to a more dignified status from the previously held prejudice that a musician was a person wasted in wine, women and music'<sup>16</sup>. Even with C. Iloegbunam's observation 'that another morale booster for the music industry is the image of the musicians which has changed from that of school drop-outs and never-do-wells to that of the serious minded and upwardly mobile, positive contributors to society's improvement', the impression remains unchanged<sup>17</sup>. As a school subject, Austin Emielu observed that

16. Richard C. Okafor, *Music in Nigerian Society* (Mgbowo: New Generation Books, 2005), 210.

17. C. Iloegbunam, 'Cover: The Music Makers', *NewsWatch* 18 (9 May 1989): 46–48, 51–52.

'music is an endangered subject in Nigerian schools; very few schools offer it at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. For example, out of about 280 secondary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria, as of 2002, only 18 schools offered music as a subject and only at the junior secondary level'<sup>18</sup>.

Emielu further states that music is almost non-existent at the senior secondary school level, as it is competing with many other subjects for acceptance. According to M. C. Anya-Njoku, 'the non-popularity of music as a school subject is quite evident, even without much investigation'<sup>19</sup>. Such an impression has persisted even in the face of visible achievements of practitioners in Nigeria and is an impediment to any serious financial support for music research, recording, and preservation. There seems to be a general acceptance that indigenous music need not be given so much attention since it is always there when needed. There is the belief that the indigenous people of Nigeria did not have to record their music to transfer it for following generations. These erroneous beliefs are quite misconceived. The fact remains that every generation loses a substantial part of the musical creations of the people in the transfer process to the next generation. Finding a mitigating process is only a means of keeping as much of such music as possible for the generations ahead.

This desire, however, is challenged by current devastating environmental conditions, resulting in so many frustrating issues that make it difficult to achieve the objectives. With the recorded materials dependence on suitable environmental conditions and space, the sustainability of the project can only be realised with the provision of space where the issues of weather and environmental instability can be controlled.

### **Issues Arising**

This article stresses the precarious nature of the project given the challenges of adequate preservation, location of the recorded materials, and weather and environmental issues when considering the delicate nature of the recorded works. Also raised is the challenge of funding that has not been accomplished to achieve the objective. The issue of sustainability of the project in respect to proper management and security of the materials also come to the fore. There is no doubt that the project is at a cross-road unless some critical intervention takes place. It is clear that many people or organisations, including government agencies, are not inclined to support projects relating to music in Nigeria. Many think poorly of indigenous music and are not motivated to provide funds for sustainable projects such as this. It is also clear that institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, the greatest beneficiaries of this project, are struggling with financial issues of their own. The story is the same with state and national councils for arts and culture that constantly need the support of the government to stay afloat. The slow pace of the project, even when seen to be significant, is a result of the lack of financial support. While we constantly struggle to not be deterred by the current situation or even overlook the perceived challenges, nagging questions remain: What is next in the

---

18. Austin Emielu, 'Struggles with Historical Identities and Cultural Renaissance', *Nsukka Journal of Musical Arts Research* 2 (2013): 201–213.

19. M. C. Anya-Njoku, 'Learning Theories and Music Education in Nigerian Secondary Schools: A Survey', *Nsukka Journal of Musical Arts Research* 1 (2012): 163–171.

continuation of the field recordings? What is next in securing a proper location for the recorded material? What is next with the proper preservation of the recorded materials? What is next for the possibility of digital conversion/transfer of the recorded materials? What is next with the initial projections made for the project? There seems to be no immediate answers. Without any foreseeable financial interventions, we can only hope that the recorded material survives or that someone or some agency may be moved in the future to acknowledge the importance of the project for the socio-cultural life of the people to support the project financially.

While we are not advocating or suggesting the possibility of the project providing a complete halt of the entire gamut of indigenous music creation of the people from disappearing, the intention is to, at least, put in place a mechanism to retain as many as possible from total disappearance. It is acknowledged that without a sustainable method of documentation in the indigenous culture, there are difficulties with keeping creative materials such as music. However, the contemporary need for preservation and utilisation of indigenous creative materials such as music by different stakeholders compels musicologists to take the necessary steps to preserve and transmit such music beyond their borders and immediate areas. There is a democratic right of the creative exponents and culture-owners to have this music as their contribution to the global body of music. It is an undeniable right of such creative exponents for stakeholders to recognise their contributions within the global creative space and to put them to cultural and heritage ends. It would be unfair for all other indigenous music types to be documented and utilised globally in various creative forms while denying such rights to any other music. To do this requires that the music be deliberately collected, preserved, and transmitted through new platforms. These are matters arising from the current situation of the project, needing the intervention of individuals, organisations, and cultural bodies across the globe.

## **Conclusion**

This article provides an overview of the current state of the Library of Folk Music of Nigeria project, highlighting the significant place that music occupies as an intangible cultural heritage. It outlines challenges faced by the project in securing adequate funding, the lack of adequate preservation, and the threatening issues of weather and environment on the recorded material. Also discussed were the harsh environmental and weather conditions at the project location that poses imminent danger to the recordings. The article raises the alarming issue of losing the recorded material to unstable environmental conditions, which is similar to not recording them at all. As such, from the point of view of the communities, they face extinction within indigenous societies. Support for the project was solicited owing to its significance to the music cultural heritage of the people.

## **English Abstract**

This article discusses the state of the music collected through the Folk Music of Nigeria Recording Project since 2005. It discusses the inevitable challenge of preservation of the delicate recorded musical items in an environment that may not be suitable for recorded sound. The recording project has focused on indigenous music of Nigeria and now faces the challenges of racing against time to collect the vanishing music materials from local communities, as well as finding appropriate ways to preserve the recorded sound in a suitable climatic environment. This article discusses the issues of the environmental condition of the collected recordings and the challenges

of the effects of weather and of preservation, as well as the long-term implications for the project. The article draws on the firsthand experience of the authors who are the project coordinators and secondary sources to reveal the impact of the environment arising from harsh climatic conditions and the lack of adequate preservation methods for recorded sound.

#### **French Abstract**

Cet article examine l'état de la musique collectée dans le cadre du Folk Music of Nigeria Recording Project depuis 2005. Il aborde l'inévitable défi que représente la préservation des enregistrements musicaux sur des supports fragiles dans un environnement qui n'est pas toujours adapté à ces enregistrements. Le projet s'est concentré sur la musique indigène du Nigeria et doit maintenant relever le défi d'une course contre la montre pour collecter les matériaux musicaux en voie de disparition auprès des communautés locales, ainsi que pour trouver des moyens appropriés de préservation du son enregistré dans un environnement climatique adéquat. Cet article aborde les questions de conditions ambiantes des enregistrements collectés et les défis liés aux effets du climat et de la conservation, ainsi que les implications à long terme pour le projet. L'article s'appuie sur l'expérience directe des auteurs, qui sont les coordinateurs du projet, et sur des sources secondaires pour révéler l'impact de cet environnement dû aux conditions climatiques difficiles et à l'absence de méthodes de conservation adéquates pour les enregistrements sonores.

#### **German Abstract**

Dieser Artikel befasst sich mit dem Zustand der seit 2005 bestehenden Musiksammlung des *Folk Music of Nigeria Recording Project*. Er diskutiert die unausweichliche Herausforderung der Konservierung empfindlicher Musikaufnahmen aus einer Umgebung, die eigentlich nicht für Tonaufnahmen geeignet ist. Das Aufnahmeprojekt hat sich auf die indigene Musik Nigerias konzentriert und steht nun in einem Wettlauf gegen die Zeit vor der Problemstellung, einerseits das verschwindende Musikmaterial lokaler Gemeinschaften zu sammeln und andererseits geeignete Wege zu finden, um die Aufnahmen in einer geeigneten klimatischen Umgebung zu bewahren. Wir diskutieren die Problematik der während der Aufnahmen herrschenden Umweltbedingungen, die aufgrund von Witterungseinflüssen bei der Konservierung bestehenden Herausforderungen sowie die langfristigen Auswirkungen auf das Projekt. Der Beitrag stützt sich auf die originären Erfahrungen der Autoren als Projektkoordinatoren und auf Sekundärquellen, die den Einfluss der harschen klimatischen Umweltbedingungen und den Mangel an angemessenen Konservierungsmethoden für Tonaufzeichnungen benennen.