

# CHAPTER 1

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

### 1. 1 Introduction

Igoru is a traditional music typology of the Okpe of Delta State, Nigeria. It is a satirical genre, which uses imagery to critique societal ills and expose any deviant member of the society, or ridicule leading members of another ensemble. In this way, it has played very significant roles in the 'functioning of the society' (Richard Okafor, 1990: 28). It is performed by adult men and women with a lead vocalist and is accompanied by *Ukiri* (short drum) *Azuzu* (manual fan) and *Abo* (clappers). There are Igoru ensembles of mixed sex as well as ensembles of only male or female.

Daniel Avorgbedor (1990: 219) argues that art does not only prescribe polite ways for saying impolite things, but provides ways for expressing the inexpressible and provides license for saying the abnormal and irritant truth, without fear or favour. He intimates two levels of *Ewe* songs (existing in a body of songs called *Halo*), which make direct reference to sexual organs and acts, as well as shower insults on specific persons among the audience, right in their

presence. He reports 'Factions engaging in the war of insults and music' (Avorgbedor, 2001: 17). He further explicates that:

There are two instances among the Ewe people where singing enables one to transcend social moral boundaries. The first instance involves song texts that are loaded with references to the genital or sexual acts. The other instance concerns a body of *halo* songs that contain insults directed at specific persons (p 218)... the song removes normal and immediate moral responsibilities from the singer, and consequently leaves the singer blameless because of the ontological ex-exemplification of the artistic phenomenon which is beyond functional analysis. The melody re-adjusts the tonal and rhythmic sequences of the words in a sensitive manner. The texts, full of sexual references, calumny, and insults, would have called into question the moral status of the singer if the words were spoken plainly rather than sung (p 220).

Meki Nzewi (1977: 376) however maintains that 'The type of licenses and distinguishing social irresponsibility allowable to expert musicians in some other societies is not the pattern in Igbo society'. Nwoga (1981: 76) implicitly discussed the performer (and audience relationship) in the town festival of Umueshi in Ideato Local Government Area of Imo State Nigeria. According to him, the young people who are in the performing group watch the behaviour of community members during the year, collect names and oral records of evildoers and set them to satirical music. On the Umueshi day, they employ an anthropomorphic being, 'spirit-manifest mis-termed masquerade' (Nzewi, 1997: 39) to present the satirical songs before the audience who later use the songs against the culprits as societal or social reprisal before the next festival. Perhaps, this is why Sam

Ekpe Akpabot (1986: 62) remarks that music is the common daily newspaper of the villagers.

Igoru in pre-colonial Nigeria functioned as a social tool for checking and maintaining socio-moral norms in the society. The themes centered on issues of good socio-moral balance, peaceful co-existence and patriotism. The Okpe hold it in very high esteem for its functionality, as “the songs maintain balance between the general good of the society whose ethos must be upheld and respect for law-abiding individual” (Ojaide, 2001: 45). Amukeye Okodide, a master Igoru performer, points to the fact that the Okpe society, including the musicians themselves, accepted the criticism that came their way through Igoru music, in as much as it helped to maintain the values and norms of the society and to shape the life style of the individual to conform to societal standards:

Igoru music means so much to us, because it helps us to maintain the socio-moral standards and values our forefathers handed over to us. When evil is perpetrated and it is not revealed or discovered; when grievous offences are committed and no one is able to point them to a strong or prominent personality-the culprit, or even one of the least (say boo to a goose), such malfeasances continue and we lose profitable cultural standards. Other Igoru musicians corrected my ills, as much as I corrected other members of the society through the music. Though the manner of its presentation, being public may hurt one’s feelings in a way, yet we saw it as part of the culture and as part of life to accept and uphold, provided the musician does not unnecessarily exaggerate to ridiculously pique the image of his subject (Amukeye Okodide, 2003: oral interview).

Nzewi (1977: 426) quotes his informant, Israel Anyahuru saying, 'Whoever is mentioned in a music performance-situation, let him not take offence for it is music that is being sung. The society would protect a musician from recriminations for what he said in music as long as what he said is true'. Igoru musical performance is actually one of the ways by which the Okpe philosophical thought on socio-moral, spiritual, economic life, etc, is expressed. Elders discourage trouble making a lot, yet would remark that "it is a good thing to have a troublesome person in one's family", because on a day of oppression or attack, his services would be needed for rescue. This can further be explained with our childhood experience. Among peers may exist one who assumes to be more powerful than others and would always attempt to oppress and infringe on the fundamental rights of the others. This may continue until one of the oppressed would summon courage to challenge him, resulting to a combat. The oppressed might beat the acclaimed powerful one and the moment this happens, his excesses are checked while other members of the peer group regain their freedom and rights.

Igoru didactic-satirical essence turned excessive in the late 1940s and 1950s leading to its diminution and transformation to a new genre. Before its transformation, Igoru themes focused on sex workers, hobos, drunkards, misers, gluttons, murderers, etc, and performers inserted real names of victims and pointed fingers at them if they were present at the scene of performance. This was assumed to be acceptable in the performance context meant to educate and correct ills; alas the severe criticism and absolute focus on sex trade however in latter period became offensive to the affected persons, since it aspersed their

reputation and honour. This made sorcerers to afflict lead vocalists with diverse ailments and the consequent transformation of Igoru. Although some kind of immunity for musicians exists in the society, there also exist limits to which this is taken as a license to abuse members of the society without propriety. The real reasons for the diminution and transformation of Igoru music are hypothetically examined and justified in this research.

There is need to examine why there was absolute focus and much fuss about sex trade in the early 1990s both in Lagos and at home in Okpe land. The fact, however, that the culture places premium on colleens' efforts in maintaining socio-moral sanctity, with emphasis on legitimate marriage already provides us a hypothesis for this investigation. We are aware also that certain music may transform into new typology at one time or the other, either as a result of new socio-economic development, new innovations in technology, or contact with new cultures. But there is need for this study to examine the factors that may enhance the continuity and sustainability of Igoru music in Okpe, for the purpose of keeping its original socio-cultural functions and compositional techniques.

## **1. 2 Statement of problem**

The Okpe are one of the numerous minority groups in Nigeria whose musical culture has received very little attention in terms of research and publication. Apart from the partial comment made by Emurobome Idolor (1991: 4) on some Igoru records released by Iboyi Tebu of Djakpa Elume, no detailed study has been carried out on it, despite the fact that its performance went beyond the confines of Okpeland to the cosmopolitan city of Lagos. Even the writing of Idolor

does not contain as much fact as can be relied upon, because field investigation reveals that Iboyi Tebu was not an Igoru musician, but a promoter who sponsored some recording of Igoru artistes.

Little or nothing is documented about its origin, stages of development, functions, forms, compositional techniques as well as performance practice and even its exponents. Many records released by a few artistes are no longer available today and innumerable Igoru songs have been forgotten, though some community-folk still sing a number of them in new contexts such as working hours in the farm. There is therefore an urgent need for a documentary research to give some insight into its meaning, origin, performance practice, functions, forms and techniques, in order to further our knowledge of the genre.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study correspond with the common goals of African musicology, which are scholarly and humanistic as stated by Kwabena Nketia (1998: 14). The primary objective of the study is to investigate and document Igoru music of the Okpe, thereby contribute to the growing knowledge of music in Nigeria, Africa and the entire world. Specifically, the study will seek knowledge and understanding of the Okpe person as a music maker and user; Igoru music as a language or means of communication and an object of aesthetic interest in culture. Igoru literally means gold and connotes what is most precious and valued; the following questions readily come to mind: 'why is this music genre named Igoru? Is it as precious as gold to the Okpe people? Is it considered so in terms of its function, style, form, performance practice or anything else? Has it

any strong socio-musical interest that warranted its spread to some parts of Urhobo and Yoruba land? This research attempts to answer these questions in order to further our knowledge and understanding of the music type.

It examines its origin and development as well as its functions in the society and the compositional techniques. One principal objective of the study agrees with Keith Swanwick's (1988: 7) argument that 'theories are not the opposite of practice but its basis'. The study therefore attempts to identify and examine the traditional philosophy, theory and principles of the Okpe that form basis for poetic and musical resource in Igoru performances and compositions. The study investigates the value of Igoru music in Okpe community and discusses its usefulness as a medium of enlightenment and an instrument for fighting vices. It also highlights the implication of abuse in the use of satirical music, even when the initial intention of its uses is to educate and correct socio-moral vice. It critically views its functional vitality and satirical validity in modern Okpe society against the background of what it was, what it is and how it might end. This will no doubt form basis for further argument whether music in modern society should capitalize on 'permissible satire' to abuse people excessively or not. This objective is particularly important, because many musicians have suffered as a result of abuse in the use of satirical music in the society and results from this research might enhance our orientation as to how music can be used to foster development than to cause chaos.

Nzewi (1998: 456) argues that:

To introduce Africans to modern music learning and appreciation of European music thoughts, contents, practices and pedagogy is a radical, de-culturating process which continues to produce the crises of cultural inferiority, mental inadequacy, and pervasive, perverse cultural-human identity characterizing the modern African person in modern social, political, educational and cultural pursuits.

We have studied Western music so much that it influences our modern compositions than our traditional music does. This study aims to unfold the compositional resources and techniques of Igoru music for further exploitation in modern compositions. As Inge Mari'Burger (1987: 56) in her doctoral thesis observes that Khabi Mngoma's application of his knowledge of Zulu traditional music to his choral music composition and performance practice yielded great success, we aim to collect and study a good number of Igoru songs and further use its knowledge for further musical creativity. In consonance with this objective, Kenichi Tsukada (2002: 27) in retrospection unfolds the kind of fulfillment a scholar could have knowing about his culture:

My background was modern Western music, with little knowledge of Japanese musical traditions. As an undergraduate student of musicology at Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music..., I was particularly interested in the philosophy and aesthetics of music under the strong influence of German tradition...Fumio Koizumio, then a professor at Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music, was without doubt the founder of ethnomusicology in Japan...His course in ethnomusicology was extremely appealing, since it included vivid descriptions, based on his own fieldwork, of various musical cultures...What I learned from this... was the importance of... the study of music, of



a researcher's own experience in the field and in performance...As a Japanese, I felt irrational to be ignorant of my own musical traditions, especially because I considered myself an ethnomusicologist.

#### **1.4 Scope of the study**

Igoru music in this study samples performing groups in eight out of fifteen divisions that make up Okpe. These include Ẹlume, Ọkọkporo, Mẹreje, Sapele, Ighwresa, Orerokpe, Amwokpe and Ugolo. For the avoidance of doubt it is important to state that several documents have misrepresented these divisions as communities, even to the time of this writing. In this study, however, we examine the Okpe word *ovberie*, meaning division, often used by elders to refer to this socio-political grouping. A division in Okpe consist several towns and villages, up to fifteen, more or less. There is relative homogeneity in the cultural belief, and shared customs including music and language with little differences amongst the Okpe people in these divisions. This makes it quite safe to generalize our argument in this study on the entire Okpe people.

The study surveys the sociological and religious beliefs and general background of the Okpe people, in order to gain insight into the cultural-musical context and rationalizations that inform the elements of music making in the land. It also examines the various concepts and implications of Igoru music from primordial times up to the year 2004. It investigates the factors that propelled its propagation, change, retention, and transfusion from Okpeland to Yorubaland (as practiced by the Okpe in Lagos). The scope includes an in-depth investigation of the specific factors that led to its decline and transformation to *Ighopha*. It further

includes transcription of text, voice and instrumental parts, followed by theoretical analysis and discourse.

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

There is practically no literature on Igoru music, even though some literatures exist on Okpe music generally. As such this study is a pioneering work, which will contribute in-depth knowledge about Igoru music. In contemporary Nigeria, scholarly research interest and debate had continued to focus attention on peace, conflict management and resolution, due to the numerous community, ethnic, religious and social-political imbroglios that in recent times had occurred in Warri, Ugbukurusu, Ife, Kano, Kaduna, etc. This development, of course, has made some scholars in history to create a new unit of conflict and management studies at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan Nigeria. Since the use of abusive music to critique leaders and subjects, as is evident in the socio-political scene, has turned problematic, understanding its implications as unveiled in this study is significant. John Kaemmer (1993: 1) argues that:

ALTHOUGH IT HAS PROBABLY NEVER [capital letters in original] occurred to most people that music can be dangerous, it is sometimes viewed that way for several reasons. Modern parents in the 1990s are concerned about the messages contained in the song lyrics of rock groups, fearing that listening to such ideas through a powerful medium like music will have a negative effect upon the value system and behaviour of their children... The Navajo people of the American Southwest consider the danger in music to be due to its supernatural power.

The argument of Kaemmer, though is about the lyrical content that might corrupt young listeners, it is not the intention of this research to query that concern. It is our intention however to examine the danger of music from a different perspective; the perspective of its use to critique leaders and subjects in society, as it may attract reactions since there is hardly anyone who is ready to listen to criticism, no matter how constructive it seems. This study highlights some of the reasons why satirical music is becoming a problem in modern society like Okpe. It also highlights how discreet use of constructive musical language can sustain societal values. Nwoga (1985; 197) observes that 'culture cannot be preserved; it can only be recreated'. This study will expose musicians and scholars to the elements of Igoru music, which could be useful in creating modern music typologies and in teaching African music composition in schools and tertiary institutions.

### **1.6 Methodology**

This study adopts a multi-disciplinary approach, in that we attempt to seek comprehensive understanding of Igoru music by investigating the musical, religious, historical, sociological, anthropological, philosophical, linguistic, oral performance and communication arts aspects of the Okpe culture. Maundu (1995:32) suggests the following outline for any meaningful research work and this is found useful in this study:

- Statement of research goals and objectives
- Setting the area of operation and the scope of study
- Formulation of research questions and procedure for organization and analysis of data.

- Identifying the resource persons to interview
- Informing and sensitizing the informants
- Procuring and putting the required personnel and equipment in place.

Curt Sachs (1962: 45) divided ethno-musicological research work into two: Field work and Deskwork, while Reck, Slobin and Titon (1992: 18-19) preceded the former with library-work. The latter authors' segmentation of research work into three is worth accepting, but should library work actually come before fieldwork in an ethnographic study, particularly in an oral/unwritten culture? Gerhard Kubik (2002: 113) remarked:

As in my European travel, I did not have a preconceived program but relied on chance as my guide. Before my departure, I had read nothing about the African countries that I would visit; I said that reading would only make me prejudiced (Kubik, 2002: 113).

The researcher believes in observations in much the way the Okpe position is, as the best keys to understanding. Prior information and presupposition could create impressions that may not in the end be true. There is always the possibility of differences in the ways people see things; thus two may carry out enquiry on an object in the same field at same time, yet each could report different accounts. Although pre-field experience could sharpen the focus of a researcher, it is the field survey that determines the researchability of the subject matter and ensures that one is not given false impression from literatures to bias his mind and mislead his investigation. It is in this view that we consider in this study that

library work is a section that should go hand in hand with deskwork after field investigation.

Babchuck (1962: 6) refers to four classes of observers stated by Gold (1958), which include complete participant, complete observer, participant-as-observer, and observer-as-participant. He categorized these into two – participant observer and participant-as-observer. According to him, the former is an observer who formally joins the group(s) he studies and plays only official roles assigned to him, because his research aims are unknown to his subjects; while the latter is one who is recognized, invited or permitted to participate in the group as a researcher. Since the former approach could be disadvantageous to ethnomusicological research, in that the researcher may not feel free asking questions about the things he/she needs to know outside his unit of operation, the participant-as-observer approach is adopted in this study.

Reck, Slobin and Titon (1992: 444) argue that although we may travel to far away places to meet, see and relate with unfamiliar things and people, or search for marvelous treasures, 'the pot of gold is buried in one's own backyard'. They encourage researchers to seek out nearby musical cultures, which they can observe, understand and document, in order to contribute to the body of knowledge on musical activities generally. They offer counsel that during contact with the research subjects in the field, the researcher should advance research reasons and aims to them; observe protocols in the local system, avoid assuming the role of an expert; consider individual's differences and rights; take note or speak into tapes as activities may be changing; seek subjects' knowledge and

permission to start the interview, observation, recording, photographing; give them money, copies of photographs, tapes and finished report if demanded and poise as culture and music advocate who would help the music under study to flourish.

The researcher finds the above guide and the approach of purpose definition useful in this study. Explanation to the subjects that the University required the documentation, promotion and preservation of their musical culture indeed enhanced co-operation in the field. Agawu puts forth an argument that:

Not every writer is anxious about establishing his or her fieldwork credentials. After an initial visit in 1963, Simha Arom later spent four years in the Central Africa Republic, returning there subsequently. You would have to look hard, however, to find traces of anxiety about fieldwork anywhere in his publications. Fieldwork for him was a means to an end, and so emphasis was put on the end and not the means. And A. M. Jones, who spent over two decades in Zambia, does not introduce his magnum opus, *Studies in African Music*, by claiming near-authenticity based on length of time spent in the field. Thematizations of fieldwork are generally not pronounced in the work of African scholars. Nketia, Nzewi, Euba, Fiagbedzi, and Mensah rarely fret about doing time in the field. Anxiety over fieldwork therefore seems to be an outsider's problem (Agawu: 44).

For the purpose of this study, however, it is necessary to state a few experiences as evidence of field research. It should be noted that this is only a matter of necessity and not to justify our efforts. At the early stage of this study, we acquired and hired some recording and photographic materials such as portable

tape recorder; video recorder and photo camera and made several contact with resource persons in the various field locations. We found age mates quite approachable and used them as link to reach elderly Igoru musicians in the towns and villages. In most cases, they gave us directions and introduced us. At Ughwoton, for instance, Paul Eyagha, an Okpe Disco musician played this role significantly. All the times we visited the Ughwoton field, Paul hosted us for several hours and invited the Igoru musicians for interviews and performances. The use of key-informant interview, in-depth interview, focus group discussion, and unstructured research questions was adopted. A few Igoru records and tapes available in Record Stores were accessed. Since only two short-play records could be found in the record stores, we made special arrangements with some Igoru musicians to observe and record live performances for the purpose of this study. Ruth Stone (2002: 60) shares her field experiences as follows:

Of all the tools I used, field notes are the most basic and are indispensable. To record observations, recollections, and questions, I need no more than a notebook and a pen or pencil... Typically, ethnomusicologists share with their colleagues, and the larger public, only a very small portion of their field notes—a tip of the iceberg... I worked with a team of scholars, programmers, instructional developers, and graduate student assistants. One day I brought in some of these notes to help them better understand my conclusions and the theme of the project as I envisioned it. The team members found the notes very revealing and encouraged me to include them in the final product. Since space was not the issue that it is in conventional typesetting by a compositor, I was free to add them.

The use of field notes was minimal during our field investigation. This is so because of the present day advancement in technology and the approach of self-

reliance, where the researcher handles the recording device and photo camera to cover performances, in order to focus on major aspects of interest within the music-event.

We encountered some difficulty in the field as did Kofi Agawu (2003: 34). Agawu regards such experience as one of the nuisances of scholarly research work in Africa, stating that there is often assumption that the researcher might make much wealth out of the exercise and had to pay negotiated fees to obtain information. He argues as follows:

On a much similar scale are the Archives of Recorded sound at the Institute of African Studies, Legon, Ghana. This valuable resource, made up of field recordings dating back to the 1950s, as well as early recordings of popular music, existed in Legon for a number of years, underused to be sure, until Wolfgang Bender and his team managed to copy the entire collection and have it deposited at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany. Certainly working in Mainz is from the point of view of creature comforts and accessibility easier than working at Legon, where the archivist may not be seen for days, where the playback equipment, although visibly displayed, does not work, and where a request for a copy of this or that recording may be greeted by the suspicion that the scholar is going to make money with it. (How strange that the archivist and his staff have not sought to make money with these recordings all these years).

In our study, however, we expect Igoru musicians to benefit from researchers as much as possible, depending on the available resources. And while we rewarded the musicians to the limits of our economic power, we explained that the purpose



of this research is not commercial-oriented. This was necessary to ensure that this expectation and demand for negotiated fees from researchers does not pose much limitation for this study.

Ruth Stone (2002: 61) argues that song texts may be difficult to hear correctly from live or recorded performances:

Transcription and translation reveal rich use of language to express affect, communicate protest, and pass on moral mandates. But even as a fluent speaker of Kpelle, I have found that this work can be rough going at times. Ideally, I try to work initially with a research assistant to write down the text. Then we review the text, if at all possible, with the performers, correcting mishearings.

After every interview and discussion session with individuals and groups, we listened to the playback to determine issues that needed further clarification. Since the researcher was born and bread up in Ogiedi Elume, an Okpe village, the knowledge of the Okpe language and culture was very useful to the understanding of Igoru poetry. We found in the study that Igoru musicians have very good diction in their performances and this made transcriptions and understanding of text a bit easy. We visited the Libraries of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, the Delta State University, Abraka in Nigeria and the University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa, as well as the National museum center, Onikan Lagos, Nigeria to review existing literature around the topic from books, journals, newspapers, magazines, reports and theses, while analysis and discussion of results were in progress.

### **1.7 Theoretical framework**

Bruno Nettl (1975: 14-16) presents four schools of analytical models for gaining insight into musical structures as follows:

- Linguistic models: These treat the linguistics and basic transformational grammar of music
- Cantometrics, which focus on performance practice such as parameters of the use of voice and the interrelationships between musicians and ensemble members, with less emphasis on relationship between tones and scales, which have received much analysis.
- Specific method, which deals with specific style of classification for each culture based on its own perception and musical characteristics.
- Culture's own cognitive map, which considers recognized views of the culture in its classification, social function and other behaviour.

Ernest Brown (1992: 118) examines the relationship between African and African American musics by discussing two analytical models:

- The family resemblance models, which deal with the features that are common to two or more places and peoples which might not have been borrowed from one another.
- The diffusionist models, which deal with, the analysis of elements that have been transmitted from a specific source into another and with time diffused within the new location.

Kofi Agawu (2003: xvii) argues that postcolonial theory:

is committed to explicit thematization and theorization of the experiences of people whose identities are inflected by the metropolitan habits exported to Africa through British, French, Belgian, and Portuguese colonialism...encourages a new self-awareness, rewards the eagerness to lay bare the situatedness and precariousness of various frames of knowledge construction, and takes particular pleasure in relativizing and discentering European intellectual hegemony.

Contemporary consciousness abound, probably not with all African musicologists yet, in various attempts made by researchers to investigate African music as it is in culture; propounding theories according to the conceptualization, contextualization and thematization of the cultures under study. Some of these models are necessary to x-ray true cultural phenomena, particularly as some early writings have presented analysis of African music in erroneous terminologies (given more attention in chapter two) and theoretical construct. Basically, linguistic model and culture's own cognitive map models form the theoretical framework adopted for this study.

### **1.8 Literature review**

The commonest terms often seem to be the most difficult concepts to define, thus had there been scholarly argument on what music could be considered traditional or popular music. The same problem arises in our discussion of Igoru

music, whether to refer to it as traditional or popular music of the Okpe. David Dachs (1968: 23) argues that playing of instruments, singing of songs, composing original songs, experimenting with new sounds, use of electronic equipment and shrewd entrepreneurship are common characteristics of (all) vocal popular music. John Blacking (1981: 9) purports that “There is good evidence that for over ninety-nine per cent of human history, and for ninety-seven per cent of the time since the emergence of our own species (*homo sapiens sapiens*) approximately 70,000 years ago, all music was popular, in so far as it was shared and enjoyed by all members of a society”. Mosunmola Omibiyi (1975: 45) defines popular music as ‘purposefully commercial and entertainment music’, widely accepted and commonly loved by the masses. Ashenafi Kebede (1982: 12), in his discussion of music in North Africa, argues that:

Traditional music is ordinarily performed by the common people, not by the professionally trained [literary] musicians; its repertory consists of material that has been passed down through the generations by means of oral tradition, by word of mouth.

He purports that popular or contemporary music is urban music, also described as neo-traditional or acculturated music, blending both interethnic and international styles, found in all urban localities of contemporary societies. The repertory does not consist of only songs handed down from past generations, but includes songs composed by men and women of the contemporary society. Igoru music is used for community entertainment and commercial purposes. It is performed both in the villages and in urban centres. Its instruments do not however include electronic equipment. It is performed essentially by the Okpe,

even when it was practiced in Lagos [Yoruba land]. Since it does not have elements of international or inter-ethnic musical characteristics, apart from the use of words and expressions imported from neighbouring ethnic groups, we consider Igoru music as Okpe traditional music. In consonance with Blacking's definition, it is a popularly known traditional music typology of the Okpe.

Ruth Stone (2002: 58) argues that a practical music-situation is an "Event as object" of ethnomusicological research study. Sharing her experience, she remarks: 'Throughout my career, I have focused my research on the musical event. Here I have found a conceptual place where sound and behaviour are created, appreciated, and critically evaluated. There is great scope for study within this focus'. We have argued that only few Igoru records are available, but live performances as practical music events formed the principal basis for this study and presented real conceptual experiences. Nissio Fiagbedzi (1989: 47, 49) argues the theory and philosophy of theory in ethnomusicology, stating that:

Theory may be conceptualized as an abstractive view in explanation of, and not merely descriptive of, a phenomenon. As such, theory takes cognizance of bare facts from which it differs and for which it accounts by relating them in a way that reveals the nature or character of that which it is an explanation of. Usually theory allows for further articulation, elaboration, modification, or specification (p47).

...the philosophy of theory in ethnomusicology, may be isolated and identified with the rigorous and systematic elaboration of concepts and propositions in terms of which all manner of theory and verbalization concerning music and musical experience are formulated including the

perspective(s) from which ethnomusicological explanation is made (p 49).

Theories are often derivatives of experiences that result from practical situations and philosophical explanations as well as scientific enquiry. To evaluate and offer explanations on the theories of Igoru music and its functions, we examined the philosophical concepts and thought patterns of the Okpe as they relate to the music practice. Akpabot (1986: 69) argues that an African musician, first and foremost, is a poet who unlike the Western poet does not write for different performers, but has his poems tied to special occasions where he reaches an audience:

His output can be seen as a commentary on life styles; praising, protesting and cursing human foibles and fads, reminiscing on the exploits of national heroes; invoking the might of ancestral gods; imparting knowledge; arousing emotions and making suggestion for the common good (Akpabot, 1986; 69).

In our study, Igoru music presents very rich cultural heritage in poetry and sounds. The activities and functions of Igoru musicians are seen as those of poets, journalists and philosophers in the Okpe culture. As a performing artiste/poet, the musicians are normally the first to perform their compositions, thereafter; any members of the society could perform them anywhere. It should be noted that it is not a matter of rule that the composer must be the first to perform his music. In an ensemble situation, if any other member of the group is found to have a more sonorous voice than the composer, or a wider voice range, he/she could be assigned to lead the song at performances. We find an example

of this in the Egboto Isini ensemble records. Ethnographic data from the field informs us that Gabriel Peru Edeyiometa is the leader of the group who also is one of the composers. But the songs are all led by a female member of the group while Peru provides the harmony part below. The nature of team work in Igoru music encourages this practice. Nzewi (1977: 428) presents an argument on the copyright nature of music in traditional society in his study of *Ukom* music and quotes his informant, a practitioner as follows:

If another group picks my tune or song and I hear them playing it, I will say to myself. 'These people are playing my music'. It will make me happy. But when next I play it, I will 'recompose it so that it will sound different'... Thus I make my style of playing it something fresh. There is no shame or offence about playing some one else's original composition. They do not even have to acknowledge me if I come around to where they are playing it. However, if Israel and I are playing our own original composition on *Ukom* 'which is very sweet'... and we see another *Ukom* player around we could deliberately play the music in a way that will puzzle him so that he would not grasp it at all. And the way we do it is this: We introduce the 'pleasant' tune, and use a common tune to develop it, bring it in again, and bring in a common tune again for further development and so on. We will thus confuse whoever is trying to grasp it. When Israel and I were playing *Ukom* it was very important to us that we were on top (Nzewi 1977: 428).

In traditional Okpe society, music copyright belongs to the community as we have argued elsewhere in this study. Any singer is free to perform any song(s) composed by any Igoru musician. David Harnish (2005: 5 & 6) discusses issues of change in traditional observances such as those arising from influences of religion and government in the *Lingsar* festival of Lombok, Indonesia and argues

that 'Due to shifting religious orientation, new performers among the *Sasak* have sometimes been hard to find. Musical priorities for both groups have been shuffled as the parties have redefined themselves over the last twenty years, thus clearly indicating individual agency in the reconstruction of culture'. Chernoff (1979: 37) shares his research experiences in Ghana and argues that music helps to objectify the philosophical, religious and moral systems of the society. He intimates that upon his introduction as a researcher, the priest was asked to inquire of the deities whether his heart was pure or not. He was perplexed as the divination slats were turning upward, indicating that he was a man with pure heart, who would not hurt any man. After this experience that made the people receive him wholeheartedly and hospitably, he concludes as follows:

Africans use music and the other arts to articulate and objectify their philosophical and moral systems, systems which they do not abstract but which they build into the music-making situation itself, systems which we can understand if we make an effort. African music is indeed different from what we ordinarily consider music to be, and as we examine the way African music becomes a focus for values as it mediates the life of a community, we will find that our assumptions about tribal communities are similarly challenged. Our history teaches us to consider the relationship of individual identity and communal unity to be a matter of common faith and common feelings, and we may be surprised to discover different conceptions concerning the nature of character and individuality, understanding and communication, participation and group involvement, and freedom and discipline.

Igoru music has indeed played a lot of roles in objectifying and unifying the philosophy and religious tenets of the Okpẹ. The musicians queried some



practices that came with new faith such as the Christian religion and projected the beliefs of the people. Healthy community life is of primary concern to the Igoru musicians, since life experiences are shared in the society. In some of the songs, the musicians participate in counseling and warning parents, children and wards against practices that could lead to bitter experiences, so that life could become more pleasant and meaningful in the community.

Elizabeth Oehrle and Lawrence Emeka (2003: 39, 40) argue the concept of African music making in relation to shared experiences as follows:

Notions of music making do not exist in a vacuum. They evolve from basic thought patterns of the culture from which they come... Thought processes out of Africa stem from the basic idea of *Ubuntu*: 'A person is a person by virtue of other people...' the concept of *Ubuntu* fosters the development of communal spirit (p 39)

Music is among the most common and most widely available cultural expressions in Africa, where its cultural definition includes organized sound, language arts, movement, mood and intercourse or sharing. Every element of this phenomenon is made to address the emotions and the personality of the indigenes of the host culture. The sound – plaintive or martial, lyrical, evocative or expressive, dramatic, soothing or inciting, coy or commanding – stirs the moods, expresses identity and talks the language of the souls (p 40).

An Okpe maxim is normally expressed that “*eye se aye rhe, ihworho*”; ‘go and invite them, it is people’. This means that whenever there is trouble or serious problem, there would be need to invite someone to help. And in such situations, when there is a cry to invite helpers or rescue team, it is the people around that

are to be invited. Igoru musicians believe that at one time or the other, members of the society would need one another to celebrate or to mourn with; to give assistance to or to receive help and care from. This is the reason why they are so concerned about the wellbeing of community members, particularly dwelling on issues that would enhance living in good health. Kebede (1982: 3 & 4) argues that:

Music, like language, is culturally patterned sound...Imagination and active listening will be required in order to understand and appreciate a few of the diverse musical languages of non-European cultures. A good listener is always an informed one. Cultural information and technical knowledge advance a better understanding of the feeling and significance conveyed by the sound of music. Active listening requires discipline and involvement...The greater our knowledge and involvement, the higher our awareness and the intensity of our experience...Music provides an excellent means for the presentation of words.

Igoru music presents a wealth of knowledge and stimulates learning experiences among its audiences. It is often well worded in proverbs, idioms, epigrams, etc, so that audiences are always given a food for thought. The composers also make use of parables to stimulate audiences' imagination in acquiring deductive meanings from the performance communication. Hugh Tracey (1970: 8) argues that the understanding of African music comes from our understanding of the setting from which the songs spring:

There is no doubt that our enjoyment of African music is greatly enhanced when we know what the songs are about and the setting from which they spring. It is almost impossible for foreigners to pick up the words of an African song as it is sung. I have not yet met one who could. We

have to get the singers to repeat the words to us at dictation speed and then ask them to sing the song over again. It is then much easier to follow. But beginners must be warned that there is a strict routine to be adhered to in this operation or else whole lines will be left out and lyrically important repeats omitted. The singers themselves often have difficulty in remembering exactly what they *do* sing unless they hum the song over to themselves from the beginning and find out just what the words were. But this is not uncommon: we do the same ourselves. It takes time and patience to be certain you have the poetry down correctly (Tracey 1970: 8).

The knowledge of the Okpe cultural value systems provides us the understanding to interpret Igoru songs and deduce full meanings from the communication experience. We observe in this study that Igoru musicians have very good memory of their songs. During our field investigation at Ughwoton, for instance, at the time to revalidate our data, the leader of the Igoru ensemble, Amukeye Okodide, could just easily pick up the poems and fix the words line by line without singing the songs over again nor humming them. Although she is not literate, there was evidence that she had all the poems in her memory as well as the background information to the songs. Tracey (1970: 4) further argues on the functions of the Chopi musicians that:

One can well imagine the forcefulness of the reprimand conveyed to a wrongdoer when he finds his misdeeds sung about by thirty to forty strapping young men before all the people of the village, or the blow to the pride of an everweening petty official who has to grin and bear it while the young men jeer to music at his pretentiousness. What better sanction could be brought to bear upon those who outrage the ethics of the community than to know that the

poets will have you pilloried in next composition. No law of libel would protect you from the condemnation conveyed by those concerted voices of the whole village set to full orchestra and danced in public for all to revel in.

Daniel Agbese (1989: 4) argues that 'music has always been the most visible attempt employed by ourselves to listen to ourselves. The Nigerian who would not drop whatever he is doing to rush to the village square or the stadium to watch drumming and dancing is not yet born'. Chernoff (1979:35, 36) reports the views of his Ghanaian interviewees that Ibrahim Abdulai said 'Music is something which does not conceal things about us, and so it adds to us' while others simply said, 'Music is essential to our [lives]' and that a village, which has no music or musicians, is said to be dead and is not a place where man can live. Igoru music in Okpe is a powerful medium of communication, by which human actions and reactions are expressed one to another. It provides a forum to mirror the society so that members could understand things better and learn more about life.

Kubik (1987: 51) intimates us that *Chinamwali* girls' initiation creates 'horror pictures' before the initiate as soon as she experiences her first menstruation: that she had 'killed her mother' and must undergo the initiation process. She had to be taken into an initiation hut, in a secluded place; threatened not to have contact with any male within the period, otherwise 'her mother would die'. This fear of losing her mother is created in her mind so that she would submit to the rules of the initiation rites:

Chinamwali teaches morality and expresses opposition to promiscuity. This is often not understood by the casual

observer. Through the use of colorful language, including the use of horrifying, descriptive texts, restraints are built into the psyche of the young individual (Kubik, 1987; 52).

In our study, we observe that Igoru music focuses much on the teaching of morality and building restraints into the psyche of the public as an indigenous psychological strategy to ensure that societal ethics and healthy living are kept. We have discussed this in chapter seven. Hester and Scowen (1999: 7), while quoting from the book *Music and the Mind*, draw a contrast between the effects of hearing and seeing as follows:

There is a closer relation between hearing and emotional arousal than there is between seeing and emotional arousal. Seeing a wounded animal or suffering person who is silent may produce little emotional response in the observer. But once they start to scream, the onlooker is usually powerfully moved (Hester and Scowen, 1999; 7).

Igoru music being more of a stage art stimulates both active and participatory listening. We have stated elsewhere in this study that the musicians point fingers at the members of the public whose wanton attitudes they critique, if they were present among the audience. This style of presentation heightens the sense of seeing and listening that together stimulates loud responses from the audience. The effect of this preponderates over the stimulus–response produced by the effect of listening to recorded music. Hugh Tracey (1970: 3), in his discourse on Chopi musicians, remarks:

High good humour is a very prominent feature of most of their poems. Sly digs at the pompous, outspoken condemnation of those who neglect their duties, protests

against the cruel and overbearing, outcries directed against social injustices as well as philosophy in the face of difficulties, are all to be found in our own dance songs and shared through their music and dancing.

Sam Ekpe Akpabot (1975; 98), discussing Mbopo music of the Ibibio puberty initiation ceremony for those about to wed, argues that if in the cause of the initiation period, when the colleen is kept in the 'fattening room' she became pregnant, the women folk make songs of insult and abuse to discredit and banish her. He adds that the music of the Ebre society maintains a 'continuity of virtuous living from puberty to old age' and exerts social control by 'exposing thieves and women of easy virtue to ridicule'. It is not our intention in this discourse to argue whether or not the term 'fattening room' suggests that the purpose of keeping the girl in the hut for instructions is to enable her gain weight. Our concern is rather about the manner Igoru music is used to critique, ridicule and discredit wrong doers in the society. We have argued in chapter seven that this approach is to enable the subjects and other members of the society to develop better attitude.

J. P. Martin (1995: 27) argues the empiricist theory that 'we understand music because its meaning is inherent in it, and so through our aural perception it is communicated to us' and that 'meaning of objects resides not in their ability to excite our senses but in the nature of the means which we have to perceive them'. He further reinvents Williams' (1978: 28) views that 'the truth about the natural world is hidden...in form of a mathematical structure which underlies sensible appearances...uncovered by systematic scientific enquiry and the use of the rational intellect'. Simon Akindes (2002: 86) intimates on how musicians

respond to issues of nationalistic conflict in identity and genealogy, through their creative artistic works:

In his track *Conflict a l'Quest* (Conflict in the West) released in early December 1999 on his album *Jahsso* (House of God) Fadal Day mentioned the conflict which has historically opposed the Bete and the Baule. The Guere and the Baule also clashed in the late 1990s. The song implores them not to fight and not to listen to politicians (Simon Akindes 2002: 90).

On his CD *Nationalite* (Nationality), Tiken Jah Fakoly traces the migration paths of various ethnic groups, and identifies the period when they settled in the present territory of Cote d'Ivoire. Being himself a Dyula from the northern town of Odiene, and from a group generally accused of being recent foreign immigrants, he responded to the historical distortions that give some Ivorians of Akan descent the right to believe that they are more Ivorian than others (Simon Akindes 2002: 94).

Igoru songs present a body of text that contains much information about the Okpe. They embody chronological facts and references which need little explanations to understand – an evidence of the significance of song texts. We have discussed details of this in chapter seven. Franklin Larey (2003: viii) argues that:

Throughout the world community of musicians, artists, educators, and all who find themselves grappling with the effects of challenging economic times, the question of music's relevance in our lives brings pause. Is music a luxury or a necessity? The task of attempting to answer this question is necessarily a difficult one, because beneath its deceptively simple formulation lie hidden many of the dilemmas facing our world: among them all the issues of

cultural identity, of north versus south, of east versus west, and of first world versus third (Franklin Larey 2003: viii).

We found in this study that Igoru music is an instrument of cultural identity. The musicians and the people of Okpe see it as a mark of ethnic distinction; thus it was selected by the Okpe in Lagos as a musical performance that truly represents the culture. We have discussed details of this in chapters four and seven. Blacking (1967: 22) discusses some moments and rewards of music making in Venda as follows:

Communal music is never performed without some kind of reward, either to the performers or to the organizers, so that in a lean year none but the more important items are played. If the country side resounds with music, especially at night when it is cool, it is a sign of good times. Venda communal music is not a substitute for happiness, but an expression of it... Above all, families who are related by marriage send each other gifts of beer, which generally give rise to singing and dancing: in the course of this, the in-laws sing a series of songs that express the solidarity and cleavages within the two families, and allow for friendly criticism. Even a ruler must take in good part criticism that is expressed in music (Blacking 1967: 22).

Igoru music provides entertainment to the public who in turn reward the musicians in different forms. Although the music criticizes deviant behaviours of some members of the public, amid this, it elevates and exhilarates the spirits of the audiences, creating and sustaining amusement. Ajirire and Alabi (1990: 23) intimate us of the acknowledgement given to Juju musicians by emotionally exhilarated fans in Yorubaland. They assert that the fans 'plaster the forehead of the performing musician with wads and wads of currency notes tagged spraying'



which in turn form the major reward of the musician than sales of recorded music. Ronnie Graham (1992: 18), discussing public appreciation of music and the artiste's rewards argues that:

Given the powers of the pirates, most modern Nigerian musicians have come to rely on live shows for income, not through gate fees but through the custom of "spraying" whereby a rich individual is mentioned in song and in return "sprays" the forehead of the musician with as much money as status demands.

In Igoru music, as in Okpe culture generally, the term "*oghwa*" means reward and its use is in the similitude of the term 'spray' employed by the authors above. It should be noted that the word has a homonym spelt same way, but pronounced in different intonations. The homonym means house and does not fall into the context of this discourse. The practice of *oghwa* [open reward in appreciation of good performance] is not stimulated by, or based on praise singing of prominent personalities in Igoru music. Since the music could openly criticize ill behaviours and commend worthy attitudes, whichever way it goes, it is the content of amusement contained in it that stimulates this kind of reward from the audience. It is not only the affluent that participate in rewarding Igoru performers in this manner, even the "poor" do the same since in the time past the musicians accepted anything that had value [cigarette, kola nuts, money, etc].

Meki (1977: 429) reports the views and claims of his informant concerning musicians' immunity as follows:

All musicians are 'sacrosant' [sacrosanct] ...People do not usually harass 'musicians'... whether at home or in another

land. If a musician is guilty of offending anybody his hosts would normally plead on his behalf.

A singer is not bound by any laws with respect to what he sings. If you tell a thief that he is a thief, or point out a poisoner, mentioning the occasion he did so, those are things you said in your music... Even if you expose a leader about a wrong thing he has done he would not do anything (to you). What cannot be said in ordinary conversation could be said or exposed in a song situation. There is a saying we have which goes as follows:

'Whoever is mentioned in a music performance-situation, let him not take offence for it is music that is being sung'. The society would protect a musician from recriminations for what he said in music as long as what he said is true (Nzewi 1977: 429).

Igoru musicians have immunity when they perform to expose the evil deeds of community members, thereby contribute to the shaping of the society. But it is observed in this study that some of the affected persons, who cannot openly confront the musicians, may go behind to use sorcery means to afflict them. Ajirire and Alabi (1990: 23) argue that professional disagreements were observed to beset the first generation of Juju musicians on issues of who could be considered best or 'kingpin' of Juju music in the 1940s and 1950s. The dissensions became incessant in the 1960s and 1970s, degenerating into battle and appalling rivalry among the artistes. Igoru musicians, from the 1950s to the 1960s had serious conflict with their subjects, due to the abuse of performance immunity that later came in vogue as discussed in chapter nine. Since the musicians sang to abuse one another as well as abusing other members of the public, the conflict could then occur between two or more musicians or between a musician and non-musician.

J. S. Roberts (1972: 9) argues African music forms as follows:

By far the most common form of group singing in most parts of Africa is the call-and-response style...different from the common European form of a verse of several lines followed (or not) by a chorus...European verse is complete in itself, while the African call by itself is only half of the equation; it needs the response before it is complete (Roberts, 1972: 9).

The use of call and response in Igoru music is seen as a performance style, non-comparable to the European verse form. It is more of a performance style than a structural form, because a solo performance of the same piece does not show incompleteness of any sort. It only shows the complementary phrasing of the song itself, which in a group performance may be presented in complementary call and response style for aesthetic and labour distribution purposes.

Brown (1989:128) quotes Wilson (1985: 10) and Foster (1987: 34) that Africans see music as a stimulus to dance and both as inseparable sister arts. John Miller Chernoff (1979: 48 & 49, 50) argues concerning African music making and its concomitant dance that:

Generally, in African musical idioms most of the notes seem to fall on what we would call the "off-beat"... Omitting the master drum part and the muted beats, we get a very simplified picture of the slow form of Agbekor, to which we might assign the time signature 12/8... The rhythm that might be considered the main beat of the music is not

emphasized. We can say that the musicians play “around” the beat, or that they play on the off-beat,... Recalling the African who could claim to understand a certain piece of music by knowing the dance that goes with it, we might begin to perceive a dancer’s feet, to which in fact there might be rattles attached, as a part of the music...The musicians themselves maintain an additional beat...by moving some part of their body while they play... Those people who have said that drummers dance while they play were right in the sense that the drummers keep the beat in this way so that their off-beat drumming will be precise...a Fanti master drummer and an expert of many different tribal styles, says that he always listens to or keeps in mind what he calls a “hidden rhythm” within his improvisations. (Chernoff, 1979: 50).

Igoru music is performed with dancing. The dance is however majestic as we discussed in chapter five. The instrumentalists also move their bodies to the melo-rhythmic stimulus of the drums and the vocal sections, while they play. Although this movement may influence balance and unity among the instruments, it is not what enables the drummers to keep the beat steady. It rather shows how much they enjoy their art, the same way the dancers and audience do.

Achinivu Kanu Achinivu (1985: 63) argues that in African traditional music, the key of a song is determined by the convenience of the cantor who starts it and other singers follow, continue or stop for him/her to start again, if the given key is too high or low; whereas, in art music, the key of the composition is predetermined for the signers. Igoru music is unwritten and any key is not predetermined for performers. The musicians have liberty to start songs on any

convenient pitch that eventually sets a tonal centre (key) for the performance. They also have liberty to move from one tonal centre to another, depending on convenience. The philosophy of the performance is that performers are not compelled to strain their voices in order to thrill their audiences, since that could lead to poor sound production and not yield any good results. The accompanying drums do not have problems blending with the changes that occur in the voice sections since they are not tuned in definite pitches.

Wyatt McGaffey (2002: 12) reports that:

Kongo musical instruments have many functions and significances besides that of making music... Music itself was and is thought to enable communication with the dead, often inducing spirit possession, "causing the spirit to descend". The presence of the spirit is recognized when everybody is carried away, having a good time. Parties and ritual events, which are often much the same thing, are enlivened by music, dancing, alcohol, ululation, and explosions of gun powder. The only instrument that, so far as I can tell, has no ritual connotation whatever is *diti*, the 'thumb piano' (McGaffey 2002: 12).

We find in Igoru music evidence of the belief in Okpe tradition that the dead live on and can spiritually query the living for any wrong doing. In some of the songs, the musicians say the evil that deeds against the ancestors would be punished by God. In song 28 (page A1 – 42) the composer/performer communicates explanations to the dead in defence of the community. Details of this have been discussed in chapter six.