Awka Journal of Research in Music and the Arts (ARMA) Vol. 15 2021

## IGBA-EZE INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE OF ANAKU: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF DOCUMENTATION STYLE

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#### Abstract

here is something wrong with the ways some scholars in Ethnomusicology have conceived archiving and documentation of musical materials among cultures. Some of these come as prejudice or bias regarding the very essence of traditional music. This paper is an attempt to review the common approach to documentation of traditional music which makes a reduction in the vital value of a people's music. The music, thus reduced to artefact, satisfies only the whims of academic scholarship. Here the musical data gathered from the living music of Anaku people are carefully transcribed as is common practice. This however, raises issues bothering on the essence of musical notation for traditional music. This notation is often of little or no use to the culture or music owners except to academics. Is this a form of cultural superiority to impose this form of notational documentation on local music? This descriptive survey employs musicological tools which include participant observation, field recordings and interview of "informants". The usual explanations which claim to project local music to the world, to protect them from going extinct, or to preserve them for future generations are all found in the study to be off the mark for overlooking the inner workings of traditional music and its transmission medium from time immemorial.

#### Introduction



Music is found in every known culture, past and present, varying widely between times and places. Music notation has been adopted to many kinds of music, including traditional music and ways of writing music developed independently in various times and places. Types and methods of notating music varied between cultures and throughout history, even different styles of music and different cultures use different music notations which have been discussed by different scholars. Ekwueme (2004) detailed several attempts made at notating African music in a unique and supposedly more satisfactory ways. A tabulature system for the notation of Ewe drumming; Time Unit Box System (TUBS), African VOWO, Western music notation (standard notation) among others were in use. Ekwueme pointed out that western music notation attempts to notate African music more accurately but is not completely satisfactory for transcribing African music. Umezinwa (2008) stipulates one of the obvious advantages of Western notation system which is that it universalizes music making it understandable beyond the confines of its narrow culture.

Some music scholars pointed out that music notation is devised for the purpose of preserving and documenting music and the essence of it is to have a preserved music tradition. Ekwueme (2004) observes that a system of music preservation is through documentation in some form of paper, what might be called notation. Nwobu (2017) opines that music as a language is by nature transient with what is present instantly becoming past, leaving perhaps but nothing tangible. For Nwobu, music as a perishable medium depends for its preservation on adequate system of musical notation and lack of adequate preservation will result to most of the valuable music fading away so fast. Ibekwe (2006) states that nothing is as dynamic as change, and it has a great impact on the societal values, beliefs and in fact culture in it's entirely. She pointed out that some communities have lost what made them unique. They have embraced change at the expense of tradition. As a result,



if studies are not made, and documented, posterity will experience the vacuum of neglected culture.

Music was often written out as a means of preserving and communicating it. The idea to preserve music which many scholars have expressed out of fear of total extinction of traditional music was made obvious by what Blum (1993) says:

One of the things that have been uppermost in the mind of ethnomusicologist is "to encourage and assist in the preservation and renewal of musical knowledge for the fear that certain practices and even whole communities of musicians might not survive (p. 1).

Nwobu (2017:189) elucidates that "the entity of notation is nothing other than communication to some other people who understand the language in use even if they are from other parts of the globe" The issue here is that the method of our music writing is beautiful and ornate, complex and hard for some people to process mentally. Some music scholars have conceived the idea that without putting music on paper as scores, that such music is not valuable. Nettl (1983) discloses that "the academics among us can hardly conceive of discussing music without knowledge of a single, authoritative, visible version. Mimicking what the critic may say upon a new score "I can't say a thing until I've seen the score" and it is surprising that he does not normally say about a score, "I can't say a thing unless I've heard it" (p. 65). Most people from the point of view of this style of notation and documentation articulate that the reason of such notation is for our music not to be extinct, for such music to be memorable and not fade away.

Considering the music in question 'Igba-eze music of Anaku' which is one of the traditional music of the Igbo people; of what benefit is this style of documentation for them? What is the eventual essence of such documentation to the music owners, people who eventually rely on



oral transmission? What is the advantage of this documentation style when the owners of such music cannot understand it? What does this type of existing documentation achieve for the culture, for the music owners, for the future generation of the owners of Igba-eze music? The point is that this documentation style we are using now is not of essence to the music owners only for the academics. But of what benefit is this music for the scholars and what has the music scholars to do with such Igba-eze music? Some will say presenting it to the world, is the world really interested in such music? Is the white man interested in coming to learn how to play Igba-eze music? The rule of the university is to assess creative works of people with this form of documentation style during appraisal exercises why? Every time, you will hear where is the score as if that score is the end of all essences.

From the point of view of this style of documentation/archiving, which seeks to find a visual equivalent to an oral phenomenon widely interpreted to mean the reduction of sound to standard western notation and which Nettle (1983) pointing up the major characteristic of western academic musical culture because of its impact on ethnomusicology avers:

> Dealing with the written music is the classical musician's ideal. They are so tied to notation. It equates composing with writing and accepts the creation of music on paper even when the composer can barely imagine its sound until he has heard it (p.65).

Nettl further explains that the culture of Western classical music seems to represent a serious departure from the norm of all the societies in which music is created and transmitted entirely or largely aurally. This documentation style which encourages people to think that a piece of music only exists in its truest form only when written on a piece of paper have succeeded in reducing our music to mere artifact,



written and stored in archives, stored away from people who want to practice the music. Umezinwa (2008) rightly puts it that:

African music is hardly a permanently fixed piece of music which is kept away somewhere waiting for another performance someday. It is music that lives in the lives of both the people and their culture. It is free from its conception to its performance and so cannot be chained within the narrow confines of a notation on paper (p.191)

This present style of documentation/ archiving is of no use to the owners of traditional music who might see it and will not know or understand that it is a real living music. Such documentation style is perhaps just for academic purposes; it is not directly influencing the culture even the future generation will not know that such music is scored and stored somewhere. This is to show that there is problem with the practice in which we are all involved with hence this critical review.

## Igba-Eze Instrumental Ensemble

Igba-eze music as the name implies is popularly associated with the kings or the Igwe in Igbo society. It is music specifically attached to tradition. It is a type of music reserved for a stratified group in society. Igba-eze music is most common among the Igbo tribe. It is the music associated with the king and not meant to be heard every day but for specific events within and outside the king's palace. It has similar traditions (common) in many communities in Igbo tribe.

According to Ibekwe (2006), "Igba-eze is the most popular music that can be found in Igwe's palace, thus Igba-eze is a special music. Special in the sense that it is meant for a special group of people such as the Igwe and titled men (*ndi nze na ozo*)" (p. 58). Ibekwe further listed some of the important occasions when Igbaeze music played within and



outside Igwe's palace to include coronation or installation ceremony, the ofala festival iguaro or iwaji, etc. The music group accompanies the king when attending ofala festival of another king or funeral ceremony of fellow king. It is also performed when the Igwe has visitors.

Igba-eze of Anaku is music traditionally recognized and reserved for king, connected with serious activities such as coronations of a kingofala festival, burial of a king, *iwa j*i or *igu aro* festival and outing or the like. Igba-eze is a royal music of Anaku, a town made up of three villages- Umuria, Ikenga and Umueragu in Ayamelum Local Government of Anambra State. This music symbolizes dignity, royalty, class and is reserved for the stratified group in the society. Igba-eze music of Anaku is also known as Okanga Eze, a music organized by Igwe Udo 1 (Ezeudo of Anaku a.k.a omena cash).

Igba-eze music is used to give due regards to the king (Eze).According to Nze Nwokeno:

Igba-eze has been a long traditional music played only for titled men (Igwe). The music is played for and used by some of the Igwes of Anambra State such as Igwe Okagbuo, Igwe Nwokedi, Igwe Kenneth Okonkwo, Eze Nri, Igwe Neni, Eze Uzu Awka among others. Igba-eze is a special music for the Igwes not for all or commoners. It is not played always unless for coronation and ofala ceremonies. Igba-eze is not a large ensemble or music group. The music group is made up of nine people of which four persons play flutes, four persons play drums and one person plays bell. Three drums provide strict and steady rhythms while the master drummer improvises. Three flutes response in unison the call of the master flutists (Personal communication, April, 2019).



This music group has four (4) styles of music. The titles of tracks are "*Eze na-Abia", Obi Eze, Ijomme* and *Ife Eze Gwara Anyi.* The first music is used to indicate that the king is about to enter the coronation or ofala arena. The second one shows that the king has entered the arena. The third track is for (Igba ofala). The Igwe dances to the music proudly, slowly, gaily, and meaningfully. Every bit of his movements portrays dignity as he has to follow the rhythmic rendition of the Igba-eze music. The king dances to the drums beat and listens to information the oja is giving (when to appear, dance, speaks and when to leave). He normally appears in royal attire when dancing to give it the desired meaning. The last track indicates the returning of the king (leaving the arena). The music plays an informatory or communicative role. It directs and informs people when the king is about to appear or leave the arena



The Igba-eze of Anaku is an instrumental music, though in some communities, it is a combination of vocal and instrumental ensemble. Ibekwe (2006:59) discussing Igba-eze of Achina avers that:

Igba-eze is not a very large ensemble. It is a combination of vocal and instrumental ensemble. Through the songs, the singers recite the history of their present and past generations. The songs find its highest expression at the court of the Igwe, the chiefs' praise names are recited through songs. The singers use the songs to strengthen the position as well as legitimize the authority of the reigning chief. The texts of the songs are full of proverbs and idioms which the chief understands and which are peculiar to only the insiders, the songs also portray the achievements, bravery, victory and highlight of both past and present dynasty.



In instrumental music, instruments are selected in relation to their effectiveness in performing certain established musical roles or for filling specific musical purposes. The choice of instrumental selection of Igba-eze group coincides with what Nketia (2005) discussing the choice and combination of instruments that are meaningful in terms of aesthetics of African music said. He categorized these selections into three: ensemble that consist exclusively of melodies instrument (instrument of definite pitch), ensemble that consist exclusively of



percussive instruments (instrument of indefinite pitch) such as bell, rattle, clappers e.t.c and ensemble with the combination of both melodic and percussive instrument. Of these three categories, Igbaeze music ensemble falls under the third category that combined both melodic and rhythm instruments. This music group has four membrane drums, four flutes (flute choir) and a bell which performs communication function. The bell is used in cueing the music, changing tracks as a cue signal and as a cadential call.

# The Theory of Deconstruction

Deconstruction arose in France in 1967(late1960's) as a reaction to structuralism and existentialism. It has been attributed to Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man and other thinkers. It relates to the activity of reading to address the concerns raised in the way that texts are interpreted. Its application is, however not limited to literary texts. It is good to understand the principle on which the theory operates. This theory states that "texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs and practices do not have unambiguously definite meanings, as they do not have very strict and rigid boundaries".

It is good to understand that structuralism sought to explain how a system works. It was roundly criticized for been static and lacking dynamism. That is why some writers describe deconstruction as a poststructuralism theory. Deconstructionists hold that written words are in adequate to express meaning fully. It seems that their maxim is David Rehman's statement: "there are no truths, only rival interpretation" The theory has been criticized for leading to uncertainty.

## Justification for Applying Deconstruction Theory

The tradition of scholarship and research has always grown and often overgrown the practitioners. In the field of Ethnomisicology, it is not



entirely different. The fact of sciencing about music is a given. A living, cultural heritage like music and or dance could very easily but unwittingly reduced to mere artifact by research processes. The very methodical information gathering, interviews, open and structured, recording of sound bytes, replays and transcriptions are all professional means of reaching an understanding about the particular research objectives. The analyses that usually follow these painstaking approaches have often been viewed by some scholars with a certain kind of suspicion.

This suspicion arises from some reasons. To whose advantage is such research? Is it for the advancement of the dance or music, or the group or the community? Or is it for the growth of the researcher? Even when it is claimed that such a research serves as a launch pad for the culture to start orbiting the firmament of scholars, it is still taken with a pinch of salt. This type of research has gone on well for a time, often as a one off thing where nothing is heard again from the researcher once the information for the research is deemed complete. There has been no feedback mechanism for the music/ dance, or troupe or community. In some cases, effort is made to resurrect a dead dance for the purposes of research after which the music/dance dies a second time. It appears rare that such cultural music would receive any form of boost from these researches. Of course it is not the primary concern of the researcher to embark on a revival trip for a dance that is moribund. But even beyond this, the finished product in the staff notation shows that the audience for the research has changed. In that form, it cannot be recognized by the music/dance owners. Many empirical studies like this have been shelved away in many libraries after serving their purpose. The question now is, is that all? Must researches follow this trend in an attempt to showcase meaning? Is it out of place to start looking at a new possibility in the approach to ethnomusicological researches?

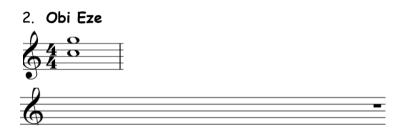


Analysis of Anaku Instrumental Music

The Scale Mode and Melodic Range

1. Eze n'abia

The track "Eze n'abia" is within the pentatonic scalic mode while the range is within the interval of an octave of E to E.



Obi Eze is within the tetratonic scalic mode while the range is within the interval of a perfect  $5^{th}$  of C to G.

## 3. Ijomme



The track "Ijomme" is within the pentatonic scalic structure while the range is within the interval of a Major  $6^{th}$  of G to E.

# 4. Ife Eze Gwara Anyi



If e eze gwara anyi is within the diatonic mode of the major scale while the range is a compound interval of a  $9^{th}$ , the interval of D to E.

Looking at the four tracks of Igba-eze music of Anaku (see appendix I-IV), one discovers there is parallel form and equally unisons performance between flute 2, flute 3 and flute 4. On the part of drums of Igba-eze music, the production of independent rhythms by the drums of the Igba-eze music showcases polyrhythm which is one of the features of African music. Igba-eze music ensemble serves as speech surrogate resulting from the instruments imitating human speech. What the instrument is saying may not be obvious to a non-local or who is not in the community; it has a restricted sense of meaning. This notational system cannot show the psychological connection which Anaku people have with this music. This is always an aspect of record that has a question mark. There is certain history, affection and attachment which develop between the people and their music; it is elusive as researchers' don't capture that psychological aspect.

Igba-eze music of Anaku has its own language and every member including Igwes, nzes and ozos among others are expected to understand the language and respond accordingly. Drums as well as flutes function in encoding messages in tonal imitation or native language. They could be used to reproduce tonal speeches as well as play melodies within the scope of the drums, flutes and skills of the performer.



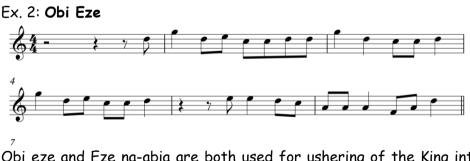
Eze n'abia is like entrance hymn for the king. The ensemble ushers in the king to the arena for any ceremony with this track. It informs the audience that the rich king is coming or entering the arena.

## Ex. 1: Eze n'abia



The players gave this interpretation to the above transcription:

Igbo Text	English Text
Ogaranya nwere ego	Rich and wealthy king
Eze na-abia	The king is coming
Eze niri oto eze	Stand on your feet king
Ijele niri oto eze	Big masquerade step out



Obi eze and Eze na-abia are both used for ushering of the King into the arena

Igbo Text	English Text
Obi eze na eze na- abia	King's palace, be attentive, the
	king is coming



Igbo Text	English Text
Ijomme Eze na awa	Ijomme the king is dancing

Ijomme is used to communicate to people that the king is dancing.

# Ex. 4: Ife Eze Gwara Anyi

Igbo Text	English Text
Ife eze gwara anyi anyi emee	Whatever the king says, we will do
Eze ikago ubochi I ga agba ofala	The king, have scheduled for your
ka anyi bia	<i>ofala</i> so that we can come
Ife eze gwara anyi anyi emee	

## Critical Review of Elitism and Imperialism in Research

The sort of thinking expressed in this work has been around. Every research sets out to explore, unravel or solve a perceived problem in an attempt to gain a deeper insight into reality. To do this, several



methods of research are employed. Conversations among scholars have almost often taken different forms as rivalry, debates, criticism, disagreement or even rejection. These battles have raged concerning the content, context, methodology, scope, significance, purpose, impact, responsibility and even the future of researches. While this is going on, there are scholars whose contributions compel agreement more than other. Then, there is a large band of somewhat passive professionals who accept the scholarly opinions or theories of other. Sometimes the discussions have so gone out hand that one forgets that the subject matter is still music and musical experiences of people. High sounding theories like PC set theory are employed and musical notes and intervals begin to assume the status of statistical symbols. One wonders about the real audience of these writings. Are scholars unwittingly entertaining themselves? This has resulted in too much elitism, a subtle form of imperialism (an imposition of assumed superior opinion). This is not new.

There was a time when classical music was associated with high class, other "lower" music genres were supposed to belong to the lower class. In ethnomusicology, however, there seems to be a different kind of issue not the relationship of musical taste to social strata. It is the issue of the perceived research style associated with data collection and analysis. It is an improvement that the owners of the local music who used to be known as informants are now more appropriately called teachers. Indeed, they teach the researcher what he or she seeks to know. For what is the difference between the teacher and student except in the amount of information each has?

It seems that the relevance of these teachers end once the information is released. From then, the researcher transcribes, notates and injects series of interpretation to the melodies, harmonies, rhythms, ululations and, indeed, every component of the

music for this elitist audience. These subsequent analyses are not often known or shown to the dance owners. The language of analysis is above them. So there is the danger of sliding into elitism in music research. This elitism may have even happened and is being sustained inadvertently.

Is it possible to explore other ways of conducting researches in ethnomusicology without seeming to be caught up in the quasiimperialist attitude of tradition? How can researchers enhance the music they have studied? Is there a possibility of evolving a feedback mechanism so as to inject varied form of value and dynamism to the music or dance studied? Is it possible to allow a free approach that does not give off a scent of limited freedom, a sense of regimentation and confinement? This free approach is not a yet defined or clear cut path but fact is that in the atmosphere of freedom, great strides have been recorded; breakthroughs have been made.

## Problem of the Dance Ensemble

Igba-eze music ensemble members pointed out some of the problems that they are having as a group. The problems include:

- 1. Lack of interest by the youths of the town, those who will sustain the tradition..
- 2. Inadequacy of finance
- 3. Insufficient events to attend and patronage
- 4. Lack of sponsors among others

Looking at the problems of the Igba-eze group, one can wonder how this research relates to the problems or address these problems of this group. How can the documentation style we are using solve the problem of this dance group? It is obvious that our researches cannot address any of these problems, proving that what the researchers are doing are just looking at the artists and their music, scoring and



keeping them in shelves or library/archives and the music will be there without direct benefit on the society. This type of documentation has become part and parcel of the academics and rather than appearing to be solution to any problem, it is done as routine.

Saving of music materials in archives is not going to solve the problems of different traditional music groups. It is pertinent to find out the problems of each group and seek for solutions. As regards to Igba-eze of Anaku, the solution to lack of interest of the youths is to motivate them by sponsoring their trips to different places and by organizing festivals and competitions which will motivate them. For instance, if all royal music groups in Igbo society should be holding competition regularly and the winner rewarded handsomely, what will stop music groups from engaging in serious and constant rehearsals? Organizing of music events regularly will be of immense help, and equally seeing that same music type should be performed by people of different ages - adult, adolescence and children. If many wealthy people should turn into motivators for different music groups, why then should there be fear for extinction of such music?

## Conclusion

Presently in the field of ethnomusicology, the way in which music scholars have conceived archiving and documentation of traditional music materials among cultures, in which music is created and transmitted entirely or largely aurally seem erroneous. The abandonment of the earlier system of music transmission and preservation by rote which existed for centuries is specious. The issue of preserving African music was intensively dealt with by Ekwueme (2004). He stresses on the need to preserve the African music and he is of the opinion that the system of preservation should be one that keeps African music alive and continuously growing and developing. He adds that in seeking for ways of preserving the African music that it



should not be done in such a way that participation in it will not be restricted. We are practicing and enjoying the indigenous music we have at our disposal in this contemporary time because our forefathers preserved it traditionally, they made sure it was practiced and handed over from one generation to another. We should equally benefit from such inheritance, the knowledge to continuously reproduce our traditional music as musicians and other participants in musical life. Blum (1993) avers that "reproduction of musical knowledge is one of the many human activities that foster and are sustained by various types of historical consciousness" (p. 1). It is clear that solution to our problem of seeking ways of preserving our traditional music genre from total extinction is not just documenting or notating and storing the music materials in archives. The concerns of the ethnomusicologists should not with the study of music that lives largely in oral tradition, they should stop spending great deal of their energy finding ways of reducing audio music to visual form which definitely is the classical musician's ideal and beneficial to the academics

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#### Appendix 1



Score

**EZE NABIA** 

[Composer]



#### Appendix II



#### Appendix III



## IJOMME





#### Appendix IV

IFE EZE GWARA ANYI

Nwobu S.N



