CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON IGBO TRADITIONAL MUSIC FROM PRE-COLONIAL TIMES TO 1967

A.O. Ifionu
University of Nigeria

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to trace the cultural influence on Igbo traditional music from the pre-colonial era to 1967, thereby proving that the Igbo have never been a musical island as was suggested by Bruno Nettl.

In the first section of this report it is stressed that mutual musical borrowing had existed between the Igbo and her neighbours long before the advent of Western civilization in the Igbo culture area. In the second portion, it is demonstrated that this musical acculturation intensified and widened in scope and content as a result of European influence in the form of Western education, Christianity, external trade, and advanced technology. Dissemination of music through the mass media and the establishment of Sowande College of Music with a double musical programme at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, gave the cultural traffic a wider dimension which resulted in the cross-fertilization of Igbo and European musical idioms.

The Nigerian civil war which isolated most of the Igbo culture area for almost three years, stemmed the tide of cultural current and, in indeed, brought a musical era to an end.

Bruno Nettl, in his book, Music in Primitive Culture, argued that the degree of preference for ethnic music other than one's own varies. He cited the Igbo as a classic example: "the Ibo of Nigeria prefer their own old

songs, uninfluenced by the music of any other tribe".[1] But, anyone familiar with Igbo attitudes knows that the Igbo traditional music and musical practices were (and are still) significantly affected in various forms and degrees by cultural contacts between them and their neighbours and among the Igbo themselves, during and after pre-colonial era.

The task of this paper is to document this as a musicological fact, and in the process of exposition and illumination to provide resource materials for the study of musical acculturation in the Igbo culture area.

Pre-Colonial Era

Music is an inseparable element in Igbo cultural life. The Igbo found in their music an indispensable vehicle for honouring their gods and meaningful mechanism for sustaining and edifying their traditional institutions and customs. They practised it with singleness of mind, observing strictly the conventions of Igbo musical practice and cultural ethos. The Igbo have never lived in isolation. For centuries, their neighbours have been the Igala and the Tiv in the North, the Ibibio and the Yako in the South; the Edo and the Isoko in the West; and the Idoma and Ogoni in the East.[2]

Evidence abounds that the Igbo were, and to a large extent, are still closely linked to their neighbours whom they influence and who in turn influence them. Thus, to some extent, the pattern of monarchy as well as the title systems and the paraphernalia peculiar to such institutions found in Onitsha, Abo, and other towns along the river Niger can be traced to the Edo Kingdom of Benin and the Igala state of Ida.

After a detailed analysis and comparative study of the historical, political, and anthropological set up of Onitsha, Abo, Oguta, and Osomari,

which claim affinity with the ancient kingdoms of Benin and Ida, Nzimiro confirmed that "external cultural contacts have affected the political institutions of the states. The first is the contact arising from their migration which, as recorded in their traditions, shaped the structure of their kingdoms."[3]

Marriage customs, war cults and war songs were also borrowed. Nzimiro affirmed that "many years ago, the Onitsha people were living in the realm of the Oba of Benin. They quarrelled and, after a battle which lasted one and a half days, King Chima led his people out of Benin territory in search of a new area in which to settle".[4]

Nzimiro also reported that

> Oguta brought with them from Benin two war cults, one male and the other female, each performing different functions. The male cult, known as Akpatakwuma, is located in Umusoha ward and its head is the priest of the cult.[5]

Again, Igbo social institutions such as the practice of head-hunting, the secret society and the age-grade organisations of the Eastern Ngwa Igbo, according to Afigbo, originated from Ibibio, the Ijo and the Cross-River peoples.[6]

Pursuit of trade and specialized occupations by ritual specialists and craftsmen, as well as visits to oracles in different places in the country, were incentives for people to travel far and wide and within and beyond the confines of Igboland.[7] It is very probable that the musical activities associated with these trades, occupations and institutions were borrowed at the same time. For example, while investigating the music of Asaba people in the nineteenth century, Day recorded two canoe songs entitled

Dama Dama Dukerio and Adam Biko respectively sung by both men and women who paddled the river Niger. Day testified that these songs of Abo origin, are sung by the Asabas and Onitsha and in fact all the tribes upon the banks of the Delta rivers".[8] It would also be natural to suppose that speech and some aspects of material culture of peripheral Igbo towns were influenced by the languages and material cultures of their non-Igbo neighbours.

Christianity first penetrated Igboland through Onitsha, a town about 35 kilometres from Awka town. Around 1899, "Awka was the farthest limit of white penetration on the Eastern side of the Niger", a Basden testified.[9] It is safe to suggest that about 1857, the traditional music and musical practices of the Igbo were typically Igbo, particularly in terms of language, organization, performance norms, instrumentation and roles. These would include different categories and types of vocal and instrumental music (ritual and non-ritual) as well as dances which serve various functions in the political and social systems of the Igbo communities.[10] One would also reckon with Court music and musicians as seen in some Igbo towns which have maintained a long tradition of kingship: Egwu ota or Egwu eze (the royal drum of the Obi of Onitsha), and the Okanga eze (the royal drum music of the Nri King) are examples. Ames has also drawn our attention to Obimo, in Nsukka, where "special music was performed for the king of Obimo by non-professional musician – farmers with special gongs and drums".[11] Echezona attested that the Eze Opi (the king of Opi in Nsukka) "owns and conducted his own orchestra".[12]

It has been postulated that the loose-key xylophone which is used extensively among the Igbo, as well as among the Tiv, was diffused into the society during the Bantu migration through the Congo (now Zaire) via the

Cameroon.[13] The same theory of diffusion might also account for the existence of the slit-drum and the lamelaphone throughout Igboland. However, these three instruments have been so deeply integrated into Igbo cultural life that the people have come to accept them as indigenous instruments.

Within the Igbo culture area, borrowing of music and musical instruments has been a long standing practice on an extensive scale. The people of Umunze learned the Egbeni oba dance (special music for celebrated hunters) from their Uga neighbour. The Ethigwu dance, the author was told during his field work, migrated from Igboukwu, a riverine town in Anambra area, although Okonkwo claims that it originated from Udi.[14] Egwu Ekpiri (minstrel songs accompanied with head rattle made from the large pods of the uku tree), which originated from Oru and Anambra areas with Nwoye Azodo of Okuzu as one of its recent chief exponents, has been popularized by many singers from different parts of Igboland. The same applies to Egwu ogene, another form of minstrel songs accompanied with the clapperless iron bell, which is typical of Awka and Nri style of minstrelsy. Both Egwu ekpiri and Egwu ogene are still in vogue in many towns in Anambra state. The Igba eze dance, played by Nanka people in Awka division in the days of old, was learnt from Nando, a riverine town reputed for singing and dancing. In fact this Igba eze is popular in the whole of Anambra basin. Most of these dances change role, style of performance, and sometimes their names as they migrate. A few instances will suffice.

Ufie music which is danced during Ofala and the funerals of titled men and heroes in Nri and other towns in Igboland, has changed its role at Onitsha. Nzegwu reported: "The Ufie, a band consisting only of drums, is

also traditional. They are not used for dancing, but serve only to awaken the Obi and the town in the morning".[15]

Owu music, played by Mbieri people during the Owu (a yam harvest festival) was learnt from their neighbouring town Orodo, and the people of Orodo learned it earlier from the Oguta people. At Oguta, this Owu music was associated with the worship of the sea god.

At Eziagu in Orumba Local Government Area of Anambra State, a blind minstrel, Chukwuago Ogu, learned xylophone music from Nicholas Onyire who earlier brought it from Ogbunka, another neighbouring town. In its original form, the music was Ekere mgba (wrestling music), but as wrestling fell into disfavour as a pastime in Eziagu, Chukwuago transformed his Ekere mgba music into music purely for entertainment with a new name "Odi uto eju afo" ("Sweet but not able to fill the belly", i.e. it is so entertaining that one could not tire listening to it).

A music form may be initially inspired. The inspired musician may thereafter teach it to his community. Asaba people had a myth which was documented by Day:

Music is of course mixed up with many curious traditions, and is regarded as being of divine origin. The Asaba people say that music was first brought into the country by a hunter named Orgardie, a native of Ibuzo, upon his return from an expedition in search of big game. Orgardie having lost his way in a thick forest, was surprised at hearing sounds of music; he accordingly concealed himself and discovered that the music proceeded from a party of forest spirits that were approaching. From his hiding-place, Orgardie managed to hear and observe sufficient to enable him to remember the steps of the dances, and the music of the songs sung;

and upon his return to his village he taught his countrymen this music, which was called Eguolo. From Ibuzo music was imported to Asaba land.[16]

Customs and cultural institutions were also borrowed. Two notable examples were the Mmanwu (Masquerade) and Ozo title taking. Mmanwu spread to different parts of Igboland and probably beyond from the Anaocha area of Anambra State. Speaking about masquerades in Onitsha, Nzegwu maintained that "the masquerades are mostly copied from neighbouring towns after the establishment of the new settlement".[17] Ijele masquerade, the most dignified and prestigious masquerade in Igboland, hails from Oru and Anambra areas. Some towns, such as Enugwuukwu, have borrowed it. Another Mmanwu tradition, known as Ekwulu Igbokwe, is believed to have been introduced to Egbema Ozubulu in about 1840 by Okonkwo Ogbuchi "An Arochukwu immigrant whose home can still be traced and whose descendants are alive".[18] And from Ozubulu this tradition of masquerade spread all over the Nnewi/ezengwu area which stretches between the basins of the Urasi and Njaba rivers to the north and south, and between the towns of Olu in Anambra State and Abo in Bendel State to the east and west. "From the 1880s to the early decades of the twentieth century, mmanwu theatres were established all over such towns as Ukpor, Lilu, Ihembosi, Ihiala, Ihitenansa, Uqwula, Akuma and others. Groups acquired their theatres either from the original Ekwulu Igbokwe in Egbema Ozubulu or from any other Ekwulu derived from it".[19]

The Ozo title was an innovation of the Nri people, whose priests were instrumental in its spread throughout Igboland and beyond.[20] The spread of Nri priestly influence in Igboland is proverbial:

Everywhere, they had duties to perform. These, they claim, include assisting at the coronation ceremonies of the kings of Ihiala, Ogwashi,

Aguleri, Asaba, Aboh, Onitsha, Idah and Benin. They were consulted in time of poor crops, they held ceremonies to purify towns and they spread their title system the Ozo, far and wide. They were always present at title-taking ceremonies and they provide the ankle cords worn by title men.[21]

The fact that almost uniform patterns of ozo regalia and ozo music feature throughout northern Igboland is an indication that both these institutions and ceremonies migrated with the music and musical instruments associated with them.

On the other hand, the influence of Igbo culture on three Yoruba communities, Ukunzu, Ugbodu and Uburubu, who call their language and themselves Olukumi ("My friend") and who exist in the heart of the old Asaba division in the western Igbo area, provides us with a classic example of cultural contact, approaching almost complete assimilation. The degree to which these people absorbed the customs and social organization of the surrounding Igbo villages was remarkable. H.U. Beier testified: "Of their original Yoruba culture, the Olukumi have retained little, but as they have become assimilated to the Ibo towns around them, Ibo is spoken as a second language and the custom and institutions show mixture of Ibo and Benin influences that is so characteristic of Asaba division".[22] Beier further maintained that "there are numerous Ibo cults like Ikenga, (the shrine of a man's right hand, representing his strength and his luck) and Onitsha Alodi, a cult introduced from east of the Niger".[23] Of the musical scene of this area, Beier affirmed that:

...The music and dancing seen in Ukunzu were completely Ibo in character. Prominent instruments were a horn made out of the neck of a calabash which is covered with pig's feather, and drums made out of round clay pots

and beaten with a piece of leather. Both are Ibo style and one dancing group, the Otu Abuda, actually told us that they learned the dance in the Ibo town of Issele Uku.[24]

The Early Christian Era (1857-1900)

It is important to note that Igbo traditional music did not escape the influence of Western civilization through the agencies of Christianity, education and government. The first two factors appeared almost at the same time, and exercised tremendous influence in the society for over four decades before the inception of British Rule.

Missionary activities formally started in Igboland on July 27, 1857, the day that the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) had its first open air church service at Onitsha. Initially the missionaries were preoccupied with evangelism, but in the following year, convinced that Western education would be an effective means of "elevating" the Africans, and also realising that the educated ones would be reliable allies in the battle against "paganism", the C.M.S. on Monday, 15 November, 1858, opened the first day school at Onitsha.[25] Music was included in the basic curriculum. And as a means of attracting more pupils, the children were made to march round the various sections of Onitsha town singing the Igbo translation of this song:

Children this is quite delighting,
Schools are open all around,
Where they teach the art of writing,
And of reading which is sound,
Come to school then,
Let none in the streets be found.[26]

The tune was undoubtedly a western melody sung to Igbo texts. However, the total effect was tremendous, for Ekechi reported that this strategy impressed some of the local spectators and led to an increase in school enrollment. By 1864, the total enrollment for the day school was fifty and the night school seventy.

To Igbo communities at that time, traditional religion and Christianity were the hinges on which Igbo social, political and cultural lives revolved. It is true that the strength of Igbo music rests on the fact that it is deeply integrated into the social life of the people. These very areas were the targets of the early missionaries who, with the support of their converts who saw Christianity as a religion of salvation, banned all traditional religious rites and manifestations, including dance and music. They encouraged the converts to dispose of any art works which had been used in traditional religious rites. In practical terms, "any art work" included ritual (idols) and invariably "primitive" musical instruments. Thus, the destruction of idols went hand in hand with the destruction of all musical instruments with which those idols were worshipped. Consequently, almost all forms of traditional sacred music suffered. Masquerade dances and displays, which were and still are, one of the healthy and cherished sports of the Igbo people were discouraged. Christians were asked not to participate in them since they were deemed to be heathen and devilish. Hymns (Ukwe, abu), which were in the main, excerpts from English hymnals, were translated into the vernacular for use in church worship. It should be pointed out here that the iconoclasm was not total for the "heathens" continued to practise their music with unabated devotion.

By the 1880's, the blaze of Christian evangelism had raged with significant effect for three decades in Igboland. Educational work dwindled partly because of lack of trained personnel and partly because the Igbo people themselves had no incentive, at the time, to welcome European education for their children. Their society provided amply opportunity for moral and vocational training of the young and they had no reason for seeking European-type of skills until these skills became saleable from the inception of the British rule.[27]

The Colonial Period (1900-1960)

The colonial era is known as Enu Bekee or Enu Oyibo (The regime of Bekee, i.e. White man). During this period, two institutions operating simultaneously but independently affected Igbo music in varying degrees: the missionaries, directly and consciously, through Christianity and mission education; the colonial government, indirectly and unconsciously, through its educational policy, development of towns, construction of roads, introduction of Western technology, and establishment of both military and police bands which in addition to their official functions provided the civil servants and military and police officers with recreational music. This type of music appealed mostly to the elite of society as well as those who had been converted to christianity. School pupils gradually shunned some of the traditional pastimes, such as moonlight plays and games, wrestling and masquerade displays.

Basden observed that "these are days when gramophones and records are being imported in ever-increasing quantities, and the modern and foreign form of concert is now coming largely into favour. With their inherent instinct for music, the young Ibo people quickly master the latest ditty. They are also adepts at making some sort of music from the

instruments they are able to purchase".[28] But he regretted that "little, if any attempt had been made to bring into service any of the native tunes". This lamentation was re-echoed by K.C. Murray about the state of art generally and music in particular. "The younger generation who have been to school are unfortunately mostly ignorant of their local traditions and history, and fail to appreciate African art. The old religious carvings are gone or are disappearing. No study is being made of Nigerian music and it is neglected in schools".[29]

Two main reasons might be given for this deplorable state of affairs. First, the chief function of the government primary and secondary schools "is to train more promising boys from the village schools as teachers clerks for the local native courts and interpreters".[30] It was not to promote the culture of the people. To do so would be tantamount to interfering in the religious and cultural affairs of the people – an endeavour which was contrary to the avowed policy of the colonial masters. To the missionaries, "schools and teachers go with the gospel. You can't have one without the other."[31] Therefore, it was not surprising that the mission teachers both native and foreign, excluded traditional folk tunes and dances from the curriculum because, as they wrongly thought, they "are associated with undesirable words and topics which render them unsuitable for church or other general public use".[32] Thus, a new crop of musicians was born whose musical interest ran parallel to the traditional musical practices. Consequently, Western hymns, anthems, canticles and chants, Negro spirituals (through the influence of the early West Indies mission teachers), choruses and carols were introduced in schools and teacher training colleges. Ukwe, Igbo translations of the textual excerpts from various "revivalist hymns of Britain and America" and various old and new Latin chants of the Mass, features prominently in the Christian church worship. The European tunes were mainly those from Sankey and Barnby".[33]

Since Igbo is a tone language (the meaning of the words depending very largely upon their inflections and pitch), the imposition of European tunes which disregarded the language tones sadly resulted in gross distortions of the meanings of the words, which in turn rendered the hymns completely meaningless. Parrinder castigated this practice: "unfortunately the hymns and canticles have been translated or rather transliterated into the different African languages without any attempt being made at finding a poetic or musical form native to the language in question. The hymns of Wesley and Whittier have been turned almost word for word into Yoruba, Twi, Bacule, and a hundred other tongues. They have been sung to the tunes of Sankey, Barnby, and the rest, which have no kinship with traditional African music. And the tragic result has been that these hymns are utter nonsense". But as time went on, and as more Nigerian academic musicians were trained, "in order to remedy this anomaly, Nigerian church musicians began to compose hymns whose melodies were in agreement with the inherent tonal patterns of the texts".[34] Native airs and anthems based on Igbo folk tunes swell the repertoire of church music. Accompanying these gospel songs with traditional instruments and dancing during church worship at special ecclesiastical feasts and harvest thanksgiving services became accepted musical practice. Parrinder observed that even non-orthodox mission churches variously called Seraphim and Cherubim, Apostolic, etc. "tend more easily to revert to indigenous forms of music. Some of them do still use the hymn book of the mother church from which they broke away, but they increasingly use compositions by their own organists. 'The African Church (Incorporated) of Nigeria has its own book of some two hundred hymns of local composition".[35]

However, it is to the lasting credit of the missionaries, especially the Church Missionary Society, that they introduced music in their earliest primary school, and gradually made the teaching of western music courses

formal in their secondary schools and teacher training colleges. For example, St. Paul's College, Awka, which was founded in 1904 was the centre of diocesan singing competitions, and in fact, the centre of church musical activities. As the training college where many Anglican school teachers, and pastors were trained, its students came from all parts of Nigeria and the Cameroons. These students provided not only student choirs but also Choir-masters who taught music, especially western music mainly in form of singing, using sol-fah notation in the village churches, regular schools and Sunday School periods. It was such efforts that eventually produced pioneer musicians such as the late Daniel Ojukwu of Nnewi, Ishmel Nwangene of Nibo, Awka, David Okongwu of Nnobi and W.W.C. Echezona of Ogidi among others. The late Harcourt-Whyte of the Methodist Mission needs be mentioned among the galaxy.

Late Daniel Ojukwu was a school master, footballer, an organist and a Band leader at Central School, Onitsha. He was instrumental to the spread of "Brass Band Culture" in many Anglican Schools in the then Onitsha province. He taught band at Saint Simon's Central School, Nnobi in 1928. It is significant to point out that most of the pioneer Igbo band leaders such as Arinze, Opene and Orajinkpo had their inspiration in music through the agency of school bands.

During this period, Basden observed, "many of the villages now boast of a band composed of fifes, cornets and other instruments".[36] These bands were used for morning marching parades before the morning assemblies, during Empire Days, and C.M.S. Anniversary celebrations, for cheering the atmosphere during sports and football matches. Bands were also played at Christian weddings and funerals. For morning assemblies in schools and occasionally supported by the accordion, or the pianoforte.

However, during the C.M.S. Anniversary celebrations, Igbo traditional dances and drama organised by school children featured prominently.

By the late thirties, hybrid tunes gradually crept into the church. "Hybrid" because these tunes initially were not original compositions as such but rather adaptations of melodies of foreign stylised dances such as the Fox-Trot, the Rumba played from 'G.V.' Records from His Master's Voice gramophones, to the texts of some hymns in Akukwo Ukwe Ibo. As melodies from these stylized dances were exhausted, people gradually experimented with traditional folk tunes. Early pathfinders in this respect are Ishmail Nwangene, Mr. Nelson Okoli from Oko in Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra State and others. However, the two people who made the most significant impact in this direction were David Okonkwo and W.W.C. Echezona.

David Okongwu's period of experiment in original composition of hymns and canticles covers between 1932 and 1937. By 1941-42 he had matured and had started writing extensive works in Igbo. The church welcomed this new endeavour and encouraged original composition and singing of Native Air by incorporating these in the repertoire for singing competition. His works have not yet been fully studied. W.W.C. Echezona (later Professor of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka) who studied music at the Trinity College of Music London, influenced the course of musical growth in Anglican mission in two ways. First, by teaching western music formally in some mission secondary schools and colleges and secondly by adjudicating in singing competitions and festivals of arts. He played the organ in churches in order to raise the standard of music in the Igbo speaking area, in particular, and in the then Eastern Nigeria, in general.

The creation and development of urban areas were the work of the colonial government. The influx of a heterogeneous population, that had abandoned their village life style, favoured western recreational music more than its traditional counterpart because, among other things, the former was not socially bound to any traditional institutions and as such could be easily adapted to suit individual tastes. In 1961 Bob Ogbuagu observed that "culturally, Enugu has little to offer. It is a conglomeration of the cultures of many tribal groups. The culture of the original owners of the land has very little, if any impact on the community of Enugu".[37] With little modifications his observation is typical of the state of affairs in most other big townships in Igboland at that time.

Apart from being free from traditional conventions, Western recreational music (and all popular music for that matter) tends to be transient. The form and style may persist for only a short time and disappear as soon as new forms are introduced. Changes and innovations are introduced by outside influences as well as by the individuals within the society. The popularity and growth of night clubs and ballroom dances created the demand for more Western dances, such as Waltz, Quick-step, Tango and so on, which were provided initially by the Army and Police bands to the enjoyment of European government officials who were the main patrons of these early recreational institutions. Through the use of the gramophones and records and the social bands, some of these European dances gradually penetrated the rural areas. With the admission of a few African elite into European-owned clubs, and with the establishment of the counterparts of such clubs by some African businessmen to cater for the interests of the mixed cultural groups, a need arose for varied musical genres. The situation led to the introduction of African-derived music such as the juju-music of the Yoruba and the Highlife; and such music as jazz, Calypso, and Latin-American dances. Privately owned indigenous bands

also gradually sprang up, being established by some of the band-boys who played in school bands during their school days.

The compromise between Western music and African traditional forms was also reflected in the instrumental ensemble of the dance bands that played this popular music, and the texts of the songs. Western instruments such as the guitar, the pianoforte, brass and woodwind instruments, bells, tambourines and other western dance-band instruments were used together with traditional drums and idiophones. The Highlife, for example, was sung not only in 'pidgin' English, but also in different Nigerian languages - Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba and Efik. The themes of these songs were and are still similar to those of the traditional songs: love, death, praise, satire, and philosophical reflections. Western harmony dominated the tonalist while rhythm was and still is hybrid: an amalgam of Western and African patterns.

The government, through the establishment of the radio, and television stations and by the importation of commercial gramophones and records encouraged the growth of more popular bands and the rapid dissemination of music to all corners of the country possible, gaoler and quicker. Broadcasting stations created a new breed of traditional artist-musicians of all classes whose products fed the broadcasting programme. However, these electronic media are, to a large extent, responsible for the considerable decline in spontaneous music-making in the villages and for the commercialization of traditional music.

Another agency, quasi-governmental in nature, which made a significant contribution to the promotion of performing and aesthetic arts was the British Council. Although it sought principally "to ensure that the best of British drama, music and the visual arts is displayed overseas at the

most effective place and time", it was also the agency that initiated the idea of a Nigerian Festival of the Arts in 1949 to enable Nigerian artists, musicians, dancers and craftsmen to display their art to the public as an annual event.[38] Today, the Nigerian Festival of the Arts is a virile force in promoting traditional cultures both at the State and National Levels.

However, in spite of the government's attempt at urbanization, Igbo society remains basically agrarian and therefore, rural there are many people who are not very much affected by urban life style. There are also those who seem to have no desire to embrace Christianity or to acquire western education. They hold tenaciously to the tenets of traditional religion and customs, and guard jealously all the essential musical practices that support those cultural elements.

Furthermore improved means of communication, a high degree of social security and commercial incentives among other factors, have promoted more frequent and closer culture contacts between the Igbo and other culture groups in the country and the outside world at large. Consequently, a greater borrowing of material and cultural element is encouraged. For example, in more recent years, institutions such as the Ogboni cult infiltrated into Igboland from Yorubaland. So also are various types of the so-called 'African Churches'.[39] Similarly, Ofala festival continued to circulate within the country. Commenting on the Ofala festival which he claimed to have originated in Igala division, Marius Nkwo pointed out that Ofala was "the principal festival of all the Igbos around Onitsha.

These places included Anambra, the Niger Igbo of Atani, Ogbaru, Osomari, Odekpe, Ndoni, and Abo. Even towns farther in, like Olu in Igara division had Ofala as their premier festival".[40] The Ofala festival, J.O. Nzekwu testified, was introduced into Aguleri from Onitsha in 1912 by

King Joseph Odigo II.41 Chieftaincy is now a popular traditional affair among the Ibo and every distinguished chief tries to organise his own yearly Ofala festival.

The contribution of demobilised soldiers at the end of the Second World War needs to be mentioned. The Nigerian soldiers who served in the army in different parts of the Commonwealth brought back many new songs and new vocabulary, among other cultural innovations. W.J. Griffith reported that "the soldiers (during the second world war) brought back many new words and songs from the Army" -

"A-banna Killer me die-oh!
Male male male sodjer deidei
Male male male polis bansa."[42]

Ekpe music was borrowed from the Efik whereas Ekpo may have come from the Ibibio; Sakara music and musical instruments from the Yoruba and the Akara dance from Ghana. Harcourt Whyte gives an impressive account of one of such musical borrowings which is worth quoting in extenso:

In the early part of the twentieth century, about 1915 or a little later, a type of music came from Gold Coast to the Rivers Province in Nigeria. It was known as the Asiko. It was brought by the ships crews, and passed over to their comrades working on the beach. Within a short time, the natives started to copy the music of the strangers, and about three years afterwards the music became general among all who live along the coast. About 1920, the music changed into what was known as the Ijaw and was sung and danced for many years by the people of the Rivers Province. About 1940, the music passed northward through Southern Nigeria, where

it changed from Ijaw to Okombo and from Okombo to Abaina, and as it changed, the singing and dancing changed with it. Now the difference between the Abaina and the Asiko is so great that if the ships' crews who brought it to the Rivers Province hear it, they would not recognise it as Asiko.[43]

Three phases are discernible in post-colonial Nigeria, each corresponding to the different political, social, and cultural vicissitudes which the Igbo experienced: 1960 to July 1967; July 1967 to January 1970; and January 1970 to the present. The last two are outside the scope of this essay.

1960-July, 1967

Generally, throughout the first phase which covered the attainment of independence and the beginning of the civil war, the urge to revive and promote Igbo musical practices as a means of asserting nationhood was strong, hence traditional songs and dances of all kind became a feature of a popular radio programme entitled "Our Kind of Music". The television house varied and intensified its live performance of folk drama to the delight of the people. The music of the Classical masters' were not neglected because "Concert Hour", a two-hour music programme of these classics, was a Sunday afternoon favourite. Regional and National Festivals of the Arts also were great incentives to people to become deeply involved in this cultural rebirth and evidence of this is seen in the performance of stereotyped dances such as the Nkpokiti and Etilogwu.

The Court music and orchestras of the kings such as those of the Obi of Onitsha and Nsukka mentioned earlier, which had been essential elements of the traditional political organisation, were adapted to play a new role in electioneering campaigns. Ames reports: "Korodu bands played

with an ensemble of calabash horns, are especially popular in the villages of Obimo, and can be heard all the year round at second burials, public festivals and on the occasion of a visit by a minister of state or some other important dignitary".[44] As an agent of political expression, political songs generally condemned colonialism in its varied forms, castigated rival political groups, satirised party renegades and party ideologies. Party supporters and thugs were, and still are, the purveyors of these songs which are spontaneously composed, sung unaccompanied because the singers want the words to reach the people. They are orally transmitted to all nooks and corners of the electorate with the aid of microphones mounted on party vans. Every political gathering, formal and informal, offered a forum for singing these songs, which enlarged the repertoire of songs in most Igbo communities.

The establishment of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in 1960 with a college of music (among other disciplines) is a landmark in the history of music education in Nigeria. "Sowande College of Music", as it was called, is the first department of music in Nigeria to offer both degree and diploma programmes in music. Its curriculum is also unique because since the University is established to meet the needs of Nigeria, it was decided that its music programme should reflect the diversified musical scene in Nigeria.[45] To this end, "the courses designed for the music students," reported Dr. Edna M. Edet, the first Head of Department of this College "ran the gamut of western musical knowledge and included lectures in African music, African musical instruments, and seminars in ethnomusicology and African music".[46] The new crop of academic musicians who graduated from this double musical programme in the pre-civil war period were eight: Emeka Nzewi, Samuel Ojukwu, Felix Nwuba, Michael Okoye, Adolf Ahanotu, Azubike Ifionu, Achinivu K. Achinivu and Nwokolobia Agu.

By such exposure and orientation, these musicians became more aware of the potentialities of our folk songs, folk music and dances as rich sources of compositional materials. They also appreciated the depth of the idioms in their musical compositions. Those who found employment in the Broadcasting Houses encouraged the feature of more of our traditional folk songs and dances in the music programmes. More interest in our traditional musical heritage. And the fact that African music is a very important study in all the departments of music in various universities, colleges of education, and most Institutes of African Studies is as a result of this wind of change that started from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Such was the situation of things when the civil war broke out, a war that more or less created a cultural lacuna in the Igbo traditional musical scene: Ofala, and other primary calendric festivals as well as title-taking ceremonies which offered opportunities for large scale music-making in the communities were suspended. All and sundry were preoccupied with the war effort. But two main types of music dominated the radio programme: western military music; and music of the traditional war songs and dances. Finlandia, which furnished the melody of the Biafran National Anthem, was one of the Symphonic Poems composed by Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) in 1890's but was revised in 1900. Just as this music was a nationalist expression of his country's struggle for freedom from the political bondage of the Russians, it also served as an index for the political and emotional agony of the oppressed people of Biafra. This spiritual dejection pervaded the tone and mood of songs composed in Igboland generally at that time of crisis and distress.

Conclusion

The above exposition underscores the fact that Igbo traditional music did not escape the dynamics of change. Before the advent of Western

civilization the change took the form of mutual musical borrowing within the Igbo culture area and also between the Igbo and their neighbours. The advent of European influences in form of western education, christianity, international trade, advanced technology and dissemination of music through the mass media, intensified and widened this musical acculturation in scope and content.

However, at no stage was this change either wholesale or sudden for some music forms were (and still are) resistant to change. Whatever changes that took place were gradual and continuous. The establishment of the Sowande College of Music with its bimusical programme at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in 1961/62 gave the cultural traffic a some-what global dimension which resulted in the cross fertilization of Igbo and European musical idioms and styles and the intensive academic study of and research in our traditional music. The resultant elements did not force a change in the traditional musical culture but rather enlarged its scope. But the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) isolated some parts of the Igbo culture area for nearly three years, stemmed the tide of cultural current and created a musical lacuna which marked the end of an Igbo musical era.

Notes

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