

# CHAPTER 41

## CHORAL ART MUSIC COMPOSITION ACCOMPANIMENT: SELECTED IBIBIO TRADITIONAL INSTRUMENTS

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### Abstract

Music is a very significant aspect of life of any group of people. It is embedded in the cultural life of the people as expressed in their norms and values in terms of their culture, social, and moral values. Ibibio music is socially controlled and normally associated with important social, religious or political events. The research method used for this study was survey research design. The paper focused on the use of Ibibio indigenous instruments as accompaniment to Ibibio traditional choral art music compositions. It emphasizes the role of traditional instrument as accompaniment to music in promoting social and cultural values of the Ibibio. It was observed that Ibibio vocal and instrumental music are difficult to separate, the dialect is inflectional thus producing speech rhythm that has influenced drumming and dancing style. The study is a bold and courageous attempt at creating and documenting new genres in the contemporary Ibibio church musical works repertoire, and in addition it will serve as research materials for further musicological and compositional research in the near future. Ibibio traditional orchestra accompaniment promotes customs and traditions and also values of the people. Recommendations were made at the end of the research.

**Keywords:** Culture, Tradition, Orchestra, Accompaniment, Choral, Composition, Ibibio.

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### Introduction

African music is an art that encourages communal experience within the people of its environs. This is because, Africans generally, are fond of celebrating social events like age grade, initiation, coronation, birth, death, marriage. All these are oftentimes celebrated with music. Omibiyi-Obidike (2002) justifying this states that: for almost everywhere one turns to, one encounters one

form of music or the other. Traditional music composition in Africa has over time, been taken for granted in the aspect of accompaniment. This, which could be due to the influence of westernization, African music which is tonal because of its speech pattern has had to be altered by the use of a piano as an accompaniment to suit the western laws of harmony thereby distorting the tone colors, contours, idioms, accent, and communicative song texts embedded in African music used in language communication. Nwamara (2017) states that, the entire life of an average Igbo (from cradle to grave) revolves round the arts generally and most especially the musical arts. Many aesthetic features of a wide range of the arts of music, dance and drama fill the lives and environments of Igbo rural communities.

As the very essence of culture, folk music forms the basis of people's traditional identity. This is also applicable in Ibibio land. Hence, Ibibio traditional music, like other traditional music in Nigeria, is not just practiced for ordinary entertainment purposes, but also an art that influences the general life of the ethnic group. The musical arts of the Ibibio symbolize ways of life and thoughts of the people, and this is reflected in their culture which is very peculiar even in their dressing. Nwamara (2006-2008), again states that: The continuous decline in the interest of the Igbo, especially the youths, in Igbo music appreciation, composition and practice, and the craze for its western counterpart, is obvious. This has adversely affected so many areas of the life of the Igbo. In the church, the story is the same as church musicians and composers have followed suit, composing and performing what can be best described as Western music-influenced. This is also true about Ibibio music, quite some compositions have been done in Ibibio using the western instrument (especially the piano) as accompaniment. In Ibibio land, traditional music is often performed with the traditional orchestra instrument as passed down, since 'tradition', according to Encarta Dictionary, is the passing down of customs or beliefs from one generation to another. Akpabot (1975) states that: Ibibio vocal and instrumental music are difficult to separate, because their dialect is inflectional, producing speech rhythm that has influence their drumming and dancing style.

Hence, the focus of this paper is on the use of traditional instrument to accompany traditional choral music composition, with reference to Ibibio orchestra instrument. It emphasis the role of traditional music in promoting social and cultural values of the Ibibio. The selected Ibibio percussive orchestra instruments used by the Ibibio as an accompaniment is tied to speech melody and speech rhythm. Traditional (indigenous) music is the music of the people handed down from one generation to another. The research method used for this study was survey research design. Nworgu (2006:72) 'a survey research design is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analysing data from only a few people or items considered to be

representative of the entire group.' It is anchored on the theory of continuity and change as propounded and first used by Herskovits and Bascom (1975). The main thrust of the theory is continuity of tradition as passed down in the face of changes as accepted by the ethnic's community.

### **Ibibio Traditional Music and Accompaniment**

The traditional make-up of Ibibio music is not entirely different from other ethnic groups in Africa, this is because compositional characteristics are not exclusive to one community, culture, or country; one can extract the dominant musical concepts and procedures in a given area. The music is vocal, instrumental (traditional), or vocal and instruments; and this helps to create and apply effectively, the various constructs and techniques of Ibibio which reflect the cultural idioms, phrases, and concepts of Ibibio music. Ibibio music is used for either ritual or non-ritual purposes. The latter is purely for entertainment, while the former is used for the praise of deities and ancestral gods. Songs in Ibibio are sung and played in social gatherings such as marriage, coronation, birth, and so on; furthermore, the type of music familiar to these people, is usually in the form of the orchestra and is symbolic. Accompaniment according to the dictionary, is defined as a part, usually performed by instruments, that gives support or adds to the background in music, or adds for ornamentation. Nwamara (2019) quoting Chukwu (2007), defines musical instruments as: Humanly designed and constructed mechanisms which when struck, bowed, plucked, blown or touched (depending on the pressure exerted on such instrument), produce certain sounds that are generally accepted by the makers and users of such instrument(s). This implies that the sounds need to be accepted by the makers and users of these instruments before it becomes an instrument for such people. The traditional accompaniment of the Ibibio is usually performed by the ethnic's traditional instruments, giving support to the voice as a means of communication, warning, treatment, abuses, and so on. Their musical art symbolizes their ways of life, reflecting in their dressing, dance, style, language, and music. Jagger (1974) posits that: music to the contemporary African is directed at people and their cultural activities. The selected Ibibio traditional orchestra instrument referred to in this study falls under two categories: the membranophone and the idiophones, all of which are referred to as drum as they are percussive and rhythmical; and are used for ritual and non-ritual ceremonies. In African orchestra, Akpabot (1967) observed that: the drum is the foundation of most African music ensembles and it fits into both the percussive and the melodic rhythm. Hence, the drum will be used to include other instruments; this is because they are all percussive and melodic rhythms, which usually maintain their melodic lines and fragments.

These instruments are: Eka Ibib, Ekpat Ebon, Nkwong, Ntaokrok, and Abang.

### **Findings and Discussions**

Ibibio melodies are short and repetitive; not rigidly structured on one syllable. Like other ethnic groups, Ibibio melodic form also makes use of the dynamic qualities from the rhythmic

framework already used to organize their sound materials as their melodic lines are guided by word (lyrics). This also has a great effect on the percussive instruments of Ibibio rhythmic patterns especially, on the *Ibid*. Their melodic patterns are also restricted to phrase because Ibibio music in a general phenomenal, are controlled by either speech pattern or by their traditional instruments because of the limited ranges of the instruments. This, often times is combined (that is the melody (voice) and instruments). In his opinion, Akpabot (1998) confirmed that: All the rhythmic patterns found in African music can be classified primarily under three headings - Percussive, Melodic, and Speech rhythm. Percussive rhythm is provided by idiophones and membranophones, and melodic rhythm by aerophones, chordophones, and tuned idiophone. Speech rhythm is provided by syllabic cadences of human speech like the rhythm from the words of a song. Common with traditional choral music in Ibibio land, is the percussive rhythm which according to Akpabot, is provided by the idiophone and membranophone instruments. The selected Ibibio instruments of this study are six in number; one membranophone and five idiophones; and are all constructed with high, medium, and low tones.

### **Selected Ibibio Traditional Instruments**

The Ibibio traditional instrument are grouped as follows:

<b><i>Ibibio</i></b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Classification</b>
<i>Eka Ibid</i>	drum	membranophone
<i>Nkwong</i>	gong	idiophone
<i>Ekpat obon or Nsak</i>	rattle	idiophone
<i>Ntaokrok</i>	woodblock	idiophone
<i>Obodom</i>	wooden drum	idiophone
<i>Abang</i>	pot-drum	idiophone

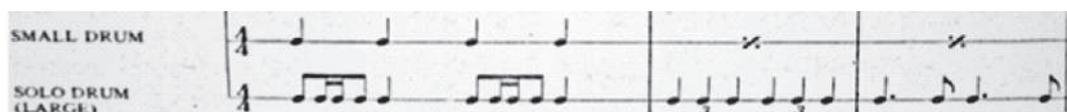
#### ***Eka Ibid (drum):***

The drum is the foundation of most African music, according to Akpabot (1975). It fits into the percussive and melodic rhythm. The *ibid* are of different types but mostly in larger or small sizes, used for non-ritual purposes. The large skin drum *Eka Ibid* is symbolically used to play solo, imitating the voice during accompaniment. Other types of Ibibio drums which are used for the ritual purpose are the: *Nsin Obon* used for *Obon* secret society, and the three-legged *Ibid Ekpo* used for the Ekpo society. The drum is made of wood and covered by animal skin used as a membrane. It is tuned by little pegs attached to the sides around the drum head. The larger the drum, the lowest the sound, and the more eloquent it talks during accompaniment. They are usually covered at only one end. It is a membranophone classified instrument. This is a single-headed drum, (cylindrical). Taxonomically, it is classified as a membranophonic instrument. The *eka ibid* is a percussive and melorhythmic instrument. The shell is commonly made of wood, the head is made of animal skin, and is fastened to the shell with pegs or lace around the border of the



**Plate I: Eka Ibid**

The *iso ibid* or *ikpa ibid* (the skin) is the most valuable part of the *eka ibid*. The *idem ibid* is the body of the *eka ibid*; while *ubok mbre ibid*, are the hands that are used to play the *eka ibid*. The *odu ibid* is the hollow space at the bottom of the *eka ibid*, and the *mkpafak ibid* are the little sticks used to increase the tension of the *eka ibid*, while the *uruk ufuk ibid* is the rope tied around the *eka ibid* to hold the *mkpafak ibid* firm. See an example of rhythms played by *Eka Ibid* and *Ibid* (large and small drum):



Example 1.

***Nkwong (gong):***

The gong is also identified as the bell rhythm. The bell rhythm is said to be the standard rhythm of the gong and is found in almost all dance orchestras. There are two types or varieties of gong: the large conical shape producing one tone and the twin gong (which in Ibibio is called *Akang-kang*), which produces two tones, and is also small in size. According to Dietz (1965) opines that: gongs are used as the foundation of the orchestra's background rhythm section throughout Africa. It is an idiophone classified instrument.

This is commonly referred to as *Agogo* (in Yoruba) and is prevalent in Nigeria. It is a conical hollow shape percussive instrument made of metal that produces sound when stricken with a bamboo stick to keep a steady rhythmic beat throughout the music. It is taxonomically classified under the idiophone instrument. It is also in different sizes (see plate II).

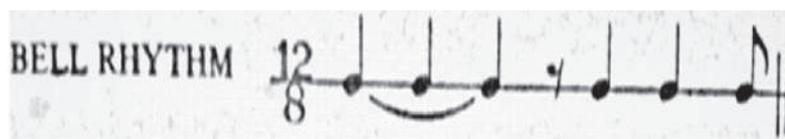


**Plate II: Nkwong**

The *nsip* or *eto*, is the bamboo stick used in playing the *Nkwong*; while the *idem nkwong* is the bell-like body of the *nkwong*. See an example of the rhythm played by the *Nkwong* which is similar to the bell rhythm:



Example 2a.

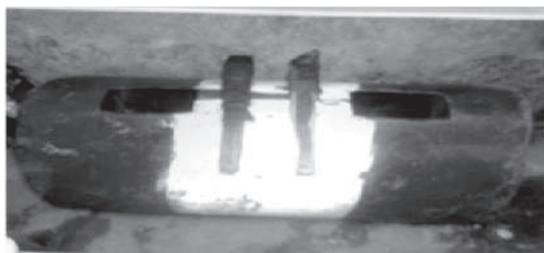


Example 2b.

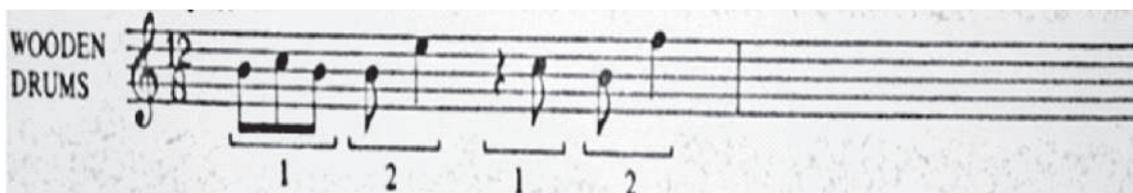
### ***Obodom* (wooden drum):**

The wooden drum comes in small and large sizes and it is prominent only among the Ibibios, Ibos, and Ijaw. While it is *Obodom* in Ibibio; it is known as *Ekwe* in Ibo. It is sometimes called - slit drum, classified as idiophone but functions as a membranophone during accompaniment. It is carved out from a tree trunk and made in different sizes. (Akpabot 1975). It was noted that wooden drum was wrongly described as slit drum or wooden gong; a suggestion was made by Tracy (1969) that wood drum might be better since it is made of wood. Though the standard name is wooden drum because it has been in use for a long time. It is classified as an idiophone instrument.

It is taxonomically classified as an idiophone. It is also known as the wooden or slit drum or *ekwe* (Ibo). It is carved out of a piece of a tree trunk, with two hollow openings and played with two pallet stacks. The *obodom* is found among the southern and eastern people of Nigeria; the Ibos, the Ibibios, and the Ijaws. It is a melorhythmic instrument, capable of playing melody and rhythm. It is an indefinite pitch instrument that produces two tones; a major second, minor third or perfect fifth apart depending on the size. It can be used either singularly or in groups of two or three orchestral. It is constructed in different sizes; the one referred to is the large *obodom* played with two mallets or bamboo sticks. The rolling hollow sounding tone of the *obodom* is major characteristics of this work (see plate III).

Plate III: *Obodom*

The *eba ibid* of the *obodom* is the two hollow spaces, and it is the most valuable part of the *obodom*, and the *odu ibid* is the two holes of the *obodom*. The *idem ibid*, is the main body of the *obodom*, and while the *eto ibid* is the pair of bamboo sticks used in playing the *obodom* and it is cut to a desired length, and also the hard portioned peeled away for a desired shape. See the example of the rhythm played by the *Obodom* (wooden drum):



Example 3.

***Ekpat obon (rattle):***

There are six rattles readily identifiable in Nigeria. While it is *Ekpat Ebon in Ibibio*, the Yorubas call it *Sekere Agbe*. It is constructed from a dried-out gourd covered with netting often used by the Yorubas. *Ekpat Ebon* though mainly used for ritual purposes by the Ibibios, is a small bag or container filled with tiny stone which rattles when shaken. There are also the leg rattles which are used by dancers in order to add colors to their dance movements. It is classified as idiophone.

It is also known as the rattle, filled with rattling objects which rattle when shaken. It is an indefinite rhythmic instrument that is taxonomically classified as an idiophone instrument, known as a 'noise making' instrument. It is played with both hands by holding up the handle while shaking the rattling objects in the container to produce sound (see plate IV).



**Plate IV: *Ekpat Ebon***

Example 4

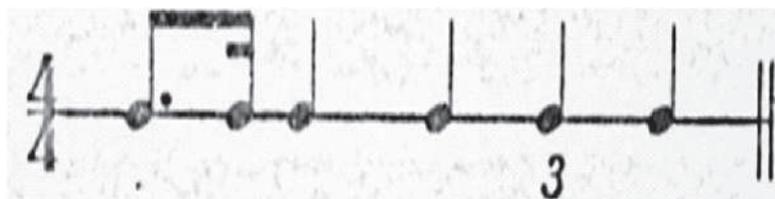
***Ntaokrok (woodblock):***

This is a slit with one opening. It is held with the hand or placed between the two legs in the case of a larger one and played with a bamboo stick. It is also known as the woodblock; taxonomically, it is classified as an idiophone instrument. In Ibibio music, the role of *Nkanika* (bell rhythm) is played by the *Ntaokrok* instead of *Nkanika* (see plate V).



**Plate V: Ntaokrok**

The *eto* is the bamboo sticks used in playing the *Ntaokrok*, the *odu* is the hole of the *Ntaokrok* out of which the sound is produced. While *idem* is the body of the *Ntaokrok*. It is placed between the two legs while striking with the *eto*, maintaining a sitting position either with one of the two hands. See an example of rhythm played by the *Ntaokrok* (woodblock):



Example 5.

***Abang* (pot drum):**

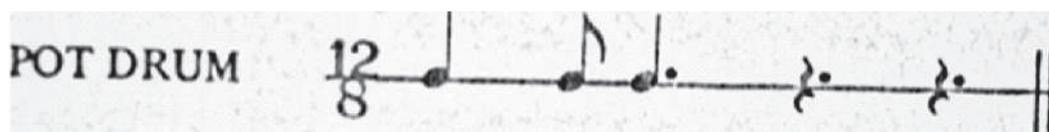
It is known to the Ibibio as *Abang* and to the Igbo as *Udu*. It is primarily used by women in groups of two, three, or more as an accompaniment to singing. This is also known as the pot-drum or the pitcher drum as used by the Ibibio has one hollow hole opening. Some other types come in a large and small pitcher with a hole on the side. Sound is produced by the player striking the open end of the pot with the *eto abang* which is the beater of the *Abang*.

It produces two tones that are muffled rhythmically. The right hand strikes the large opening while the left-hand strikes the small opening (see plate VI).



**Plate VI: Abang**

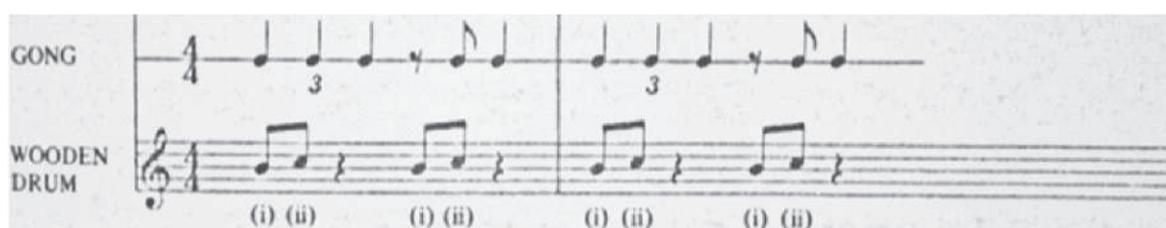
The *ubok abang* is the two handles of the *abang*; the *odu* is the hollow part that resonates when beaten. The *idem*, is the body while, the *eto abang* is the beater used to strike the hollow space of the *abang* and of course, the *efut abang* which is the bottom of the *abang*. See an example of rhythm played by the *Abang* (pot drum):



Example 6b

Other Ibibio rhythmic examples of the selected traditional orchestra are seen below:

Example 8, shows two tones of the wooden drum (i) and (ii), and the gong.



Example 8.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been shown in the study that the Ibibio vocal and instrumental music are difficult to separate since their language (dialect) is inflectional. And that it also produces speech rhythm that influences their drumming and dancing style. The Ibibio melodic patterns are restricted to phrase because their music in general phenomenal, are controlled by either speech pattern or by their traditional orchestra instruments due to the limited ranges of the ethnic's orchestra instruments. It has also shown that Ibibio traditional music composition combines the melody (voice) and instruments which reflect in their ways of life, dressing, dance, and cultural norms and values. The researcher has at this point created and prepared grounds for further studies, as this should be a challenge to music composers of Ibibio land.

### Recommendation

The researcher in this paper has, therefore, attempted to enrich scholars on the Ibibio traditional orchestra instrument hence, suggest that Ibibio traditional choral music composition and their traditional accompaniment should be revived and encouraged as passed down so as not to bring about the extinction of the ethnic's traditional orchestra instrument. This is so as not to lose the tonal accent and inflections of the Ibibio language. Ibibio music and their traditional accompaniment like other African traditional choral music compositions can be attractive to foreign students, thereby bringing in national earnings from foreign countries which will increase

and boost the nation's policy, if the tradition of accompanying Ibibio traditional music composition with the ethnic's traditional orchestra instrument, is adhered to. Ibibio traditional orchestra instruments and others should be given priority in our school curriculum just like, if not more than, the western orchestra instruments; especially in our higher institution of learning for in-depth learning and mastery.

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## APPENDICES

