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Full Length Research

'*Ogene Anuka*' The Bell Orchestra That Invokes Spirit Possession Among The Igbo Of South-Eastern Nigeria In Traditional Religion: A Study In Ethnomusicology

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These, are those African Traditional instruments that depends on the vibration of their whole body as source of sound production thereby transmitting certain religious messages which cannot easily be decoded and interpreted. Sound is an essential medium in mediating with God (s), ancestor veneration and worship in traditional religion. Sound has been shown to be intrinsically important in aiding of spirit invocation and possession in religious communication. This paper focuses on creation of spirit possession through the mediating power of sound produced by beating of bell – *Ogene*. It explores how in dance ritual spirits emerges as a manifestation of the group's intrinsic power of accomplishment, adaptation, and invention. Moving through ritual spaces and will, these dancers utilize their independent and ritual performative power in order to actively develop their religious practices through the mediation of sound. This type of description has been classified to *Ogene Anuka* which is our main point of focus in this paper as a musicology study.

Keywords: Bell, Devotees, Ethnomusicology, Power, Ritual and Sound.

INTRODUCTION

This is a locally made instrument that is carved out from a log of iron through indigenous technology. It is a talking-drum which when beaten with sticks, it invariably gives rise to melodious sounds. It comes in different shapes and sizes and this depends on the description of the town. It is basically made from iron constructed locally. In view of this, these kinds of musical instruments of different makes are often used in many parts of Igbo communities to transmit cultic verses and messages. Expert in such traditional instruments use them for entertainments and to disseminate religious messages and beliefs. Those who are knowledgeable in this area can easily decode the meanings from their various sounds and rhythms (Nabofa, 1994:39).

Ethnomusicology as a Study

This paper is structured on the study of the *Ogene Anuka* as an Igbo idiophone in the African traditional religions with specific reference to sacred sound in religious practice. In this study, the two approaches that I have used are ethnographic approach to the study of religion and ethnomusicological approach to the study of idiophone. Considering the empirical nature of the research project, in this paper, I explain the method(s) used in conducting my research as well as the range on instruments and procedures for data collection.

Methodological Framework

Ethnography is a method identifying and explaining a structural system through analyzing the core principles and values that actually constitutes the system of investigation (Clifford and Marcus, 1986:2-3). In ethnomusicology on the other hand, according to Nettl, one must study each musical tradition in terms of the theoretical system that its own culture provides for it (1973:151). The principal methodologies or investigative paradigms that have been and are the bases for the scholarly study of indigenous music and religious music are: the scientific historical method, the analytical method and the critical/interpretive method.

However, because of this study, I have based my methodology on the critical/interpretive method in musicology. The reason is because the critical/interpretive method in musicology explores the comprehensive interpretation and the total evaluation of what a musical work entails within the frame work/ambit of its contexts—historical, political, sociological, and economic, as well as aesthetic. In this way, it basically differs from the analytical method, which generally explores the work of music to have a partially, if not completely, autonomous status with respect to its possible context (Kerman, 1985:154). Traditional religious practices as performative therefore, include speaking, singing, dancing, and gesticulation, which have some symbolic meanings and thus more suited to an interpretive approach.

Ethnomusicology as a method of research forces the researcher to enter the world of the people investigated. It involves in my own case, ritual and celebrations which I examined properly and now draws a general evaluation and infer something about its meaning and significance. This method does not exclude interviews around specific questions but are largely done using unstructured interviews which made the respondent rather than the researcher determine the direction of the 'conversation' (Dawson, 2007:29; and Rugg and Petre, 2007:12) instead of being a dominant researcher who is "typically the one who initiates the conversation, controls its direction, and terminates it" (Scott, 1990:30). In my case, I made use of participatory and observation methods which afforded me the opportunity to act as an observer-participant during the *Ovala* ritual festival in Aguleri cosmology where the *Ogene Anuka* features prominently.

Ethnomusicology is the fieldwork method, thus a method concerned with investigating situations and relationships that constitute people's daily lives (Sanders, 1999:47). Fieldwork is also called naturalistic research—research that takes place within the natural setting of the social actor (Mouton and Marias, 1988:1). According to Van Maanen (1988:3), fieldwork is then a means to an end, while Mouton and Marias (1988) calls fieldwork, qualitative research. They suggest that "… qualitative researchers prefer to use unstructured or informal interview, i.e., interviews which employ a set of themes and topics in order to form questions in the course of the conversation" (Mouton and Marias, 1988:12).

The parameters of my study as a researcher were limited and that it was subject to the felt concerns of the interlocutors. The broad objective of my research was actually negotiated with the interlocutors. According to Agnew and Pyke (1982:45), ethnomethodology is a 'go–and-see' method—the 'eyeball' technique, which is the core of fieldwork method. In this regard, in the study of the significance of the *Ogene Anuka* as an idiophone of religious practice, I used observation, description, and interpretation methods as (Agnew and Pyke, 1982) because they require no manipulation and no controlled experimentation.

The field research was conducted between July and September 2013 in the form proposed by Mouton and Marias (1988) and Agnew and Pyke (1982) in that I observed the natural behaviour of people in the field as they perform traditional religious rites and ceremonies. According to Peter Dunbar-Hall, this can "achieved through various means: physical positioning of audiences, timetabling, subtle suggestions of when it was appropriate to leave" (2006:63). Observation was carried out in an ordinary Igbo – Aguleri social context and also during festivals where the *Ogene Anuka* featured most prominently.

Jean Kidula argues that "ethnomusicology has moved from European positioning of other cultures to viewpoints and reportage by indigenous cultures of their own selves — from dominance of Euro-American scholars as objective outsiders, to a recognition that all scholars are biased by their backgrounds, exposure and agenda" (2006:110). This discipline now includes local researchers, performers, and voices – all of whom are contributing to our understanding of indigenous musical practices, which means that that in general ethnomusicological practice has moved beyond cultural ethnographies to more musicological analyses. Kidula (2006:99) argues that today, the recording and documentation of African music and sounds continue to be restricted to such fields as ethnomusicology, comparative musicology and even systematic musicology - concepts originally intend to serve the European and African scholastic curriculum. Celia Applegate argues that this is done in order "to demystify the Western canon in general and to shake off German influences, whether musical or musicological, in particular" (1998:275). Likewise, John Mohawk (2004) asserts that there have been changes, transformations, and challenges to the prevailing meta-narratives in Western culture. Molara Ogundipe (2007) writes that we must recuperate ideas from our primal or indigenous cultures in order to use or adapt them for development if we do not respect our past, or understand it enough to

make discriminating adaptations of it for our movement forward. She argues that "these cultural and historical pasts are not very past but are still very present with us" (Ogundipe, 2007:15).

Gerard Behague (2006:91) writes that "ethnomusicology has taught us that musical instruments and styles are frequently the resultant effect of specific cultural determinants emanating from social ethno-historical, factors of various kinds". He thus argues that ethnomusicology concerns itself primarily with non-written musical traditions and attempts to integrate musical expressions of a given culture or community group. Ethnomusicology seeks to explain not only the structure of the musical product of a given society but also all elements – ethnic, social, historical, economic – that combine to establish the uniqueness of that product (Behague, 2006:91). Robert Young sees indigenous artifacts like the *Ogene Anuka* as "rich repositories of culture and counter-knowledge" (2003:114). According to Charles Seeger (1977:54) "the field of ethnomusicology is concerned with the analytical study of the process of variations of musical text, on the one hand, and the social context for music making on the other. It seeks to explore not only the structure of the musical products of a given society because it also examines the ethnic-elements, social-historical, and economic aspects''.

Ethnomusicology provides an ideal theoretical and analytical lens through which to investigate the uniqueness of the *Ogene Anuka*, as a case study. Nonetheless, indigenous sacred sound of African religion in the postcolonial era showcased religious objects as material expression of African religious paradigm. Euba describes it "as a representation of continuity with the past which gives opportunity of learning, in order that present may be better understood' (1969:475). Similarly, San Juan (1998) argues that indigenous ritual performance might also be imagined as new forms of creative power and resistance against the forces of modernity. Richard King (1999) in his *Orientalism and Religion* reminds us that in the postcolonial context, the master discourse is appropriated by the native whose agency reflects cultural resistance in the form of the mimicry and parody of colonial authority. Finally Gareth Griffiths asserts that "the project of the post-colonial text [or artifact]… can never lose sight of the determining cultural factors which bring it into being, since it is grounded in a perception of how self and other are constituted within a discursive matrix which includes the material forces and institutions of cultural production and reproduction" (1990:162). In short, ethnomusicology is seen as the site or domain within which the indigenous is being re-imagined, asserted and where hegemonic western forms are being resisted.

According to Marin Stokes "people can equally use music to locate themselves in quite idiosyncratic and plural ways… A moment's reflection on our musical practices brings home to us the sheer profusion of identities and selves that we possess'' (1997:3-4). Music would take the form of grapevine stories to alert the people on development planned for them (Wilson, 1998). Thus Murphy (2012) suggest that as music function to effect a cathartic release of pent-up frustration, it is conceived as healing contact with a transcendent will and purpose, encoded memories of another world of grace and freedom.

Eno Akpabio observes that music has been used even in "modern setting to aid the liberation struggle to address inequities in society, talk about the virtue of love, relationship and a myriad of other uses" (2003:20). Nathan Corbitt (1994) offers an insightful exploration of this aspect of music in his study on the role of music as agent of political expression for the Kikuyu people of Kenya in their resistance British colonial occupation. Thus both Obeng (2000) and Ohadike (2007) assert that in such cultural and political contexts, music becomes an instrument of resistance. In the context of the American civil rights movement, James Cone argues that "to understand the history of black resistance, it is also necessary to know the black spirituals. They are historical songs which speak about the rupture of black lives; they tell us about a people in the land of bondage and what they did to hold themselves together and to fight back" (1989:42). Likewise Ohadike reminds us that "songs and dances among African blacks in diaspora become the most articulated medium of protest that sustained their feelings and resistance" (2007:8).

Caleb Dube affirms that music is "used in the war to instill determination, inspiration and hope among fighters and everyone who participated" (1996:110). Nettl (1983) asserts that music is seen as something that functions as an aid, particularly in times of crisis. In South Africa, the song Enoch Sontonga, a mission school teacher composed in 1889 later became the national anthem (Corbitt, 1994:11). Hajduk reminds us that music is not always a gateway to better understanding and liberation but that it can also be "a vehicle for the expression of fervent nationalism, a rallying cry that unites one ethnic group against others" (2003:497). Nonetheless, Alain Corbin insists that in the postcolonial context "music sounds stands to signify and portray its role as signals, as markers of local identity, as symbol of authority and resistance, and hence as sites of religious, social and political struggle" (1998:196).

James Early in his article 'Sacred Sounds: Belief and Society' posits that "sacred sounds are not necessarily restricted to formal settings in which religious

rituals are performed for followers" (1997:2) as he illustrates how various civil and political spaces such as picketing lines are non-sacred spaces where religious music has been consistently and meaningfully incorporated. More so, the most interesting aspect of this is that in often in and through music, politics and religion are inter twined and that is the more reason why music serves as a major medium in traditional set up and is put into very powerful use as a functional part of it, a supportive material or a decorative material as the case may be. Simon Frith (1987:149) argues that what music can do is to put into play a sense of identity that may or may not fit the way we are placed by other social facts. Finally, Martin Stokes observes that "a sense of identity can be put into play through music by performing it, dancing to it, listening to it or even thinking about it. It can also leap across boundaries and put into play unexpected and expanding possibilities" (1997:24). This is precisely the conception of music and sound that I have deployed in the course of my study, and in the analysis of the religious and social significance of the *Ogene Anuka* the bell orchestra and the supposedly sacred sound that it produces.

Ethnomusicology as method

Ethnomusicology according to Alan Merriam (1964) was once defined as the study of music in culture and later he argues that this definition did not go far enough, that it is the study of music as culture. Helen Myers asserts that "ethnomusicology includes the study of folk music, Eastern art music and contemporary music in oral tradition as well conceptual issues such as the origins of music, musical change, music as symbol, universals in music, the function of music in society, the comparison of musical systems and the biological basis of music and dance" (1992:3). These definitions as adopted here are significant as the realization that the *Ogene Anuka* sound is a significant cultural product that was also the product creative human imagination. The study of the *Ogene Anuka* sound in relation to Igbo festivals has something to add in consideration of its role in that context.

It is also clear that method does not operate in a vacuum, and that there must always be a consideration not only in problems but of the theoretical framework along the lines of which an approach to the problem was carried out (Scoville and Wilson, 2003:4). Nettl (1973:151) asserts that in studying indigenous music, worldview of that particular cultural society should take preeminence. My interest in the *Ogene Anuka* music as a sacred sound is not simply to investigate it as a structural form but as a human phenomenon which functions as part and parcel of Aguleri culture and identity.

Merriam (1960:112) in her paper entitled "*Ethnomusicology Discussion and Definition of the Field*" suggests that the study of music can by no means exclude the historic, the structural, the aesthetic from equal consideration with the ethnological. The integration of the historic, structural and aesthetic is completely intertwined with an understanding and assimilation of the cultural background in which these aspects of the *Ogene Anuka* operate. Ethnomusicology as a method brings together the historical, the structural and the aesthetic aspects of culture and identity that is reflected in attitudes, practices and beliefs about music.

Of the three major principal methodologies for musicological research mentioned above, the most suitable method for my study which I used is the critical/interpretive method. The method made possible the comprehensive interpretation and evaluation of what the *Ogene Anuka* music as sacred sound means and as it pertains to spirit invocation and possession with all of its forms—historical, political, sociological, religious, economic, and aesthetic forms. Although, challenging what the musicology critics perceived as a reasonable demarcation between academic musicology and that of human experience of music, Kerman calls for a methodology that would draw upon "all modes of knowledge, including the theoretical and analytical, the intuitive, to help achieve a critical response to a place of music" (1985:154).

Nonetheless, the notion of transcendence would be an underpinning theory of my ethnomusicological research which has focused on the significant functions of the *Ogene Anuka* sound in enhancing spiritual experience and understandings among the Aguleri. I found John Blacking's (1967) ideas about transcendence through music, as discussed by Sager, to be suitable for my research. Rebecca Sager argues that Blacking did not focus upon trance per se but rather upon the whole experience of music. Accordingly Sager writes:

First is the idea that transcendent states are natural, normal, possible even necessary for the full development of a human being. The intensely integrating experience of transcendence is not the privilege of the few but something to be experienced [to varying degrees by] any normal human. Second is the idea that the other self – the transcendence state of the self – can manifest outwardly in many different ways, ranging from calm, still, inwardly focused behavior, across a spectrum to ever more overtly demonstrative expressive behaviours, including getting a spirit [or the spirit]. (2012:31).

Similarly Brackett (2012:125) asserts that "*while both religious, imply that experiences of transcendence derived from spirit possession may be widespread enough to support the idea of states occurring in secular music such as the blues*''. Thus it is my view that ethnomusicology provides a suitable methodological framework for a study concerned with the intersection

between music and religion in the postcolonial African context.

Origin of *Ogene Anuka*

Not minding the contestations and historical paradigm of the origin of *Ogene Anuka* as an indigenous instrument of the Igbo people O'dyke Nzewi asserts that oral tradition have it that "the music style in which it figures originated in Aguleri – a farming/fishing Igbo community on *Omambala* River basin of South-Eastern Nigeria" (2000:25). Nnamah (2002:9) comments that "it is also very vital to mention here that Aguleri is strategically located at the point of origin of Igbo land from where Igbo land spread further into the hinterland". He argues that the significance is that Aguleri as a town, represent the boundary of Igbo land from where Igbo land stretched eastwards to the rest of its heartland and equally, it is important to note that every major cultural expression in Igbo land in terms of arts, artifacts, symbolism, and names of different types and so on are found in Aguleri (Nnamah, 2002:9).

It is on this position that Neuman (1980:12) argues that ancient towns like Aguleri is "the birth place, ancestral home, and a historical centre of culture. Other areas, important as some have now become, are nevertheless derivative from tradition''. Insofar as some of the areas deriving their art music from the great tradition of Aguleri became, themselves, "great centers for the dissemination of musical culture, though geographically distant from its original place and surrounded by different local traditions, other areas remained little centers of the great tradition'' (Capwell, 1993:96). Isaiah Uzoagba (2000:38) affirms that societies like Aguleri are famous for different art formations such as sculptor, painting, carving, graphics and design and they equally demonstrate these arts on their musical instruments.

Oral history tells us that it was Odili Chukwuemeke from Eziagulu-Otu Aguleri who was the originator of the music, while Peter Ofordile who hails from Umuivearali, Umunoke-Ivite and Ayanti Aronu of Amaerulu-Ivite all in Aguleri town that popularised the music. Associated with this kind of music style is a factor that basically adds an embellishment to its flora, fun, enthusiasm and fantasy is the use of its sound respectively which has today become the choice for many communities in Igbo land and nobody seems to give any official recognition to its origin (Nnamah, 2002:8). In its live performance, the musicians dance around the open arena with rhythm and music that stir the crowd into unconscious emotion, nodding of heads and waving of hands, "a sight which can be better felt than described'' (Idigo, 1990:34) because "its powerful effects defy analysis'' (Watkins, 2004:186). It is during this kind of ritual dance that "the most scenic dance performances are displayed'' (Heuser, 2008:36). In this sense according to Nabofa, 2005:358) "the blending vibration coming from the music sways the whole congregation and it is not difficult for any one, whether member or not, to be moved, while the lending dictates the various steps of the dance". Nketia (1975:22) aptly observes that peoples' participation in music and dance is "an important means of strengthening the social bonds that bind them and the values that inspire their corporate life". It is on this position that Lawrence Grossberg (1995:370) argues that "there is little reason to privilege the live performance as if it were unmediated or as the only viable source of an authentic experience''. Ilesanmi (1996:5) argues that it is in this form that "these groups keep the traditional religion alive, annually looking forward to what gods has in store for them. Practice keeps religion alive; oral tradition makes it lively; the potency of predictions reassures the members and forces them to renew their faith in the deities''.

According to Nzewi, "the *Ogene Anuka* is an instrument of the struck idiophone class" (2000:25). He affirms that the construction of these bells is a specialty of craftsman in Awka, an iron-smiting Igbo community some 70km away from Aguleri but social migration within the Igbo land has made it possible for blacksmiths to settle in the performance community of the *Omambala* river basin (Nzewi, 2000: 25). Parrinder (1969:67) affirms that anyone who listens to this kind of African music "must have been impressed by the sonorous rehearsals of divine qualities". It is in this context that Nabofa (1994:10) echoes that the artistic/ritualistic object like the *Ogene Anuka* is regarded as "the people's theologians and religious spokesman. This is because it provides the language with which the people's thinking is expressed''. In this wise, African theology should be understood in the context of African life and culture (Appiah, 1995:119).

It is on this position that David Chidester (1996) the supposed discovery of such indigenous music was based on the practice of morphological comparison that established analogies between the strange and the familiar. He argues that morphology did not depend upon reconstructing historical links between ancient and contemporary religions; rather, morphological comparison relied exclusively on the observation of formal or functional resemblance (Chidester, 1996:18). No wonder why Francis Arinze (1973:51-52) writes that such "music is beginning to take on local colour. This is good and necessary. The experts in Igbo music tell us that Igbo music must respect the tonality of our language and also the recitative nature of many of our traditional chants".

But not withstanding the controversies on the origin, one thing that is clear is the fact that the ritual activities of the *Ogene Anuka* movement is filled with

ritual dance and songs that subdues the physical bodies of the devotees, while the spirit possession comes to the fore, in which a state of altered consciousness is attained and worship will be better effected. Michael Nabofa (2005:358) asserts that "these songs have been claimed to have been revealed to any of the members in dreams and in visions. They are not codified but learnt by memory because most members are illiterates". He argues that "the ability to be able to master these songs indicates how mature the person is, spiritually and also how involved the person is in the religion. Although, these songs are not written they are well punctuated and they blend with the musical instrument'' (Nabofa, 2005:358).

From the analysis of the above assertion, it has come to show that the historical paradigm of how the dance came into being which has been part and parcel of the Aguleri oral tradition that is somehow neglected. No wonder Jacob Olupona (1991) has observed that the failure to engage in a history of African religions has created the impression that the religion is static and unchanging and that in the history of religions, diachronic analysis can no longer be neglected. Such analysis normally leads to issues of continuity and change in African traditional religion (Olupona, 1991:3). Chidester draws our attention to the idea that "such oral tradition as a myth is not a story with canonical closure, but rather than being subject to timeless repetition, such a myth is opened and reopened by interpretation, and as a result, such myth is a type of ongoing cultural work" (1996:261). Anthony Aveni asserts that by this way "history is regarded as a chain of events, a process whereby every happening contributed to the causation of future events" (1998:315).

Ogene Anuka Dance As a Communicative System

The communicative value of music is however more apparent in Africa where music forms a very important part of their rich cultural heritage (Ohadike, 2007:9). Ohadike (2007:9) again argues that "Africans on the Continent and in the diaspora use music and dance to express their feelings and to preserve their culture and history'', and as a communication device, they "serve as a form of record keeping'' (Ohadike, 2007:11). Rodney comments that:

Music and dance had key roles in uncontaminated African society. They were ever present at birth, initiation, marriage, death, as well as appearing at times of recreation. Africa is the continent of drums and percussion. African peoples reached the pinnacle of achievement in that sphere. Because of the impact of colonialism and cultural imperialism…Europeans and Africans themselves in the colonial period lacked due regard for the unique features of African culture. Those features have a value of their own that cannot be eclipsed by the European culture either in the comparable period before 1500 or in the subsequent centuries. They cannot be eclipsed because they are not really comparable phenomena (1973:41-42).

Hudgens and Trillo (1990:52) affirms that "nowhere in the world is music more a part of the very process of living than in Africa'', without it "the efficacy of the people's worship are reduced to nothing'' (Akinfenwa, 2013:6). Pratt (1914:60) echoes that "of these artistic appeals, none is on the whole more penetrating or more intense than music. Nothing that can be urged by those who profess themselves to be insensible to musical impressions, or by those who have become righteously exacerbated by the misuse of sacred music here or elsewhere, can break the force of this general truth. There is no artistic means of getting at the internal springs of feeling in popular heart that can compare with music''. Leonard (1906:429) argues that "the religion of the natives [Africans] is their existence and their existence is their religion. It supplies the principles on which their law is dispensed and morality adjudicated. The entire organization of their common life is so interwoven with it that they cannot get away from it''. No wonder, Shorter (1978:49) affirms that "…Africans are notoriously religious'', while Isichei (1976:24) particularly asserts that through the music like the *Ogene Anuka* "the Igbos are nothing if not profoundly religious, and all accounts of their life reflect the fact''. Stephen Ezeanya (1980:324) posits that in Africa, "life is religion, and religion is life''. Ekeke (2013:3) argues that "this means that religion could not be explained away in Africa and whoever tries it will be seen as a stranger to Africa''. Mbiti (1975:9) asserts that religion is by far the richest part of the African heritage. In this wise, Chernoff describes African religion as a "danced belief'' (1999:172), and as a form of worship that is visible and inherently attached to bodily action (Heuser, 2008:35). Buttressing this further, James Early posits that:

Throughout world history sacred sounds have served as a medium for human cultures to raise queries, advance beliefs, give praise, and inspire others to join in exploration of the mysteries of earthly existence and the greater universe. These sacred sound traditions encompass a broad range of expressive forms: melodic and repetitive vocalizations called chants; sharp, passionate, emotions-filled hums, groans, shouts; percussive, rhythmic hand claps and foot stomps; and extended song, sermon, and instrumental arrangements. Instrumental music, sung prayers, and mystical chants have been used to communicate with the divine, to unite religious communities, and to express moral, political, social, and economic aspirations. Sacred sounds in many traditions are the central means for invocation of spirits. The utterance of particular sounds is thought by many cultures to form a connection to all the elements of

the universe. In some belief systems music and sound vibrations are pathways for healing body, mind, and spirit. Among the wide range of human expressive behavour, the capacity to infuse the joys, sorrows, and humility that characterize religious and spiritual beliefs into oral poetry, chants, songs, and instrumental music is certainly one of the most powerful and inspirational ways all peoples and cultures acknowledge the spirit of the Supreme in their lives (1997:1).

Akinfenwa (2013:7) asserts that "*the origin of music and dance is a mystery, but their importance cannot be over emphasized in religious circle"*. According to NTI:

In the olden days, during the Stone Age, records show that Africans were mostly wanderers moving from place to place and living inside caves. Their major occupation was hunting for animals which served them for food. When the man comes home in the evening he tells his family stories of his exploits for the day. Imitating the movements of the animals that he encountered in the forest. Some scholars believed that it was from his imitation of the movement of birds that dance was born (1990:20).

Buttressing this further, Wosien (1992:17) affirms that "man was taught how to dance by the animals, which he observed closely and learned to imitate. He depended on them for his food, clothing, tools and weapons, and therefore needed to study their habits and characteristics''. Akinfenwa (2013:7) argues that "people specialized on them and earned their daily bread. Music and dance cannot be replaced by anything in the world. A world without music and dance will face trouble. This is because of the important position they occupied in worship. Man was made to worship the Supreme Being and the worship is not complete without music and dance''. Music infuses all the activities of the African from the cradle to the grave (Hailey, 1957:67). Awolalu (1991:132) affirms that "the Africans are a singing race. A lot of their music is of a religious nature. In these songs, they portray their joy and sorrow, their hopes and fears. In each song there is a wealth of material for the student who will patiently sift and collate. Ritual songs and dancing follow prescribed patterns and a study of them will reveal a lot of the people's beliefs''. According to Ruth Stone (1994:391) "religious aspect of music is fundamental to the very being of many musical acts and cannot be stripped from the performance. Thus, it is only for analytical ends that we can, to any extent, pull the religious from the performance bundle from temporary scrutiny''.

Reaffirming this affirmation, Gorer, (1935:289) cited in Doob (1961:73) posits that Africans allegedly dance for joy, and they dance for grief; they dance for love and they dance for hate; they dance to bring prosperity and they dance to avert calamity; they dance for religion and they dance to pass the time. Mutua (1999:173) argues that "that is why the degradation of African religions should be seen as the negation of the humanity of the African people''. Onwochei (1998:286) explains that "there are so many ways Africans express their musical heritage''. Nketia (1989:119) argues that interacting and rejoicing with music and dance in the context of ritual and worship is also an important aspect of the African concept of religious expression and may be given free reign at religious festivals. It is in this wise that Lucas (1948:110) posits that feasts like the *Mmanwu* festival is followed by general merriment, including processions and dances. No wonder Okafor (1994:130) affirms that "the Igbo would appear to be a people perpetually celebrating because in every moon of the 13 moons in the year, some communities somewhere are celebrating in Igbo land''. According to Jafotito Sofola:

Music is used in African lives in various forms even in spurring farming people to action as is done when the farmer is cutting his field; it is used in folktales that is told the children under the night's moonlight; it is used during wrestling with composition that spurs or disarm the wrestlers as the case may be; it is used in social and religious activities, to name some uses. The music form has its dissonance and consonance, characteristics that make it African music that need not be forced into the Western or oriental moulds which have their own respective characteristics. It is left for the students of African music art forms to conduct researches into them and propagate and preserve them in their distinctive forms having, of course, the possibilities for adventurism as they wish to have (1973:102).

Buttressing this further, Kwasi Aduonum notes that:

In Africa, music is life; that is, it permeates all daily activities. Music in Africa is the soul which is ultimately concerned with various customs and religious practices. The African is born, named, initiated, fortified, fed, nurtured, buried with music. In Africa, music heals the sick, music directs and guides the blind, music comforts the widow, and music stops tribal warfare. Music is in the office … Finally, music accompanies every single daily activity (1980:19-20).

In furtherance of this assertion, John Mbiti asserts that:

A lot of African music and songs deal with religious ideas and practices. The religious rituals, ceremonies and festivals are always accompanied by music singing and sometimes dancing. Music gives outlet to the emotional expression of the religious life, and it is a powerful means of communication in African traditional life. It helps to unite the singing or dancing group to express its fellowship and participation in life. Many musical instruments are used by African peoples (1991:71).

Music has universal appeal especially African and Nigerian music are sang or produced in local language and that is why Euba (1977:13) argues that "Nigerian tone language usually had its own inherent melodic structure and the imposition of an imported melody resulted in a conflict with the natural melodic structure of the text, thereby distorting its meaning''. The spirituality of sacred sounds, bodily movement, chanting, incarnations, and divinations are literarily, in tandem throughout the African diaspora, no wonder Melville Herskovits asserts that:

The African past must be included under the rubric traditions of the past, whether these traditions are held overtly or not, becomes apparent when the religious habits of Negroes in the Caribbean and South America are anchored to both ends of the scale whose central position they comprise—to Africa, the aboriginal home of all these varieties of religious experience, on the one hand, and to the United States, on the other, where the greatest degree of acculturation to European norms has taken place (1941:224).

However, Tagg (1989:285-298) argues that the distinction between Africans and Europeans are often based on essentialist ideas about music and people which are often ascribed racist stereotypes and assumptions. Buttressing this further, Roman-Velazquez (2006:298) equally made a reference to this assertion by concluding that "racism has often resulted in blacks being thought of as more authentic in terms of musical sexual expression of the body, whilst Europeans have often been associated more with the mind and less spontaneous type of musical performance''.

Apparently, ethnicity basically often linked to national identity is invariably used to equate, shared features or characteristics simply due to a belief in what Shelemay (2001:249) describes "as common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and elements in common, such as kingship patterns, physical continuity, religious affiliation, language, or some combination of these''. It is on this position that Ohadike (2007:2) argues that "every sacred drum has a name, and can be conceived as belonging to a particular clan or family unit, albeit a family of drums [sic]. He asserts that "a sacred drum cannot be treated as the property of an individual. Instead, it is a member of a lineage organization. Like any other member of the lineage, it is treated with certain amount of respect, and it enjoys certain rights and privileges. This explains in part why an African clan could go to war if its sacred drum was violated, seized or stolen by another clan'' (Ohadike, 2007:2-3). James Clifford idiomatically states that:

Groups negotiating their identity in contexts of domination and exchange persist; patch themselves together in ways different from a living organism. A community, unlike a body, can lose a central organ and not die. All the critical elements of identity are in specific conditions replaceable: language, land, blood, leadership religion. Recognized, viable tribes exist in which any one or even most of these elements are missing, replaced, or largely transformed. The idea of culture carries with it an expectation of roots, of a stable, territorialized existence (1988:338).

Conversely, the sound emitting from the *Ogene Anuka* of the dance group as an indigenous musicians is believed to be the sacred sound of the initiates of the cult in Aguleri cosmology in the sense that it is "created by the people, sustained by the people, and is for the people'' (Araki, 2004:214). Nnamah (2002:7) asserts that most obvious is the fact that Aguleri have an organized indigenous musicians not the typical acephalous society structure commonly associated with Igbo land before the advent of colonialism. Nettle (1983:156) affirms that music like that of the *Ogene Anuka* group "supports tribal integrity when many peoples, whites and other Indian tribes, because of the onset of modernization and Westernization, come into a position of influencing each other's culture".

In order for the ritual convocation of the spirits and ritual of spirit manifestation to occur according to Boston (1964:45-46) "the gong is normally kept in the owner's ancestral shrine, where it receives a share of the offerings and libations that are made to the ancestors. Ritual tokens of these gifts are tied to the handle of the gong, in the form of strips of white cloth, *okpe*, and chicken feathers. When the gong is brought for an investiture or funeral ceremony kola nuts offered by the appointee's family are broken over it, with an invocation to the dead". This is done with the belief that this will maintain its sonority" according to (Nicholls, 1988:199). Symbolically, the sticks are believed to be imbued with ancestral powers and the gong is fed in order to keep the spirits pleased (Obi, 2008:143).

Equally significant is the fact that feathers are applied on the gong with the firm belief that they act as protective mechanism in rendering it powerful. This is done in order that the gong can "speak in deep-tongues, and the messages it convey may be shrouded in secrecy and only those that have been initiated into the ancestral cults can comprehend them" (Ohadike, 2007:3).

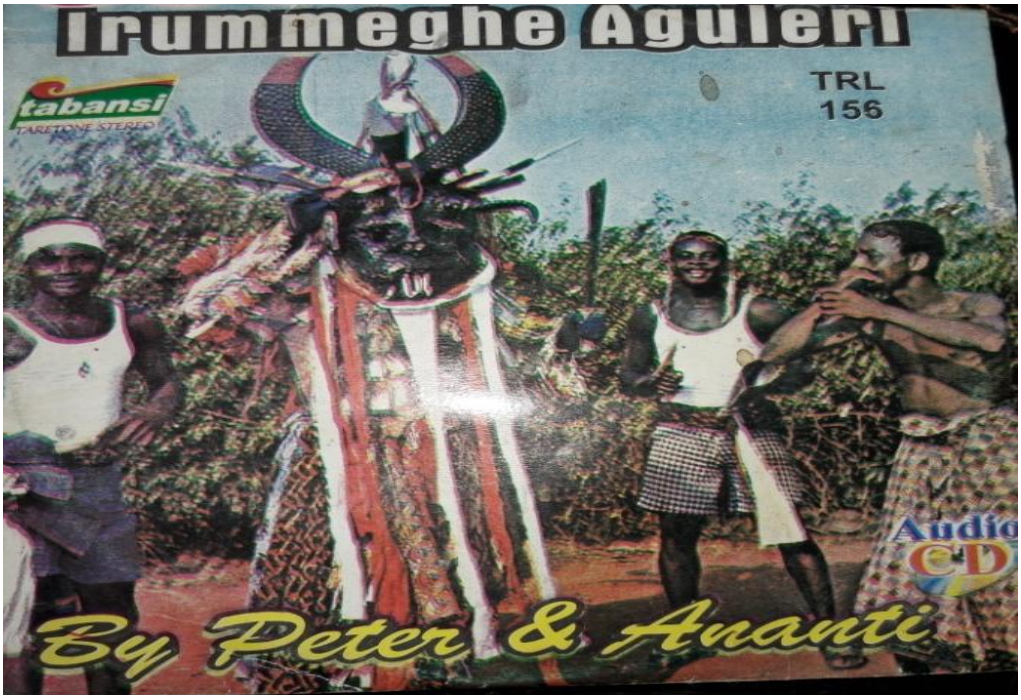

Figure 1: Peter Ofordile and Ayanti Aronu posing with their Ogene Anuka the Bell Orchestra and Agaba Masquerade (Courtesy of Tabansi Records).

Nabofa (1994:37) affirms that these kinds of rituals are rigidly and meticously followed so that they can retain their ancient, ritualistic and spiritual values as revealed and decreed by the divine in order to avoid sacrilege. For this reason, some Igbo ethnographers of the South-Eastern region of Nigeria concludes that Aguleri as an ancient kingdom for "so long is respected for clinging to the ways of their ancestors" irrespective of the fact that they embraced Christianity which encompasses civilization and modernization (Paredes, 1995:355).

Spirit Invocation and Possession in Igbo Cosmology

Spirits are unscrupulous creatures in settings in which peripheral and subordinate members of the society notably the initiates of a particular cult or initiated dancers like that of the *Ogene Anuka* are possessed, whereas, spirits uphold morality in societies where it is those in authority who enter trance (Lambek, 1989:39). Michael Nabofa argues that "it is within the world of classical sound that the elements of traditional cultic ritual have a natural alliance" (1994:38) which invariably calls for spirit invocation and possession. Janice Boddy (1994:407) explains that "these forces may be ancestors or divinities, ghosts of foreign origin, or entities both ontological and ethnically alien". Spirit invocation and possession is a significant feature of life in the ritual liturgy of the Igbo as an indigenous religious cosmology. During the ritual festival, the recognition of the abiding power of spirit invocation and possession emerges in a variety of circumstances during the pounding sound of the *Ogene Anuka* and is constructed from signs ranging from apparently psychotic breaks to sudden competent expression of trance behaviour during the feast. According to Michael Lambek (1989) some initiates with spirits have to observe different taboos imposed upon them but never enter except when the sound like that of the *Ogene Anuka* is activated, managed and manipulated in ritual circumstances. He argues that "people's ability and circumstances differs, but the main point is that not every spirit will make the same demands upon the host – although, when such is made there is every possibility or tendency that the demands are quite conventional" (Lambek, 1989:42). A close observation of trance behaviour can be seen and interpreted as an expression of the identity or attitude of the spirit and the stage or immediate tendency of its relationship with the host and it is in this situation that altered state of consciousness or the creation of a secondary self is achieved, but they are not determined by them (Frazar, 1922:91). This is the reason why Nabofa (1994:56) writes that these types of sacred instruments "*are considered to be very sacred and important in the act of worship among the traditional worshippers in many parts*

of Africa because they easily strike the divine signature tune".

Spirit possession in Igbo cosmology during the ritual dance of the *Ogene* Anuka can be viewed, in broad ways or terms, as a symbiotic and symbolic system of divine communication. First, one must have to consider the period of the emergence of a spirit in a particular host, during which messages concerning its individual status are communicated. At this stage, it is during the ritual decoration of the *Ogene Anuka* before the ritual dance that certain ritual items like the white chalk is used to imbue it with spiritual potency and symbolic qualities. No wonder Nabofa (1994:56) affirms that: "the sound produced by these instruments in conjunction with some other things and conditions will as well help to awaken the spirituality in the devotees. When they have been so aroused they would be so elated that they may start to see through the veil, feel narrate and testify to what they must have seen".

All these act as ritual mechanism and primordial symbol of spirit ties without which nothing can be done (Shapiro, 1995).). Kazuo Fukura (2011: 107-109) affirms that "these are must-have items that constitute a teacher spirit's tray on the altar of a medium". In this situation, the identity of the spirit emerges during the interpretations of signs and a circumstance on the first appearances of the ancestral spirit which emerges during the application of ritual medicine on the body of the *Ogene Anuka*.

Secondly, during the stage of spirit possession, the behaviour of the host's is conventional and highly constrained by the codes of performance [the rhythmical sequence of the sound of the *Ogene Anuka* which goes simultaneously with its dance styles and praises]. Lambek (1989:44) argues that such an experience is equally "symbolically rich and open-ended, both because it does not prescribe particular channels or avenues of behaviour to the onlookers and because it's playful quality, especially the use of sound and dance and the comedic-drama are usually kept apart". It is during this stage that the sound of the *Ogene Anuka* breaks that spiritual link or barrier between the worlds of seen and unseen in the extraterrestrial realm, and in this situation, it is believed that the Igbo youths "are dancing on the shoulders of their ancestors" (Glocke and Jackson, 2011:6), through the mediation of ordered hierarchy from deity to man. Lambek (1989:44) asserts that spirit invocation and possession performances are somehow amusing, intellectually and aesthetically gratifying and satisfying. Spirit behaviour is endlessly fascinating to some people; the parties for spirits held at the last stage of a possession attract large audiences as well as hosts whose spirits would not rise otherwise, and the appearance of a spirit on any occasion produces general interest for the entire community. It is in this wise that Philip Garrett comments that:

(S)pirit possession, interpreted as sacred theatre, can provide [...] a priceless resource for historians of popular religion. One can examine and describe the "performance", try to ascertain how it was understood by its audience, and ask what kinds of cultural and theological expectations the performance and its interpretation by the audience implied. All of these facets not only elicit the contexts in which the phenomena of spirit possession occur but also help to recapture the lost world of popular belief (Garrett, 1987:5).

In the course of ritual liturgy of order, the identity of the spirit is known or established as separate from that of the human host and given both psychological and social reality. When the initiates are under possession, the people so possessed dramatically through dance behave like the spirit which activate and possess them (Ohadike, 2007:10 and Shuaibu, 2002:62). This is because "the dancing contains elements of both reinforcement and inversion of norms of gender typification" (Rasmussen, 1994:79). Nabofa (2005:348) explains that the votaries demonstrate their skill and dance, beating their *Ogene Anuka* with their imbued sticks while "this causes a great vibration which moves the votaries and they are all dressed in white clothes – their symbols of purity within and without". Meki Nzewi (1987: 94-95) stresses that each of these *Ogene* carries a "specific melorhythnic structure which is the orchestral framework in which the master musician superimposes his solo compositions".

In fact among the Igbo's the "bell is used by diviners to invoke spirit in some areas of southeastern Nigeria (Nzewi, 2000:25). No wonder, Judith Hanna argues that such vigorous dancing can lead to an altered state of consciousness because it has a unique potential of going beyond communication by creating moods for divine manifestation (1988:286). Emma Cohen (2007:64) asserts that during this stage it creates a "specific atmosphere which has a decisive effect on the nature of the neurophysiological activity in the brains of group members" through the sound which invokes the spirit that is believed to be around in anticipation of mounting on the initiates that eventually results to altered state. Basically, it is with this assimilation and understanding that William James argues that this mystical states or interlude are very brief and cannot be sustained for a long time (1975:367). Andrew Greeley posits that in this mystical episode, the person consciously experiences his intimacy with the cosmos (1974:65). It is also significant to say here that it is during this period that some onlookers do develop eerie feelings and goose pimples according to the views expressed by some of my participants. However, the public is seen here as a

conscious and participatory audience enriching ritual production of the bell (*Ogene*) through the mediation of its sound (Ayu, 1986:22).

Nonetheless, it is the booming sound of the bell that calls for spirit invocation and possession because its sound would be compared to the wind, and according to Shuaibu (2002:63) "it is everywhere and no one can tell with any accuracy, just how it feels to be possessed, one knows that it is there that is all". Here, sound wave is nothing more than a compressional wave caused by vibrations (Lapp, 2006:7). In this mystical process, a current of energy or vibration through the sound stimulate the initiates' spirit and the meeting point is the point of communion of the initiates by hearing the mystical sound emanating from the deep (Akintola, 1992:18). In this mystical transformation lies the whole secret of where spirit invocation and possession are articulated and managed. As a point of emphasis, at this point the identity of the spirit may be in suspense until the enactment of the final ceremony; it is a by-product of the host's deep motivation and the actual identity of the spirits of the host's consociates and predecessors (Lambek, 1989:43).

Nabofa (1994:39) assets that at this stage the host is in a frenzy mood, while the divine is believed to infuse the total being of the subject and would enter into an intimate inner communication with the devotee. It is also believed that the possessed person would begin to hear sonorous voices blended with melodious sound emanating from inside the deep. He affirms that at this stage also, the devotee would be enticed and would have a feeling of compulsion to go there. He becomes ecstatic and moves to the shore or to that direction, and endeavours to answer the divine summons (Nabofa, 1994:39). This is the more reason why Igbo religion attaches more importance to spirit of mami water in African Religion and spirituality (Wicker, 2000). According to Wicker (2000:199) mami water is the name applied by Africans to a class of female and male water divinities or spirits which possesses their devotees. In this situation, "their bodies often end up signifying order and purity when they are displaced according to morally appropriate norms of containment and control" (Masquelier, 2008: 41). Alyward Shorter (1970:112) posits that during this period "the subject is seized with shaking, sways from side to side, falls down and speaks a meaningless, gibberish, or words of a foreign language already known to him". Similarly, Danfulani (1999:191-192) affirms that it is during such periods that "some members may be gripped by the spirit and they may speak in tongues. Their involvement with glossolalia demonstrates very clearly their practice of spirit possession, similar to what obtains in many Pentecostal churches today". Nabofa (1994:40) explains that "experience has shown that it is not always very easy to overpower such a possessed person because of the extra power the divine has infused into him because his body would become slippery and to calm the ecstasy; some symbolic items would be applied in order to placate the divine". The ritual purification of the *Ogene* Anuka members where mystical sound are produced through the mediating power of sound produced by beating of *Ogene* with its sticks features most prominently is a liturgical ritual site to reconstitute royal authority and enable the spirits to perform ritual blessings over the human populace through act of spirit invocation and possession (Bloch, 1987:272). The authority of spirits is a key feature of their makeup and one that actually plays a significant role in the final sort of ritual communication (Lambek, 1989:45).

Thirdly, there are substantive communications between established spirits and their human consociates, including the internal mystical conversations maintained by adepts, but the conversations established between the initiates and the deities are very paramount (Lambek, 1989:45). He argues that in this way, spirit invocation and possession is treated as natural in the sense that, while it is unusual, an oddity that cries out for explanation, it can, in fact, actually be explained as the direct, unmediated contact or outcome of a material process in the thinking and belief of society like the Igbo people (Lambek, 1989:47). The most common type of variants of this approach is to assume or believe that spirit possession is a more or less direct contact or mystical manifestation of divine attributes where possession is basically concerned essentially with the enhancement of status (Lewis, 1971:127).

On the contrary, spirits are powerful creatures or mystical agencies, and in their effects upon their human hosts and their demands upon others their ritual power is vividly mediated and manifested (Lambek, 1989:50). But, we should take note of the fact that this power is socially constructed, generated and activated when the sound of the bell is played in the ritual festivals like the ritual purification and it also portrays a kind of system of communication through which possession is constituted. It is on this position that Lambek (1989:51and55) posits that spirits through the mediation of sound "act with a power and speak with an authority that transcends the mundane, and humans are not considered responsible for their actions or directives at that particular point in time. This is to view spirit invocation and possession as ritual, but ritual that does not merely speak, in symbolic language or voice, about society, but actively constructs it". Lambek (1989:55) again affirms that in ritual performance like the ritual purification celebration, "real things happen to real people", because this is where the sound from the hand fan is used to invoke and infect spirit possession on the initiates. Arguably, Ilesanmi (1996:5) asserts that it is during such ritual dance through the sound of the bell that "the deity himself

possesses some of them, making them perform fits beyond the normal capacity of the generality of the people''. It is on this position that Erika Bourguignon (1968:4) asserts that spirit possession through the mediation of sound is apparently dependent on the possibility of separating the self into one or more elements. Put in another way, spirit possession entails a complete separation of mind [or agency, spirit, person, self] totally from the body (Rouget, 1985:325).

Similarly, Cohen and Barrett (2008:246-247) affirms that the agency of the host is frequently represented as withdrawing from the body or assuming a passive role in relation to control the body, which is subsequently occupied or simply animated by the possessing spirit. Thus, spirit possession entails the complete displacement of the host's agency by another agent's, such that a bodiless or lifeless agent effectively takes control of the body – but not the mind of self – of a living being. Cohen and Barrett (2008:247) again argues that during the possession episode, the agency of the host is completely replaced by an agency other than the host's. Equally significant is the fact that possessing agent is wholly responsible for the duration of the episode. Spirit possession involves a fusion of an antidate with the spirit or mind of a human host or joining of the body of the medium with that of the spirit entity. In other words, the otherness of possession as it is believed is captivating, mysterious and enigmatic (Cohen and Barrett, 2008:250). Very important is the fact that the bell plays some therapeutic kind of assistance. In Igbo cosmology it is believed that "the act of drinking water from a broken musical bell is a kind of speech therapy. Igbo healers also use the bell for sedating the mentally ill. The small bell is used by diviners to invoke spirits in some of Southeastern Nigeria" (Nzewi, 2000:25).

On this position, I can say tersely that the sound of the *Ogene Anuka* is very significant for spirit invocation and to summon the divine to attend ritual worship in Igbo cosmology. Spirit invocation is achieved through the ritual power of sound that invokes the ancestral spirit during the ritual dance festival. During the invocation, incantations are recited and praises are showered on the ancestors and deities of the community through the simultaneous pounding of the sound that emanates from the beating of the *Ogene Anuka*. It is from the sound of these musical instruments and its ritual incantations that we would be able to know the attributes, praises, the theogony, powers and capabilities of the object of the worship (Nabofa, 1994:16). Nonetheless, the fears and aspirations of the devotees are equally identified in the course of the sound and incantations. The sound of these *Ogene Anuka* are played and manipulated in such a manner that they easily create eerie feelings on those within the liturgical or ritual ground. By such act, the whole place would be charged, and also surrounded with the aura of reverence, while all these combined with some other symbolic processes that will make the ritual liturgy to be more meaningful and enjoyable (Nabofa, 1994:35).

In fact, the sound and beating of the *Ogene Anuka* is assumed to be used to bring order, meaning and co-ordination among the devotees when they begin to express their feelings and joy through ritual dance and drama during any ritual celebration. This when sprinkled with the kaolin, is believed to have some divine power and used for healing exorcism according to (Akama 1985:34). Igbo religion has witchcraft as one of its elements. It is on this position that Akama (1985:25) again reasserts that "belief in witchcraft and practices of other allied antisocial evils appears to be the root cause of the emergence of the cult" in Igbo communities. This is to counter the claims that "the gospel in Igbo land achieved an amazing success where the walls of pagandom collapse Jericho-wise" (Ayandele, 1973:126). No wonder Umar Danfulani (1999:167) affirms that "African communities used various methods for controlling witchcraft before the introduction of colonial rule". Similarly, Kathleen Wicker (2000:198) asserts that "these characteristics differentiate African spiritual traditions from Western religions, where faith usually involves acceptance of an articulated set of beliefs posited as absolute truths". During ritual possession dance and singing, the sound produced by the ritual mechanisms in conjunction with other things and conditions will as well "aid to awaken the spirituality in the initiates" (Akintola, 1992:25). Robin Horton (1963:98) claims that through the mediation of its symbolic sound for the initiates, "it means the ability to translate the rhythm smoothly and faultlessly into the appropriate dance-steps". Nabofa (1994:35) argues that "when they have been so aroused they would be so elated that they may have direct contact with the holy. In order to arouse the sense of awe and reverence in people's mind and consciousness, cultic functionaries combine non-verbal communication techniques through the mediation of the sound with spoken words in transmitting their messages and intensions in order to align others". He explains that "different messages are usually encoded into the sound expressions and different onlookers decode different meanings from the symbolic ritual dance and drama" (Nabofa, 1994:35).

CONCLUSION

The symbolic impressions created by the booming and pounding sound from the *Ogene Anuka* seem to linger and indelibly remain as a point of reference in the minds of most spectators because according to the views expressed by some of my participants they like it. This is one of the reasons why

the presence of a devotee, in whose interest a particular ritual is being performed, is needed. In the study of ethnomusicology, such is required in order to enable the message of the ritual, which is basically transmitted through the symbolic sound to sink deeply into the inner recesses of the devotee where spirit invocation and possession control the movement between individuals while the spiritual potency of the sound is ritually and spiritually contained.

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