

CLASSIFICATION OF IGBO MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, NIGERIA

by

J.N. LO-BAMIJOKO

Worldwide, there are a number of systems for classifying musical instruments, each with its advantages and imperfections. Since the purpose of this study is to find ways of incorporating Nigerian instruments in a national musical effort, the system used will be derived from indigenous terminology and concepts. When necessary, reference will be made to internationally familiar terms such as those of the Sachs-Hornbostel system. The major task of this study is to place indigenous instruments in an indigenous framework. The lists of musical instruments presented here do not pretend to cover the wide variations of all Nigerian musical instruments. Rather, the purpose of the survey is to give a broad overview of Igbo musical instruments, as well as to show how musical instruments of some of the other cultures of Nigeria relate to those of the Igbos, and how they relate to the classification of musical instruments as a whole.

The Igbo Instrument Classification

In Nigeria, and specifically among the Igbo-speaking people, the classification of musical instruments takes two factors into consideration. The first focuses on the instrument *per se*, the second on the society in which the instrument is used. The first factor, in other words, deals with the classification of the instruments based upon how they are played, and the second with the various functions of the instruments in the indigenous context.

1. *Iyọ* - to shake, rattle, or clap together
2. *Iku* - to strike a hard surface with a beater
3. *Iti* - to strike a membrane with hand or beater
4. *Ikpọ* - to pluck or bow
5. *Ifu* - to blow

With regard to the functions of the instruments in the indigenous society, they are grouped according to the role they play in Igbo music. These roles are divided into three categories: (1) the rhythmic, (2) the melodic, and (3) the rhythm-melodic.¹

The two major factors we have mentioned embody within themselves cross-currents of meanings and values which will be discussed as they come up in the research. The next section will attempt to describe various Igbo musical instruments in all their ramifications.

Iyọ

Under *Iyọ*, which means to shake, rattle or clap together, and whose role in music is rhythmic, will come all forms and shapes of rattles and clappers. The characteristic of instruments under the above heading is that sound (not necessarily musical sound) is

produced by shaking, rattling, or clapping the instruments. Therefore, the description of the rhythmic instruments can be approached according to their means of producing sound.

Instruments under IYO (to shake, rattle, clap together)

Rattles

Name of instrument in the different Languages	Description	Where found
<i>ekpili</i> , <i>ide</i> or <i>oŝha</i> in Igbo; <i>iyok</i> in Efik, <i>opho</i> in Edo and pellet rattles in English.	Small round and hollow bells of seed, metal and basketry laced together and worn around the waist or ankles	Anambra, Imo, Cross Rivers, and Bendel States.
<i>Saworo bata</i> is used among the Yorubas	Bells of different shapes used on <i>bata</i> and <i>dundun</i> drums as buzzers	Oyo state
For anklets and wristlets the Yorubas use <i>seke-seke</i> , <i>saworo eleko</i> , or <i>agogo-ese</i>	Variouly shaped metal rings and squares with hollows for pebbles or beads (Fig. 5)	Oyo state

Instruments described as rattles have one common feature. They are always strung together, and are then used as anklets or waist bands, or tied around a musical instrument to act as a buzzer. Their names vary according to the material with which they are made. The name *ekpili* (Fig. 3) is used when the rattle is made from seeds known in Igbo as *ekpili* or *ekpiri*. These seeds are cut in halves when they are still fresh, and the nuts are either scraped out or left to fall out when dry. The shells are then strung together and used as anklets or waist bands.

Pellet rattles contained in grass, palm frond or metal encasements fall under the same classification as the *ekpili*. Like the *ekpili*, they are strung together. When they are made of metal, usually brass, they are known in Igbo as *yomyom* (Fig.1). According to W.W.C. Echezona, "the name 'yom-yom' is derived from the sound (which the rattles) make when they are shaken",² but the term is used to describe only the metal rattles. When the rattles are made from grass or palm fronds, they are known as *ide* (Fig.2).

Shakers

Name of instrument	Description	Where found
<i>Ekput</i> in Efik, <i>uyara</i> or <i>kpokoŋkpoko</i> in Igbo	Hourglass shaped, bell-like on both sides with clappers loosely hanging inside both openings	Cross Rivers, Imo, and Anambra States
<i>ikpo-nketa</i> in Efik	Known as clapper bells in English	Cross Rivers State
<i>nyo</i> , <i>ishaka</i> , or <i>oŝha</i> in Igbo, <i>sekere</i> in Yoruba, <i>nsak</i> or <i>kaksak</i> in Efik, <i>eyisa</i> in Ida, and <i>gwantso</i> in Hausa	Basket rattles or gourds covered with beads. They can be single, double or more. The gourd rattle can be small or large.	Anambra Imo, Cross Rivers, Oyo, Ogun, Bendel, Kwara states.

The Yorubas have other gourd shakers which they call <i>era-sango</i>	A bottle-like gourd containing pebbles; it is beautifully carved.	Oyo, Ogun and Kaduna states.
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Primarily, the shakers are of two kinds — basket (*nyo* - Fig.9) and calabash (*ishaka* -Fig.10). The basket shaker has a piece of round calabash as the base, and the basket is woven and closed at the top. It can be a single, double, triple or quadruple basket shaker linked together at the top in such a way that the link becomes the handle of the shaker. Before the top of the basket is closed, rattling materials, such as pebbles or seeds, are put into the basket. The calabash shaker instead has the rattling materials laced around the calabash. The Igbo name for both shakers is *nyo*.

There is another type of shaker known as *uyara* in the Imo State. This shaker, a native of the Cross River State, is of wood, shaped like the bell, and with clappers loosely hanging inside. It is also used in the Imo state most probably because of the proximity of the Cross River and Imo States. This shaker known as *ikpo-nketa* (Fig.8) in Uyo, Nigeria, is known as *kpokokpokok* (Fig.6) among the Igbos of the Anambra State.

Clappers

Name of instrument	Description	Where found
<i>aja,okpokolo</i> and <i>nkpokpo</i>	Wood clappers, and wooden or seed clefs, also tortoise shell	Anambra, Imo, Rivers, Cross Rivers States

These are known as *aja* (Fig. 13) in Igbo, and they are made with two flat pieces of wood which may be prolonged to become handles, or may have a raised back for finger grips. Other types of clappers are in the form of short, well rounded sticks hit together. (Fig. 12) *Okpokolo* in Igbo music is a generic name for a flat, and hollowed piece of wood beaten with a stick, or tortoise shell beaten with a stick. (Fig. 14). In Nigerian contemporary music a flat and hollowed piece of wood used to maintain a regular ostinato rhythm is known as a 'Clef'. Whereas rattles perform only one function in music, buzzers, shakers and the clappers have more specific musical functions. Some of these instruments may be used for time-keeping, and others may be used for filling in gaps between one musical movement and the other. The shaker and the clapper, for example, will perform this specific musical function, but do not perform it in the same way. When the two instruments are used together, as they usually are in Igbo music, they will adopt some form of dialogue with one another, and this dialogue is similar to what is generally known as the 'call and response' form, e.g.

Rhythmic Patterns (An example of musical dialogue between shakers and clappers)

In the hands of experts, the function of these instruments can become even more complicated, and the dialogue can take other musical forms.

Iku

Instruments under *Iku* are all those whose hard surface is struck with padded or non-padded beaters. These are the gongs, slit-drums, and xylophones.

Gongs of all sizes, from the smallest, *ogene*, (Fig.15) to the largest, *alo*, (Fig.20) comprise this class of instruments. The small gongs are all known as *ogene*, and they can be single, double, triple, or quadruple. The big gongs known as *alo* are usually single, although in very rare cases, double *alo* can be found. Although *ogene* and *alo* have melodic properties, their function in music is mainly rhythmic. It is important to mention here that musical instruments in Igbo music follow a hierarchical order which determines the place and role of a family of musical instruments in the total framework of Igbo music, as well as the place and role of an instrument within its own family. Therefore, in the hierarchical framework of Igbo musical instruments, all are not equal. The following is how Igbo musical instruments are ranked:

1. *ikolo*, *ufie* and *ekwe* (slit drums)
2. *igba* family of instruments (membrane drums)
3. *odu*, *opi* and *oja* (wind instruments)
4. *ndedegwu* (xylophone)
5. *ogene* family of instruments (gongs)
6. *ubọ* family of instruments and *ubọ-aka* (strings and thumb piano)
7. *nyọ* family of instruments (shakers, rattles and clappers)

Within each family of instruments, the ranking is accorded to the role each instrument plays in the music of that particular family:

1. *oke* (lead instrument)
2. *nne* (second lead)
3. *nwa* (time keeping)

Metal gongs

Name of instrument

In Igbo, small gongs are called *ogene* and big gongs *alo* or *ugbom*, *agogo* in Yoruba, *nkong* in Efik, *ulo* and *akpoge* in Edo, *ugege* in Igala, *kuge* in Hausa, etc.

Instruments under IKU (to strike a hard surface with a beater)

Description

Small and large metal gongs of all sizes and shapes. The smaller ones can be double, triple or quadruple.

Where found

Used in the whole of southern and middle Nigeria, name varying according to the area

Although *ogene* and *alo* perform mainly rhythmic functions in music, their hierarchical position in Igbo music is higher than that of the rattles. Moreover, *ogene* and *alo* outside a musical context perform what can be described as a melodic function. They are used to communicate information. The big gong *alo* performs the same function in dance music when it is used to communicate to the dancers changes in the *dance sequence*. As *ogene* usually uses two tones, a high and a low, its communication method is by patterns, and one has to be schooled in the patterns of *ogene* language to be able to understand *ogene* or *alo* when they talk.

For an example of a double metal gong see Fig. 16 — *Ogene nkpinabọ*, and Fig. 17 — *Ogene nne na nwa* — mother and child gong. For a triple gong see Fig.18 and for a quadruple gong see Fig. 19.

Slit drums

Name of instrument	Description	Where found
Small slit drums in Igbo are called <i>ekwe</i> , <i>okwa</i> , or <i>ekere</i> , and the large slit drums, <i>ufie</i> (<i>uhie</i>) and <i>ikolo</i> (<i>ikoro</i>), <i>obodom</i> in Efik, <i>akwakwa</i> in Urhobo.	Wood logs of all sizes and shapes, hollowed out enough to serve as resonator, and with a slit at the top	Anambra, Imo, Rivers and Cross Rivers States

Slit drums come in three sizes. Unlike other families of musical instruments, the three sizes of slit drums never play as a family, and musically they do not perform similar functions. The largest of the slit drums is known as *ufie* or *uhie* (Figs. 24 & 25), the medium size as *ikolo* or *ikoro*, and the smallest as *ekwe*. There has always been disagreement on the names of the largest and medium slit drum. The Igbos of Anambra State call the largest slit drum *ikolo* and the medium one *ufie*. The Igbos of Imo State call their largest slit drum *uhie* and the medium one *ikoro*. The only agreement among all the Igbos is with the small slit drum which is called *ekwe* by all. (Fig.23). In *Niger Ibos* by G.T. Basden³, the largest drum is referred to as *ikolo*, but the same author in *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*⁴ referred to the same drums as *ekwe*, thereby compounding the confusion already created by the way Igbos from different areas change the names of the drums. To reduce this confusion, slit drums will be described in this study according to their sizes.

Of the largest slit drums, G.T. Basden stated that they “are not intended to be instruments of music; rather they are used for spreading information, for ceremonial purposes, and at sacrificial festivals”⁵. This was true in the past, before the advent of Christianity, when the life of a community pivoted on one centre: this was the community head who was also custodian of the traditional beliefs of the community. Today, community life as it was once organised is disappearing rapidly, and instruments like the large slit drums are becoming non-functional. In fact they are rarely heard these days. As with the gongs, one has to be schooled to be able to understand the language of the slit drums when they are used for communication.

The largest slit drums are of enormous size. G.T. Basden has reported of one whose dimension was 10ft 2in in length, 7ft 10in in width, and 8ft 5in in height.⁶ These drums were usually carved out of a hewed down tree, and were not meant to be moved around. The medium-size slit drums can be moved around, and are used for ritual music of the inner chamber type. In the Afikpo area, women are still not allowed to see or listen to these instruments while they talk. The functions for which these instruments are used take place at night, in order that women may hear the instruments playing but not see either them or the players.

Xylophones

Name of instrument	Description	Where found
<i>Ndedegwu</i> , <i>ngelenge</i> , or <i>ikwembo</i> in Igbo, <i>ikot-eto</i> in Ibibio, <i>agiloh</i> in Ogoja, <i>kundun</i> in Birom, and <i>molo-maikafa</i> in Hausa	Tuned wooden slabs placed over a resonator box, or banana stems, or over graded horns	Anambra, Imo, Rivers, Cross Rivers and Plateau States

In different areas of Igbo land, the xylophone is known by different names: the most commonly used names are *ngedegwu* (Fig. 27) and *ngelenge* (Fig. 29). According to its musical functions, *ngedegwu* is more a melodic than a rhythmic instrument. Mary Kingsley in her *West African Studies*, expressed a preference for the West African variety of xylophones because of their "clear water-like notes".⁷ Talbot in *Peoples of Southern Nigeria* reported that "beautiful notes are produced by various kinds of xylophone"⁸.

Of all the rhythm-melodic instruments, *ngedegwu* is the only one that performs the function of a solo instrument. It never accompanies, rather, it is always accompanied. Because of its musical function, it should be regarded as a melodic instrument; however, it needs to be emphasised that this instrument has a strong rhythmic function. The xylophone is a very ancient instrument among the Igbos. W.W.C. Echezona claims that "the Igbos are generally regarded as the originators of the marimba ... but having originated it, they lost touch with its further developments elsewhere."⁹ Echezona's claims are based on a series of historical evidences which confirm the black presence, and thereby a black influence in Asia beyond what there ever was of Asian civilization in Africa. If this is so, then A.M. Jones' "brilliant" attempt to place the origin of the xylophone in Southeast Asia must be in very bad faith, and represents further demonstration on the part of the Westerner to deprive Africa of anything that is of value.¹⁰

Iti (To strike a membrane with hand or beater)

The next heading in the classification is *iti* and under it will be listed all the families of membrane drums which will be referred to in this study simply as drums. The musical function of drums is rhythm-melodic like the slit drums and xylophones. The similarity, in fact, in the way the two categories of instruments are played, and in their musical functions, may explain why Talbot classified both the slit drums and the xylophones as drums.¹¹ It may also explain why Basden in two of his books on the Igbos in which he dedicated chapters to music, did not mention the xylophone as an instrument separate from the drums,¹² or why Northcote W. Thomas categorically stated that "the commonest musical instruments (among the Ibos) are drums and perhaps flutes".¹³ In Igbo land, the drums are not only the most common musical instruments, but the most important of musical instruments.

The drum has been described by many scholars and musicians as a rhythm-melodic instrument. As a rhythmic instrument, it is regarded among the Igbos as the generator of everything happening around it. It is the pulsating force, like the heart, which gives life and meaning to music. As a melodic instrument, it is regarded among the Igbos as possessing life, but this is not life as we know it, of the mortal, ephemeral type. The drum possesses the spirits of the gods and for this reason can do all a mortal can do and more. It can talk, it can sing, it can do all of this in the way that only the gods can, the supernatural way. As in all Igbo musical instruments used for communication, one has to be schooled to be able to understand the language of the drum.

We saw that there is a hierarchical ordering of Igbo musical instruments, and in a hierarchical order, the roles that instruments play in music are more or less fixed. This order controls two factors: (1) the function of a family of musical instruments in music as a whole, and (2) the function of each member of the family of musical instruments

within the family itself.

Instruments under ITI (to strike a membrane with hand or beater)

Name of instrument	Description	Where Found
(1) Generic names for drums in Nigeria <i>igba</i> and <i>nkwa</i> in Igbo, <i>ihu</i> in Yoruba, <i>ganga</i> in Hausa, <i>igede</i> in Sapele, <i>ekede</i> in Isoko, etc.	The generic names describe all single and double drums of all shapes and sizes	Drums are found all over Nigeria, and they are used by the different peoples of Nigeria
(2) Families of drums <i>igba-alusi</i> , <i>igba-eze</i> , <i>igba-mmonwu</i> , <i>igba-egwu</i> , <i>nkwa-ike</i> , <i>oke-nkwa</i> all in Igbo, and in Yoruba <i>dundun</i> , <i>bata</i> , <i>sekere</i> , <i>koso</i> , and <i>apinti</i> , in Hausa, <i>tambari</i> , <i>koiso</i> , <i>kalangu</i> , etc.	Sets of drums that number from two drums to as many as five or more	Drums are generally used in sets in the different cultures of Nigeria
(3) Pot drums <i>udu</i> in Igbo, and <i>abang</i> in Ibibio, <i>shantu</i> in Hausa	Earthenware pot with handle and spherical opening on either side of the handle, or pots with different water levels played with a fan-like beater, and stamping tubes	Anambra, Imo, Rivers, Cross Rivers and Bornu States
(4) Drum xylophones <i>ekere-mba</i> in Igbo and <i>ikon-ikpa</i> in Ibibio	Graduated and differently tuned drums arranged progressively in a rack and played like the xylophone	Imo, Cross Rivers, and Rivers States

The Igbos have many families of drums ranging from the most sacred *igba-alusi* (sacred drums), *igba-eze* (king's drums), and *igbo-mmonwu* (drums of the spirits of the ancestors), to the most common *igba-egwu* (dance drums). These different families of drums have their own special types of music. For instance when a type of music is mentioned, it is possible for people belonging to the culture in which that music is used to know what special ritual, ceremony, or social function this music is used for. They will also be able to tell what special instruments are used for the performance of that special music.

Igba-Alusi

This family of drums, one to three in number, are played only by holy men, custodians of the altar of the gods. Accompanying the drums are sacred gongs and

rattles. In the hierarchy of the sacred drums are lesser drums which are regarded as sacred because of the mystery surrounding the functions for which they are used. W.W.C. Echenozha called this the drum of the medicine man.¹⁴ This lesser drum, which is usually single, forms part of the paraphernalia of an Igbo native doctor.

Igba-Eze

In the past, a king, a chief or a titled man commissioned a set of drums for his own personal use which usually consisted of a large, prestigious drum surrounded by three or four smaller drums which performed varied musical functions (Fig. 32). The king, chief, or titled man usually maintained an expert drummer in his service whose duty it was to salute the king in the morning, give him the news of the day, inform him about day-to-day happenings, praise him (this in Igbo is known as *itu-afa*), and thrill him with the music of the drums. This is the music of *igba-eze* and it is a slow dignified music fit for a king, with none of the complicated drum patterns typical of Igbo drumming.

Igba-Mmonwu

Igba-mmonwu is a more varied type of drum music. The general term *igba-mmonwu* refers to the drum music of the ancestral spirits that appear for different reasons, at different seasons of the year, masked in forms significant of their missions. *Igba-ijele* is the music of the biggest Igbo masquerade, so big it can hardly move with ease. Symbolically, *ijele* masquerade is as big as a house. *Ijele* music is slow thus allowing the masquerade to make slow and wide movements. *Igba-izaga* is another masquerade drum music played for the very tall *izaga* masquerade that dances standing on two bamboo stilts. *Izaga* music is more vigorous than *ijele* music, but comparatively it is a slow drum music. Faster drum music of the *igba-mmonwu* is the type danced by *oji-onu* (the dancing masquerade). There are many other types of *igba-mmonwu* in Igbo land, and they are used for masquerades which bear different names according to what area of Igbo land they come from. It is important to note here that Igbos of the Imo area of Nigeria call drums *nkwa*. Drums, whether called *igba* or *nkwa* perform the same social, cultural and musical functions all over Igbo land.

Igba-Egwu

In Igbo language, the word *egwu*, without any change in inflection, means music, dance or drama. As music, *egwu* is the term used to describe two types of singing: *igu-egwu* (solo singing) and *ikwe-egwu* (chorus singing), and different ways of playing: *iku-egwu* (to strike music), *iti-egwu* (to beat music) and *ikpo-egwu* (to call music). As dance, *egwu* is used to describe dancing (*igba-egwu*) as well as the teaching of dance (*izi-egwu*). As drama, it means all aspects of drama which include games, plays and jokes. Therefore, *igba-egwu* is drum music used for all of these aspects of *egwu* that we have described.

Ikpo

Ikpo which means to play, pluck or bow, includes all string instruments, some of which are described in this section (others under another heading).

Instruments under IKPO (to pluck or bow)

Name of instrument	Description	Where found
(1) Raft zithers <i>molo</i> in Hausa and <i>ubo</i> in Igbo	Several cane stalks bound together. The strings are made by raising the hard part of the canes on both sides. The front strings are played while the back strings act as resonators. The back of the instrument has a mat woven through the stalks, containing pebbles which rattle as the instrument is played.	Anambra and Gongola states
(2) Musical bow <i>une</i> in Igbo, <i>odong</i> in Efik.	This instrument looks like a hunter's bow. It is played with one end of the string in the mouth which acts as resonator, a cane or metal beater used to produce sound, and a short stick of soft wood used to vary sound.	Anambra and Cross Rivers States
(3) Lutes <i>molo</i> , <i>garaya</i> , <i>kuntiki</i> and <i>goge</i> in Hausa, <i>ubq-akwara</i> in Igbo, <i>akpata</i> in Edo.	Long necked lutes with one to eight strings, plucked or bowed.	Found all over northern and parts of western and eastern Nigeria
(4) Thumb piano <i>ubq-aka</i> in Igbo, <i>ikpamboto</i> in Ibibio, <i>akpata</i> or <i>agbata</i> in Isoko, <i>agidigbo</i> in Yoruba	A calabash or wooden box on which is mounted four to eighteen metal tongues. It is played by plucking the tongues.	Anambra, Imo, Rivers, Cross Rivers, and Bendel states

In present day Igbo land, most string instruments, with the exception of *une* (music bow) have fallen out of use. One of the reasons for the disappearance of string instruments among the Igbos was the adverse or satanic power that string instruments allegedly exerted on their players. The story is told in Urunnevo village in Enugwu-Ukwu, of how the last group of young men who played *egwu-une* (music bow) were possessed in different ways by evil spirits which took the lives of all of them, sparing only members of the group who played instruments other than *une*. The story goes on to say that after that incident the playing of *une* was banned in Urunnevo village. According to an Igbo saying, "*Akuko N'ije*" which means 'stories travel fast', it is clear that the story of the evil effects of the string instruments on those who played them must have swept Igbo land like wild fire destroying string instruments which the Igbos now know as belonging to Igbo culture only by reading about them in books written by

early explorers. Talbot in *Peoples of Southern Nigeria*¹⁵ described two such instruments which he said were Igbo string instruments. One of them, *ubq-akwara*, is familiar because stories about its magic powers are still told in the Igbo areas where it was once in use. Talbot described *ubq-akwara*, which he called a type of harp, as an instrument whose “resonator is boat-shaped and covered with a skin ... the strings are attached to a single neck and tightened with pegs.”¹⁶ This writer, who never saw an *ubq-akwara* in use among the Igbos, discovered an instrument at the National Museum, Lagos, Nigeria, which matches Talbot’s description.

W.W.C. Echezona also mentions *ubq-akwara* which he subtitled ‘Ibo guitar’ in his *Ibo Musical Instruments in Ibo Culture*. He did not, however, say why such an instrument which was once “a common instrument all over Iboland” disappeared.¹⁷ The discrepancy between the two descriptions of *ubq-akwara* must have resulted from the different cultural associations of the two writers. This writer has come across enough descriptions and photographs of *ubq-akwara* in many early writings by explorers to believe that the instrument really existed and was once in use among the Igbos. This contradicts Northcote Thomas’s assertion that “stringed instruments are not found at all, with the exception of the musical bow”.¹⁸

An instrument still in use in parts of Igbo land, and which all early writings agree existed among the Igbos, is the *une* (musical bow) (Fig.41). This instrument is currently becoming very popular with the Igbos through the music of Okechukwu Nwatu, from Awkunano in Anambra State, the only known professional *une* player (Fig.42). Nwatu informed this writer that in the past the *une* was an instrument played only by women, especially newly married women. The husband gave his new wife *une* as a gift to keep her company when he was away at work on the farms. The women played only love songs with *une*. It is said that women were later banned from playing *une* because they used the instrument to play love songs to their lovers and not their husbands.

Ubo-Aka

Ubo-aka (thumb piano) (Figs. 48 & 49) is generally classified by Sachs-Hornbostel¹⁹ as an idiophone. The literal translation of *ubq* in Igbo means “a plucked or bowed instrument”; thus the way the instrument is played determines that it belongs to the string family of instruments. The Igbos classify *ubq-aka* with string instruments because it is played by plucking the bamboo or metal lamellas. It is the only Igbo instrument of the plucked or bowed family that survived the onslaught against string instruments in Igbo land. This is because, while the other instruments were more or less instruments of leisure and of pleasure, *ubq-aka* was at one time, and is still in some areas of Igbo land, a ritual instrument; it was, in other words, functional within the social and cultural context of the Igbos.

Talbot called *ubq-aka* a native piano, and described it as the commonest instrument among the Igbos.²⁰ Even Northcote Thomas, who did not think that the Igbos had any instruments other than the drums, acknowledged its presence, and described it as “a piano made of small tongues of bamboo and played with the thumbs”.²¹ Basden called it “an instrument which cannot be compared with any foreign one with which he is acquainted”.²² W.W.C. Echezona once more asserts that Ibo slaves “also took their *Ubo* along with their xylophone as far as to East Africa”.²³

The two main features of *Ubo-aka* are the sound box, which can be made of calabash (gourd) or wood, and the tongues. The calabash sound box gives the instrument a deep

and resonant sound, while the wooden sound box gives the instrument a less resonant sound. The two types of sound box are used all over Igbo land. The tongues of *ubo-aka* have been discovered to range from four to as many as eighteen.

Ifu

Our last category of instruments, which goes under the heading of *ifu*, to blow, encompasses all wind instruments irrespective of the materials with which they are made. The wind instruments are grouped according to their genre. *Qdu* are horn trumpets, *opi* are horns, and *qja* are flutes.

Instruments under IFU (to blow)

Name of instrument	Description	Where found
(1) Horn trumpets <i>qdu-enyi</i> , <i>qdu-okike</i> in Igbo, <i>oduk</i> in Ibibio, and <i>kaho</i> in Hausa	Large and small horns made from elephant tusk, used as a trumpet, and owned only by nobles. The horn can be decorated with simple or very complex geometric patterns	Anambra, Imo, Cross Rivers and Bendel states
(2) Horns <i>opi</i> , and <i>akpele</i> in Igbo, <i>kaho</i> in Hausa	Large and small animal horns, called <i>akpele</i> when made from calabash. Also used as trumpet.	Anambra, Imo, Rivers, Cross Rivers, Bendel and in most northern parts of the country
(3) Flutes <i>qja</i> and <i>qdiike</i> in Igbo, <i>imar</i> in Tiv, <i>ipe</i> in Igbirra, <i>nuk-ukang</i> in Abak, <i>osoko</i> in Idah, <i>sariwa</i> in Fulani	Wooden or cane flute of varied sizes. The wooden flutes are end blown, and the cane flutes are side blown. Ivory whistles are widely used in the middle belts of Nigeria	Anambra, Imo and Cross Rivers, Bendel, Kwara, Kaduna, Benue, and Oyo states
(4) Metal horns <i>oko</i> in Edo, <i>kakaki</i> in Hausa	Long trumpets of silver or beaten brass	Found in most northern states and in Bendel state
(5) Wooden or bone horns and reed instruments <i>fare</i> , <i>pampani</i> , <i>algaita</i> in Hausa, and <i>imborivungu</i> in Tiv	These are all end blown instruments. The difference is that <i>algaita</i> is a double reed instrument.	Found in most northern states of Nigeria

Although the string and wind instruments are said to perform melodic functions in Igbo music, the wind instruments are in a melodic class much higher than the string instruments. Whereas the string instruments are generally restricted to their musical function, which is purely melodic, the wind instruments perform social as well as cultural functions in addition to their musical functions. For this reason, in the hierarchy of musical instruments, the wind instruments occupy a more important position in Igbo music than the string instruments.

Qdu

The word *qdu* is used to describe three types of horn trumpets:

(1) *Qdu-enyi* (Fig.50) is an ivory horn. It is a status symbol in Igbo land, and only titled men can own it. To make a wind instrument out of the tusk, a small square or rectangular hole is made on the top outer curve of the tusk, and this is where the horn is blown. The titled man uses his *qdu-enyi* to announce or acknowledge his presence both at home or when he is on his way to *ndi-nze* (elders) meetings. *Qdu-enyi* cannot be said to be a musical instrument as such in that it is not used to perform any special kind of music, but during a meeting of *ndi-nze* at which *igba-eze* is played, the elders use it to show off. They use it also to talk among themselves.

(2) The second type of *qdu* is known as *qdu-okike* made from a large animal horn, usually a male antelope's horn. This horn is used as a trumpet by hunters during the hunting season. Like *qdu-enyi*, it has only one hole used for blowing.

(3) The third type of *qdu* known as *qdu-achala* is an instrument used exclusively by masquerades. *Qdu* here is symbolic. Because this instrument is a bamboo reed covered at one end with *ududo* (the protective covering of spiders' eggs²⁴), it gives a supernatural sound to the voice of the masquerade, whose place among the Igbos is both spiritual and supernatural. Of all members of the *qdu* family of wind instruments, *qdu-achala* is the one that is most often used as a musical instrument. It is known as the voice of the ancestors, and its name varies among the different Igbo peoples.

Opi

Wind instruments in the class of *opi* (Fig.52) are made with smaller animal horns like deer or cow. Igbos on the Western bank of the Niger make their *opi* with gourd, and it is known as *akpele*. Unlike the horn trumpets, *opi* is a musical instrument, a solo instrument used in combination with drums, gongs, and rattles. *Opi* as a musical instrument performs melodic functions as well as non-musical functions. As a melodic instrument it can sing like a human voice. Among the western Igbos, an expert *akpele* blower usually performs in duet with other singers. The non-musical function of *opi* occurs when the instrument is used for giving signals, especially in time of war. The horn trumpets also perform this function.

Qja

Qja (Fig.53) is the most common of the wind instruments. It is made of wood, usually a light soft wood, and of bamboo. The wooden *qja* is notched and end blown, while the bamboo *qja*, also notched, is side blown. Of the two types of *qja* only the wooden one has survived the changing times. The explanation of this survival can once again be found in its deep-rooted functionality in Igbo cultural and social life. The characteristic of *qja* is the high-pitched sound which the different types produce. This is because this family of instruments is small in size. The biggest *qja* discovered by this writer is about 10 1/2" (.26m) long, and the smallest about 5 1/2" (.14m) long. The size of an *qja* determines its pitch and the quality of sound determines the instrument's function. The highest-pitched flutes, which are also the shortest, are known either as *qja-mmonwu* (flutes used for masquerade music) or *qja-okolobia* (flutes used for ceremonies of men who have attained manhood). The sound of both of these flutes is bright and they are used more for chanting than for singing. The difference between the

two styles is that chanting is an extended form of speaking, while singing is purely musical.

The lowest-pitched flutes are known as *oja-igede*. *Igede* is a drum music used for burial ceremonies, and *oja-igede* is used in pairs with the male *oja* calling and the female *oja* responding.

The next *oja*, whose sound is half way between the highest-pitched and the lowest-pitched ones, is known as *oja-ukwe* (the singing flute). This is used for women's dances of all types.

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1. The term "rhythmo-melodic" has been coined for use in this study to differentiate instruments whose musical functions are purely rhythmic from those that also have melodic properties.
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17. Echezona, *op cit.*, 188.
18. Thomas, *op cit.*, 136.
19. Curt Sachs, *The History of Musical Instruments* (New York: Norton, 1940) 455.
20. *Ibid.* 812.
21. Thomas, *op cit.*, 136.
22. Basden, *op cit.*, 1938, 360
23. Echezona, *op cit.*, 357.
24. Curt Sachs, *The History of Musical Instruments*. 54.
25. *Ed.*: Talbot's description seems to refer to a harp, rather than a pluriarc.

Fig. 39. appeared in Dr. Lo-Bamijoko's article published in "The Black perspective in music", Vol. 12, No. 1, Spring 1984, and is used by kind permission of the editor.

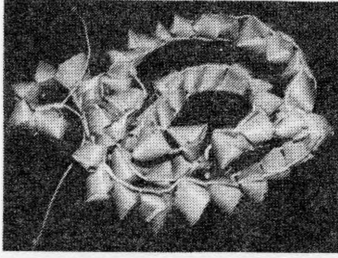


Fig. 2 *Ide* palm frond rattle

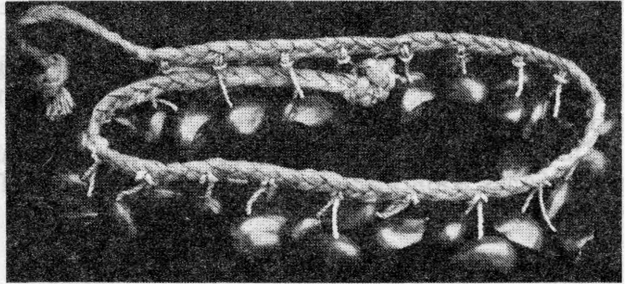


Fig. 3 *Ekpili* or *Ekpiri* seed rattle

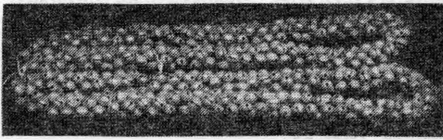


Fig. 1 *Yomyom* pellet rattle

Fig. 5 *Seke-seke* metal ring rattle

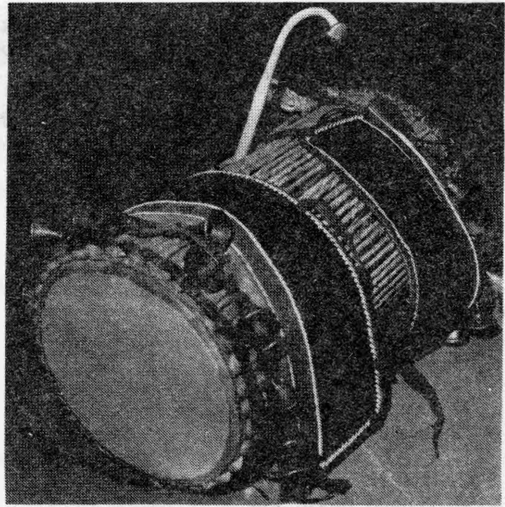
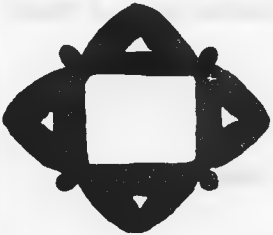
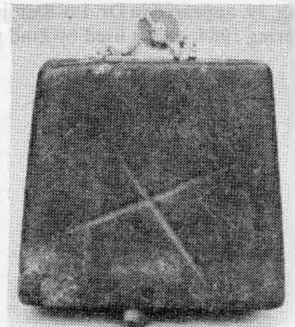


Fig. 4 *Saworo* bell rattle on *dundun* drum

Fig. 6 *Kpokokpoko* wooden shaker



Fig. 7 *Ikpo-nketa* clapper bell



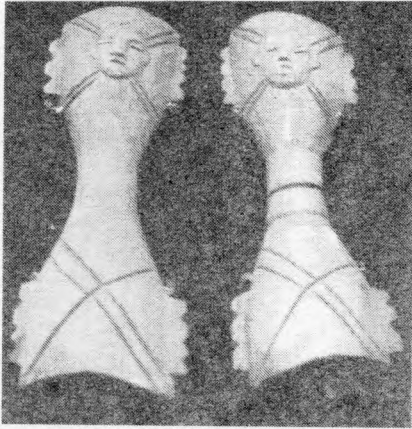


Fig. 8 *Ikpo-nketa* clapper bell

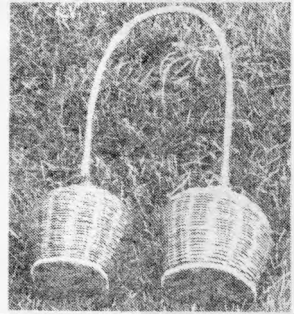


Fig. 9 *Nyo* basket shaker

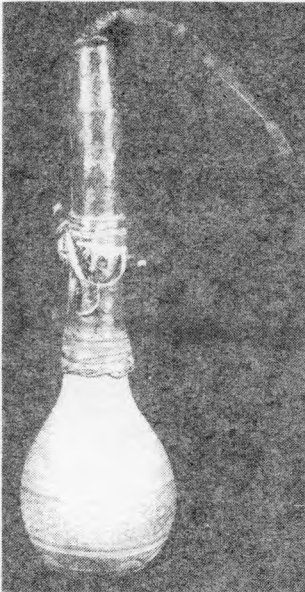


Fig. 10 *Ishaka* calabash shaker

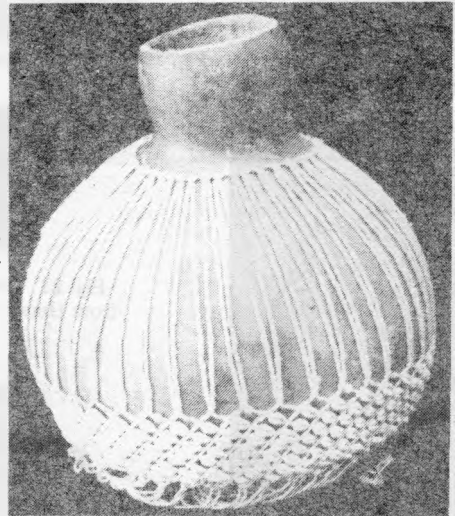


Fig. 11 *Sere-sango* calabash shaker

Fig. 12 *Aja* clappers, rounded stick type



Fig. 13 *Aja* flat wooden clappers, clapped together like two palms

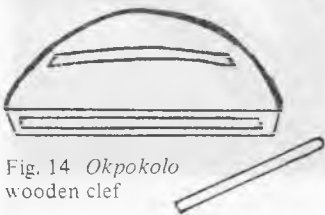


Fig. 14 *Okpokolo* wooden clef

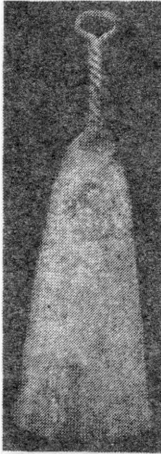


Fig. 15 *Ogene* metal gong

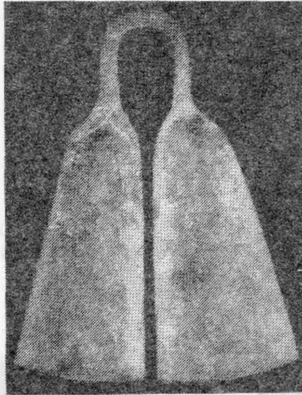


Fig. 16 *Ogene Nkpino* double metal gong

Fig. 17 *Ogene Nne Na Nwa* mother and child gong

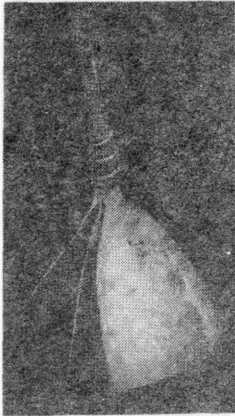
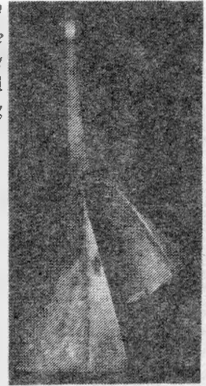


Fig. 20 *Alo* large metal gong

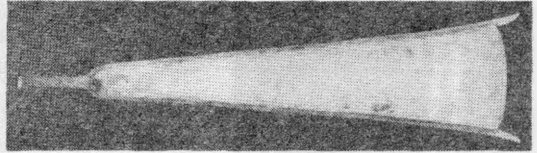


Fig. 21 The famous and widely travelled 'Nkponkiti' dance group from Umunze, Anambra State, during a Festival of the Arts, Enugu



Fig. 18 *Ogene Nkpi-ito* triple gong

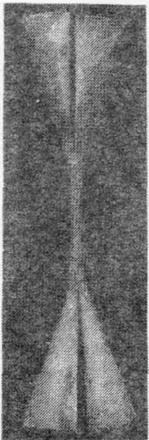


Fig. 19 *Ogene Nkpi-ino* quadruple gong

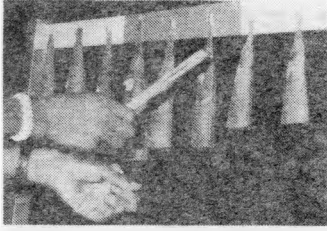
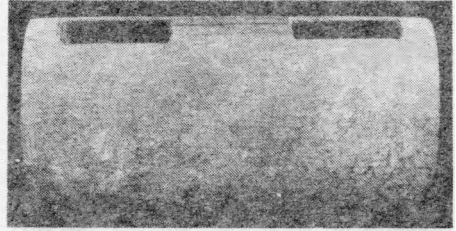


Fig. 22 *Ogene*-phone,
St. Andrew's Choir,
Obosi, Anambra State



Figs. 24 & 25 *Ufie*
medium slit drum

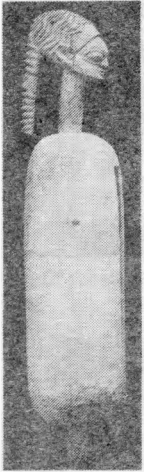
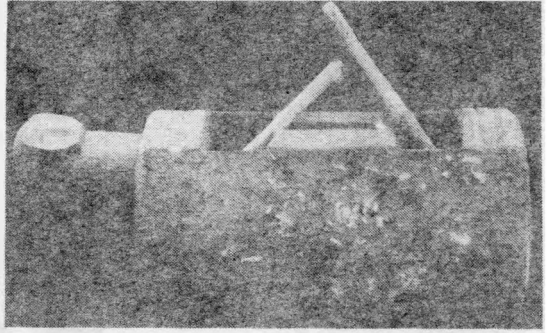


Fig. 23 *Ekwe*
small slit drum



Fig. 26 *Igbeni* group
from Okposi, Afikpo,
Imo State, at a Festival

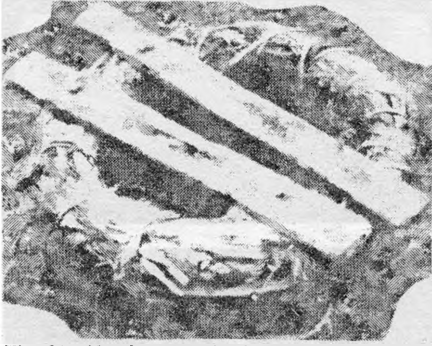


Fig. 27 *Ngedegwu* xylophone

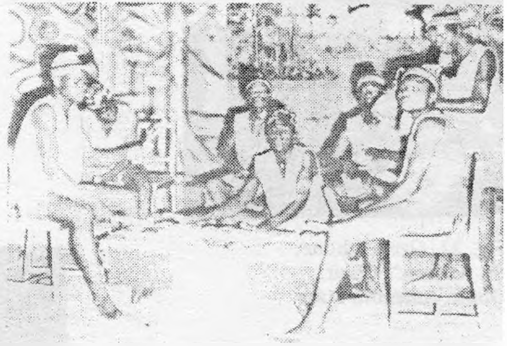


Fig. 28 The 'Nwoye' xylophone group from Ahaozara, Afikpo, Imo State, at a Festival. The group has performed in Europe and America.



Fig. 29
Ngelenge
xylophone

Fig. 30
Kundun
xylophone

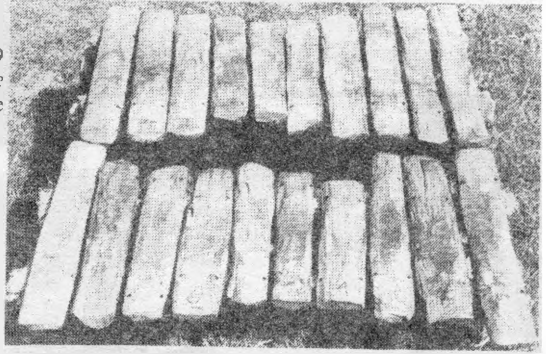
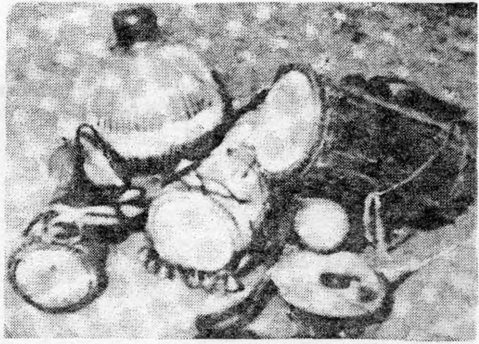
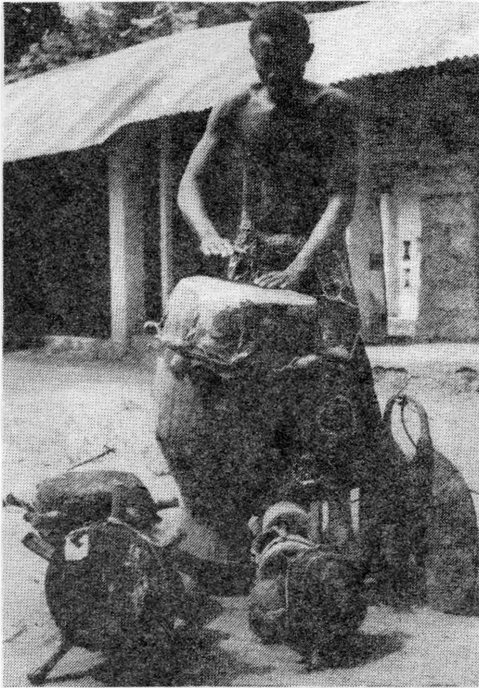


Fig. 31 *Igba* drums at *Ukwu-ije* Festival, Awka, Anambra State





Clockwise from above:
 Fig. 32 *Igba-eze* royal drums and the drummer of the Obi of Onitsha, Anambra State, in front of the palace.

Fig. 33 *Dundun* drums

Fig. 34 *Tambari* royal hemispherical drums

Fig. 36 *Egwu Amala* group from Aguata, Anambra State, at a Festival of the Arts

Fig. 35 *Udu* pot drum

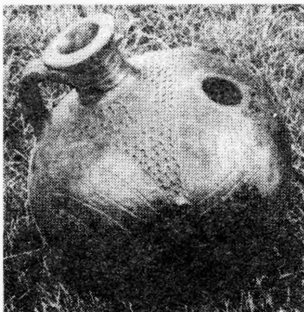




Fig. 37 *Shantu* stamping tube

Fig. 38 Fanta Gombio, the well-known Kanuri musician from Borno, Borno State



Fig. 39 *Ekere-mba* drum xylophone

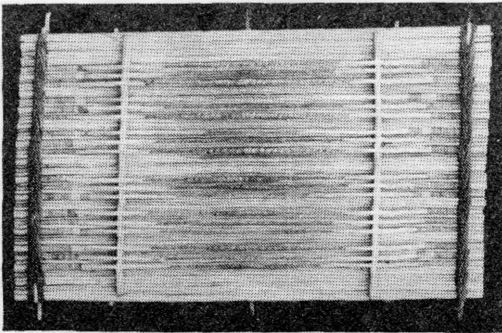


Fig. 40 *Ubo* raft zither

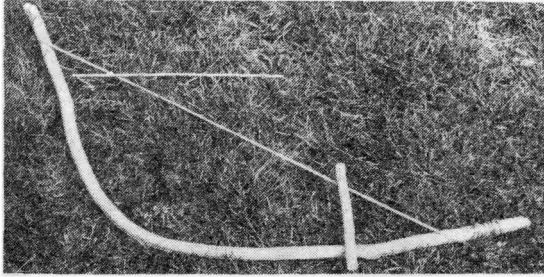


Fig. 41 *Une* musical bow



Fig. 42 Okechukwu Nwatu, from Awkunanu, Anambra State, the only musician in Nigeria today who plays *une*

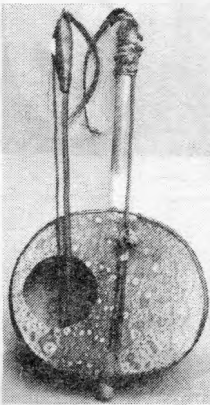


Fig. 43 *Goge* bowed lute, string made of horse tail



Fig. 44 *Molo* double-stringed lute

Fig. 45 *Garaya* (smaller than *molo*)

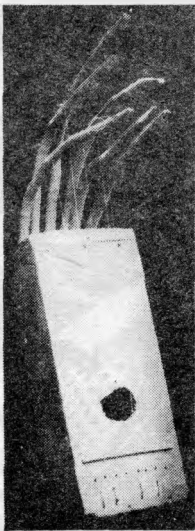
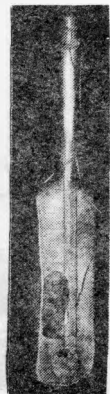


Fig. 46 *Ubo-akwara* pluriarc, similar to the one described by Talbot²⁵

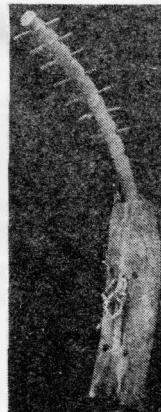


Fig. 47 Harp

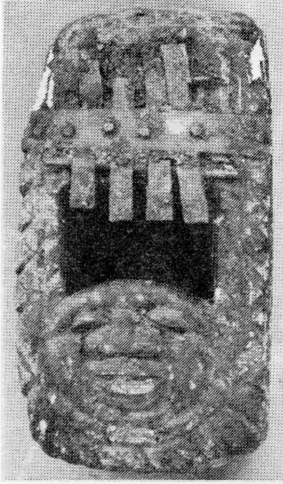


Fig. 48 *Ubo-aka* thumb-piano

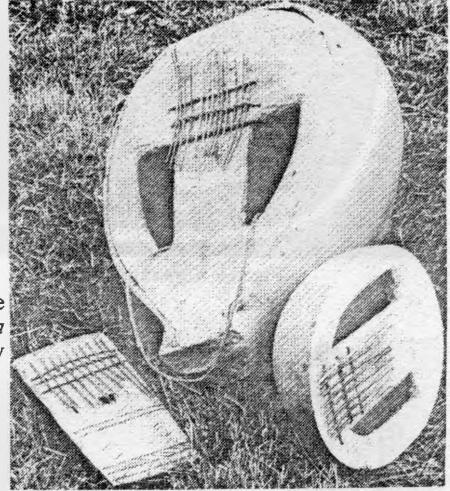


Fig. 49 The three sizes of *Ubo-aka* used for the study

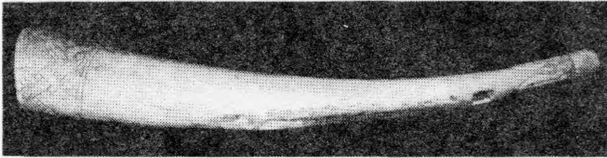


Fig. 50 *Odu-enyi* ivory horn

Fig. 51 *Kaho* antelope horn



Fig. 52 The *opi* horn player of the Amala Dance Group from Aguata (see Fig. 36)



Fig. 53 The four *Oja* used for the study

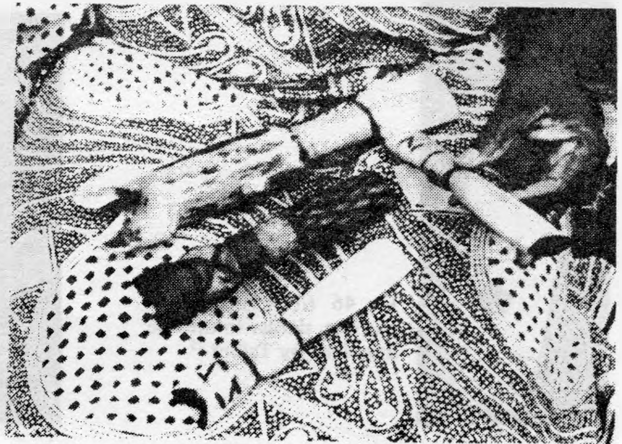




Fig. 54 *Odike*
wooden flute

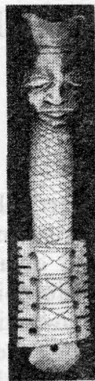


Fig. 55 *Imar*
whistle flute



Fig. 56 *Sariwa*
cane flute



Fig. 59 *Imar-anyin*
4-hole, single-reed
instrument



Fig. 58 *Kakaki*
player for the Emir
of Kontagora,
Niger State



Fig. 60 *Algaita* double-reed
instrument: the well-known
Musa 'Mogaji Mai Algaita'
(Chief Algaita Player) from
Kano, Kano State

Fig. 57 Flute player of the
ensemble in Fig. 32, at the
Ofala Festival, the anni-
versary celebrations of the
Obi of Onitsha

