

## ECOMUSICOLOGY, INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN IBADAN, NIGERIA

By

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**Abstract:** Research on Yoruba popular music has tended to draw attention to its interest in romance and the accumulation of wealth. Inadequate attention has been paid to its engagement with the environment. Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State in Nigeria has witnessed perennial flood disasters, and this has been a concern of Yoruba musicians. This article is an ethnographic investigation of the place of music in the flood disasters of Ibadan as addressed in the songs of Yoruba musicians, Kollinton Ayinla, Foyeke Ajangila, Ebenezer Obey and Agbada Owo. The article describes the connections between the cultural past, when indigenous knowledge was respected and flooding was avoided, and the present, when it was forgotten, and flooding became a constant. Based on the very specific, local context of Ibadan, I argue that calls for the return of indigenous knowledge as propagated in popular music could be a way forward in environmental crises currently experienced around the globe.

**Keywords:** Flood, disaster, ecomusicology, environmental degradation, popular music, Ibadan.

### Introduction

Flood disasters raise fundamental questions about the safety of human lives, farm produce, environmental pollution and related health hazards. Recent research reveals that disasters created by flooding are becoming more widespread around the globe (Ajala 2011). One example is the city of Ibadan, which has recorded one of the highest incidents of flooding in Nigeria. There are several studies on flood disasters in Ibadan from anthropological, historical and medical perspectives (Omoleke 2004, Areola and Akintola 1980). These publications have explained the comprehensive need for halting the degradation of the environment from a scientific point of view. The justification for looking at Ibadan is based on the devastating effects of flood disasters witnessed there from the early 1950s to 2011. Up to now, scholarly attention has not been directed towards the engagement of popular music with the flood disasters in Ibadan. This paper addresses this lack and, in the process, provides an informed assessment of Yoruba popular music on disasters such as flooding.<sup>1</sup>

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This paper describes the connections between the cultural past, in the eighteenth century before the arrival of the British adventurers, missionaries and colonialists when indigenous knowledge was respected and flooding avoided, and the present, in which floods increased as indigenous knowledge was ignored and forgotten. The Yoruba people have ideas, assumptions and values about the environment which one encounters in the form of indigenous knowledge in popular cultural expressions such as music. Several musical texts have been selected for this paper which addresses the causes of flooding as both spiritual neglect and the dumping of waste in water ways. This paper also engages with the way in which popular music increases an awareness of social responsibility among urban Nigerians in Ibadan.

The objectives of this paper are to test the viability of an emerging discipline referred to as ecomusicology; to present an ecomusicological approach to the research which draws on the value and significance of spiritual beliefs in the river goddess, named Yemoja, and to examine the connections between floods and spiritual beliefs. The songs are a reminder of not only the disasters and the loss of life caused by floods, but also of a ritual that is rarely, if ever, performed. Thus, the flooding is perceived as an act of terror inflicted by the goddess who had been offended by the lack of interest shown by local communities. The significance of the songs is magnified by the invocation of the existence and wrath of the goddess, which is apparently manifested in a series of devastating floods. Examining environmental degradation in the form of flooding tests the application of an ecomusicological approach because ecomusicology emphasises the triangularity of culture, environment and human beings (Allen and Dawe 2016). Ecomusicology is invoked not only in the context of music about the environment, but also because the music is an admonishment to people who had neglected Yemoja, goddess of the Ogunpa river and the focus of the ritual. The music is a reminder to people of how they had abandoned this ritual and the goddess, and about how flooding had devastating effects on people and their livelihoods. The mythical relationship between the environment and the goddess is vital to the content of this article. Studies on music, nature, culture and the environment, as an evolving area of scholarship, are increasing rapidly. However, very few have examined the role of a mythical creature, such as a river goddess, in the sustainability of nature and the earth.<sup>2</sup>

The ecomusicological trajectory is well articulated in Feld (2012), Titon (2013), Allen (2011), Taylor and Hurley (2011), and Impey (2008, 2013, 2018). These scholars view ecomusicology as the study of music, sound and nature in a period of environmental crisis. Taylor and Hurley (2011: 8) argue that ecomusicology is

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<sup>2</sup> Taylor and Hurley (2011) argue that ecomusicology is the intersection of music and the environment and it provides new opportunities and challenges to music creators, new sonic experiences to audiences, and new objects of study, as well as prompting revised perspectives to earlier works.

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the intersection of music and environment and it provides new opportunities and challenges to music creators, new sonic experiences to audiences, and new objects of study, as well as prompting revised perspectives on earlier works. They note that discourse on music and environmental degradation, hostile environments and climate change, is a focus with which scholars need to engage.

The relationship between environmental studies and popular music as a necessary area of scholarship has gained momentum (Pedelty 2012, 2013, 2016, Rees 2016 Rehding 2011, Guy 2009, Ramnarine 2009, Silvers 2015, 2018). These scholars emphasise the urgent need to engage with popular music which focuses on environmental issues because popular music has wider appeal and is more easily consumed than many other styles of music. This paper follows in the wake of those cited above.

Primary data was obtained through interviews with musicians and selected members of the community in the affected areas of Ibadan. Interviews were based on the reception of selected songs. Secondary sources included the use of the internet, books and journals. The analyses of lyrics and descriptions of disaster-related songs were categorised as educational tools, alongside historical accounts, and coping and relief mechanisms considered as a response to climate change, disaster risks, and cultural revival in yearly sacrifices to Yemoja. My discussion will draw upon the popular music of four Yoruba musicians. These include two Fuji musicians<sup>3</sup>; Kollinton Ayinla, and Agbada Owo, a Juju musician<sup>4</sup>; Ebenezer Obey, and Foyeke Ajangila, a popular folk musician. Generally, the musical practices, compositions, and performances of the musicians are culturally situated within the Yoruba worldview, which includes mutual respect and living in peace with nature and the environment. The music was played on Nigerian television Authority, and on community radio stations of which the Oyo Radio Broadcasting Corporation is one.

### **Ibadan and its environmental degradation**

Ibadan is in south-western Nigeria. It is the capital of Oyo State and reputedly the largest city in Africa, south of the Sahara. It is situated 130 kilometres inland from Lagos and is a prominent transit point between the coastal region and the areas to the north of the country. According to the latest census held in 2006, the population in Ibadan was estimated at around three million and eight hundred thousand (3 800 000).

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<sup>3</sup> Fuji is an Islamised Yoruba popular music predominant in Southwestern, and some parts of North-central, in Nigeria.

<sup>4</sup> Juju is another Yoruba popular music typology of the Yoruba people of South-western and North-central in Nigeria

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Ibadan lies within the transnational zones of the high forest and the savannah. It has been described as a city of hills and valleys (Mabogunje 1980: 5) with eroded areas separated by areas of active and new landscape forms. It has a central stream range that runs roughly north to south and it divides the city into roughly two sections in which the former Ònà stream is now the largest. It is the largest due to many artificial canals caused by an expanding population and unmanaged waste disposal in the city. The hilly topography of Ibadan makes it suitable for easy drainage of the water that runs from its eroded hills. Mostly, the erosion with heavy carriage capacity transports domestic waste generated by the residents who often exploit the carrying capacity of the erosion to transport their waste (ibid.). The city's built-up areas have two main streams, the Ògùnpa and Kúdetì. By 1968, this built-up portion of the city had extended into the drainage areas of the Odò-Onà and Ògbèrè streams. The Kudeti stream joined Ogunpa in the southern part of the city. However, both streams and their tributaries serve commercial purposes as they are surrounded by open market stalls which produce a considerable amount of waste.

The influx of migrants into the city has given rise to the unregulated construction of informal settlements, which, on many occasions, causes blockages that result in flooding. Ibadan is regarded as one of the filthiest cities in sub-Saharan Africa, where domestic waste constitutes close to 85% of soil, water and air pollution (Tejuosho 2004: 14). In recognition of the risks posed to flooding and the health of its population, a compulsory monthly environmental sanitation programme organised by the state government was put in place. Yet, Ibadan remains both unchanged and constant in the habits and practices of its residents. Following the failure of the sanitation programme, the stench from gutters infiltrates the streets, and domestic waste pervades every nook and cranny of the city (Omoleke 2004).

The above characteristics of Ibadan have on many occasions exposed the city to heavy flooding, which accounted for the destruction of both lives and properties. Apart from those incidences in the 1950s to 1970s; a devastating flood known as Omiyale, literally meaning "water has flooded the house", occurred in 1982, when the Ogunpa stream connected to the Ona stream, flooded its banks and swept off many of its inhabitants and their properties. Many of the victims defied local rules and regulations set against building on the riverbank. Since then, Omiyale has become an annual event across Ibadan, suggesting that the experience of 1982 was not enough of a lesson. In 2011, a more devastating flood occurred in Ibadan, and the graphic nature of its tragedy surpassed the earlier ones. In 2011, the premier University of Ibadan, located in the heart of the city, on whose compound the Ona river runs, had its perimeter fencing

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collapse, and many of its animals in its revenue-generating, zoological garden were either swept away or killed. In addition, the University lost its fisheries as several culverts and bridges in the university collapsed. Other areas that recorded heavy devastation in 2011 were Apete, Bodija, Agbowo, Odo Ona, Alakia, and New Gbagi, among others. The National Emergency Management in Nigeria recorded 176 lives lost and damage to properties that amounted to approximately USD 2 116183.

**Yemoja: The goddess, the ritual and the festival**

Omiyalé o,	Flood has destroyed the house
èbè la ñ bè ó Yemoja,	We are pleading with you Yemoja
Omiyalé o,	Flood has destroyed the house
èbè la ñ bè ó Yemoja,	We are pleading with you Yemoja.

(Ayinla 1980)<sup>5</sup>

In the song above, the singer pleads for Yemoja's clemency. The mythology of super-humans that allegedly dwell in rivers makes it clear that super-human creatures could be angry when their abodes in rivers are spoiled by human beings. The song is speaking to Yemoja about the devastating floods witnessed in the past. Many societies in sub-Saharan Africa perceive deities residing in natural elements such as mountains, trees, oceans, rivers and valleys, among others, who are friendly to humans. The traditions and cultural beliefs in human to non-human relations, which demand regular worship of such deities, existed until modernity from the west and the east forced a change in local belief systems. Modernisation, which included the arrival of religions such as Christianity, which arrived in the fifteenth century and became official with the arrival of the Church of England in 1842 at Badagry; and Islam, which was introduced to northern Nigeria as early as the eleventh century and was well established in the major capitals of the region by the sixteenth century, did not approve of the indigenous religion and rejected the practices and idea of deities residing in natural elements (Douglas 2015).

Yemoja is a river goddess identified with rivers in Yoruba land. She is an orisa (divinity) originally from the Yoruba tradition who has now become prominent as a deity for worship in many Afro-American regions. Yemoja is one of the important deities believed to have been brought into being by *Olodumare* (Idowu 1982: 169).<sup>6</sup> She is a prominent deity that is naturally endowed with an abundance of patience and she is attached to rivers. Her name is a contraction of the Yoruba words *Yeye*, meaning mother; *omó*, meaning child; and *ẹja*, meaning fish. Roughly translated, the name means, "Mother whose children are like fish" (Canson

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<sup>5</sup> This song can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPxCs9nBr2k>

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2017). This name represents the vastness of her motherhood, her fecundity, and her reign over all living things. She is the personification of fertility, due to the exaggerated nature in which her breasts were depicted. To heighten her feminine grace, huge buttocks are seen as an asset to her beauty. She is usually referred to as “*Iya o*”, meaning, “Great Mother” or “Mother of all”, the “All-Begetter”, the “All-Nourisher of life.”

According to Folarin (1993: 7), Yemoja is the patron goddess of rivers. She is revered very highly and the area of Ibadan where the old temple was located is still called Popo-Yemoja. Folarin notes that Yemoja’s shrine, located at Ogunpa River, is constructed in the traditional mud architecture of the Yoruba. The front of the old shrine is surrounded by a porch with carved wooden columns, punctuated with touches of paint in dappled effect. The wall of the shrine is represented with motifs of fish, ferns, water lilies, tortoises and snails.

The Yemoja festival is characterised by several propitiations, such as musical chanting and the use of bells. According to Adeyemi (pers. comm. 2 Aug. 2017), the worship of this fertility goddess included several propitiations in which feasts of various foods, such as the eating of new yams, often coincided with the festival. Three days of singing and dancing then followed, with the high-point of the occasion being a Yemoja statue being carried from Popo-Yemoja to the Olubadan’s<sup>7</sup> palace and Oja-Oba<sup>8</sup>, in a great procession of much splendour. Shouts of “*Iya O*”, meaning great mother, would often rend the air as jubilant celebrants dance and shout in eulogy of “mother of all.” In the palace the Olubadan danced for a few minutes with the priestess and the procession departed to Oja-Oba where everybody gathered in large numbers for festive songs in praise of the mother of the Yoruba pantheon of the gods. According to Osunyemi (2016: 4), the festival unfolded as follows:

In Ibadan the Yemoja festival lasts for seventeen days and it is a period of festivity, prayer and sacrifice where different Orisa groups and worshippers congregate. The first day’s event begins with a vigil and the consumption of the New Yam called “*Ilasu*.” This is followed by the worship of Yemoja with goats and rams on the third day and other subsequent events. The night before the conclusion of the festival is also a vigil and a sacrificial animal is taken out in the night, while the following morning, there is the worship of Yemoja at the Ogunpa river. Later in the day, the Ogunleki Statue of Yemoja, which is regarded as the essence of Yemoja, is taken to the palace of the Olubadan of Ibadanland and then to other

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<sup>7</sup> Olubadan is the title of the traditional paramount ruler of Ibadan city.

<sup>8</sup> Oja-Oba is the market situated around the palace. It is very common in Nigeria and mostly among the Yoruba communities to have a market close to the palace.

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key Orisa shrines within the Ibadan metropolis. The procession is accompanied by hundreds of worshippers singing and chanting in praise of Yemoja.

Narrating the procedure and processes of performing the rituals, an interlocutor, O. Abayomi (pers.comm. 2 Aug. 2017), whose information is corroborated by Osunyemi (2016), explained that the Ogunleki Statue of Yemoja<sup>9</sup> is carried by the Arugba Yemoja. Later, divine messages by the Orisa to individuals and communities are revealed by the Baale Yemoja-Yemoja priest who is the mouthpiece of Yemoja. The festival comes to an end the following day when priests perform the *Ifa*<sup>10</sup> divination and the prescribed sacrifice. They perform this rite to know what the future will reveal and to enhance positive aspects.

The worship of Yemoja is vital to environmental sustainability because it encourages environmental cleanliness. This is evidenced in the festival where the various locations are cleaned whenever the festival occurs. This action is believed a part of the command of Yemoja. The worship of Yemoja shows how, if one cares about the deity, one must also care about the environment. This is demonstrated through the invocation of *Ifa* chants and musical performances that suggest that Yemoja's shrine must always be kept clean. An example of a chant is given below:

<i>Nijo won n t'ode orun bo</i>	On the day they were descending from heaven
<i>Won de isalaye</i>	To the planetary earth
<i>Won la igbo oro</i>	They cleared Oro grove
<i>Won la igbo opa</i>	They cleared Oro grove
<i>Won la ona gbooro olufe n to</i>	They constructed a wide path for Ife indigenes to pass through.

(Ogungbile 2001)

The *Ifa* chant above is generally used for female deities, including Yemoja (Olajubu, 2003). The chant comments on the environmental cleanliness which existed when the deities descended from heaven to earth. This chant is used to praise Yemoja as a protector of environmental sustainability. The incursion of western religious practices de-emphasises traditional practices and that has led to the shrine turning into a rubbish dump which blocks the flow of the river.

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<sup>9</sup> Arugba-Yemoja is mostly a woman who carries the image of Yemoja. Apart from placing it at the river the image is also carried around the city.

<sup>10</sup> *Ifa* divination is the indigenous belief system.

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The sacredness of Yemoja has been sullied through waste and although there is a kind of restoration of the festival these days, the influence of westernisation and modernisation has brought several changes to the festival. One of these changes includes the domination of adults in the festival, unlike before, when youths cherished the deity. Ogunleye (2015: 5) notes that before the colonial era, Yemoja's festival was commonly performed during new yam festivals. In Ibadan it took place in September of every year. The shrine of Yemoja in Ogunpa River has since been destroyed due to a buildup of dirt and the rituals have been inconsistent.

It has been argued that the musicians' responses to the flood disasters were motivated by the repeated environmental degradation in Ibadan. Findings reveal that the loss of indigenous knowledge, in the form of rituals and religious rites, could account for the perennial floods experienced in Ibadan. It is important at this point to offer interpretations of indigenous knowledge as it relates to musical performance, the veneration of superhumans and environmental sustainability. Warren (1991) defines indigenous knowledge as local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. For him this is in contrast to an international knowledge system generated by the universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, the environment, and the production of festivals, among others. Gray (2000) views indigenous knowledge as the information base for a society, which facilitates communication and decision-making. Indigenous knowledge therefore refers to the long-standing tradition of a set of people which encompasses the knowledge system of the community. From these explanations one may infer that the indigenous knowledge of Ibadan people encompasses their popular culture in forms of music, and the veneration of superhumans for environmental sustainability.

One also finds that the occurrences of the flood connect the past to the present. The past, when indigenous knowledge thrived and flood disasters were averted, to the present, when indigenous knowledge was rejected, and flooding became a regular occurrence in Ibadan. Social responsibility in the form of a consciousness of environmental sustainability is paramount. This article describes how songs archive people's experiences during disasters, in as much as oral history and mythology may also memorialise such events.

### **Themes in the texts of selected songs**

Before continuing with the rest of this article, a few remarks about the music. Stylistically, the musicians follow the tonal inflections of the Yoruba language in their compositions and performances. Apart from Obey, the other singers started their songs without an instrumental accompaniment. Obey employed polyphonic techniques in his music and made use of three-part harmony. While Owo, Ajangila

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and Ayinla employed call and response-types of musical forms in parts of their songs, Obey employed both through-composed and call and response techniques. Obey used a combination of western musical instruments like the keyboard, the guitar and a drum set, and African instruments such as the talking drums, konga, rattles, and bells. Owo used similar African musical instruments and the western guitar.

This section examines important themes in the texts of these flood related songs. Ayinla is a popular Fuji musician who sang a song titled, *Omiyale*, in reference to the devastating flood of 1980. The title means the “Flood has destroyed the house.” He released the track in 1980, on the album titled “Mekunu Njiya”, meaning “Nigerian citizens are suffering”, after the flooding that occurred in the same year. Obey is a juju musician who released the song titled, *Oro Ogunpa*, in 1982. The title means, “The flood of Ogunpa river.” Owo is another Fuji musician who gave his voice to the memory of the destructive flood in 1980 with the song, *Omi ma tunfe Yale*, meaning, the “Flood wants to destroy the house.” In 1980, Ajangila, a masquerade singer released a song about the flooding. The themes discerned through an examination of each of these songs can be summarised as the effects of modernity on indigenous practices, religion and environmental sustainability, and social responsibility. In the Nigerian context, Eze-Uzomaka and Oloidi (2017: 85) assert that modernisation is

a process of transformation and development through which the traditional characteristics, be it social, economic, religious, political and cultural environments are being advanced technologically and ideologically to meet international standards with the introduction of modern methods and materials. Modernization can also be perceived as the process by which a community moves from having a traditional, agrarian, rural society to having a more secular, urbanized society, through this process, they change in terms of values and belief, population, and geography.

Much of the effects of modernity as expressed by Eze-Uzomaka and Oloidi is true of the situation in contemporary Nigeria. The effects of modernity in Nigeria are both negative and positive. Modernity emanating from outside Nigeria has devastated traditional institutions and religions. Christianity and Islam consider deities and traditional religions as unholy and likewise the worshippers. Many families who are associated with these religions have changed their names. Yemoja is not left behind in the neglect as several people associated with Yemoja and the appropriate festivals have abandoned their traditional names and changed them to those found in the Quran or the Bible.

In the theme of modernity and the environment, the musicians sing about the need for our co-dependency on physical and spiritual beings. Ayinla started his song by appealing to Yemoja for forgiveness and to stop disasters caused by floods.

In *Omiyalé*, Ayinla made it clear that the recurrence of floods since the 1950s in Ibadan is partly due to the neglect of the yearly rituals required by Yemoja. According to E. Ogundeji<sup>11</sup>:

Ibadan people seem to neglect the place and position of Yemoja, the Ogunpa river goddess who have, at several times, come to the Olu of Ibadan palace through the priests to report on the activities of citizens and to warn the people to stop dumping refuse in her body made of water and to return to the practices of ritual appeasement and yearly sacrifices.

(Interview 23 Feb 2017)

Normally, the river goddess should be revered and honoured as a spiritual being. It is believed by many in the community that the total neglect of sacrifices and ritual practices is informed by modernisation and an imported bigotry towards indigenous religion. Jimi Solanke (Interview 12 May 2017) explains that “the overflowing of the Ogunpa River, in Ibadan, was believed to be caused by Yemoja’s anger against the neglect of her warnings, and the continual dumping of refuse in her home.” In her song, Ajangila emphasises that desecrating the space of the goddess of the river will result in flooding. See below an excerpt from Ajangila’s song:

Obinrinso,	Women are saying that
Wonl’Ogunpa o seun	the goddess of Ogunpa has not done well
Okunrinso	Men are saying that
Wonl’Ogunpa o seun	the goddess of Ogunpa has not done well
Omọ kékerenso	Children are saying that
Wonl’Ogunpa o seun	the goddess of Ogunpa has not done well
Moni’ronigbogbowonnpakiri	I said they are all telling lies
Tani won ofiwosilo	Who among them will allow
Tiyi o gbà	desecration in their homes.

(Ajangila 1980)

In the song text above, Ajangila reiterates how people in Ibadan neglect their spiritual obligations. Ajangila explains that Yemoja became angry because of the insensitivity of the people and the abandonment of indigenous knowledge. Ajangila’s song affirms Ayinla’s plea for Yemoja’s pardon.

Ayinla reminds the citizens of the importance of the Osun Osogbo festival which is observed annually through praise, offerings, and appeasement prayers, among others. The song is a reminder to the Ibadan people of their neglect of the yearly

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<sup>11</sup> Ogundeji is an indigene of Ibadan and was interviewed about the songs and their implications for environmental sustainability.

rites and sacrifices to Yemoja of the Ogunpa and other rivers in Ibadan. The following excerpt of Ayinla's song illustrates this reminder:

Àṣàábíníbí ò se é gbàgbé, sebí ẹ rántíỌsunỌsogbo, Tíwónbọ lódòdún,	Culture and tradition cannot be neglected like the Osun Osogbo festival That is been worshipped and celebrated annually
Tójépétóbágbekuwa fun léku, Tóbágbeye wà fun léye, Tóbágbàgùntàn Aláyínlá, wá fun lágùntànbòlòjò, Ìselò n fun wònńídero,	If she demands rodent, it will be given, If she demands bird, it is given to her If she demands a ram they give her a fat one indeed The goddess blesses them in return with good things
A fúnwọnlọmọ tuntunàrigbéjọ, Àṣàábíníbí ò se é gbàgbé, sebí Kámásayédayéòyínbó, Tójé pé how are you lọmọ n kí baba, tójé pé how are you lọmọ n kí baba, Tójé pé how are you nibaba n kọmọ, Èbẹ mo n bèyín o, omọ aráyé o	Osun blesses them with children, Culture and tradition cannot be neglected Do not compare yourself to the Westerners That even greeting is casual like the father saying "how are you?" to the son And the son saying "how are you" to the father I am pleading do not forget your cultures.

Ayinla observes that modernity is the major factor mitigating against the worshipping of Yemoja. Wilson (1987: 4) agrees with Ayinla that modernity, western civilisation and urbanisation are seriously eroding the cultural and religious life of the people in Yorubaland. This observation illustrates that the superhuman that dwells in the Ogunpa river in Ibadan is not honourably treated. In the song above, Ayinla reiterates the necessity of the yearly festivals and the worship of Yemoja, and its concomitant benefits to humans. The singer reminds one of the yearly performances of the Osun-Osogbo festival and the resultant benefits it provides faithful followers in terms of childbirth, good health, protection, and environmental sustainability, to name a few. The song explains that the neglect of culture and indigenous worship could be disastrous. Alaba (pers. comm. 3 July 2016) explains that the neglect of regular sacrifices is part of the reasons for the flood. She appeals to the government and the people of Ibadan to return to the tradition of rituals and sacrifices to Yemoja. In an interview with Ayinla he observed:

I gave my voice to the flood disaster because of the incidence's magnitude. And I address several issues in the song. First is the issue of the human and non-human relationship, especially that with Yemoja, goddess of Ogunpa river. The fact is any time humans try to neglect continual customary respect, worship and the offer of sacrifices to these supernatural beings,

their wrath is incurred. So, I advise that the inhabitants of Ibadan, and people in general, perform regular sacrifices to these beings, and that they quit the disreputable act of dumping solid waste into waterways. Until the people change and begin showing respect and honour to Yemoja, more occurrences of flooding and its devastating impact should be expected in the area. And that is why I sang, informing Nigerians that our cultural beliefs, traditions and practices must not be changed because of modernity. (Interview 23 June 2016)

Another important theme from the songs is the one emphasised by Ayinla, Obey and Owo. They agree on the need to pray for environmental sustainability. While Ayinla appeals to the three major religions in Yoruba land: Christianity, Islam and indigenous religion, Obey appeals to Christians to confess their sins and pray to the almighty God. Owo emphasises the need for Muslims to pray to Allah. The place of religion and prayer is vital to most Yoruba communities and Yoruba social groups in general. Obey explains the need to confess and forsake the sin of desecrating the environment. The Bible commanded Christians to take care of their environment or else God will be angry with them (Deuteronomy 23: 14). The Biblical injunction is disobeyed by Christians who drop waste in water ways. This is true of the Holy Quran and Odu Ifa verses as well.

Gbogboonígbàgbó ayéo,	All the Christians around
Èjékátèwóadùàgìdìdì,	Let us intensify our prayers
GbogboMùsùlùmíayéo,	Muslims in the world
Èjékátèwóadùàgìdìdì,	Let us intensify our prayers
Olóògùndúdúayé o,	Traditional religions followers
Èjé kátèwó àdùràgìdìdì	We should intensify our prayers.

(Obey 1982)

One may ask why Obey is calling on the three religions knowing that the imported religions in part exacerbated the problems of the environment through not recognising the indigenous religion. However, his call signifies the belief in all religions to protect the environment. Ayinla hopes that through prayers, and invitations to divine interventions, the flooding could be brought to an end. While Ayinla is calling for prayers from the three major religions in Yoruba land, Owo only recognises Muslims and Christians as his audience. His song suggests that he does not recognise indigenous religion:

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<i>Oya gbogboeroooo, a aao ye</i>	Every one
<i>Gbogboerokakepealaura,</i>	Every Muslim should pray to Allah
<i>Koni mole kekura ni o</i>	Muslims should cry to Allah
<i>Kakep'Olorun o</i>	Pray to the Lord
<i>Konigbagbo gbe bibeli o</i>	Christians should carry their Bible
<i>Kakep'Olorun o</i>	and Pray to the Lord.

(Owo 1980)<sup>12</sup>

Obey observes that prayers alone, as emphasised by Ayinla and Owo, without repentance and a change of attitude, as existing in different religious tenets, will not stop the flood:

<i>Òjòabàmítòrò n'Ìbàdàn, òjòkèkerékó,</i>	There was a mysterious rain in Ibadan
<i>Òjòabàmítòrò n'Ìbàdàn, òjòkèkerékó,</i>	There was a mysterious rain in Ibadan
<i>Aòrò Ògùnpaòrò Ògùnpa,</i>	The flood of Ogunpa
<i>Tóbájèsè obadàrijini,</i>	If it is sin please forgive us
<i>Aòrò Ògùnpaòrò Ògùnpa,</i>	The flood of Ogunpa
<i>Tóbájèsè obadàrijini.</i>	If it is sin please forgive us.

(Obey 1982)<sup>13</sup>

Another theme in the songs is the lack of social responsibility in the community. Ayinla and Ajangila express the need for social responsibility. They both sound notes of warning to community members who drop waste in the water ways:

<i>Ilétótó bi ojùdògùnpa ni,</i>	Big mansions are built on Ogunpa
<i>Gbogboàjàkù motor nkòojùdògùnpani</i>	Motor vehicle parts are found in river
<i>Idotitim be laiyèojùdògùnpa ni</i>	Dirt and waste are thrown in Ogunpa
<i>Kinioun o da, kobojumu,</i>	It is very bad
<i>Edakunedabo, e fiyedenu</i>	Please listen and understand me
<i>Eko le ku o lojuogunpa</i>	Remove waste and buildings from
	Ogunpa River
<i>Komiori bi ma balo</i>	that the water can flow freely.

(Ajangila 1980)

Ajangila's song illuminates the level of degradation of the Ogunpa river: the plastic, damaged vehicle parts, and the dwellings built on water ways. Ajangila warns that people who are acting this way are provoking the anger of the river, and by extension, Yemoja.

<sup>12</sup> Listen to this song at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fc2Hne\\_nlCU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fc2Hne_nlCU)

<sup>13</sup> Listen to this song at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoUMt-9SNH0>

Being one of the filthiest cities in Nigeria, the residents of Ibadan are advised to embrace the values which the song advances, and to promote social and environmental change for the better. Ayinla calls for deference, with respect to the morals advocated in his song. The music serves to demystify environmental disasters as not entirely caused by God but by human behaviour. An informant, E. Akara, noted that:

I think these destructions will serve as a serious warning for the government to be proactive. In developed states of the world, people are punished for even the slightest offence as parking at the wrong place or not obeying traffic rules or signs. I believe if the system of punishing even the slightest offence is adopted, people will refrain from the unethical act of dumping refuse in waterways. (pers. comm. 3 May 2016)

Here it is suggested that the Nigerian government, from the local to federal levels, must be proactive and protect the water ways as a symbol of both intangible and tangible heritages. Yoruba people believe in spiritual beings who they worshipped through different means, before the arrival of Islam and Christianity. In Yoruba land, certain events are attributed to the supernatural, and as such are regarded as uncontrollable by human actions. In the case of floods, Yorubas believe that God causes the rains that cause floods; its control is seen as emanating from outside the human. The song makes a plea to the supernatural for clemency. As a Yoruba man, Ayinla encodes the music with Yoruba socio-cultural beliefs. His musical practice, composition, and performances are culturally situated within the Yoruba worldview about human relations and interactions with nature.

DeNora (2004) asserts that adding music to the catalogue of cultural materials or devices of ordering, contributes to a whole new dimension in the focus of human-nonhuman interactions. The Yoruba popular music of Ayinla and the other musicians discussed in this paper, presents a wealth of knowledge and stimulates learning experiences among its listeners. Their songs explain the human-nonhuman interactions that should exist and propose that when humans encroach on the environment it always results in disaster. Music is a powerful medium for communication, through which human actions and follies, especially in relation to the environment are expressed. It provides a forum for remembering the environment and how it could be sustained, so that communities may better understand and learn more about human activities and their effect on environmental sustainability.

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## Conclusion

In this paper I have described the relatedness of ecomusicology to the study of popular music focusing on flood disasters and religious belief in Ibadan. Reflecting on ecomusicology which entails humans, the environment and culture shows its centrality in the discourse of the environment and its sustainability possibly by supernatural beings. This article contributes to understanding the discourse on ecomusicology from a west African point of view. Future studies could engage ecomusicology more critically by looking at beliefs that are immanent in rituals. Ecomusicology focuses much on the activities of humans rather than the activities of perceived superhumans. Despite this shortcoming in existing literature on ecomusicological theory the perceived relationship between humans and non-humans is vital to the discourse on music in environmental sustainability and the reduction of floods in this very specific location.

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