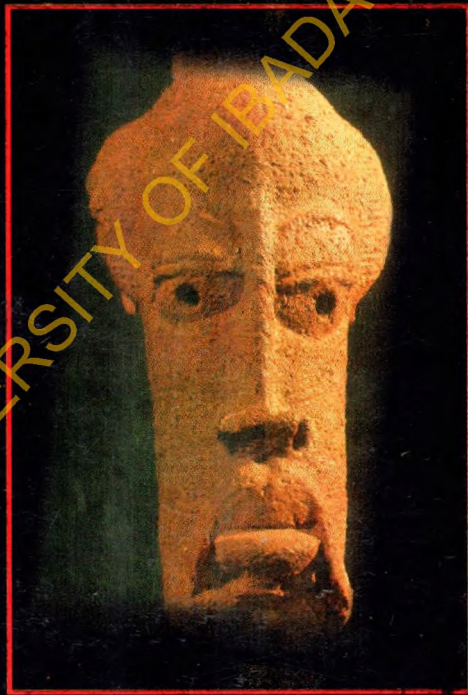


**A Handbook of
Methodology**

in

**African
Studies**



Edited by

Dele Layiwola

A HANDBOOK OF
Methodology
IN AFRICAN STUDIES

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To the lingering memory of Esiri Dafieware, poet and patriot.

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Editor's Acknowledgements

Ten years ago I was elected the Editor of *African Notes*, the journal of the Institute of African Studies, when Professor Bolanle Awe was Director of African Studies. We took a long and distant look as far back across our shoulders as we possibly could from that vantagepoint. At that time the journal had traversed a quarter of a century since it started publication as a research bulletin in 1964. That was only two years since the inception of the Institute itself, in 1962.

Now, *African Notes* is ten years older; a 'scholar' of 35 years! We thought it was about time it gave an account of itself. Professor Cornelius Adepegba became Director of African Studies a second time in 1998 and we approached him with the proposal that a broad-based edition on the methodological framework of our African Studies programme at Ibadan was long overdue. He readily agreed that this could serve as a special bumper edition of *African Notes*. One of the objectives would be an attempt at self-appraisal. We are grateful for the free hand he gave; he constituted no hindrance or inhibition in any way. The result is what is seen in this extended issue of our journal for 1999.

We owe it a duty to acknowledge the inspiration we have derived at large from foundation Director, Professor K. Onwuka Dike, of blessed memory, and more proximally from Professor Emeritus Tekena Tamuno and the late researcher and Royal, Dr S.O. Babayemi. In the thematic contexts of their works, these two with Professor Bolanle Awe have been three historians with a difference. Tamuno's works deal with institutional and security issues; Awe's with oral and gender historiography and Babayemi's with folk and performance history. Adepegba complements them as an art historian. Accordingly we have, in a large measure, built on the vision and preoccupation of these devout, eminent scholars. We must not forget to mention the contributions of Peggy Harper, Francis Speed, Robert Armstrong and Saburi Oladeni Biobaku. In a modest way, this roll-call of names has constituted our comparative genealogy; what, at the risk of sacrilege, I have often referred to as the Ibadan African Studies cabal!

My colleagues in the publications unit, Dr Olufemi Olaoba and the respective secretary cum marketing coordinator, Mrs. Comfort Falade,

later replaced by Mrs. Omolara Adeleye have proved to be invaluable assets over the years. Their loyalty and support have gone a long way. Professors Bolanle Awe, Alex Iwara and Mrs. Mabel Segun have been my predecessors as Editors of *African Notes*.

If I owe any further debt of gratitude, then it is to contributors to the present volume; except Peggy Harper, all others are presently teachers and researchers at the Institute of African Studies. Others who could not participate for logistical reasons of space or time would, most certainly, be included in a future edition.

I make bold to say that we got all the moral support for this seminal work, so whatever shortcomings remain are to be regarded as mine. *African Notes*, as a research and institutional support has, at last, come of age. The rest of the story is by now beyond fable; it is history, as with a small 'h'.

Dele Layiwola
Ibadan

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Introduction and Overview

We consider it a worthwhile attempt as well as a duty to present an anthology that reflects the state of research and method in the pursuit of field investigation in African Studies. The fifteen chapters here represent a model borne out of our active participation in a field, which our Institute has pioneered on the continent since 1962. In the first decade of its foundation, the Institute of African Studies consistently reported on its research findings in a bulletin, which later became a full-fledged journal. It was one of its kinds in Black Africa. Today, the field continues to broaden and what used to be referred to as field notes have become field methods and first-hand research models based on first-hand contacts and direct experience. Being a continent of great contrarities if not contradictions, field investigation in Africa has become a millennium event for two reasons. The first is that the continent occupies a peculiar place as one of our few remaining links between pre-history and modernity, whereby a travel in a mammy wagon or a matatu in the countryside can reveal a refreshing anthropological insight than has ever been garnered in books between the 15th and the 20th centuries. The second is that this dazzling array of anthropological idioms is in dire need of documentation and interpretation, because they stand the risk of extinction and misrepresentation. This is, therefore, the basis for that tripartite tool of observation, selection and documentation. This is the only way by which we can preserve a meaningful whole or a bird's-eye view of what constitutes a veritable history of where mankind chose to begin his history and where his civilisation first foundered. The symbolic implication of this is deep and particularly far-reaching.

On the African continent, we still consider every old man or woman a living library; every economic tree an archive and every hillside and cave a museum. In spite of the buffetings of time, of history, of colonialism and slavery, Africa continues to tick like a clock. But whence come the resistance and the vibrancy? In spite of the harsh realities of its history, there is an enigmatic, enduring oral tradition and array of cultural indicators, which keep the continent whirling in perpetual motion. What field investigation does is to activate these enduring traditions each time they are performed either as oral history

or folklore, music or dance. The enchantment is much like the illustration once given by Chinua Achebe: that culture is like a masquerade dancing, you cannot enjoy the benefit of performance unless you are in relative motion which enables you to regard it from all sides. The ability to capture in writing, script or celluloid is the key to the understanding of Africa's past and, indeed, her future.

Wole Soyinka once exemplified in a critical essay that Africa appears in more than three dimensions, and that the key to unlocking its jewel box would be the ability to see through its fourth dimension. It is the same spirit that informs J.E. Wiredu's point that there is a fallacy in making a straight comparison or even contrast between traditional African philosophy and Western thought, since one is folk and the other is modern. It is therefore legitimate to ask: If the purpose of fieldwork is to record, in a bird's-eye view, the intent and purpose of disciplines, can it represent the whole field of view like a wide-angled lens surmounted by filters? To put the matter more crudely, can the spirit essence be recorded in mundane terms? Do we have to attain the age and inner eye of Ogotomeli to be able to make sense of some of the ancient symbols of our contemporary existence?

It is difficult to hazard that the subjective instinct can really interpret the environment of field investigation beyond that which we might have programmed ourselves to see? Even when magnetic tapes and celluloid have fully captured the scenes of a performance or recital, it is difficult to say whether the subjective 'I' of the inventor can truly attain detachment. Is it really possible to capture the natural environment in its entirety? If we do, how would we account for the margin of parallax or distortion? This field casualty tendency applies to both the Western outsider as well as to the alienated insider. If anything, the tragedy of a deracine insider is greater because he is two steps away from his own objective reality. Indeed there are two or more categories of the western(ised) outsider, if we care for the minutiae of varied sensibilities.

First, there is that outsider who genuinely sets out to seek knowledge of 'species and specimens' waiting to be analyzed or studied. This category is rare — like the wink of a crab or the yolk in the womb of a boulder. The second group is readily available: the cocky, self-assured researcher who has imbibed the tale of an exotic Africa where all is willing to be dissected and investigated. For him, it is a continent waiting to make every shouldered researcher a Nobel laureate or a Herskovits fellow. Hordes of these abound on the Africanist maps telling tales and claiming to be world-class authority

in the languages and cultures of their new-fangled mental colony. To this category, fieldwork is always a story of conquests where simpleton natives are waiting for the prompting to sing at the snap of the finger.

Every so often, however, many researchers with noses in the air are themselves subject-cases for investigation by the fascinated natives, who do not tire to tell them what will amuse or fascinate their imposed or captive guest. The other categories vary, in a matter of relative degree, between the two main groups. How very wise to begin the game of knowledge poaching with a modicum of humility. It is probably less demanding to hunt whales on the Mississippi than to hunt authentic versions of ancient lore and mysticism from the depths of the Congo. Halfway down the millennium, we might find that some of the magnetic scotch reels of the last century are being contemplated for gymnastic bonfires. Many of us may not be here to witness our folly, but we might as well take on the challenge from the very beginning, the anterior sleeve of the pudding wraps. The whole business of institutionalised African Studies began just a little over five decades ago. But the destination is still far and daunting.

This truth will be even more obvious if we realise that the folk thought of Africans are yet to be individualised from dicta as philosophical theorems, which would then form the basis of authentic technological developments. We have yet to begin the rigorous philosophising of the subjects for the purpose of scientificity. For instance, the body of knowledge encoded in traditional African medicinal practices has yet to be synthesized for institutional laboratories for popular participation and consumption. There is a notion of growth, not necessarily of development, connected to this phenomenon. This begs instant comparison with the opinion expressed, sometime ago, by the philosopher J.E. Wiredu:

. . . African traditional thought should in the first place only be compared with Western folk thought. For this purpose, of course, Western Anthropologists will first have to learn in detail about the folk thought of their own peoples. African folk thought may be compared with Western philosophy only in the same spirit in which Western folk thought may be compared also with Western philosophy. . . ¹

Ruminations of this kind reveal that there are lots of problems with knowledge acquisition and production as we have hitherto approached the field in and about Africa. In spite of the large bodies of data available on and about the continent and its peoples, far much

less of this has had any direct impact on the problems and material conditions of the continent. This would seem to be the lament of the anthropologist, O.B. Lawuyi, on the failure of field anthropology in Africa. He notes that in spite of its colonial history and a large body of data, anthropology continues to be a rear-guard scientific discipline in African universities. He fears that it will be largely ignored by scholars and policy makers because it had always formulated its subject matter as a way of keeping colonialism and imperialism in place. The contention of this scholar is that the insights of ethnographic data conflicts with the reality and welfare of the African populace. In his own words:

Besides, anthropology is a discipline in which the 'child' is seen but not heard because there is less African input into the discourse, even though the texts acknowledge their presence in quotations or in pictures added to the texts-photographs that hardly reveal the dynamism of their cultures, and which in any case hardly reveal the nature of the encounter between the observed and the observer once the observer disappears from the frame.²

We must admit that Lawuyi's thesis is somewhat expansive for the purpose of emphasis, but the danger of field misapplication to scholarship is borne out in his words. Once a false notion is conceived as theory, the consumer is fed with fables in place of historical and empirical truths — the anthropological fiction. This problem is not peculiar to the field of anthropology, but to the general production of knowledge of and about the African 'Anthropos' and cosmos. Some of the underlying reasons derive from the context of colonialism, conquest and power relations.

In the early enterprise of colonialism, anthropology and literary fiction were the adjunct disciplines used as the basis for the supposed understanding of conquered peoples and territories. Once the physical conquest and occupation were done with, the next step was the intellectual domination of the terrain. This allowed the conqueror to people his domain with invented subjects and 'duppies' of his dreams, which needed to be shapened and imaginatively tamed for the ease of governance³. In psychoanalytical terms, it is easier to relate to such invented subjects with a measure of hallucination or grandeur, whereby roles and aspirations are appended to them as in works of art. Such inventions do not have souls beyond the interpretations of their creators. They think or express themselves in notions of false consciousness. This is not overly the fault of the anthropologist

because it is logical to look down upon a conquered subject as a mere specimen to be subjected to scientific probe.

A created work cannot talk as by itself unless its creator first breathes or talks into it. It then means that the conceptualised mode of dialogue is already lopsided. A subject can neither properly dialogue nor argue with its master without creating a conundrum as in Shakespeare's Prospero and Caliban. Power thus expresses itself in linguistic as well as rhetorical relationships. The long drawn contestations of African literary critics on the Prospero-Caliban story is a classical representation of power as reflected in the metaphor of the voice and the tongue. For if the subject is not heard as an actor, which audience will acknowledge his existence? Certainly, only the heard can be noticed or recognised. It follows that in the market-place of ideas, rhetoric is the weapon or stratagem; language constitutes the power of argument as well as the argument for power. Our documentation of the field is a continuation of the historical encounter between forms of civilisations and forms of apprehensions. It is the conceptual tool for the pursuit of an art as well as its science.

I have referred to the documentation of fieldwork as a historical battleground for forms of civilisation because conceptual and ideological battles did not stop with the end of colonialism. Even indigenous scholars have continued to identify the field of research and study as the subject of conquest rather than a socialising or humanising endeavour. Many researchers believe that they are bringing specimens of their own study to the attention of the world rather than the subject of study bringing knowledge and light to their ignorance. They have imbibed the superiority complex of their masters who went before them. Many Colonials, for lack of intellectual humility, looked at their subject as objects of conquest; now many Post-Colonials are looking at their own communities, through spurious goggles, as specimens of study for intellectual export. This is why the truths of our ancients have not been discovered for proper application to endogenous problems in Africa. In fact, the true Colonial may understand the subject better since his position is slightly less pretentious as a conquistador rather than that of a pillager from within. For there is no man who conquers his own culture from within, rather, that culture formed and nurtures him like a parent; for the same reason, that culture is superior to him. It has a hold on him because it determines the quality of his subsequent existence.

The foregoing does not foreclose the positive improvement that men achieve upon the culture bequeathed to them, all it says is that

great civilisations are wrought in the context of self-conquest and humility rather than in the context of aggression and a self-invented, wilful complex. The latter is more a result of fear than of benevolence, and true knowledge can come only from unfettered circumstances. The poor villagers and provincials we study and interview very often know how we feel towards them and volunteer the kind of information we deserve to get! But then we carry, like a burden, the supposed gospel truth to the real peddlers in the megalopolis of knowledge. Deservedly, as intermediaries, we know far less than the humble villagers we pillage every so often do.

The present anthology has no pretensions to extraordinary knowledge; it does not harbour any golden bullion, nor does it claim to know where to find them but it suggests how best to begin the search for them. This is done in an indirect manner through the experience of others who have been working in the African fields within the limitations that we have earlier enumerated. It has been set out in six sub-sections according to the interest of the researcher-participants in the project. But beyond the watertight compartmentalisation into disciplines, there abounds a variety, which are intertextual in scope and conception. For instance, there is the lucid description of the field and endeavour as exemplified by Adekola, Pogoson and Osunwole. There are others, which derive from systematic techniques such as we find in Harper, Iwara and Albert. There are those which constitute a survey of the field and the subjects of encounter as in Olaoba, Olaniyan and Omibiyi-Obidike. There is a unique contribution such as textual prognosis in comparative Arabic philology in Jimoh's contribution. The Arabic documentation unit he represents has, at last, established its presence in the intellectual concerns of our Institute. Adepegba and Layiwola's contributions dwell on the perceptual tendencies in cross-cultural studies.

Each of the contributions is predicated on the theoretical and practical background of its author. Olaoba and Albert have brought the subtleties of historiography into their analyses, though Albert careers into proposal writing and defence as an ancillary function of a researcher who seeks thorough funding and pursuit of field investigation. It is interesting to see how Osunwole, Adekola and Jimoh have been able to fuse aspects of anthropology and belief systems with intricacies of religious overtones. Omibiyi-Obidike and Olaniyan combine hard core performance with theoretical research in the field. Iwara is first and foremost a linguist; therefore, his contribution has harnessed deep insights from that subject to illuminate the concerns of an Africanist

field researcher. Though anthologised elsewhere, Adepegba's paper brings considerable theoretical insight into the field with regard to the development of tradition and tastes between colonial and post-colonial tendencies. Pogoso's and Adepegba's form the art historical component of the anthology. Harper's is a distillation of her field notes from the 1960s through the early 1970s and with Layiwola's represent the performance and literary components of the project.

The fifteen essays by a dozen Africanist researchers here, though equipped with scope and perspective, do not in any way exhaust the possibilities of the field. They are, at best, seminal contributions which serve to stimulate the yearly debates of our graduate students, especially on a pivotal course called Theory and Practice of Field Investigation. The anthology is also intended as a handbook for both enthusiasts and teachers in the humanities. Finally, it is hoped that the anthology will provide a feedback mechanism and appraisal for the evolving discipline of African studies at Ibadan.

Notes on Contributors

1. OLUBAYO ADEKOLA is a Research Fellow in Anthropology with particular interest in divination, linguistics and comparative religion.
2. CORNELIUS ADEPEGBA is Research Professor of African Art History. He is Director of African Studies and had curated an exhibition of African Sculpture for the Tront Gallery in Carlisle. He has worked extensively on body markings among the Yoruba and the Fulani.
3. OLAWALE ALBERT is a historian with special interests in Peace and Conflict Studies. He has recently visited the United Nations University in Jordan. He is pioneering the establishment of a Conflict Studies programme at the institute of African Studies.
4. ALEX IWARA is a Professor of Linguistics and has a special interest in Folklore and French Literature. He is the President of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria. He was a Consultant Editor to the 1977 World Black Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in Nigeria.
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8. OLUFEMI OLAOBA teaches history at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. His special interest is in Legal History and Palace culture. He has recently conducted a study of the largest open market in Ibadan, the Bodija Market. He has been the manager of the Institute's publication unit.
9. MOSUNMOLA OMIBIYI-OBIDIKE holds a Ph.D. from UCLA in Music Education. She is a Research Professor of Ethno- musicology. She has published widely on musical instruments and musical genres with particular attention to documen- tation.
10. AIBINUOLA OSUNWOLE holds a Ph.D. in Religion and Belief Systems with specialisation in Ethno-medicine. He has published

- widely on the use of herbs in traditional healing systems.
11. PEGGY HARPER inaugurated the Dance and Performance Studies unit of the Institute of African Studies in 1964, and was active in field collection, recording and documentation until the early 1970s when she returned to England.
 12. OHIOMA POGOSON studied the Esie Stone images of Kwara State, Nigeria for his doctoral dissertation. His recent interest has been the art history of Benin and its Palace regalia.

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Section I

Art History

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SPLIT IDENTITY AND THE ATTENDANT PERSPECTIVE TANGLE IN POST-COLONIAL AFRICAN ART FORMS

CORNELIUS O. ADEPEGBA

1

Despite the changes that African ways of life and traditional values have gone through since colonialism, Africanity has been a major expectancy in post-colonial African arts. The concern for it was a strong factor in the colonial formation of the arts. Not only has it continuously created a foggy perception of the art forms, it has also appeared as a dilemma in the creative efforts of emergent African artists. To the audience, artists and their works are neither individuals nor groups. The identity problem it has created in both the understanding and creation of the art forms is what is here being specially considered alongside the popularly advocated approach to traditional African art to evolve a suitable approach to the new art forms. The approach as used for traditional African art is certainly not without its shortcomings; it is even a barrier to the understanding of the new African art which is not as culturally functional as the traditional one.¹ But as the only approach popularly advocated for the study of African art, which to many is only the traditional art, its examination together with the new art forms is a relevant starting point in the search for an appropriate methodology for understanding the new art.

To begin with, however, there is need for clarification on Africa as it is taken to mean in reference to African arts and post-colonialism. The adjective "African" in cultural studies commonly refers to a section of the continent occupied by a particular race and not the entire geographical entity from which the adjective derives. Culturally, the adjective applies to only the countries directly south of the Sahara together with Sudan and Ethiopia, somehow east of them that are all inhabited by black populations. Whether this application is appropriate is not the issue. Mention is only made of it to show the spatial coverage of both the art forms and the artists referred to by the qualifier, *African*. With the exception of Ethiopia, the countries to which the artists and their art forms belong were under one European power or the other for most part of the first half of the last century. Their post-colonialism, very recent, only started with the independence of Sudan in 1956 and the time most of them became independent coincided with the period of upsurge in their artistic outputs. However, post-colonial African art did not just begin with their attainment of political freedom. In art, as in most aspects of African life, there is no clean break from colonialism to post-colonialism. Post-colonial African art actually has its root in colonialism and as colonialism mostly started in different parts of the region in the early decades of the last century, post-colonial African art is simply twentieth century African art.

The Colonial End of Traditional African Art

The political control which colonialism means was the umbrella for all other controls of the countries and their peoples in the colonial era. The political control very much strengthened Christianity and commercial enterprises which had been introduced into the region before it and the trio – foreign rule, Christianity and commerce – combined to bring an end to the concept of traditional African art, especially the sculptures which were produced mainly to serve traditional religious purposes. Industrial materials from Europe also replaced traditional hand-made utilities and through churches and European-style education which were prompted by the need for mutual understanding and administrative conveniences, Africans began to see their traditional ways of life, often branded "primitive" by their colonial masters, as inferior. The colonial period also coincided with the time that traditional African art became recognised as art in Europe. The rush to collect the art objects that followed, the

recognition coupled with the absence of traditional preservation of the art impoverished the countries of their existing traditional art objects and their traditional artists also started to give up production owing to paid employments brought about by monetary economy. African traditional artists preferred newly introduced jobs and trade to their traditional crafts which used to be practised as pastimes mainly for the interest of the group and for little or no reward. Thus before the end of colonialism, traditional African art appeared close to its end. In the new ways of life ushered in by colonialism, art, though desirable, was no longer functional and essential but became sensual and luxurious.

The Colonial Origin of Post-Colonial African Art

Western formal education introduced in the colonies general, elementary education based mainly on the needs of the time could not provide professional training in a subject such as art that does not lead to the production of obvious essential end-products. Thus, in most of the countries, the first set of new artists had to go to Europe for training. Notable early Nigerian artists (Aina Onabolu, Akinola Lasekan, Ben Enwonwu) were trained in Britain. So also did the foremost Sudanese painters, Ahmed Mohammed Shibrain and Ibrahim El Salahi study at the Slade School of Fine Art in London. Other foremost African artists who trained abroad include the Ethiopian artists, Afewerk Tekle, who also studied at the Slade; Gebre Kristo Desta who studied at the Academy of Art in Cologne, Germany and Skunder Boghossian who studied in both the Ecole des Beaux Arts and the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere in France.

Although these early artists are of different generations and cultural backgrounds, western training made them to value originality, a common artistic value and major expectancy in western art, above anything else. Their works were the beginning of personal and individualistic self-expressions in contrast to tribal and stereotypical attributes of traditional African sculpture. As the eventual vanguards in art and art teaching in their respective countries, these artists also passed on the same European value to their students. Thus their European artistic orientation became a permanent mark of modernity in Africa art.

Not long after these early set of artists were being trained abroad, the art schools fashioned after European models were also being set up in Africa. They were different from those of Europe only in their locations. In the materials introduced as well as in the method and focus of the training in them, they are the same with western art

schools. In them, as in European art schools, emphasis was on skill and originality and all their instructors were Europeans until the Africans trained in the same tradition started to join and take over from them.

Established in 1936, Achimota College in Ghana was the first of the formal art schools to be established in Black Africa. It was followed by the School of Fine Arts at Makerere University College which was established in Kampala, Uganda in 1939. There, Margaret Trowell practised the conventional European teaching procedure to produce easel painters. In Kinshasa in 1943, a Catholic priest, Reverend Brother Marc-Stanislas established the Ecole St Luc, named after the art school where he trained in Belgium. There also, European classical art was taught.¹ Worth mentioning also are the present College of Fine and Applied Arts in Khartoum which was established as the Department of Arts and Crafts in 1946 and the Academie des Beaux Arts et des Metier d' Art which was run by a Belgian artist, Laurent Moonens and was established in 1951 in Lubumbashi in Zaire. Then in Nigeria, the Fine Arts Department of the Yaba Technical Institute (now Yaba College of Technology) was established in 1953. The Fine Arts Department of the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology was originally established in Ibadan but was transferred to Zaria in 1955. These were the formal art institutions established in Black Africa in the colonial era. Many more have been established since then and at present in Nigeria, formal art schools are not fewer than ten and they have continued with the western conventional method with little or no modifications. This is to show that the post-colonial art institutions in Africa are not particularly different from those established before them in the colonial era.

The formal art schools were not the only places for art instruction in Africa. Very important in the foundation of modern African art are also the workshops and occasional centres which, run by some European individuals, taught Africans art in unconventional western methods. These workshops were two types: those in which European and other media were employed and those which were set up to revive the dying African traditions.

Those in which European media were employed were similar in their focuses; they were to encourage individual creativity as in the formal schools but through a different approach. In most cases, the workshop instructors simply provided their students with materials without interfering with their creations and even their processes of executing their arts in some cases. This method, according to most of the organisers of such workshops, was to ensure that the resulting art

forms would be free of any imposition and could be taken as the authentic individual African expressions, a claim which Marshal Mount finds difficult to accept on the ground that even when formal instructions were not given, the artists could still be influenced just by mere admiration, approval or disapproval of their works by their instructors.²

Only in French-speaking African countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and the People's Republic of Congo, were two of such schools established before post-colonialism. The earlier of the two and the earliest of such workshops was established by Pierre Romain-Desfosses in 1944 at Lubumbashi (formerly Elisabethville) in the Republic of Congo. It was first called "Le Hangar" but was later changed to "L'Academie de l'Art Populaire Congolais". The workshop began from the astonishment of its founder by an accidental painting made by his chauffeur who was later given materials to work with together with his friends. According to the founder, the intention was to make the students to produce works that were wholly African: hence he would not suggest themes, provide models or give advice on methods of representation to his students. He only gave them the place to work and provided them with necessary materials such as paper, canvas and paints.³ The school was run that way until after his death in 1954 when it was merged with the Academie des Beaux Arts et des Metiers d'Art, a formal art school which, as indicated earlier, was established in the same town by Laurent Moonens. According to Marshal Mount, Moonens's approach which was conventionally European resulted in a greater technical proficiency.⁴

Established also in the colonial era, the second of such workshops was the Centre d'Art Africaine, popularly referred to as "Poto Poto" school. The name derived from the quarter of Brazzaville in the People's Republic of Congo in which it was established in 1951 and the workshop was established by a French mathematics teacher and an amateur artist, Pierre Lod. The origin of the school was as accidental as that of the one established by Desfosses. The paintings that Osali, Pierre Lod's houseboy, did with the paints he secretly took from his master intrigued and made his master to start supplying him and his friends paints and other materials to work with. His method was not different from that of Desfosses and Lod, the organiser, claimed to have only surrounded the boys with traditional African objects, organised parties, furnished the materials such as paper, paints and brushes and left them to work freely up to allowing them to discover the technique themselves.⁵

Other such experimental workshops were run in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Nigeria in the 1960s. Although the earlier workshops cannot be said to have directly influenced the later ones, such workshops continued to play a major role in the production of African art and artists up to the post-colonial period. Those of Nigeria even began after Nigeria's independence.

The one in Mozambique appears to have been a two-man affair, just an effort made by a Portuguese architect, Pancho Miranda Guepes to develop the creative potentials of Valente Malagantana, an African ball-boy and club attendant he found painting in the tennis club in Lorenzo Marques (now Maputo) in 1959. Unlike the earlier of such workshops in the Republic of Congo and the People's Republic of Congo and even the ones in Zimbabwe and Nigeria established shortly after it, the Maputo experiment was not open but was similarly prompted by the founder's interest in developing local talents. Malagantana had been painting and drawing from his early school years: Guepes only provided him the needed facilities to improve and mature in his art. Malagantana claimed that Guepes discovered him painting in 1959 and very early in 1961, the architect had arranged for him to leave his work at the club by offering him a studio and a monthly allowance to enable him paint full-time. Malagantana soon matured into an outstanding African passion painter.

Equally successful was the workshop run at the National Gallery in Salisbury (now Harare) by Frank McEwen, then the administrator of the gallery. When McEwen became administrator, the activities of the gallery focused mainly on the interest of the European colonists. The political situation in Zimbabwe at the time did not favour African participation in the activities of the gallery and the situation did not please McEwen who was very much interested in developing local talents. Young local artists, including the gallery attendant, Thomas Mukarobgwa, were encouraged to paint and sculpt; but sculpture, particularly in stone, was dominant in the creative outputs of the gallery artists. Stone sculptures were found in the ruins of ancient Zimbabwe, and McEwen linked their productions to the past; but their forms, though personal and individualistic, are sophisticated, most likely because of the criticisms, which McEwen claimed to have offered to give the artists.

Though individualistic in their forms, the works of the workshop experiments of the Mbari Mbayo centre in Osogbo, Nigeria is conversely naïve. The workshop which was begun in 1962, started as an offshoot of the Mbari Centre which was originally set up in Ibadan

by some intellectuals of Ibadan University in 1961 as a forum for artistes of all kinds to meet, discuss and display or perform their arts. In the Ibadan center, writers, musicians, actors and, occasionally, visual artists were involved. A print-making workshop was run there in 1962. But it was the performing aspect of its activities that attracted and led Duro Ladipo, then a local dramatist, to request Ulli Beier, a leading organiser of the Ibadan centre, to set up a similar centre in his native Osogbo. It was from the performing art beginning of the Osogbo Mbari centre that the visual art workshop grew. In fact, most of the early Osogbo artistes were former actors/actresses of Duro Ladipo's theatre group. Ulli Beier himself was not an artist, hence the visual art activities of the workshop were primarily in the hands of guest artists and Ulli Beier's painter-wife, Georgina. The requirement for the visual art participants at the workshop which was decidedly of minimal western education was in reaction to what Ulli Beier saw as western imposition or slavish imitation of European art forms in the Nigerian formal art schools with higher educational entry requirements. Of such workshop centres in Africa, hardly has any as much lasting influence on the arts of its country of origin as the Osogbo workshop. The setting up of a similar centre, the Ori Olokun of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) at Ile Ife was influenced by the Osogbo experiment and many talented Nigerians with neither ability nor means to further their education took to art through the workshop apprenticeship method.

Before independence in Nigeria, a number of efforts were made to revive the obviously disappearing traditional art. In a number of places, workshops for such artistic revival were attempted or successfully organised. In 1897, the traditional ruler of Benin was removed by the British. But in 1914, the appointment of a new traditional ruler was necessitated by the role he would play in the indirect rule system the British were going to introduce and the grumblings of the indigenes against the high-handedness of Obaseki, a British appointee that replaced the former ruler. Traditional brass-casting and wood-carving which were mainly to serve the royalty and had been driven underground with the banning of the king were revived. Although without success, attempts were also made to introduce traditional wood-carving into the curricula of secondary institutions in both Lagos and Omu-Aran.

However, none of the efforts to keep traditions alive, especially in wood-carving, was as successful as the notable workshop experiment run by two Catholic priests, Fathers Carroll and Mahoney in the Yoruba town

of Oye Ekiti. The objectives of the Oye Ekiti experiment was to employ traditional artistry for the artistic needs of the Catholic church. Hence, different craftsmen including traditional wood-carvers were assembled at the workshop to produce images and other artistic needs of the church in the local, traditional ways. The only occasions for interference was when the sculptors were representing sacred figures such as that of Jesus. Set up in 1948, the workshop has long been discontinued. But its wood-carving activities have led to the expansion of the repertoire as well as the continuity and popularisation of Yoruba sculptural forms which are now seen employed for mundane and non-traditional uses.

Yoruba sculpture is generally humanistic. But its ethnographic pieces, whether in cast metal or wood, are abstracted in contrast to the naturalistic sculpture of ancient Ife, the cradle of Yoruba civilisation. The naturalism of Ife art rather than the abstractions of the later Yoruba sculptures, remotely motivated Abayomi Barber, an indigene of Ife who, in 1972, established and still runs a workshop named after him in the Centre for Cultural Studies of the University of Lagos. At the centre, Abayomi Barber, more of a self-trained than an art-school trained artist imparts technical competence and care for minute details, sometimes described as surrealism, into his students most of who are Yoruba like him. The method of the centre is, however, hardly different from that of the formal art schools. Their art forms require technical competence and extreme patience in the use of materials and representational devices such as foreshotening, proportion and modelling.

In Nigeria where there have been the highest numbers of both formal art schools and workshop centres, emphasis in the discussions of contemporary arts is sometimes placed on the dichotomy between the modes of training in the formal art schools and the workshops.⁶ But the goals of the training in both the formal art schools and the workshops were in most cases not strikingly different. The same can be said of the personnel involved in the organisation and the running of the workshops. The teachers in the art schools and most of the instructors in the workshops were trained in western art schools and the emphasis in the training in the workshops, like in the formal schools, has been on originality of both the artists and their works. Regardless of their training backgrounds, what is foremost to the outstanding ones among the artists is being themselves. This, however, is not to say that the works of the two groups of artists do not reflect their individual modes of training. Forms in the works of the school-trained artists are generally characterised by greater rationalisation and logic than those of the workshop-trained artists.

The Diversity of Forms and The Problems of Handling and Approach

In the catalogue of the exhibition of contemporary African art held in London in 1969, Jaqueline Delange and Philip Fry imagined how justice could be done to the many artists exhibited without infringing on the originality of individual works of art.⁷ If the artists could be as many as to give such a concern in 1969, now more than thirty years after, how many more artists need to be studied and how diverse will their works also be, especially as avenues for training have kept on increasing? The variety or diversity of the art works is, however, not totally confusing. The need for handy classifications for teaching purposes has prompted me into coming up with four tendencies that cut across contemporary African art forms.⁸ The tendencies are: (1) Discernible Images of Experiences and Ideas, (2) Naïve Visions Encouraged and Sometimes Fossilised (3) Abstractions beyond Common Understanding, and (4) Adaptations from Traditional Art Forms.

Images of Experiences

The first tendency consists of figural works in different degrees of abstractions representing the artists' experiences and world views. They may be portraits, reports of events, representations of traditional and contemporary ideas, world and religious views, landscapes or even still lives, all rendered in the individual ways that are explainable or can be understood by the art audience. The tendency was the earliest: Aina Onabolu, Akinola Lasekan and Ben Enwonwu of Nigeria as well as Afewerik Tekle of Ethiopia demonstrated the tendency and the tendency still constitutes the largest percentage of the works of contemporary African art.

Naïve Visions

Naïve visions of individual artists were only encouraged by the approach of the workshop schools in which the student was simply given materials to produce "masterpieces" without any technical instruction or much interference. Even in individual visions of life and experiences, forms are characterised by naïve abstractions which resulted more from lack of representational skill than the artists' intentions. Their forms have no regard for volume, depth, proportion and logical interrelationships of motifs and their folkloric themes are sometimes cover-ups for representational inadequacies. Only the

products of some workshops such as of the Abayomi Barber School, the National Gallery Workshop of Zimbabwe and the Catholic Experiment of Oye Ekiti, the approaches of which differ, are exceptions. (As already indicated, the forms in the works of the artists of the National Gallery Workshop of Zimbabwe were somehow corrected through criticism; those of the traditional craft experiment at Oye Ekiti in Nigeria were outcomes of prior knowledge of Yoruba traditions, while those of Abayomi Barber School in Lagos, are not different from those of any of the conventional art schools.) Generally, the non-teaching and non-interference approach of the other workshops did not encourage much stylistic changes in the works of individual artists. (No stylistic change is obvious in the works of Twin Seven Seven of the Osogbo workshop while the artists of "Poto Poto" school even seemed to have copied one another to the extent that their original style has degenerated into the commonest tourist art forms in West Africa.)

Abstractions

Complete abstracts are the art forms that are completely without or hardly suggestive of nature. Not many artists produce such works and neither has their production anything to do with whether they, the artists, were trained in the formal art schools or workshops. Both Gebre Kristos and Skunder Boghosian of Ethiopia from formal art schools are outstanding in their complete abstract paintings. Both of them won the Haile Selassie I Prizes in art and the former was even specifically awarded his for introducing non-figurative art into Ethiopia.⁹ Notable of such works are Kristos's *Tin Cans*, *Green Abstract* and *Red Abstract* as well as Boghosian's early paintings of embryonic forms such as *Cosmological Explosion*. A good number of the untitled abstract paintings or prints of Louis Maquebella of South Africa, also a product of a formal art school, have been published while the early works of Muraina Oyelami of the Osogbo workshop, especially his architectonic series, are among the earliest traces of complete abstract art in Nigeria.

Adaptations from Traditional Forms

Although they are increasing in number, contemporary African artists who have revisited traditional art forms in their works are not many and the sources of the traditional art forms adapted into their works vary according to their cultural backgrounds. While most of the artists from Sudan have drawn inspiration from Arabic and Islamic scripts

because of their Islamic background and those of Ethiopia were influenced by their Christian icon and magical images, those of West Africa have drawn their creative ideas from traditional sculptural forms. Most contemporary African artists are also not consistent in their sources of inspiration or outputs. However, some notable ones among them have consistently adapted traditional art forms in their works. Among them are Ahmed Mohammed Shibrain and Ibrahim Salahi of Sudan whose works have been influenced by Arabic script and alphabets and Nigerian artists such as Ayo Ajayi and Chucks Anyanwu whose works have shown influences from traditional wooden masks and figures. From Nigeria also is Sokari Douglas-Camp whose themes and forms of sculptures are the various performing arts of her people, the Kalabari. Her works straddle over discernible images of experiences and ideas and adaptations from traditional art forms.

The variety of approaches, style and forms among present-day African artists demonstrates the artists' openness as observed by Jean Kennedy¹⁰ and as the art forms range from extreme naturalism to complete abstracts which tend towards internationalism, they could normally be expected to have an international appeal. But the acceptance and patronage of the arts sometimes seem to have depended on racial prejudices which have blurred the perceptive placement and identity of the artists and their works. By their up-bringing, the artists see themselves as still Africans but their works as individual. But to outsiders, particularly their western audience, their individualism should always show their African backgrounds. To such an audience, the artists are more or less copiers of western art especially when their works are not satisfactorily "absurd."

Unfortunately, the thrust of the purchase of their arts has been preponderantly western. The first generation of contemporary artists such as Aina Onabolu and Akinola Lasekan and Afewerk Tekle were contented with local patronage in their respective countries, most likely, because they were unnoticed or hardly recognised in the western world. They were forced to understand their local tastes as the colonial arrogance of the outside audience of their times would hardly allow anything good to be seen in their works. A story told by Evelyn Brown about the comment made on contemporary African art by a leading museum director when requested to present Ben Enwonwu in an exhibition in England in 1950 is a good enough illustration of the western attitudes then towards the works of the early set of contemporary African artists. "Yes, I know Enwonwu's work and his reputation in England. But no good art is being done in Africa today;

none will be done in the next fifty years – and I know what I am talking about,” commented the museum director.¹¹

Aina Onabolu's portraits of the Lagos elite of his time and Tekle's works which celebrated the Ethiopian Church and royalty which conferred on him the honour of a court painter¹² are proofs of the inward looking of the pioneer modern African artists. But local patronage of the arts has not been consistent. Even up to the post-colonial period, the artists still look forward to foreign buyers not only for higher prices but also because it was dignifying to have European recognition. Ulli Beier, commenting on the Nigerian artists trained in art schools in the late 1960s, observes that the chief concern of the artists was to establish new identities by building broken bits of traditions self-consciously into a collage often proclaimed as African renaissance and the identities were more often established in the art galleries of Europe than in the villages of Nigeria.¹³ The fact of the disposition is that most Africans, and not only the artists, have placed a high premium on musicians than visual artists. Among many Africans and even to date, to behave or dress European has become a mark of modernity. With the French colonial policy of *assimilation*, Africans in the French African colonies could even aspire to become “French”!

The criticisms of the artists were not unconnected with the attitudes of the European audience towards the new African arts. The European orientation in bringing about the new art such as the emphasis on individual creativity is often forgotten. The artists are criticised both for leaving traditions behind or for embracing traditional elements.¹⁴ More common of the criticisms, however, is the question of Africanity which is often directed more to the artists trained in formal schools than the workshop trained artists. The intellectual contents of the arts of this group of artists which could be mistaken for those of European arts appear detested. Africans who study abroad and avoid African subject-matter or employ styles that are not “recognisably” African are sometimes considered betrayers of their inheritance.¹⁵ Skunder Boghosian's early paintings were well received but not bought in the exhibition he held at the Galerie Lambert in 1964¹⁶, most likely because of their abstract forms that are not patently African. But no issues are raised on the western art materials that are commonly used by the new African artists. No voice is also raised when the images are absurd. Hence scholars are more comfortable regarding the paintings of the semi-literate street artists displayed on vehicles and barbers' shops as Africans' than the works of African artists trained in art schools.

The replacement of traditional African values with the European since the colonial era and the frequency of such a criticism in the valuation of the post-colonial African art forms seem to have continually affected the artists in their outputs. The artists and their works are still neither here nor there and the identity of the artists rather than show naturally is some- times consciously sought. The resultant split of identity has not helped to encourage interest in the collection and study of the artists' works. Neither also has there been a consensual and appropriate methodology for understanding their diverse forms. Much interest has not been shown by collectors and scholars in expanding African art beyond the traditional art forms. While museums and private collections of traditional African arts abound, institutions especially devoted to the collection of modern African arts are rare. The only contemporary materials that most schools which offer African art as a teaching subject include in their syllabuses are the extant traditional craft materials such as textiles, jewellery, pottery and basketry.

Although Henry Drewal has made a case for the inclusion of modern African art in the teaching of African art in schools¹⁷, modern sculptures or paintings are still not commonly included and as I have indicated elsewhere¹⁸, general publications on contemporary African art are still very few. Only catalogues of exhibitions, most commonly self-promoting and sponsored by the artists themselves, can be found and they too are few. Serious criticism of contemporary African art is yet to begin and in fact, scholastic attitudes towards modern African art are just improving.

Twentieth century African art sometimes erroneously considered as parts of European development. Fagg, in the early 1960s, was of the view that contemporary African art, because it was not ethnic based, was like skyscrapers, an extension of Europe in Africa¹⁹, a comment that one would now hesitate to pass even about modern African architecture which has been considerably indigenised. One even wonders to what extent the issues of European influence on the art can be stressed if the later western naturalistic traditions that derived from classical Greece and Rome are seen as belonging to their different periods and countries of origin and not just as extensions of the classical tradition.

The diversity in the art forms rather than attract scholars tend to scare them and the absence of the expected, single distinguishing attribute for the art forms has left most scholars who have shown interest in the art groping in their different directions. No common

approach to the understanding of the art has evolved. The special methodology used for traditional African art by scholars is not adequate even for the traditional art forms for which it is constantly advocated, how much less then for the modern art forms.

Since the 1930s, when the field investigations of Griaule among the Dogon in Mali indicated that traditional African sculptures meant more than "art for art sake" within their cultures of origin, the constantly advocated approach for the traditional art forms emphasises the cultural rather than the aesthetic significance of the art objects. By this, attention is paid to functions even at the expense of forms and emphasis is not on the objects as art but on their totality as objects. Both anthropology and art history, the major disciplines involved in the study of the traditional African art, have upheld the approach regardless of the differences in their traditional interests in art. While the interest of art history in art is form, that of anthropology is the study of art to understand culture. Yet both claim to be studying African traditional art objects as arts. Neither of the disciplines also seems to understand the methodology of the other. Art historians can only claim to know the peripheral and descriptive method used by anthropologists in the study of African and other non-western arts and not the mainstream approach of anthropology. Anthropologists too often ignore the fact that even in the western sense, traditional art historical approach does not forbid the use of cultural backgrounds to understand and explain art. As I have indicated on many occasions, mention cannot but be made of the political and religious life of seventeenth century Holland in the understanding of its easel paintings and similar things can be said of other periods of European art and their cultural backgrounds. If the study of western art appears silent about the cultural background of the art, it is simply because western culture, mostly written, is already well known to the western readers for whom the art historians of Western art write.

The Relevance of the Advocated African Art Approach

The major questions to now ask are: If the methodology of cultural significance has been advocated and commonly upheld for African art because of the functions of the art objects within their cultures of origin, how appropriate is the methodology for contemporary African art forms that are not functional but purely aesthetic? Does it then mean that the background cultures of the contemporary artists are not necessary for understanding their works?

Out of the four tendencies into which contemporary African art has been earlier classified, only the third which is constituted by complete abstracts may not be identifiable with culture. The forms in it may not be produced for cultural interpretations. But the first which is constituted by images that are discernible as specific life experiences and ideas embraces both the traditional and contemporary aspects of life and so is the second which is made up of naive forms. The fourth that consists of adaptations from traditional arts that could also be seen for the sake of their forms that are abstracted could only be understood in the light of their traditional sources. Thus, there is still much need for the understanding of the cultural backgrounds of the artists in understanding their arts.

However, both the artists and their fellow Africans are no longer their ancestors for whom the traditional art forms were made. While only the traditional cultural aspects or ethnographic data are needed for understanding traditional African art, both the traditional and the modern ways of life are needed for understanding the contemporary arts. Thus scholars who are interested in the study of the contemporary arts require a wider coverage of African culture. Religious ideas and practices, both traditional and present, as well as current events are all aspects of African cultures that are required for interpreting contemporary African arts. For this reason, the approach, rather than oppose the approach to traditional African art simply extends its scope. The expanded scope is even adequate for understanding both traditional and contemporary African arts. However, its effectiveness for understanding both traditional and contemporary arts of the continent still requires the appreciation and understanding of forms. This is not because some of the contemporary works, especially those in the third tendency, are made up of pure forms that appear unidentifiable with any culture. The objects being studied in both cases are supposed to be studied as art. Even in cases where art, especially the modern ones, emphasises processes rather than tangible forms, what distinguishes art from ordinary artefacts is still their extraordinary forms. The neglect of forms in the study of traditional African art, regrettably, has no justification.

Conclusion

The suitability of the approach being suggested is not exclusive to contemporary African visual art forms. It is equally valid for other art forms of post-colonial Africa, be they music, drama or literature. As

rightly pointed out by Jean Kennedy, modern African poetry, like modern African visual art has many forms; it reveals patterns reminiscent of indigenous poetry as well as suggests influences from western poetry.²⁰

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A VISUAL ARTS METHODOLOGY

OHIOMA IFOUNU POGOSON

2

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to acquaint scholars and students with the basic tools required for investigating and probing the visual arts of Africa. By the term “visual arts of Africa” in the broadest sense, is meant the concrete material traditional and contemporary artistic productions of Africans in Africa and by Africans. Of course, they must be capable of being perceptible by the visual senses. Such works, which have now come to include the ethnographic objects, may be utilitarian, secular or religious. The peculiarity of traditional African visual arts lies in the fact that they are integral parts of African life, bearing heavily not only upon religion and ritual but also on the mundane. It is for this reason that African arts are said to be an “art for life” rather than the case of western art, which is believed to exist for its own sake to satisfy the basic desire for pleasure and entertainment. Indeed, Vogel has aptly noted that an essential quality of western art is that it exists for its own sake and that it has a higher ambition than to be useful in any pedestrian sense (Vogel, 1988:14). This situation has conditioned the marked difference between western and traditional African art methodology.

African art is even more complex when we consider that Africa lacked writing in the modern sense of it and as such it has been difficult to look far back into its past. This handicap has undoubtedly hindered the growth and development of the academic study of traditional African art, especially in the early period. Indeed, it is this peculiarity of Africa (and other non-literate peoples) that caused the study of their culture to require an especial approach in conducting research, gathering information and reporting on its material culture. It is also true that it is this very nature of traditional Africa that has worked to shape and condition the methodology for studying African culture. Since Africa did not belong to the civilised worlds of Europe and America, its study naturally fell within the realm of anthropology, and this was at a time when studying exotic cultures and their productions was a vogue for the more "advanced" and "civilised" world. They have more or less fashioned the methodology that this paper will discuss.

The issue of a method for the study of African arts began to gain serious attention when African art objects started to arrive in Europe in large numbers at the turn of the nineteenth century. The Europeans, finding it difficult to understand the works quickly concluded that such art works must in one form or the other be tied to their producer – culture and, therefore, could only be best comprehended from within the culture that has produced the art. Of course considering what and how western art experience is viewed, this was a safe position to begin with. Following from this is the importance of fieldwork that is now more or less a *sine qua non* for conducting studies in African visual arts. "Fieldwork" simply means going into a particular *foreign* culture to study. Consequent upon this development, scholars and enthusiasts have had to visit, live with and study African art producing cultures to be able to interpret the artistic productions of the people, especially in the western academic tradition of understanding art. Because the initiators of this idea were basically anthropologists, they referred to the procedure as "participant observation." And from the mid-nineteenth century onwards several European and American scholars, among them Leo Frobenius, William Fagg and the McIntoshes, visited various parts of Africa in order to carry out fieldwork. At this point, it is instructive to note that although many of these people were mostly anthropologists, they nonetheless studied the arts of the various places they visited as the material productions of man. Their published works and data are now important source materials in African visual art studies.

Participant observation as a method of gathering data requires for the researcher to go into the society which he wishes to study to become, as much as possible, a part and parcel of that society. Although there have been varying experiences with this approach to anthropological studies of Africa, participant observation remains a valid fieldwork tool that has withstood the test of time. Participant observation is now widely accepted as the tool for investigating the earlier so-called exotic cultures. It has been found to be an all-encompassing and appropriate method if used with caution, discretion and ingenuity. This is more so since it has been established that there is a close proximity between African arts and its producer-culture; to the extent that the knowledge of a particular culture is essential for a thorough understanding of its material productions. Therefore investigations about African visual arts require a well-grounded knowledge of the culture that has produced it. From an understanding of the culture, information about provenance, the impetus for its creation and, indeed, the reason why it is created as is, can be sought and got using the right procedure. In some cases, the materials and methods of production have been found to be culture conditioned. Consider always that many African cultures had no writing and have had to depend on oral traditions for information about the past.

Fieldwork as a tool for investigating the visual arts of Africa involves going to the environment that has created the art to ask questions that will provide correct information about the work. To do this, you must sample, observe, conduct interviews or generate questionnaires and analyse the products of these initiatives. To go about doing this you are obligated to prepare adequately for fieldwork. Because the researcher is directly involved in the quest for information and knowledge that will throw light upon the topic he is working on, he is participating fully in the endeavour to which observation is of extreme importance, to reliably gather the information required. When he does this he is doing fieldwork as a participant observer. As I have indicated earlier on, due to the proximity of African visual arts to its culture, the desired exhaustive understanding of the culture is best approached using the participant observation method of fieldwork. This method ensures that the researcher is opportunely to interact within the environment and imbibe the salient aspects of the culture, well enough to undertake successful research. This is not to imply that the method is devoid of its own drawbacks and handicaps. Participant observation as a method involves a set of procedures, which have evolved basically from

the experiences of various early researchers. Many of these procedures derive simply from the early field experiences. They now ensure the sustainability, reliability and validity of the data that is gathered and translated into the final research output, the academic write-up.

The Pre-Fieldwork Stage

At this stage we shall review those things that require to be carried out before proceeding to the field to undertake any research. First and very important is the determination of the research interest. You may call this the conception stage where it is expected that you determine and define the problematic. Having become conversant with the basics of the discipline, the researcher seeks loopholes and gaps which he hopes to fill and enlighten upon in order to make a contribution to knowledge in his discipline. The researcher thus peruses his discipline, searching for areas where further light requires to be thrown. To do this the researcher must, of course, be sufficiently conversant with his discipline. When he has located such an area that he wishes to research, he must then endeavour to read deep and wide to acquaint himself with the state of knowledge in that area. This is often referred to as the library search stage. Here, the visual arts researcher is expected to probe the culture of the producer of the arts he wishes to study. In addition, he should look into nearby areas and cross-check relationships and connections that may exist. Based on his library work, the researcher builds up a bibliography of relevant materials on the subject. This will be a handy compilation for the future when he begins to write his research. It would also be wise for the researcher to spend some time seeking circumstantial materials. The experiences of various workers in the field have shown that it could be quite revealing and rewarding.

Consider the case of the researcher who while studying Benin, ventured into its relationship with Owo only to discover and conclude that most of the ivory carvings initially attributed to Benin possessed very strong Owo connections. Indeed, Gillon is now of the view that based on grounds of iconography, most of the Benin bronzes are the products of Owo artists (Gillon, 1984:212). This is in spite of the fact that Owo is a Yoruba town about 100 km northwest of Benin and is very closely related to Ife, the fountain-head of the Yoruba from where very important manifestations of Yoruba artistic adroitness have been discovered. All considered, the point in this section of this paper is the need for a thorough preparation; one that will neither

under-value nor take for granted any form of information gathered from various sources.

For better efficiency, the production of a check-list is often advised at this stage as well as at the other stages. Such a list, which must contain details of the hows, whats and whens of the project, is a good way to organise and prepare for fieldwork. This way, the researcher is less likely to forget or omit anything that had previously been planned. Indeed, there is no gainsaying the need for adequate preparation before fieldwork. This section is, therefore, not cast in any concrete structures. What this means is that preparations have to go beyond the points I have raised into really more personal things. For example, it will be foolhardy for a researcher in the Jos area of Nigeria in the later part of any year not to go there prepared with thick clothing. This is because at such periods the temperature drops to as low as between 18/22°, a temperature which is considered very cold for a researcher from the tropics. There are also the more basic preparation in terms of where to stay in the field, amounts of money to take along, the type of materials and equipment that you could need, etc. Finally and above all, the researcher must prepare for and strive to be as comfortable and independent as possible while in the field. Therefore, the researcher must, in addition to making adequate preparations, trouble-shoot for possible problems and ensure multiple back-ups to ensure a hitch-free fieldwork period. Finally, it is important to mention that the quality of research is highly dependent on the preparation for and the comfort of the researcher in the field.

Let me say that much of what is to be achieved in the field is dependent on the researchers ability to be innovative and creative. He must not assume a straitjacket or have preconceived ideas about how to got about his data gathering. What is most important is that he is willing to spend time to find creative solutions to hitches and blocks that he will definitely come across in the field. Above all, he must remain focussed on his goal. Indeed, the quality of the outcome of his work in the field depends greatly on how well and how adequately he has prepared for this stage. This is the point where there are no hard and fast rules and as such the researcher must be willing and ready to bend over backwards to ensure that once in the field, his objectives are achieved to the best of his ability.

In the visual arts, there is a great need for photographs and this is one area where many researchers have problems, because in this culture people are averse to being photographed, with or without their permission. In order to scale this usual hurdle several creative solutions

have been taken in the past. In a particular occasion while doing fieldwork among the Hausa-Fulani nomads, Adepegba (Personal communication, 14) found it expedient to carry along with him a Polaroid instant camera in addition to his 35mm camera. With the Polaroid, he was able to photograph his subjects, which he gave to them in order to ameliorate their aversion. However, to attain his objective, he used the 35mm camera first and then used the Polaroid last and thereby making it seem as though the picture he had presented them was the product of both cameras! Some other researchers have preferred to seek by subtle means the permission of the subject before attempting to take a photograph of him. Yet, another researcher went to the length of explaining the purpose and need for the photograph to the townsfolk or community head who in turn explained these to the subjects. Truly, there is no limit to handling such issues; each must respond to the peculiarity of the situation he finds himself. When the visual arts researcher also needs to take video pictures of festivals or masquerades, he must device ways and means of surmounting these obstacles that have a great potential to disrupt the research. Several other thorny situations could arise when you are talking to people, observing a situation or, indeed, just living among the people.

While carrying out fieldwork in Esie, Kwara State, in 1983/84, I was confronted with a situation where I had to deal with two factions of the townsfolk. This anomalous situation required me to gain the confidence of both sides in order to get the right history and information I was seeking. At the end of the day, my discussions with the local school-teacher and church priest provided useful insights to how to use the data that I had obtained from both factions in the town. Understanding the local politics especially from the point of views of the teacher and the church priest saved me the embarrassment of using skewed data. This is not to say that advice from them could not have distorted things for me, but passing all information gathered through a plausibility sieve aided in the handling of data collected. I was able to evolve a basis for sieving and selecting what to use.

The Fieldwork Stage

This is at the stage when the researcher is in the field proper, to gather the information for his work. It is the stage to implement all the planning that have been made at the first stage. Armed with his work-plan, the researcher is advised to proceed with clinical efficiency and creativity. Apart from following with the plan and adapting to

situations that can yield the best results for your research, some emphasis is required by way of advice on comportment and relationships with informants. While in the field, it is advisable that the researcher is humble while expressing his opinions and interacting with members of the community. He should place himself in the position of a learner and be willing to absorb all that he gets. He should also be ready to sieve and cross-check his material when he gets to the next stage of the work. It is advisable to check your work, and plan regularly when in the field so as to be able to adjust to changing situations. Finally, the researcher must strive to remain very organised in the face of the vagaries of the field conditions. More often than not, the researcher will be faced with emergency situations and so he must act and make quick decisions that will aid him in re-focusing on his objective and the plan of work. It is even possible that what you get in the field could advance and recondition your focus. At all times during this stage, therefore, the researcher must remain flexible, and willing to adjust the dictates of the field.

While carrying out fieldwork in Esie as earlier mentioned. I had been, so to say, living and interacting with the stone sculptures for about two weeks, trying to find a focus on how to attempt a stylistic study of such a large collection of sculptures. But it was not until my supervisor visited me in the field and pointed out what later constituted the bases of my stylistic study of the images, that I was able to handle the large number of works involved in handy packages. Indeed, the packaging of that study and the bases used now encompasses the over 800 stone sculptures of Esie Nigeria. It used to be the practice of the postgraduate school for the supervisor to visit the researcher while in the field. The student, in what was then known as Bench fees, paid for this practice. It enabled the supervisor to visit the student researcher in the field. This was meant to ensure not only that the researcher is in the field, but more importantly, that the researcher is going about his data collection in the best manner to obtain maximum results. In addition, as I have already showed above, the presence of the supervisor in the field enables both supervisor and researcher to agree on new directions that the field conditions may re-direct. Perhaps reintroducing "fieldwork supervision", as the former situation could be called, will go a long way to enabling better fieldwork and ensuring better research and results. The student researcher could also gain a lot of confidence that he will require in future research endeavours.

The Post-Fieldwork Stage

By the time the researcher comes out of the field, he should be armed with all he requires to begin the write-up or documentation part. This is the desired end of all academic research. Therefore, the question of how, who and where he will write becomes very important. For example, if he is writing a thesis or a dissertation, he has to follow the tradition of the institution for which he is writing. He could just as well be writing for a journal or, indeed, a book, but the most important thing is to realise that there are specified styles of presenting your work. It is advisable, therefore, for the researcher to consult with his supervisor or an editor to review the options that could be available. But since the aim here is to acquaint the student with the tools and techniques to cope with data gathering and thesis writing, he should be talking with his supervisor. There could be other situations that arose while in the field that will tend to condition the structure of the write-up. With the help of his supervisor, the researcher should work out a plan to approach this stage. Some library work is also necessary and advisable to cross-check materials brought in from the field. Since the main aim of this stage is the write-up, the researcher should be diligent in doing so. He must make frequent references to his field notes and ensure that his photographs are sharp and clear.

Photography and the Visual Arts

Photographs are most essential in any visual arts study. The photographs are meant to present in a more graphic and visible form the works that the researcher had studied. Unlike other disciplines where a good description could suffice, it is expected that good quality black and white or colour prints be used to illustrate the arts being studied. Free-hand drawings are also acceptable in cases where photographs are strictly not allowed. Although many researchers are unable to take good photographs, the expectation is that the researcher himself takes care of his photography. He is required to be able to take good, sharp and appropriate pictures to illustrate aspects of the arts that he is studying. It is for this reason that basic techniques of photography are taught. I must emphasise here that the ability to take a good photograph is not something that can be achieved as quickly as it will take to teach the basic photography lecture. Good photographs come out of consistent practice. You must handle your camera and take photographs under varying conditions to be able to imbibe the simple roles each of the settings of the camera play.

Let me point out here that the whole idea of taking a good picture depends on exposing the right amount of light on the subject in the lens and for the right amount of time. But choosing the right equipment (see a short discussion on equipment later on) is equally important. So, it is a function of balancing the right quantity of light for the right amount of time on the image that the right lens sees.

The three basic parts of the camera that you can use to perform the operation described above are the lens and the aperture. The lens is like the eye while the aperture is like the mouth. With the lens you position your subject in the frame and ensure that it is in good focus. These can be achieved by positioning the subject properly within the square frame which is meant to guide you and turning the focusing ring until you are satisfied with the sharpness of the subject. Having done these, the weather conditions will now guide you on what amount of light you will require and for how long. If, for example, you are working on a very bright day, you can imagine that there will be sufficient natural light so, first of all, you do not require any artificial light such as a flash. Next you will also realise that you do not need to expose your film for too long so that you do not get an over-exposed picture. Measured in f-stops, the higher the aperture numbers, the smaller the aperture opening. Therefore, on a bright day such as we are using here, an f-22 aperture will be more desirable than an f-3.5. It is all a function of getting the basic working principles of the camera and constant practice. In terms of the printing, ensure that you use printers that are reputable in printing research photographs.

Regarding the camera to take to the field, I would advice on a 35mm single lens reflex (SLR) camera because of its portability, versatility and ruggedness. This came to replace the very bulky and highly professional twin lens cameras. Since the entry of the SLR's into the photography market, they have become very successful. They can now be bought with numerous optional items to enhance the quality of photographs that can be taken. Some of these include a wide variety of lenses from wide-angle lenses to telephoto lenses and combination zooms. There are also flash units with amazing intensity and ranges as well as other power attachments meant to make the camera user-friendly.

Apart from the still camera, there are now very portable camcorders for recording action scenes such as festivals and observing action procedures. Also, more recently, digital cameras and computer scanners have emerged to further simplify good picture making. Although the hardware to use a digital camera and scanner, the

computer, is still out of reach in terms of cost, they have the especial advantage of maneuverability. For example, if for one reason or another the researcher cannot go back to the field and re-shoot a poorly lit or out-of-good-focus picture, the poor quality picture can be scanned into a computer. Then using any of the numerous programmes now available for enhancing pictures, improve upon the picture to an acceptable level. With these recent possibilities, field photography has become less tedious.

Conclusion

Finally, it is important to note that there is no straitjacket procedure for operating in the field when gathering information. The key things to observe include making sure that you are familiar with the state of research in the area you choose to study, making adequate preparation, and being very organised.

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Section II

Linguistics

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THEORY AND PRACTICE OF FIELD INVESTIGATION IN LINGUISTICS

A.U. IWARA

3

Introduction: Problems and Prospects of Field Research in Africa

Before we tackle field research methodology in linguistics proper, it is necessary to say a word or two about the general problems that field researchers usually encounter in Africa, and to suggest solutions to them. This is because field research, particularly in Africa, south of the Sahara, does present certain pitfalls that the researcher must guard against.

For one thing, many students who engage in field research do so without adequate library readings. This problem may arise as a result of inadequate library resources on offer, or the poor reading habit of the student. But we know that useful field research begins in the library, with an extensive literature review on the subject of the research in hand to point the researcher to relevant observations for subsequent analysis and evaluation.

What happens very often is that students go to the field not only without adequate preparation in terms of sharpening their procedures for data collection and analysis, but also without determining exactly the objective of their study; whereas experience shows that researchers

who take the time to define clearly the purpose of their work and carefully critique their research plan spend their time well in the field and return with a sense of achievement. Time spent defining the problem, debating it with others, and reviewing related research markedly improves field research and leads to fewer disappointments and wasted efforts.

This point bears emphasis, because many research students do not know how to state the research question. A proper research question is a question with more than one possible answer. Otherwise, why spend the time and money needed to produce the answer? A research question requires empirical or observable information in order to be answered in that, by definition, research of any kind involves the study of observable information. Therefore, without observable information, no research is deemed to have taken place.

The implication is that undertaking field research means more than leaving the reading desk and going to the field. For participant observation, for instance, the researcher has to bring himself to the level of the informants or the community where the research is taking place. Without this mental and psychological re-orientation, accurate observation and evaluation may be impaired. This is a real danger because in the African context, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, the researcher usually has more formal education than the general population, and so enjoys a higher degree of prestige and social standing vis-à-vis the community. The student, therefore, must endeavour to win the trust and friendship of the community under investigation. Overlook this requirement and you compromise your field research. The villager may look ignorant and perhaps awkward in the eyes of the educated researcher, but he is a wily and slippery customer from whom you will not extract the whole truth and nothing but the truth until you become or appear to become one of his kind. Field research requires humility and patience, as well as the keen, and sometimes, obsessive desire to get at the truth of the matter. This is the human aspect of all fieldwork, which is of primordial importance. Burges (1982: 1) captures the essence of the researcher's responsibility when he states that "field research is a learning situation in which the researcher has to understand his own actions and activities as well as those of the people he is studying. He must endeavour to obtain an insider's view of the situation while maintaining his outsider's perspective.

One more area of persistent difficulty in field investigation in Africa is funding, especially for the lowly-rated humanistic specialisations being

offered in the Institute. Obviously, inadequate financial support for a project will have a negative impact on the quality of field research. The student should, therefore, tailor his coat according to the size of his cloth; he should plan his programme with an eye on the funds he can secure before embarking on a field trip. The researcher must, of course, be realistic in his expectations, not only in terms of accommodation and feeding facilities in rural circumstances, but also in terms of the technological gadgets he can have at his disposal. He cannot be too ambitious or match his condition with that of his colleagues in the industrialised world where sophisticated equipment for field investigation are taken for granted, especially, for instance in the area of the production, transmission and reception of speech sounds.

Areas of Field Research in Linguistics

With this introduction, let us turn our attention now to linguistics. We want to begin with a functional definition of linguistics itself, in the interest of those who may not be familiar with the subject-matter.

Linguistics, in its modern acceptance,¹ is primarily the scientific study of language,² and in particular the scientific study of human language mostly from the phonetic,³ phonemic,⁴ morphological,⁵ syntactic,⁶ and semantic⁷ points of view. What this means, in effect, is that linguistics concerns itself with the study of any language or group of languages from one or more or all of these perspectives and their corollaries.

From this definition, it is clear that it is virtually impossible to draw up an exhaustive list of the various areas of field research in linguistics. The frontiers of linguistic study have, in the last fifty years or so, expanded almost beyond recognition with the introduction of stylistics and discourse analysis as aspects of the subject. In view of this, we will do no more than mention here a restricted number of important domains where field research in linguistics is currently most frequently undertaken.

The most obvious place to begin is what may be described as 'pure linguistics' where the subject-matter is taken to be language itself, pure and simple. This linguistic study is distinctive in that it does not include other branches of scholarship, such as anthropology or sociology or psychology; its object is language and language alone. The approach may be theoretical⁸ or applied,⁹ descriptive or prescriptive,¹⁰ or it may be comparative or historical.¹¹

In contrast, linguistic study may be linked with other branches of scientific endeavour. For instance, it may be linked with anthropology and history, in so far as it concerns the use of linguistic evidence in the study of cultures and historiography and the expression of human thought. In this case, we are in anthropological linguistics, which is a fertile area for linguistic field research.

Linguistic study may also be linked with sociology in sociolinguistics, in so far as it concerns language use in society and seeks to describe and account for the ways in which language forms vary according to situation, social class, age, sex, etc. This is another area of linguistic field research to which many students are attracted.

And linguistic study may be linked with psychology in psycholinguistics, in so far as it concerns the analysis of speech forms as human behaviour and the impact of language on the interpretation of reality. Psycho-linguistics also deals with language acquisition and the learning process. It is another productive area of linguistic field research.

As we indicated before, our aim in specifying these areas of field research is not to say that they are the only legitimate areas of research in linguistics. The real point is that linguistics is not a monolithic field, and linguistic methodology cannot be expected to be monolithic either. It is the subject of research that determines the methodology to be employed.

Methodology in Linguistic Field Research

Methodology, as conceived here, is not a complete programme or formula for converting ignorance into knowledge, but rather a set of strategies for gathering data. This is so because data collection for analysis and evaluation is, ultimately, the primary objective in all field research, including linguistic research. But the nature of the data to be collected and the methodology to be used differ from one research field to another, and from one research topic to another.

In linguistics, three procedures or strategies are generally involved: elicitation, intuition, and observation. These procedures are, of course, not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary, the degree of complementarity being determined by the nature of the research subject.

Elicitation

In theory, the gathering of data by elicitation is a simple process of asking bilingual informants to translate word lists such as that of

Swadesh, sentences or texts, oral or written, which are part of a longer discourse. The precise words of the informants are then transcribed, either simultaneously or subsequently from a recorded tape, if the linguist cannot cope with the flow of natural conversation.

In practice, it is a much more complicated business. First, the researcher must establish a good working rapport with the informants. He must also endeavour to ascertain *ab initio* the competence and reliability of the informants and decide on their number. David Crabb (1969: xi) informs us that he had to assemble a whole 'academy' of speakers of the various Ekoid Bantu languages of Ogoja in Cross River State which he was studying. It is important to take these precautionary measures because indigenous speakers have been known to fail sometimes to recognise or register distinctions, phonetic or otherwise, which they regularly make in natural speech.

Secondly, the calibre of the researcher himself has a major role to play in the quality of the data obtained. Typologically, he may belong to one of three categories. He may belong to the type of researcher favoured by Bloch and Harris, that is a researcher approaching a target language without any previous knowledge of it, in which case, he has to depend solely on his technical skills as a linguist to try to do a phonetic transcription without reference to the meanings of the words. Indeed, Labov (1972:104, footnote 4) recounts a story of one John Street who, under the influence of Bloch, once spent many months trying to transcribe Mongolian in this manner. The attempt ended in failure, which is not entirely surprising: it is unlikely that the argument of objectivity on which this 'theory of ignorance,' as Labov put it, was based, will ever hold water, since the questions that linguists have to tackle these days demand deep rather than shallow knowledge. And in any case, it is difficult to set up a reliable test for the validation of data in such a procedure.

Or the researcher may be of the type who has acquired a working knowledge of the target language. What Pike (1947), Nida (1949) and Gleason (1961) advise in this case is that the researcher must additionally acquire the skills of segmentation and allophonic grouping and of recognising conditioned variants, minimal pairs and commutation tests before attempting phonetic transcription. The success of this approach is evident in the best of the S.I.L. reports and the work of Boas and Sapir.

Or, thirdly, the researcher may be an indigenous speaker, in which case he can call upon his intuition¹² to do phonetic transcription. The fact of being an indigenous speaker does not in itself guarantee success

at phonetic transcription; one must acquire the technical skills advocated by Pike and others to ensure accuracy and validity.

What all this means is that a realistic methodology of elicitation would not advocate total ignorance of the target language, but it would not insist either that the researcher abandon all phonetic transcription until he has full knowledge of the language under consideration. The crucial point here is that the linguist must be fully aware of the nature of the data he is seeking and he must know how to ask his informants the relevant questions. The questions eliciting data must not only be appropriate but both the researcher and the informant must each be of the right kind to handle their jobs.

Intuition

It is now fashionable to exploit intuition as a methodological procedure in field research, and to cite intuitive data as evidence of grammaticality or correctness in phonological analysis.

This is a methodological revolution, which is generally attributed to Chomsky. It was he who contended that every indigenous speaker has sufficient competence in his language to know intuitively what is or is not grammatical.¹³ As generative grammar developed, linguists came to depend more and more on their intuitive data as evidence of the correctness of their theories and of their divergent positions. Conflicts of opinion soon inevitably emerged, and Chomsky had to come up quickly with a solution in an ordered scale of grammaticality (1961). But this solution was ignored as each linguist was bent on following his own intuition. The kinds of intuition to be cited as evidence steadily increased, and grammaticality itself became a bone of contention as there was no longer agreement as to what sentences were well-formed, ambiguous, same or different, marked or unmarked, and intuitive evidence itself became a problem.

The result is that linguists now present un-checkable examples from their own languages and proceed to defend them by asserting that they are only discussing grammaticality according to their comprehension of their own languages or dialects.

What is alarming about this development is that it is no longer considered proper to even doubt such intuitive data. And legitimate questions are shrugged off by the linguist citing his own language as the only relevant source of evidence. The danger is that this somewhat excessive use of intuition and of the concept of the idiolect may lead to an illegitimate and unworthy escape from serious work, because when data

begins to fragment into un-patterned idiosyncrasies, the very Saussurian notion of *la langue* as the general possession of the speech community, which inspired Chomsky in the first instance, is defeated, and linguistics as we know it today comes to a stop.¹⁴

Therefore, although, in theory, intuitive evidence is valuable and insightful and should not be rejected out of hand, in practice it cannot alone lead to the same sense of right and wrong that is the ultimate goal of linguistic field research. What is needed now is that the proliferation of intuitive data should be accompanied by a methodological concern for the reduction of error in phonetic analysis and transcription. There should be a consensus on what is admissible intuitive data. In the meantime, intuitive evidence as a methodological procedure should be used with circumspection.

Observation

Observation is the third procedure for gathering linguistic data in a field research situation. It is common practice to categorise methodological observation into two types: participant observation and non-participant observation. In participant observation, the researcher participates actively in the speech act from which he intends to gather his linguistic data, whereas in the non-participant observation, he takes a back seat and inobtrusively allows the group, peer or otherwise, under observation to interact and control the level of language produced and the flow of natural conversation.

In theory, the observation of the speech act to obtain linguistic data is no more complicated than the other two procedures. The researcher simply has to do his phonetic transcription either simultaneously or after the speech event from his magnetic tape recorder.

In practice, there are several constraints on observation as a linguistic methodological procedure which derive from the interview situation itself. Some of the more obvious constraints relate to factors such as location or placement of the interview, wording and delivery of questions, timing, incentive, and discussion topic.¹⁵ In a sociolinguistic interview for instance, the researcher may be looking out for the language that ordinary people use on the street, arguing with friends, or at home blaming their children. Coherence is sometimes an issue in the study of ordinary language. For example, narratives told to insiders may be more fragmentary, and/or less well-formed than those told to outsiders. No serious study of a speech community can take place without involving both types of interlocutors. The interviewees

should also include not only family members and friends, but also strangers although they may be more difficult to approach. The performance of the individual speakers, their language, according to Saussure, has also to be considered. In participant observation, in particular, the researcher must calibrate the impact of his presence or absence on the group sessions. His strategy in all this is to break through the various constraints of the interview situation and observe how people speak when they are not being observed. The various solutions that he adopts to this paradox define methodological observation as a procedure for obtaining accurate data in the study of language in context for linguistic theory or analysis.

Conclusion

The first point we want to make, as far as methodology in linguistic field investigation is concerned, is that despite the fact that we have a variety of methodological approaches to the gathering of linguistic data, it is not necessary for all linguists to use the same methods. Indeed it is better if they do not, in order to benefit from the complementary principle. Data from a variety of distinct sources and methods, properly interpreted, should be used to converge on right answers to hard linguistic research questions. As Schatzman and Strauss (1973:14) put it, field research is "more like an umbrella of activity beneath which any technique may be used for gaining the desired information, and for processes of thinking about this information."

The second point is that despite the fact that they are aware of these methodological procedures, most linguists who are approaching a language for the first time tend not to systematically follow any particular procedure, but to resort to all kinds of devices to get at the language. They make their way as best they can, in the sometimes subconscious knowledge that their findings will most likely be re-written many times by those who come after them. As Labov (1972:98) put it,

With the pleasure of being the first goes the certainty of being wrong, which is the converse of the cumulative principle: the more that is known about a language, the more we can find out about it.

Students should, therefore, not be afraid to approach a new language or a new linguistic field even when they are not sure of the exact methodological procedure to adopt.

The third and final point to be made here is about what research students ought to understand by scientific methodology. Scientific methodology is basically a reverse procedure in which one is trying to prove to oneself that one is wrong. The scientific method is the careful and conscientious search for error in one's work. To be right means that one has finally, abjectly, hopelessly failed to prove oneself wrong. It is unscientific and even dangerous to assign this responsibility to anyone else, since no one will have the same vested interest in one's particular pursuit as one does. And this kind of methodological self-criticism will lead to a continued refinement of one's methods, introducing safeguards, reliability tests and cross-checks, which are the hallmark of the scientific attitude, and which the student researcher is therefore expected to imbibe with profit for his field research.

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Section III

**Performance and Literary
Studies**

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DANCE STUDIES

PEGGY HARPER

4

The Institute of African Studies, recognising the position of dance as a major art and as an integral part of life in Africa, is initiating research into dance forms and the cultural and sociological significance of these forms.

In the ferment of cultural transition which reflects the economic, political and social changes accompanying industrialisation, dances which are an expression of traditional ways of life are changing rapidly, in some context to the point of extinction. The urgent need to record the immense amount of material *currently* available in Nigeria presents a formidable programme. The first steps to meet this need are being taken by recording dance performance, and the ceremonies and festivals of which dance is a central feature, on film with synchronised sound. This work is part of the Ford Foundation Film Project under the direction of Francis Speed: Information on the occasions and significance of dance and related contextual facts is collected and filled at the institute. Research into methods of analysis of form in African dance is being set up.

The Occasion and Significance of Dance

A dance usually fulfils several functions simultaneously, with a main, overt function and several subsidiary functions which may be explicit expressions or implicit reflections of the structure of the society and way of life. The multiplicity of functions is often reflected in the variety of occasions on the dance is performed.

Principal Overt Functions

1. religious, ritual or ceremonial
2. expression of a pattern of social organisation
3. expression of political hierarchy or organisation.
4. economic or occupational
5. expression of history or mythology
6. educational
7. recreational
8. entertainment

Dance as Religious Ritual or Ceremony

Motivation may be compulsive or persuasive: soliciting aid, protection or strength from gods or spirits: usually preceding an enterprise.

Propitiatory: to appease the supernatural powers.

Jubilant: to celebrate a successful enterprise or give thanks for favours received.

Note:

Purpose of overall ceremony and the significance of the dance within the ritual framework. There is often a combination of sacred and secular purpose which are indicated by the setting in which, and the occasions on which, the dance is performed.

Status of dance performer in society and role within the cult.

Use and significance of magic-mimetic action, or symbolic gesture which may enact an activity and simultaneously signify an implicit intent.

Dance as an Expression of the Pattern of Social Organisation within a Community

Purpose:

- * to differentiate roles of individuals, sexes or groups within the society

- * affirm attributes and attitudes proper to social position of the individual or group
- * expression of the identity and cohesion of a particular social group, e.g. an age group
- * institutionalised expression of social goals and appropriate means to goals within the community.

Occasions of performance:

- * celebration of a specific occasion of social significance, e.g. wedding, funeral, etc.
- * more general social purpose, e.g. to entertain visitors to community.

Dances as an Expression of Political Order

- * stress leadership and internal order within a society
- * express ways and means of maintaining or defending the existing leadership and internal order, e.g. warrior's dances

Note

- * all occasions on which a particular dance may be performed and their related functions.

Economic or Occupational Dances

Purpose

- * to facilitate work by rhythmic execution of actual working movements with accompaniment.
- * to use mimetic re-enactment* of work movements in dances to express local economy, e.g. type of work performed, role of sexes at work, etc.

Occasion

- * to celebrate seasonal calendar of related occupations such as farming or hunting.
- * as a form of celebration at a more general level.

* Relation to occupational prototype varies from realistic imitation to abstract stylisation.

Dance as Expression of Mythology or History

Purpose

- * to celebrate events in historical or mythological oral tradition, e.g. victories in war, deeds of heroes in founding community.
- * to celebrate great events within living memory.
- * to re-enact past periods of economic activity, explicitly as in a farming community whose forebears lived by hunting and continue to perform hunters' dances, or implicitly by including movements from past occupational dances in present performances expressing contemporary activities.

Dance as Education in Traditional Society

Purpose

- * to assimilate new members into a society by educating them in knowledge, attitudes, emotions and goals appropriate to that society.
- * to educate children in traditional patterns of behaviour and standards of conduct and warn them of the dangers of deviating from the accepted norms.
- * to educate adolescents during periods of initiation into adult society – e.g. to convey the significance of fertility and child bearing, teach proper conduct during courtship or prepare for parental roles and responsibilities.
- * as a method of keeping young men physically fit, of teaching them the control and discipline necessary in occupational skills and warfare, and inculcating patriotic attitudes.
- * dance used to reinforce educational experience and intensify oral instruction.
- * to teach historical and mythological tradition.

Dance as Entertainment

Note

- * whether entertainment is a primary or subsidiary function.
- * if dance is specifically created for entertainment or evolved from another category give reasons for change, e.g. urbanisation, development of local travel facilities, economic need, secularization of cult dances due to missionary activity etc.
- * whether dance is competitive or non-competitive.
- * professional or amateur.
- * influenced by other ethnic groups and cultures: in what manner?

Dance as Recreation

- * is the dance open to all members of the community or restricted to a particular group?

Note

- * relation of the style and movements to the established dance forms of the community.

Having established the occasion and significance of the dance, the following related data should be recorded:

General Background

- Pattern of social organisation in the community.
- Political organisation.
- Main and subsidiary economic activities.
- System of religious beliefs.
- Factors of social change and their causes.
- Cultural position of the individual and of the sexes in the society.

Specific Background

- Ethnic grouping.
- Country.
- Province, state or area.
- District
- Town
- Village
- First and other languages spoken by performers.

General Setting

Natural:	geographical, topographical, climatic.
Cultural:	architecture, dress, crafts, etc.
Dance Performance:	an occasion in its own right or an element in a larger communal situation.

Note:

- relation between dance motifs and natural and cultural environment.

Specific Setting

Character of performing area: shrine, marked square, palace compound, etc.

Description of size, shape, outstanding physical elements.
performing area:

Date of performance:

Time:

Duration:

Circumstances in relation to other activities:

Accompaniment

- (a) *Instrumental:* photographs, or sketches if possible.
Played by musicians as distinct from dancers and/or instruments of self-accompaniment: manipulated and/or worn by dancers.

Type of instruments: aerophones
cordophones
number of
idiophones
each type
membranophones
Local names of instruments.

Manner in which each instrument held and played.

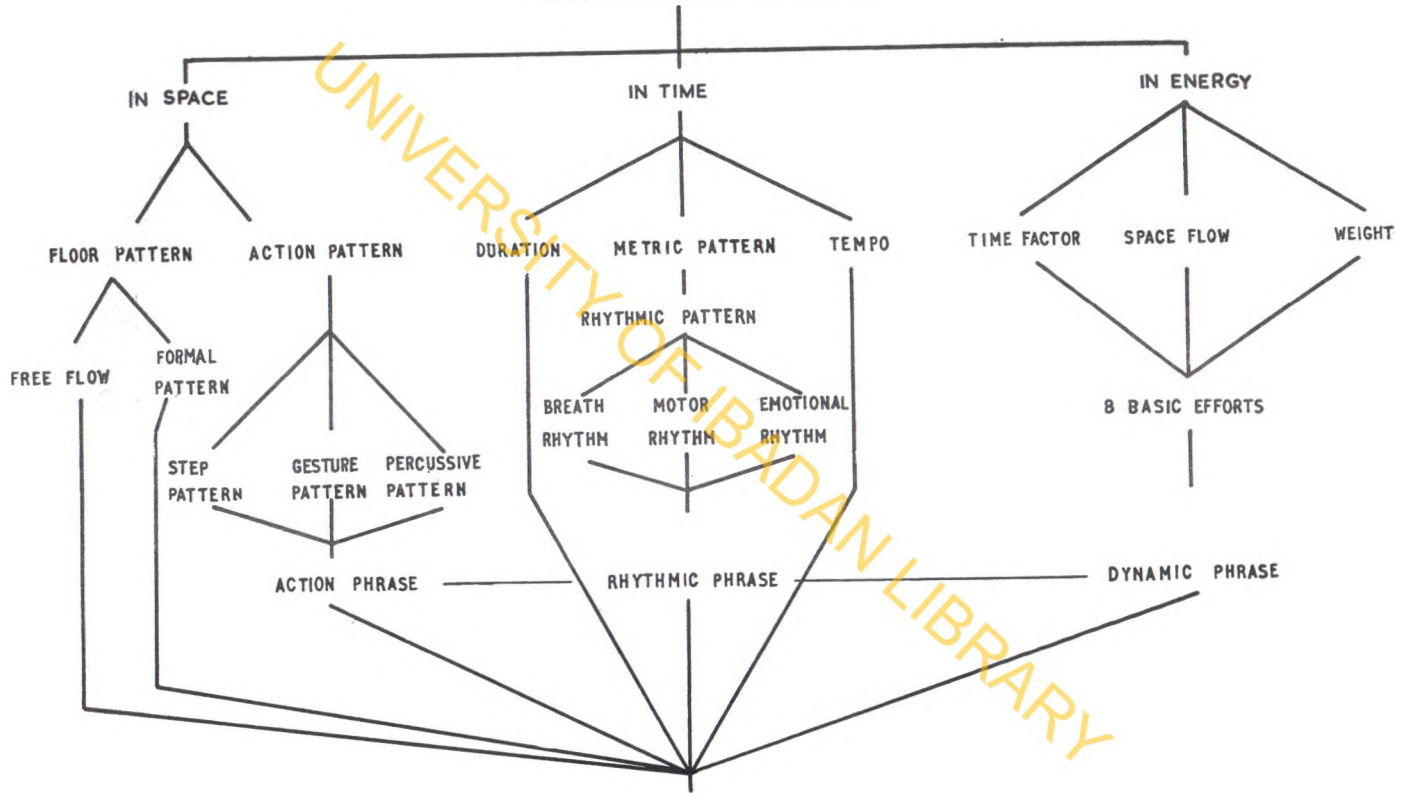
Musicians: sex, age, number (solo or ensemble) organisation of members of ensemble in relation to each other and to the dancers costume or dress

- (b) *Vocal:*
— songs, chants, words or vocal sounds.
— provided by dancers, musicians, specific individuals or ensemble.
— sex, age, number, dress of performers.
— relationship to dancers.
— texts of songs, chants or words with translations.

- (c) *Body percussion*
Foot stamping, hand clapping, body slapping, etc.
Performed by dancers, specific individuals, ensemble, or musicians, spectators in general.
spectators:

Music — Tape recording if possible. If not:
Tempo
metric organisation
rhythmic pattern constant or changing.
melodic pattern

DANCE MOVEMENT



SEQUENCE OF PHRASES = DANCE FORM

- newly designed: creation of an individual.
for a specific event.
evolved from traditional costume.
- musical instruments: worn as part of costume.
carried as paraphernalia.
- ornaments worn of ritual, historical, symbolic significance
or objects carried: ance or worn as decoration?
- manipulation of do dancers add to or discard garments:
costume or cloth significance?
during performance:

Is the use of garments or cloth an integral and important part of dance movement?

- masks: significance.
symbolism.
does size, weight or the wearing of mask
affect movement of dancers?
- faces or/and significance?
bodies painted or
patterned:

Note:

If observer is a foreigner newly arrived in a community he should check whether dress or costume is worn specifically to please him and what are regarded as his standards of decency.

Relationship between Performers and Spectators

Note whether there is a specific performing group and a defined group of spectators who constitute an audience – or whether these roles are undifferentiated and fluid.

Whether spectators participate in performance.

In what manner: singing, dancing, handclapping.

Whether participation is formal and controlled.
informal and spontaneous
allowed to specific individuals, groups or
spectators in general.

Audience Appreciation:

note the criteria on which spectators base their assessment of the dance.
social considerations.
aesthetic considerations.

Training of Dancers:

- Note whether performers are specifically trained as dancers or whether all members of community, sex or age group perform dance.
- Professional or amateur status: i.e., whether dancing is their main occupation and source of income, or a part-time occupation.

Training:

- means or techniques: formal or informal.
- status and experience of teacher or instructor.
- age at which performers commenced training.
- is training a regular feature of dancers life or only undertaken in preparation for a dance occasion?
- how much time is spent in practice?
- aids to performance: ritual, medicine, stimulant. Effect of same.

Selection of performers:

- by whom? — on what basis: dance ability; membership of cult or social society?
— aesthetic criteria for dance ability among performers? (compare with that of audience).

Recording and Analysis of Dance Form

The form of a dance is suited to its function and rooted in the movement patterns and habits of the particular culture. When the function and contextual conditions have been noted then the resultant form should be recorded. The recorded material then needs to be organised so as to be available to contemporary and future scholars for interpretation and analysis.

It is imperative that the recording should provide an accurate and comprehensive reproduction of the dance in terms which are accessible to the wide range of specialists whose work includes an aspect of dance study. (As an integral part of ritual, social and economic life, dance in Africa is not only of interest to the dance and

theatre specialist.) At present, professionally* made film is the best available method of meeting the requirements of accuracy and accessibility. Dance notations, forms of symbolic transcription, are extensively used in Europe and America to record dance. However, these transcriptions are too reliant upon personal and cultural factors to be trusted as a recording technique in Africa where a vast amount of material of great variety needs to be recorded in field conditions. At this stage, when dance studies are being initiated in Africa, transcriptions needs to be referred back to as near an exact reproduction of the original material as possible. An exact reproduction must obviously be in the same terms as in the original material and dance as a kinetic art, inseparably bound to aural accompaniment, can only be comprehensively and adequately recorded in terms of an audio-visual medium. Film is accessible to scholars in different fields and countries, whereas a notation, as a complex symbolic language, is accessible only to those conversant with the particular technique.

The present notation systems** are further unsuitable as a basis for analytical work in Africa because the assumptions on which they are based result from the study of European dance and its derivatives and from the acceptance of the cultural concepts of time and space implicit in these forms. For example, the most common techniques of notation use staff lines and spaces which reflect the European obsession with geometric design and are unsuitable for recording or analysing those forms of African dance in which the rhythm of the movement is common to all performers while the spatial design and dynamic remain open to personal interpretation within the limits of the particular style. Those recording and analysing dance should be keenly aware of the cultural implications of the techniques they employ.*** Indeed, it is essential to employ a recording technique which continuously questions the basic assumptions of the forms of analysis.

* Implies a technician capable of handling the technical problems of filming in the field and a dance specialist to handle content.

** *Labanotation* evolved by Rudolf Laban in Europe in the 1930s. *Benesh notations* developed by Rudolf Benesh now working in London. Simpler notations using much the same premises have been evolved by other choreologists.

*** It is conceivable that an existing form of notation may be radically extended and adapted for use in Africa, but this can only be decided when sufficient recorded material is available for study.

Where possible traditional African dances should be filmed in their authentic setting where they perform the function for which they came into being. An artificial separation of function and form can be deleterious to the performance particularly in ritual and ceremonial contexts.

In the absence of a film camera, basic elements can be noted in simple terms which provide a subjective memory check and serve to develop movement observation for the particular scholar. Descriptive and graphic techniques may be abstracted from the following analytic guide which is based on the study of dance forms in Nigeria, Ghana and southern Africa. It is not assumed that this form of analysis is adequate for the study of dance throughout Africa, but rather that it is a tentative first step in the direction of the development of a necessary technique. Descriptive terms and graphic illustration have been kept at a simple level as a specialised jargon and complex symbols could confuse issues at a stage where the ground work must be laid for the study of dance in Africa and the techniques employed must be kept open to all academics and artists interested in this work. A wide range of dance material needs to be recorded and studied before comprehensive forms of analysis can be developed for general use in Africa.

In the subsequent analysis the dance material is viewed objectively from the point of view of the dance analyst.

Dance is an art of which the basic material is the movement of human bodies in space and time. The analysis of dance movements entails breaking them down into their component elements of time, energy and space. The element of time is expressed in the overall duration of the dance, the tempo or relative speed at which the movements are performed, and the metric and rhythmic patterns which bind the movement to the accompanying music. These movements are performed with a specific use of energy or muscular effort which gives the dynamic quality or dramatic texture to the movement and springs from the conceptual intention and emotional motivation of the dance. The use of space is recognised in terms of the design or spatial delineation of the dance movement on the surface of the performing area, or through the air surrounding the performer.

These basic elements are present in all dancing but the main emphasis, and the resulting relationship between the elements, differs with different cultures to an extent which can necessitate a radically different analytical approach.



The principal emphasis in the dance styles studied to date is on the dynamic use of movement rhythms rather than on spatial movement patterns.*

* By contrast most European dance forms emphasise geometric spatial patterns conceived in terms of movement from one specific position to the next And are poor in the development of kinetic rhythms.

A.

In considering dance movements as performed *in time*, initial observations establish that dance movements are bound to the musical accompaniment by metric patterns which form the basis for additive rhythms.

A metric pattern is composed of beats and in its simplest form consists of a sequence of equally spaced pulses,

• • • • • • • • • • • •

or is the sum of different numbers of time units e.g.

• • + • • • • 2 + 3

• • + • • • • 2 + 4

• • • + • • • + • • 3 + 3 + 2

• • • • • • • • • • + • • • • • • 9 + 7

These patterns are often established at the outset of the dance by a shift of weight in the dancer's body: e.g. the stamping of one foot or shift of weight from one foot to the other.

The time rhythm in movement is developed by accenting certain metric beats while leaving others unaccented so as to form a pattern of stresses which progress to a point of culmination or repose thus forming a rhythmic phrase in terms of visualised movement, e.g.

X • • X • X • • • + X •
 X • • X • 9 + 7 metric beat (X = accented r
 hythmic beat)

a dance often has a basic rhythmic phrase which is repeated to form a repetitive rhythm. This may remain constant or develop in complexity during the performance or there may be a change to a completely different rhythm.

X • X • X • X • X • X • steady metric beats

X • • X • X • • X • X • rhythm

The use of off-beat of syncopated rhythm is common.

Visualised movement rhythms may be based on:

Breath rhythm, particularly in dances accompanied by song in which the movement is used to accent the rhythm of the song.

Motor rhythm, which depends on the change of weight in a particular part of the body in which case gravity provides the beat potential and the dancer's movement consists of giving in to, or resisting the force of gravity. Motor rhythms may also result from the use of repetitive body "beats" based on the contraction - release of a set of muscles causing a movement accent followed by a return to the original position in an isolated part of the body; the movement is repeated to stress the accents of the rhythmic pattern.

Emotional rhythms, which derive from the ebb and flow of the emotional motivation of the performer and give rise to expressive gesture performed as a repetitive rhythmic pattern.

The visual movement rhythm and musical rhythm of a dance performance unite to form an organic whole, though the relationship may be simple and direct or set in a complex counterpoint. The following points should be clarified in defining the nature of this relationship.

1. Whether the musical accompaniment provides a single basic rhythm. If so, whether the accents of the movement rhythm coincide with those of the musical rhythm on a beat to beat basis or in terms of a rhythmic phrase, e.g.

a phrase of musical rhythm X • X X X X • X • X •

with a visualised movement phrase • X • • • • • XX • X •

2. If the accompaniment combines several musical rhythms, whether they combine to produce a unified overall pattern in which each instrument is of equal rhythmic significance or whether one instrument provides a dominant or leading rhythm; and whether the movement rhythm is performed in relation to

the dominant rhythm, the background rhythm, or the "overall" result.

3. Whether the dancers in a performing ensemble follow the same rhythmic source or the group is sub-divided into two or more sections that follow diverse rhythmic patterns.
4. Whether the individual performer combines several rhythms simultaneously in his dance movement: two simultaneous body rhythms are usual in most dancing, three are used by skilled performers, four are rarely observed. The relationship between the complexity of bodily rhythms and the musical rhythms should be noted – for example:

Intrument	Rhythm	Movement rhythm	Physical technique
Drum	X • X • X • X •	foot rhythm	shift of weight from one foot to the other.
Sekere	X • • X • • X • •	pelvic rhythm	contraction and release of abdominal muscles causing pelvic rock.
Gong	X • • • X • • • X A B A	arm movement	Extension forward to full reach of arm at shoulder level A. Followed by flexion of elbow joint bringing hand towards upper chest B. arm held at shoulder level. Movement accented at A and B by wrist movement.

5. Whether the musical rhythm is constant or allows for improvisation. Whether the improvisation is performed by a leading instrument against a steady rhythmic background or the supporting instruments follow the improvisation. Whether the dance movement follows the improvised rhythm or leads it, or stays with the regular pattern of the background music.
6. Whether the initial rhythm(s) develop in complexity or alter in tempo during the performance of the dance. And in what way?

Tempo in dance is the rate at which movements follow each other and is usually described as fast, normal or slow in relation to the

normal walking pace of the performers. But tempi can be relative to each other, e.g. a dance may start at a brisk speed (in relation to a walk) but, by increasing this, make the original opening seem slow. So that in describing the tempo of the dance the basic criterion for measurement should be stated. The time rhythm in a series of movements consists of a combination of equal or different lengths of time units. These rhythms may be independent of the tempo of the whole movement sequence, in that the same rhythms can be performed at different tempi without changing the proportional length of each time unit. The repetitive rhythmic patterns in African dance serve to provoke the motor imagination of the dancer to motional expression and as this is established the overall tempo of the performance is often subject to change.

B.

The performance of a movement as an integral part of a rhythmic pattern may be studied in terms of the *dynamic quality* or character of the energy or 'effort' content of the movement. In Africa the visual rhythmic patterns presented by the dance are highly developed so that the dynamics are greatly varied and have a clear immediacy of expression.

A rapid staccato body rhythm is performed with quick, definite, abrupt movements which may be heavy or light according to the strength or weight of the rhythmic accent. A slow sustained movement rhythm is performed with a controlled sustained movement which, according to the "weight" of accent, may call for the positive use of the body weight in a heavy movement or the reverse in a light, weightless movement. So the dynamic or effort content of a movement is manifest in bodily actions through the use made of weight, space and time in terms of motor energy, with an added element of 'flow' which expresses the presence or absence of a deliberate control in the fluidity of the movement.

Time: Movement may be sustained or sudden. Sustained effort uses or "takes" time resulting in a slow speed of movement and a movement sensation of a long span of time. Sudden movement resists or fights against time and gives a quick speed and a consciousness of urgency or a short span of time.

Weight: Movement may be firm or gentle. Firm movement makes a positive use of body weight in itself or in relation to an

external object resulting in a strong movement and a heavy movement sensation. Gentle movement negates the body weight giving a weak movement and a light or weight-loss movement sensation, e.g. rhythms of tension and relaxation can give alternate firm and gentle movement.

Space-flow: Movement may be direct or flexible. Direct movement is deliberately made towards and halted at a specific point in space at which it stops with a definite impact so that the energy of the movement flow centres on the point to which the movement is directed, and creates a **linear** movement sensation.

Flexible movement starts with an impulsive use of energy which indulges in space and peters out resulting in an indirect use of space and a pliant or expansive movement sensation.

The three basic effort elements of time, weight and space-flow may be combined to give eight basic effort qualities which can be described in everyday terms.*

1. A movement may indulge in time, weight and space giving a dynamic quality or effort which is sustained, heavy, indirect: a wringing movement as in wringing out a large heavy wet cloth. As an expressive movement wringing has the character of strong resistance to outer pressures, or the suffering of inner psychological pressures.
2. A movement may resist or economise in weight, space and time resulting in an effort which is quick, light and direct: a dabbling movement as in tapping a finger on a stable surface which gives a nervous but controlled expression.
3. The element in a dabbling movement maybe reversed giving a **slow**, direct, light dynamic: a gliding movement, as in caressing a smooth, straight surface, which as an expressive movement has a serene controlled dynamic quality.
4. The weight of a glide may be altered giving a heavy, direct, slow pressing movement as in the sustained effort of pushing a heavy

* Rudolf Laban's theory of movement effort. As a former student of Rudolf Laban my analytical work is greatly influenced by his thinking.

object. This dynamic gives a concentrated, deliberate **expression** to movement.

5. Altering the speed of a pressing movement will give a **heavy**, direct, quick or punching movement as in hitting a particular target with force. As an expressive movement this effort gives a strong, aggressive character to the movement.
6. If the punching movement is made indirect and impulsive rather than direct and impacted the result is a slashing movement as in cutting through long grass with a machet. As an expressive movement it conveys an impulsive, undirected use of strength and energy.
7. If a slashing movement is made light it results in an indirect impulsive, quick, light movement: a flicking movement as in flicking dust off a surface. Expressively it is a movement of undirected nervousness or excitement.
8. If a flicking movement becomes sustained or slow it is changed into a sustained, indirect, impulsive, light movement: a floating movement which has a vague dream-like dynamic that can hardly be used in an occupational context.

Definition of the effort content of the movement of a dance necessitates data on the following initial considerations:

- (1) Is there a predominant effort which gives an overall character to the performance?
- (2) Are there subsidiary efforts which contrast strongly (implying change of two or three component elements) or merge into the principal effort (change of one element)?
- (3) Are there several dynamic qualities of equal importance: strongly contrasting or closely related?
- (4) In an ensemble do all dancers use the same effort simultaneously? Does the performance allow for individual improvisation within the dynamic pattern? If so, in what way does this relate to the spatial and rhythmic patterns?
- (5) In what way does the dynamic content of the movement relate to that of the accompanying music?
- (6) Does the individual performer use one overall effort in his body movement or does he make simultaneous use of several efforts, centred in different parts of his body? How do these dynamic patterns relate to rhythmic and spatial patterns of movement?

This type of analysis of the dynamic components of movement enables the observer to recognise and define the effort character of a

particular movement or series of movements in precise and simple terms. Effort content reflects the performers' temperament, character and state of mind as well as expressing their social role, occupational or educational disciplines, and being the central, kinetic element in mimetic enactment. This study, therefore, provides valuable insights into the character of a society or individual, particularly with regard to the implicit emotional or unconscious psychological motivation which underlies human movement apart from its purely formal implications.

The spatial delineation of utilitarian movement springs from practical or psychological necessity. In dance as an art there is, for performers and spectators, a kinetic delight in the creation of pattern or design in terms of rhythmic, dynamic and spatial movement for its own sake apart from the social or ritual function it performs. The formal elements are unconsciously rooted in the everyday movement of the surrounding culture; but dance allows for imaginative extension and elaboration of such movements.

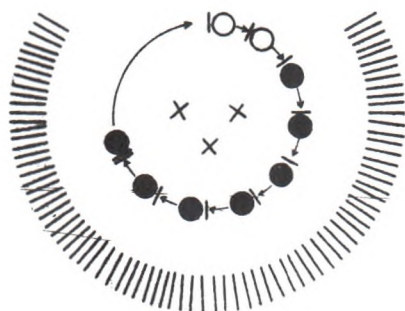
C.

Spatial design in dance consists of three-dimensional patterns created by the movement of the dancers on the surface of the ground and through the air surrounding their bodies within the physical limits of the performing area.

The ground plan or floor pattern on the surface of the performing area may be in terms of a free form in which performers improvise and move freely as individuals within a group or in solo performance. Alternatively, it takes the form of a definite geometrically defined floor pattern which in traditional dance is usually simple in design and repetitive in performance.* In either case the performers may make extensive or economic use of the performing area.

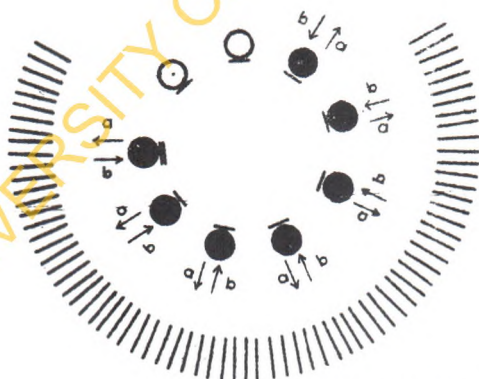
Floor patterns may be recorded by diagrams using symbols identified by a key. The diagram should give the essential facts of group direction: movement forward or backwards, to left or right, clockwise or counter clockwise and essential exchange of position.

* In contrast to the complexities of floor pattern of contemporary theatrical dance.



- // // // // // Spectators
 O female dancers
 ● male dancers
 - back of dancer
 = back of leader
 X musician
 → direction of movement
 - - - - - limit of performing area

For complex progressions it is necessary to draw a series of floor patterns:



KEY: as above

- (a) movement out of original circle followed up by
- (b) movement back into original circle repeated five times before returning to fig. I.

Action patterns: are the shapes and designs created by the positions and movements of the body and limbs of the performer in the surrounding space. Dancers may move from one clearly defined position to the next or the movements may be improvised through a series of positions within the limits of the basic form of the dance. In the latter case the spatial shapes of the movement and accented positions will be within the given style but not necessarily corresponding for each dancer or each performance of the dance. The use of a common rhythmo-dynamic movement pattern which allows for improvisation in terms of the spatial pattern within the limits of a particular style is typical for a number of African dance forms. In this context the synchronised sound camera is invaluable as a recording technique.

In the study of action patterns the following should be noted:

1. In traditional dance there is usually a characteristic posture or stance* in which the body may be held throughout the dance or to which the dancers return at regular intervals. This basis or repetitive body position can be indicated by simple stick figures. The whole body should be considered:

Head	—	neck
Torso	—	shoulders, back, pelvis hips, buttocks
Leg	—	knee, ankle, foot, toes
Arms	—	elbow, wrist, hand, fingers

The figure may be further simplified when working under pressure in the field.

A basic position.

head:	upright- face forward
trunk:	upright
arms:	elbow drawn back from shoulder bent – 45° lower arm parallel with ground.
hands:	in front of body, palms facing forward
legs:	parallel Knees relaxed – slightly bent.
feet:	parallel facing forward firmly on the ground.

* Both legs supporting weight of body rest on ground.

2. There may be more than one clearly defined basic position and the dance may move between two, three or four such positions.

Note: The positions in these diagrams (the back straight, the head and neck continuing the line of the back, the knees relaxed and slightly bent, legs and feet parallel with the feet firmly placed on the earth) are typical of many forms of dance in Africa. The back may be upright or incline at a slight or acute pelvic angle towards the ground surface. The overall body position and accompanying movement give a kinetic sensation of moving into the earth or of a close and confident relation to the earth. This is in sharp contrast to many styles of European dance where the spatial accent is on an upright body which continuously tries to escape the force of gravity and the ground surface on which the dance is performed.

3. A dancer moves intentionally forwards, backwards, sideways, diagonally or in spontaneous improvisation over the ground by transferring his body weight from one foot to the other in performing movements of progression or steps. With regard to spatial level steps may be described as medium, deep or high in relation to the upright standing body, e.g. medium entails the same degree of flexion and extension of the leg of as a normal walk, deep involves strong flexion of legs bringing the body closer to the ground and high involves raising the weight from the ground usually with an extended knee, e.g. onto the balls of the feet. Deep stepping is a common feature of African dance.

Dance steps may also be recognised as small or large, wide or narrow in relation to a normal walking step.

The dance step has many variants, e.g. walk, stamp, slide, jump, etc., depending on the use made of time, space and energy. Jumping brings an element of excitement to a dance and may consist of springing:

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|--------------|
| a. | from both feet to both feet: | double hop |
| b. | from both feet to one foot: | jump or leap |
| c. | from one foot to the same foot: | single hop |
| d. | from one foot to another foot: | leap |
| e. | from one foot to both feet: | jump. |

Jumps may be high or low depending on whether the dancer concentrates on moving up into the air or over the earth.

Turns may be used as a form of progression if made while transferring weight from one foot to another, or as part of a

progressive pattern by preceding or following a step when they are performed on one or both feet. Turns may be recognised as full turns in which the front of the torso revolves through a full 360°, half turns 180°, or quarter turns 90°. Turns are made either to the left or to the right in relation to the central body axis.

Acrobatic progressions include “cartwheel” turns in which hands alternate with feet in the transference of weight, or movement in which the knees may alternate with the feet in direct contact with the ground, virtuoso jumping turns, etc.

The pattern of progression indicated by the ground plan may be straight, angular, or curved.

A progression of steps accenting the rhythmic phrasing of the dance builds into an action phrase in terms of steps forming a step pattern.

A dance may be performed without a progression of steps – in a standing, sitting, kneeling or lying position.

4. Gestures are actions of the limbs which do not involve the support of the body weight and are performed by arms or a ‘free’ leg and can be extensions of movements of the trunk and/or include movements of the head and neck.

A gesture may consist of a single action of a limb or a series of successive actions of the various parts of a limb, e.g. shoulder – elbow – wrist – fingers.

The directions and levels of arm and leg gesture are relative to the joint in which the movement originates: e.g., considering the vertical plane for the arm:

- Medium: at shoulder level
- High: above shoulder level
- Deep: below shoulder level

A gesture may be performed in preparation for the transference of weight.

In physical terms gestures depend upon and may be described as:

- (a) the rotation of a joint(s) and resulting rotation of the trunk, neck and head, arms or legs.
 - (b) flexion and extension of joints resulting in the flexion, extension or hyper-extension of the related parts of the body.
5. A gesture creates a delineation of movement from one to another particular point in space. A number of gestures performed in succession build up a spatial action pattern in terms of gesture, forming a

gesture pattern. If the change of direction at the final point of each successive gesture entails an acute angle of movement, the resulting gesture pattern is angular or geometric and the points of change of direction are clearly defined and may be stressed by a pause, use of weight or change in dynamic, as well as a definitive change of direction, so forming the accents in the spatial phrase of movement. A gradual change of direction creates a rounded gesture pattern or shape in which the movement may pass through, rather than pause at, the spatial position which is hence far more difficult to define or notate and may vary from dancer to dancer within a dance ensemble. The accents of phrasing then depend on the rhythmo-dynamic patterns of the dance movements.

Angular and rounded gesture patterns may be combined in complex gesture patterns.

6. Gestures may originate in the torso and flow outward towards the periphery of the limbs in space or they may be orientated into the earth on which the dance is performed or the gesture may be directed from the limbs in towards the body centre. In general a dancer may make generous use of the personal kinetic space within the range of the full stretch of his extended limbs, or the design of the movement may impose an economic use of space in which movements are confined and close to the body. In the same way an ensemble or soloist makes extensive or economic use of the common space available for the dance.

7. Percussive beats may be spatially expressed by step or gesture patterns or they may result from the contraction – release of a group of muscles causing a rhythmic movement beat to be set up in a particular part of the body, e.g. in one or both shoulders or in a pelvic rock, in isolated movements of buttocks or breasts, etc. These beats accent the rhythmic phrasing of the movement forming percussive movement patterns.

Percussive body beats in a great variety of forms are a familiar feature of many dances in Africa.

8. The action pattern of a dance includes step patterns, gesture patterns and percussive movement patterns. All three types of action may be simultaneous parts of an individual dancer's movement, each located in a different part of the body. They may form a balanced unity in terms of an action phrase, or one type of action pattern may predominate with one or both of the other action patterns entirely absent, in a subsidiary position or flowing from the dictates of the

leading pattern. The overall action pattern of a dancer's movement should be viewed as a single entity with all parts of the body contributing even if in relative repose.

9. In the simultaneous use of more than one action pattern by a performer, one pattern, e.g. the step pattern, may be formally constant in terms of action, rhythm and dynamic whereas the gesture pattern of the arms may be improved, though the rhythmic and dynamic patterns of the arm movement remain formally constant for a specific movement phrase. Hence the action patterns used simultaneously by one dancer may be a combination of form and improvisation with the overall style of the movement, e.g. the basic rhythmic phrase may be stressed by the movement of the step and/or the percussive movement patterns, while the gesture pattern may not accent the stresses of the rhythmic phrase on a beat to beat basis but coincide with it in terms of the overall visual rhythmic phrase.

10.(a) The dance may consist of a basic phrase, in terms of the action, rhythmic and dynamic patterns, which is repeated as the sole motif of the performance. This phrase may be performed at a constant tempo or there may be a marked acceleration of tempo during the performance leading to a point of concentration or climax of movement at the termination of the dance or during the dance: in which case the climax will be followed by a reduction of tempo possibly returning to the initial tempo of the performance.

(b) A simple phrase of movement may be established in one part of the body, e.g. in a step pattern. This pattern may then be extended and developed by the addition of related movements, e.g. gesture or percussive – beat patterns centred in other parts of the body or by a development in complexity of the original basic step pattern. So the dance movement may start as a simple phrase and develop in range and complexity of movement until an extended movement phrase is established. This may be repeated as the basic motif of the dance. In this case the transition from one phrase to another is dependent on an additive process which may depend on subtle gradients of movement.

(c) The patterns of the original phrase of movement may be abruptly and completely altered to form a new phrase. In spatial terms the abrupt transition may apply to step, gesture and percussive movement patterns (if all these are in use) or to an abrupt alteration in the patterning of one or two of these spatial action elements while those not affected remain constant.

Abrupt, sudden or complete transitions are readily recognisable and typical of dances with clearly defined spatial patterns of movement in some cases requiring an athletic or virtuoso technique of performance. Subtle transition depending on a relatively slight alteration of movement or gradual addition of more complex movements are common in dances which have a fluid or improvised form in spatial terms, but often requiring a heightened precision and skill in the performance of the rhythmo-dynamic patterns of the dance.

Whether the transition from one phrase to another is gradually additive or sudden with a clearly defined demarcation of timing, it should be established as to whether the transition depends principally on a change of visualised movement rhythm, tempo, dynamic or spatial patterning. Or whether the transition results from a combination of all or some of these elements. If the transition takes place in terms of a change of action pattern then it must be clarified as to whether this entails a change of the step, gesture or percussive movement or a combination of two or three of these aspects of spatial design.

(d) In some forms of dance a number of phrases build into a recognisable sequence of dance phrases. The sequence may consist of the repetition of a constant phrase or there may be a complete transition of movement pattern from phrase to phrase resulting in a sequence of contrasting phrases. The sequence may combine repetitive and contrasting phrases. The number and nature of the constant and contrasting phrases contained in a dance sequence should be defined and established.

(e) A specific dance sequence may be performed repeatedly to create the form of the dance. Alternatively it may give way to a new sequence of dance phrases after one or several performances of the original sequence. Transitions between clearly differentiated sequences are usually marked by a sharply defined change in the rhythm, melody or tempo of the musical accompaniment and the visualised rhythmo-dynamic patterns, tempo and/or spatial design of the dance movement.

If the dance consists of a number of clearly differentiated sequences then it should be established whether the number and arrangement of the sequences remain constant for each performance of the particular dance. A constant arrangement necessitates deliberate and careful planning and practising prior to performance and any alteration of the 'normal' arrangement of sequences will be set before the commencement of the performance. Alternatively alterations in the arrange-

ment of dance sequences may depend on a recognisable musical directive from the leading musician, so that within a practiced and familiar range of basic sequences, the arrangement may be altered or used according to the immediate demands of the particular performance. In this case the initiative is normally taken by the leading musician and the dancers follow the arrangement of sequences (and possibly the arrangement of phrases within the sequence) that he 'dictates.'

A formal arrangement of a contrasting series of dance sequences is normally found in social dances performed by a team or group that is trained and led by an outstanding dancer.*

A dance may build to a climax in complexity of action, rhythmic and dynamic, and increase of overall tempo, or it may remain constant and repetitive in form and character. The subjective involvement in the motor experience of rhythmic and action patterns often brings the dance performer to a point of inner concentration bordering on, or entering into, a state of trance. In dances which build to a climax the performers may move into a state of deep trance or possession. Stimulants or ritual preparation prior to performance may facilitate or bring the performers into a state of possession before the commencement of the dance. Performers in a state of possession are usually controlled by followers or assistants.

11. Facial expressions of dancers should be noted – whether constant or changing, naturalistic or formalised.
12. Physical contact between performers as an integral part of the action pattern of the dance movement is rare in traditional dance, though close physical contact between members of a dance team has been observed. Physical contact is at times pointedly and deliberately placed at a climax point in the dance, often with humorous or satirical overtones. Physical contact is obviously necessary in some acrobatic performances, and in mimetic enactments of everyday relationships.
13. It should be noted whether the action patterns include physical distortion or acrobatic techniques, and how these are acquired by the performers.

* This category of Dance lends itself to theatrical display and entertainment as it may be readily organised and tailored to meet the demands of a contemporary theatrical situation and allows for the presentation of varied and contrasting material.

14. In some dance forms costume, cloth or paraphernalia is used to extend or elaborate the action patterns of the dance, or the wearing of masks or elaborate costumes of weighty materials inhibits the development of movement. The observer should note the possible differences between the fully costumed performance and the prior practices of the dance in simple dress which may give further insight into these aspects. Also dance movements as an elaboration of everyday movements often make a deliberate use of traditional dress in extending the movements necessary to the daily wearing of such dress.

It is apparent that though the formal elements of time energy and space may be differentiated for study purposes, they are inseparably interwoven in performance. The main emphasis may be placed on one or a combination of two elements with the third relatively undeveloped, but there are many dance forms in Africa in which all three elements exist in an equally balanced equilibrium. Care should be taken not to lose sight of the integrated whole in the interests of finality of definition of the component parts. The nature of the integration between the formal dance elements should be noted and also the relationship between musical sound, verbal text and body movement.

Any marked formal or stylistic resemblance to other forms of dance should be noted; also influences from other traditions or cultures.* When the function and related contextual factors has been established and the form of a number of dances analysed then studies in the relation of form and content should be attempted.

* Peggy Harper, 'Dance in a Changing Society', *African Art/Arts d'Afrique* Vol. 1, No. 1.

FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE AND THE DOCUMENTATION, MEDIATION AND ANALYSIS OF DRAMATISED CULTURE

DELE LAYIWOLA

5

The nature and extent of fieldwork for researchers of African Studies are changing with the times. Historical, 'linguistic'¹ and behavioural problems are therewithal precipitating an underlying sub-culture that informs the outcome of any field event or its research. One rather cursory but intensely fundamental factor is that mentioned by the doyen of African Art history, Roy Seiber, in a 1992 interview:

The old scientific view was that you got your evidence, and from your evidence you built your hypothesis. Now we are expected to have a hypothesis and then go out and look for the evidence. [1992: 51]

In view of the implication which this kind of contemporary attitude imposes on field investigation and derived results, this paper will address three distinct issues. The first is the sphere of authority in scholarship; the second is the medium of analysis; and the third is the problem of false consciousness in the 'adult learning' process. As I shall presently contend, the first is historical, the second linguistic and the third behavioural.

There is a sense in which communities and cultures with a longer history of oral tradition (or orature) than that of written tradition have become unique sources of information and data, especially in the field of visual and performance research. But we must remember that twentieth century researchers, by the mere incidence of the *written word* possess a high degree of intellectual arrogance, even arrogance, through the facility to 'affirm' or accentuate observation in their own words or printed letters. Hitherto, societies without the magisterial art of the *written* alphabet often own ideas and artefacts communally (and in trust) rather than individually. But the importation of written literature has brought with it a phenomenal shift of emphasis in the arrogation of the authorial 'I' to things and to the territory and landscapes of the mind. That authorial 'I' is the assertiveness that has characterised the whole enterprise of colonialism – the intellectual claim to the property of 'others' as opposed to ours. This is the reason that post-colonialism has always manifested as neo-colonialism even among kindred group and nationalities.

If, by the foregoing, we affirm that textual strategies have given a new power to the author and researcher, then the world is changing relative to that shift and position of power. The opportunity to (re)search in the field becomes the mapping out of a designated and 'captured' world in the sense of a *subject*. Here then is the point of contention. Studying and writing have become power-sharing processes or power-play instances in the modern world.

The expanse of the field in, for instance, an African or Pacific settlement is a whole wide world to which the researcher or critic applies himself like a text. This world, to borrow a phrase of Edward Said (1979) "is a text that incorporates speaking and writing, reading and telling" which "accepts as inevitable not the separation between speech and writing, nor the disjunction between a text and its circumstantiality, but rather their necessary interplay" [p. 170]. This interplay of medium is the undoing Aurora which dazzles and perplexes many a brilliant researcher who may return to their desks conceited with scientific facts that are no more than jack o' lanterns. A few interesting instances of what Roy Sieber had identified as establishing hypothesis before evidence is well illustrated in Mallory Wobber's *Psychology in Africa*.

There are also isolated occasions when an enthusiastic learner of an indigenous language 'invents' a wrong interpretation, or infers a wrong meaning from words used in established contexts [Achebe, 1975, 1982, p. 6]. We all know too well that language often

encapsulates cultures and worlds, and where we get field guides and interpreters, there are still knotty issues we cannot afford to gloss over. Roger Arnaldez and Edward Said, paraphrasing Ibn Hazm, remind us that language has two apparently conflicting characteristics:

first, that of a divinely ordained institution, unchanging, immutable, logical, rational, intelligible, and second, that of an instrument existing as pure contingency, that is, as an institution signifying meanings anchored in specific utterances [Arnaldez, 1956: 80; Said, 1979: 170].

The real historical point, however, is that before the enterprise of colonialism, African (or untranscribed) languages tend to maintain speech and writing as inseparably imbricated. It thus means that there was no conception of 'telling' or speech as inherently separate from that of inscribing or writing. This, from a stochastic rather than from an empiricist point of view, is responsible for the relative tonality of many African languages whereby what is said (or intoned) is what is written (or inscribed).

The above point has far-reaching implications if we ponder the reason for the apparent absence of musical/dance notation and scores in the corpus of cultures with vast traditions of folk music and dances. It is, of course, understandable that where there is a rich and extensive tradition of learning and recounting by rote; where historical records are committed to memory, there almost always exists a performative as well as declamatory approach to oral renditions, chants and recitals, even if only as methods of *aide memoirs* which are largely intuitive. It is therefore not difficult to tolerate the sometimes intrusive musical notes which abound in the names of objects as well as the numerous instances of tonal counterpoints and puns based on musical and melodic notes. If language is to encapsulate worlds, indices of knowledge and boundaries of culture, then it must retain a high level of vibrancy and elasticity within its own fold. Much as this factor can be an asset in the documentation and cipher of knowledge, it may become serious impediments for persons seeking to relate to those cultures for the privilege of research 'entry'. This is known to undo both indigenous as well as foreign researchers. The case, already cited above, which Achebe documents is very pertinent:

He published a long abstruse treatise based on an analysis of a number of Igbo proverbs most of which, it turned out, he had so completely misunderstood as to translate 'fruit' in one of them as 'penis' . . .

It is interesting to note that misunderstanding need not come through the medium of language alone. Otherwise brilliant historians and culture analysts have been caught in the same kind of cultural slips. In his authoritative research on dance drama in East Africa between 1890 and 1970, Terence Ranger came to rather startling conclusions which would seem to affirm that the field researcher made tendentious, legislative comments on the cultural inclinations of the community under study. I quote him:

When we read of 'light comedies' being put on to illustrate black-white relations such a brief time after the ravages of the war, we may well deplore the lack of a well-developed political consciousness thereby displayed, or feel urban Africans had been culturally or intellectually emasculated under colonialism [Ranger, 1975: 76].

In the same breadth:

But we can hardly deny admiration for the survival capacity of these young men of the towns [*Ibid*: 76].

Statements of this kind are often rife with the arrogance of a researcher dealing with his 'subjects and objects' of study. The impression given is as if "these colonials must subject themselves to the view and scrutiny of the scalpel-happy researcher doing for them what they are incapable of doing for themselves!" Consequently, the same assertion is soon riddled with contradictions and over-generalisations. However, we must honestly acknowledge that even scholars indigenous to the culture sometimes unwittingly fall into such errors of presumption. Issues of racial and class origins can often be secondary or ancillary. The real point is that the control of the apparatus of research, study, and more appropriately, of *Ecriture*, may give the illusion of powers that we, as researchers, do not actually possess. The result is that a lot of nineteenth, and some twentieth, century ethnographies are laced with assumptions and arrogance which are lacking in humility and defective as scholarship in the true sense of the term. In spite of this, they have come to influence many writers and researchers.

The above statements would seem to reveal that *escritorial* engagement engenders assumptions and attitudes which portray the "writer" as educated, and possessing a measure of power and control over the "speaker" or informant who may have become a "mere object of study" devoid of will, soul or a driving principle. It then shows that our designation as scholars and researchers may constitute not only an

attitude of taste and of outlook but may be an overriding sub-culture; even an anti-culture.

More recently, two former students of Roy Sieber, Sidney Kasfir (1988) and Cornelius Adepegba (1996), have indicated that the tension from a 'holistic' or interdisciplinary study of African Art has not helped to defuse the widening tangent of individual perspectives. For instance, one would think that the study of art by both anthropologists and art historians would be complementary in the interpretation of cultures. Instead, tension continues to generate between scholars depending on which of the disciplines they practice. Anthropologists continue to concentrate on the study of institutions whilst art historians continue to dwell on forms. There is no doubt that the field would be richer if we continue the study of cultures from a multi-disciplinary, multi-dimensional point of view, agreeing on mutually convergent methods. We must, of course, remember that only a first-hand experience of cultures can guarantee against such misinterpretation as we have often had in the past. Quite frequently, prejudices have been the basis for such misinterpretation. A case in point is the 'myth' that was spun around Ekoi and Ejargam masks as recalled by Adepegba:

For a long time before the kind of skin used as the cover for the skin covered mask was ascertained to be that of an animal, the skin cover was always said to be that of a human being, used for providing the masks with human attributes. Any second thought was not even suggested by the fact that the masks are in both human and animal forms and that the skin might have been employed to conceal possible cracking of the wet wood traditionally carved into masks and figures in Africa (p. 6).

The truth is that informants in the field are eager to tell researchers what they like to hear! Any researcher in search of exotic ideas will eventually help his informants to ascribe same to the processed text. The irony of this being that the researcher loses control over the mill of his own ideas and product, and returns to his desk with the illusion of ostensive power. In the same vein, Pierre Verger had recorded an instance where trustees of an indigenous institution confessed that whenever curious researchers ask incisive questions, they tell them stories they like to hear (Verger, 1965).

The aforementioned tallies with the point too well adumbrated by Michel Foucault that "in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a

certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality" (1979: 216). These will thus continue to be a perpetual power play in the relation between "verbality" and "textuality". But we must bear in mind that this is underscored by the simple fact that the informant in the research field, or the 'subject of study' perpetually thinks of the investigator as a poacher, an uncertified intruder whose business is always to break down; to analyse and to vandalise for the purpose of academic (in)digestion. This assumption is, certainly, not unfounded especially as our mien as researchers and poachers as knowledge would often impose airs of virtual superiority, of investigators, physicians, midwives, and even contractors. The impression the other party gets is that we pretend to have all the tools and he is a lessee being understudied in an 'agreement'; the substance of which he neither drafts nor controls. How then do we overcome the tension of the superiority/inferiority relationship in circumstances of research otherwise supposed to be neutral, objective and results-oriented? Does this involve the empowerment of the subject and object of study? If so, how do we and who determines the parameters?

Ecriture and Authority

There is absolutely no doubting the mission of ethnography as a pervasive influence on culture and its intellectual analysis for the purpose of study. The writer's particular experience in the study and documentation of dance ethnography will not be different from those of anthropologists and others constantly foraging the 'field' for ancient and new ideas and ways of representing them in the context of African studies in the modern period. As has been recorded earlier, there is no 'divine' format on methods of field investigation. However, in the realm of values, ethnography is a sphere of influence for an upper hand in the post-colonial scramble for space appropriation and dominance. In the semantics of John Frow: 'Who speaks? Who speaks for whom? Whose voice is listened to? Whose voice is spoken over? Who has no voice? Whose claim to be powerless works as a ruse of power?' [1996:16]. This set of questions helps Frow to push the point already echoed by Linda Alcoff in her essay on "The Problem of Speaking for Others" [1992: 5-32] which stresses that meanings change as often as the vantage positions of who speaks or seeks to make the meaning. This is, of course, a philosophical axiom which ties down interpretation and meaning to relative geographical and

ideational space. For it is impossible to transcend one's *a priori* point of view in the representation of facts and meaning in an intellectual space. There is also the imputation of identity and class as sub-structures of value formation but we can avoid those for now and just concentrate on the hegemonic references. It is clear that unless one undergoes a particular condition, it is impossible to describe that condition with perfect objectivity (or even subjectivity). If a researcher or writer represents a human condition, it is almost certain that he is speaking or writing from a position of secondary elevation; and may thus be speaking *in spite* of him. The result of his findings are always *on behalf of* rather than *of* or *for* a particular group or culture. If it is impossible to attain the objectivity or the truth that scholarship aspires to, then we, as researchers, stand in a degree of ambivalence to our work and to the ethnography that we purvey.

The contradiction cited above would seem to be that we researchers are 'impostors' claiming to 'speak' or 'write' on behalf of chosen peoples and communities whilst we actually vend half truths and assumptions. Etymologically, therefore, we cannot really be authors as we often claim to be but can be better described as interpreters and translators of some reputed ideas. Though the argument is plausible that we put these propositions across the grid in matters of degree rather than with any absolutism; but the real dangers are quite visible that studies akin to truth and objectivity are often not so. It also becomes clear that as double personalities, researchers must begin to fashion new tools and devise new methods which can continue to sharpen the frontiers of knowledge acquisition. This is necessary because we stand the risk of making a culture out of a forced method of ethnography.

Conclusion

One can safely assume that for the discipline of oral and dramatic performance, there is an added layer of illusion generated by the very nature of performance itself. There are, thereby, four levels of meaning running concurrently: First, there is bare narration which either the performer or the field research recalls as primary text. Second, there is the level of analysis which appears as improvisation for the performer but as imposed theory for the critic or analyst. Third, there is that affective layer of embellishment which is often intuitive to the performer. Finally, there is the real objective meaning that exists irrespective of perception. It is an enhanced state which engenders cultural meaning as the grimace on the face of a mask but which can

often deny analysis on the part of the researcher. Where there are no firm methodologies, the analyst, who is 'outside' of the context of play may assume *authorship* and *authority* and begin to adapt meanings and orientations which are ultimately misleading but which he purveys as scholarship. Knowledge thereby becomes an ideology and a political motivation. At this point, neither the author, researcher or reader can ever hope to advance the true study and understanding of culture that is, after all the whole basis of assiduous field research and representation.

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AFRICANIST FIELD RESEARCH AND THE REALM OF VALUE

DELE LAYIWOLA

6

In opening this paper, it is necessary to predicate it with the famous words of Barbara Hernstein Smith on the contingencies of value, that:

The privileging of the self through the pathologising of the other remains the key move and defining objective of axiology [1988:38].

This oblique reference to both polarisation and hybridity would seem to be an emerging possibility in the field of Africanist research. In the previous essay, I referred to the tension between anthropologists and art historians. In this essay, I hope to demonstrate that the realm of value is bombarded by the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge as well as by the tension between possibilities and proliferation of ideas. The result is that we are torn between ideas and value judgements which represent the same field but divergent in perceptual orientation such that we stand the risk of losing grip and harmony within the same household of cultural speculation.

If we take, for instance, the recent advancement of gender-laden theories of womanist perspectives as a realm of value, in itself, then

scholarship probably has gender. We can also assume that the perception of value in the interpretation of a drama or an artwork can be a way of revisiting the world if we say that those works have the masculine and the feminine within their realm of value. It is possible to say that a certain culture can be either the high type or its popular equivalent. Certainly, 'if within the same household of culture such disparities occur, then we can no longer talk of a uniform realm of value judgements or assessments. The possibilities of value are often inimitable.

I will like to illustrate this with a practical point in Nigeria's second republic; the era of 1979-83 politicians. Before this era, regional media houses had often, for institutional reasons, broadcast in major local languages or in English, the *lingua franca*. The myth of a uniform audience was then shattered when the erstwhile 'minority' languages foregrounded themselves and insisted on being included on broadcast stations, if not in printed media. The fact of a seething semiotic undercurrent was lost to many, but a spectacular example occurred in Lagos and Ogun states. The evening Yoruba broadcast had to be complemented with the 'uppish' Ahori language sub-group of the region. Though the Ahori speak the dominant Yoruba language, they demanded the inclusion of their mother tongue in the broadcast media. The 'pathologising of an other' would thereby generate a midwifing of a complex culture where competition can(not) be truly imagined. Hence, which language is popular and which is not since the broadcast is to the same volume and spectrum of audiences in the Lagos and Ogun gateway field areas? No one could say that Ahori could not be broadcast because it has no orthography studied in schools. After all, they are a politically influential electorate in the politics of the area.

In a fieldwork situation, for instance, if we were to assume a uniform framework of value, which of the two linguistic options mentioned above would be most suitable for information generation and dissemination? What language medium will be either "politic" or "just convenient" within the field of play? Would a researcher dwell on the complexity of syntax, or history in his choice of language or would he dwell on another aspect of socio-linguistics – say, that of social class or political clout? It then becomes clear that, theoretically speaking, the realm of value is fundamental to our choice and context; the only problem is in being able to explain the choices that we make and why such choices have priority over others.

What my point advocates is simply that we must, more than ever before, pay greater attention to the classifications we make in our analyses of field work. We must, in fact, pay attention to the slant of language usage, which is capable of inflicting value judgements and prejudices over the statements we make. There is an inevitable bias in the analyses and processing of information and data from given geographical and field conditions. In what way do we mark off territories and sort out historical or conceptual links in-between sources which are either oral or written, sung or declaimed, recited or chanted? What John Frow records on this is succinct:

More broadly, this would be an analysis not only of norms and procedures but of the institutional structures through which value is formed, transmitted and regulated; of the social distribution of literacy; of the mechanisms for the training and certification of valuing subjects; of the multiplicity of the formations of value, differentiated by age, by class, by gender, by race, and so on [1996:135].

We certainly cannot claim that value judgments are not relational or variable; we cannot claim that what would be 'universal' for one researcher or a group of researchers will necessarily be same in another class or gender-specific situation. There, certainly, are various grades and dimensions to the study of matter and the intellectual properties of existence.

When we process cultural materials from their peculiar contexts: that of ethnic violence; political shifts and domination; aetiology of selfish interests and prejudice; economic domination and struggle; situations of uneven perception, then they emerge without reflecting the conditions under which they were gathered. The truth, sometimes, is that it becomes the pronouncement of an individual, which unwittingly affirms that what we read is a factual, omniscient canon that is above any realm of value. Obviously, we underestimate the power of value over even the notions categorised as facts and records. The only sane antidote to this mismanagement of research information and procedure is to adopt the warning of Clifford and Marcus (1986:15) that culture is always relational and is an aspect of communicative process and exchange, which are historically between subjects in relations of power. It is this relations of power that are categorised by terminologies such as gender, class, popular or elitist, etc. The field is full of landmines, often far more suffusing than we think. It can only be that the position of genuine scholarship becomes more precarious

and hazardous with the progress of history. Social formations tend to reveal at the same time as they obfuscate varying categories of analyses and the rules of knowledge production.

Let us go unto other examples, realising that there are always alternative ways of explaining the world; alternative perceptions of events and values in a rational situation. Besides, we do not want to be bogged down by over-theorising tendencies and making particular situations look like ends in themselves rather than seeing them as a process of a given history or tradition. Here I shall give two tendencies in the contemporary experience of African literature; tendencies curiously overt only in the form of the novel. There are two novels of Chinua Achebe involved: *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964).

In the first novel, the author creates a cultural scenario whereby a cultural domain tries to explain its own world as a way of asserting it. It says that colonialism did not come to civilise Africans but that there have been organicist models whereby communities grew on their own terms, *in situ*, and are valid for their own purposes. In other words, their value systems are co-ordinated from within and are not fore-closed to other communal systems with which they can have cultural and value exchanges so far as there is mutual respect for one another. This is why, in that first novel, the major patriarchal character, Okonkwo, goes all out with macho and style prejudicial in his own favour. The author, as is to be expected, presents this hero with great artistry by putting emphasis and exaggeration on certain dominant traits of the individual as a template replicating an internalised system. Of course, Okonkwo, as a person, cannot possibly be as gastronomic as he is portrayed, neither does a whole community, in exaggerated fits of manual labour, need to pound a mountain of yams just for the sake of showing agricultural prowess and then proceed to eat it all up within a period of twenty-four hours. That will not display the necessary sense of rectitude. However, the subtle point remains that it was a self-sufficient, self-catering community where none lacked in wherewithals.

Achebe performs an artistic feat in creating a larger-than-life situation meant to illustrate a simple point or notion on the probabilities of human accomplishment. But if we were to subject the idea to empiricist analysis then we might ask whether it is the same labour that produced the yam which now pounded it or were there some machines and robots employed? If individuals from diverse groups would come from the various distant communities on foot, at what point of the pounding did they arrive given that the pounded

yam didn't grow cold and unappetising? If indeed the communal feast involved the total participation of the various provinces, how long did each person stay as to enable him exchange handshakes over the left-over of the day? The story is a feat of the intellect which creates its own peculiar realism that, as is now too obvious, cannot bear the insult of modern cinematic technology as borne out by the travesty of its transfer into a modern film. One linguistic effect, which is realised in abstractions rather than in bland empiricism, is the symbolic use of parts to express wholes. This often appears as a rhetorical device in circumlocution as indigenous Igbo expressions. Christophe Kambaji [1994:72] has noted two instances of such expressions in *Things Fall Apart*. The first was the afternoon when the ancestral body of *Egwugwu* gathered for a legislative fiat over the affairs of the living. The *Egwugwu*, as the living body of ancestors, are the supreme body in Igbo law and jurisprudence. Their periodical appearance, therefore, is always full of ritual and performance. Utterances on such occasion are, therefore, spectacular and pregnant with meaning. It is customary, in adjudication, for the esteemed judges to utter greetings to litigants on both sides. On that occasion, an *Egwugwu* addressed Uzowulu thus:

Uzowulu's body, I salute you (p. 81)

The status of an ancestral spirit puts him on a different pedestal from Uzowulu who is a mere mortal before these awesome spirits. He, therefore, addresses him as 'body' rather than as 'spirit being'.

A similar instance occurs when Ekwefi narrates to the priestess Chielo how horrified she was when Okonkwo shot at her with his gun. She remarks:

I cannot yet find the mouth with which to tell the story (p. 44)

This simply means that she is still too horrified to describe the circumstances of the incident. As Kambaji has observed, this will be ungrammatical as well as puzzling in the English language, but the rhetorical device is perfectly acceptable in the cultural context. A casual visitor, even a researcher in the field, would be expected to 'catch up', as it were, with such situations if and when they arise. But the point is too well made that there were great pre-industrial societies with their own system of organisation – juridical, cultural and legislative – before the intrusion of market forces and colonialism.

In the novel that came six years later, Achebe presents a more balanced; a more contemplative scenario that is striving to take in, understand, and selectively tackle a new-fangled urbanity that is

nascent with colonialism. A few critics and researchers feel that *Arrow of God*, if only for that reason, is a more accomplished artwork than the former novel. But, for our present purposes, that is in itself the realm of value judgement. What we can say is that the value of cultural capital in African Studies would, for a while, be ruled by the two faces of the same coin. The first is that there are indigenous systems which are whole and complete in themselves and often demand a unique analysis of partially closed value systems for their understanding. That is the group to which *Things fall Apart* belongs. The other is more eclectic, more interdisciplinary, and that is the group to which *Arrow of God* belongs.

It is noticeable in the latter work that the main character, Ezeulu, is unlike Okonkwo in very many respects. First, Okonkwo's temperament is that of a conservative, legendary political figure who would dabble in the mundane politics of his day or wherever prestige offers him a role to play. But Ezeulu, a bit more of an introvert rules by other means; he combines the role of a king and priest. He leans more in temperament to the clergy of the old order. He affirms that he would not altogether resist a new order but would take the best of both worlds. The irony is that this seeming pragmatism does not save him from the tragic fate of heroes. The only difference is that of a rather intriguing tragic irony. Okonkwo loves his fatherland and would cultivate its values. He would tame it, if need be, to prove a mettle. He would meet the alien tradition with the same kind of ruthlessness. He eventually caves in to that pressure from the outside, intruding influence. On the other hand, Ezeulu, noble and calculating, would welcome and weigh the influence coming from outside of his community and immediate field of cognition. But his undoing is his lack of a total understanding of the pressures from within. It is a sad irony that a man who would serve both worlds would succumb to the undoing from the inside.

The foregoing instances reveal how complex and varied the analysis of value and cultural capital can be; especially under vacillating, uneven allegiances. But one fact cannot be gainsaid: that is that every political or cultural system has within its kernel that which builds as well as that which rebuilds or destroys it.

It is abundantly clear that the future of African studies in its relation to the realm of value in other cultures must continue to affirm its own validity as much as revitalise itself through the emergence of other intruding cultures and attitudes alien to it. Its thrust in the coming millennium will be predicated on how much of its own

documentation it has organised for the value of facts and true representation as opposed to misrepresentation and conjectures. It will also have to open up to true models of multi-disciplinary, inter-textual as well as trans-textual studies without sacrificing its own unique identity. For instance, depending on the country one is in, African studies is either located in such varying fields as literature, cultural studies, history, politics, anthropology, economics and fine art. And for the future it should subtend such fields as physics, medicine, pharmacy and engineering. What then is that protean field called African studies and what will be the rules of its methodology? One of its strengths is in being located in as many fields as we can find, but the same bastardises it by removing its focus.

We must not forget an even stronger factor in the realm of value formation: that much of African studies research is, purportedly, now done farther afield than at home itself. The risk being that 'workers' at home only provide raw data whilst 'researchers' abroad can then process the data sent from a home-grown market. Whether the result can be salutary to workers at both or either ends of the scale is something to be examined in a future essay. However, one abiding factor will be that of genuine collaboration between the two categories of scholars. One side must be in the constant know of what the other is doing as either roles are important and each stands in the mortal danger of losing sight of the other in the jigsaw arrangement.

The situation places an all-time premium on the responsibility of the Africanists on the African continent itself. They will be expected to be at the cutting edge of research or data gathering in the area whilst enjoying the support of their colleagues abroad. This, by way of conclusion, would seem to confirm the observation of John Frow once again:

In order to move beyond the limitations of relativism (which does not mean the reinstatement of some non-positional perspective), it becomes necessary to redefine the notion of positionality itself, together with the notion of representation on which it depends. The crucial argument here, it seems to me, is the one that follows when regimes of value are detached from a directly expressive relation to a social community (p. 154).

Once this is achieved, a more centralised focus should begin to emerge for the benefit of the field itself. It also means that a more meaningful economy of value would most certainly emerge with greater clarity across the field as a whole.

Section IV

Historiography

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TECHNIQUES FOR COLLECTING ORAL DATA IN AFRICAN CULTURE HISTORY

ISAAC OLAWALE ALBERT

7

Introduction

One of the major tasks before historians is that of helping to explain the complex processes that led human society to its present state. The historian has a myriad of channels through which his enterprise can be approached. He could limit himself to a specific time, space and situation. He could take a country, continent and even the whole world as his subject. He could focus his work on significant events that took place within a twinkle of an eye or study an event spanning several centuries. The historian cross-fertilises ideas and promotes debates that could enable “the contemporary man” to understand past events and problems. History is interested in the totality of man. One could, therefore, talk of political history, economic history, environmental history, legal history, medical history, intellectual history, culture history, etc. Each of these types of history has strong ties with the original discipline to which it is related by the virtue of the name by which it is known. For example, political history has strong tie

with politics; economic history with economics; environmental history with environmental studies, and so on. Our attention in this paper is on culture history which has a strong relationship with cultural studies. What is culture history? We may not be able to answer this question without attempting, first, to provide answer to another question: What is culture? We need to ask similar questions when trying to define other types of history.

There are as many definitions of culture as are those who define the term. The first major definition of the term was provided by Tylor [1871:1]. According to him, culture “is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society”. A major criticism of this definition is that it is silent about the means by which culture is acquired: is it genetically or through a learning process? Culture is largely acquired through a learning process. The environment in which one is raised determines, to a large extent, one’s cultural attributes. As a child grows up, he replicates the things that he sees the people around him doing, and in the process he becomes a member of that cultural group. Culture is, therefore, a characteristic way of doing things among a given people. Our understanding of what constitutes culture can be further enriched by citing another major authority. According to E. Laing [1990:1] culture is “the totality of a people’s way of life; its way of organizing its affairs, of viewing the natural and the man-made world, of meeting universal human needs; its hierarchy of values or criteria that determine its behaviour and thought – in brief, a people’s view of the world, its social heritage”. To Akyempong [1993], culture is “the total pattern of human behaviour and its products embodied in thought, speech, action, artifacts, and dependent upon man’s capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations through the use of tools, language and systems of abstract thought.” Following logically from these three positions, “African culture” can simply be said to be referring to those peculiar ways Africans live their lives – how they replicate or vary a particular kind of behaviour and pass this onto their offsprings. African culture history is, therefore, a contemporary reconstruction and interpretation of the peculiar ways Africans lived their lives in the past – their kinship, kingship, economic, thought and belief systems.

This paper is specifically prepared for postgraduate students who are expected to have become much familiar with the general sources of history [written records, oral traditions, archaeology, linguistics,

ethnology, etc.]. We shall, therefore, not delay ourselves here with how fieldwork can be organized in these different areas. We shall limit ourselves essentially to how to collect oral data. Our discussion of the other methods of historiography shall, consequently, be tangential.

The written sources provide one of the easiest [to collect] and most accessible body of information for writing history. Most of the written sources of African history [books, archival records, etc.] were produced by foreigners [western scholars, explorers, missionaries, colonial officials, etc.]. As Hallet [1980:19] noted: "the authors of this type of material are essentially impressionistic in their approach and sometimes possess only a modest acquaintance with the African environment they set out to describe". Those foreign scholars who tried to write African culture history actually distorted the African past to a large extent. Unlike political and economic historians, most of these western scholars wrote about cultures they knew little or nothing about. There is, therefore, a large lacuna to be filled by students of African history in the area of cultural studies. Our focus in this chapter is on how the student of culture history could go about his enterprise.

There are two major methods of studying culture: it could be studied ethnographically or archaeologically. The historian, in studying culture, is literally assumed to be an ethnographer; he is also the main user of the data collected by the archaeologist. It is, therefore, impossible for a culture historian to operate without a basic knowledge of how ethnographers and archaeologists do their work. This explains why most departments of history compel students to take courses in these two important areas. At postgraduate level, a culture historian is encouraged to see himself, first as an ethnographer and then as a historian. The affinity between ethnography and history is understandable considering the common boundary shared by the two disciplines. E.E. Evans-Pritchard [1962:24] argued as early as 1950 for a consideration of social anthropology as a special kind of historiography. He considered social anthropology as empirical and highly scientific studies. He equated the discipline to social history which he considered as studies of "a society developing in time." A society developing in time is a changing society. It is a society produced by the continuous contradiction of history and not a static society.

Ethnography is the only social science discipline that has been most sympathetic towards the study of the African past [McCall 1969: 8-11]. We can probably explain this further within the framework of what Crane and Angrosino [1992:2] consider to be the main preoccupation of this area of academic specialisation. According to

them, ethnography

. . . tells us how members of a society live from the time they are born until they die, the positions they hold at different times in their lives, what they do in these positions and what the society prescribes that they should do, what the systems of belief current in the culture are, what kinds of choices in belief and behaviour people have, in which ceremonies they may take part and in what ways, their art and bodily adornments, shelter, ways of making a living, and how this society is related to those nearby.

Just as the ethnographer constantly queries the past in order to understand the present, the historian too moves closer to the reality of the past through insights from ethnographic data. What the historian studies and how he studies it is often dictated by present-day dispensations. The descriptions of the ethnographer or social anthropologist is an important tool, therefore, to the historian. If the ethnographer so chooses, he could write history. This is because during his fieldwork, like the professional historian, he too usually collects information about the past. The problem, however, is that in most cases the ethnographer would prefer to leave such data about the past to the historian. Because of this and the "presentism" of most anthropologists, Professor Robert O. Collins once boasted "It is the historian who provides the perspective to the ethnographer's descriptions" [Collins 1968:5]. This is probably why another scholar, Marrett [quoted by Crane and Angrosino 1992:98] observed that "anthropology is history or it is nothing." Evans-Pritchard [1962b:64] has also told us that history too "must choose between being social anthropology or nothing." These suggest that there is close relationship between history and anthropology.

The implication of the above is that the historian must be ready to incorporate a good measure of anthropological methods – participant [and also non-participant] observation, structured or unstructured interviews – into his work. In the same vein, the traditional ethnographers often borrow the historian's life history methods. Life history helps the ethnographer to appreciate what it means to have been part of a culture over a period of time; it also reveals how values are articulated, replicated or altered to suit pressing exigencies and social tensions in a society.

Tylor's definition is of great interest to us in this presentation no manner the existing criticisms against it. It clearly informs us about the

fundamental issues germane to cultural studies: “. . . knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society.” Gyekye [1994:51] too noted in his own work like Tylor’s that culture includes a people’s “beliefs, social practices, socio-political institutions, their systems of values, their manners [that is, habits and customs], etiquette and fashion.” This means that cultural issues can be studied as part of different kinds of history: intellectual history [knowledge], history of religion [belief, morals, etc.], art [visual, musical, dramatic] history, [legal history, social history and even history of philosophical thoughts]. Language plays a great role in how culture is acquired and transmitted from one generation to the other; it also plays a great role in how culture could be studied. Information regarding the culture of the African people are largely coded or preserved in oral forms. They are transmitted across generations. This explains why those interested in the study of African culture must first turn to oral sources. We are not saying that written sources are not relevant for writing culture history. In some cases, the researcher might need to make reference to archival material about those aspects of cultural practices that have been documented in administrative papers or published works. The point we are making basically is that oral sources offer more reliable information for studying the culture history of a people. The oral sources enable the people to tell their stories as they believe in it and as they live their lives – independent of what “outsiders” think of them.

There are two major techniques of oral historiography. By historiography is meant “the study of” and “writing about” the past. The first is what is popularly referred to as “oral tradition” and the second, “oral history.” The two are often used interchangeably by some scholars. They are different from each other. Oral traditions, according to Henige [1982:2] are “those recollections of the past that are commonly or universally known in a given culture.” Oral traditions are historically relevant oral information passed across generations. They include mythical stories, legends, didactic tales, chants, songs, proverbs, etc. On the other hand, “oral history” is “the study of the recent past by means of life histories or personal recollections, where informants speak about their own experiences”. The informant in an oral history project could have witnessed or participated in what he was narrating; he might not have witnessed or participated in it but told about it by someone who was a participant in the episode or somebody who himself was told about the event. In an oral history the information has to be collected in verbal forms.

We have decided to differentiate between oral tradition and oral history in this paper because the custodians of the data for the two are not the same; the methods for collecting data related to each is also different, though slightly. For example, those usually versed in oral traditions are aged people in a society, or people holding some traditional political or religious offices in the society. Data for writing oral history, on the other hand, can be collected from anybody who has witnessed or participated in the particular episode that the research seeks to investigate. One does not need aged informants, for example, to gather oral information on some of the activities of Festac '77. What the informant is simply expected to do in such an oral history project is to narrate what he saw and what he was told about the festival. The oral information that such a researcher gathers could be further interpreted in the light of the existing literature on the historic cultural fiesta. To gather detailed information about some of the mythical stories [oral tradition] performed on stage or some of the incantations recited during the festival, the researcher might have to carefully search for custodians of such kind of information. They are usually very old people who might even have to carry out some rituals before attending to the researcher. Before a researcher sets for the field, he, therefore, needs to find out very carefully what kind of oral data he needs for his work. Is he trying to study oral tradition or do oral history?

A researcher in need of oral tradition has a more herculean task before him. As Hallet [1980:21] rightly notes, this kind of oral source "presents the researcher with the most obvious practical difficulties". In another breath he observed that this source offers the historian "a refreshing period of liberation from his study and his books, [he] finds himself in places – palaces of local chiefs, hamlets deep in the bush, back-street compounds in provincial towns – to which he would not otherwise have gained entry, records many memorable personal encounters, and in general accumulates a range of new experiences of a kind well calculated to stimulate and refine historical imagination" [p.22]. The information that the researcher seeks to collect are special historical data that cannot be collected from just anybody but from some selected number of people in the society, in some selected places and at some special moments. Such people could be difficult to locate. The data at the disposal of some of those that could be located might not be collectable without some rituals.

Before the Field

A popular adage says “Fail to prepare and be prepared to fail”. Many fieldworks in African history fail just because the researchers engaged in them fail to make all the necessary preparations before going to the field. The first step in any research is the “pre-field deskwork”. At this stage the researcher literally plots a mental and physical graph of how he seeks to approach the work – most especially the field situation. Having identified the topic he wants to work on and having assured himself that nobody has done something similar, he must proceed to set out the main objectives which he seeks to achieve in his research. This will help him to work out the time line, resources and contacts needed for carrying out the fieldwork. It is dangerous for a student to approach the field without first familiarising himself with existing literature on his topic. This is necessary for three main reasons. The existing literature educates him on what others have done on the topic, something related to it or the locale of the research. The researcher must have a general knowledge of what he is working on or the society he is studying before coming to the specific issue he is working on. The existing literature will also educate the researcher on how the data for such a work could be collected; the problems associated with such field methods and how this could be overcome. Above all things, existing work provides the researcher the information about possible contacts during the fieldwork.

While doing his background reading, the oral historian will come across several references to artefactual evidence. This could suggest some important places that have to be visited by the scholar. It could also suggest the kind of archival study that must be done before going to the field. There are different kinds of archives in modern African society. The most important are the official archives which usually house all public documents. These were established by colonial administrators in most of the African countries in which they operated. There are three major official archives in Nigeria: the National Archives in Ibadan which contains historical data on the southwestern parts of Nigeria; the one in Kaduna is for northern Nigeria and the one at Enugu houses archival collections on eastern Nigeria. The archives to be visited by a particular researcher will, therefore, be determined by the town or culture area he is researching. Some states and local governments as well as prominent private individuals have their archives which members of the public could visit. Archival documents

help the researcher to track down useful information and possible contacts about his research topic.

Archival search is usually very laborious and painstaking — it is not meant for lazy people; not many students of African studies have the patience and resilience for doing it. The researcher has to carefully search through several “lorry loads” of difficult-to-identify files before the data begins to trickle out. This exercise could take many days, months or even years as there are usually several catalogue books in any archive to take a look at. After collecting the list of relevant files, the researcher begins to call for them one after the other. A single file could contain up to 200 pages. The researcher has to patiently read through each page as he searches for the information related to his work. Many find this difficult to do and this explains why some culture historians do not incorporate archival data into their works. The conclusions in such works are often misleading and are poorly written as they do not contain all that could be said on the researched subject.

Archival information is usually useful for putting oral data in the right perspective. It complements oral data and helps the researcher to ask the right kind of questions during his fieldwork. Archival documents usually make reference to certain events, persons and circumstances which the researcher could further investigate during the fieldwork. Let us use a recent example to illustrate the point. While researching into a prominent Yoruba city in 1993, I came across an archival document that says that there was a major crisis in that city in the 1930s. I tried to ask questions about this when interviewing the king of the town. He feigned ignorance of the incident as he considered it as not being in his interest to say that there was such a serious division among his subject at the time. Questions related to the incident were posed to other informants in the town until an important chief in the community agreed to tell the story of the event. Although he was a young man when the event occurred he was nonetheless a witness. His analysis fitted perfectly into what was contained in the archival records. In the process of narrating the story it became clear why the king of the town pretended not to be aware of the incident. The information collected from the chief helped me to further expand my fieldwork as it raised some other important issues that needed to be further explored.

It is always good for a researcher to make a preliminary trip to or reconnoitre the field before commencing the real fieldwork. This will help him to draw a realistic budget for the fieldwork; identify possible

research assistants and when and how to locate informants. Such a visit could be used for arranging appointments with informants. It is not always good for a researcher to just bump into an informant and begin to ask him questions. Some level of trust is needed to have been built between the two before the commencement of questioning. The researcher could arrange for his personal accommodation for the duration of the fieldwork and deal with other expedient logistics. This visit could even be used to do some pilot interviews. This is usually an opportunity to test the water before jumping into it. A researcher who jumps into the field without doing some or all of these things might be disappointed. He will most likely to be treated like a stranger by almost everybody he comes across during the fieldwork. This could dampen his enthusiasm.

Doing Fieldwork

Fieldwork in culture history involves two important things: observation and interview. A blindman or a deaf-mute can, therefore, not do any effective fieldwork in the field of culture history. The observation method is a major field tool of the ethnographer interested in contemporary culture. Since the historian is interested in the past rather than in the present, participant or non-participant observation might not be directly related to his work. This is a misleading assumption. The culture historian is first an observer and then any other thing. The culture historian observes the relics of past cultures and in the process forms his impressions of what might have taken place in the past which he needs to ask questions about. An art object could convey millions of messages. An enactment ceremony could directly reflect how things were done in the past. Some traditions have been so much preserved and are so vivid that a historian watching an enactment ceremony patterned after them could begin to report the ceremony in the past tense as if what he was describing took place several decades ago. The various Oduduwa enactment ceremonies at the palace of the Ooni of Ife and the Osun Festival in Osogbo are good examples of what one is saying here. The contents of the ceremonies remain as they used to be.

There is, however, a long-standing debate among ethnographers that we have to consider here. For how long does a researcher have to observe a cultural system before having an "insider knowledge" of it? An ethnographer is expected not to write authoritatively about a thing he does not know much about. The culture historian should also not.

This explains why participant observation is usually recommended in the field of ethnography. The researcher has to live in the community he is studying for a long period of time. He is expected to start his fieldwork only having understood the language and cultural practices of the people very well. A researcher who rushes to the field to observe might see nothing or something far from the reality. His work might, therefore, misrepresent the people. How do we prevent this kind of thing in the field of culture history? Do we recommend, like the ethnographers, that a person researching into culture history must spend a minimum period of time in the field before commencing his writing about the people? This question is difficult to answer here. The best that one can recommend is for a scholar to only work on a culture area that he knows very well. Should he seek to work in an environment that is not well known to him, he must collaborate with an indigene of the area. He must also share his research findings with the local people or their representatives before publishing it.

Once the researcher is in the field, he must introduce himself to the local authorities that could facilitate smooth execution of the research. Of course his visit must coincide with the activities [festivals, rituals etc.] pertaining to the issue under study. A person studying the Osun Osogbo Festival might find his visit to Osogbo more rewarding during the annual cycle when the festival is celebrated. It is advisable to let the local political authority in the town, for example, the king or chiefs, be aware of the researcher's presence most especially before the fieldwork commences. The support of the chief could assure the researcher an array of official data that could not have been easily accessible to him. The chief could also be a source of strength to him as he introduces himself to his prospective interviewees. "If the chief is in support the gods are also in support": many traditionalists would say. The researcher also needs the chief in case of any conflict in the course of the fieldwork. While introducing himself to the people, it is necessary that the researcher explains, in very clear and true terms, his research objectives to them. The people must be assured that whatever information is given to him would be used for academic purposes only. He must keep this promise after completing his fieldwork so that other researchers coming behind are not exposed to hostility.

The best method available to a culture historian for collecting his data is by interview. This method has been discussed in great details elsewhere [see Albert in this volume]. How the interview has to be done will, of course, be determined by the kind of oral data that the researcher is in need of. Let us start with the case of a researcher

collecting oral traditions. An oral tradition could be “fixed” or “free”. A tradition is said to be fixed if it has to be performed in a specific way by all those required to render it. For example, the way the “Lord’s Prayer” is rendered in Nigeria is not different from how it is rendered in other parts of the world. This is because it is a fixed text. A researcher wishing to collect this kind of text could just ask the simple question: “Please recite the Lord’s prayer” and his informant will immediately start talking. He could record such performance on audio or video tapes. Traditions that are fixed in this mode include incantations, prayers, proverbs, etc. They are easy to collect so long as the researcher is talking to the custodians of such a tradition. Where the text to be collected is not fixed but free, the researcher is dutybound to use unstructured method of interviewing, or, put in another language, open-ended ethnography [in-depth] interview, for gathering his data. The amount of information that will come to the researcher engaged in this kind of enterprise is usually a product of his dexterity in asking questions. The questions must be friendly and must convey no impression that the research seeks to insult or denigrate the culture he is studying. As far as possible, the informant should be treated as an authority in what he says. Questions could be asked so that he throws further light on his perspective of that particular incident. He could use other sources, later, for confirming or further controverting the information made available to him.

The type of questions asked by the researcher and the way these questions are framed or structured provide a frame for the kind of answers he or she gets. Respondents or informants shape their accounts of the past based on how the interviewer frames his question. The onus, therefore, lies on the researcher to ensure that his questions capture the totality of what he seeks to investigate. The answers he gets must lead him to some other important questions. The fieldwork is completed only when the researcher realizes that he has collected “all the available information” from the respondent.

Collection of oral data, however, goes beyond mere interviewing. As Fontana and Frey [1998:56] noted, it also requires that the researcher immerses himself in the native culture. These scholars have noted further:

One may have to disrobe and casually stroll in the nude if doing a study of nude beaches or one may have to buy a huge motorcycle and frequent seedy bars in certain locations if attempting to befriend and study the Hell’s Angels. The different ways and

attempts to “get in” vary tremendously, but they all share the common goal of gaining access to the setting.

What these scholars are simply saying is that one must behave like a Roman when in Rome in order to really gain the trust and confidence of the people one is trying to study. The way the researcher presents himself leaves a profound impression on the respondent. Trust between the researcher and the researched enhances more qualitative research information. The task of building trust also requires that the researcher works with an insider when doing his fieldwork. The insider could serve as a guide. He could also serve as an interpreter of cultural mores and local jargons.

Building trust is, however, not limited to when the researcher is trying to gain entry into the field situation. Even while doing the fieldwork [e.g., asking questions] he must remain courteous, friendly and pleasant. As Sellitz, Jahoda, Duetsch and Cook [1965:576] have noted:

The interviewer's manner should be friendly, courteous, conversational and unbiased. He should be neither too grim nor too effusive; neither too talkative nor too timid. The idea should be to put the respondent at ease, so that he will talk freely and fully.

Methodologically, doing oral history is not too different from collecting data on oral tradition. It also requires unstructured interview methodology. Oral history provides the unique opportunity to reach groups and individuals who have been ignored, oppressed or forgotten by history; it could also be a recollection of past events by famous individuals. It is an attempt to capture how they live or have lived their lives. Oral history has become popularized, in recent years, by the feminists seeking to bring women back into history in a world dominated by masculine interpretation of past events. This method of writing history, however, dates back to ancient times. Its modern character can be traced back to 1948 when Allan Nevins started the popular Oral History Project at Columbia University [Starr 1984:4].

Conclusion: From Field Notes to a Research Text

Filed work is of no value until the researcher is able to convert his notes into research texts. Field data is, in most cases, in “raw” forms. It is usually descriptive and not analytical. It could be some pieces of “meaningless” jottings or volumes of audio or video tapes that say nothing to the ordinary person. Should a researcher drop dead after

completing his fieldwork, the array of data he has collected might be useless to the academic world, especially if such research information has not been formally coded. The task of processing research data after completing the fieldwork is, therefore, as important as the fieldwork itself.

Meanings and significance are attributed to field texts after the fieldwork has been completed. The necessary ingredients for data analysis has to be generated by the researcher during the fieldwork. As the researcher takes his note, he must note some special information that could help in the analysis or interpretation of his data. His notes should enable him to capture the field experience adequately. For example, he must note the date of each interview or observation. He must provide very clear information about the interviewee: Who was he?; What age; What position in the society does he hold?; Why was he and not any other person interviewed?; What was the duration of the interview?, etc. The researcher must watch out for body languages that could further help him to understand the information provided by the respondent. All these will help the researcher to carefully track down patterns, narrative threads, tensions and themes within and across what he was told.

Audio and video films ought to have been properly labelled and numbered right from the field. Transcribing and translating the information in these tapes could take a fairly long time. It is necessary that the tapes are stored in a cool place to prevent them from getting spoilt. The earlier they are transcribed and translated, the better. It is only after all these processes that our field notes can get processed and converted to research texts.

CONCEIVING AND PROPOSING A RESEARCH IDEA

ISAAC OLAWALE ALBERT

8

Introduction

This paper is a response to some of the questions often asked me by some graduate students of the University of Ibadan who write research proposals for external grants. They come to my office in droves asking to be guided on how to write “proposals that work”. The questions asked by some of these students pertain to how to do literature review and develop research hypotheses. One should rather sympathise with them, considering the fact that there is hardly a department in any Nigerian university that has “Proposal Writing” as a formal academic course. Yet, the students need such training. To get their research work funded, they need to know how to write high quality research proposals. Even after their graduation, many of the students have need for proposal writing. The time available to me to discuss issues germane to proposal writing with those who call to see me in the office is often limited. The best one does, most of the time, is to

quickly touch on what is considered the most important aspect and then leave the student to think his way through the dark tunnel. Issues pertaining to proposal writing is supposed to be taught to graduate students for a few weeks. It is, therefore, not possible for a person to do justice to the task within the few minutes that my interaction with these students often permits. The attempt is made in this piece to explain carefully some relevant things that students have to take into consideration while conceiving and [formally] proposing research ideas.

There are three stages to any good research. The first is that of designing the research – identifying the research problem and reducing this to a topic. This is called the stage of conception. The second stage is that of execution during which the research is implemented and a report is written. The third stage – that of evaluation – has to do with the scientific assessment of the research finding [often by an external “examiner”]. A good researcher must have these three stages in mind as he attends to every aspect of his work. Once a project is not properly conceived, it is doomed to fail. A properly conceived research could be wrecked by poor fieldwork. The researcher must, therefore, ensure that when he gets to the field, the right research methods are applied and qualified research assistants are used. It is only within this framework that those evaluating the project could come up with positive assessment reports. Until the outcome of a research is positively evaluated, it is a mere waste of energy and time.

Our interest in this piece is on how to design a good project. Put in another language, we are interested in how to conceive good research ideas and convince our external assessors to support the work.

Choosing a Research Topic

Doing research is a systematic process. The first step is to identify a feasible topic; this is followed by a logical review of the existing literature on the matter; formulating research questions and hypotheses; designing how the project will be implemented; collecting and analysing the data and writing up the project.

Identifying the research topic involves two related processes: conceiving the idea of what is to be studied and reducing the “wild idea” into a convincing research title. Conceiving a research idea is often as difficult as doing the actual research. Many doctoral students spend several months reflecting – whether deeply or feebly – on their

research topics. There are situations when the student is frustrated into believing that all the “good topics on earth” have been studied by those that came before him. There is, therefore, nothing left for him to study. Some desperate graduate students even ask their supervisors to suggest research topics to them. Even where there are feasible topics to work on some students think it is no longer possible to attain any serious degree of originality* in their project as expected of every doctoral candidate. A doctoral student once expressed this kind of sentiment to me. She named a number of professors who had written books and articles in her field of specialisation. These people must, therefore, have turned the field “up and down” leaving little or no roles for those coming behind. To her, what is left for the younger scholars is just to review or update the work of these accomplished scholars. This kind of thinking is misleading; it incapacitates innovativeness and turn them literally into helpless consumers of what others have written, instead of taking on the challenge of making their own original contribution to the expansion of the frontiers of knowledge.

There is nothing bad in a junior scholar updating the work of senior colleagues; knowledge builds on each other. But a scholar who seeks to develop his own original idea would always find something new to study. He could carve a new niche and field for himself if he so desires. Every age or period has its own problems and challenges

* Originality is an essential but elusive concept in academic research. To say an academic work is original is to say that the content of such work is new and not a restatement of what some other persons have written. Graduate dissertations, most especially doctoral works, are traditionally expected to make an original contribution to knowledge. The work must contain information considered to be unique in its details. Dissertations are assessed, according to their level of originality. As Preece [1996:192], originality of the work could lie in ... the amount and scope of literature brought together on the topic, and in the quality and authority of the conclusions and relationships which may be inferred. Clearly the topic should be one which previously has not been treated in this way. The writer, in effect, becomes the world expert on the literature of the topic with an exhaustive knowledge of the relevant secondary sources. This is not as unlikely as it may sound provided the topic or question is carefully chosen to be original and suitably restricted.

worthy of critical academic attention. Academic inquiries are always motivated by practical problems around man. There is always something to study in every discipline and society. What differentiates between the accomplished professor and those perceiving him to have studied *everything* is that he was conscious of the problems of his time and he studied them. He, too, had the “opportunity” to fold his hands in his youthful age and complain that those who came before him had studied everything. He did not do this: he set some roles for himself and, therefore, became known in his field.

Conceiving a research idea or topic has much to do with the interest and the value system of the researcher. Interest and values are usually inter-twined. Those who have interest in partisan politics might find themselves always interested in studying political problems – from whatever perspectives [sociology, history, law, etc.]. How the problem is studied will, to a large extent, be determined by the student’s value system. There are situations where a student or scholar particularly chooses topics that could arouse the interest of research funding agencies like CODESRIA, Ford and MacArthur Foundations. Some academic departments have funds for some on-going projects which students could benefit from. Students who choose to do their project on related project could get some financial assistance from the department. In most cases, such students serve as research assistants under the project. Some academics are commissioned by the government or private foundations to carry out some projects. The point we wish to make here is that research topics are often not chosen in a vacuum; it is influenced by the preferment of the research and the environment in which the research works.

Students who have problems identifying their research topics could get inspiration from of the following strategies:

Critical Observation of One’s Environment

The first question that the researcher has to ask himself is: “What are those things that are changing or are not changing in my environment which are of social, economic and political importance? Why are things happening this way? When did such things start to happen? Of what implications are these new developments? In the process of your trying to provide answers to these *what, why, when* and *how*, some clear research issues would become apparent. Scholarship is about apprehending continuity and change in human existence. Whether in the field of history, politics, economics, anthropology, etc., what the student is invited to

study are intriguing developments around man. If it does not rain a good scholar should be able to probe into why. Why did it rain last year and not this year? If it rained yesterday and it is still raining today one could also raise some academic questions —. Why has the rain refused to stop? What could be the implication of such uninterrupted raining? Students can use such simple questions to identify new issues to be studied. Looking around us with a critical eye is, therefore, a good source of generating new research ideas. The challenge here however is that though we all have eyes not everybody can look at his environment critically. To be able to function effectively as a scholar we must be able to critically interrogate everything that happens around us. If people are constructing their houses in a new way we must be able to say why. If young boys are doing hairstyles in a special way, we must be able to say why. If the economy of our country is not doing well we must be able to interrogate this kind of development. Nigeria is a rapidly changing society in all spheres. This means that there is a lot for students to study. The general point that we are making here is that good research ideas come only by interrogating our immediate environment; this involves asking questions. These questions could be “loudly” asked when formulating one’s research questions or hypotheses.

Critical Study of Other People’s Works

Hints for possible things to work on could easily come through critical reading of other people’s works. Before we can become good scholars, therefore, we must have a strong reading habit, and when we read other people’s works we must do this with a critical mind. As we appreciate what others write, we should be able to identify lacuna that have to be filled in future works. We can challenge ourselves to filling such lacuna in our own work.

A researcher who is abreast of the latest publications in his field of specialisation and who critically reads these works might not find it too difficult to develop new research ideas. This is because knowledge develops in systematic ways. Those who publish books or write journal articles are merely saying the little they know about at particular issues. It is not possible for a scholar to say all that could be said about an issue. The “accomplished” scholar might have said what he said in his book or journal article so well that another scholar would want to write a “rejoinder” about what the work has contributed to knowledge; he might have used an excellent methodology to warrant another

scholar calling attention to this in his own work. On the other hand, the scholar might have written the paper so poorly that another scholar feels challenged to correct some wrong impressions. He might have also used a questionable method in his data collection or analysis. He could have used good methods to arrive at misleading conclusions. A scholar could also do a paper to correct any of these problems. This is how knowledge is built upon and the academic debate goes on and on like that.

Expert's Opinions

Expert's opinion expressed at conferences, seminars, workshops and lectures often stimulate new research ideas in academics. In some cases, people sharing their research findings would state how much they have gone in their works and, in some cases, would clearly identify issues that could not be covered in their studies for some stated reasons. Other researchers could jot down such gaps as the focus of their own research. The paper presenter or lecturer could come up with findings which some people might feel like challenging or corroborating in "a follow-up project". An observant graduate student could pick up the ideas for his project by critically studying the issues raised in the classroom by his lecturers.

Expert's opinion could come, in some cases, in form of announcement of some important findings by officials of national or international governmental or non-governmental organisations. The United Nations could announce, for example, that the level of poverty in certain parts of the world could increase to a given percentage if certain economic policies are not put in place by the governments of the named countries. A researcher could design a project aimed at finding the specific ways in which the expected disaster could be averted – what precisely should the government do and where should government derive the sources for dealing with the problems from? These could form some of the research questions in the study.

Reducing a research idea [whether generated from critical study of one's environment, other people's works or expert's opinion] to a coherent topic is sometimes not that easy. Even when the researcher is aware of the specific problem to work on he might spend a complete day, or even some months ruminating on how to frame his topic in a manner that will capture all that he seeks to study. He has to concern himself with ensuring that the topic is not too long, ambiguous or pointing at any bias; it has to be sharply focused and clear to the

reader. Phrases, adjectives and nouns in the topic have to be carefully chosen. Let me use the problems faced in developing the title of this paper as an example. The first title of the paper was "Proposal Writing in Qualitative Research". After writing the first few paragraphs of the paper, I realised that I needed to focus on more than mere proposal writing. I was also not interested in tying myself down to how to do qualitative research; students wishing to do quantitative research could be interested in some of the issues that I would be raising in the paper. I, therefore, changed the title of the paper to "Conceiving and Developing A Research Proposal". After completing the first draft of the paper, I changed its title again to "How to Choose a Research Topic" to capture some important issues that I had raised "unconsciously" in the presentation. A good research title or topic must truly reflect what the researcher seeks to say.

To frame their research ideas into a topic, what many researchers do is to start by reducing the entire problem of study into a statement of about one sentence. The statement from which I forged the title of this paper is: "How graduate students can write good proposals in qualitative research". This was edited continuously, most especially for grammatical precision until a sharply focussed headline was attained. As the research goes, it might be found necessary to further re-edit the title as I have earlier demonstrated. As Preece [1996:202] advised, a title "should not be excessively lengthy; it should not be grammatically incorrect; it should not be some attention-grabbing but uninformative journalism. Essentially the title should be informative, giving a clear idea to a potential reader of the subject of the research covered, and in good style".

Structuring the Study

It is not enough for a researcher to identify a good topic, he must be able to convince himself that he has the social, financial and mental capacity for coping with the demands of the proposed work. Under the present Nigerian situation, it is exciting for a student to say he wants to study the problem of cultism in Nigerian institutions of higher learning. Knowledge is, however, not based on hearsay. The student needs to first assure himself and his supervisor that he has the necessary contacts for studying this problem. If he does not have the contact he could just drop the topic. He also needs to assess the financial cost of such a research. If the financial cost of doing the research is beyond what he could afford, he had better drop it. The

third area of attention is whether the student has the necessary intellectual resources for doing the work. To test this, the student should be able to sketch out the following aspects of the work:

1. **Statement of the problem**

He must be able to state in clear terms what the research is all about and why he has chosen to study it and not something else. Of what importance is the work to knowledge or policy-making? Is he sure of getting any of his lecturers to supervise such a topic?

2. **Evidence of background reading:**

This has to do with the existing knowledge on the subject of investigation. What relevant aspect of the problem has been studied in the past and what is the quality of these past studies? What gaps are left in the existing literature which you seek to fill.

3. **Research questions**

What are the major questions that you are going to pose in your study? Why such questions? Of what relevance are such questions to your research objectives?

4. **Methodology**

How are you going to study your proposed topic? What are your sources of data; how are you going to collect the data and analyse them?

Developing the Topic into a Full-Blown Research Proposal

Once a research idea is generated and the researcher is convinced of his ability to do the work, he now moves to the next stage of developing his ideas into a full-blown research proposal. A research proposal is a detailed statement of intention to conduct a research – stating what the research is all about, why it has to be conducted, when it has to be conducted, how it is to be conducted and what the society stands to gain from conducting such a study. As Morse [1998:68] noted, a research proposal is like a written argument [most probably in a court-room situation]. In writing a proposal, a researcher is trying for the first time to tell the “outside world” that the research idea he conceived is feasible. The researcher has to show that he understands what he is talking about very well. The onus is on him to show that the work is worthwhile and has not been done by someone else before. The work must be very persuasive and written in very good English. Those reading the proposal are expected to pass a judgment and, of course, their judgment will be based on what they read, not what they

thought the researcher ought to have said which he did not or could not say. Except in a university situation where the student is close to his supervisor or would have to defend the proposal physically before a panel, many proposal writers often do not have the opportunity of answering questions before the funding agency considering their work. These people have to read the proposal and form their opinion about its quality. Generally speaking, a poorly written proposal is meant for the waste-paper basket as this would suggest to the reviewers that the researcher is probably not in the position to bring anything good out of the work; on the other hand, a good proposal ultimately gets support. To this end, a good proposal must be "fair and balanced".

A research proposal is usually addressed to a departmental academic committee or a research funding agency. Each of these bodies have their specific requirements on how to write a proposal. Some organisations simply expect the researcher to fill a form in which a number of questions have been asked. In some other cases, the researcher is expected to propose the work in the form of an essay. In either case, the researcher is expected to express himself succinctly. Brevity, relevance, clarity and accuracy should be his guiding principles as he writes. Achieving these objectives becomes easier for the researcher if he could pause once in a while to imagine himself as a student taking an examination. What he writes is going to be evaluated and the result is going to be either "passed" or "failed". A research proposal should, therefore, be carefully thought out and must have the following aspects:

Title Page

A normal proposal should start with a title page. The information contained here should be as detailed as possible so that at a glance, whoever picks the proposal up could easily form his opinion on what it is all about. The title page should start with a title of the project. This is followed by name[s] of the researcher[s] and then name of the institution to whom the project was proposed and, last but not least, date of writing the proposal.

Background to the Study

Some researchers present this as part of their "Statement of the Problem" or "Justification of the Study". This aspect of a research proposal is aimed at providing a reasoned account of the why and the context in which the research is proposed. The basic question that the researcher

is supposed to be answering here is: "What do I intend to investigate? What led to my having to propose this kind of work and not something else?"

This aspect is, therefore, supposed to be a brief, sharp and good description of the issues to be investigated in the research as well as the major questions that the research will provide answers to. It could include a number of appropriate and authoritative references. To make this aspect sufficiently convincing the writer of the proposal must demonstrate clearly why the particular research has to be conducted. A person proposing to study the involvement of children in criminality, for example, might have been disturbed by the increasing number of children getting caught for such offences and might just be trying to use his research to suggest the ways out of the problem. To make his work more convincing, he might need to cite a few references [e.g., relevant statistical information on recent criminal victimisation or what others have said about this kind of trend]. The researcher will proceed from there to say that his own work will provide more detailed information about what is happening and what could be done about it. Some scholars start this aspect of their work by raising some policy or academic questions in the society, related to the work, which had hitherto not been academically addressed. He then goes further to show that his work is aimed at filling such a major research gap. He might find it easier to do this by making reference to the inadequacies of existing literature. He should then follow this up with a clear statement of what precisely he seeks to do in the research given the fact that it is impossible for him as a person to solve all the problems that made the research expedient. He also needs to make a brief statement on how he seeks to achieve his research objectives and what the project will contribute to knowledge, policy making or development.

Research Objectives

Objectives have to do with a number of measurable goals that the researcher seeks to attain. A good student should be able to state his research objective in a sentence or two. A long list of objectives and circumlocutions simply suggest that the project has not been well thought out.

Literature Review

Apart from showing that his work is relevant, the researcher has to show that it is not a repetition of what some other scholars have done,

but an attempt to build on existing knowledge. He cannot do this without a careful review of what others have written. Literature review is a critical assessment of what some other scholars have done or said on particular issues related to a proposed research. It should not be a lengthy summary of everything that the student has read but the synthesis of how this affects his proposed work. The review could also elicit the methodology that other scholars have used in the past in carrying out related studies. No matter the originality that a researcher arrogates to his work, the fact remains that someone somewhere must have done something related to it. It is, however, not possible for the latter to have done all that could be done or said all that could be said on the subject matter. The new researcher must start his own work by acknowledging what these earlier writers have done and now state what he has to add to this existing knowledge. In summary, literature reviews are meant to achieve any or a combination of the following objectives:

1. prove that the proposed work is original; it has never been done by any other person;
2. prove that where a related work had been done, it does not have the focus that is now planned. The earlier writer might have studied poverty in Ghana and not poverty in Nigeria. Your own work now seeks to study the same problem in Nigeria using probably the same method that was used in Ghana;
3. prove that where a similar work had been done, it is not at the enlarged perspective currently proposed;
4. prove that where similar work has been done elsewhere, it had some factual errors that the proposed study seeks to correct;
5. prove that where a similar work has been done elsewhere, it had some methodological problems that make the proposed work necessary;
6. prove that though a similar work has been done before, these existing works have become dated and, therefore, no longer relevant for understanding the social problem in question.

A literature review is supposed to be a critical assessment of other people's works; it is not a mere listing of what others have done or said. It provides answers to the questions: how important has been the existing work, what do they add to our knowledge, what have they not been able to add to our knowledge, and why? In answering these questions, the researcher has to carefully justify the need for his own proposed study.

Research Questions

These are the main questions that the student will be asking in the research. The questions should be specific and demonstrate the student's potential to think deeply in the attempt to gain original knowledge. Good research questions usually flow from a good understanding of the object of investigation. Attainment of such "good understanding" flows from critical reading of the existing literature on the topic.

Research Methodology

This section is supposed to reflect a detailed discussion of how the researcher is going to achieve his research objectives. It should provide detailed information about the objects of study – who are they, where and when can one locate them? How can data be collected on/from them? Is it by survey method, participant observation or interviews? What kind of observation methods will be used – participant or non-participant observation? When, where and how are the interviews to be conducted? How will the research data be analysed? How will the "primary data" for the project integrate with the existing literature for achieving the research objectives? Are there any envisaged field constraints? How are you going to solve them? Your methodology must be dictated by the aims and objectives of your research. Two scholars studying the same problems could have different objectives. How one approaches the work will be different from the other. The methods used by one will have to be conditioned by the specific goals he seeks to achieve.

Some research funding agencies require that those sending proposals to them should include other items like *budget* and *abstract*. We need to say a few things about the two as a way of concluding this paper. Preparing a research budget is sometimes as problematic as justifying the proposed study. In preparing a budget or a project, the researcher should simply put himself in the position of a contractor bidding for a project along with many other contractors. He must openly demonstrate his ability to produce the best at a minimum cost. He must limit his budget to the barest minimum that he truly needs for executing the project. Making bogus claims could destroy all that he has put into making the proposed research topic worthwhile. Three sets of things are usually accommodated in a standard research budget: personnel, equipment and supplies. These should be carefully specified in the proposal.

Last but not the least we have to say something about the abstract page which some funding agencies ask students to include in their proposals. An abstract is a short summary of the key information in the research proposal. Its main function is to tell a reviewer at a glance what the proposal is all about, how the proposed research will be carried out, the expected conclusions and results and the significance of the research for either policy-making or further academic work. Elmes, Kantowitz and Roediger [1995:443] defined an abstract as a “short summary at the beginning of a journal article that informs the reader about the results”. It could also be a short summary at the beginning of a research proposal that informs the reader about the content, methodology and possible results. An abstract is supposed to be “dense with information but also readable, well organised, brief, and self-contained” [*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* [1994:8]. It is supposed to be a summary of the message in the proposal. It is meant for helping a “lazy reader” to quickly form his opinion on what is really contained in the work. An abstract should precisely say what the project is about and how the research is going to be carried out.

LEGAL RESEARCH IN ROYAL DOMAIN: THE EXPERIENCE OF A FIELD RESEARCHER

O.B. OLAOBA

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Preamble

Research into legal heritage, particularly at the grassroots, could be painstaking, hazardous and frustrating. On the whole, it could be quite fascinating and rewarding especially if the field researcher is committed and motivated before venturing into it. Indeed, the nature of legal research in indigenous societies is fluid; arising from the fact that there are reservations concerning the vibrancy of oral tradition by which information or testimony is sourced. The difficulties besetting collection and collation of oral material in legal research makes it quite understandable that one might wish to agree with some lawyers who uphold the view that it is not in their training to engage in legal historiography.¹ This may not be entirely so. Perhaps, it is a way of bestowing the work to legal historians, social anthropologists and sociologists.

The legal heritage of indigenous societies quite often reveal the social dynamics of cultural values which set in motion the engine of development. This point presupposes the fact that the documentation of various aspects of legal heritage would no doubt open up an avenue

for acquiring relevant knowledge through the study of the social values enshrined in cultural heritage. Towards this end, therefore, legal research in Nigerian societies is a *sine qua non* for understanding Nigerian peoples across cultural boundaries and within the scope of development over time. It will be an eye-opener for a fruitful synthesis and analysis of traditional and modern trends in legal development. Jurists, legal historians and social anthropologists as well as political scientists should take interest in the study of African legal culture. It should be seen as a multi-disciplinary venture.

Introductory Background

Generally speaking, researchers often shy away from engaging in the study of palace culture where the best of antiquated legacy could be located. A number of reasons are responsible for the situation. Fundamentally, the royal domain, especially in Yoruba society (as may well be the case in other Nigerian societies) has always been looked upon as an institution which ensures settlement of disputes. According to G.J.A. Ojo, as a "court of justice" the royal domain, "was pre-eminent in a variety of ways."² Ojo is primarily a geographer. Credit must be given to him for pioneering research into palace culture which contemporary scholars are building upon. Before the writings³ of Ojo in this field of research, foreign scholars, missionaries and adventurers visited Yoruba palaces and they were able to give descriptive analyses of what they saw and experienced. D.J. May⁴ (a British Officer), Leo Frobenius⁵ (a German adventurer) and W.H. Clarke⁶ (a missionary) as well as H. Clapperton⁷ (an explorer) and R.F. Burton⁸ (an adventurer) are good examples upon which Ojo relied for his secondary sources of data for his writings. There are gaps in the account of the various foreign writers which Ojo, too, could not fill up is in the area of legal research in royal domain. The neglect may well be associated with the fact that the fear of traditional rituals and administrative bottle-necks in the royal domain discourage researchers to participate in the adjudication of disputes therein. Usually a select group of litigants and their witnesses along with the adjudicators (the Oba-in-Council) often formed the audience in a litigation.

This study is a testimony of a field researcher who, as a legal historian, enthusiastically probed into the legal heritage in royal domain. This is with a view to answering the clarion call of Jay Gordon⁹ that historians, rather than running away from legal research

must create social history from the study of law. It is becoming increasingly important that any historian worth his training must approach his field of study from a multi-disciplinary angle in such a way that his synthesis and analysis of historical facts would blend with the substance of other branches of knowledge. Although the historian must not be so entirely detached from his climate of opinion, the embracing of relevant aspects of other disciplines would have made his work worthwhile and accessible to a large audience. Thus, as a legal historian collecting and collating data on legal heritage, one cannot run away from aspects of training possessed by jurists especially in the adoption of a field method.

This study is an exposition of the experiences of a field researcher, obtained through visits to some eastern Yoruba palaces and participation in traditional litigation procedures.

Basically, the focus of the researcher was on the documentation of legal heritage through first-hand knowledge and direct experience. The study examines all issues relating to the preparation and procedure of the field researcher. Because the study involves a working knowledge of the researcher on the subject before him, participant observation is desirable and this is one of the talking points of the study — a significant area which usually shapes the focus and sharpens methodology.

The study also buttresses the fact that post-settlement fact-finding interviews are so relevant to the establishing of the focus in vogue. In addition, the study zeros-in on the problems and prospects of legal research in royal domain. The study ends with structuring post-field analysis following the collection and collation of oral data.

Preparation and Procedure

Preparing for fieldwork (of any sort) particularly in the field of legal research is a herculean task involving many areas of consideration. David Henige, in his *Oral Historiography* has spelled out for scholars, students and researchers the necessary rules and regulations instructive to the field researcher. Henige's book and Jan Vansina's, *Oral Tradition as History* are quite useful for the commencement of fieldwork. These are, however, general approaches to historical studies. At the back of the mind of a field scholar venturing into research in royal domain, will be to select an interesting area of study. How the area is determined depends largely on the knowledge of the researcher concerning the area. The field researcher must be accountable to the development of interest in a particular aspect of legal research and the

geographical setting which enlarges and broadens the scope of the research. The field researcher cannot pretend to know the area and the focus of the research which is the legal heritage.

Based on my knowledge and study of African law and jurisprudence, major courses for postgraduate students wishing to earn a master's degree in African law (one of the fields of study at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan), I worked out a theme of research relevant to, and coinciding with historiography. Also, I pondered quite extensively on what particular geographical zone I could choose for my research. The result of my reflections was that I settled down with my culture-area of which I am very familiar. A.E. Afigbo has identified the merits and demerits of such a stand. According to him:

. . . the emphasis on the intensive and extensive use of oral sources suggests that for now each practising Nigerian historian can best contribute to the reconstruction of the Nigerian past by working in his own area where he has a mastery of the language and can thus penetrate the thought processes of his respondents and analyse their institutions with sympathy. Some of the works produced today in African history by people who do not speak or write the languages of the groups they studied are a standing warning of the dangers of that kind of exercise.¹⁰

Settling down to a research focus is the starting point of preparing for the field work. This will be followed up with structural and rhetorical questions which will certainly convince the researcher (as it did for me) of the feasibility and vibrancy of the focus. Once the focus is self-generating and intuitive, the accompanying desirable motivation becomes so rooted in the faculty of the researcher. Without avowed interest in the focus of legal research in royal domain, the field researcher will have no fertile ground to sow the seed of analysis after the collection and collation of data. As a matter of fact, the focus of the research is the mirror of analysis and substance of the research. Some of the questions which bothered my mind included among others:

1. What will be the focus of the legal research?
2. Am I intellectually equipped to handle it?
3. Has the focus been worked upon in the geographical setting of my choice?
4. Are there enough source-materials to aid my comprehension of the focus?

5. Where can I locate such literature?
6. What contribution would I be making to advance the course of knowledge of the legal research in mind? Of course, the questions are limitless and they may convince the researcher of the social values of the focus of the research.

Furthermore, the inquisitiveness of the research, as induced by the probing-mind, quite often suggests the structural base of the questionnaire for the fieldwork. Similarly, and this is very important, the questioning spirit often leads to determining the next step to take in the actualisation of the researcher's zeal.

Locating material for mastering the focus of the legal research took me to the university library and the National Archives, Ibadan. These were carried out *pari passu*. This was with a view to expediting action on the location of relevant material useful for broadening the scope of the focus of study. Intelligence and annual reports of colonial administrators, chiefs' laws (in gazettes), missionary notes and colonial ordinances were among documents sought after at the National Archives. A survey of available information was done through extensive reading of relevant legal writings and non-legal textbooks in the libraries, especially at legal libraries. Notably, A.N. Allott, one of the fire-brand erudites of African law, has listed nine such legal writings geared toward initiating legal research:

The investigator should have a plan of campaign (which will probably need extensive modification in the course of research). His first task is to survey the available sources, and evaluate them. His evaluation will determine possible fruitful lines of research, and the end at which he should aim. If there are no books of a high calibre already in existence, the investigator may have to be satisfied with producing a preliminary statement of the customary law, and not a definitive legal textbook. He should soak himself in the social background; the fact of having been on the spot for some time is obviously of great assistance.¹¹

Anthony Allott has convincingly laid bare the guidelines for any field researcher worth his salt to implement. These guidelines, as resourceful as they have been for me, still stand the test of time. Perhaps one should say that there are no stereotypes as to the modification desirable at different occasions on the field. The adoption of a workable modality for the changing stance of the plan geared towards transforming the focus to reality depends on the initiative of the field researcher. The plan could also be modified along

the lines of change as a result of meeting with several informants on the field. Observably, there are informants and there are informants. The field researcher must be shrewdly committed to determining the truth and logicity of facts presented to him. Indeed, it is a difficult task to know when the informants are telling the truth. The pre-field survey of source-material, whenever available, stands the field researcher in good stead at verifying and authenticating the oral data relating to dispute settlement in the royal domain. This is often compounded by the awe and aura surrounding the persons so engaged in adjudication in the royal palaces.

Much as it has always been difficult to identify resource persons (such as elders, chiefs, well-informed informants and approachable litigants) in indigenous societies, doing so in the royal domain often proved onerous. What I had in my preliminary plan was the identification of known persons who were connected in one way or the other with royal potentates and chiefly classes in eastern Yorubaland. To a very large extent, it worked out fine. Through this method, one discovered the periods allotted to dispute settlement in the royal domain. Having discovered the periods, the field researcher must of necessity keep a diary of engagement and a time-table of witnessing litigation procedures in royal domain. There could be clashes in the schedules of appointment which the field researcher should shrewdly handle, otherwise there could be loss of confidence leading to lack of interest and commitment on the part of the informants towards supplying information. As a matter of fact, once the field researcher misses the opportunity of witnessing adjudication, it is rarely possible for him to understand reference to the dispute at a later point of discussion with the informants .

Keeping a research notebook is of utmost important for the field researcher. Although through library and archival search he must have availed himself of the relevant information which definitely broadens his horizon and scope of the focus in vogue, the mnemonic memory of the researcher must be well-nigh perfection. With a large heart, an alert mind and consistent reflections, the field researcher usually sharpens his focus along the lines of new information accruing from participant observation and structured interviews. Upon certification of new oral data, information from the informants are carefully recorded in the field notebook awaiting analysis at the appropriate time and level of writing. Normally, the field researcher might be disallowed from recording in whatever form (tape recording, note-writing or photographing) it behoves him to observe and listen to

the proceedings of the palace court. Thereafter he must write down the vital issues involved in the litigation. Arranging for appointments with important adjudicators outside the court enhances the quality of recorded issues through corroboration and factual authentication.

Tape recording and photography might, on many occasions, be disallowed. This should not deter the field researcher from carrying tape recorder and camera securely kept in a portable bag. These equipment must be in good working order and prepared ready with accompanying accessories. Sometimes it might be quite rewarding to play back the tape for the listening pleasure of the informants. The advantages are two fold. First, it will afford the informant the opportunity to cross-check the authenticity or otherwise of the recorded information and, thereby, make amends. This usually ensured correctness of information. On the other hand, the field researcher would be able to verify and reconcile the substance of both old and new information. On photography, the field researcher normally stands the risk of snapping so indiscriminately. Failure to get very sharp shots of the proceedings in the royal court will amount to losing the credibility associated with the live-rendition of litigation. Very few informants allowed on-the-spot photography without questioning.

The welfare of the field researcher on the field (especially in the royal domain) cannot be under-estimated. While witnessing dispute settlement, the field researcher cannot avoid partaking in the feast following the adjudication. This has been noted by Omoniyi Adewoye. According to him:

The ceremonies which often closed any serious disputes further illustrate the spirit of reconciliation that underlay the traditional approach to law and justice. They were intended symbolically to bury the dispute. The disputants might be asked to share a piece of kolanut. Those present at the court vicariously took part in the reconciliation by partaking of the kolanut too. The successful party, if he was well-to-do and if the seriousness of the dispute warranted his doing so, might furnish food and drink for the whole court as a token of his appreciation for their patience and wisdom.¹²

On two occasions, I was inevitably involved in this type of feasting. This was in the palaces of the Oloye of Oye-Ekiti and the Olusin of Usin-Ekiti. In the latter, it was at the instance of Chief Ajawesola whose wives, Moni (senior) and Bisi (junior) were engaged in a quarrel. Chief Ajawesola, one of the palace chiefs, though not allowed

to sit on the palace dais, considered the work of litigation quite fruitful towards normalising strained relationships in the family system. Hence he provided drinks for all present at the palace. The field researcher took part in the ceremony.

Since it was not always all the time of visiting the royal domain and witnessing court proceedings that the end of dispute ceremonies come up, the field researcher must ensure that he is robustly fed before commencing field work. He should, in addition carry along with him sufficient refreshments and medication which could satisfy his needs on the field. It may sometimes be to the disadvantage of the field researcher to request for a meal and water from his informants as this might be misinterpreted.

Notably, there are no hard and fast rules for preparing for field work in the royal domain. Whatever guidelines might be laid down is susceptible to change. Indeed, they are so flexible subject to the exigencies of the time and the nature of the legal research. Thus a rigid adherence to the plan for the field work is out of place. In outline, existing guidelines are always blended with the currency of events, the unfolding nature of the dispute in vogue and the vibrancy of ideas.

Adjudication and Participant Observation

Adjudication is hooked on to performance. Procedurally it is melodramatic. The dramaturgy associated with it quite often produces optimism for all the parties involved in the art. Thus for the field researcher who had been sufficiently prepared for an arbitative scenario, his enthusiasm would coincide with achievement on a large scale. A point of inference here is that at the end of preparing for field work, the field researcher must have all the energy, zeal and motivation to collect as much oral data as would come his way. There might be some preliminary bottle-necks which should be handled with care and caution. The field researcher must adhere to the simple rules of courtesy, always asking and probing as well as listening with rapt attention so as to give room for reflection. His humility towards elders and chiefs as well as reverence for the *Oba* must be well in place. On no occasion must the field researcher argue with the informants or open up a point of debate while the court proceeding is in progress: He must listen, watch and cogitate thereby whetting the appetite for elaborate questioning at the appropriate time.

I am always enthused and excited by the level of wisdom and

fair-play associated with the adjudicatory processes in various palaces such as at Aiyede, Isan, Itaji, Usin and Otunja as well as in Ikoyi. One example will make the point clearer. At the palace of the *Olusin* of Usin, all the traditional procedures of adjudication were followed to the letter. For example, in *Bisi v. Moni*, the *Oisemo*, one of the *Iwarefa* chiefs in the palace ordered absolute silence in the court from the participating audience. Said he:

Olúsin ífé sè dajó
 Kóní kálukú mómú sénu omo rè
 Ko lóni kó bá yonúsó
 Hin ò, oun kójú rè bá sìn rí ki Para'mo.¹³

The *Olusin* is about to give judgement
 Let every nursing mother breast-feed her child
 Whoever disturbs the proceeding will have himself to blame.

The *Oisemo's* warning, as observed and corroborated with source material on hand, confirms Ajisafe's submission that a warning was usually made against disruption at the commencement of court proceedings.¹⁴ My observation was that there was perfect silence throughout the period of adjudication. Law and order was maintained. Only one person could be heard talking at a time. The crowd listened with utmost attention. Even though eyes were set on me — a stranger with a mission — I had enough courage to monitor the affairs of the court. I was quite careful not to look so hard on the people, especially the parties to the dispute, so that there was no suspicion about what my mission was. As a matter of fact, I controlled my laughter and emotion and wore a friendly look. I watched the court proceedings with keen interest and with an ear to the ground to observe vital information germane to the focus of my legal research.

The nature of the dispute and the mood of the parties to it usually dictated the pattern of participant observation model. At the palace of the *Olusin*, the complexity of the dispute under review and the seriousness of the offence committed dissuaded the field researcher from attempting to record the proceeding while it was in progress. Although the *Olusin* invited me to witness the case as a follow-up to an earlier interview with him, he warned me never to be so concerned with the issues on the ground. I considered this a friendly warning against losing an opportunity.

During participant observation, it is the responsibility of the field researcher to observe the rules of adjudication as earlier indicated, and to put up the appearance of an "ignorant person" in the matter

before the palace court. By so doing, he will be more informed and ready to learn new things about the dispute. Even at the level of post-settlement, fact-finding interview, which perhaps gives room for cross-examination on all the issues involved, I was still very cautious not to ask embarrassing questions or pass damaging comments. I was still acting in "ignorance" with the ulterior motive of fine-tuning, corroborating and confirming the level of fair-play in the issues involved.

In outline, observing the court proceedings gingers a field researcher to reconcile oral data with other source material at his disposal. Thus the core of the plan for the field work, as always, is at the level of participant observation. Obviously, the field researcher cannot manufacture disputes. Litigation do not go with fiction. It is a real life situation which makes the field researcher a practical person. Participant observation, therefore, contextualises the focus of legal research, reconciles unidentical concepts and demonstrates actual life experiences as far as a field researcher in royal domain is concerned.

Post-settlement, Fact-finding Interview

A field researcher is a pathfinder of sorts. He must always look for the searchlight, cue and eye-opening mechanisms. His work is too engaging and as such he could not be detached from embracing even minute details. This is why he must be abreast of time, information and logic in a given situation. This would enhance a package of oral data for an extensive analysis of the focus which he goes to test on the field. Cognizant of the foregoing, modalities, the work of a field researcher does not end at the level of participant observation as examined in the last section of this paper. At a point, the field researcher must discover a new dimension to the focus of his work during the participant observation. Since he has no permission to express his ideas at that point, he is duty bound to revisit the area of new dimension during post-settlement, fact-finding interviews which he should conduct for all the informants, especially those intimately associated with the area of his concern.

The questionnaire prepared for the field work might, at this juncture, become somehow obsolete as they may be too theoretical and undemonstrable. Coincidentally, however, some of the questions might be fine-tuned so as to match the situation. The new set of questions should be aimed at squeezing out more facts about the dispute from the informants. The questions which should be witty and

concise must aim at enabling the informants re-assure themselves of their contributions to normalising the hitherto disturbed and lawless atmosphere. The questions, on the whole, must be inquisitorial¹⁵ rather than accusatorial. The field researcher should not challenge, in a direct manner, the verdict to the dispute given by the adjudicators. Of course, challenging the verdict at this point will not be reasonable as the focus of the researcher will not accommodate it. Moreover, it will affect the relationship between researcher and the informants as well as truncate the magnitude of the fact-finding mission. In fact, the researcher would not be one of the parties to the dispute and could not have been affected in any way by the verdict of the adjudicators. He is expected to be as neutral as the adjudicators.

As indicated, under participant observation, recording the dispute might be altogether impossible. My approach to the recording was that immediate attention was given it shortly after the court proceeding. It was after recording it in the research notebook that the task of reflecting on and reviewing the dispute settlement emerged. It was also a point of revising and reviewing my questionnaire to accommodate new trends of development to my focus. This done, I was adequately prepared for the post-settlement, fact-finding interview. The outcome of the interview was quite pleasant and rewarding. More explanations on the hidden facts about the dispute were supplied. Indeed, it was at this time that the *obas*, *chiefs* and elders gave further insights into the dynamics of dispute settlement in the palace courtyard, especially the taboos that the parties to the dispute were compelled to observe. In a nutshell, post-settlement, fact-finding interview is a means of authenticating issues involved in the settled dispute, thereby enabling the field researcher the opportunity to cross-check his findings against the background of his focus.

Problems on the Field

It is a mark of responsibility on the part of a field researcher to envisage coming into contact with some problems on the field. Obviously the focus of study must be problem-oriented. Hence the field researcher cannot avoid running into problems at relevant points of the field work. The problems may, however, be of varying degrees. One of the problems include language barrier, which, for some field worker might require the help of an interpreter. If he is lucky to come from the same cultural environment, there may be partial understanding of the language of interacting with the informants

because there will always be dialectal differentials within the same language group. In my own case, I ran into this dialectal problem at the level of proverbial rendition of issues associated with the dispute in vogue. Recording the dialect in the research notebook was not all that easy. I overcame the problem during the post-settlement, fact-finding interview. Secondly, whatever I scribbled down as an amateur was always read out to the hearing of an expert in the dialect for authentication.

Dealing with numerous informants with different outlook, mood and temperament was in itself problematic. A lot of people often shied away from providing information for fear of what the *oba* and his council of chiefs might say. Even the chiefly class feared creating the impression that they have been selling out information about the age-long heritage. A few of the informants even hated answering questions from the field researcher who they felt was a disguised government agent. To such informants, I always explained in bold terms my mission and motives as regards carrying out legal research in the area. A field researcher must not hide his feelings or keep away reasonable explanations to enable the informants understand his intention and mission.

It has become increasingly difficult, due to the level of poverty in the society, to collect oral data from the field without a payment either in kind or cash. Many informants assumed, and rightly so, that the research embarked upon must have been sponsored. Hence they would want to know the level of their profit in the interview as payment for their time, energy and wisdom. I met so many informants who openly bargained over the oral data they were to supply. I resisted giving honorarium but preferred presentation of various gift items – biscuits, handkerchiefs, wine and kolanut. On one occasion, it became quite inevitable to provide drinks for the adjudicators in the palace for the post-settlement, fact-finding interview. A field-researcher must resist 'spraying money' at the informants as the motive might be misinterpreted.

The problems that a field researcher encounters on the field are multi-dimensional. Each research environment is conditioned by a set of problems peculiar to it. Thus a field researcher should be conscious of analysing a set of problems, which, when properly understood, would enhance the analytical process of the focus in view. In short, as formidable as the problems are, they are usually not entirely insurmountable. Indeed, the courage and stamina of a field researcher can always solve problems of the field.

Post-field Analysis

While on the field, the researcher would have weighed the level and substance of the oral data in his kitty to equip him for the next step of his research. After field work, the revision stage affords the researcher time to collate and assess the volume of the oral data for his focus. The richer the oral data, the easier the analysis. My approach to post-field analysis is that of harmonising the existing texts with fresh information from the field, sifting, as it were, the grains from the chaff.

The process of analysis may be tedious. The bottom line of it is that of stating the fact in the corridor of truth. Again, a set of rhetorical questions come to mind. How far has the time spent on the field justified the outcome of it? Are the oral data collected bouyant enough to initiate structural synthesis and analysis of the focus? Are there fresh findings from the field to enrich the knowledge of the focus? Can the new findings change the researcher's orientation? What would be the shape of the analysis? Personally, at the back of my mind, I was satisfied with the volume of the oral data collected from the field, believing that quite a sufficient volume could be in a data bank for subsequent designs.

At the writing stage, a field researcher would again resume selection processes, which he, no doubt, started when determining the focus of his study. This is so because from the body of oral data so acquired, there normally exists material for immediate analysis. Furthermore, in the process of organising the write-up, oral data take turn to be used indiscriminately. Selection of oral data will enhance good organisation. This is no doubt the locus of the focus.

In sum, this paper has focused on the guidelines for achieving effective legal research in royal domain from the perspective of a field researcher's experiences. It has unearthed the procedure, level of participation and problems associated with field work, delving so conscientiously on the dynamism of legal heritage and the social engineering anchored to it. Success on the field depends largely on the level of preparation and articulation of the plan for data collection. By the same token, designing a good focus is a prerequisite for undertaking legal research. At the end of the field work, the researcher must have been sufficiently informed about the source material at his disposal, the substance of his focus and the direction of his analysis. In summary, the field researcher is a go-getter.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF AFRICAN LEGAL DATA

O.B. OLAOBA

10

Abstract

The unwritten stance of African legal heritage poses a lot of danger to the understanding of its nature and prospects by modern-day legal researchers. African legal heritage existed in the body of oral data whose basic rule was performance. Performance, which had been a key event in oral tradition, changes from time to time and from society to society. The movement of time in the performance (or dramatization of legal culture) often added colour to the interpretation and analysis of social engineering which the legal heritage typified. The standpoint of this study, therefore, is that contemporary researchers must approach the subject with caution for the proper articulation of the oral data at their disposal.

Introduction

The maintenance of law and order was for a very long time assured in traditional African societies. The principles and practice of indigenous legal processes, the dynamics of social engineering, respect for age and

seniority as well as the dramatization of cultural values can be identified as ingredients for ensuring peace and harmony in traditional African Societies. These important elements in the social relations among Africans have been performed rather than written down, which gave vent to the degree of interest associated with them by Africans. The training of every individual who was born into those cultural values was largely informal — through social meetings, festivals and dispute settlement. Thus the performance of social ideas among Africans was sine qua non to understanding, preserving and promoting them. Because they are written it, it is possible to lose vital information about the substance of the cultural values. This reasoned example has taken away the basic idea of the social engineering in African legal heritage as will be unravelled presently.

The documentation of African legal heritage started with the advent of missionaries, colonial administrators and social anthropologists in Africa. Although, in its unwritten form, dispute settlement remained in vogue; precedent would not have been judiciously used to great advantage. Thus both African judges and litigants would have found it difficult to cross-check and corroborate the substance of fairness after judgement.

The focus of this study is on the use and possible abuse of African legal data by researchers and scholars. It identifies some of the problems besetting the study of African legal heritage as this is the core area which researchers and scholars must watch out for when interpreting and analysing the oral data at their disposal. The study also examines the relevance of legal data to the understanding of African legal heritage. It also unearths possible areas of abuse attendant on the use of African legal data. The study concludes, with useful suggestions, to contemporary researchers and scholars in the field of legal research.

Problems of Studying African Legal Heritage

Originally, Africans did not conceive of their legal system as a body of knowledge to be systematically analysed and studied. It was, in the main, considered as a body of knowledge for perception through observation and performance so as to make it practicable and demonstrable for all categories of people in traditional African society. This was the nature of training which individuals in the society were expected to undertake. The training was a life-long one. Thus an individual in African society was a potential adjudicator. African legal

culture was viewed as part and parcel of life activity. Obviously, the pattern of dispute settlement in African society usually assumed popular dimension and approval. The African youth through conscious observation and experiential knowledge of the drama of arbitration and reconciliation usually mastered the art of dynamism in the social engineering anchored on dispute settlement in traditional society.

Contemporary researchers and scholars who are untrained in the aforementioned art of adjudication, and who are interested in the study of African legal heritage, would always be faced with a number of problems. One of such problems is ignorance of the basic principles and practice of African law. Contemporary researchers and scholars would normally rush to blend their knowledge of orthodox legal practice with the vagueness of indigenous legal heritage. This is to say that contemporary researchers and scholars do have a bias for Western jurisprudence. L.C.B. Gower lends credence to this viewpoint. He remarks thus:

But lawyers and law teachers in Anglophonic Africa were even more traditional than their British brethren . . . The besetting sin of secondary education in Africa is that too few children are taught the need for original thought. . . Furthermore, the besetting sin of the British trained African lawyer is complacency. He appears to believe that English law is the embodiment of everything that is excellent even when applied to totally different social and economic conditions. Certainly it is that no one who studies criminal law from Mr. Seidman's casebook is likely to continue to believe that English criminal law makes complete sense when applied to African conditions. . . The lawyers know English decisions best, their local decisions next best, and those of Africans states not at all.¹

Gower's classic conclusion concerning the well-nigh ignorance of the British trained African jurist is well in place. This seems to be the core of colonial mentality in many 'learned' Africans.

Insufficient knowledge of Africans about their legal heritage, came about as a result of the unwritten nature of African legal culture. Laws were never properly documented before the advent of the British administration in Africa. Thus fragments of this legal culture survived but remain unrecorded. Max Gluckman, an outstanding scholar of African legal heritage, summarised the foggy situation militating against adequate understanding of indigenous legal system thus:

There had been many description of the settlement of cases in general and abbreviated form, but for a better understanding of the

judicial process we needed full, if possible tape-recorded, accounts of the presentation of evidence, of the cross-examination on the evidence, and of the judgement itself, while much detail had been recorded on the minutiae of religious ceremonies, very few detailed records exist about the process of trial. But it was only by such detailed records that we could get at the fundamental problems in African law, morality and logic.²

While one might share in the robust sense of enthusiasm in Max Gluckman (whose contributions to the development of African legal culture have been so profound), it is to be noted that contemporary African societies have been riddled with so much bastardization of cultural values (legal thought inclusive) that whatever might now be recorded, would no doubt be a fusion of the old and the new legal orientation which, remarkably, affects the conclusion to the findings of legal researchers. It is, however, undoubtedly significant that the recording of legal proceedings would enable field researchers use the legal data quite resourcefully. It will facilitate adequate understanding of all the issues relating to dispute settlement and thereby enables the legal researcher comprehend and interpret the data quite carefully and skilfully.

Lack of sufficient legal data can mar the interpretation and analysis of the field researcher. What would be supplied through the oral data, as earlier indicated, can be riddled with a lot of problems — distortion, falsification and exaggeration.

The scope of African judicial process had, quite often, compounded the problems of studying it. Because of the heterogeneity of African society, researchers and scholars might find it difficult to reconcile the similarities with the dissimilarities in African legal procedure. This is what Anthony Allott refers to as "Unity of African Law." He also observes that within the uniformity of African Law some differences are recognised from one ethnic group to the other. Thus Allott tagged ethnic group with related legal models as "homeonomic."³ We can cite examples of Allott's grouping from among Zulu-Xhosa and Tswana (South Africa). Kikuyu (East Africa), Ibo, Yoruba and Akan (representing West Africa; wherever found, Allott believes that they may be accidental or conditioned by environment. From the point of view of Allott, there is not just one body of rules governing African society but that whatever set of rules are in existence, the principles behind their operation are quite identical and apparently functional on the same pedestal.

The point of Antony Allott is instructive for contemporary researchers and scholars who, at any relevant point, might develop cold feet for the appropriate understanding of the syncretic nature of African legal culture. By illustration and for the purpose of clarity, Allott's thesis of 'Unity of African Law,' may be compared with the modeling of a coin which are of seemingly related sides. By the texture, material for the model and the trade mark, the coin is quite uniform. But when the designs on the sides of the coin are closely observed, there should be conspicuous variation. On one side of the coin, there may be sophisticated designs unlike the simple designs of the other side. Yet the coin serves the same market-economy in purchasing power. Similarly, African legal culture is pluralistic but works on uniform principle of operation. The pluralism of African law, synthetic or symbolic as it may appear, lubricates the engine of unity in diversity, as it brittle with varied peculiarities. Thus such peculiarity crystallized into assimilative tendencies which became rampant in colonial Africa. Notably, there are some essential features common to and characterised by African law, which, understandably differed from western legal culture. Such features include, among others, speediness of hearing and flexibility.⁴ The plurality of African legal culture suggests to contemporary researchers and scholars the difficulty associated with synthesis of the ideas and principles behind the operation of indigenous legal systems across cultural boundaries in Africa. The researchers ought to be cautious of this fact and must go a mile further to articulate objectivity when interpreting and analyzing legal data. The pluralistic paradigms of legal culture could mar or make analysis at whatever cost.

Lack of understanding of the environment earmarked for study and language barrier could also adversely affect collection and collation of legal data as it influences interpretation and analysis in the long run. Antony Allott has identified the basic principles which usually condition legal research into customary law.⁵ There can be no better understanding of the zone of legal research than what Allott suggests. According to him:

It is invaluable for the investigator to have a knowledge of one or more African languages. For instance, it enables him to dispense with interpreters, who are a notorious source of error, and also slow up the enquiry. It allows him to sit on court cases, and understand what the parties and witnesses are saying (perhaps to be elucidated later by talks with them). Furthermore, a knowledge of the vernacular enables him to go to remoter areas at will. Sometimes, however, the prestige

of the investigator, or local custom demands that he uses an intermediary.⁶

Perhaps a more disturbing problem besetting the study of African legal heritage was the erroneous conception by pseudo-western scholars. Although it could be understood that these scholars lacked the wherewithal to locate useful documentary evidence to corroborate their facts, it stood to reason that they could not exercise patience, caution and sympathy for the nature of African legal tradition. For instance, British administrators always used their English law for subjugation and consolidation of their territories.⁷ While credit ought to be given to the district officers in their bid to record a skeletal aspect of African legal heritage, albeit in their Intelligence Report, their explanation and interpretation of the principles behind it was tainted with ulterior motive – relegating African legal heritage to the background. Taslim Olawale Elias, a leading African scholar in the defense of African legal culture reasons that:

One of the defects of the administrative officer's approach to African law in general is that he seems pre-eminently occupied with problems of criminal punishment. His obsession with the administration of criminal justice is understandable, seeing that much the most important part of his duties is concerned with it. What is not so easy to excuse is the tendency to give the impression that African law is all criminal — and, because certain criminal offences are recognized and punished by English law in ways often different from those of African law, the two systems are necessarily poles apart in all other respects.⁸

It is the responsibility of contemporary researchers and scholars to draw a line of demarcation from the truth and falsehood associated with the African legal culture by pseudo-western scholars. Failure to do so will confuse the mind of the researchers and scholars about the secondary legal data with which they could corroborate, validate and reconcile ideas and principles enshrined in African legal culture.

The modern researcher and scholar must endeavour to seek for the sacred facts and truth provided in the legal data at his disposal. As the researchers seek for the truth, with a view to enhancing objectivity in scholarship, they must appreciate European scholars whose works have been largely dependable and reliable towards studying and reconstructing ideas and principles concerning African legal culture. Scholars in this category include Antony Allott, Schapera, J.H. Driberg and Max Gluckman to identify a few. From the onset, these scholars

were cut out to make a meaningful study of African legal culture, expressing quite brilliantly the features and functions of African law which have not differed from what had been in operation in European societies. In this respect, the submission of Max Gluckman is significant here. According to him:

I have studied the work of African Courts in Zululand and Rhodesia, and found that they use the same basic doctrines as our courts do. African legal systems, are founded on principles of the reasonable man, responsibility, negligence, direct and circumstantial and hear-say evidence, etc. African judges and laymen apply these principles skillfully and logically to a variety of situations in order to achieve justice.⁹

Gluckman's thesis of the reasonable man¹⁰ had been quite informative and instructive. This is an area that contemporary researchers and scholars ought to revisit for meaningful adoption and adaptation across cultural boundaries. Nadel¹¹ had since explored the truth in Gluckman's thesis.

Use of African Legal Data

Legal data, when resourcefully used, can be worthwhile in the development of the society. Law is a functional fulcrum of social engineering that enhances peace, harmony and order. Ignorance of a legal heritage is bad enough. Awareness of African legal heritage through research and documentation often promotes its practice. The legal data can always be used as judicial precedents for other future disputes. Having this fact at the disposal of researchers and scholars would always enhance proper articulation of interpretation and analysis. This entails that the interpretation of legal data deserves thoroughness of explanation which should be in tune with meaning and substance. This will definitely have multiplier effects on the magnitude of analysis.

Using judicial precedent as legal data is a unique innovation. But it must be used in a way that is appropriate to the ensuing dispute. Thus to a very large extent, the judicial precedent which could always be legally binding on members of the society, can become ahistorical. The writer, as a legal historian, once recalled that during an interviewing session with the Alasin of Asin (in eastern Yorubaland), the royal father reflected on a case of theft involving a bricklayer. The bricklayer, upon investigation, was found to have stolen some bags of cement. Having proved the case beyond reasonable doubt, the Oba

and council of chiefs (adjudicating) ordered the culprit to walk round the town with a bell announcing to the general public his misdemeanor. The egbegun age-group followed him to ensure that the victim complied with the verdict of the adjudicators. It was supposed to be a humiliating ordeal. The Alasin affirmed that whenever similar cases were brought to the king's court it was the magic of "wayo bomoje" that was employed. This type of magic had been in vogue since the founding of the town and it did not fade out of use because the district officers had popularized it in the annual report which is one of the legal data during the era of colonial administration. The "wayo bomoje" syndrome became a moral charter dissuading people from theft.

Proper use of legal data can provide historical information on land management and resources. Indeed, land dispute arising from fragmentation without identification had always given rise to mismanagement of the principle of African sociation. In a land dispute, the legal data thus envisage many useful ideas spelling out historicity of the land which historian can use to reconstruct the history of the family, lineage and town. This fact of positively using legal data on land matters can also be abused as will be subsequently discussed.

Demarcating reasonable portion of land with plants which have long span of existence and resistance to fire, termites and dry season; had been a long tradition in Africa. Among the Yoruba examples of such plants are: *Lapalapa* (*Jatropha curcas*) *Peregun* (*Dracaena fragrans*) and *Iyeye* (*Spondias mombin*). These plants often provided physical evidence of ownership. Thus they speak volumes about the management and control of landed property. Metaphorically, these plants have always been used as physical, legally binding symbols that could stand the test of time. Thus the legal data expressed in land matters whether family or community would always symbolize family co-operation and communal solidarity.¹²

Legal data are resourceful towards intellectualizing moral code and ethics of African societies. Ideas and knowledge of African legal heritage often focus quite intelligibly on the various aspects of development in the society. Thus to be ignorant of African legal culture is to be ostracized from the mainstream of African intellectual focus and forum. In other words, the knowledge enshrined in African legal data and their applicability has often shaped and sharpened individual intellectual capabilities, social status, historical consciousness and a sense of belonging in African societies.

Legal data can also be used as anthropological model for carrying out meaningful research on African sociation based on mutual understanding and interaction. Widespread in African legal data are the facts of collective responsibility and determination towards reconciliation to enhance social engineering of sociation. Among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria, this has been articulated as the *ajobi* and *ajogbe* paradigm.¹³

Finally, African legal data can be used to reconstruct the history of family and lineage origin, and to establish code of moral/ethical conduct as evidence of land ownership.

Abuse of African legal data

Fluidity and flexibility are two inseparable features of African legal culture. These humane characteristics are, however, prone to textual distortion, misapplication as well as manipulation. This also applies to oral tradition which produces African legal data. Adefuye is of the view that as strong as oral tradition could be, it can always be abused. According to him:

The strength of oral tradition can and has often been turned into a weakness. The nature of oral tradition and the manner in which it is used positively has sometimes rendered it liable to manipulation by interested individuals and/or groups. One of the weaknesses of oral tradition is the possibility of its being deliberately distorted in order to serve some ends. Since the informant is not an eye witness of the event, there has always been the possibility of his selecting what to pass on the historian.¹⁴

Obviously, Adefuye, from the foregoing assertion, stresses the point of application of oral tradition with regard to ulterior motive. Antony Allott's thesis corroborates the extent to which distortion and falsification of fact may be attendant upon customary law. Allott is worried about the applicability of customary law to differing situations and cultural environments.¹⁵ In fact, the problem of defining reasonable aspects of African legal culture makes it vulnerable to manipulation. As earlier discussed, the problems of studying African legal heritage is that the fact that interpretation of legal data could be multi-dimensional. R.E. Robinson was aware of this problem of tendencies regarding legal transformation across cultural boundaries. According to him:

The great problem therefore arises of how to foster the emergence of a unitary body of complex African societies. Towards that end two correlated processes may be directed. On the one hand African custom may be adapted and extended to modern situations. On the other English legal principles, such as those governing commercial and contractual relations, may be simplified and grafted on to native customary law. The one should be so presented as to supply the deficiencies of the other. It would be idle to speculate on the proportion of English and native law in the eventual product. That is a question of degree. But the principle should be that the infiltration of English legal concepts should not be such as to sap that vitality of custom upon which the integration of African communities depends.¹⁶

The foregoing passage buttresses the ulterior motive of colonial administrators who set in motion the recording of African Customary law in their Intelligence and Annual Reports and then supplement them with their Ordinances and Statutes. What informed the recording of the uncoded legal data by the Colonial Administrators was no doubt, an attempt to fuse African traditional law with English law. This led to distortion, misapplication and misinterpretation on a scale which was quite unimaginable. Since that Period, African legal data became increasingly distorted and abused. In the area of chieftaincy disputes, the colonial authority mixed up African legal processes with the dictates of the received law. There were, however, sharp discrepancies between the traditional norms and legality of resolving chieftaincy conflicts in colonial Africa. A case in point was that of indiscriminate dethronement of traditional rulers without respect for constitutionality and legal norms which are traditionally binding on king making and balance of power. Yet the colonial power pretended to be applying the principles of African legal culture.

What is the likely implication of this abuse of legal data to contemporary researchers and scholars? Researchers and scholars must know and understand at the outset that the legal data should be approached with caution if they are to make a meaning out of African legal data for their analysis. They must know that legal data need proper scrutiny and critical appraisal lest the interpretation accorded it can undo the purpose of research, focus and analysis. The researcher must ask himself ennobling questions as regards African legal data: What is the genesis of the data? What is the calibre of the supplier of legal information? How free is the legal data from bias,

manipulation and abuse? How best can he adapt data to smoothen and sharpen his focus and analysis?

In summary, methodological perspective provides the fundamental fabric for initiating contemporary research into legal heritage for standardising model in resolving conflicts. It has been stressed that as buoyant and robust as the legal data may be, it has a dual nature viz: positive and negative uses, which, as it were, could make or mar its relevance in scholarship.

This study concludes that the flexible nature of African legal data is its vulnerability. It has, therefore, been suggested that researchers and scholars, who, of necessity must make sufficient use of African legal data should need to be cautious critical. Furthermore, African legal systems have often been denigrated and have suffered discrimination under colonialism. It will be the responsibility of contemporary researchers and scholars to give new light to re-appraising and reconstructing African law for the purpose of contemporary conflict resolution. This will help it to take its own place among the legacies of world cultures.

Section V

Musicology

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THEORY AND PRACTICE OF FIELD INVESTIGATION IN ETHNO-MUSICOLOGY

MOSUNMOLA A. OMIBIYI-OBIDIKE

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This presentation is in two parts. The first part discusses the background to ethno-musicology, its definition and early activities while the second part discusses its field methods.

There are several definitions varying according to individual's disposition to and involvement with the field. But, by and large, ethno-musicology is generally accepted as a discipline "having as its main objective the investigation of music as a physical, psychological, aesthetic and cultural phenomenon in terms of its self and in its cultural context" (Hood, 1957; 1970). In other words it involves the systematic study of the variety of music(s), styles or musical roles of a performer, or an instrumental repertory found in a particular geographic enclave or locale, among an ethnic group in a region or even a society.

It developed in the nineteenth century as a result of the growing interest in the "exotic" peoples of the world on the one hand, and the need to salvage the musical cultures of communities that were threatened by the encroachment of modern technology; hence, the

need to collect and deposit in an archive for the sake of documentation and analysis. This implies going out to the field for the purpose of collecting and bringing back for deposition in an archive for reference and analytical investigation. Indeed, Sachs (1962) recognised the two aspects of an ethno-musicological study: field and deskwork. According to him, as summarised by Nettl (1964: 62) "Fieldwork denotes the gathering of recordings and the first-hand experience of musical life in a particular human culture while deskwork includes transcription, analysis and the drawing of conclusions." Therefore, the ethno-musicologist is a research scholar whose main aim is to seek knowledge about music and who must necessarily go out to the field to collect and bring back data on music for scientific analysis. Our concern here is on how to execute the process of field investigation in a way that would enhance our knowledge of music and musical practices in a particular locale among a particular group of people. We shall endeavour to do this by raising and answering some relevant questions germane to fieldwork.

The first question is: What is fieldwork? It is the gathering and recording on audio/visual equipment of musical data at first-hand from any particular human culture and location in its socio-cultural contexts. Thus, fieldwork in ethno-musicology involves direct field experience with the people who produce and use the music under study. This requires special training that will enable the researcher not only to collect reliable data but also make high fidelity recordings of musical materials and performances that will stand the test of time.

Early investigations were carried out by non-specialists, that is, those without musical background from such disciplines as physics, mathematics, physiology, psychology and ethnology, to mention a few. These were people interested in scientific investigation of the various aspects of music such as pitch, sound, acoustics, scale, rhythm, instrument, or even comparison of the music(s) of their own background with those of other cultures. Their investigations were based on materials available within the confines of their immediate environment without necessarily going to the field. This kind of activity was referred to as "armchair" investigation. Which characterised most of the early activities. I will like to cite two examples to illustrate this point. The first example is the case of the Bella Coola Indian orchestra on the occasion of their tour of Berlin in the 1880s. In an effort to capture the momentous excitement created by the performance and for comparative study, Carl Stumpf¹, the investigator, transcribed the songs into western notation during the performance. It later formed the basis of

the study of Bella Coola Indian songs which emphasised scale and melody and which was published in an article titled "Lieder der Bellakula Indianer" (1886)². Of course, the effort could not be foolproof, as it was not possible to replay what was being performed and thereby validate the transcription. This was done prior to the invention of phonograph and since it was not possible then to record and play back what has been recorded, there was no other alternative opened to the transcriber. The second example is that of doctoral dissertation based on the analysis of materials found in an archive in the United States. The investigator wrote her dissertation without setting her foot on the particular soil of the people whose music she was investigating³. It has now become mandatory for the ethno-musicologist to go to the field physically and personally to carry out field investigation in their cultural contexts.

In terms of African musicology, activities were dominated mainly by non-specialist foreign enthusiasts – European traders, colonial officers, ethnologists and missionaries – whose interest range from mere curiosity to genuine desire to salvage African music from obliteration. Their interests were conditioned by the urgent necessity to collect and deposit in archives samples of music and dance forms which were threatened by the increasing encroachment of modern technology. Consequently, most of these early field studies were done out of context and meant for the purpose of taking away to different locations in Europe for mere accumulation of sources both written and recorded on tapes. Quite a number of them were full of misconceptions and recordings both on tapes and discs were not properly and adequately documented. African musicology developed as a challenge to these early activities which restricted investigations to areas outside the researcher's environment. Thus, instead of the old breed of non-specialist foreign enthusiasts, we now have scholars – African and non-Africans – whose interests transcend mere collection for archival deposition. This new trend marked the rise of research on African music by African musicians and scholars in their own culture on African soil. We now have a cream of "insiders" who study their own music and are able "to bring out in their writings the essentials of their musical cultures" opposed to the "outsiders" who are foreigners to the culture (Darkwa, 1993:2). Nettl (1976:14) discussing the issue of "insider" versus "outsider" in ethno-musicology, however, noted that:

. . . the insider's point of view produces certain insight, while other insights can be gained from the viewpoint of the outside

analyst. He from his comparative standpoint might observe phenomenon that the insider may not even notice. The outsider sees the forest, while the insider sees the trees. The two contributions are therefore complimentary.

In a later writing Nettl (1983) brought in the issue of an African researcher being an outsider to the culture of another ethnic group in his own country. Thus, for instance, a Yoruba in Nigeria will consider himself an outsider while researching the music of his Hausa or Igbo compatriot since according to him "it is only the coincidence of British colonisation that threw these people into the same nation" (Nettl, 1983:263). While we recognise that there are varieties of musical traditions varying according to linguistics and cultural divisions within the countries, similarities in musical structures based on functionalism, typology, contexts of use and so forth already place an indigene at an advantage over a foreigner studying the music of other ethnic groups in his own country from the insider's standpoint. Another factor is the internal mobility which constantly brings people of differing cultures in close proximity whereby they unconsciously imbibe one another's culture through living together. Therefore, an indigene of a country is closer to the traditions of another ethnic group in the same country and cannot be regarded as an outsider.

This leads to the second question: Who can be a field-worker or a research scholar? An answer to this question is implicit in our peculiar need in Africa at this present time. Nketia (1993:5) noted that:

What Africa needs at this period in her history, are not only collectors but researchers who will combine collecting with scholarly studies, researchers who can see the implications of what they collect for culture and development, education and creativity or for scholarly investigation into traditional and contemporary problems in their particular field of African studies, Africans in full command of the materials they collect (Nketia, 1993:5).

Thus, given our peculiar situation in Africa whereby African musicology was dominated by foreigners interested in collection and analytical study from the perspective of their own musical background there is need to train African personnel – both specialists and non-specialists – for the intensive collection and documentation of all forms of musical expressions from the ethnic context, the national, regional or inter-territorial context and continental context (Nketia, 1972:274) on the one hand, and a reassessment of existing writings

and formulation of reliable theories on the theoretical basis of African musicology on the other hand.

If we return to the question raised earlier on, we believe that a person born and brought up in a particular culture will be best suited for research work on his musical culture although this does not preclude non-indigenes and foreigners from taking interest in the music. In fact, Blacking (1967:18) when discussing research into Ugandan music specified the qualifications for those to be involved and this include "a knowledge of the language and culture efficiency in making recordings, and adequate experience in the techniques of transcribing music". He concluded that "All Ugandans, by virtue of their birth and upbringing have the first qualification and the second qualification can be learnt in a week".

Therefore, from the foregoing, three categories of personnel who can be trained are discernible: the first are the indigenes who understand the language of their ethnic music; the second are those who have been exposed to the music of their compatriots through living in an environment outside their own; for instance a Yoruba person born and brought up in an Igbo, Urhobo or Hausa enclave; and the third are those who have gained the knowledge of the particular tradition through exposure to education. The three categories of personnel identified are represented among our students who registered for the course *AFS 702: Theory and Practice of Field Investigations*. Those specialising in African music represent the category of specialists who, from their previous musical training at the undergraduate level, have possessed some knowledge of fieldwork, transcription and analysis of musical data and can do specialised analytical studies on any aspect of African music. The other two categories of investigators are subsumed into the group of non-specialists and are represented by all those specialising in other disciplines but who could be helped with a course such as *AFS 702* to acquire some measure of proficiency in data collection and documentation.

Another relevant question is: Where is the field? It was originally conceived as a remote location outside one's environment — a remote village, and an ethnic enclave where groups of non-literate, pre-literate or even primitive people reside. It has already been observed that early ethno-musicological activity involved investigation outside one's cultural environment. However, this attitude has now changed and the field could be one's own environment. The field could be anywhere one could collect data on a particular study. In fact, the city of Ibadan could be a field or even the University of Ibadan campus as long as the

location offers materials relevant to the particular subject or theme one intends to investigate or document. Thus, the concept of fieldwork is broader, and extends beyond a set, standardised "primitive" village. It is now possible to do fieldwork in one's own village, among one's ethnic group or other ethnic groups in one's country, another country in Africa or outside Africa.

II

In this second part, we shall discuss the procedure for fieldwork bearing in mind the three categories of personnel previously identified that are represented in this class. It involves pre-field preparations, the actual field experience and post-fieldwork.

Pre-fieldwork is further sub-divided into two sets of preparations: first, library research and contact and two, material needs and research equipment. An ethno-musicologist who is interested in solving a particular problem must first define the problem and delineate his area of study. This means that he must choose his topic, select his area of study, formulate his hypothesis in order to determine whether the work would be extensive; that is, covering a wide area and, therefore, would go on for an extended period. In other words, a general survey, or an intensive research which involves a small area requiring an indepth study for a short period. In connection with the choice of an intensive study, Darkwa (1993:3) opines that ". . . an ethno-musicologist who spends one or two years in a small area with few ethnic groups stands a better chance of learning more about all phases of the musical culture of that research area, than one who makes an extensive study in a wide geographic area within the same time-span". The research worker then acquaints himself with relevant published works on the selected topic which relate to the particular hypothesis formulated for existing information on the musical practices of the people one intends to visit, their history, and local conditions, to enable the researcher determine when it is best to go on field trip in the area. Library research is very important for published works on the music and customs of the people. One may find words applied to music and dance activities, photographs of music events and so on, which may provide background information on the topic.

After the initial library research the next stage is the establishment of contact with the research location in order to gain entry. The questions arising from this are: How does one gain entry into the community whose music one is researching or collecting? How does

one gain rapport with members of the community, the musicians, performers and key informants-research assistants? Even if one is a member of the group whose music is being studied or recorded, one would still have to go through the process of becoming accepted. One of my students who wanted to conduct research into an exclusive festival music which holds every five years in his hometown had to go through his father who is a respected chief in the community before he was able to collect information. The researcher must arrange for a contact person who can link him up with the people who perform the music under study. Another way of establishing contact is by obtaining a letter of introduction from somebody in authority to the person, people or organisation in charge of the particular musical tradition, informing them about one's intention and requesting for permission for implementation. In this regard I will like again to recount my own personal field experiences which occurred at different stages of my professional life.

The first experience was gained in the 1960s when I was documenting Idoma music. It was a general survey type of research and I had the privilege of a prior meeting with the traditional ruler, *Ochi Doma* of Idoma through a very good associate of his. This gave me an easy entry to the extent that when I went for the actual field trip, I was more or less a guest of the traditional ruler. I was lodged in his compound, fed and provided with all the necessary comfort. He appointed people and arranged interviews with musicians who performed their music both in context as well as out of context when necessary. The experience was highly beneficial and successful and did not cost me anything except for the materials purchased for recording and documentation.

The second experience was a complete contrast to the first one. This happened in the 1970s when I attempted to document the music of the Edo Cultural Group. The group had come to Ile-Ife, where I was resident at the time, for a performance and I had met with the leader with whom I had discussed my intention. He informed me of an impending cultural fiesta which would hold in Benin City where the Edo Cultural Group and other groups would perform and present a good opportunity for documentation. There was a mutual agreement between both of us and I did not envisage any impediment to my plan. So, on the actual date of the fiesta, I arrived at the venue and there were many groups on the grounds of a school in Benin. I went straight to where members of the Edo Cultural Group were located. The leader was not available and I had to explain my intention to the man next to

him in authority, and this led to discussions among members of the group and the next thing was an outburst on how people have been coming to steal the knowledge of Benin musical tradition. With this reaction, it became impossible to do any recording or conduct any interviews with the musicians and the performers. Perhaps with a letter from the leader of the group the experience would have been different.

The third and last experience happened recently while I was conducting an ethnographic study of the Ikale communities in Ondo State. It involved seven different groups of investigators, each with a team leader. I covered documentation of Ikale musical tradition. We had to gain entry through a well respected member of the community who was also a colleague at the university. Two prominent members of the research teams chose a date when we physically visited the community, High Chiefs and some traditional rulers in company of the colleague who is a "son of the soil" in order to make our intentions known. After the initial visit, during which we offered drinks used for prayers to the ancestors, we received the go-ahead from the custodians of Ikale culture and were then free to choose our research assistants and carry out our investigations and documentation. Because of dialectical problems, I chose another "son of the soil" who was knowledgeable in the arts tradition of the community as my assistant to lead me in the documentation of the musical traditions of the Ikale. Each team went back to the traditional rulers on matters of relevance to them. The experience was very rewarding and successful. Thus, the cooperation of the people or group whose music is being documented is very important for a successful field experience. A fieldworker must necessarily obtain permission from the research location before a study can be executed in the area and this one does through a contact person who is able to help in establishing relations with the people.

After having established contact with the research location, and a date is fixed for the actual fieldwork to commence, the researcher needs to make a second set of preparations and these include: getting adequate materials for his personal needs, finance, equipment for recording and documentation and developing good human relationships.

In recent times the field has been polluted by foreign researchers who come with grants and so offer so much money to field assistants. This has posed a great problem to local researchers who go on fieldwork with little money. It is no longer possible to do any recording without giving a small amount to show appreciation. Sometimes, some

research assistants make some demands which are not negotiable while at other times they wait for whatever is offered. In such cases the researcher must be careful not to provoke a feeling of exploitation. He should exercise good judgment in offering satisfactory reward. Other times when it is not necessary the researcher should be able to assess the situation and possibly make payment in kind.

Another way of promoting good human relationship is through being able to speak the local language of the research location and ability to perform some of the music. This used to form part of the basic training of an ethno-musicologist. Our foreign colleagues adopted this as an essential part of their training. A foreign colleague who visited Nigeria many years ago, breezed into my office where some friends were seated. They were stunned by his proficiency in the Yoruba language. Ability to speak the language would promote intimate understanding and dispel any suspicion that might have arisen in the minds of the people. Furthermore, learning to sing and play the music before going to the field makes the unfamiliar become familiar and facilitates the use of participant observation method of data collection.

The next preparation deals with research equipment such as recording machines, audio and visual equipment, and their accessories.

In recent years, portable cassette recorders are used for fieldwork, although reel to reel tape recording is best for music. Also recently in Europe and the U.S. digital recording, as opposed to analog, has been introduced. However, for us, the cost and maintenance may make it unaffordable. I would suggest that until digital recording becomes accessible, fieldworkers at our level should continue to work with portable battery operated recorders. In the early 1960s before the break-through of cassette recorders when reel to reel tape recorders were used, such accessories as microphones, headphones, cable extensions, battery re-chargers, microphone-stands and so forth were part of the equipment a researcher used to take to the field. In recent times, with the use of cassette recorders, which always have in-built microphones most of these accessories are no longer necessary. Apart from the equipment for recording, which capture the audio aspect of fieldwork, another important set of equipment are still and video cameras to record the visual aspect of fieldwork. In the past, actual filming of field experience was done and this then formed part of the training of an ethno-musicologist. Nowadays video recording has simplified the rigours of handling a cinematic camera and all the

experiences that go with it. Video recording is less expensive, easier to produce and preserve. Still photography is used to capture special details pertaining to field experience such as an artist in performance, a musical instrument, its playing position, and so on. A fieldworker must be able to handle these equipment personally rather than employ the services of the so-called professionals who may not understand what should be photographed and filmed. This means that every fieldworker should be able to operate both still and video cameras. It should form part of the training of members of this class. Other materials should include blank video tapes black and white films and batteries. After all the equipment have been assembled, the researcher must pre-test them to ensure that they are in good condition for use, test his own ability to operate them, as well as become familiar with them. The next stage is actual visit to the field to gather data through first-hand experience of the musical life of the people in the selected research location. The question then is: What procedure or methods are to be used?

There are no standard procedures in ethno-musicology for collecting data on the field. The general field methods applied in other related disciplines such as history, folklore, ethnology, social science and so forth are used and these are; interviewing and a combination of observation and participation. The fieldworker/researcher must establish cordial relationship with the people to secure their cooperation so that they would give him reliable information rather than lie to him. He should become familiar with the people through living with them and participating in their daily activities – musical and non-musical. In this way, he becomes a part of them and he is able not only to observe but also becomes a participant observer. He is able to record musical data even outside the specific study, photograph and film performances in their actual context. This is called *Actuality Recording* during which the researcher records such events of life as ceremonies, festivals, religious celebrations, etc., as they occur on the spot. This kind of recording is non-analytical but is aimed at capturing the essence of the occasion. It can, however, form the basis of an interview which is usually specially arranged. Thus what follows is *Interview Recording* during specially arranged situations when performers, audiences, knowledgeable people and individuals are asked open-ended questions about the subject of study in particular as well as other related questions in general.

During interview sessions, the researcher should not interrupt nor influence responses from informants. He should listen to them as they

talk about their music, material culture and social organisation during interview and Focus Group Discussion sessions. Analytical recording of songs, instrumental ensemble and performers, could be done during special interview of performers, singers, dancers, etc. Questions on music events, types, repertory, performers, instruments could be raised during interview sessions while participant observation method could be used during musical events in their original cultural contexts. The next question is, What data are to be recorded?

As we have noted elsewhere (1989), since African music vary with linguistic and cultural divisions in a particular country, efforts should be made to collect music and music-related traditions and ethnographic history from each ethnic group. Thus, from the ethnically based angle, data on vocal, instrumental and other folkloric activities intimately associated with music should be collected. Under vocal music, different song types and their lyrics should be collected and classified. The socio-cultural and cosmological values attached to them, theoretical elements, styles of performance and their instrumental accompaniments should be examined and analysed. Information on musical instruments, their distribution, design and construction, classification, technique of playing, types of ensemble performance norm and so forth should be collected. Biographical data on local musicians, dancers, and instrumentalists, their organisations should also be collected. Such information as their position in the society, roles in musical situations, their abilities, education and method of training should be elicited. Furthermore, calendar of music and dance events, festivals on regular and periodic bases, activities and dance styles, terms used in music, should all be collected. All data should be collected in their cultural contexts of usage and performance as well as in specially arranged situations. The same investigation should be extended to the study of musical expressions at the national level.

This discussion of what to do before and during fieldwork has been succinctly summarised by Nketia (1993:6-7) when he recounted his own experiences both as a researcher and collector. He wrote:

The focus of my field research would be on musical events, including any event that incorporated music. Accordingly, my primary data would be drawn from observation and documentation (including recording of the music of such events in selected societies). The variety of events defined in part the scope of the musical culture with particular reference to the genres and the selected items that were performed.

The research programme would be based on the study of selected topics that would allow for particular formal and contextual problems or themes to be investigated in the field and not on the detailed study of the culture of individual societies in their totality. . .

The research programme would document oral traditions about music and musical events or specific topics being investigated, or unsolicited topics raised by those I talked to.

To ensure that varying scope was given to research and collection as the occasion or the situation demanded a distinction would be maintained between "studies" and "documentation". The former would be intensive while the later would be extensive; involving recordings of the repertoire of individual societies or events for archival purpose rather than for immediate analysis and study, since the building of such an archive of sound recording would be a major part of the programme.

The documentation would also include transcriptions of song texts and drum language since these are created and used by musicians. Textual studies had to be part of my concept of African musicology not only because of what texts revealed about a culture but also because of what they revealed about the creative process and larger issues of communication in music. . .

The foregoing has also indicated what to do with data collected from the field at the post-field stage: deposition in an archive and transcription and analysis – both structural and textual – of data or scholarly investigation and solution to certain African musicological problems. The first aspect is done by everybody, both the specialist and the non-specialist, who has undertaken Course 702. However, the second aspect can only be done by the specialist whose investigation constitutes the desk aspect of fieldwork in ethno-musicological studies.

ETHNO-MUSICOLOGY AND AN APPROACH TO ITS FIELD RESEARCH

OLUYEMI OLANTYAN

12

Introduction

Before I discuss what I consider an acceptable research method based on my own experience as a researcher and music scholar, I like to explain what African concept of music is, most especially as it relates to ethno-musicology. When broadly assessed, the system of music making in any society is focussed on a number of notions. Such notions bring music into the events practised by a group of people. But before elaborating on the concept, it is deemed necessary to define the word 'music.'

What is Music?

In an attempt to give a general definition of music, the *Collins English Dictionary* describes Music as:

- (1) an art form consisting of sequences of sounds in time especially tones of definite pitch organised melodically,

- harmonically, rhythmically and according to tone colour.
- (2) such an art form characteristic of a particular people, culture or tradition.
 - (3) the sounds so produced especially by singing or musical instruments.
 - (4) written or printed music, such as a score or set of parts.
 - (5) any sequence of sounds perceived as pleasing or harmonious (Collins, 1979:970).

Though, the definition quoted above could be viewed as all-embracing, an ethno-musicological overview would clarify the concept about music according to the belief system of each of the societies of the world. Many scholars have described music as an aspect of 'human behaviour.' Such a behaviour is expressed with elements and patterns unique to the society in question. In such a case, music could, therefore, be said to be an art form characteristic of a particular people, culture or tradition or any sequence of sounds perceived as pleasing or harmonious by the society. Blacking (1976:54) when discussing culture and society in music states that:

. . . Music, therefore confirms what is already present in society and culture, and it adds nothing new except patterns of sound.

This state relates very much to African music which is the focus for this chapter. It should be clear that in modern day Africa, music has fallen into three categories as follows:

- (a) traditional or folk music
- (b) art music; and
- (c) popular music.

Blacking's statement undoubtedly refers to African traditional music which is the issue at stake. This is one of the areas of world music on which many ethno-musicologists concentrate their research interest. Whereas, ethno-musicological research approach has been found very useful in investigating the art music of African composers and of the west and also aspects of world's popular music; in actual fact an ethno-musicologist should be interested in the study of world music. This is why Blacking (1976) states that:

. . . Research in ethno-musicology has expanded our knowledge of the different musical systems of the world. . . . Ethno-musicology has the power to create a revolution in the world of music and music education, if it follows the implications

of its discoveries and develops as a method and not merely an area, of study.

Blacking believes that:

. . . Ethno-musicology should be more than a branch of orthodox musicology concerned with "exotic" or "folk" music: it could pioneer new ways of analysing music and music history.

Music is a universal phenomenon. It is generally believed that music cannot be on its own as an art without the control and the overall behaviour of people. Investigations have shown that there are several kinds of human behaviour. Merriam (1964:14), observes that:

. . . Music cannot exist on a level outside the control and behaviour of people, and several kinds of behaviour are involved.

This means that music as an art is based on the behaviour of a particular society. It therefore involves many aspects of the society's social and economic life. The procedure and processes of training an African traditional musician is not to be the same as those adopted to train a musician of the West. While informal training is the practice in Africa, formal training is mostly adopted in the west. Every society has its own conceptual behaviour and ideation. These are dictated by the culture which involved the concepts about music. The statement by Blacking (1976) is that the sound may be the object; but man is the subject; and the key to understanding music is in the relationships existing between subject and object; the activating principle of organisation. Definitely, what is implied here is that music is an aspect of human behaviour.

Blacking recorded Venda music as a way of showing that music involves man. Stravinsky is quoted as expressing his own ethnic music of being the sole purpose of establishing an order in things, including, and particularly, the co-ordination between man and time (Gollancz, 1936: 83).

Music is more than an ordinary sequence of sounds to entertain. Music, especially that of Africa, is life itself. Let us take for instance "rhythm" which is an important aspect of music. Within it, awareness is organised into periods of seasonal change. Such a change includes necessary aspects of human life like socio-economic and political systems, genealogical history and the religious belief of life and re-incarnation. All other aspects of music emphasise and perpetuate

the creative, architectural, technological scientific and other artistic values of man within his culture. In specific terms, African music is closely identified with its rhythm and meter which are often very complex.

Improvisation and form are used to a great advantage in compositions. The components of African music include speech sometimes in the replica of melody in speech-song style, pure and melody and rhythm which is closely associated with dance. This is why Akpabot (1986) observes that

. . . speech, melody, rhythm and dance are usually inter-related.

African music, therefore, is the music created, performed and enjoyed by Africans. The music satisfies African ideals and attributes of the philosophy of the people in their various cultures. Such music fulfils the usages, role, functions and the artistic *cum* aesthetic phenomena of the people who own the music. It could also appeal to non-African cosmopolitan music lovers with artistic and adventurous minds.

African traditional music has been passed on from one generation to another through a conventional means of oral tradition. The artists are non-literate but highly imaginative, creative, skilful, resourceful, and full of initiative. Many researchers and scholars of African music accept that it has an essential style which can be perceived in the different musics of African peoples (Chernoff 1979:30).

For us to describe what an ideal African music is, there must be that orientation of the familiarity with the tradition. A model has to be designed in which the features of the music would be revealed. Such features would show the uniqueness of the various music types of Africa in general terms. Based on this premise, Chernoff goes on to observe that for us to be able to describe African musical style in order to refine our sensitivity the following aesthetic questions must be asked:

- (1) Why is a certain piece of music good?
- (2) Why are people moved or bored when I play?
- (3) What is the purpose of the music?

[Chernoff, 1979:30]

These questions pose the problems of assessment of the quality of music based on the yardsticks laid down by each culture. What may be good singing in one culture may not be in another. What may be good drumming in one culture may not be in another. References are made

also to performers. Members of each African society could tell who a good singer or drummer is. They could also tell who is a good dancer, as dancing is often associated with music. In Yoruba society, for example, there are terms used to describe the quality of music performed by any artiste or a group of artistes. Such terms like *ohun iyo*, (the voice of salt) means 'sweet voice,' *ohun gooro*, (smooth voice) means sonorous voice, *ohun aro* (tremulant voice) means vibrato voice which is most suitable for the rendition of mournful songs. An artiste who possesses any of these voice qualities is described as *Olohun iyo*, *Olohun gooro* and *Olohun aro*, as the case may be.

In Nigeria, ethnic linguistic style influences vocal texture to a certain extent. Further, each musical genre demands for rendition style that reflects the mood of such a genre. Chanting forms such as *rara*, *ijala* and *ewi* have unique way and manner by which they are rendered. The exhibition of the artistes skill of tremolo, vibrato, sonorous and jocular style of rendition is not uncommon.

With regards to instrumental music such as drumming, every musician is believed to have his peculiar 'hand.' In some cases some drummers and a few other knowledgeable people in music could identify who is handling the master drum in an ensemble even when the group is out of sight of such listeners. Salawu Ayankunle, an old and experienced master drummer and one of my informants in Oyo, Nigeria, stated that some drummers 'hands' are said to be 'soft' on the drum - '*owoo ree ro mo ilu*', meaning that he possesses a skilful playing technique. On the other hand, a drummer whose 'hand' is said to be stiff on the drum lacks a skilful playing technique. Performance - compositional aptitude - is another important yardstick for assessing the ability of an African musician. A musician is regarded as good if he is capable of utilising all the compositional devices within the framework of the art, to create his music. For this to happen, the musician must be intimate with the culture in addition to his musical skill and expertise.

African Music in Ethno-musicology

It is necessary to discuss the roots of ethno-musicology in order to reveal the relevance of its study to that of African music and other exotic musics of the world. Beyond this scope, the study has, in the present time, extended to both popular music and western art music. The methodological approach to the study of music as far as

ethno-musicology is concerned is both anthropological and musicological. Music is treated as a human behaviour based on societal concept and not as an isolated art. Even though western art music was treated as 'sound autonomous,' it was noted that there is a considerable measure of the people's societal influence on the music. Take for instance the works of great masters like Bach, Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Chopin, Beethoven and Wagner, to mention just a few, which performed in concert halls, there exists a conventional behavioural response in and outside the concert hall. Applause is given at the end of each show. Non-professionals could increase their repertoire as amateurs through regular attendance to concert performances.

Music is an all-embracing art within any African society. Folk song texts, for example, have been described by Lomax (1968) as culture indicators. In African societies, they are agents of information transmission. African music reveals a good measure of the people's cultural ethics, norms and general pattern of life. The music; in the traditional set-up, is unwritten and performed by professionally trained musicians whose method of training is through participant-observation. Music is believed to be a human behaviour and the inherent heritage of the society. In the context of African music performance, modern electronic and computer generated music is artificial. Such music is not regarded as authentic. Unlike western art music there is a remarkable community participation and involvement.

Having considered all the factors discussed, many notable scholars have adopted the ethno-musicological approach for the study of African music so that the result would reveal the music as a corporate art and an integral aspect of the culture. A thorough knowledge of the people's culture leads to a thorough knowledge of the music.

Basic roots of Ethno-musicology

According to Merriam (1964) the roots of ethno-musicology are usually traced back to the 1880s and 1890's. This is regarded as the time when activity in the field started. Ethno-musicology has been divided into two distinct parts, the musicological and the ethnological. The two are blended into one unique fashion that stresses neither but take both into consideration.

Ethno-musicology was originally called comparative musicology. Kunst (1959:1-2) defines ethno-musicology as the study of the traditional music and musical instruments of all cultural strata of mankind, from the

so-called primitive peoples to the civilised nations. The science, therefore, carries out researches on all tribal and folk music and every kind of non-western art music. The study originally excluded western art and popular (entertainment) music. It is observed that the importance of the science of ethno-musicology was not insufficiently realised among the wide circles of the pioneering white scholars. Kunst, in support of this fact states that:

It is not sufficiently realised that western music, after all, is based on order forms which are identical with – or at any rate, comparable to – those found today outside Europe and ‘European’ America. Neither is it generally understood that, as far as the higher musical forms of expression of the Asiatic civilised nations are concerned, their extremely refined specialisation renders them difficult to grasp for us westerners who are equally specialised, but in a different direction. The differences are frequently felt as deficiencies, and strike the hearer more forcibly than the elements which both types of music have in common.

[Kunst 1959: 1-2]

It is very important to remark that Kunst also realised that the earlier white writers on music outside western music wrote all they wrote out of a sense of ignorance and ethnocentrism. The fact that should be realised before embarking on any research is that every race or population group has its own type of musical expression, and this undoubtedly strikes members of another culture as strange. In order to achieve an authentic result from a field research, therefore, the researcher should approach the study with a broad mind free from bias.

Studies in ethno-musicology were carried out in places like Germany and the United States. There was an arrangement of division of labour in the study. A group of scholars concentrated on the study of music sound in isolation, that is, as a system that operates based on its own working principles. On the other hand and at about the same time, some other researchers influenced by American anthropology emerged. The reaction of this group was against that of the group mentioned earlier. While the former believed strongly in the concept of classic social evolution and diffusion, the latter believed in the study of music in its ethnological context. In this case, the emphasis, instead of being placed so much upon the structural components of music as sound, the emphasis was placed on the part which music played in culture and its functions in the society.

Based on all that have been said, it has been found out that ethnomusicology is of a dual nature. The definition of ethno-musicology would now be according to the terms that emphasised both the descriptive, structural nature of the study and the geographical area to be covered. The term ethno-musicology was known as comparative musicology or exotic music. Different writers proposed different concept for the field. Benjamin Gilman (1909) declared that the study is of primitive and oriental forms. A writer, Marius Schneider (1957), states that the primary aim of ethno-musicology is the comparative study of all characteristics, normal or otherwise, of non-European music, and Nettie (1956) defines ethno-musicology as the science that deals with the music of peoples outside western civilisation. There are records of other definitions that have broadened the scope of ethnomusicology. Willard Rhodes added the music of the Far East, African, North American, Indian and European folk music and dance. Kolinski's idea is that the major difference between ethno-musicology and musicology is in general, the approach which distinguishes the two, not the geographical difference. Jaap Kunst's dimension to the study is more all embracing. He has been mentioned earlier but now he is mentioned with reference to other scholars to whom he has paid homage. According to Kunst (1959) Alexander John Ellis is well known for his two works which have remained the best known of his writings. (1) *The History of Musical Pitch* (1880/81), and (2) *Tonometrical Observations on Some Existing Non-Harmonic Scales* (1884), to which he owes the designation 'Father of Ethno-musicology.' Mantle Hood (1971) describes ethno-musicology as a field of knowledge, having as its object the investigation of the art of music as a physical, psychological, aesthetic and cultural phenomenon. The (ethno) musicologist is a research scholar, and he aims primarily at knowledge about music. Gilbert Chase (1958, . .) indicates that:

the present emphasis. . . is on the musical study of contemporary man, to whatever society he may belong, whether primitive or complex, eastern or western.

Merriam finally concludes that ethno-musicology is to be defined as "the study of music in culture." He strongly believes that ethnomusicology is made up both of the musicological and the ethnological, and that musical sound is the result of human behavioural processes that are shaped by the values, attitudes and beliefs of the people who comprise a particular culture. Musical sound cannot be produced except by people for other people, and although we can separate the two aspects

conceptually, one is not really complete without the other, Merriam maintains. It is human behaviour that produces music, but the process is one of continuity and the behaviour itself is shaped to produce musical sound, and thus the study of one flows into the other.

Other scholars like Charles Seeger, John Blacking, etc., all agree on treating ethno-musicology as the study of music in culture. Seeger is against drawing a strict line of demarcation between musicology and ethno-musicology. Blacking believes in studying music based on the understanding of the culture of the people who own the music. The analysis of the structure must be based on the people's concept of their music, he contended.

Currently, the study of ethnomusicology has, in a way, been extended to the area of art music, and popular music. It should be remarked that many notable African musicologists/ethno-musicologists have contributed immensely in one way or the other to the study of music. Areas distinguishable in the study are performance composition, music education, dance, organology, music technology, music history, music theory and music production, to mention just a few.

Fieldwork in African Music

I regard fieldwork as one of the practical activities of a researcher. This activity is carried out in the field of research to collect the raw materials for the project. Apart from this, the researcher is faced with the exercise of data organisation, transcription, analysis, description of musical style and the study of the music in culture.

Let me begin with fieldwork; the most basic of the activities. According to Curt Sachs (1962:16) as quoted by Nettl (1964), he states that ethno-musicological research is divided into two kinds of work, fieldwork and deskwork. Fieldwork denotes the gathering of recordings and the first-hand experience of musical life in a particular musical culture. Take for instance in Africa: a researcher can carry out research on Ewe or Akan music in Ghana as Nketia did. Scholars of music can investigate Yoruba music, Idoma music, Igbo music, Efik music, Hausa music, etc. in Nigeria. Different areas of music that interest different researchers could be investigated, viz; vocal or instrumental, music composition and performance techniques, uses and functions, etc.

Deskwork — embraces transcription, analysis and the drawing of the conclusion. In current research procedure, a strict distinction may not be made between fieldwork and deskwork. The two might be done

in the field of research. There was a time when the ethno-musicologist left the fieldwork to the anthropologist to carry out. The anthropologist would later bring back home material for the music specialist to work with. What was previously thought of as an approach to fieldwork is simply the collection of raw material with a recording machine. And that the person assigned to the job might not necessarily know about music. All he might know is just to record the music. Music specialists initially did not take the aspect of collecting material seriously. The fact was later realised that the ethnomusicologist could achieve more success if he would do the fieldwork himself.

Further Technique on Fieldwork

Blacking's approach has been found to be very useful in carrying out field research. He advocates an intensive study of a musical tradition, or of a number of related musical traditions in a homogenous area with special reference to the function of music as an aspect of the behaviour of man in society. This is the approach adopted by Blacking in his fieldwork amongst the Venda of northern Transvaal. The approach is in line with the works done by Merriam, Hood, Wachsmann, Malm, Garfias, MacAllester, A.M. Jones, Kauffman, Nketia, England, Lois Anderson and many other ethno-musicologists trained in the U.S. The renowned scholar has observed that the results of such an approach have yielded enormous success and have afforded us the opportunity of placing ethno-musicology on a more scientific basis.

With reference to my own academic and research experience in music, the approach adopted by the scholars and researchers already mentioned has been of great benefit to me. I have adopted the approach in my field research over the years. It has been observed that intimacy with the culture, the society, and the people's social and ceremonial observances facilitates an indepth understanding of the music. It could be said that as soon as music scholars/researchers of African origin started researching into their own music, certain issues of misconception by some of the earlier writers were explicitly articulated.

In studying the composition and performance techniques of African instrumental and vocal music, one of my major areas of study is that of the composition and performance techniques of Yoruba *dundun-sekere* music. My decision not to take anything for granted and my approach in this area of research, because of my citizenship of the Yoruba nation

has afforded me the opportunity of studying all aspects of the music in Oyo as they relate with the culture. This has contributed to my deeper understanding of the art and the culture. What is meant here is that I lived with the artistes in their natural environment during the fieldwork. I discussed with them the musical and extra-musical aspects of the art. I observed and also participated in their performances both in their homes and on out-door occasions. I joined in their performances for all secular and religious occasions.

The performances were recorded on audio and video cassettes. Photographs were taken. Sample survey was conducted in several Yoruba towns apart from Oyo which was the focus, on the ensemble and some other related ones. In order to make my desk and laboratory work easier, I organised meetings in which each of the compositions played in the context of performance were replayed. The part of each accompanying instrument was played and recorded. The verbal connotations of the part of the master drum and the other drums were discussed along with the philosophical implications. I had used a similar approach in the study of the techniques of creativity of *bata* music, *fuji* music (a popular music genre) both in Yorubaland and *okonko* music and minstrelsy music in Igboland. I have also been able to adopt the same approach to a great advantage in studying the composition and performance techniques of Ghanaian drum ensemble music in Ghana between January and March, 2000.

Equipment available for my use in the field are:

- (a) A double cassette 'sharp' tape-recorder, model number GF 555E
- (b) A handy cassette 'sony' tape-recorder, model number TCS 300.
- (c) T.D.R. 90 minutes standard cassette tapes
- (d) A cannon 'AF 35 M' camera
- (e) A video camera

Laboratory Work

Once a researcher has carried out what can be described as an efficient fieldwork, desk and laboratory works will be easier. I have always found this aspect of research highly challenging as it has to do with the organisation of the data collected in the field. Other activities connected with this are the transcription and the analysis of the music. All these require adequate equipment such as:

- (i) a good cassette player
- (ii) a good video player

- (iii) a metronom
- (iv) a strobocon
- (v) music transcription computer

The availability of the equipment mentioned above will make our transcription, analyses and findings as a whole to be more scientific, as it should be understood that music is both an art as well as a science. The result of a successful research should demonstrate this fact. Merriam (1964) puts across some assumptions. His first assumption is that ethno-musicology aims to approximate the methods of science, in so far as that is possible, in a discipline which deals with human behaviour and its products. By scientific method he means the formulation of hypotheses, the control of variables, the objective assessment of data gathered, and the grouping of results in order to reach ultimate generalisations about music behaviour which will be applicable to man, rather than to any particular group of men.

His second assumption is that ethno-musicology is both a field and a laboratory discipline; that is, its data is gathered by the investigator from among the people he is engaged in studying, and at least part of it is later subjected to analysis in the laboratory. The results of the methods are then fused into a final study.

His third assumption is a practical one dictated by what has hitherto been done in the field, i.e., that ethno-musicology has been concerned primarily with non-western cultures and most specifically with non-literate societies in North America, Africa, Oceania, South America, and Asia, as well as the folk cultures of Europe. There have been a number of studies as well of the art music of the Near and Far East, and fewer studies we would be willing to call the ethno-musicological aspect of music in western cultures.

His fourth assumption is that while field techniques must of necessity differ from society to society and, perhaps more broadly, between literate and non-literate societies, field method remains essentially the same in overall structure no matter what society is being investigated [Merriam 1964: 37-38].

Conclusion

For a researcher of African music to be convinced that he has carried out a reliable and authentic investigation, his approach must have been both anthropological and musicological. The anthropological approach which makes use of ethnological data involves the researcher

in studying and describing the music-type as a human behaviour in his social environment, while the musicological approach involves him in studying and analysing the music as an organised sound structure. The two methods have been found to be a very useful analytical approach. This approach affords the researcher the opportunity of treating the analysis of the music as part of the analysis of a cultural and social system. May it be clearly stated here that no single researcher or a group of researchers can complete the whole work to be done in any area of investigation, but the bit any researcher/researchers can do should be done thoroughly.

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Section VI

Anthropology/Belief Systems

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STRATEGIES AND METHODS IN ETHNO-MEDICAL FIELD INVESTIGATION

S.A. OSUNWOLE

13

Ethno-medicine is a non-western medical system that has its own concept of health and disease. It encompasses medical beliefs and practices of traditional societies. Ethno-medical systems seek to provide holistic health and well-being by addressing the physical, spiritual and psycho-social theories of illnesses as well as illness behaviour. The behavioural aspects of illnesses such as self-diagnosis, self-care, choice of healers, role of kin in illness, family social relationship and corporate life are vital to a successful therapeutic process (Good 1987: 22-23). The issue of how traditional peoples perceive diseases, interpret their causes and provide cure in a cultural context is indeed the domain of ethno-medical research (Yoder 1982: 1-17).

In most indigenous medical systems where cultural beliefs and medicine sometimes overlap, data are usually both physical and spiritual in nature. For instance, ethno-botanical information may be somehow practical and quantifiable because it is concerned with genetic resources which have testable properties. However, therapeutic

rituals such as prayer, sacrifice, occultism and some other religious acts currently have no empirical basis because of their supernatural connection. Studies have shown that the efficacy of medicine or magic is brought about by the Law of Similarity or Law of Contact, whereas divination as a therapeutic technique does not follow these two principles. The reason is that a diviner only observes and reports conditions revealed during his communication with the gods without causing the events to happen (Edward 1961: 127). A researcher is therefore expected to be meticulous in his observation and be able to distinguish between the least natural and supernatural acts as well as their meeting point.

What a casual observer may see in the case of magico-religious practices may be labelled naïve or superstitious unless he appreciates the symbols and metaphors of rituals. Behaviour such as propitiating some trees believed to be sacred as in the case of ritual therapies can produce rational explanation if it is properly investigated. Investigation have shown that most resources that are considered sacred and are propitiated have valuable medicinal or nutritional properties. Such religious acts by the practitioners are meant to protect bio-resources from human destruction. Banton (1966:86) is of the view that what matters is not the empirical basis of such acts but their social and cultural meanings which produce therapeutic results.

In his discussion about strategies and methods in the study of culture, Beals *et. al.* (1977: 49) observes that the only way of understanding people's culture is "to consider the kinds of data involved in describing culture and the methods used in collecting it." In order to gain access to specialised information from the practitioners, the researcher must act as an ethnographer because ethnographic methodologies are quite relevant in collecting data on culture-bound health care systems. Also, he is expected to understand the concept and significance of that "field" as a prescribed place where data can be collected. While scientific experiments are usually carried out by scientists in the laboratories, ethnographers carry out their investigations in the field where hypotheses or assumptions are tested (Olomola 1991: 77-91). In recent times, ethno-medicine has become a branch of medical anthropology which is a social science discipline. In this study, therefore, attention will be focused only on the appropriate social science research methods that can be effectively used in collecting ethno-medical information.

Field research is usually an interesting exercise for ethno-graphers and, indeed, ethno-medical investigators, because it is practical,

innovative and a departure from the routine classroom theoretical orientation. It is an opportunity for social interaction with respondents who are usually the healers, diviners, priests and priestesses of African deities, guild of hunters and users of traditional remedies. However, it can become unpleasant if it is improperly handled. In this regard, the researcher must adopt effective strategies which will enable his methods to be effective, purposeful and result-oriented.

Research Strategies

Research strategies are essentially a pre-field plan of action by the researcher for effective take-off of the project and its overall implementation. They include:

- (1) Having a pre-knowledge of the place and its people most especially their social life and traditions through available oral or written ethnographic account.
- (2) Making adequate provision for feeding, accommodation, finance and personal health during field investigation.
- (3) Determining the number and calibre of contact persons and field assistants with particular reference to their role and remuneration where necessary.
- (4) Ensuring how the research findings will enhance development rather than dislocate the people's corporate existence.

Methods

There is a lot of vital information on African therapeutic systems that has not been adequately documented, especially the aspects of dosage, efficacy of remedies and the mystery surrounding therapeutic rituals which a researcher can get only through proper methods. The practitioners are usually willing to give credible information only to their friends, kinsgroup or any interested persons who care to stay with them, share their values or learn the art of healing within a prescribed period of time. The reason which some of them often give for hoarding information from visitors or non-members are the following:

- (1) It is considered dangerous and unethical to give professional information to those who will commercialise it without due regard to copyright law or patency.
- (2) An outsider is not often disposed to the norms of preparation of remedies which he considers to be naive or unscientific.

(3) The information may be used for negative or non-beneficial reasons.

Since it is difficult to get all ethno-medical information from the libraries, archives and computers, participant observation is relevant in collecting ethno-medical or ethno-botanical information. The method affords the researcher an opportunity of participating in the daily life of the people being studied, observing things directly as they happen and listening to what people say, and asking questions on symbolic acts (Becker and Geer 1967: 109; Martyr and Atkinson, 1983:1). There are objects and behaviours that are better experienced than imagined. For instance, plants are better identified by observing and touching them as well as smelling their odour (Kafaru 1997:7-16). It is also important to observe how the practitioners prepare their remedies and diagnose the patients. Observation technique can be used to visit herbal shops, botanical gardens and traditional clinics for collection of live specimens and watching live events.

Since traditional medicine has two parts, viz: the physical (testable aspect) and the spiritual, (non-empirical) aspect, observation is relevant to ethno-medical research because even in the physical sciences where the physical aspect of traditional medicine may be relevant, experiments are set up and observed systematically for the purpose of arriving at empirical results (Peil 1982: 158). Participant or direct observation also enables the researcher to provide meanings to symbols and metaphors of rituals and interpret body signs. Some respondents do not want to be interviewed about their private lives. There are also some insignificant health behaviours among social groups which an observer must watch. There are two techniques involved in participant-observation. First, the researcher can be a recognised member of the group. Second, he can be a non-participant who just observes events as they happen without necessarily sharing people's beliefs, attitudes and values.

While participant-observation may be regarded as a viable ethno-semantic tool in data collection, it has been observed that it lacks the ability of being replicated (Onabanjo 1986:139). Because a single methodology cannot adequately provide necessary ethno-medical or ethno-botanical information, interviews and questionnaires can be used to complement direct observation (Maundu 1995: 3).

Aside from participant-observation techniques, another popular method used in the behavioural sciences such as ethno-medicine for eliciting information is the interview technique. This method

involves direct conversation between the interviewer and interviewee with a view to getting information on various aspects of people's beliefs and practices. It also enables the researcher to exchange verbal ideas and have responses from respondents directly which can be used to correct some of the behaviours that might have been misinterpreted during participatory techniques (Oyeneye and Okunola 1991: 62-76). A close conversation reveals individual feelings, mood, sentiments and it encourages reciprocity. Where the interviewer observes that the respondent is highly opposed to the nature of some questions that touch on personal lives and beliefs, he can adopt a more sustainable strategy in his interview technique.

Interviews may be formal when the questionnaires are structured and directed towards organised groups at pre-arranged occasions such as conferences, meetings, seminars and cultural ceremonies. Informal interviews are, however, less structured when they are conducted casually in market-places or along the road where the practitioners are engaged in the sale of their products.

It has been observed that the best time to dialogue with them is during their leisure hours, since there will be a few or no clients to consult with. It is easier to interview a small and homogenous group where everybody can be easily reached. Group interviews can also be conducted during the practitioners' meetings. But one fundamental disadvantage of group interview is that a practitioner who thinks that he has some special qualities and is outspoken can dominate the discussion whether he is giving his personal opinion or that of the group. In this regard, it is necessary for the interviewer to identify a credible opinion leader or a key informant whose information will not only be authentic but acceptable to other practitioners as well. Also, it is not often possible to get every personal information needed from either the healers or their clients through group interviews. It is hereby suggested that where the group is large and complex, it must be reduced to a manageable level through sampling in order to get effective responses from targeted respondents.

The interview must take place in a conducive atmosphere where the practitioners are psychologically prepared to dialogue with the interviewer. It is pertinent for the interviewee to be educated on the contribution which the outcome of the interview will make to development at both personal and community levels (Maundu 1995:3). Ethno-medical practices flourishes mostly in traditional societies where individual skills are recognised. Such practices are also often centred around individuals who specialise in psychiatry, bone-setting, maternal

and child-health, divination, sale of traditional ingredients and occultism. The structure of the profession serves as a good factor for interviews to be conducted at individual or professional levels.

Questionnaires are synonymous with interviews. While the former are written, the latter are orally administered through direct conversation. In the view of Peil (1982: 97),

Questions can be asked personally in an interview, or impersonally through questionnaire, about many things which can easily be observed, e.g. beliefs and values, memories and future plans.

Questionnaires are generally believed to be more economical when they are used because the researcher does not have to interview respondents one by one (Oyeneke and Okunola 1991: 63). But it has been observed that the use of questionnaires in eliciting information on indigenous practices is not as effective as other ethno-semantic methods, because of lack of commitment on the part of the practitioners to give authentic information when the interviewers are not physically present. Since some questions are not often answered by the healers, clients or believers during participatory techniques, such questions will remain unanswered by majority of them when they are written and posted or are sent through field agents. Aside from giving false information, some respondents may refuse to return the questionnaires. This attitude emanates from the fact that traditional medical information is precious and cannot be effectively gathered through impersonal means. In fact, some practitioners do not want to be quoted on certain information they give about their practices that are sometimes cultic and are guided by ethics of informed sources of the profession. Most of the practitioners cannot read or write and the literates, like their illiterate counterparts, do not often understand the nature of questionnaires. Researchers have to adopt interview techniques to achieve results of questionnaire techniques. The insider's perspective of data collection is most highly favoured by the practitioners. This technique is non-discriminatory and sees the researcher both as an observer and a participant.

Questions are usually rigid, preferably requiring either Yes or No answers. Because of their rigidity most questions become ambiguous, thereby producing meaningless answers. For example, if a practitioner is asked to say whether his medicine is potent or not, he is likely to say Yes. But he cannot adopt a Yes or No answer approach while trying to prove the efficacy of his remedies or therapeutic rituals. The

practitioners are noted for their rhetoric, repetition and emphasis on the general and not the specific issues while giving information. Apart from the inadequacies of such questions, the attitudes, beliefs, mood and values of the respondents usually affect their answers to questionnaires. In fact, questionnaires cannot express the feelings, sentiments, meanings of symbolic forms and actions associated with therapeutic practices. There are multi-causal factors of diseases and multiple remedies for a single ailment as well as different categories of healers. In this situation, it is irrelevant to ask a practitioner to give the name of a single plant being used only for curing diseases such as malaria or hypertension. It is also unrealistic to ask for the name of the agent that causes mental disorder or a healer who treats all ailments. Questionnaire should be unambiguous where specific information is required.

Most questionnaires seem to pre-empt their answers where they are specifically designed and administered to test hypotheses. At the initial stage, they are assumptions which later become hypotheses after their validation by research instruments. It is hereby suggested that in culturally-patterned beliefs and practices, the researcher's field experience should be allowed to guide the formulation of his hypotheses.

Data Analysis

In this discussion, the author does not approach data analysis as a domain of study but as a way of arriving at credible and purposeful information from the crude data collected from the field. It should be noted that data collected on cultural beliefs and indigenous health practices are oftentimes unreliable in some respects because of the overzealous nature of respondents. Most of the practitioners are sometimes unassuming, inconsistent, speculative, egocentric and conservative when giving information to researchers. Some of them can even give sweeping generalisations that are capable of complex meanings and interpretations. Such statements are full of facts and fallacies which should be meticulously analysed by the researcher.

In sum, there is no single research method that can adequately provide the necessary ethno-medical information. A researcher should, therefore, adopt any or a combination of relevant ethno-scientific methodologies already discussed in eliciting required information. However, they should normally be complemented by participatory approaches.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELD METHOD: A RESEARCHER'S APPROACH

O.O. ADEKOLA

14

Introduction

Anthropology can be defined as a discipline of infinite curiosity about human beings because it provides answers to a variety of questions. In actual fact, anthropologists seek to understand human nature and the broad implications of social interaction. Societies are studied at first-hand with a humanistic interest in their culture and the use of scientific approach to gather information. This ultimately leads to greater appreciation and acceptance of the diversity of human societies. Even though many disciplines of the sciences and the humanities study man, it is significant to note that "anthropology is a special way of understanding our species" (Crapo, R.H., 1993:3). Anthropology is, therefore, a diverse subject that enriches information and knowledge of human existence.

With the above introduction, therefore, this paper focuses on anthropological field methods with particular emphasis on the researcher's approach and experience in social and cultural anthropological

studies. In this study, the researcher worked on a comparative study of two most popular divination systems (Ifa and *Yanrin-tite*)* as practised among the Yoruba *babalawo* and Muslim Alfas in Ibadan, Nigeria. The theoretical framework adopted in this study will be elaborated presently.

Theoretical Framework of Anthropology Research

Interest in the origins and evolutionary development of man and his institutions was the beginning of social cultural anthropology. Early, anthropological research works therefore focussed on the evolution of human institutions with particular emphasis on the human family (Darwin, 1859). Notably, Morgan (1877) and Tylor (1871) attempted to explain the evolution of world societies in terms of evolutionary trends. Hence, they were tagged “unilineal evolutionists” and “fathers of anthropology”.

In order to elaborate their evolutionary theories, these early scholars needed information not only on their own societies but also on as many of world societies as possible. However, many of them did not personally gather information in the field, but rather relied on the reports of others who had had experiences in various parts of the world. These include reports from traders, missionaries, education officers and explorers. Some of the reports, however, are unreliable due to racial and class discrimination, bias and the pre-conceived ideas and notions of those collectors. Arising from such field reports, many early anthropologists were termed “arm-chair anthropologists”.

By the end of the nineteenth century, there was a reaction against the practices of these ‘arm-chair anthropologists’ and criticisms have been made that sources of data used by these anthropologists were seen to be too selective in their choice of data and that they selected these information that promoted their own hypotheses. Opinions therefore grew that anthropologists should gather much more reliable data on the world societies and that each anthropologist should endeavour to study other cultures apart from his own. Consequently, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the then western anthropologists started collecting data on non-western societies. For instance, scholars like Rivers (1906) worked among the Todas of southeast Asia, while Franz Boas (1929) did his fieldwork among the Indians of North America. Malinowski (1929) also worked among the Trobriand Islanders of eastern New Guinea in the Pacific. In like manner, African indigenous anthropologists are now embarking on

ethnographic studies for proper understanding of various societies in Africa or outside the continent.

This researcher's experience is worth remarking on. Field investigation was used in addition to the literary data collected. Field research is necessary for confirmation and validation of the pre-recorded texts used by this researcher. Several research methods centering on fieldwork among selected areas or groups of people have been adopted. These are being used by anthropologists and sociologists up till today. It is worthy of remark that fieldwork is believed to be the best method for an in-depth study of economic, religious, cultural and philosophical lives of specific peoples (Giddens, 1889).

Preparations for the Field

The field, in most cases, is a remote location outside one's environment. Originally, it was taken to be the researcher's environment, but later the field of research was taken to be anywhere depending on the researcher's scope of work. The field of research being cited here by the researcher is confined to Ibadan and its environs. The choice of Ibadan for the research was not accidental but was based on some potent and cogent reasons. The first reason advanced for the choice is that Ibadan is a very densely populated city which is home to many immigrants from all walks of life, particularly people from other Yoruba sub-groups, who are the focus of this study. Furthermore, it is assumed that the population of Ibadan is adequately representative of Yoruba culture. Finally, it is observed that the two divination systems being studied and compared are the most popular among the people.

According to Okpewho (1989:2), "Fieldwork need mean no more, of course, than investigation and data collection in a specific area of study". After the proposal for this fieldwork had been prepared and the goal of the research determined, this writer decided to embark on the research. This is in harmony with the general advise by scholars that any researcher who intends to embark on fieldwork in anthropological studies should do so preferably in his immediate community or within a community where he would feel at home and would not encounter much of the problems of communication with his informants. This is necessary because many researchers sometimes find themselves in unhealthy and unfriendly situations outside their familiar culture. Therefore, it is usually more comfortable and easier when a researcher works within a community whose language he understands and can

speak. However, if it becomes mandatory for any anthropologist to carry out a research work in a 'foreign' community, ideally, he should steep himself deeply in the language and behaviour of the people he is studying. He should learn not only the language but also think of the world in the way his informants do.

A scholar embarking on a field research in anthropology or a related discipline has to do some preliminary planning. He has to conceptualise his topic and get a clear idea of the study area. Some topics which are too wide may pose insurmountable problems, while some may be too narrow to give reliable findings at the end.

A researcher is also expected to read some available and relevant texts on the topic of focus before going to the field. He must focus attention across and beyond the culture into which he is researching. If he is an indigene of the community and has lived therein for a long time, he should be very careful in his evaluation. He should not be tempted that he has known all or much of his people's cultural life and historical background. He has to realise that most of the sources — the inter-relations and the import of the various facets of that culture — may never be accessible to him.

A researcher may also go further to read some available reports of even amateur researchers and journalists as well as any relevant official documents to broaden his horizon and to validate the researcher's investigations. In this case, a number of publications were critically read by this researcher before embarking on the fieldwork and these proved to be relevant materials for the final write-up.

Another remarkable stage is to look for rapport. In some cases, relations and friends may be of assistance. Some of my friends and relations served as rapporteur in this fieldwork. They often introduced some of my informants to me and this afforded me greater opportunities to interact freely with the people. Occasionally, leaders or influential persons (chief, *oba*, community leader, etc.) were of help.

Lastly, a serious researcher has to ensure that he is equipped with the right tools for fieldwork. These include pens, note-books, audio-visual materials like tape recorder and video tapes, camera, etc. The most basic of all these equipment is a portable cassette recorder and a researcher who cannot afford this is, simply, not qualified to venture into fieldwork (Okpewho, 1989:9). This signifies that the use of a cassette recorder is highly essential in fieldwork. The basic research methods used in this fieldwork are interviews and participant observation and these shall be discussed below.

Interviews

A fieldworker is expected to do some interviewing during the early part of his field experience. These interviews should normally be quite open-ended and minimally structured. The informant should not be discouraged from veering off the interviewer's questions if the interviewer hopes to collect valuable information coming up in areas outside his knowledge. In fact, the right attitude of a field researcher should be to enter a field with no pre-conceived notion or bias. It is left to the community members or practitioners to teach him their culture or beliefs. The most common analogy is that the fieldworker enters the community under study as if he were a new-born baby, and during the course of his fieldwork, the community socialises him in the ways of its culture just as it socialises its own children.

In this research, structured, unstructured and oral interviews were conducted with priests and practitioners of Ifa and *Yaurin-tite* in Ibadan and environs. Other relevant information on the subject were sought from well-informed traditionalists, especially worshippers of other primordial deities like Sango, Obatala, Osun and Yemoja. In all the interviews, open-ended and informal interviewing schedules were adopted. This gave my respondents the freedom, courage and opportunities to express their views and, moreover, the adoption of the open-ended interviewing method certainly yielded rich information on the subject focused.

Typical oral interviewing method was adopted by Malinowski (1929) though this did not originate from him. Like others before him, Malinowski put the technique to original use. He conducted interviews with the appropriate key informants focusing on such topics as technology and economic organisation, religion and magic, political and judicial organisations, family and kinships, etc. Those interviews were probably informal, that is, he did not go about applying standardised questionnaire to his informants – the Trobrinad Islanders. Malinowski's immediate goal was to gather information on all aspects of their socio-cultural life, and eventually to abstract from this abundance of information what he termed the "skeleton" of social life. These goals hint at what were to become major themes in anthropology in later years. One of these themes was a holistic orientation which upholds the society as a complex whole. Related to this holistic orientation in anthropology has been an emphasis on understanding the inter-relationships among the various aspects of culture and social behaviour. In a nutshell, it should be stated that Malinowski's

significant contribution to fieldwork techniques in anthropology has been quite noteworthy (See Evans-Pritchard, 1982).

Fieldwork for the current research started in November 1991 and ended in May 1995. Most of my respondents were discovered by a kind of snowball sampling method whereby when one diviner had been found and interviewed in a certain compound, he was asked about others practising in the area. Furthermore, the central shrine or temple where *Ifa* devotees and other traditional religious worshippers hold their weekly, annual and/or occasional congregational meetings at Oja-'ba, Ibadan was visited. Here, many of the *babalawos* in Ibadan area were introduced to me and their places of residence described. In this case, an eventual wide sweep of Ibadan area was accomplished. Within this period, a total number of 265 *babalawos* and 112 *alfas* were interviewed. The wide gap in the two numbers of respondents was basically due to the fact that there were exceedingly more *babalawo* in Ibadan than *alfa*. Another reason that can be attributed to this gap is that *Yanrin-tite* is not generally approved of among Muslims in recent times. Hence, some diviners who engaged in the practice did their work secretly and sometimes refused to respond to my interviews.

Of the 265 *babalawos* interviewed, 193 (or 72.8%) claimed to be of Ibadan descent, while 72 (or 27.2%) migrated from other parts of the Oyo - Yoruba sub-group. As regards the Muslim diviners practising *Yanrin-tite*, 82 (or about 75%) claimed to be indigenes of Ibadan while 30 (or about 25%) were from other parts of Yorubaland. The diviners who migrated from other Yoruba sub-groups to Ibadan claimed that they did so because of the high population density which made their profession more lucrative in the city.

Participant Observation

The best approach to fieldwork is through participant observation. This helps to break barriers and make the atmosphere thoroughly relaxed and communal. Participant observation method is normally associated with research in anthropology and the tradition is to study human groups or societies in their various social contexts. This implies that data is collected by actually staying with the society whereby an anthropologist makes direct observations on a first-hand basis. By doing this, a researcher studies the community in the proper sense of it. He stands like an observer by living among the people and interacting with them on a daily basis. In some cases, the researcher may seek to become a full-time member of the society being studied.

Malinowski's most significant contribution to anthropological field-work is worthy of remark. He was the first anthropologist to live in the midst of the indigenous people (i.e., the Trobriand Islander) because he actually moved and lived in the midst of the community he was studying. Malinowski points out that it is only by this technique that one can discover the multitudes of ordinary habits and behaviours of the daily round of life which he terms "the imponderability of actual life and typical behaviour" (Malinowski, 1922). Issues like the routine of a man's working day, manner of taking food or taking care of the body and the tone of conversations among friends and relations may seem trivial, but for the anthropologist trying to gain an understanding of a society, these are important forms of data. Malinowski, reiterates that data collected through participant observation approach gives the ethnographer insights into the emotional and expressive aspects of a society.

Participant observation as a means of gathering data has a long history in anthropological research. It has been used by researchers through time with widely differing theoretical frameworks. Conversely, it is a research technique which has been adapted to meet the requirements of social and cultural anthropologists and also sociologists with various views on the nature of social reality (Haralambos and Heald, 1980).

From the experience of the current researcher, it is pertinent to point out that the collection of data through oral interview discussed earlier and the use of divination texts are not sufficient for a study of that nature and magnitude. Therefore, data were also collected through personal observation of ceremonies and rituals. On several occasions, I had to present myself to practitioners as a client. This was to enable me ask both the diviners and real clients certain searching questions. Sometimes, however, neither the diviner nor their clients agreed to discuss what they considered confidential or personal.

I have also had the opportunity on several occasions to participate as observers of the practitioners in some of their periodic rituals and festivities. This method indeed paved way for better understanding of the processes. Occasionally, I joined them in their worship and funeral rituals in order to lay my hands on some pieces of first-hand information. Furthermore, I sometimes watched the processes of divination and later asked searching questions from both the diviners and their clients.

In outline, participant observation on the part of an anthropologist studying a foreign culture helps him to gain entry into the culture and

develop rapport with its members. This increased rapport pays off in increased co-operation of community or group members with the anthropologists in other aspects of his field research.

Finally, participant observation provides an important cross-check of data collected during interviews. It can also help to overcome two limitations associated with interviews. The first limitation is that the person being interviewed about a particular event or institution may present an idealised picture of it, often to put himself or others in a flattering of it, or to avoid mentioning the fact which he felt might embarrass the community. In this case, participant observation can point out social realities that are at variance with the idealised account of the interview. Also, there often occur steps in standardised events such as marriage and funeral ceremonies that are well known and are taken for granted by a person being interviewed. In this case, participant observation is valuable in the authentication of facts.

Standardised Questionnaire

During the later stage of his research work, the fieldworker will rely more heavily on structured interviews with what he has learned to be reliable key information on selected topical areas. He therefore begins to fill in the details on the above-mentioned outlines. At this point, he is more likely to directly record the interview or information he is getting, either in written form or with a tape-recorder. During the early stages, it may even be more diplomatic not to record the informants' material in his presence, but commit it into memory, and later write it down as soon as one is alone.

The standardised questionnaire was not put to much use by anthropological fieldworkers until the 1950s and it is still not employed by many anthropologists. One important reason for this is the type of community focussed by the anthropologist. The standardised questionnaire schedule which can be statistically tabulated is a good instrument for obtaining information from a representative sample of a large, heterogeneous society.

If such a question is used, however, this may most often be done near the end of the field research period as a check on the qualitative data the fieldworker has collected. One argument which the anthropologist often has with the sociologist is that the latter is in too much of a hurry to rush in with his questionnaire. The anthropologist's point is that a great deal of qualitative information gathering needs to be done before a questionnaire is prepared and administered

in order to know which are the most meaningful questions to ask in the society under study. This lends credence to the anthropologist's attitude that one should enter the field with a minimum of prior assumption (Haralambos and Heald, 1980:511- 515).

Having taken all the above precursors in my field research, I was able to submit that the study has, in no small measure, provided new information and shed more light on the origin and processes of Ifa and *Yanrin-tite* divination systems among the Oyo - Yoruba of Nigeria. It has also highlighted the symbolic and philosophical values inherent in the systems.

Use of Tape-Recorder, Cameras and Films or Video-Tapes

The tape-recorder is a technical aid used by the anthropologist on the field. It is useful not only for interviews but also for recording texts such as myths, legends, poetry, folktales, local music, etc. Other technical aids used are cameras (for taking photographs) and films. Of these two, cameras have been far more utilised. If, as many western anthropologists believe, an essential task of anthropology is the translation of a culture into terms recognisable to members of other cultures, then, photographs illustrating such cultures are an effective aid in this job of translation. Films, and more recently, video tapes, are potentially valuable in this regard. They are especially very useful in conveying the emotional tone of a society, which may often be difficult to put into words. Unfortunately, films and film equipment are very expensive and the film making process can be time consuming. Furthermore, most anthropologists lack the expertise needed to effectively record films. This notwithstanding, more anthropologists are now using films through the provisions from established cultural agencies.

Network Analysis

Network analysis takes account of the fact that the anthropologist is not equipped to research the social structure of a large, heterogeneous urban centre. Rather, the approach here is to focus on the social networks among friends, kinsmen and workmates in the urban situation, and try to determine the ways in which these networks influence the behaviour of their members. The social network approach has been put to the greatest use in Central African urban centres by a group of anthropologists known as the "Manchester School" - they are men like A.L. Epstein (1967), Mitchel and Bruce Kapferer (1966).

It is noteworthy that anthropologists doing urban research are more likely to make use of social surveys which are capable of producing results stable in quantitative terms than their rural counterparts. This is to be expected, given the large-scale heterogeneous nature of the urban centre. Even though the urban anthropologist may employ research assistants to administer questionnaires as one aspect of his field research he will almost always be spending a large portion of his fieldwork period conducting research on his own in the city, using the time-honoured tools of participant observation and personal interviewing.

Problems Besetting Fieldworker and Some Suggested Solutions

Anthropologists and other research scholars usually encounter problems on the field. These problems may be simple or complex. For instance, a common problem usually faced by scholars who embark on divination practices or similar research works may rest on how to validate or authenticate the information collected. While some people outside the field hold the view that the art is pseudo-scientific or has no scientific base and/or proof, others hold tenaciously to the conviction that it is one of the most authentic and reliable ways of communicating with the metaphysical and the spiritual worlds.

It is unfortunate that scholars are yet to prove scientifically the potency and reliability of the art of divination. It is also sad to note that scholars in this field of study are very few. These problems may be as a result of the complex nature of the research and the huge financial commitments involved. Problems confronting an anthropologist in the field are usually routine in nature because the solution to one leads to another which may even be more complex. Hence, field research is an entangled forest of ideas.

Another significant problem is the fact that most of the practices and procedures studied are shrouded in secrecy probably due to their involvement with the spiritual and the mundane worlds of men. Such secret ways and activities of practitioners often pose great problems to scholars and laymen.

Some anthropological fieldwork may be risky. For instance, an anthropologist studying a delinquent gang might be seen as police informant and might consequently become unwittingly embroiled in conflicts with rival groups. If a field researcher meets with such suspicion, sometimes, such fieldwork may be jettisoned.

The issue of secrecy apart, the problem facing a researcher who has a different religious background or belief are enormous. It may look absurd that some traditionalists often assume that one comes to ridicule their indigenous faith or render the practitioners impotent of their religious knowledge. Thus, Bertsch (1986:397) states that;

A traditional person does not trust others, especially if they come from beyond the immediate circle of friends or kin groups; strangers are to be suspected, not dealt with openly. Relations going in the opposite direction are also difficult because a traditional person lacks the ability to empathise with others, to put himself in their position and to imagine how the world looks from their vantage point. . .

The above submission makes it imperative for any researcher, particularly in the field of anthropological studies, to be very cautious and to equip himself with necessary tools. Not only this, the anthropologist should be adequately prepared before he sets in for a research trip.

Furthermore, it needs to be emphasised that some types of fieldwork which involve the researcher's participations in ritual ceremonies are sometimes quite dangerous. My experience with some *babalawo* and a few Muslim diviners confirms this assertion. Some of the diviners saw me as an intruder who had come to 'steal' their knowledge. Their mood and responses to questions showed that they were not ready to co-operate. This notwithstanding, there are some diviners who are much more enlightened and are ready to supply useful information. Some even showed hospitality by offering some light refreshments and gifts.

Feeling of loneliness sometimes poses psychological problems to a researcher. This is because it is not always easy to fit in quickly into a society or a group of community which one does not originally belong. But gradually, this problem will disappear. Occasionally, an anthropologist or any other scholar may face the problem of being frustrated constantly for the fact that members of the groups being studied may be reluctant to respond to questions or refuse to talk about themselves probably for personal reasons. With patience and perseverance, most of these problems will be surmounted. The people who had earlier proved to be rigid or conservative in their behaviour may become more friendly and accommodating.

More importantly, language barrier is often inimical to a meaningful research effort. For instance, the language of divination as can

be observed in Ifa literary corpus is technical, symbolic and archaic. Also, most of the Ifa texts are full of poetic renditions and symbolic expressions which are sometimes difficult to interpret or decipher. In this case, a researcher has to employ the services of interpreters in order to make a reliable translation of the informants' submissions.

In this particular research work, the research had to make use of some pre-recorded texts of Ifa corpus and complement them with some other newly collected Ifa poems. Some Arabic divination texts collected from notable Muslim diviners were acquired and used. These were painstakingly transcribed, translated into Yoruba and re-translated into English before analysing their contents for necessary comparison with the Ifa divination texts. The translation of the Arabic texts were done by competent and professional Arabic translators and interpreters. Meanwhile, the problems being faced by the researcher are numerous but not insurmountable.

Comments and Suggestions for Contemporary Anthropologists

Despite the changing emphasis in anthropological concerns and research strategies, anthropological research still retains much of its 'intimate' character. The nature of field research in anthropology still remains a distinctive hallmark to many other disciplines.

It is obvious that the anthropologist researching his own culture does not have to face many of the problems that beset the anthropologist who is studying a foreign culture. He already knows the language, he is an "insider" and so does not have to overcome the initial suspicions of the community to well-wish the same degree, and he already shares the emotional and thought processes of the community. By and large, the use of participant observation does not offer the same rewards to the indigenous anthropologist as it does to the foreign anthropologist.

Regarding the participant observation technique as an alternation between involvement and detachment from the research community, this is more natural and easily accomplished by the anthropologist studying his own society. Conversely, it is in the area of detachment in which the anthropologist sits back and attempts to record and analyse his research findings with greater objectivity. There are, however, certain problems which the indigenous anthropologist have to face. At a very practical level, there are often sensitive areas in a community, such as chieftaincy or boundary issues, which form part of the data of

community social relations. The foreign anthropologist is not a permanent member of the community he studies and therefore will not feel deterred from including such data in his records and write-ups. The indigenous anthropologist is such a permanent member, and may feel greatly tempted either to cover up such material, or present only evidence that favours his own part of the community's viewpoint. In either case, this is the evidence of distorting the reality of the situation.

There is also a more subtle issue associated with this detachment. The analogy, again, is the child about to be socialised. The point of this attitude is to produce a record of that society that is as objective as possible. This attitude is a more difficult one for the indigenous anthropologist to maintain than it is for the foreign anthropologist, merely because the indigenous anthropologist cannot help but feel that he already "knows" his society. He has, in fact, been a participant observer. Previously, he had been a layman participant observer, not a professional participant observer.

If the indigenous anthropologist does not strive to be aware of his pre-conceived assumptions about his society and subsequently try to rid himself of this, he is in danger of inserting distortions not only into his participant observation but also into his interviews.

In sum, the African anthropologist studying his own community has some great advantages over the foreign researcher. He should, however, be aware of some potential pitfalls inherent in his position. It should also be noted that the African anthropologist is not restricted to studying his own community or society. Notable examples of Nigerian anthropologists who have done fieldwork in the United States are Victor Uchendu who did his research with the Navajo Indians and John Ogbu who did his own with American schoolchildren.

Indeed, a sermon that anthropology has long preached is that there should be increased understanding and tolerance among the world societies in regard to each other's cultures. Nigerian anthropologists should therefore play a leading role in increasing such understanding and tolerance among Nigeria's ethnic groups.

ARABIC DATA AND FIELD INVESTIGATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF A NIGERIAN SCHOLAR

JIMOH, I.A.

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Introduction

Arabic is one of the major languages through which African culture has been transmitted from generation to generation in Nigeria as well as in other parts of the world. The original speakers of the language are the Arabs. Apart from early trade contact, the main significant contact of Nigerians with Arab culture is through their exposure to Islam and to the corpus of Arabic texts which are full of rich literature and culture. At the head of these literature texts is the glorious Qur'an, the scripture and primary source of Islam.

Many uses that Arabic served are noted in the variety of literacy forms employed by religious and political leaders during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Nigeria. These include governmental and administrative correspondence and directives, books and pamphlets on politics and propaganda, historical treatises, poetry, and a wide range of religious and didactic literatures. All these sources constitute an essential mine of information on African history and culture.

Ideally, clues to research problems revolved round the process of fieldwork, otherwise known as field investigation. Henige (1982:23) describes the process as a tripartite affair which involves preparation, collection of the basic data and their organisation into wider interpretative and analytical studies.

Language barrier often poses a serious threat to research. A researcher that does not understand a particular language may be self-constrained to embark on studies whose data are mainly documented in the language. Written sources in Arabic are not an exception. Consequently, many researchers avoid these materials during the course of their studies even if they are central to them.

As rightly observed by Rummel, Francis, I. And Ballaine, W.C. (1963:17-42), availability of relevant source materials, whether written or oral, is one of the major determinants of research feasibility. This paper, therefore, aims at examining the nature of Arabic data, how to source for them and the problems that are often associated with their collection. More importantly, as the methodology of carrying out a research varies from discipline to discipline, the paper is also intended to expand past experience in field investigation on Arabic data in Nigeria. The materials examined are indigenous Arabic writings, mainly manuscripts, both in text and on microfilm and some other classical literature. Besides, oral interview forms an essential aspect of the field investigation.

Nature of Arabic Data

In Nigeria, printed books and manuscripts in Arabic form part of the major data that often attract the attention of field investigators. Unlike printed literature in Arabic, Arabic manuscripts are only available in a scanty number with a few people having access to them. This factor gave an impetus to their collection and preservation in many centres of major cities in Nigeria. The centres include Arewa House for Research and Historical Documentation, Kaduna; Sokoto State History Bureau, Sokoto; Centre for Islamic Studies, Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto as well as the National Archives, Kaduna, and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Jos. Others are Bayero University Library, Kano, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Maiduguri as well as Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, and the Centre for Arabic Documentation, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan.

A prospective researcher stands to benefit immensely from the bulk of the Arabic collection in these centres. Arabic manuscripts are usually kept among the rare collections in many of the centres as is the case at the Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan. The centres afford the researchers great opportunity of minimizing rigours and obstacles often associated with Arabic data collection.

In the southwestern part of the country, there are two major repositories of Arabic manuscripts. These are the Kenneth Dike Library and the Centre for Arabic Documentation, Institute of African Studies, both at the University of Ibadan. The manuscripts were collected from individual scholars from Sokoto, Jos, Borno, Ibadan, Oyo, Ijebu-Ode, Lagos and Iwo; while others were collected from institutional libraries France, Paris (Mahmud, 1964: 98; Odularu, 1987: 321-332). Some of the early scholars who donated to the University Library the materials they collected during the course of their research tours or studies at the University of Ibadan contributed immensely to the building up of the Arabic manuscripts collection at the university. The scholars include, W.E.N. Kensdale, H.F.C. ('Abdullah) Smith, B.G. Martin, J.O. Hunwick, F.H. El-Masri, Khalil Mahmud, I.A. Mukoshy and H.K. Bidmus.

The Arabic collection of Ibadan university library started about the same time as the library moved to its present buildings officially opened on 17th November, 1954, while the Centre for Arabic Documentation was inaugurated in 1963 (Aboyade, 1973: 133).

Arabic manuscripts at Ibadan can be classified into three forms: originals, photocopies and microfilms. It is noteworthy to mention that in cases where a particular manuscript exists both as original and photocopy, it is misleading to conclude without verification, that the latter is a mere duplication of the original because the photocopy might have been copied from another original produced by a different copyist. This explains the reason why in most cases such photocopies are also allotted separate accession numbers. Availability of such variant copies of the same manuscript, produced by different copyists, further facilitates the task of researchers in editing such manuscripts as will be shown below.

Apart from the bulk of Arabic documents located in many centres of the major cities in Nigeria, there are also many of them which abound in the private possession of Islamic scholars in different parts of the country.

Arabic manuscripts serve different purposes in research activities, depending on the researcher's level of literacy in Arabic language. These include:

Edition

A researcher may want to embark on producing an edited version of a particular manuscript. In this wise, at least, three different versions produced by different copyists of the same manuscript are needed. Where one of the copies omits, others may add. It will then be possible for such an editor to surmise a correct rendition in the editing. Therefore, his collation should aim primarily at the adoption of the variant which is grammatically and structurally sound. This will definitely make possible the production of an accurate and perfect edition of the manuscript. An exception to the rule, however, is that an edition can also be made solely from an archetypal copy of a particular manuscript which is written in the handwriting of the author. Quite a number of scholars have produced works on manuscript editing. They are M. Hiskett (1964), F.H. El-Masri (1968), Y.A. Quadri (1978), as well as S.U. Balogun (1978), and A.I. Lawal (1984). Others include K.A. Balogun (1990) and I.A. Ogunbiyi (1977-79: 33-55; 1990-91: 1-42).

Translation

Translation of Arabic manuscripts in most cases into English, or into any other local or foreign language has been the foci of many researchers. This effort solves the problem of language barrier in appreciating the values of Arabic source-materials. Besides, it creates room for large readership and affords other researchers, especially those who are not literate in Arabic, to derive vital sources from such studies for their own research areas. Examples of such translation include the studies of scholars like H.I. Olagunju (1986), M.G. Hasan (1986) and A.F. Ahmed (1983-89: 59-68). Naturally, all the studies on manuscript editing also contain their English translations. Another typical example is the work of ^cUmar Faruk Malumfashi (1989) titled: "Divergence of opinion in the law of Islam" -- being the editing, translation and analysis of Shaykh ^cUthman b. Fodio's *Najmu l-ikhwan yahtadun bi-hi bi-idhn Allah fi 'umuri' z-zaman*.

As a Basic Source-Material

Arabic data generally serve as primary sources for many researches. Quite a number of such studies have already been carried out on various aspects of Arabic manuscripts as shown in long essays, dissertations, theses and journal articles both within and outside Nigeria. Similar survey of such works at the University of Ibadan on Arabic manuscripts of Nigerian scholars has been carried out (Jimoh, 1998: 10-15).

Moreover, there is a clear indication that language barrier is not an excuse for not making use of Arabic materials either as a general or primary source. Danmole (1983-89: 69-87), for instance, makes use of an Arabic ode to reconstruct the history of Ilorin-Offa War. The manuscript is a twenty-three-line praise-song composed for Emir Aliyu (1869-1891) by Muhammad ath-Thani. Similarly, in a recent study carried out by O.O. Adekola (1998), an Arabic manuscript constitutes one of its primary sources in spite of language barrier. The manuscript, *Qur'an fī 'ilm ar-raml* (choice by lots in the science of geomancy) written by Ja'far as-Sadiq is one of the Arabic texts on sand-cutting (*Yanrin-Tite*), which was based on the traditional sixteen canons (*odu*) of Ifa.

There is no gainsaying the fact that a high level of cultural integration exists between Arabic and many Nigerian languages such as Hausa, Fulani and Yoruba, as in many other African languages. For instance, both Hausa and Fulani have borrowed more than a fifth each of their vocabularies from Arabic. This large borrowing originated mainly from direct borrowing and adaptation rather than from linguistic affinity. This is because while the latter is a Semitic language, the formers belong to Kwa family of languages. The only affinity that can be suggested, however, is the similarity between Arabic and Hausa in pronouns and also in the characteristic of differentiating between masculine and feminine. Likewise, Arabic names of days and months were directly copied and used by both Hausa and Fulani. The borrowings were greater in the field of poetry where all technical terms such as metres and rhymes were directly copied from Arabic without any modification (Umar Jah, 1975-76: 38-49). In the same vein, scores of adulterated and borrowed, Arabic words also abound in Yoruba as shown by the studies of scholars like Gbadamosi (1978: 223-225); Balogun, N.O.A. (1984: 10) and Abubakre (1983: 5-18).

Arabic, too, has been influenced by the local languages as "there is always a quick inter-change among the different territories of cultural values" (Bartold, n.d.: viii). This is evident in the available written sources whose expressions are in local languages such as Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri and Yoruba, but which are written in Arabic script otherwise known as *'ajami*. Quite a number of writings of jihad leaders and their successors attest to this point. Another typical example is the inscription on the Nigerian currency which depicts its name value in Hausa language but written in Arabic script. Similar examples also abound in the Arabic writings of Yoruba scholars. One example is

Yoruba stories woven round the tortoise which were compiled and translated into Arabic (Ogunbiyi, 1975).

The existence of ^ᶜajami in Arabic sources, however, poses some difficulties in working on or using such materials, unless one has some knowledge of these local languages. An instance is a sixty-seven-line ^ᶜajami poem which was written by Shaykh ^ᶜUthman b. Fudi originally in Fula, but was later translated into Hausa by an anonymous translator. Both versions are in Arabic script. Working on such document definitely requires the expertise of scholars in Fula, Hausa, Arabic as well as English. This explains the reason why in a research conducted on the manuscript in question, four scholars of high integrity in the subject-matter had to work on it (El-Masri, Adeleye, Hunwick and Mukoshy, 1966: 1-36). This limitation notwithstanding, such documents help to build up a more coherent picture of the religious and social life of African peoples (Herbek, 1981: 131). In addition, linguists find them useful for the study of the historical development of African languages (Hunwick, 1970: 51).

Sourcing for Arabic Data

The choice of a research topic is a difficult task that often besets scholars at any level of study. Quite a number of studies carried out on the principles of field investigation by scholars such as Ahmad Shalabi (1976) reveals that once this hurdle is overcome, the primary assignment on a research topic is to form the habit of extensive reading as well as taking cognisance of all related studies that had been carried out on the topic. A researcher should also learn about "research in progress" from newsletters. Similar pieces of information are contained in the copies of *Research Bulletin* of the Centre for Arabic Documentation, University of Ibadan. In volumes 18/19 (1990-91: 72-77), for instance, there is a list of completed doctorate theses between 1980 and 1990 in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan. In volume 20 (1992-94: 104-107), there is also a list of doctorate theses/M.phil dissertations between 1986 and 1993 in the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin. All these could, subsequently, form part of the researcher's "Literature Review." This effort will save him the possible embarrassment that may arise should his examiners supply him with serious facts that he fails to supply in his thesis or study which can lead to the re-working of the research.

After a study on which Arabic data are required has been delimited geographically, many of the Islamic scholars in the locality

normally serve as resource persons and they are contacted for relevant Arabic materials on such study. Hence, the topic as well as the scope of a study determines, in most cases, where relevant Arabic data are to be sourced.

From a personal experience during a project on "the acquisition and preservation of Arabic manuscripts of Ibadan authorship" in 1994 major scholars and imams in Ibadan formed the major target in the field investigation. It was, however, observed that there are instances when a particular manuscript cannot be fished out from the immediate environment of the author. For instance, one of the scholars covered by the study is Shaykh Ahmad Rufa^ci Bello of Oke-Are (d. 1971 C.E.). His son, Shaykh ^cAbdu'l-Karim (d. 1995 C.E.), who was then the Chief Imam of Ibadanland, generously made available to me for photocopying all the former's Arabic manuscripts in the private collection of the family. One of the works that could not be directly acquired from the author's family is an elegy composed on his friend, Shaykh Salahuddeen Apaokagi (1890-1950 C.E.) who migrated from Sokoto and settled in Ilorin. One of the channels through which the work came to light is a book written in 1984 by the latter's son, Alhaji Khidr Salahuddeen Apaokagi, in which the text of the elegy forms a part.

The main factor that can be attributed to this point is the very nature of some documents which were only written and sent directly to the intended person who might be residing in faraway places, without any effort by the writers to make duplicates of the works. These include compositions as encomium, elegy or correspondence in various forms. It is only from those to whom such works were addressed that they could be sourced.

As David Henige (1982: 42) observed, published ethnographic descriptions of certain social norms or other vital information may be mistaken, misconceived or out-of-date. This is true of written sources in Arabic. The importance of oral communication in this direction cannot be over-emphasised. In 1998, a study involving some Islamic personalities in the major cities of Nigeria among whom are Dr. Tahir Maigari and Shaykh Muhammadu'th-Thani al-Kafanghi, both of Kano, was carried out. Before the fieldwork, all the relevant biographical literature, mainly Arabic, on the two personalities were sourced and studied. All these materials assert that both scholars are still hale and hearty. It was only on the field at Kano during an oral communication with a scholar at Bayero University, Kano, that I first learned that the latter scholar had passed on since May 29, 1989 while the former had died only a couple of weeks before my arrival at the university on the

8 July, 1998, contrary to the impression I had earlier about the two scholars (Jamiu, 1998). This point further corroborates the fact that oral interview is essential for field investigation.

The familiarity of the archivist with the materials under his care is one of the greatest benefits a researcher can expect during field investigation while tracking down Arabic data. This expertise was displayed by Malam Yakubu Ahmad Dukawa, the director of Aminu School of Islamic Legal Studies, Kano. It was originally thought to request him to link me up with the residences of those authors of the Arabic materials already consulted at home before the fieldwork for more clarification on the issues raised in the works either from their authors or their close associates. Immediately Malam Yakubu was acquainted with the proposed research topic, he was highly delighted and readily made available to me all relevant materials and as well granted me oral interview on the issues that are central to my study (Dukawa, 1998). In fact, many of the materials I got from the Legal School Library through him, and which were subsequently photocopied, were so rare that they could not be found in Kurumi market, one of the biggest markets in the country where Arabic books as well as monographs are sold.

At Kurumi Market, similar expertise of familiarity with the Arabic materials was also enjoyed. I was introduced to many works of Nigerian authors, which, to a large extent, influenced modification in the choice of Arabic works of selected scholars. All these sources rekindled my interest and threw more light on the topic of research.

One of the major problems often faced by research workers using Arabic sources is the lack of basic biographical and bibliographical tools. For the Middle East and northwest Africa such a tool exists in the form of Carl Brockelmann's *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur*. In Nigeria, each of the centres of Arabic documentation has its specific classmark to distinguish its holdings from those of others. At the Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, for instance, the general classmark for Arabic manuscripts is 82, otherwise known as "82 series." Each title is catalogued with the prefix classmark 82/the serial accession number. Although, there are index cards of all the catalogued Arabic manuscripts at the university library, the first attempt, and of course the only one, to produce a catalogue of the Arabic manuscripts solely available at the library was made by W.E.N. Kensdale in 1955-58 with 150 Arabic manuscripts. The work is not arranged serially according to how they were catalogued, but the entries were made in the alphabetical order of the author's names, the latter being the heading.

The Arabic manuscripts at the Centre of Arabic Documentation at the University of Ibadan are on microfilm with the exception of the newly acquired manuscripts of Ibadan authorship. The manuscripts on microfilm are catalogued serially with the prefix CAD/. There is a catalogue compiled by Omar Bello (n.d.) which describes each manuscript of the centre's collection. In addition, analyses of about 425 titles of these materials have appeared in the twenty volumes of the centre's *Research Bulletin*.

A similar attempt was earlier made by C.E.J. Whitting in 1943. In his work, he gave a list of ninety-nine titles, showing: Name of work, Author and Nature of subject-matter. There is another work that lists Arabic manuscripts in the Jos Museum and Lugard Hall Library, Kaduna. Most copies of the materials are also available on microfilm at the Ibadan University Library (Drs. Arif and Abu Hakima, 1965). D.M. Last reviewed the publication in *Research Bulletin* of the Centre for Arabic Documentation (4(1 and 2): 87-91). Based on the inventory taking and re-classification carried out by Z.I. Oseni in 1987 on the Arabic collection of Jos Museum, the classmark allotted to each manuscripts is JM/A.MS followed by the serial numbers.

A more comprehensive list of the Arabic manuscripts of Nigerian scholars is contained in a work edited by J.O. Hunwick and R.S. O'Fahey (1985-1987).

As indicated earlier, language barrier constitutes a major limitation to a successful field investigation, especially when the research takes place in a different geographical culture from that of the researcher. This reminds me of the first embarrassment I recorded in a field trip to the north of Nigeria. The scene was that of myself, a Yoruba man in Hausa garments. This ostensible dressing prompted my informants to be conversing with me in Hausa language. My regular response was, *Ba ji Hausa ba* which simply means, "I do not speak Hausa." In this type of situation when one is linguistically handicapped, the services of interpreters become inevitable.

Closely related to the point is the problem associated with pronunciation of *ʿajami* names that are embedded in Arabic literature. Early studies show that some scholars often fail to realise the correct pronunciation of such *ʿajami* names because they transliterated them as if they are purely Arabic names. This made some of their works appear as if they have been largely undertaken with the approach of an armchair scholar. The result has rendered common names in current usage unintelligible. Taking for instance, *Tazyin al-waraqat* of ʿAbdullah b. Fudi edited with a translation and study of the author's

life and times by M. Hiskett (1963); there are words transliterated as Raj (p. 90) and Jukulla (p.5) which are in fact the common Fulani proper names Raji and Jokolo. Similarly, the word Baida (p.59) which was considered as *baida'* and accordingly translated as "a desert" is a Fulani proper name and an associate of the Emir of Gobir as suggested by M.A. Al-Hajj in his review of the work (*Research Bulletin*, 1965, 1 (2): 40-47). To overcome such problems, as rightly observed by Al-Hajj, there is a need for field research to ascertain the correct pronunciation and identification of such 'ajami names that Arabic sources contain.

Conclusion

Attempt has been made in this paper to highlight the methodology of field investigation on Arabic data. In Nigeria, there is a very large number of valuable Arabic source materials in major centres where they are being preserved. It is, however, evident from the study that there are many Arabic manuscripts still dispersed, and unlisted, often in the hands of uninformed owners and exposed to the elements and parasites. Consequently, there is urgent need, especially for the centres of Arabic manuscripts in the country not to relent in their efforts to acquire more Arabic documents for proper preservation. The centres, too, have great tasks ahead. That is the challenge of maintenance of these African documentary heritage in their charge. Unfortunately, it is ironical for the documents to be collected from the individual Islamic scholar only to be indiscriminately managed due largely to lack of proper storage facilities and preservation methods. This problem has rendered some of the vital Nigerian Arabic documents irretrievable. Whereas, copies of such documents abound intact in overseas libraries and archives.

More researches on various aspects of Arabic sources such as translation, editing and analysis need to be embarked upon. Such studies will continue to shed more light on the relevance and value of Arabic source materials to knowledge and humanity. It is high time we produced an up-to-date catalogue of all indigenous Arabic literature as well as manuscripts in each of the Arabic centres in the country. This, in turn, will make possible the publication of an all-embracing catalogue of Arabic literature of Nigerian authorship.

The expertise of a researcher in certain research aids is also of paramount advantage. The skill includes microfilm reading, Arabic/English bilingual typing and processing of words on computer with

Arabic softwares. It is then that challenges of modern technology in Arabic documentation will be met. Finally, it is not an over-statement, as shown by the study, to submit that Arabic source material is indispensable to the expanded knowledge of an all-inclusive African culture.

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Chapter 1

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Chapter 3

1. The term that was initially used to cover the study of language was philology; it dealt exclusively with the language of written texts and had a philosophical bias. Subsequently expanded to cover the history of human civilisation as reflected in Indo-European languages, philology as a word fell gradually into disuse and was eventually replaced by the new term "linguistics", which has blossomed since the twentieth century and extended its field to cover the scientific study of all kinds of language, human and artificial.
2. The term "language" has many meanings and associated meanings. It may refer to human language, animal noises, scientific and mathematical formulae, traffic signals and road signs, gestures and gesticulations, and even silence, but its primary meaning, especially for scientific analysis, is human language. For its associated meanings reference is usually made to an individual's mother tongue, the speech form of a particular community and its literature, the standard speech variety of a particular nation, and various descriptions of linguistic and socio-linguistic behaviour.
3. Phonetics is the scientific study of the production, transmission and reception of physical speech sounds of all kinds, called phones. Vowels, e.g. [e] and [o], and consonants, e.g. [p] and [b], are the two main types of phones.
4. Phonemics is the scientific study of the significant speech sounds of a particular language. These sounds are called phonemes, e.g. in English /p/ and /b/ in /pat/ and /bat/. Different pitches in tone languages also constitute phonemes, called tonemes. A speech sound or pitch is said to be significant and therefore a phoneme when it has distinctive meaning in the speaker's consciousness within the sound or pitch system of the language concerned.
5. Morphology is the scientific study of grammatical units or categories or parts of a speech that carry meaning in a particular language at the word level. These are called morphemes. Examples in English may be simple words, i.e. words that have a simple structure, as, for instance, 'book' 'hoe;' word-endings which convey plurality, as in 'book-s' 'hoe-s;,' prefixes and suffixes, as in 'pre-school' and 'collect-ion;,' internal alterations indicating such grammatical categories as tense, as in 'sing ~ sang,' and number as in 'mouse ~ mice.'
6. Syntax is the scientific study of mutual relations among word elements in the sentence structure of a particular language. For instance, in English the word order SVO, as in 'Peter kicked the ball' further specifies

the mutual relationship among the component word elements. When the categorial relationship is broken by changing the order of the words, as in 'The ball kicked Peter' or 'Peter the ball kicked,' the sequence no longer has meaning.

7. Semantics is the scientific study of meanings of words and phrases in a language. When the meanings of words and phrases are determined by discourse context, we are in the area of pragmatics, which may, therefore, be viewed as a projection of semantic study.
8. In theoretical linguistics, the aim is to build language models or theories to describe languages or to explain their structure.
9. Applied linguistics makes use of the findings of scientific language analysis in such areas as language teaching, dictionary preparation, speech therapy, computerised machine translation and automatic speech recognition.
10. In descriptive linguistics, which may be synchronic or diachronic, language is viewed from the standpoint of what is actually said by the speakers. Therefore the corpus may contain blemishes or slips of the tongue. A synchronic analysis captures the language form in current use, whereas a diachronic analysis captures the language form at a particular point in time in the past or traces the historical development of the language form.
11. Prescriptive linguistics analyses a language from its idealised homogeneous forms which the speakers should conform to. Here the corpus does not admit of blemishes or slips of the tongue.
12. In comparative linguistics, two or more languages are compared. The comparison may also be between two or more groups of languages. The basis of comparison may be phonetic, phonemic, or any other viewpoint. The objective may be to establish their common or divergent ancestry.
13. Historical linguistics concerns itself with the historical development of a language or group of languages. It attempts to discover the proto forms of a language and its creation innovations. Dialectology is an aspect of historical linguistics.
14. Intuition as a research tool is discussed in this study.
15. Chomsky's contention was in line with Saussure's argument (1962: 321) that linguists should concentrate upon the social aspect of language, *la langue* which is conceived as being so general that it is in the possession of every speaker. Therefore one can investigate it by asking anyone about it, even oneself, which is what Chomsky and his followers proceeded to do.
16. This may not be unconnected with Chomsky's reported statement that grammar is dead.
17. With regard to discussion topics, one widely propagated belief is that an emotional topic is very effective in making speakers less self-conscious and so to speak naturally. Such topics include the death of a child or a close relative and a narrow escape from a fire incident or an accident.

18. AFS 702, apart from seeking to enlighten students on field methodology, which is what this paper is about, also sets out to cover related matters such as the 'keeping of field records and notes and audio-visual materials; the writing of field reports, papers and monographs; the collection and preparation of bilingual documents from oral sources.' These aspects of the research programme are, in my view, more appropriately handled elsewhere by the students' supervisors who have the responsibility of ensuring that the students write their term papers properly. These items are therefore deliberately omitted in this paper.

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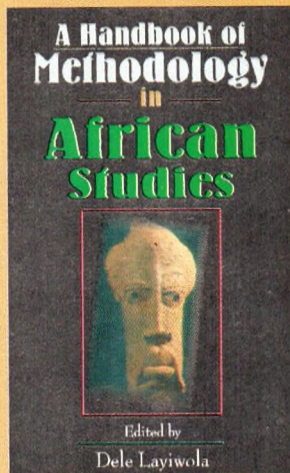
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The fifteen works of twelve researchers from the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan here anthologised are meant to disseminate directions of thought in field methods in African studies. Rather than cataloguing facts, however, the collection anticipates a conceptual framework of practice. It is, therefore, a theory and practice of field investigation in Africa, south of the Sahara. It also seeks to carry forward the vision of *African Notes*, as a forum for scholars and students with more than a passing interest in African culture and its continuing relevance to contemporary life.

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