HERITAGE AND IDENTITY IN IDOMA TRADITIONAL MUSIC.

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Abstract
Idoma's musical heritage cuts across different musical styles which gives Idoma a unique identity among other cultures in Nigeria. The music also serves as a cultural pool from where the Idoma derives his or her pride and identity. The development and sustenance of this cultural symbol depend largely on its continuous performance among the Idoma people, as this refreshes the practitioners as well as inducts the younger generation into the crux of a cultural system. Although some scholars have researched Idoma history, language and festivals, none has investigated how traditional music is engaged to negotiate and project heritage and identity in Idoma land. This paper, therefore, discusses two Idoma traditional music types, gospel music in Idoma, and how there have served as symbols of cultural heritage and identity to the Idoma. The participant observer method and in-depth interviews of performers of the music as well as other key informants were used in obtaining data for this study. The paper reveals that the transmission of Idoma cultural values, history and general development from one generation to the other has been accomplished largely through their indigenous music. This is presented in the form of historical narratives of events, personality praises that reveal family pedigree and social commentaries in general. In recent times, Idoma musical patrimony has incorporated issues that dwell on contemporary politics and other social developments in the immediate and wider society.
Keywords: Idoma, Idoma heritage, Idoma identity, Idoma music, patrimony.

Introduction
The world over, every culture celebrates and relishes her heritage. There can be no understanding and appreciation of any culture without understanding and appreciating its heritage. This is because of the inter-relatedness of the concepts of cultural identity, ethnic identity and heritage. According to Rummens (2001), identity could be defined as "the distinctive character belonging to any given individual, or shared by all members of a particular social category or group" (p. 1). Among the Idoma of Benue state, their intangible culture still occupies a central place in their day-to-day living, thereby holding the key to understanding their history and social life (Osuagwu, 2018). According to UNESCO (2003) in Wulf (2015:132), intangible cultural heritage refers to "practices, representation, expressions, knowledge skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage." Idoma's sonic culture, which is an aspect of their oral culture, expresses their artistic and performance skills which give them a strong sense of identity and unity with one another as well as their ancestors. Both the songs and instrumentation are

culturally potent, providing a platform for a shared art of musical interpretation, resulting in individual and collective aesthetic expressions (Mbanugo, 2009).

Idoma cultural identity, which is perceived as a collective identity, is largely expressed through Idoma traditional music and dance, deeply rooted in their heritage from their past. Although, the musical sound may be incapable of providing the material aspect of heritage such as buildings and other architectural works, musical instruments, costumes and other contextual performance paraphernalia serve the purpose of material heritage in different cultures of the world including Idoma. Idoma traditional music is, therefore, central to Idoma heritage, which has been used as an instrument for collective identity and memory. In consonance with Macdonald (2006)'s submission on heritage issues in Nuremberg, there exists a very strong opinion among the Idoma that their traditional music and dances have "the right – or even creates a demand – to continue" (p. 9). This philosophy underscores the continuous support for traditional musical performance on different stages and spaces like festivals and burials as part of the people's preservation of memory while upholding culture. According to McDowell (2018), memory and commemoration are inseparable if heritage is understood as "the selective use of the past as a resource for the present" (p. 40). Hence, it draws its strength and resources from the past to validate and give meaning to the present. This explains why individuals, groups and peoples manipulate heritage ideology for different purposes that include "validation, legitimization and unity", while at other times to "challenge, refute and undermine." (McDonald, p. 49) However, scholarship on Idoma culture generally has not explored how the people have engaged their traditional music to construct and reconstruct their heritage and identity. This has created a knowledge gap in understanding some of the fundamental ideological underpinnings in Idoma traditional music performances and conceptions.

Review of Idoma History and Heritage

The Idoma people occupy the South Eastern corridor of Benue state in Nigeria. In a location that is described as the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, their history is traced back to the 16th century to an area known as Apa from where they migrated to their present locations (Magid, 1976: Denga, 1995; Ogli, 2011). However, the history of Apa is particularly associated with the second phase of the old Kwararafa empire. Kwararafa evolved in three phases as a confederacy of different groups of people, covering the entire Gongola basin between the Benue River and Lake Chad, and beyond. This geographical area falls within the tropical climate zone of West Africa and lies between longitudes 7^0 and 14^{0}E, and latitudes 7^0 and 13^{0}N. According to Unomah (1996), the first phase of Kwararafa lasted until around 1520. The nucleus of this first phase was called Santolo, established by the Kutumbawa (the founders of Kano) under the leadership of Aku Maga. The Santolo group was later referred to as Abakwariga, which is often alluded to in the Idoma *Alekwu*

Afia chant (Ogli, 2011). Following upheavals in their original settlement, the Santolo/Abakwariga group migrated down to the Gongola-Hawal confluence where they joined Idoma Nokwu, Igbirra, Jukun and others to establish the Biepi dynasty, which became the capital of a revived Kwararafa. Thus, the Benue valley around Biepi and its environment where the Idoma Nokwu were found in Kwararafa represents Idoma's ancestral homeland often referred to as Apa (Folorunso, 1993; Ochefu, 1996).

The Idoma people are agrarian in occupation; a practice for which they were known even in the old Kwararafa kingdom. According to Erim (1993) and Denga (1995), the ancestors of modern Idoma of Ugboju, Adoka, Otukpo and Alago migrated out of Apa in Kwararafa to Apa I with its regional headquarter at modern Abinsi and later Makurdi town in the early 17th century (Ogli and Okpeh, 2022). This was a result of a major political crisis arising from the struggle for the throne in which the Idoma Nokwu candidate lost to the Jukun candidate. Indications are that Edo who was the leader of Ugboju became the leader of Apa I. However, the aggressive and intense Tiv invasion between 1685 and 1715 further displaced the Idoma group from Apa I, forcing them to move southward. This justifies the constant reference to Apa as an ancestral homeland in Idoma historical narrations, Abakwariga, Igbirra and Igala as kins. In a bid to keep this memory of their past fresh as part of their heritage and collective identity, mention is made of this history in some musical performances like *Alekwu Afia* chant for the dead, and *Ichicha* women music.

Background Information of the Study Area

Currently, the largest concentration of the Idoma people occupy an area of 130, 1552 km in Benue state of Nigeria. According to Onaji (2013), they make up the second largest ethnic group in the state and inhabit nine local government areas (out of twenty-three local government areas) in Benue state. They share boundaries with Nasarawa, Kogi, Enugu and Ebonyi states as well as the Tivs in Benue state. Based on the national census of 2006 in Nigeria, the Idoma population was 1,307,647, which is projected to increase to 1,764,900 by 2016 (Ijachi, 2021).

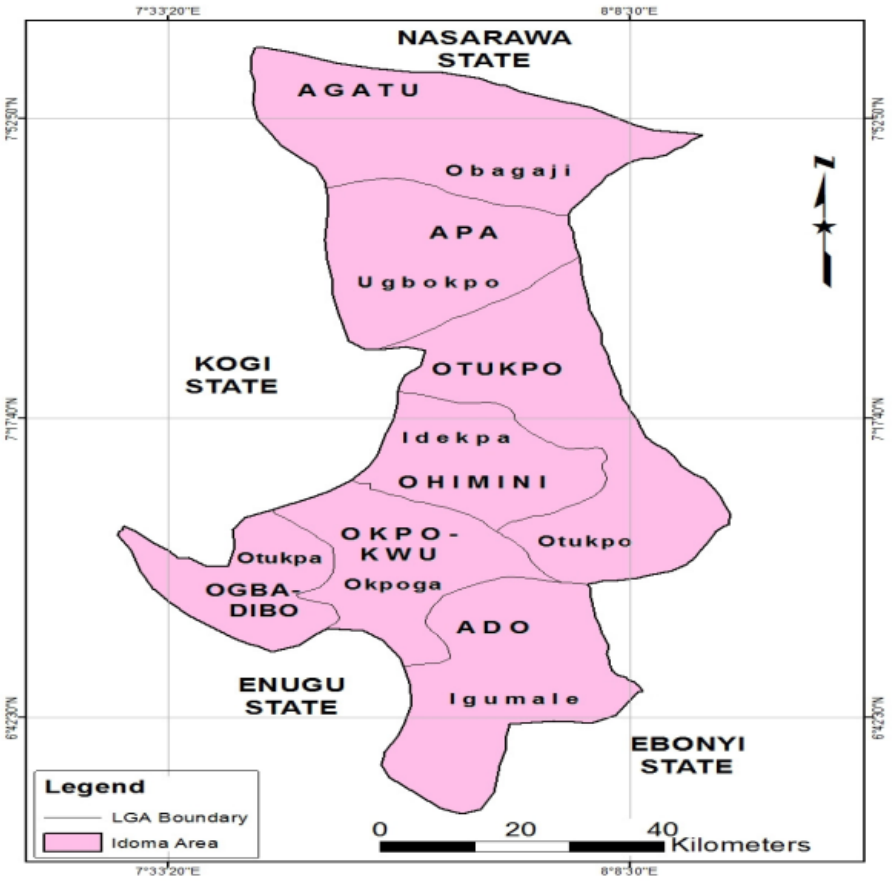


Fig. 1: Map of Idoma-Speaking Area of Benue State. (Onaji, 2013, p. 18)

Findings: *Alekwu Afia* Chant and Identity Construction

The *Alekwu Afia* chant is an old ritual chant performance practice that Idoma carried along with from Apa. Whereas *Alekwu* generally refers to the spirit of the dead, *Alekwu Afia* refers to an all-men specialized institution which represents the physical manifestation of the spirit of Idoma ancestors uniting with the living for fellowship, guidance, blessing or punitive actions to deter wrong and anti-social deeds in the community. Whenever *Alekwu Afia* manifests, it speaks in chant forms called *Ekwu ooka*.

The chants are exceptionally colourful and unique narrative tradition, which combines artistry, socio-cultural roles as well as religious rites. It is also performed during traditional Idoma adult funeral rites and in an emergency.

Ekwu ooka employs dialogue to negotiate relations between humans and their ancestors. *Alekwu Afia* chants engage both the world of ancestors and humans. Allusions are generally made to ancestors, ancestral homes as well as issues in society like death, wealth, strength, valour, witchcraft, animals and nature in general. These allusions are most often presented in unusual

expressions, proverbs and wise sayings that are not easily understood by a novice.



Fig 2: Idoma *Alekwu Afia* led by a family head.

Although chanters use the Idoma language as their primary medium of performance, they occasionally include expressions in Igala and Ebira languages as spices in their art of performance. More so, the chants are notably different from spoken language or song in two major ways: firstly, the rapid succession of words often does not allow breaks between words to make them discernible. Therefore, three words could be spoken as if it is a single word. e.g. *Adahwọfukọyiọyikewọfu Adanuma i*nstead of:

Adah w'ọfu k'ọyi
Ọyi ke w'ọf' Adanu ma
Translation
The father is the strength of his child
The child is the strength of his (her) father

Secondly, *Alekwu Afia* chants do not follow the normal tonal pattern of the Idoma language as observed in Idoma songs. Thus, different words could be performed on the same pitch, thereby making comprehension difficult. Despite the fast tempo in performing *Alekwu Afia* chants and the performance technique that makes it generally difficult to comprehend for an average speaker of the language, skill and excellence in its performance are highly regarded. Each clan has an *ObiAlekwu* (also known as *Ad'Alekwu* - an elderly man who oversees the *Alekwu* cult of the clan) and an *Ikpodoko* (a central grove), from where all the *Alekwu Afia* of the clan usually begin and end their physical appearances.

Alekwu Afia chant is performed during the annual Idoma *Ej'Alekwu* festival, which celebrates their ancestors. The concept, performance and items

associated with *Alekwu Afia* demonstrate the importance attached to heritage, memory and identity among the Idoma. *Alekwu Afia* chants retell Idoma's past and contextualise that past within present realities. The critical sense and cultural idealism of Idoma society cease to exist without the *Alekwu*. Okau (2001) captured the place of ancestors in the Idoma psyche when he said:

> The importance of ancestors in the life of the traditional Idoma cannot be over-emphasized. There is no explanation of any event in a man's life that is not with reference to the ancestors. Misfortunes are ascribed to ancestors' anger while prosperity is viewed as an expression of the ancestors' approval of the activities of the living. (p. 101)

Each *Alekwu Afia* represents a family within a clan and testifies to their past and present position in a given Idoma society. Owing to the material requirement for canonizing a late elder, to qualify such become an ancestor, the incidence of an *Alekwu Afia* manifest is a pride to the living children. It is an act stating that their late father occupied a position of and commanded respect in their society when alive, and is still revered even in death. The living identifying with an ancestor is not intended to speak about the ancestors alone but by way of reciprocation, an act intended to attract the pleasure and blessing of the ancestor to the descendant. Thus, it is identifying with their ancestors and celebrating the past by the living, as well as identifying with descendants and identifying with the present by the ancestors. Further still, it is a statement of the identity of a smaller group within a larger one. Identifying one's pedigree is very important in traditional Idoma society because it associates the living with the heroic deeds, nobility and (or) greatness of their ancestors. Although the costumes used by the *Alekwu Afia* are similar, special identifying marks are made on each costume to distinguish one ancestor from the other.

Further still, the rites performed by the *Alekwu Afia* during the traditional funeral of Idoma adults still border on identity – the ancestors identifying with the spirit of the dead who is about to join them, as their own indeed. When an *Obi'Alekwu* dies, all the *Alekwu Afia* in that clan would gather on the wake-keep night to perform a rite of arresting the spirit of the late leader before daybreak when the dead body will be interred. This rite is intended to announce the identity of the one who had just died as a leader of the Idoma traditional religion, identify the dead with all the *Alekwu Afia* present, as well as announce and accompany his spirit to the presence of the ancestors. It is common to find expressions that allude to Idoma's history and group or individual identity in *ekwu ooka* (*Alekwu Afia* chant). Although the spirit-arresting rite is performed only when an *Obi'Alekwu* dies, *Ọwẹ Ohẹ ku lo kwu* (passage clearance ritual) is performed by the *Aekwu Afia* when an adult Idoma dies and he/she is to be buried traditionally. This rite requires that an *Alekwu Afia* would approach the dead body which is laid-in-state, touching the feet of the dead with its mast (among other things) as a way of identifying the dead as a beloved descendant before the ancestors.

The distinguishing feature of each chanting *Alekwu Afia* is often reflected in his family identity. A man's family is regarded with much respect among the Idoma because it reveals his root and the blood that runs in them. Therefore, reference to one's parentage is a way of announcing one's identity and stamp of authority especially in oral submissions. Reference to parentage is commonly used in the chants to reveal the family of the *Alekwu Afia* speaking. In the following excerpt reported by Ogli (2011), the chanter mentions his wife (Ọnyẹbẹ), the wife's father (Ijẹgwa), the chanter's father (Ọgbọgbọ Ijagwu) and his mother (Ijakwu) in the following:

Ọnyami, ọy'otu	My wife, the daughter of night
Ọnyẹbẹ ọy'Ijẹgwa	Ọnyẹbẹ the daughter of Ijẹgwa
Ọgbọgbọ Ijagw' Ada ne mum	Ọgbọgbọ Ijagwu the father that begat me
Ijakwu ẹnẹ ne mum l'ọnya biwa	Ijakwu my mother fetch the horse

A chanter's mention of his mother and (or) father is often an appeal for their assistance to enable him to accomplish difficult tasks. This connotes the father and mother are already dead, therefore, forming part of their ancestors. An expression of this nature is not only understood to be an appeal for assistance but, also a declaration of the chanter's identity and pedigree. Hence, the mention of names in chants is a performance style utilized for declaring the chanter's lineage. It further serves in identifying prominent ancestors in the clan as well as their position in the lineage. The following excerpt serves in enunciating clan identity and seniority among the Idoma of Otukpo:

Okp' Adeji m'ọl'ọw Okpe	Okpe *Adeji* that fill the ancestral home of Okpe
Okpe Ode, Ode m'Ode	Okpe Ode, Ode gave birth to Ode

This chant reveals the relationship between Okpe and Ode, two revered names in Otukpo ancestry. Okpe is identified here as the son of Ode, and still, Ode gave birth to another Ode. This implies that the father of Otukpo is Ode, while there still exists another clan descending from Ode, who is a brother of Okpe. This short declaration is laden with kinship information among the Idoma of Otukpo. It reveals understanding the position of Ode as a personality in Otukpo ancestry must be based on the knowledge of the particular Ode in question. Therefore, Ode could refer to the putative father of Otukpo as well as a clan. As a clan, the Ode clan is not senior to the Okpe clan, rather they are brothers; Okpe is senior to Ode as demonstrated in the order of mention in genealogical chronology. This is necessary for clarifying seniority and hierarchy in Otukpo traditional community affairs where age is highly regarded.

The political system in Idoma land is crucial to the well-being of all and sundry in the community. The place of Idoma chiefs is highly revered because they are believed to represent the ancestors among their citizens as well as represent the living among the ancestors. Therefore, heroic deeds, impeccable character and extraordinary wisdom are attributes every chief is expected to possess. In the following example, which is an excerpt from Amali

(2000), the king of Otukpo is acknowledged and praised for his titles and quality of bravery:

Ọch'Otukpo ọdu	The king of Otukpo adze
Ọdu b'ọgẹna	The adze which digs scorpion hole
B'ọg'ẹgwa	Digs the whole of the snakes

The Och'Otukpo is herein praised for his personal quality of strength and toughness. These qualities are compared to an adze metaphorically because the adze is used to shape wooden objects and also to dig the tough ground. Hence, Och'Otupko is presented as possessing such qualities that enable him to accomplish difficult tasks, such that the ordinary man would find extremely difficult. This is reflective of the qualities Idoma traditional rulers are culturally believed to possess. In Idoma culture, traditional rulers are believed to possess dual personalities – mortal man and ancestors. To achieve this, they are made to undergo several rituals before ascending the throne as rulers.

Besides family identity, the place of history is central to Idoma culture. During every *Ej'Alekwu* festival (an annual festival which celebrates and makes sacrifices to Idoma ancestors), the king's pedigree is re-enacted through chanting. Using the Ugboju clan as an example, the history of Ugboju is re-told by one of the *Alekwu Afia* present, with a special interest in tracing the lineage of the chief on the throne. This serves to confer legitimacy on the king as well as restate (and refresh) royal records. Similarly, although chanters use the Idoma language as their primary medium of performance, they occasionally include expressions in Igala and Ebira languages as spices in their performance. The occasional use of these languages for expressions also suggests the close relationship that exists between Idoma culture and that of these languages. The following Igala expression is part of a funeral chant:

Una ikpogu Akoji jogwu odudu	The fire blazed, Akoji shouted in the morning

Expressions like this and other references to elements in these sister cultures help to re-invent and re-state the historical brotherhood between Idoma and Igala cultures. Igala forms the western neighbour to Idoma land while Ebira is further away from Idoma land. The close affinity that exists between Idoma and these groups is said to date back to pre-colonial times when they co-inhabited the Kwararafa kingdom around the Gongola basin.

Identity and Heritage in *Ichicha* Songs

Ichicha music is a pre-requisite in Idoma culture for fulfilling traditional funeral rites at death under certain conditions. The music is performed by a women's choral group known as *Ichicha*, accompanied by two traditional musical instruments - *ichicha* and *ọkanga. Ichicha* is a hand-held instrument made from a dried gourd. Unlike the common rattle music instrument which has a net of beats woven around the dried gourd known as *ichaka*, and which produces sound when shaken, the *ichicha* sounding materials are locked inside the gourd chamber. The players hold the neck of

the instrument and shake it to produce a dry sound to accompany their singing (see pic. 2). *Okanga* is a membrane drum with two heads. The okanga is played by a man whose role as a musical accompaniment in the group does not grant him membership status. Whereas the group always performs with the *ichicha* (from where they derive their name), featuring the *okanga* performances is not mandatory, seeing it is played by a non-statutory member of the group.

Themes of the songs performed dwell on death, reflecting on the definitive consequence of death among humans. *Ichicha* songs are in call-and-response form, predominantly in simple duple and simple quadruple time. The responses are always in two phrases; the second always compliments the first. The range of *Ichicha* responses is often between a major second and a perfect fifth. The chorus does not vary the response all through the music except when the cantor (the song leader) chooses to end the song by introducing the Concluding Phrase Recall (CPR). *Ichicha* songs are accompanied by only *ichicha* (gourd rattle) and hand clapping when performing indoors while the *ọkanga* (double-headed drum) is added when performing outdoors. Both instruments are usually introduced into performances after the chorus response had been established.



Figure 3: Women Playing *Ichicha* (gourd rattles).

The context of *Ichicha* performance notwithstanding, the issue of identity and heritage still form a major theme of their songs. Identifying the dead, his lineage and his relationship with people who matter in society are often strongly stressed in the singing. However, identifying the dead is a process that carries along with it insight into cultural values and unique heritages peculiar to the family of the dead. This is exemplified in the following excerpt of an *Ichicha* song:

Cantor:	*Ọ ch'Ugboju ko w' ọbandẹ,*	Chief of Ugboju *ọbandẹ,*
	Ugboju w'ọladanu	Ugboju is his father's home
Refrain:	*Ikwu l'ọma chum ọnya*	Death sent me an errand with salt
	Ọwọ l'ọma gbenyi	Rain wet the salt
Cantor:	*Adaji Ugbọnẹ,*	Adaji Ugbọnẹ,
	Ẹginya w'ọlẹnẹnu nun kaa?	I said where is his mother's home?
Refrain:	*Ikwu l'ọma chum ọnya*	Death sent me an errand with salt
	Ọwọ l'ọma gbenyi	Rain wet the salt
Cantor:	*Ọyim na ma ọma*	That son of mine that you see

	Ipọm w'ọlẹnẹnu kocho	Ipọm is his mother's home, please
Refrain:	*Ikwu l'ọma chum ọnya*	Death sent me an errand with salt
	Ọwọ l'ọma gbenyi	Rain wet the salt
Cantor:	*Achẹ ne e ta l'Ogodo*	The people saluted as *Ogodo*
	Neke l'ẹbeje n ma ko ga	That does not eat leopard's meat
Refrain:	*Ikwu l'ọma chum ọnya*	Death sent me an errand with salt
	Ọwọ l'ọma gbenyi	Rain wet the salt

The song above identifies the dead as Adaji Ugbọnẹ, a citizen of Ugboju, whose traditional ruler is known as *Ọch'Ugboju*. It further revealed that Ugboju chiefs are always saluted with their traditional title of *Ọbandẹ* regardless of their presence or context. In every important gathering which includes the funeral of elders, the *Ọch'Ugboju* is always acknowledged and saluted as observed in the song above. This part of the Idoma heritage proclaims the authority of their traditional rulers over the land and demonstrates their loyalty to such rulers on every occasion.

The song further reveals that Adaji's father is from Ugboju while the mother is from Ipom. Although Ipom is part of Ugboju, part of their heritage as revealed in the song is that they do not eat leopard meat. The cultural practice that forbids groups from eating certain meat or bird differs among clans and sub-clans among the Idoma. Usually, such animals have some totemic significance to the clan or sub-clan. Hence, such restrictions form part of their heritage, believed to have been passed over to them from their forefathers who had had a special encounter with such animals, resulting in preserving their posterity in one way or the other.

Idoma salutations are very revealing, describing the part of Idoma the recipient comes from. Different Idoma clans have different salutations, which are culturally very significant. The Ipom people (the late Adaji's maternal home) are saluted as Ogodo in the song above. *Ichicha* songs, therefore, do not serve the purpose of mourning the dead alone but identify the dead and proclaim other cultural values like loyalty to traditional institutions and sustaining clan titles as expressed in salutations.

Discussion

In general, research on Idoma cultural expression and heritage seems to be dominated by history, archaeology, religion and socio-political structure. However, music is fundamental in the intangible cultural resources among any group of people globally. Musical performance is one of the most engaging cultural activities in the performative space of any given people. In Africa generally, musical performance is an artistic creation which engages the language of the people, their literature (poetry or narrative art), technological skills that produce their musical instruments, and their history as they journeyed from the mythological past to the present. This enables the people actively and imaginatively relate with one another as well as their common heritage. In this sense, promoting music as a cultural heritage enhances

harmony among the people as well as their image (Echezona and Okezie, 2018).

The sense of self-worth of individuals and groups is closely associated with their identity negotiation in different forms. The research observed that musical performances at different cultural occasions in Idoma support identity projection, negotiation and recognition (Lenzerini, 2011). The identity of the Idoma people is stated and re-stated through the historical element of their musical performance, while that of individual members of the society is validated or heralded in the music. At present, so many cultural elements are getting extinct daily. Such losses strip the affected culture of every instrument of identity. The Idoma people are concerned about the preservation and sustenance of their cultural identity. Supporting the cultivation of cultural creative works like music broadly has the potential of keeping the practice alive as well as building the interest of the younger members of society to appreciate their heritage and identity.

Festivals are highly celebrated among the Idoma people. They serve as moments for celebrating the blessings of the past season, just as they mark the beginning of another. According to Onaji (2013), festivals are events usually organized by a local community to celebrate some unique aspects of the community or share a common tradition. Among the Idoma people, one of the most popular festivals is the Alekwu (ancestors) festival, intended to celebrate their ancestors annually. The festival confers an imagined and potent significance on the relationship between the people and their ancestors, who are believed to be alive in the realm of the spirit. This reality, in turn, transforms occasions of death into important cultural moments that ensure the circle of communal and spiritual re-inventing is sustained. Musical performances during these instances serve as instruments of communion between the living and the living-dead, within the space they all recognize as home. Again, festivals and burial instances are transformed into communal spaces for identity creation, validation and projection. According to Kimani (date unknown) in Alachi and Tyokyaa (n.d.):

> Home is not merely the dwelling place of our physical self. It is also the location of those other invisible, but not intangible selves. Our dominant ideal of home inevitably embraces a nurturing place, a space of spiritual, psychological, social, and physical comfort, security satisfaction, and ultimately confidence, because we know that we will be understood…it is the dwelling place of some of our deepest affections; the place of familiarity and of the family that reminds us of the ancestors… as well as those other enduring and unseen, though not unfelt ways in which they continue to touch and shape the present, especially our lives (p. 5).

Conclusion

As stated earlier, the history of Idoma's ancestry is fundamental to Idoma's traditional culture. Thus, the reference to Abakwariga, Apa and Ẹdọ are very significant in Idoma memory. Abakwariga and Apa represent

Idoma's roots – where it all began in the Kwararafa kingdom. Apa also brings to memory the bitterness of fighting for survival both within Kwararafa and when they were forced to move to Apa I - modern Abinsi near Makurdi in Benue state. The mental reconstruction of Idoma's history has been enhanced by *ekwu ooka,* which has, in no small measure, fostered unity, oneness and encouraged a commonality in their thought process. Further still, it is observed that the influence of history and memory is unmistakable in the relationship that exists between Idoma and Igala. Unlike several cases of communal clashes between Tiv and Idoma, there are far much less communal clashes between Idoma and Igala. This largely is attributable to their perception of one another as brothers, having a very close ancestral heritage.

Furthermore, Idoma ancestry is represented in Ẹdọ and the ancestors cannot be overemphasized. Ancestral worship is not just religion but fellowship. The ancestors are alive: they feel, appreciate and are capable of being offended. Therefore, ancestral worship and veneration are living phenomena in traditional Idoma society. Whereas each family and clan has its own *Alekwu Afia,* Ẹdọ represents the father of all Ugboju lineage just as other lineages have their father. Idoma's heritage and individual as well as group identity, often captured in their history and constantly recounted in *ekwu ooka* and other musical art forms must be kept alive to give the unborn Idoma the self-worth of knowing who he is, where he comes from, and the collective historical heritage that belongs to them all.

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