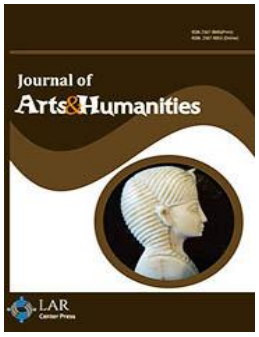

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Born a Musician: The Making of a Dùndún Drummer among the Yorùbá people of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Due to its popularity and as an exemplar of the Yorùbá cultural practices, the dùndún (widely known as the 'talking drum') has received much scholarly attention for its musical and literary functions. However, there is a dearth of studies focusing on music education of the dùndún tradition. Conducting a qualitative study involving extensive observations and in-depth interviews, with dùndún drummers in different towns in south-west Nigeria, the study investigates the teaching-learning process in the world of dùndún. Findings reveal that, although dùndún musicians hold the belief that a musician is made through a combination of àjẹ́bí (genetics) and èbùn (a gift), several methods such as observation, participation, modelling, and verbal instructions are employed in the dùndún pedagogy. The paper concludes by highlighting the implication of the indigenous methods on contemporary music education in sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: Dùndún, Indigenous Music Education, Indigenous Teaching Methods, Yorùbá Cultural Practices.

1. Introduction

The Yorùbá are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. While they are widely spread across Nigeria and also beyond the borders of the country, all references to the Yorùbá people and/or their territory in this paper are concerned with the five Yorùbá-speaking states occupying south-west Nigeria, namely: Lagos, Ògùn, Ọyọ́, Ọ̀ṣun, Òndo and Ekiti. The Yorùbá are a group of people known to be proficient in various professions including drumming. The connection of the Yorùbá people to the art of drumming is exemplified by the fact that certain families are associated with the art (Euba, 1990; Vidal, 2012a). While there are various drums to be found amongst the Yorùbá including the *bàtá*, *agẹ̀rẹ̀*, *ìpèsè*, *gbẹ̀dú* among others, the paper focuses on the *dùndún* especially in relation to the *dùndún* musician. The *dùndún* drum is unique and appears to be the most popular, probably because of its 'talking' capability, its amenability to all occasions (sacred, cultural, secular etc.), and its usability amongst people of all ages and both genders. The study focuses on music education in the world of the *dùndún*: methods of teaching and learning and the essential prerequisites for becoming a *dùndún* musician. This is imperative to

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understand and preserve the cultural practices, especially the indigenous knowledge of the *dùndún*. There have been changes in the society and in the musical landscape of Nigeria. Despite the changes however, the *dùndún* tradition still strives (Omojola, 2012; Amegago, 2014; Durojaye, 2018). It is thus important to keep the tradition alive to prevent culture extinction and enhance cultural preservation. The preservation of the indigenous knowledge of the *dùndún* is also relevant for the purpose of application in other contexts, for example, contemporary music education in sub-Saharan Africa, in which there have been a demand for the need to promote African-centered arts education (Dzansi, 2004; Herbst, 2005; Mans, 2002; Nzewi, 1999, 2001; Samuel, 2013). There are two main reasons for the choice of the *dùndún* specifically for this study. Firstly, being a family tradition passed on from one generation to another (Euba, 1990; Idamoyibo, 2002), the *dùndún* provides a source of rich data to reach the objective of this study. Secondly, the *dùndún* is a favorite among the Yorùbá, being the most popular (Akpabot, 1986; Euba, 1990) and, as such, it is a satisfactory exemplar to reach an understanding of musical culture among the Yorùbá.

Various studies have addressed aspects of the *dùndún* such as the literary, musical and social-cultural functions, as well as the analysis of the music and the text of the drum to mention but a few (for example, Akpabot, 1975; Durojaye, 2018; Euba, 1990; Sotunsa, 2009). Adegbite (1988) adds to our understanding of the role of drums in Yorùbá religion. From the rituals which accompany drum construction to the association of certain drums such as *agèreẹ̀, ìpèsè, igbin* and *bàtá* with Yorùbá deities. He points out the uniqueness of the *dùndún* and its indispensability in deity worship despite not being associated with any deity. Concentrating on the poetry rather than the music of Yorùbá drums (and with more focus on Yorùbá oral literature rather than music), Sotunsa (2009) in her book *Yorùbá Drum Poetry* brings out the aesthetic and stylistic attributes of drum poetry which inescapably shares literary and musical space. Through in-depth analysis of drum texts and the detailed description of drummers' utility of the texts in certain performance settings, the book highlights the uniqueness of the talking drum in language and music. Bankole and his colleagues (1975) discussed the qualities and the requirements for becoming a Yorùbá master musician. Omojola (2012) mentioned the performance practices of the *dùndún* in the twentieth century. The most extensive work on *dùndún* is Euba's *Yorùbá Drumming* (1990). In his study (which was conducted for his doctoral thesis in 1974), Euba broached a wide range of subjects around the *dùndún* tradition, ranging from the historical and social background, to the discourse of the practitioners, their organisation and training, without omitting an analysis of the music of the *dùndún*. However, neither the work of Euba (1990) nor any other studies have particularly addressed in depth music pedagogy in the world of *dùndún* in present times and the importance of such pedagogy in the general socio-cultural environment. This study is different from Bankole et al. (1974), in that its attention is placed on the teaching and learning process of the *dùndún* for both old and young, male and female, insider and outsider, trainee and master musician. Moreover, both the works of Bankole et al. (1974) and Euba (1990) were conducted in the 70s, with the former not involving any fieldwork, and the latter, conducted in different localities with different participants.

In contrast to previous studies, data for this research were collected qualitatively through extensive observation of various *dùndún* performances, and in-depth interviews with *dùndún* musicians during an eight-month fieldwork trip to different locations within south-west Nigeria. The towns visited were Igbó-Ọ̀rà, Ìlọ́ra, Ẹdẹ, Òṣogbo, Ìpetumodù and Òyó. The choice of the locations was based on two major considerations: (a) locating areas rich in *dùndún* tradition, and (b) gaining authorized access to the chosen sites. Participation in the study was voluntary and the participants' consent was sought at the commencement of fieldwork. Consent of minors (below 18 years) was obtained through their parents or family representative. Participants also indicated their interest in having their names and pictures appear in the any publication relating to the study. That is, they did not insist on anonymity or confidentiality.

Findings from participants' account and observation of their activities reveal that, although *dùndún* musicians hold the belief that a musician is made through a combination of *àjẹ̀bí* (genetics) and *èḅùn* (a gift), several methods such as observation, participation, modelling, and verbal instructions are employed in the *dùndún* pedagogy. These findings provide a further contribution to, and an update of, the literature on the Yorùbá *dùndún* and the Yorùbá culture. In addition, knowledge about indigenous music education could make a significant contribution to contemporary music education in sub-Sahara Africa.

This paper proceeds with the description of the *dùndún,* followed by the ways through which a *dùndún* musician is made described from two viewpoints: (i) the perspective of the participants, that is the belief held by the musicians about learning; and (ii) the researcher's perspective as gathered from the observation of the musicians. Focus is placed on the second viewpoint in which different methods of teaching and learning were outlined. The training of a beginner is also discussed as well as the essential requirements for one to be called a *dùndún* musician. The paper concludes by highlighting the relevance of the study for the Yorùbá culture, the African child and the modern-day education system.

2. Defining the *dùndún*

The term *dùndún* can have two connotations: one is for it to be seen as music. Euba defined *dùndún* as a 'type of music played by any combination of the Yorùbá hourglass tension drums' (Euba 1990:19). Another connotation is to the musical instrument, an hourglass-shaped drum. Although, the practitioners of *dùndún* hardly use the term in relation to music. For them, the musical sounds produced on the drum are described in terms of the particular form of music being performed. For example, they use terms such as '*ilu éégun*' ('masquerade drum'), '*àlùjó*' ('dance music'), '*oríkì*' ('praise poetry'), without referring to these art forms as '*dùndún*' either on their own or collectively. To most *dùndún* musicians, *dùndún* is a drum. It can be described as an hourglass-shaped, double-sided membrane drum, sometimes adorned with brass bells.

Dùndún is usually performed in an ensemble comprising about five instruments, four of which are of the same shape but different sizes (see Figure 1). These are: *ìyá ìlù* (also known specifically as the *dùndún,* because of its leadership status as the drum doing the 'talking' and directing the rest of the ensemble), *kẹ́ríkẹ́rì* (also known as *Aguda*), *omele*, and *kànnàgó.* The fifth, known as *gúdúgúdú* is conically shaped and an essential part of a *dùndún* ensemble. The ensemble is also commonly referred to as a 'family' consisting of the mother (*ìyá ìlù*), the father (*gúdúgúdú*) and the children or siblings (*omele* and the rest). *Omele* siblings are also assigned a gender status as male or female.

Fig 1: Family of dùndún: L–R omele, ìyá ìlù, gúdúgúdú, ìyá ìlù, kẹ́ríkẹ́rì. Photo credit: author, January 2016

3. The making of a *dùndún* musician

The making of a *dùndún* musician can be conceived from two perspectives. First is the belief system of the people (that is the musicians themselves) and second can be said to be a researcher or an outsider's perspective which focuses on the training of the musician. While the former is briefly discussed below, more focus is placed on the latter based on field observation and interview with *dùndún* drummers in six Yorùbá towns in south-west Nigeria.

A discussion of the world of *dùndún* is incomplete without some mention of *Àyàn*. Briefly, in the Yorùbá belief system, *Àyàn* is the drum god (*òrìṣà*). Lindon (1990, p. 205) defines *òrìṣà* as 'deified remote ancestors and/or natural forces', a definition that can be said to be inadequate in capturing all that the Yorùbá categorise as *òrìṣà*. In a broader definition, Barber describes *òrìṣà* as a 'combination, in varying proportions, of deified human hero, force of nature, and a being of heavenly origin' (Barber, 1990, p. 313). Although there are numerous *òrìṣà* recognized among the Yorùbá with each performing different roles (Alana, 2004; Barber, 1981, 1990; Lindon, 1990; McKenzie, 1976; Omojola, 2010), the belief system of the Yorùbá places Olódùmarè ('the supreme deity') as the head of all *òrìṣà* (Ekanola, 2006; Idowu, 1962) and below him are all other *òrìṣà*. The Yorùbá *òrìṣà* can be classified into: a) those that exist with Olódùmarè from creation; b) great humans who have been deified; and c) those who evolve by being associated with natural objects (Omojola, 2010, p. 32). All three categories are in some way related to the *dùndún*, but *Àyànàgalú*, the deity directly related to the drumming tradition, falls under the second category of great humans that are deified. Ibisankale (2007) records that a man called Kunsanri Àyàn invented *dùndún* in the old Ọ̀yọ́ empire (see also Euba, 1990, pp. 38–39, for similar and other versions of the origins of *dùndún*). As *Àyànàgalú* is believed to be the first Yorùbá drummer to have been gifted in the skills and art

of drumming by Olódùmarè (Euba, 1990; Ibisankale, 2007), his prowess led to him being made a deity and hence referred to and worshipped as the god of drums and the patriarch of all Yorùbá drummers (Euba, 1990, p. 90; Villepastour, 2015, p. 3). To corroborate the records of Ibisankale that link the *dùndún* to Ọyọ́, the participants in this study, who were drawn from different locations, state that they originated from Ọyọ́ before dispersing to their various destinations, and for this reason they always refer to themselves as *omo Àyàn* ('the offspring of Àyàn'). This saying could also explain why it is a tradition for the family of drummers (be it *dùndún* or *bàtá*) to prefix their names with 'Àyàn', for example, Àyànlere, Àyàntunde, Àyàndiran and so on, tracing their lineage to the origin. Furthermore, the belief in a common Ọyọ́ origin could explain why, in spite of different dialects spoken among the Yorùbá, *dùndún* only imitates the Ọyọ́ dialect (Akpabot, 1986; Euba, 1990). *Àyàn* plays an important role in the lives of Yorùbá drummers in general as not only does *Àyàn* determine their names but he is also believed to control their activities. Drummers attribute their knowledge, skills, abilities and even their social and economic status to *Àyàn*. Hence, the discussion with the performers on how they learn was influenced by the contribution of *Àyàn* and the larger belief system of the culture.

To *dùndún* drummers, a child born into the *Àyàn* family does not learn *dùndún*. It is a combination of *àjẹ̀bí* (genetics) and *èbùn* (a gift). They not only believe that the child will play naturally as *Àyànàgalú* himself will teach him/her; they also believe the child will discern the drum language naturally (see also, Amegago, 2014, p. 99). During a naming of an *Àyàn* child I witnessed in Igbó-Ọrà, the rituals involved the *ìyá ìlù* drum being beaten right next to the child's ear. A ritual activity I was told is very important, as it contributes to the child possessing drumming skill. This begs some questions: What makes a child born into an *Àyàn* family proficient in the art of drumming? The rituals, genetics, gift or the experience the child garners as a result of observing and imitating older ones? Or is it a combination of two or more factors? There is the belief held by the participants which depicts the role of *òrìṣa* in the belief system of the people as well as the conviction that an *Àyàn* born does not learn *dùndún*.

The belief of the drummers that one does not learn *dùndún* is logical given that the teaching and learning of drums in traditional African societies includes aspects of formal and informal training (Amegago, 2014, p. 100). A child develops into a system in which music is involved in one's life from cradle to grave. Music-making in indigenous sub-Saharan indigenous African societies is communal in nature. This communal practice, which Turino (2009: 98) describes as 'participatory performance', seemingly seldom isolates the audience from the performers, given that everyone participates in an event through dancing, singing, clapping, drumming or at times as a mere observer (Nzewi, 1991). The tacit knowledge stemming from experience gained over the years through the engagement of the mind and the ears in various socio-cultural activities contributes to the making of a musician. This is especially true of those born into musical families such as the drumming family. As a family profession passing from one generation to another, it is mandatory to imbibe (especially) the male children into the art of drumming. Tacit learning for a child born into the *dùndún* family starts at about 3 years old (but following the older ones to performances does not start until about 5 or 6 years old). Hence, through social learning, a child grows into the profession. Although, one seldom sees an 'outsider' (someone not born into the family of *Àyàn*) learning to play the *dùndún,* the drum can be learned by anyone regardless of age or gender.[2] Drumming is taught from childhood as it is believed that the earlier a child begins, the better the child is at playing in adulthood. Also, it is felt that an adult who has come to learn *dùndún* from the outside will not only take longer to learn but will also not be as dexterous as a child, especially one born into the *Àyàn* family.

The participants note that the major requirement for learning *dùndún* is 'interest'. While an outsider has to be very keen in their quest for *dùndún* knowledge, an *Àyàn* born also needs to show interest for the inner ability to be developed. That interest is an important factor to being adept at *dùndún* playing, is consistent with some studies that have recorded the significance of intrinsic motivation for the acquisition of musical skill (for example, Ericsson et al., 1990; Davidson et al., 1995). Apart from intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation that is found in the family environment is an equally important factor, as *dùndún* playing usually takes place in families. Drumming is likened to a highway or an endless path: '*Kíkó ẹ̀ ó gùn lọ títí ni. Ibi tí ọpọlọ oníkálukú bá gbe dé náà ló mọ*' ('Its [*dùndún*] learning is

[2] *Dùndún* drumming used to be an exclusively male affair. This is still prevalent, but females are now seen with *dùndún* (though not often). The Igbo Ora ensemble has three female members.

endless; it stops at the extent to which each person's brain can accommodate it') says Bashiru Àyandamilare, a drummer in Igbó-Ọrà (interview, November 2015). Similar to the records of Euba (1990), it was found that the first drum given to an *Àyàn* child is *kànnàgó* (see Figure 2) The child is not taught anything specific on the miniature drum but is expected to play aimlessly as a child scribbling on a piece of paper. This process continues for about three or four years, when the child can comprehend rhythm and can give a steady basic and simple rhythm. Then the child moves on to *omele*. For an adult beginner, the first drum is *omele*, followed by *gúdúgúdú*, *kẹ́ríkẹ́rì* and then *ìyá ìlù*. Proficiency in oral praises of every family in the community is very essential for every drummer. Therefore, training and drilling in this act is included at every stage of learning of *dùndún*.

Fig. 2: A young boy playing kànnàgó at a burial ceremony in Igbó-Ọrà. Photo credit: author, November 2015

Dùndún ensembles are organized in a way that at the early stage of learning, the younger ones are encouraged to follow the oldest members of the family, for example, the grandfather or great uncles, for performances. When they are a little older, the child follows the younger uncles, his father and/or people of his fathers' age. The process of a child's mentors gradually being younger people as the child grows older continues until the child is old enough to go out with his peers. The rationale behind this process is based on the need for 'patience'. According to some of the interviewed drummers, patience is one of the qualities required of a *dùndún* trainer. Younger ones in *dùndún* ensembles are made to follow the older ones as they (the elders) are believed to be more patient than the youths. A patient trainer is also needed for an adult recruit, because the trainer would have to bear with the mistakes and use discretion to correct the adult recruit. Concerning how the older drummers[3] know when to move a child to the next mentor or stage of learning, Sikiru Àyànwale in Igbó-Ọrà, likens the promotion process to the Western system of education:

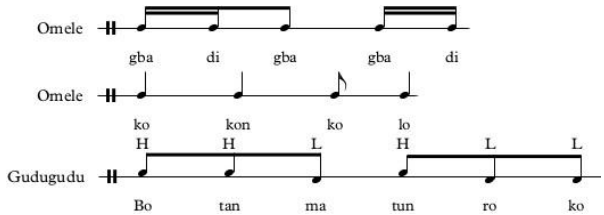
Bi k'ọmọ wà ni *primary one*, t'ó bá yá tí ó bá ti n di pe ọmọ yi ti n *good* ó ti yẹ kó kúrò ní one k'ó lọ sí *two*, torí ó tó bí-- bí a ṣe ma n lọ òde yẹn ó ma n tó bí *group* bi mẹ́rin sí márùn tí a ma ń lọ sí òde yẹn. T'a bá wà ní *primary one*, àwọn bàbá àgbàlagbà yẹn ni a ma n bá lọ. T'ó bá yẹ pé ọmọ yi ó yẹ kí ó ti tó lọ sí *primary two*, ọmọ t'ó bá ti lọ sí *primary two* nígbà yẹn, ó dúró fún wípé àti *three*, àti *four* ó ti kó gbogbo è ja, ọmọ yẹn ti good ni yẹn. Wọ́n á já wa kúrò léyìn àwọn bàbá bàba wa, a d'èrò òdò baba kékeré.

It is like when a child is in primary one, when the child is good and ready to move to primary two, because we are about four or five groups that go on outings. When we are in primary one, we follow those very old fathers. When a child is good enough to move to primary two, a child that has progressed to primary two then, it means the child can also pass on to primary three and four, and that the child is good. At that stage, we would be removed from our fathers' fathers to small/little father [older uncles].

(Interview, November 2015)

A beginner drummer starts with simple and standard rhythms often turned to onomatopoeic words or common phrases for ease of learning. Examples of such drum mnemonics are shown below:

Drum mnemonics



After this stage, a child moves on to other semi-complex rhythms and, with constant practice and experience, the child is expected to learn to play these rhythms correctly and must be able to synchronize with the whole ensemble. To stress this point, Idamoyibo, citing Nketia, notes that 'performing in a drum ensemble means [...] knowing the role one's instrument is supposed to play [...] the rhythms assigned to

[3] Given that expertise in *dùndún* drumming is linked to the age of the drummer, the use of 'older drummer' here refers to both age and years of playing. 'Adult learner' is used for someone old in age but not in *dùndún* drumming, i.e. starting *dùndún* later in life.

it and precisely where they fit into the music' (Idamoyibo, 2002, p. 74). The drummers in Ẹdẹ and Ìlọra state that before an adult learner can be given an *omele* to drum, he/she must be made to perform some administrative duties which include, but are not limited to, holding and caring for drums in outings, helping to save money realized during performances, and helping to keep other gifts items such as clothes or drinks offered by listeners in appreciation of drummers' services.

Learning of *dùndún* in indigenous Yorùbá communities is not done in a rigidly fixed venue or specific days for learning. Children learn through playing with their peers around the house after school hours, while relaxing with adults, during outings or in general entertainment in the household. Although drummers would say the art of *dùndún* drumming is inborn and not learned, still they agree that innate potential is honed through constant engagement with the art and experience through years. Adult and experienced drummers learn more repertoire whenever they are out in other communities, villages or towns. For instance, if a certain ensemble hears additional lines of an *oríkì* that is already known to them, they include these lines in theirs, and upon returning home they tell or show the others what they have learnt. Through this process, ensembles and expert drummers build their wealth of repertoires. New skills are also learnt through observation of other drummers, for instance, taking note of other drummers' techniques of playing. The process by which expert drummers build on their wealth of knowledge corroborates the idea that learning of *dùndún* is an endless process. Moreover, the exchange of knowledge depicts collaboration amongst drummers, which in turn supports the drummers' idea that *dùndún* in Yorùbá is 'one' and drummers throughout the Yorùbá culture are one big family (Ayantayo Kamiu in Ẹdẹ, interview, December 2015). By tracing their root to Òyọ́ and collaborating with one another, *dùndún* musicians can be said to be joined together historically by tracing their roots to Òyọ́, and socially by their art.

4. The recruit

A beginner in an ensemble who is not born into *Àyàn* family is in most cases known to the drummers. He/she must have been close to the ensemble and known of their activities, in which case the ensemble members will readily reveal all there is to know. The recruit should also be humble and patient if they want to be welcomed into the world of *dùndún*.

The recruit comes around daily, sits with the drummers and observes the drummers' daily activities. He/she follows them to every outing and when the drummers are satisfied the recruit is truly interested in learning, he/she will be given the *omele* to start with. Learning then continues from one drum to another until the person 'graduates' to *ìyá ìlù*. Even though it is said that *ìyá ìlù* is easy to master, *dùndún* drummers also believe that an adult coming to learn *dùndún* may end up not graduating to *ìyá ìlù*. This belief is captured in a saying quoted by Bashiru Ayandamilare (interview, November 2015): '*À f'àgbà kọ́ lù l'órí omele yẹn ni yóo wà'* ('One who learns drumming at an old age will remain on *omele*') In other words, to the drummers, not only is it easier to teach a child than an adult as they contend children grasp concepts faster, but also the endless nature of learning *dùndún* will prevent the adult from moving on to another stage.

Throughout the process of learning a trainee observes all activities including the techniques for handling and playing. After some period of following the ensemble to performances, and at the end of a particular occasion, the recruit is given a drum to hold, during which time he/she is expected to try out some things observed during the event and to recall the same some days later. Gradually, through trial and error, and constant practice, the individual acquires the knowledge of the art. The foregoing suggests that every *dùndún* drummer is expected to possess good listening skills as well as observational and memory skills. Ayanjimi Ayansoji in Ìlọra (interview, November 2015) added that besides accepting a novice drummer into an ensemble, sometimes a veteran on *dùndún* might want to join an ensemble. In his ensemble, such an individual would be asked to bring a sum of five thousand naira and a bottle of schnapps.[4] An initiation ceremony that involves *Àyàn* ritual is then held to formally welcome the new member.

[4] Schnapps is a generic name given to a local gin (Yorùbá name: *ogógóró*) in Nigeria. It is an indispensable item in every cultural practice as it is not only used as libation, but it is also known as *ọtí àdúrà* (prayer beverage), and as the beverage of the elders and ancestors. During the fieldwork the drink was always present, no matter what the occasion.

5. Methods of teaching and learning

Because of the communal nature of music making in an indigenous African setting, music education is predominantly a social experience. Methods of music instruction in indigenous African cultures have been noted in the literature; these include but are not limited to observation, imitation, and apprenticeship (Abdallah, 2010; Abrokwaa, 1999; Amegago, 2014; Berliner, 1993; Euba, 1990). Teaching and learning of *dùndún* is no different from teaching and learning in other indigenous African musical cultures. *Dùndún* musicians would say one does not 'learn' *dùndún*, and this is not farfetched, given that it is part of an oral tradition where learning is ingrained in the culture itself and not a discrete activity. So, asking a question such as 'How did you learn *dùndún*? Or how does one learn?' produces the general response that 'we do not learn'. Such a response is perhaps influenced by the conception of 'learning' as a formal method applied within a given period of time, to a curriculum and/or contents as found in Western contexts. So even if *dùndún* drummers say they 'do not learn' the art, one has to take into account *how* the knowledge is transmitted through generations as gathered from the participants' accounts and researcher's observation in the field.

In the past one of the major methods of learning *dùndún* in indigenous communities was through apprenticeship (see, for example, Abdallah, 2010; Amegago, 2014). Recent years, however, have seen a decline of this practice. On the one hand, the decline could be attributed to the perceived low economic status ascribed to drummers,[5] or to some other economic reasons, as youths are attracted towards more lucrative trades; on the other hand, migration to urban areas to play for churches or as popular musicians could account for why it is no longer a practice for someone to be formally allocated to a master to learn *dùndún*. Having said that, *dùndún* is learned through various other methods. One is through *following* older drummers to all performances (also interpreted as participation method), and performing such duties as caring for the drums taken out, among others. This method of 'on-the-job training' serves two purposes for an adult learner especially. Firstly, the method is used to train the learner in the virtue of patience and perseverance, which are believed to be necessary if one is to play the *dùndún*. Secondly, the method tests the level of interest of the learner. A less enthusiast learner will stop going out with the ensemble within a short period, especially because of the mundane duties.

In an apprenticeship, a keen individual (whether an *Àyàn* offspring or outsider) is expected to try out some rhythmic patterns on the drum on his/her own, while carrying or caring for them. These try-outs are taken as one way of learning. Following the older drummers to performances is also important, as it is a method by which learners gain the knowledge of and about patrons and their *oríkì* (an important element in the art of *dùndún* drumming). It is also important to build up knowledge of different types of occasions, including the kind(s) of music suitable for such occasions. Following the older drummers and participating in activities of the group appear to be the foremost requirements and the primary method of training in an apprenticeship, as both old and young, insider and outsider must undergo this process.

Another way through which teaching-learning of *dùndún* takes place is *modelling.* Outside of the performance arena, the modelling method is more pronounced as an older drummer can be seen in a family compound showing the younger one how to carry out a task. In this method, both the expert drummer and the learner will each have a drum to work with. As the trainer plays, the trainee imitates the same.[6] This practice occurs frequently, especially in the evening, when everyone has finished their daily chores and just unwinding in the compound. The modelling method is somewhat similar to, but different from, the observation method. Observation does not necessarily entail the trainee having a drum to work with, and the trainer is not consciously or intentionally showing the trainee what to do, but these are mandatory in the modelling method.

Observation and *imitation* are two inter-connected methods. As drummers play during or outside performances, younger ones watch their behaviors. Through constant watching the observable behavior of adults, the younger ones tend to imitate what they see. While learning through observation can be an unconscious act on the part of the trainee, imitation can sometimes be deliberate. In comparison with

[5] Even though *dùndún* drummers are highly regarded in the community in terms of their services, some of the musicians stated they are sometimes derogatorily called *alágbe* (beggar).

[6] An uncommon variation of this method involves a trainer holding and guiding the hand of the trainee (see also Amegago, 2014, p. 103). I personally experienced learning through this method from Azeez Àyànsola in Igbo Ora many times during my training. In some cases, for ease of learning, children are placed on the lap while the trainer holds his or her hand to drum (see also Euba, 1990, p. 105)

modelling, which can be perceived as formal, imitation can be seen as an informal method that involves children just remembering and copying the actions of adults. The contexts of these methods also differ. Observation and imitation occurs anywhere and everywhere; modelling is usually applied outside the performance, while participation is bound to the context of performance. The following statement of Waidi Ayanleke in Ẹdẹ explains the methods of observation and imitation:

Tí àwọn t'óbá dàgbà jùwá lọ, tí wọ́n bá n lù-- irú gúdúgúdú báyìi (points at gúdúgúdú), tí wọ́n bá n lu, àwa náà ma ń wo ọwọ́ wọn, àti bí wọ́n ṣe n ṣe. Bí wọ́n ṣe n ṣe un, àti irú ìlù tì wọ́n n lù, a máa wo. Tí àwọn bàbá wa-- tí wọ́n bá tún ti wá dá irú ìlù un lẹ ní jọ́ọ́ mi àwa náà ó wa sáré rántí wípé bí àwọn tó jù wà lọ ṣe san sí n'jọ́ onii yi re, òun làwa náa fi ń *pick* up die die, tó fi di pé...

When our elders perform, for example, this gúdúgúdú (points at gúdúgúdú) when they drum, we look at their hands and how they do it. The manner of their performance and the type of drum beat they give, we observe. Some other time when our fathers start the same pattern, we quickly remember this is how our elders did it the other day. That is how we pick up little by little, until... [now]

(Interview, December 2015)

Verbal instruction telling the trainees what to do or play is another method *dùndún* drummers employ. This method is seldom used, but it is useful especially at the stage of playing *ìyá ìlù*, when 'talking' on the drum is necessary. It is also used in teaching *omele* by means of drum mnemonics. Sometimes, if a trainee does not get the perfect intonation of any word, or if she/he plays an incomplete proverb, the trainer gives instructions verbally. It was mentioned earlier that older drummers add to their repertoire by collaborating with other drummers both within and outside their community. The knowledge thus garnered from the outside is passed on to the others through verbal instruction.

6. Essentials of the world of *dùndún*

Just as in many other professions or trades, there are some essential aspects of art of *dùndún* drumming that must be realized for someone (old or new) to be acknowledged as a *dùndún* musician. The remaining part of the paper highlights some of these. Participating in performance activities: any old, new or aspiring member of a *dùndún* ensemble must go with the others to performances. Apart from serving as a major method of learning, it is an avenue for gaining more experience, meeting people, making money, fostering relationships amongst drummers and other musical arts practitioners. These relationships are essential for the growth and survival of any ensemble, including *dùndún* drumming as an art. *Dùndún* music thrives through performances and as an art that is handed down through generations, hence it is imperative to make the subsequent generations adopt the culture of going to events. This ensures the survival of *dùndún* through the ages.

One major way of learning and gaining experience amongst the Yorùbá is associating with elders. A proverb *Ọmọdé ló l'orin, àgbà ló nì'tàn* ('The youths might know the popular song, but only the elders could relate the story behind it') is an indication that an elder in Yorùbá culture is regarded as a repository of knowledge and wisdom. Hence it is considered prudent for anyone who wants to succeed in the world of *dùndún* music to mingle with the elders in the society (including non-drummers). Such a person is required to have good personality, especially humility, and predisposition to learn. A Yorùbá saying '*Ọmọ t'ó bá mọ'wọ́ wè, á bá'gbà jẹun* ('A child who knows to wash his/her hands will dine with elders') brings home this point. A *dùndún* drummer must know every aspect of the history of the community in addition to knowledge of *oríkì* (praise poetry) and *òwe* (proverbs). It is therefore imperative for *dùndún* drummers to be as close to the elders as possible, even in social settings such as evening games.

It is an essential requirement for a *dùndún* drummer to possess good memory skills. There are numerous gods worshipped amongst the Yorùbá and most of the gods are linked with particular drum patterns (Euba, 1990; Ibisankale, 2007). A drummer is expected to be versatile in the separate beats of the gods. He/she must know every family in a local community and their individual *oríkì*, which must not be mixed up with one another. A *dùndún* drummer must have the knowledge of as many proverbs as possible. Given that almost every event among the indigenous Yorùbá calls for *dùndún*, a drummer is expected to know different drum patterns/beats for different occasions, and how to stimulate the interest of the audience in any situation. He/she must know the history of the land, and the history of past kings and the incumbent ruler, among other things. From the accounts of the drummers, *dùndún* drumming is not for a feeble or forgetful mind. To explain how it is possible to acquire knowledge of all there is to know, and especially the *oríkì* of every member of the community, Sikiru Ayanwale (interview,

November 2015) says he follows the routine of '*ojúmọ́ kan oríkì kan, ojúmọ́ kan òwe kan*' ('one *oríkì* per day, one proverb per day'). Participants always say that the most important component of the *dùndún* profession is the 'heart or mind'. From the accounts of the drummers, it can be said that three requirements cover the process of developing prowess in *dùndún* music: first is the requirement of 'interest', second is that one has to completely focus one's mind on every aspect of the *dùndún* tradition: the requirement of attention; and thirdly, one has to retain and recall everything learned: retentive memory. All the interviewed drummers noted that the most difficult and the most important aspect in the teaching-learning process of *dùndún,* especially *ìyá ìlù*, is the knowledge and skill of reciting *oríkì*. Vidal, writing in 1969 (republished 2012), defines *oríkì*, as 'one of the oldest traditions in Yorùbá music consisting of a unification of poetry and music' (Vidal, 2012b, p. 151). It was pointed out that the primary function of *ìyá ìlù*, besides giving information, is to say *oríkì*. Hence, a *dùndún* drummer has the responsibility of making the most of the drum by his/her ability to recite as many *oríkì* as possible. Closely associated with the acquisition of the knowledge of *oríkì* is knowing the *òwe* (proverbs). These two are very important, as they are part of the major tools used by drummers to affect the moods and emotions of their audience. In addition to *oríkì* and proverbs, knowledge of *àlùjó* (literally: dance beats or dance drumming) is equally important for any *dùndún* musician. As explained by Sikiru Ayanwale,

Music náà dè ṣe kókó. *Music* ṣe kókó gidi. Ṣé ẹ mò pé t'a bá bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí orin kọ nisiyin-- tí Òṣùpá tí Paso bá n k'ọrin nisiyin, gbogbo orin ẹ ló ní *music*. Bí Wasiu Ayinde nisiyin, t'ẹ bá wo *live* kan báyii ó ní pé "óyá ẹ fún mi l'álùjó", àwọn onílu yẹn dè lu. Onílù è lu gbogbo è t'ó dè pe.

Music too is important. It is very important. You know if we begin to play now… for example, when Osupa or Paso sings, all their songs have music. For example, Wasiu Ayinde, if you watch one of his live [music] he says, "now give me àlùjó [dance rhythm]" and the drummers played it. His drummers drummed everything completely.

(Interview, November 2015)

When asked what he meant by 'music', he said *àlùjó*. On the one hand, the statement by Ayanwale points out the importance of *àlùjó*, and on the other hand, by referring to popular musicians such as Osupa, Paso and Wasiu, shows it is important for *dùndún* musicians to follow new trends. However, what is trending seems to be predominantly applicable to the younger generations of *dùndún* musicians. As various types of music have found their way into the rural areas, probably through migration, media or some other means, it appears that it is important for the younger generations to be relevant. This is revealed in a further statement by Sikiru:

Nkan tí àwa bá ṣe nísìyin àwọn bàbá yẹn wọn ò le ṣe irú è mọ. Wọ́n ti d'àgbà. Wọn ò lè lu àlùjó àbí kí wọ́n lù'lù fún àwọn obìrin kí wọ́n jó mó pé b'a ṣe ma n lù'lù. Àbí k'á *travel* lọ sí Èkó nítorí a ma n travel lọ sí Èkó, a má n lọ Ìbàdàn, a má n lọ Abuja, a ma n *travel* káàkiri be. Àwa l'a wà ní'ta nísiyin. Bí àwọn onífújì náà ṣe wà nìsiyin, ṣé ẹ mò pé àwọn kan kọ́kó ti wà pé àwon ni wọ́n kọ́kó n kọ fújì k'ó tó di pé èmi l'àwon Paso, èmi l'Osupa yẹn de [….] Àwọn ẹni yẹn ti di t'àná, wọ́n ti di *old*. Àwọn Ọṣupa èmi l'àwọn Paso, àwon l'ó si wa ní ìta nísiyin, gégé b'ó ṣe jé fún wa gan nì yẹn.

What we [the youths] do now, the elders can no longer do. They are old. They can no longer play àlùjó or drum for women to dance the way we would play it. Or we can travel to Lagos, because we do travel to Lagos, to Ibadan, to Abuja; we do travel everywhere like that. We are the ones in vogue now. You know some people have been before Fuji musicians such as Paso and Osupa [….]. They are now old-fashioned. The likes of Osupa and Paso are trending now. That is how it is for us also.

(Sikiru Ayanwale, interview, November 2015)

The need for relevance through *àlùjó*, corroborates the notes of Omojola (2012) that *àlùjó* is one of the creative materials stemming out of Yorùbá drummers' 'process of adapting a predominantly sacred tradition [of Yorùbá drumming] to the social needs of modern Yorùbá society'. *Àlùjó* is also a 'representative of the desire of Yorùbá drummers to survive in a fast-changing world' (Omojola, 2012, p. 68). The need for survival and relevance could explain why younger drummers (as was discovered through observation) in this study, create their *àlùjó* by means of common slang and/or current happenings, in contrast to older ones who make their dance rhythm predominantly by combination of proverbs. Be that as it may, amongst drummers of all ages knowledge of *àlùjó* is imperative as it is a means of relating to people who do not understand the drum language. *Àlùjó* is also employed when the occasion calls for lots of dancing and, as pointed out by one of the participants, when the event is for women, since occasions involving women are characterized by dance.

Furthermore, during performances it is necessary for all drummers, including the very young ones, to be conversant with the language (drum signals and gestures) of instruction in the *dùndún* world. Even though instructions for playing *dùndún* are not written down as the art evolves in an oral culture, there are means of giving directions which must be learned by aspiring *dùndún* musicians and achieving an excellent performance. For example, the lead drummer who is on *ìyá ìlù* has the responsibility of directing the activities of the ensemble. He starts the music, dictates the pace and/or changes it at will during a performance. Whatever changes he makes are supposed to be in the awareness of the others and they have to follow suit. The lead drummer can also use body movements to give instructions. At other times he can use a phrase or proverb. For instance, in Ìlọra, when *ìyá ìlù* says *'Àfira nì'jàkadì'* (Wrestling is performed briskly), it means that the ensemble should increase the tempo and/or put in more energy. *'Òṛò ìkòḳò ní gban gba ló ń bò'* ('Words spoken in secret will come out in the open') means to stop playing or pause for a while. In Igbó-Ọrà, the leader after a long performance of *oríkì* cues the ensemble in for rhythmic accompaniment with *'J'ógun ómí j'ógun ó sinmi, àwa 'rawa rí rawa'* ('Allow the war to recede, allow the war to rest; those of us (that are of us) have seen ourselves'). For all the different ensembles, the common way to indicate 'stop' or 'pause' is to have the leader strike the *ìyá ìlù* once. If the other members do not see or hear him, another person signals by raising his stick (*òpá*) to tell the others to stop. *Dùndún* performers describe their actions with everyday language, but musically there is meaning to what they are referring. For instance, when they talk about *òkè* (literally 'up') or *ilè* ('down'), in terms of music, they are talking about register (high or low), dynamics (loud or soft), or tempo (fast or slow). At other times they may talk about *sáré* ('run'), which means 'fast'. Aesthetically, they may talk about music as being 'sweet' as the term is used for food, for example, 'the song is sweet', which in terms of music means 'interesting', or they can refer to poor sound as being 'austere'. More examples of terms used in the world of *dùndún* to refer to the drum and/or playing mechanics are listed in Table 1 below. The knowledge of these terms, proverbs gestures are mandatory for one to be called a *dùndún* performer. These they learn through careful observation, attention to detail and having retentive memory.

Table 1: Examples of terminology used in the world of dùndún

Term	Literal meaning	Musical/Performance meaning	Context of usage
Àlùjá	Breakable drum	Tuned too tight	Used when the tensioning strings are too tight
(Ọsán) dè	Soft tensioning strings		Normal condition for tensioning strings which aids good sound production
(Awó) rò	Soft membrane		Good sound production
Ìsèḷù	Sounding the drum/morning greetings	Pre-performance	*Ìsèḷù* is performed by drummers at the house of a celebrant before the commencement of the main event.
Já wale	Drop it down	Slow; soft; low pitch	
Le/ Èle	Hard/strong	Fast; high pitch; vigorous	
(Ìlù) le	Firm drum	Tuned tightly	Used in the context of tuning and comparing the voices of drums
Òde	Outing	Performance	
Ọwó rò	Soft hand	Wrist technique (which into aids in better sound production)	Used when talking about the right technique of playing
Sa ìlù	Drum display		
San	Tighten	Tune	
(ìlù) Sọ ara lè/rò/jáwò	Drum is loose/soft/ drop down	Well-tuned	Used when tensioning strings are in a good condition for use
Ṣán òdì	Playing the opposite	Make mistake	

Outside of performance it is imperative for every *dùndún* musicians, old and new, young or elderly, to know how to make and repair a drum. The membrane of the drum wears out after some time and sometimes it tears open while in use. *Dùndún* drummers must know how to fix the membrane or fit a new one (see Figure 3). In fact, apart from the carving of the drum skeleton, which is a job of another family, every other aspect of drum construction must be known by every *dùndún* drummer. Coupled with this knowledge is the ability to tune the drum. 'Voice' is very important to each drum making up the *dùndún* family. Different voices include high, medium, low (for *ìyá ìlù*), and hard and soft, or male and female (for *gúdúgúdú* and *omele*). Hence, even though the *dùndún* drummer does not have a precise way of determining the exact pitch of any of the drums, through experience they are able to compare the voices of the instruments and determine when voices are blending with one another. Apart from the tuning done in preparation for performance or to distribute 'voice' parts, it is important for a *dùndún* drummer to know when the membrane is generally in shape for good tone production. Adjustment of voices is made on *ọsán* (the thongs): stretching the thongs from one end to the other produces a hard tone, while tightening a rope around the drum (to loosen up the tension on the thongs) and leaving it for some minutes or hours will give a soft tone. Besides learning to repair and tune drums, the need to have a personal drum and *òpá* (stick) is very important for any drummer as an individual shows his/her level interest and commitment when he/she possesses a personal drum.

Fig. 3: A drummer preparing the drum shell to make ìyá ìlù. Photo credit: author, January 2016

7. Conclusion

While the requirements for recognition as a *dùndún* musician is far from being exhaustive, the foregoing highlight common practices within the *dùndún* tradition which not only influence the making of a *dùndún* musician but also provide an insight into some factors influencing *dùndún* performance. This study is significant in that it provides an awareness of indigenous knowledge systems which can be useful in a modern educational context. Knowledge of teaching and learning process of the *dùndún* is beneficial for the classroom in sub-Saharan Africa as a contribution towards the clamour for the need to imbibe in the African child, the knowledge of the practices of his/her cultural heritage (Durojaye, 2011; Herbst, Nzewi, & Agawu, 2003; Mans, 2006; Nompula, 2011). This demand gave birth to a pragmatic curricula involving the integration of the musical arts and an African-centered music education in different countries (see for example, Ekwueme, 2010; Herbst, de Wet, & Rijsdijk, 2005; Mans, 2000; Nzewi, 2001). The demand for the indigenous also extends beyond music education to other subjects (Mawere, 2015; Shizha, 2014, 2015). Hence, the current methodologies in the classroom could benefit from a deeper understanding of indigenous knowledge systems and pedagogical principles of indigenous African music, through an encouragement of collaborative network between the indigenous and modern schools. Incorporation of such knowledge would not only promote multi-cultural music education in general, but also aid in the promotion and preservation of the Yorùbá cultural heritage.

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