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Documenting and Archiving the Nigerian Musical Arts: Notes on Methods, Processes and Practices

Oladele Ayorinde, Grace O. Talabi and AdeOluwa Okunade

Abstract

This paper explores musical documentation and archiving as central to an effective music scholarship and arts development in Nigeria. The available research on various aspects of Nigerian music, the overwhelming presence of creative outputs (like musical composition) and the emerging musical forms have not only valorised archiving as a key component of knowledge production, but also calls for critical engagements with these available works—for new knowledge and arts development. While there are efforts at institutional levels to archive the available musical works and research, the lack of ‘specialist knowledge’, infrastructure and theoretical models have frustrated rather than encouraged such efforts. Drawing perspectives from contemporary archival practices, experiences and theories, in this paper, we explore possible musical documentation and archiving frameworks and methods that could facilitate the transformation of musical arts research, artistic and creative practices for social, cultural and economic development in Nigeria. In so doing, we explain the political economy of the musical archive and its place in the nation’s developmental process, as well as its implications for individual institutions. Advancing from this, we engage more practical steps and methods that constitute a functioning archive and documentation practice. In sum, we argue that the transformation of music research, education frameworks, artistic and creative practices in Nigeria depends on a higher education agenda that takes seriously the role of music documentation and archiving in knowledge production.

Introduction

Archive as Access and Power-Relation: A Short Overview

It is now a common knowledge that functional framework for documentation and archives are crucial component of social intellectual frameworks. The functionality and constant appraisal of such a framework thus valorises documentation practices and archiving as institutions—where peoples’ social, cultural and economic realities are critically engaged and renegotiated. However, the underpinning idea of documentation and archiving is solely not about storing information or documents. Rather, it is more about critical processing of the claims that archival information embodies. And, this is the basis of Schwartz and Cook’s (2002: 3) argument that ‘remembering (or re-creating) the past through historical research in archival records is not simply the retrieval of stored information, but the putting together of a claim about past states of affairs by means of a framework of shared cultural understanding’. The performativity of claims about the past and its accrued social, political and economic potential for the future, according to economic anthropologists (like Guyer, 2004), thus not only situate archives as place of political and economic negotiation, but also as a site of power. This is simply because archives are

about choice (of what to keep) and access (to in-group users). As Swartz and Cook (2002: 3-4) suggests, the principles and strategies that archivists have adopted over time, and the activities they undertake—especially choosing or appraising what becomes archives and what is destroyed – fundamentally influence the composition and character of archival holdings and, thus, of societal memory. In this sense, we could suggest that archives themselves are not unproblematic space, as the idea of documentation is very much about exclusion and inclusion. It is about privileging—that is hugely shaped by ‘asymmetric power relations’, to borrow a term from Bourdieu (1984).

In the context of African music and its scholarship, the notion of documentation or archives is indeed a contested terrain, as it is shaped by the top-down power relation between the West (the metropolitan scholars) and Africa (the host and owner of archival cum scholarly content). In the second chapter of his seminal work, *Representing African Music*, Agawu (2003) provides a critical overview of the archive of knowledge about African music. Considering the asymmetric power relations that shaped knowledge production, Agawu explains that the contrast with (Euro-American based students and) African-based students and scholars in access to archive of knowledge is enormous. According to him, African students are not aware of the holdings (the archives and documentations on African music) outside Africa. In other words, ‘African-based scholars have little idea of the cumulative resources available for [the] study of their own music’ (ibid, 22).

The issues that Agawu raised is part of the deep-rooted top-down power relation that have shaped scholarships and knowledge production on and about Africa for decades. Although the implication of lack of access to archive of African musical knowledge manifests differently in different African societies. In Nigeria, the lack of access or non-existent of standard institutional musical archives has a gross negative implication on musical scholarship and musical arts education. This is simply because archives are site of ideological engagement and renewal. Like Agawu suggests, many students and scholars in Nigeria are equally naïve by the overwhelming musical resources available to them in Nigeria—simply because there is currently no functioning documentation and archival practice or tradition in our institutions.

Archival Practice and Scholarship through Akin Euba: A Short Appraisal

In the past there have been efforts and attempt at institutionalised musical archives at various departmental level—within the music departments and Institutes of African studies in Nigeria. However, these efforts are yet to materialised. Euba commented on one of such efforts:

The university archives have developed mainly from materials collected by research scholars working on specific projects. This is not an altogether satisfactory method of archiving and

there is a clear need for a proper archival programme whereby material is collected on a systematic and comprehensive basis. (Euba, 1976: 30).

Euba's perspective above is an excerpt from a 1976 article, published in one of the earlier issues of *The World of Music journal*. In this somewhat descriptive narrative, Akin Euba provides four possible models for preserving Nigerian music. He outlines creativity and performance, technical media, printed form, and education as the reliable means for preserving Nigerian music. Euba's suggested models for preserving Nigerian music is very instructive—in that it provides a lens to view the type of scholarly activities that laid foundations for music research and scholarly enterprise in contemporary Nigeria.

Euba's article could perhaps be read as one of the very first scholarly engagement with issues surrounding documentation and archiving of Nigerian musical arts. His prescriptions are still relevant to contemporary issues and could also serve as a good starting point for current discourse around documentation and archive—not only for Nigerian musical arts but also for the arts and culture industry. For example, in his second prescribed model, the 'technical media', the available technical resources [in the 1970s] for preserving and presenting Nigerian music includes radio, television, gramophone records, and film. According to him, there were five radio/television organizations situated at Lagos, Ibadan, Benin, Kaduna and Enugu—and all of them were under the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation's (NBC) headquarters in Lagos (ibid, 30).

According to Euba, apart from the broadcasting of Nigerian music, the NBC, through its various branches, also established what could be seen as the first devoted institutional documentation exercise. This institutional documentation framework thus became one of the pillars that laid foundations for African music research in Nigeria. This is specifically because most of the influential 'returnee scholars' 'rediscovered' their research interests through NBC's preservation and broadcasting frameworks. Euba explains that in the absence of a National Archive of Recorded Sound, Institutes of African Studies in the universities therefore became the main archival centres. As a result, at least two of these Institutes—those at Ibadan and Ife—established archives of sound and film. We currently do not have details on the development of these archives. More importantly, they deserve ethnomusicological engagement, for documentation and analysis of earliest attempt on sound and film archive.

Equally impressive and fascinating is Euba's rationale for establishing a music publication platform—an outfit devoted to the production of modern African art music and documentation of African music. In mediating the challenge of music publication in Nigeria, the University of Ife Press established a music publication series known as Ife Music Editions—the first three works of the series was published in July 1975. According to Euba, this initiative was necessitated by a need to create and encourage the documentation and circulation of written music, as well as publication of scores by African art music

composers (ibid.). As brilliant as this initiative seem, it did not survive beyond its infant years, there was (and still is) no proper documentation and managerial framework for the publication outfit and the already published series and works. We hope that the initiative will be revived and relaunched for the development of music documentation and publishing in Nigeria.

The implication of the somewhat collapsed state of the initiative is enormous, and it is partly the problem facing art music in contemporary Nigeria. For example, it would be almost impossible to do a mapping of modern African art music composition in Nigeria because there is presently no documentation of these practices. Most of the new compositions and creative works do not have proper documentation and they never get published by an institutionalised music publication firm. Those that get published loses their value through illegal circulation channels like photocopying—because lack of proper documentation and archiving practice has also made issues surrounding copyright, intellectual property right and plagiarism redundant in our society. And by extension, the implication for lack of institutionalised documentation is the impotency of ‘cultural policy’ in the society (if there is any) that could protect the creative and scholarly works of music scholars and composers in Nigeria. The issues surrounding copyright, cultural policy and plagiarism are indeed the most disturbing issues facing the development of music scholarship in Nigeria. These issues are far beyond the scope of this paper, they would be engaged elsewhere.

Considering the perspectives of Euba, it suffices to infer that Nigerian music scholars (especially from the 1950s till around 1980s) and music scholarship is overwhelmingly influential. This is not only for the legibility of their scholarship and knowledge production, but also about their influence in and on the society. We argue that this category of Nigerian scholars were and still influential and productive because they championed a scholarly cause that was (and still is) premised on preservation and circulation of Nigerian music in modern form. However, this generation of scholars did not create any template for documentation and archiving of Nigerian musical arts. The implication of this, as the situation presently is, is that extant music scholarship in Nigeria may not be visible within global discourse and may struggle to garner relevance at home. Like Agawu (2003: 23) explains, extant music scholarship from Nigerian scholars are also not accessible at home— due to the type of research framework and scholarly agenda that produced them. This is so because, as Euba acknowledges in the excerpt above, there is no proper documentation and institutionalised music archival practice in Nigeria— that could drive rigorous, critical and innovative music scholarship and knowledge production for social, cultural and economic transformation. In what follows, we provide preliminary discussion on the political economy of musical documentation, archival principles and basic steps to music documentation and archiving.

The Political Economy of Archive

Like any other aspects of cultural management, the political economy of archive is centred on the notion of power (Schwartz and Cook, 2002). That is, power to make records of certain events and ideas and not of others; power to name, label, and order records to meet business, government, or personal needs; power to preserve the record; power to mediate the record; power over access; power over individual rights and freedoms, over collective memory and national identity (ibid, 6). Central to the concern of power is the question of value. The idea of archive is premised on the notion of access. In other words, the archive should be accessible to its community.

According to Schwartz and Cook (2002), archives are established by the powerful to protect or enhance their position in society; in that the past is controlled through archives. In this case, certain stories are privileged, and others marginalised (ibid, 1). Schwartz and Cook points out that archives represents and controls enormous power over memory and identity, over the fundamental ways in which society seeks evidence of what its core values are and have been, where it has come from, and where it is going (ibid). Therefore, archives are not passive storehouses of old stuff, but active sites where social power is negotiated, contested, and confirmed (Schwartz and Cook, 2002; Lambrecht, 2016). Archives constitutes histories, and history tells people about their identity. Identity is broadly understood here as a process of social composition rather than a finite spectacle. As mentioned earlier, archival materials are not just papers or old pictures, they are the leading memory of peoples' past, and permanent legacy of the future.

In the Nigerian context, the question that begs for answer is: what is the relevance of musical archive, and why is it so important to scholarship and knowledge production enterprise in Nigeria? Archival holdings in the arts and culture could provide a veritable lens to negotiate peace amidst crisis—specifically because, arts and culture are pointers and embodiment of social, political and economic histories. A viable documentation and archival practice could produce historical knowledge, and such knowledge production could mediate potential political or social crisis—like what Nigeria is currently experiencing, 'crisis of rule' (Obadare and Adebani, 2016). While acknowledging the hegemonic tendency of archives, Swartz and Cook (2002) explains how archive could mediate peace in a society:

They [archives] can be a tool of hegemony; they can be a tool of resistance. They both reflect and constitute power relations. They are a product of society's need for information, and the abundance and circulation of documents reflects the importance placed on information in society. They are the basis for and validation of the stories we tell ourselves, the story-telling narratives that give cohesion and meaning to individuals, groups, and societies (ibid, 13).

In other words, archiving involves provision of records that can tell stories about events, people, and society. Archives, through institutional agency, has the ability to save or erase individual's history or even the history of an entire people. In this sense, arts and cultural archives constitute a major cultural

heritage and information resource that could influence social, political and economic changes in a country like Nigeria. Archives are incubation centres, a space where memory is created, contested, recovered and reinterpreted.

More importantly, archive produces a different kind of value. Archival value could be annexed through medium such as artefact, books, objects and information. The hallmark of any archival practice, we argue, is visibility and accessibility. That is, archives would only generate value through opening and accessibility—for critical and rigorous engagement by scholars and the public.

Archival Principles: A Short Overview of Theories

In his keynote address at the 2019 ANiM conference, Prof. Nwankpa has provided an insightful and yet significant details on archival theories—with a transcontinental survey of archival practices and histories. Anyone who is interested in such a carefully calibrated survey and analysis should read his paper in this publication. Building on Nwankpa’s survey, here, we provide a succinct preliminary practical guide and explanation on archival theory and practice.

Principle of Provenance

Discourse surrounding archival theory is predicated on two archival principles, namely, the concepts of provenance and appraisal—as these are the basic principles that laid foundations for other archival methods, practices and theories. On the one hand, *Appraisal* refers to the process whereby the so-called essential value or long-term preservation and potential use of records is determined, giving credence to the various selection practices in archives (Lambrecht, 2012: 16). On the other hand, *Provenance* refers to the original creator(s) of the documents. The ‘principle of provenance’ or the *respect des fonds* dictates that records of different origins (provenance) be kept separate to preserve their context (ibid.). The latter is very relevant to what we aim to explain here. In a practical sense, provenance relates to the personal organisation of the person that created and used a record for research, business or personal life. The principle of provenance requires that the record of one entity must not be confused or combined with the record of the other. This will be demonstrated in the next section below. Archival practice in audiovisual are also founded on the same basic principles of appraisal and provenance. This is because ‘the preservation of sound recordings requires archival arrangement and treatment similar, if not identical, to that which is considered appropriate to textual archives’ (Ward, 1990: viii cited in Lambrechts, 2012: 16).

Basic Steps to Music Documentation and Archiving

Advancing from Euba's perspective, as discussed earlier, here the basic approach to music documentation and archiving are covered, and they are i) data collection process, ii) data coding, and iii) archive administrative process.

Data Collection Process

The field of anthropology and ethnomusicological have provided a veritable ground for data collection as an important component of archival and documentation process. Considering this, researchers or potential curators therefore need to consider fieldwork proceedings and management as background to documentation and archiving of materials. Designing a research and its data collection process requires a careful way of dealing with recording and filming machinery and video—which are the general principles of data collection in ethnomusicological fieldwork. In the same way that 'all subsequent analysis and interpretation of data depends so heavily on fieldwork' (Nettl, 2005: 136). A carefully planned fieldwork recording does not only contribute to the success of a research report; it also provides credibility for such data in the archive for further engagement. Data collection, especially recording, is the most important aspect of musical research, and it is also the aspect that does not get attention or taught in our institutions. Other practical aspects of data collection like fieldnote, headnote and historical data are equally important aspect of documentation and archiving because they all constitute, in a broader sense, the idea of 'recording'.

As mentioned earlier, data collection is the first stage of any musical documentation and archiving. Music research, for example ethnomusicological research, 'requires orderly record-keeping, accomplished with an imposing list of mechanical aids—audio and video recorders, microphones' (Myers, 1992). Considering the ongoing changes in the technological world, it may not be possible to prescribe a particular gadget for field recording. This is simply because cell phones and sophisticated recording gadgets now exist and, in contrast to audio and tape recorders of the 1990s, there are also various handy or micro gadgets that could record as long as anyone wants to. Given this, apart from all the necessary institutionalized theoretical considerations, we suggest that the basics and basis for, and of African music data collection is recording. Therefore, considering the emerging digital humanities and Artificial Intelligence (AI), any Android phone could serve the purpose of recording in the data collection process. This is because the required video or picture resolution, in any smart phone, is inbuilt, and this makes it very easy for researcher to handle with little editing and data processing.

As soon as the data collection stage is achieved, the next step in musical documentation and archiving is data ordering and labelling. This process is also known as 'data coding', and it is done after the order of principle of provenance.

Data Coding

Data coding process starts as soon as the data has been captured through recording. In other words, the researcher labels all the data collected with number, date and a brief identification note about the contents. In whatever format the researcher chooses to use—cassettes, tapes, compact discs (CD) or digital audio tapes (DAT)—all the materials needs to be numbered in a chronological order. In most cases beginning with 1, in-sequence ordering according to topic, genre, musician, culture (and so forth), and this is done in cross-referencing. For example, IFE1/2015/DAT/13: (IFE1) is the name of the trip, (2015) is the year, (DAT: digital audio tape-field record) is the format, and (13) signifies tape number 13. Or, as an example, PHT5/004/CD/3: Port Harcourt, trip 5, 2004, Compact disc number 3, and so forth depending on the format chosen by the researcher. The need for labelling is simply to provide a description for proper documentation—as it gives the user a basic information about the year, place and, where the data is collected. The process and functioning of the labelling are what we earlier explained as ‘provenance’—which will eventually help researchers or archival users to gain deeper insight into the history and purpose of such data when it is finally documented in the archive. The process that we discussed here are exclusive to fieldwork recordings, it does not apply to printed materials like books or music sheet/score archiving. Printed materials like books, newspaper cuttings and music scores require a different approach. Nonetheless, this aspect is briefly discussed below.

Administrative Process

In arranging archives, archivists, curators and archival researchers use the term *descriptions* and *arrangement* when they are documenting archival collections. Basically, the administrative process explains the practical steps of archival management and access—after the data has been collected and coded. Below is a short but detail description of the administrative process.

Arrangement and Description: Arrangement is the process of organising archives in accordance with the set archival principles, as briefly outlined earlier—the ‘principle of provenance’ and ‘original order’. Description is the process of capturing information about archive in a standardised format— for example, in a data-based (online) or paper-based (manual or physical) format.

Provenance: As earlier explained, Provenance refers to the ‘origin’ or the person or body that created or received the records, either for business or personal activities. Each new accession of records represents a distinct unit, and the relationship of various items in this unit must be maintained. For example, an archivist or archive scholar will not mix Mr A’s document or music manuscripts with that of Mr B’s, regardless of any relationship or similarity between the two composers or scholars. Each collection, such as music manuscripts, books or photographs, would have its own storage requirements, archivists or collectors should be able to identify all the items in each collection and make them available when they are needed.

Original Order: the second theory or rule of archival arrangement is to preserve or recreate original order. That is, the order and organization in which the documents were created. For example, if composer A’s musical works and records are sorted into music manuscripts, concert photographs, and performance bulletins, then that would be the order in which the collection must be kept. Provenance and original order are the essential building blocks of archival arrangement.

Accession record: this is a document that is created by the archivists or archival researcher for a specific type of record. In practice, accession record is about noting the records' title, date, condition, conservation needs and provenance when the records come into the archives. Accession also includes rudimentary arrangement, description, and preservation of collections.

Documenting Archive

Archivist documenting provenance use enabling history to shape document organisation, or a brief biography—in the case of a person. In doing this, archivist or archive researcher then records ‘Original Order’ [explained above] using what is called ‘a series description sheet’. The individual archival items are then recorded in an inventory. Below is an example of Provenance, in a series description sheet or table. This example explains the type of information that is represented in a provenance.

Provenance for James Ologbon’s Research Fieldwork Notes.

Name:	James Ologbon Fieldwork Notes	ID No: A1088	
Start date	1950 [when the fieldwork begins]		End date: 1980 [when the fieldwork was concluded]
Previous:	NIL		
Subsequent	James Ologbon Fieldwork/Composition Record (A1089)		
History Note	[Background information of the content in the record or document]: This explains what is recorded in few words detailing the history of the fieldwork date, place, type of concert/festival/composition etc. In other words, the synopsis, abstract or description.		
Prepared by	Name of the researcher, archivist or curator that assembled or processed the information.		
Date:	Date prepared or date when the form was completed.		

Managing Archives: Collection, Development and Policy

One of the major components of documentation is policy. That is, the principle of managing issues like embargoes and copyright. Access to archival collections are govern by these two principles. Issues around copyright and restrictions on potential archival material meant that the collector, researcher or curator must decide on the focus of the archive—this decision also covers music focus, demographics and formats. For example, archival materials vary from one region to the other, and from one country to another, therefore climate condition (in the case of photographs, music manuscripts and books) needs to be considered in the documentation process. In other words, climate change, temperature, humidity and pest control system are among the condition that influences collection choice.

Documentation of archives requires different standards. In the case of music sheet/scores or books, for example, the material needs to be sorted according to relevance. This is followed by a description stage (we have explained this as ‘original order’). As mentioned earlier, provenance, origin of the collection, must be kept in mind in managing collection. This could follow the arrangement of collection in alphabetical and chronological order. In other words, curator or researcher would need to consider each collection according to its own merit—that is, works, context or history. Following this, the labelled and sorted files are kept in a box—where the material can be accessed by other researchers.

In the case of digitization for online open access, each of the materials will be scanned with a quality scanning machine. The original file structure or format, after scanning, is called ‘TIFF’ with 600 dpi (the resolution), while its derivative could be PDF or JPEG 300 dpi (depending on the choice of the archivists or scholar). The labelling or naming format in this process follows i) file name, ii) surname of the composer [in the case of music manuscript], iii) type of document [this could be music, book or photograph], iv) title of the work.

Archive policy is one of the important areas of archive management, in that it clearly regulates the usage of the archival collection. Policy may stipulate that archival collection may only be used within certain areas of the archive’s reading or study room. It could restrict the use of pencil on any of the collection materials, or forbid drinking, eating or sleeping within the archive premises. It could also limit photocopying, photographing, or scanning of archival documents to ensure preservation and security, respect copyright law, and suggest best practice and usage of the archive. Most importantly, policy may follow a strict rule or open rule where decision on acquisitions follows the host institution or organisation’s legal framework.

Summary and Conclusion

Drawing perspectives from contemporary archival practices, experiences and theories, in this paper, we have explored possible musical documentation and archiving frameworks and methods that could facilitate the transformation of musical arts research, artistic and creative practices—for social, cultural and economic development in Nigeria. In so doing, we provided a brief explanation of the political economy of the musical archive and its place in the nation's developmental process. Advancing from this, we have provided a preliminary discussion on practical steps and methods that constitute a functional archive and documentation practice.

Schwartz and Cook (2002) has challenged us to reconsider the function of archives in the society. According to them, scholars need to deal with two intimately related, but separately conceived themes: 'knowledge and the shaping of archives' and 'archives and the shaping of knowledge'. They argue that central to these themes is the exercise and performance of power—power *over* information and power *of* information institutions. Closely related to the notion of power is also the crisis of representation. That is, the power of records and archives *as* representations and the representation of power *in* records and archives. They contend that the postmodern destabilization of our bedrock concepts of reality, truth, and objectivity has placed both power and representation under close scrutiny. For them, archives and records are not immune to such scrutiny, and indeed our professional traditions, so dependent on notions of neutrality and objectivity, are unseated when postmodern concerns for situated knowledge, alterity, hybridity, liminality, and plurivocality are raised (ibid, 13-15).

The concerns that is expressed by Schwartz and Cook are also true for the Nigerian music scholarship and knowledge enterprise. As we have already outlined above, archives are dynamic and their essence cuts across diverse strands of relevance. Contrary to popular opinion, archive is not solely about preservation. Rather, it is a knowledge project—a project that is fraught with issues of power, inclusion and exclusion. If, according to Foucault (1972), knowledge is about power, then scholarship and knowledge enterprise in the Nigerian context cannot be apolitical. In other words, scholarship cannot be premised on the notion of 'knowledge for knowledge sake'. If not for anything, the current social, economic and political landscapes in Nigeria requires a music scholarship that can mediate and bridged the gaps in civic education. Such scholarly agenda can only flourish based on strategic documentation and archive initiative in the Nigerian institutions, especially, the music departments in the Nigerian universities.

Apart from the fact that tokenistic knowledge endeavours cannot equals a critical music scholarship, music education is not synonymous to music research. Music research is the foundation for an effective music education project. Research is the bedrock of any effective music education— simply because it

feeds, revitalises and bread essence into music knowledge enterprise. Therefore, we suggest that music scholarship should rather mediate development in the society— by engaging social, political and economic realities of the Nigerian society. We therefore urge Nigerian music scholars to consider documentation and archival project— through their compositions and research—that is socially sensitive and culturally competent to interrogate history.

As Euba (1976) demonstrates, the early generations of Nigerian music scholars valorised preservation of Nigerian music as a crucial aspect of their scholarly framework. However, their noble and novel approaches could not be sustained by the generation after them because they lack sustainable documentation and archiving framework. It is now common knowledge that the current music scholarship landscapes in Nigeria are choked because there is currently no known archive or documentation agenda that can provide access to historical resources, books, music manuscripts, journal articles, audio-visual materials, and creative initiatives—from the past. The transformation of music research, education frameworks, artistic and creative practices in Nigeria depends on a higher education and research agenda that takes seriously the role of music documentation and archiving in knowledge production.

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