

Liberty University

School of Music

**Orichas Roots of Latin American Music:
Syncretism, Music, and its Possibilities for Missionaries**

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Music

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Abstract

The African diaspora as a result of the Caribbean slave trade had long reaching consequences, specifically for the Ikwere people. Due to the Catholic Church's support and, at times, encouragement of syncretism, a new religion was formed. *Lucumi* tradition is based on the musical rhythms specific to the Orichas from Nigeria, referred to as Igboland, the term employed by the citizens. The Ikwere are one people group of many affected by the slave trade and had their religious practices transformed as a result. The Ikwere are focused upon due to their prominence as the majority of slaves from Igboland were Ikwere and their strong system of beliefs that led to the formation of *Lucumi* music. *Lucumi* tradition combined the rhythms of the Orichas with aspects of Catholicism to create a new religious form of musical expression. The rhythms were then adapted and used in Latin American popular music, separately, but still rooted in *Lucumi* tradition.

While there is documented study of the musical transmission as a result of the diasporic slave trade in the Caribbean, this paper will further explore the far-reaching implications of musical transmission among a displaced people and the effects this has on surrounding culture. Additionally, the exploration of current practice compared to historical practice among both professionals and practitioners will seek to display the changes that can occur in the transmission of a musical style from one people to another. New practice of Orichas traditions as observed by those in the field will provide further context not only for understanding this change but also provide a pathway for researchers and those working with displaced peoples to recognize change and adaption and utilize this knowledge in an appropriate manner.

Keywords: Ikwere, Syncretism, Orichas, Religion, Mission Work

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Chapter One: Introduction | 1 |
| Background | 2 |
| Statement of the Purpose | 4 |
| Research Questions and Sub Questions | 4 |
| Significance of the Study | 6 |
| Research Plan | 7 |
| Chapter Two: Literature Review | 9 |
| Introduction | 9 |
| History, Background and Religion of the Ikwere Peoples | 10 |
| Examining the Effects of the Slave Trade on Traditional Religious and Social Practices | 16 |
| Link Between Latin American Popular Music and Orichas | 22 |
| Summary | 23 |
| Chapter Three: Methodology | 25 |
| Sources of Research Materials | 26 |
| Research Plan | 27 |
| Potential Issues | 28 |
| Relation to the Hypotheses and Applications | 31 |
| Chapter Four: Research Findings | 32 |
| How did the mixing of different African cultures combine to create a new culture with a new musical and religious tradition? | 32 |
| What was the role of the Catholic Church in the development of <i>Lucumi</i> traditions? | 39 |
| Which forms of Latin American popular music still utilize rhythmic aspects of the calling down of Orichas? | 47 |
| Introduction to Part Two of the Research | 52 |
| What is the current state of the Orichas worship among the Ikwere people? | 53 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| How are missionary workers currently communicating with the Ikwere people through the allowance or disallowance of musical traditions, specifically Orichas rhythms? | 61 |
| Chapter Five: Conclusion | 71 |
| Relationship of the Results to the Literature Review | 74 |
| Limitations | 80 |
| Considerations for Future Study | 80 |
| Appendix | 87 |

CHAPTER ONE: PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH AND INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The effects of the African diaspora through the Cuban slave trade are felt widely through the Latin American musical world. Under the dramatic layers of rhythmic complexities, flowing dresses, bright colors, and hypnotizing movements lies an undercurrent of long-lasting effects of religious syncretism, danger, possession, and worship. The intoxicating rhythms of Latin American popular music are designed specifically to be so, as the original purpose of these rhythms was not to entertain, but rather to serve a religious purpose. The basis of much Latin American popular music is rooted in the rhythms originally derived from prayer and the calling down of Orichas to possess dancers and provide a vehicle of communication between humans and the gods in order to influence events and people. Exploring Latin American popular music requires exploring the musical traditions of the Ikwere people of Nigeria. The Ikwere comprised a large portion of the people forced into slavery away from their own cultural traditions. Their efforts to maintain cultural heritage and religion despite their removal from traditional lands, language, and people group--combined with the Catholic tradition at the time that allowed for, and in fact encouraged, syncretism--provided an opportunity for a new religious and musical tradition to grow. The goal of this thesis is to go beyond merely an understanding of the roots of this musical tradition and its transmission, but also to examine whether the Orichas worship tradition is still being practiced among the Ikwere and in what form. The aim is that this understanding may help those working with the Ikwere through missionary works better able to communicate with this people group and apply this knowledge towards achieving missional

goals. To attempt to understand a people, one must attempt to understand their culture and history.

Background

It is well known that the introduction of new peoples and cultures influences the traditional culture in a region. At times, the new influences could end up more significant than the existing musical and artistic traditions. African drumming styles specifically the Orichas rhythms, have influenced music around the world with their adaptations into the Santeria religion, Latin popular music, Latin liturgical music, and even into jazz, rock, and American popular music and traditions.¹ It is nearly impossible to hear a piece of popular music that has roots completely free from the influence of these rhythms and musical styles. As an exploration of the effects of diasporic events and syncretism, the music has once again adapted itself to the purpose of entertainment, far removed from its original intentions.

The Latin American slave trade introduced rich African drumming rhythms to Latin America. These rhythms were known as Orichas rhythms and each rhythmic pattern belonged to a specific Oricha.² An Oricha is a manifestation of Olodumare, the creator. These Orichas rhythms gradually transitioned into use in Santeria and found their way into Latin American popular music.³ The intent of this thesis is to trace the lineage of a sampling of Latin American popular songs back to the roots of the Orichas and the specific manifestation they represent. This

¹ M. Papenfuss, "Santería in Catemaco, Mexico," *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society* (2023): 378.

² Nathan Montgomery, "Santeria in a Globalized World: A Study in Afro-Cuban Folkloric Music," *Lux*. (Lawrence University Honors Project, 2018), 123.

³ Papenfuss, "Santería in Catemaco, Mexico," 375.

topic is of interest for anyone interested in music pathways across nations and cultures, and the way each culture may adapt and change the original inspiration to suit their own needs.

Discovering how this happens naturally may aid those in mission positions better adapt their processes to more closely mirror the natural progression of intercultural musical change.

In addition to specific rhythms, each Oricha also has its own color associations, representative numbers, and items. Dance is also a major part of the Oricha rhythms. When all aspects are combined, it creates *Lucumi* music. These can then be traced further forward and backwards Songo music, which then broadens even further into popular dance and harmonies.⁴ In tracing this musical worship style backwards, we examine the traditional religion and society of the Ikwere. In following the path of this musical transmission forwards, new musical genres are developed, along with modern research styles. While it is difficult to find only one narrow example to focus on, this research will directly trace the adaptation of Orichas rhythms within the context of syncretized Catholicism. The adaptations of Orichas rhythms, combined with Catholicism, creates an interesting dichotomy as there is a combination of strict musical meaning and religious adaptation which branched off into its own religion but retained the roots of its original intention.⁵ Popular music usage could then be linked either to Santeria or the originating *Lucumi* traditions, and it may prove difficult to identify which route was followed.

It is commonly believed that Orichas rhythms were a way for slave communities to continue their religious traditions without interference by the culture of their owners in Latin America. Instead of purely being an expression of religion, the musical tradition took a turn into

⁴ Montgomery, "Santeria in a Globalized World: A Study in Afro-Cuban Folkloric Music," 25-26.

⁵ Papenfuss, "Santería in Catemaco, Mexico," 378.

Santeria, where Catholic Saints were reimagined as Orichas. This then became its own religion separate from Orichas worship, but still sharing the same roots.⁶ The understanding of traditional drumming elements may not be in the forefront of those listening to Latin popular music specifically, but aspects of the Orichas rhythms can still be found. The drums followed speech patterns and phrases, played on three sacred Bata drums.⁷ These same drums are found in the Songo rhythm, which is heard very clearly in Cuban Rhumba music. Rhumba music then exists separately from its origin but is linked deeply at the same time.

Statement of Purpose

The intended purpose of this research is to go beyond strictly a tracing of musical lineage and to delve further into cultural effects of diasporic events through the lens of one cultural tradition. Exploration of the events surrounding the roots of Latin American popular music provide a window into history. In addition to furthering understanding of historical events and contexts is the application of this research into modern uses that could help mission workers approach the Ikwere people from a place of understanding. This understanding would go beyond history and tradition to study how these traditions may be affected and influenced. While the focus will not be specifically on mission goals, knowledge of how musical ideas are adapted and translated by other cultures could aid missions around the world in better adaptation of their processes in a more natural manner.

Research Questions

To determine the effects of the blending of differing African cultures in the creation of the *Lucumi* traditions, the history and necessity of that blending needs to be studied. The role of

⁶ Montgomery, "Santeria in a Globalized World: A Study in Afro-Cuban Folkloric Music," 1.

⁷ Montgomery, "Santeria in a Globalized World: A Study in Afro-Cuban Folkloric Music," 16.

religion, both as a result of a large-scale diasporic event and as a combination with existing Catholic practice should be researched. The current effects of those events should be researched to determine which practices remained constant and which were further adapted to a modern popular application. Lastly, the current state of Orichas worship and its role in the context of the current Ikwere peoples should be examined to determine how their needs may be met by those in the field. The research questions of this project are as follows:

R1: How did the mixing of different African cultures combine to create a new culture with a new musical and religious tradition?

R2: What was the role of the Catholic Church in the development of *Lucumi* traditions?

R3: Which forms of Latin American popular music still utilize rhythmic aspects of the calling down of Orichas?

R4: What is the current state of the Orichas worship among the Ikwere people?

R5: How are missionary workers currently communicating with the Ikwere people through the allowance or disallowance of musical traditions, specifically Orichas rhythms?

Hypotheses

As a result of the research questions above, the following hypotheses may be examined more closely to determine if the research will prove these theories. Based on current research developed and explained in the literature review, the following are entered in as possibilities for this research to explore. The current practice of Orichas worship and practice among the Ikwere people may be assumed to be ongoing. However, the context of that worship may have changed over time from the traditional practice that shaped the development of *Lucumi*.

H1: The lack of cultural unity and language forced the slaves in Cuba to develop methods of communication based on shared traditions. These shared traditions helped create a basis for community building, strengthening of ties, development of a new religion adapted from traditional Orichas worship and Catholicism.

H2: The encouragement of the Catholic Church of syncretic elements allowed the Orichas to still be worshipped, but under the names of Catholic Saints. The further encouragement of local worship groups to meet without an oversight by the Church allowed the *Lucumi* tradition to grow beyond the limits of what the Church would normally deem acceptable.

H3: Latin American popular music utilizes Orichas rhythms and surrounding traditions in *rhumba* and *salsa* based musical forms and dances. These musical elements occur often times without an understanding of the roots of the music and the meaning of the associated colors and religious elements.

H4: The Ikwere likely still worship Orichas in a similar way as they did at the time of the African slave trade diaspora. They may have pushed this worship under cover again due to outside influences such as missionary groups and globalism.

H5: Mission workers may be more aware in modern times than they were historically of the dangers of syncretism in religious practice and what may be acceptable or unacceptable. This may allow them to communicate in a more understanding and clear manner with the Ikwere people to achieve goals related to health, safety, and education.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research is in the study of musical migration through the slave trade and other examples of emigration. This research could also be applied to educational settings when teachers are tasked with students from many different cultures and provide them with a starting point of study in musical and cultural adaptation. An additional aspect to this research is the importance of culture and religion on groups of peoples, even after they have been force-ably moved and dispersed from their original locations.

The African slave communities were united over the drumming traditions and provided them a link to their home countries and culture that was not extinguished by their removal from the region itself.⁸ It could be speculated that similar beginnings to Santeria and Latin popular music may be starting in countries with a high number of refugees. While the focus on

⁸ Montgomery, "Santeria in a Globalized World: A Study in Afro-Cuban Folkloric Music," 16-17.

globalization in the world now is different than hundreds of years ago, large movements of peoples and cultures continue across boundaries as refugees from war, climate, religious persecution, and due to economic need. These refugees bring their own culture, artistry, and musical traditions to a new country and the effects of this will likely be seen in music progressions in these new countries as well. Understanding methods of keeping musical and artistic traditions alive in a dispersed community may also help in healing the people who are displaced. The need for this healing and link to culture is what initially brought the Orichas rhythms from Africa and the further dispersal of the peoples contributed to the mass expansion of the musical and artistic traditions.

Research Plan

Biases exist, as they exist in most forms of study, of inserting the researchers' own thoughts on the subject and finding evidence that supports those thoughts, instead of the evidence leading to theory. Studying a culture that is not the researcher's own could lead to a misunderstanding of the significance of an aspect of this music, so taking steps back and questioning whether a hypothesis is truly based on evidence or just a cultural assumption is of utmost importance. This could be combated by conducting interviews with practitioners of Lucumi, Santeria, and Latin popular music. These individuals would have a deeper understanding of how they are influenced on a cultural and personal level by the rhythms of the Orichas. Audio and video recordings can also help understand the use of this music in its appropriate context, rather than in a performance setting. Performance settings can, at times, neglect cultural origins of an art in order to focus on virtuosity of the performer and relation to an audience. Studying *Lucumi* as a whole, with all aspects of music and dance combined, can only give a clearer picture of this religious and cultural art form.

Research for this thesis will involve the studying of historical documents; viewing and listening to audio and video recordings of Orichas worship in both traditional and modern toque ceremonies; descriptions of such events by practitioners and participants; and cultural snapshots of the Ikwere people developed by those currently working with them in Nigeria. A combination of information from these sources can provide a well-rounded picture of this musical event and allow for answers to the research questions. Considering the multiple methods of research required to paint a picture of a subject that has much variation, the research methods require a multifaceted approach. Each research method must be compared to other methods to avoid research-related missteps and assumptions based on studying only one aspect of the subject.

It is a complicated issue to attempt to draw conclusions of modern traditions based on historical events. The additional difficulties in the form of few reliable historical accounts, hidden practices and the illegality of the *Lucumi* practice at various times, and the nature of creating a study based on predominantly outsider perspectives require that research be done carefully and with an open mind towards conclusions. The importance of the study in providing a window into the effects of cultural diaspora and potential effects of globalization on other cultures add to the significance of this research. Lastly, providing the Ikwere people with respect and admiration for their traditional culture and noting the effects they have had on modern culture can bring to light the struggles of other cultural groups. In the following chapter, a review of the literature will offer a glimpse into the current state of research on these subjects.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Understanding the significance of Orichas worship music and how the transition from a religion practiced in Western Africa to the roots of Latin American popular music involves in depth study of the cultural origin of not only the people who practiced the traditional religion, but also how the culture moved and was adapted to suit both colonialist needs and oral transmission of religion and history through the practice of slavery. Orichas worship is one aspect of religion of the Igbo people, which encompasses most of modern Nigeria. The Ikwere people will be the focus of the study of this transmission. Not only have the Ikwere people been one of the originators of Orichas worship, but they have also resisted modern attempts at missionary outreach. A thorough understanding of the religious practices and cultural demographics are necessary for the hope of successful outreach.

This literature review will cover existing research and history pertaining to the Ikwere, Orichas, syncretism, and the combination of diasporic events which became the roots of both the Santeria religion and Latin American popular music. Following the background on the Ikwere-- including a historical, religious, and anthropological overview-- the effects of global events will be examined. These global events include influences from Western missionaries, and the major diasporic event of the slave trade. The forced assimilation of various people groups into one larger community will be examined through studying the *cabildos* and the syncretizing of Catholicism with the traditional Yoruba religion, which includes the rhythms of Orichas worship. An examination into historical and modern *toque* ceremonies will follow, along with a look into the rhythms of Orichas being utilized in non-religious settings.

History, Background and Religion of the Ikwere Peoples

The Ikwere people in Igboland, commonly referred to as Nigeria, have an ancient and storied history that has seen traditions changed and adapted through colonialism, the slave trade, and globalization. In respect to the heritage of the Ikwere people, the region of Nigeria from which they originated will be referred to as Igboland, and the whole of the country will be referred to as Nigeria. Before Nigeria was colonized, it was a mix of many different cultures, ethnic groups and languages with loose ties to one another. While there are many estimates and ways of grouping people, generally anthropologists agree on three main people groups, the Igbo to the East, the Yoruba to the West, and the Hausa-Fulani to the North.¹ This is an oversimplification of the number of ethnic and language groups currently identified. Modern studies have identified up to 250 additional ethnic groups and up to 394 language groups.²

The Ikwere people are historically from the Rivers State area of present day Nigeria. This region includes Port Harcourt, Ikwere, Obio/Akbor, and Emohua.³ Igboland was affected immensely by the slave trade with some estimates stating the 75% of all slaves brought to the West originated from there. The Western Igbo communities practiced slavery amongst themselves, sometimes as a form of punishment for those who committed crimes against *Ala*, the earth god. These crimes could include homicide, incest, and stealing crops. If restitution could not be paid, the perpetrator was enslaved. Northern Igboland suffered the most amounts of raids

¹Blessing Nonye Onyima, "Nigerian Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Challenges and Prospects," *OGIRISI: a new Journal of African Studies* 12 (2016):274.

² *Ibid.*, 282.

³ Wellington O. Wotogbe-Weneka, "Burial Rites and Reincarnation in the Indigenous Tradition of the Ikwere People of Upper Niger Delta" *African Indigenous Religious Traditions in Local and Global Contexts: Perspectives on Nigeria* (2015): 217.

by slave traders and as a result had many forms of resistance including the use of weapons, guerrilla warfare, group protection practices, and the use of drums to communicate as early warning systems.⁴ Those people who lived along riverbanks and in coastal towns were traded frequently and even participated in slave raids on other tribes. This is the area where the Ikwere people traditionally resided. Southeastern Igboland was a location for religious pilgrims due to its oracle and as a result was respectfully not raided by other people groups. In Igboland, a new tradition began which honored men who killed slave raiders through “dance forms with the *ese-ike* drums (drums of men of prowess) normally played during burial ceremonies of respected elders.”⁵

After colonization, an attempt was made to group the peoples into one culture which resulted in rivalries and conflict throughout Igboland. Many different peoples were grouped together based on their locations and misunderstandings of cultural practice. Due to colonization, the people of Igboland learned to adapt and assimilate their religious beliefs with those of other tribes and cultures and also those of Christianity, which missionaries brought with them.⁶ The Ikwere culture, similar to other Igbo cultures, is one of oral tradition. The history, lessons, morals, and religions of its people are passed down through stories from one generation to the next. Ikwere culture is a gerontocracy, in which the elders have the highest positions in society and are “considered closest to the ancestors”.⁷ When missionaries arrived, they threatened the

⁴ Sylviane Diouf, *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Struggles* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), 127.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁶ Onyima, “Nigerian Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Challenges and Prospects,” 278.

⁷ Rowland Olumati, "Religious Functionaries (Priests, Kings, Medicine Men, Diviners and Oracles) In Africa," *American Journal of Social and Humanitarian Research* 3 no. 10 (2022):174.

heritage of the Ikwere people by stealing artifacts, destroying symbols of their religion and culture, and forcing the children and youth to attend schools that deeply affected the oral transmission of their history.⁸ Children who attended and graduated from these schools caused damage to the culture from within and they refused to participate in and actively disrespected the culture of their parents and elders.⁹ Colonial missionaries “behaved like social revolutionaries, plunged into condemnation and eradication of traditional religion, traditional music and dance, and drama and song were denounced as immoral.”¹⁰ Actions such as these contributed to religious and cross cultural conflict between the Ikwere people and other ethnic groups, as well as members of their own culture.

A rich part of the culture that did survive colonialism, though in a somewhat syncretised manner is the worship of the Orichas. Oricha worship traveled with slaves from the Igbo region to Cuba and Haiti where these practices formed the roots of *Lucumi* music, *Yoruba* religion, and Santeria. Musical aspects of the Oricha worship became contextualized into modern society and can now be found as rhythmic basis for popular Latin and World music. Traditional religion in Igboland and among the Ikwere people is multifaceted. The Ikwere religion allowed for change and adaptation and it may not be possible to find the roots of every religious practice. The main practice of the religion include worship of a god titled Olorumare, nonhuman spirits, such as the Orichas, and ancestors.¹¹ Olorumare is considered a “Supreme Being, the controller of the world

⁸ Chukwuma O. Okeke, Christopher N. Ibenwa, and Gloria Tochukwu Okeke. "Conflicts between African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Eastern Nigeria: The Igbo Example," *Sage Open* 7 no. 2 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017709322>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

and all that is in the world.”¹² They do not use shrines to Olorumare as the Ikwere believe he lives above the sky. Additional deities include “*Ala* the earth goddess, *Ufiejioku* the god of agriculture, *Idemili* the god of water, and *Agwu* the god of medicine, divination, and possession.”¹³ Religious experience and expression are not only the responsibility of the priests in Ikwere culture, but it is believed that everyone lives fully religious lives and that while their destiny is guided, they may build their own futures and experiences.¹⁴ As stated by Okeke, “The individual is immersed in a religious participation which starts before birth and continues after death, for the life of an Igbo man is like a religious drama, which vitally links the living with the ancestors and those yet to be born in a mystic continuum.”¹⁵ Burial rites and treatment of the dead is very important in Igbo culture and if the burial rites are not followed exactly, it is believed that the dead will wander in a purgatory-like plane until the burial rite is performed properly.¹⁶ As a culture that believes in re-incarnation of ancestors through newborns, the Ikwere do not believe in eternal judgement, only a never-ending cycle of life and death. This can contribute to grudges and vendettas between families as the young are told stories of how they were wronged in a previous life by another family. Other aspects of Igbo religion include “Cleansing the town of pollution and desecration, the institution of slavery, human sacrifice, killing of twins, taking of oath and trial by ordeal, first and second burial for the dead, long

¹² Okeke, "Conflicts between African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Eastern Nigeria: The Igbo Example"

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

mourning period for widows, and practice of polygamy.”¹⁷ The Ikwere believe dancing and drumming could summon deities and ancestral spirits to possession and used the *nkwa* drum or *ugele* gong to facilitate this communication.¹⁸

The cultural heritage of the Ikwere people, similarly to other cultures in Igboland, is endangered. “Efforts at preserving heritage are obstructed with challenges of trafficking and exportation of arts, thefts and looting of museums, vandalism, iconoclasm, Christianity, civilization, commerce, change, and developmental projects.”¹⁹ Heritage refers not only to tangible traits, but intangible ones as well.²⁰ As an oral culture, much of Ikwere history is intangible and without elders to pass down history and willing young people to receive it historical knowledge can disappear. Certain endangered aspects of Ikwere culture include proverbs, dances, poetic forms of orality, incantation, songs of worship, and traditional religious practice.²¹ Social structures are also an important part of heritage and speaks to the traditions of persons and positions of respect in a society. In the case of the Ikwere, this is seen in the reverence of elders (*ohna*), priest lines passed from father to son (*ekpere*), and priestesses. Additionally heads of the kinship groups referred to as *nye-vu-oro* are important aspects of the culture and transmitters of history.

¹⁷ Okeke, "Conflicts between African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Eastern Nigeria: The Igbo Example"

¹⁸ Rowland Olumati, "The Impact of Christianity and Modernity on Ali-Earth Goddess of the Traditional Religion of the Ikwere People, Rivers State, Nigeria," *African Research Review* 9, no. 1 (2015): 97-99.

¹⁹ Onyima, "Nigerian Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Challenges and Prospects," 274.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 275.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Early attempts at missionary work in Igboland were met with considerable resistance. Through heavy-handed tactics, missionaries attempted to destroy parts of Ikwere culture that were counter to the bible. The resulting practices were a mixture of traditional religious practices and also syncretism with the Christian church.²² Some similarities can be found between Ikwere religious practices and Christianity including the framing of Olorumare as a symbol of “justice, righteousness and truth.”²³ While a few members of the Ikwere people converted to Christianity and in fact there have been Ikwere bishops of the church in modern times, the adaption of adaption of Christianity has been met with much resistance both historically and presently. Examples of successful work includes the Christian church allowing the Ikwere people to play their own instruments during worship, sing songs in their own language, and use traditional objects in their worship.²⁴ The Ikwere and Christian church traditions believe in sacredness of water (holy water) and the symbolic use of oil for purification purposes. The Catholic church used “candles, water, sand, oil, masks, and palm fronds to enculturate Christianity in Igboland.”²⁵

Some aspects of Ikwere religious practice were not able to be contextualized into the church and can be seen as one of the roots of many failed missions. The Ikwere believe in the importance of naming ceremonies where a diviner is tasked with choosing a name for a newborn child. These names can be based on seasons, cultural events and historical events.²⁶ The colonial

²² Okeke, “Conflicts Between African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Eastern Nigeria: The Igbo Example”

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Rowland Olumati, "The Anglican Church And Intercultural Communication Among The Ikwere Of North Eastern Niger Delta Region Of Nigeria," *African Cultural Personalities in a World of Change: Monolithic Cultural Purity and the Emergence of New Values* (2018): 86.

²⁵ Ibid., 93.

²⁶ Ibid., 88.

missionaries forced those who were baptized to choose Christian names. This caused the family and the child great disrespect and caused conflict even between family members. A particularly strong example of conflict between the Ikwere people and colonial missionaries involves sacred animals. The Ikwere believe in *Eke* a sacred python. The killing of the python is forbidden, and anyone who does kill a python will be “hunted by a mob, ostracized, and not given an honorary burial”.²⁷ Christians and converts began killing pythons as they did not see themselves as needing to follow the rules of the traditional culture. Beyond this, they put the heads of the pythons into boxes which, when opened by an Ikwere person, caused them to need to perform a cleansing ceremony on themselves. This example caused one of the first conflicts among the religions.²⁸ Other areas of conflict involved sacrifice, polygamy, bride prices, and the honorary titles in the community. Traditional ceremonies including manhood ceremonies are secretive and caused considerable conflict between Christian converts and their traditional families. Not participating in these rites can result in ostracization for entire families due to the society and traditionalists believing they will be punished by the ancestors.²⁹ For the church to be successful, the cultural aspects and importance of title need to be remembered. Early steps in this direction are the addition of the Knights of the Church. This gives the Ikwere an opportunity to be provided with titles as is customary, but does not work against the teachings of the church and conflict with the faith of new converts. As stated by Olumati, “The conversion of man should not

²⁷ Okeke, “Conflicts Between African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Eastern Nigeria: The Igbo Example”

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

be regarded as a break at whatever cost with his past and with his tribal religion, as if to make a kind of dichotomy between light and shadow, between what is holy and what is perverted.”³⁰

Examining the Effects of the Slave Trade on Traditional Religious and Social Practices

As the context for present day struggles with reaching the Ikwere people has been explored, the research will now go back to the slave trade in order to study how the Ikwere religious traditions travelled across the Atlantic and became the root of genres of Latin popular music as well as the building blocks for the Santeria religion. Slave ships began transporting slaves from Igboland to Cuba in the 1500s. Between 1517 and 1761 over 60,000 slaves were imported to work in the sugar and coffee plantations. From 1761 until 1838, an additional 400,000 slaves arrived.³¹ As stated previously, up to 75% of the slaves were from Igboland, many of them with Ikwere cultural roots. Slaves were not permitted to overtly practice their religion. However, they were permitted to play music and sing. An escaped slave described life in the slave barracks as “containing magic and religious practices. Sundays were characterized by drumming all day from noon.”³² Unbeknownst to the slave owners, drums were frequently used as part of Igbo culture to communicate with and call down deities and ancestors for protection and prayer, as well as maintain an important role in birth and death rites. An aspect of African religion that led to the incorporation of the syncretic Santeria, is the belief that religions

³⁰ Olumati. “The Anglican Church and Intercultural Communication Among the Ikwere of North Eastern Niger Delta Region of Nigeria,” 99.

³¹ Christine Ayorinde, "Santería in Cuba: Tradition and Transformation," *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (2004): 77.

³² *Ibid.*, 118.

can adapt other religions and change. This allowed the worship of Orichas to adapt to Christianity without losing sight of its historical cultural heritage.³³

An additional source, often cited as the true root of Santería is the practice of *cabildos*. *Cabildos* were originally started under the guidance of the priests to teach Catholicism to slaves in the late 1500s.³⁴ The Catholic Church encouraged the syncretism of *Yoruba* religion, a local name for African religions, and Catholicism. The Church allowed slaves to use traditional drumming and dancing in their worship, not knowing that they were in fact encouraging the slaves to hide their own religious beliefs under the guise of Catholicism.³⁵ The *cabildos* was sometimes referred to as “Folk Catholicism” and focused on the worship of saints using home-based alters, as opposed to consulting with priests and attending Mass. Instead of an entryway to Christianity, *cabildos* became a refuge for traditional African religious practices. In addition to the adoration of ancestors, the *Yoruba* religion based out of Igboland, worships the Orichas. The traditional religion has a primary god, titled Olorumare, and Orichas that may intercede for people and are called down to possess practitioners during ceremonies to provide guidance.

Through the syncretism of Catholicism and *Yoruba* religions, each Oricha became identified with a Catholic Saint. Each Oricha also has its own rhythm that is played on sacred *bata* drums during ceremonies, and its own *pataki*, a mythological story of when the Oricha visited Earth.³⁶ The stories of the *patakis* are a method of orality that transmits them between the

³³ Christine Ayorinde, "Santería in Cuba: Tradition and Transformation," *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (2004): 213.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 215.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 212.

generations. Some examples of the Orichas and their saint counterparts are as follows:

Olorumare, sometimes referred to as Olofi, is the supreme divine being and the creator of Earth. Olorumare requires intercession through the lesser Orichas and does not speak directly to humans. Elegua represents cheerfulness and controls luck, both good and bad. Elegua is represented by the number three and is associated with the colors black and red to represent life and death. The saint association for Elegua is St Anthony of Padua and St Martin de Porres. *Toque* ceremonies often begin with a offering to Elegua, either candy for small problems, or a sacrifice for larger issues.³⁷ Oggun is the Orichas represented by iron and metal objects, especially weapons. The number associated with Oggun is seven and he wears green, purple, and black. Oggun is associated with violence and is called down when justice needs to be served. His associated number is three and he wears violet, green and black. The Catholic saint associated with him is St. Norbert.³⁸ Shango is the “King of the Orichas” and is the “deity of music and owner of bata drums”.³⁹ Shango wears red with white fringes and is identified by the number six and St. Barbara. Yemaya is the queen of the sea and salt water. She represents all mothers and mother earth. Her colors are blue with white fringes. She is associated with the number seven and the Virgin of Regla. Oya is considered a gatekeeper for the dead and is represented by the number nine. Her associated colors are a mix of all colors and her associated saint is Our Lady of Candelaria and also St. Teres of Lisieux.⁴⁰ Ochun represents Cuban womanhood and is represented by the color white that has turned yellow. She is represented by the number five and

³⁷ Christine Ayorinde, "Santería in Cuba: Tradition and Transformation," *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (2004): 215.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 217.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

the associated with the Virgin of Charity. Obatala is the “King of the world and head of Orichas”.⁴⁹ He wears white and is represented by the number 5 and identified with Our Lady of Ransom. Babalu Aye is represented by the numbers thirteen and seventeen and is associated with St Lazaro of the Crutches and the Dogs. Lastly, Orula is the Oricha of divining. The job of Orula is to decide if a devotee will be a *babalawo*, a priestly figure, or not. He is associated with the number sixteen and St Francis of Assisi. While the *eggun* are not Orichas, but rather the dead, they are an important part of *toque* ceremonies and are revered. As the Ikwere religion believes strongly in ancestor worship, the *eggun* are important for conveying the needs of the living to the Orichas. The *eggun* are called upon first at the beginning of any *toque* ceremony.

An important point to make before discussing the development of Santeria is that those who practice Santeria see themselves as Catholics. The Catholic Church, however, sees them as coming from the devil.⁴¹ In the 1790s, there was an attempt to stop *cabildos* parades and festivals as they were seen as a threat to Catholicism. Santeria was then hidden from the public and practiced in secret until the 1940s. At that point, it was no longer punished as a crime. In the 1950s a concert performance of a *toque* ceremony to Shango was performed publicly.⁴² Soon afterwards, in 1959, the Marxist revolution outlawed all religion in Cuba in an attempt to turn it into an atheist nation. In the 1970s, Fidel Castro allowed the acceptance of African art forms and culture and recognized them as important to Cuban identity. In the 1990s religious freedom was

⁴¹ Christine Ayorinde, "Santería in Cuba: Tradition and Transformation," *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (2004): 212-216

⁴² *Ibid.*, 222.

once again allowed in Cuba. Books with descriptions of Santeria and *Yoruba* practices were published and sold. *Toques* were once again permitted in public.⁴³

The modern *toque* ceremony is a mixture of *Yoruba* and Santeria practices. The *toque* ceremony begins with the *Oro seco* the call of the Orichas to listen. This is done in private with no attendees. After the *Oro seco*, the Orichas are listed in a specific order. As people hear their personal Orichas, they approach the sacred bata drums. During *toque* ceremonies, three drums are played by *tambuleros*. The drums are shaped like an hourglass and represent social classes. The smallest part represents the lowest in society, the middle section represents the middle class, and the largest part represents kings. The head of the bata drum represents the celestial bodies of sun, moon, and stars. Sacred bata drums are not allowed to touch the floor, must be “fed” by the *tambuleros*, and may not be polluted by being touched by women.⁴⁴ The three types of bata drums played during a *toque* are the *Okonkolo*, the smallest drum, *Iya* the largest drum, representing the mother, and *Itotele*, the middle sized drum that represents the hands and feet. The role of the *iya* drum is to speak directly with the Orichas and the role of the other two drums are to intercede on behalf of the people.

During the *toque*, when attendees hear the rhythm of their personal Oricha, they approach the *tambuleros* and lie down on the ground in front of the drum. Then they touch their forehead to it and kiss the drum. The hope of the attendees is that if they dance properly, they will be possessed by their Oricha. During these dances, an *Akpwong* (lead singer) calls out a phrase and

⁴³ Christine Ayorinde, "Santería in Cuba: Tradition and Transformation," *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (2004): 222.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 209-230.

the attendees respond. This continues throughout the toque.⁴⁵ The dances of the attendees are representative of the various mythologies of their Oricha and attempts to tell the story of their last day on earth. These elements are also used in traditional Ikwere culture. However, they do not have associations with Catholic saints.

Modern practice of Santeria and toques varies little from traditional presentations. However, the popularizations of the toque have led it to become more prevalent as representing cultural heritage rather than a religion. Toques are now performed for tourists and are represented in popular music in Latin America.⁴⁶ The rhythms still have roots in the Orichas, but the text no longer only tells stories of mythologies but rather is invented and composed to tell stories of modern experience.

Link Between Latin American Popular Music and Orichas

Orichas rhythms may be found in wide applications of Latin American popular music, such as the of the samba, rhumba, and bolero genres. While traditional *bata* drums are not used for these modern dance-centric musical styles, the bongo drums stand in their stead. The bongo drums are pitched, with contrasting high and low tones, and played with different styles of finger strikes resembling the *bata* style of drumming found in the worship of Orichas. Without the religious connections, however, they have become an adept replacement. The smaller of the bongos is the *macho*, which coincides with the lower pitched head of the *bata*. The larger bongo is called the *hembra* and plays the higher-pitched sounds. Drumming of Orichas rhythms requires

⁴⁵ Christine Ayorinde, "Santería in Cuba: Tradition and Transformation," *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (2004): 264.

⁴⁶ David Font-Navarrete, "Writing Orisha Music: Text, Tradition, and Creativity in Afro-Cuban Liturgy," *Religions* 12, no. 11 (2021).

both high-and low-pitched sounds to be played on the *bata* in various rhythms and patterns depending on which Oricha is being called. While the focus of this study is on the use of Orichas rhythms in popular music unrelated to conscious religious practice, it is important to also be aware of Orichas rhythms and the *toque* ceremony being performed as a combination of popular music and Orichas worship. Aside from genre-wide usage, such as for samba, rhumba, and bolero, where the roots of the rhythms may be hidden or even not acknowledged, there are groups who perform modern renditions of the Orichas rhythms. One such performance group is El Chacal who combines traditional *toque* ceremonies with modern Latin music expression in their video “Shango”.⁴⁷ The video for “Shango” begins with a view of a traditional *toque* where the singer arrives while the caller, known as an *akpwong* is playing the Eshu/Ellegua rhythm to ask for intercedence. This is known as the *oro seco*, a privately intoned prayer that begins each *toque* ceremony. The singer then kisses the mat placed in front of the *bata* drums to show reverence. Imagery in the video is of a number of Orichas wearing traditional colors of red and white, yellow, purples and greens, while the singer himself wears white. White is considered a sacred color in the *Yoruba* religion and is worn by Obatala. The colors of the other Orichas are worn as accents to represent all the different paths Obatala and of humanity.⁴⁸ While the singer is proclaiming his love for the gifts of the Orichas, the music changes abruptly from consisting of only *bata* drums and beads, to electronic drum machines and modern instruments utilized in Latin American popular music. The basic rhythm continues while the reggaeton style beat plays over creating a polyrhythm which is characteristic of both traditional African music and the *que*

⁴⁷ Font-Navarrete, “Writing Orisha Music: Text, Tradition, and Creativity in Afro-Cuban Liturgy”

⁴⁸ “*The Orichas*,” University of Indiana
<https://legacy.cs.indiana.edu/~port/teach/205/santeria2.html#:~:text=Obatalá%20is%20the%20source%20of,represent%20his%20Fher%20different%20paths.>

ceremonies. The video shows the singer dancing surrounded by Orichas until Shango, represented by wearing red and white and holding a double-sided ax, places a necklace of red and white beads on the singer. This symbolizes Obatala following the path of Shango in this instance, as well as the success of the *akpwong* in calling down the personal Oricha of the singer. The video ends with images of crowds of people wearing street clothing dancing and singing in the streets. This example provides a view of the Orichas being worshipped in a modern style as with new modern elements added onto traditional toque ceremony practices.

Summary

The history of the Ikwere people and the transmission of their cultural heritage worldwide through the rhythms associated with Orichas and *Yoruba* and Santeria religions provide an excellent base for cross-cultural understanding. The culture of the Ikwere needs to be viewed through the lens of historical colonialism, missionary work (successful and failed), slavery, and the important social standing of the elders. Aspects of Ikwere culture were transmitted throughout the world as its Orichas rhythms are found throughout Latin popular music. Through proper contextualization and understanding of the role of Orichas especially as they relate to musical practice and ancestor worship, the Ikwere people may be reached, as is shown by the presence of three Ikwere Bishops. The knowledge of the role of the Orichas and separation of *Yoruba* from Catholicism can give lessons and guidance to mission workers in the region, as well as others working with the Ikwere. Being aware of the ever-present worry of syncretism and its long-term effects should be something in the forethought of every mission worker currently working with the Ikwere. Lastly, this paper will seek to provide a further level of understanding for those hoping to understand how diasporic events and globalization may affect a population in both the near and long term.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will focus on approaches to research. While there are limited options available for in-person research, there are numerous options for readings, recordings and other sources. A brief discussion of methods followed and sources available will give an overview of this research's direction. This information could be utilized as a springboard for future studies on this and similar topics.

This topic can best be researched by scholarly articles on the African diaspora in Cuba, Orichas rhythms in southern Nigeria, the transition of Orichas into *Lucumi* music, the roots of Santeria, the roots of Latin popular music rhythms, and finally articles on adaptations of traditional musical genres into building missionary goals for a culture. It will be important to balance historical with modern research in order to better identify and understand areas of potential bias and misconstrued findings. Comparing modern research with historical research can help to paint a clearer picture of not only historical time periods, but also compare changes in understanding and discoveries. Additionally, video and audio recordings will be necessary to attain a full picture of what is happening in these musical and religious events. The audio and video recordings may provide the purest picture of what happens during rhythmic prayer to the Orichas as well as help in understanding the role of this musical practice in *Lucumi*, Santeria, and popular Latin Dance. Consulting these recordings through the lens of ethnomusicological study will be important in mitigating against incorrect observations and conclusions. To understand the needs of the missionary communities in southern Nigeria, various mission groups currently working in that area will be contacted. These mission groups will have a greater understanding of the needs of the community and how best to communicate respectfully with the Ikwere peoples

of southern Nigeria. Finally, government and public health information will be consulted as well in order to research specific goals and possible applications of this research.

Sources of Research Materials

The University of Miami has a collection of research on Afro-Cuban Music that discusses current musical practices and origination. This source will be valuable in finding scholarly articles on this subject. Scholarly articles will likely be the main starting point for academic research on the specific musical practices in question. They will also be useful in gaining more understanding of the Santeria religion, how it ties to the Catholic Church, and its perceptions among those who practiced it historically as well as in modern contexts. While this is not a primary research question, it does aide in understanding the musical and religious adaptation as a whole, which will be important when researching possible Christian applications of the Orichas Rhythms. The Joshua Project, based out of Colorado Springs, has many resources available regarding unreached groups of people around the world, including community profiles. These could be studied to give a clear picture of the needs of peoples and missionary groups in southern Nigeria that have traditional ties to the Orichas. The Joshua Project has identified the Ikwere peoples in southern Nigeria as in need of missionary work, as 80% are unreached. The Joshua Project is also in need of a cultural profile of the Ikwere peoples that may be aided with this research. The work of missionaries in other regions of southern Nigeria will be studied through the Joshua Project so that a plan may be made for possible implementation of this research.

Musical recordings of Orichas rhythms in ceremonies in Nigeria may be found through the Smithsonian Institute Collection, specifically the *Yoruba/Dahomean* Collection. The Library of Congress offers archive recording through its National Jukebox collection that may be useful

for study of Afro-Cuban *Lucumi* music. In addition to the Library of Congress, Indiana University offers an archive of traditional music with recordings of Santeria music. Non-scholarly music services may also be utilized for context. Onwuegbuna offers archives of original cylinder recordings of southern Nigerian music traditions that will be helpful to consult when comparing traditional usage of these rhythms to a practical mission application, as well as offering a comparison to *Lucumi* music after the movement of the peoples from Nigeria to Cuba.¹

Research Plan

There are three main parts to this research. The first part is the study is the exploration of the Orichas themselves, including the specific rhythms and drums, the colors and symbols, and the meaning and history of each. The information gathered for this section will be comprised of scholarly articles and historical recordings. The second part of the research will focus on the actual application of these rhythms and their usage in Santeria, in order to answer the question of how these rhythms found their way into Latin American practice of Santeria and popular music. This will involve scholarly articles, historical recordings, and modern recordings. The third main section of research involves the application for missions with the Ikwere peoples. This is a very extensive aspect of the research as first the needs of the culture need to be determined, followed by a study of how the missions in southern Nigeria are progressing. Finally, the findings will need to be presented in a practical fashion for missionary groups to be able to follow. This section of research will require scholarly articles on the Ikwere people, articles on missionary groups in Southern Nigeria, studies of successful contextualization of the Word of God to

¹ Re:Entanglements. *Nigeria/Sierra Leone/Re-Engaging with Colonial Archives in Decolonial Times*.
website: re-entanglements.net

peoples in that area and understanding the importance of avoiding syncretism so the message can come through unadulterated.

Potential Issues

The study of musical influences is multifaceted and includes not only tracing the sounds, in this case rhythms, of the music, but also the historical movement of the people who transmit and those who receive the music. Additionally, the reasons behind the transmission and adaptation are important. Researching the needs of the receiving culture should be studied intensely to answer the question of which particular need the adaptation of the Orichas rhythms fulfill, both socially, religiously, and secularly. Potential issues with this project include the aspect of the research being too broad, there may be a need to narrow the field down to one or two main Oricha rhythms to study. Careful study will be required, as well as developing a checklist or criteria to make a determination of which elements are found in different applications of these rhythms and beyond that, into representations of color, number, sacred object, and dance.

While historically ethnomusicology was often approached through a colonial mindset and at times nationalistic and ethnocentric viewpoint, the information in historical writings could be prove valuable if it is read and studied through the appropriate historical lens. It will be important to not fall into the trap of some early ethnomusicological research and instead try to find historical archive recordings, and ideally historical writings from a number of different researchers. In order to not draw conclusions inappropriately, the question of ulterior motives in writings will need to be explored. The topic of this paper leads itself to the dangers of interpretation instead of reliance on pure facts. Anytime a paper is written about a population who was not able to speak for itself, in this case the subjugated people in slavery caused African

diaspora and the indigenous cultures of Cuba and Latin America, outside listeners and researchers are at risk of unintentionally influencing their own understanding on a subject and potentially tainting the evidence with their own thoughts. Peer reviewed journals, articles, and books can help to mitigate this risk.

Things get more difficult with audio and video recordings as the context of the recording may have caused the people to perform their music or ceremonies in a certain way, knowing they were being recorded. Evidence needs to be based on true and authentic experiences, not performances for the purpose of a camera or recording device. Cultural heritage centers in the countries themselves may have more authentic recordings than collections outside of the country, depending on who the original researcher was and what their goal was in the recording. Once all information is gathered, checked and cross checked, then it could be considered accurate enough to be included in the paper. A failure to do so may continue to spread incomplete understanding and misconstrued ideas of culture and peoples and set research developments backwards, instead of forwards.

While some methods of data collection for this thesis are straightforward, other collections may be more difficult. As *Lucumi* and singing to the Orichas has been banned at multiple points through history,² there may be a lack of desire for cultural informants to share information and experiences. Gaining trust with those who are being worked with in a more direct manner, such as interviews, will be highly important. The gathering of historical data related to diasporic events may cause information to be difficult to trace with full surety, at which time an educated interpolation would become necessary. Names and locations may be

² Natalia Bolívar, "The Orishas in Cuba," *Afrocuba: An Anthology of Cuban Writing on Race, Politics and Culture* (Melbourne, Victoria: Ocean Press, 1993), 137.

obscured, and people groups become linked together, though historically they would have no connections to each other in a non-diasporic event. This could cause research to show connections that would be inferred as common to multiple groups of people, when they are, in fact, only common in one culture, but the blending of cultures may lead specific cultural events and practices to be assimilated within other groups. When tracing a cultural event, this could cause a flawed finding.

Addressing these concerns through detailed methods of research, including historical writings, modern writings, the use of maps and genetic mapping, as well as attempting to trace roots of the Orichas specifically, not only in a broad sense, to the Ikwere could combat potential pitfalls in research. Gaining the trust of those being interviewed and ensuring that they do not feel as though they are in danger is important to the effort of accurate answers to questions. If fear is present, the answers may not be honest, which could cause a flaw in the research findings. While a complete understanding of cultural practices would be a goal, realistically, this research will be focused on one very small aspect of the Ikwere people, *Lucumi* tradition, and Latin American popular music. Ideally, there would be a great fluency with all aspects of a culture to where the perspective blends insider and outsider approaches, however, it will be beyond the scope of this thesis to do so. As such, the problem of assimilation of cultural activities and then attempting to trace back to origins may prove difficult if not treated carefully and with multiple sources that point to the same events. This could help protect the research from cultural anomalies, when attempting to study a cultural norm.

Relation to the Hypotheses and Applications

The hypothesis states that syncretism itself was an important driver in the development of Latin American popular music. The research for this thesis and to further develop the hypothesis will be qualitative, with data collected from historical documents, recordings, interviews with practitioners, and current recordings of modern *Lucumi* applications. The research questions to be answered include exploring the extent of the role of religious syncretism in the development of Santería, which in turn spread the music of the Orichas from religious practice to secular applications. The second research question that will be answered is an examination of the rhythms of the Orichas themselves. A study of transcriptions and audio and video recordings will provide a basis for this portion of research. The third aspect of this research is to provide examples of particular modern Latin music pieces where the Orichas rhythms are prominent.

From a pedagogical standpoint, this research will provide an insight to educators and students regarding the transmission of music through diasporic events. Events such as the slave trade are no longer as common as previously, however, more common events such as immigration of refugees could potentially result in similar occurrences. It is also hoped that the missionaries working in the Igbo region with the Ikwere would utilize this research to form a better understanding of cultural practices within the people group and form an effective approach to the attainment of mission goals.

CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter will approach each research question and hypothesis presented in Chapter One individually. The topic for each subheading is a research question and the associated findings, followed by an in depth exploration of the hypothesis. The information in this chapter expands the current research by drawing pathways and conclusions that have not previously been explored and offers opportunities for this research to be put into practice by those working with the Ikwere people and other displaced people groups.

R1: How did the mixing of different African cultures combine to create a new culture with a new musical and religious tradition?

It is important to note that while the origin of *Lucumi* music is considered the result of the African diaspora due to the slave trade, there did not exist one cohesive group of people that contributed to the development of *Lucumi*. Many areas in which slaves were imported utilized people from one region. This meant that many areas had one type of culture the slaves followed, one language, one religious base, and even entire family groups.¹ As a result, there existed the possibility of carrying on certain traditions and practices from the people group's country of origin, as well as the possibility of preserving some remnants of their language, even though the speaking of it was outlawed in some locations. Morgan also points out that in comparison to other countries, Cuba stands apart by importing a large number of male children, as opposed to adults and women. In fact, the estimate is that up to 35% of the slaves brought to Cuba were male children. According to Morgan, "The Cuban African population had the potential for the

¹ Philip D. Morgan, "The Cultural Implications of the Atlantic Slave Trade: African Regional Origins, American Destinations and New World Developments," *Slavery and Abolition* 18 no. 1, (1997): 123-124.

greatest loss of culture and language specific to particular African regions.”² The people arriving in Cuba were not only a large percentage of male children, but also hailed from many different tribes and locations in Africa with at times only sparse similarities between people groups. According to Morgan, no single country in Africa “supplied more than about 30 percent of arrivals to either Cuba, Barbados, Martinique, Guadeloupe, or the Danish Islands.”³ What would have resulted is a mix of different people, cultures, and languages. As a result of this mix of languages and cultures, combined with the young age of the slaves themselves, a combination of elements was in place to create a new congruent culture among the slaves as a way to deal with their new living situation and lack of traditional and cultural stability. As previously mentioned, the Ikwere social structure relied heavily on the worship and honor of the elderly and ancestors. In this new culture, there were no ancestors tied to the lands, and there were likely no elderly either. This pulled the foundation of traditional culture out from under the newly arrived slaves in dramatic fashion.

While there was considerably more variation in the origins of the people who arrived in Cuba as a result of the slave trade, there began to emerge some patterns of ethnic and geographic origin. A relatively dominant people group would be the Ikwere, who were from Igboland, currently known as Nigeria. This people group combined with other ethnic groups from Igboland and surrounding areas is estimated to have been the cultural roots for up to 75% of the total slaves in Cuba.⁴ As the dominant group, it could be reasoned that cultural traditions held by the Ikwere and other related ethnic groups were adapted by those from other tribes and people

² Morgan, “The Cultural Implications of the Atlantic Slave Trade: African Regional Origins, American Destinations and New World Developments,” 127.

³ Ibid., 125.

⁴ Ibid., 126.

groups. Some of these cultural practices included the worship of ancestors, the belief in possession and multiple deities, the usage of command language, and the usage of talking drums. Talking drums were utilized in Igboland as a non-verbal method of communication that followed the natural speech patterns and allowed for coded talk between the slaves that would not have been understood by outsiders, in this case the Catholic priests and the slave owners. As a necessity for communication and an attempt to continue cultural traditions, the dominant Ikwere traditions, including the usage of Orichas rhythms for prayer and worship, would have been followed by those peoples who did not traditionally practice this particular religion.

As it was illegal for slave populations to learn to read, write, or even speak their own language, there needed to exist some other way to maintain cultural traditions. Recent studies suggest that the word *Lucumi* and *Yoruba* themselves are used to describe a language that is actually a combination of dialects with small connections to one single language in Igboland.⁵ This suggests very strongly that traditions and languages were combined into new traditions and languages as a result of the different geographic origins of the slaves in Cuba. The *Lucumi* language that is spoken is based most closely on a few different dialects in the *Yoruba* language group. It is an important note that *Yoruba* and *Lucumi* can refer to multiple things. They can both refer to an ethnicity, a language, a dialect, a people group and a religion.⁶ When linguistic experts have attempted to trace the roots of the *Lucumi* language and dialect used in Cuba to a traditional dialect of either *Yoruba* or *Lucumi* in Africa, they are met with dead ends.⁷ This

⁵ A. Villepastour, "The Cuban Lexicon *Lucumí* and African Language *Yorùbá*: Musical and Historical Connections," in *Handbook of the Changing World Language Map*, eds. S. Brunn, R. Kehrein (Cham, Switzerland, Springer 2020), 2577-2600, 2579.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2576.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2583.

suggests very strongly that even the language and dialect used between slaves is a mix of remembered languages and dialects that may have a common root, but have become so mixed that they are their own language.

People who have been removed from their traditional geography, whether through events such as economic strife, political reasons, war, genocide or slavery often seek to retain aspects of their own culture in a new place and set of circumstances.⁸ It stands to reason that this desire would have also been felt by those who were force-ably removed due to the slave trade. The need for communication is a large part of the human experience, but the restrictions and difficulties placed upon the newly arrived slaves did not allow them this human need. Beyond the difficulties of blending cultures and traditions between people groups that may have had little or no previous contact with one another, the additional illegality of even speaking traditional languages or participating in traditional ceremonial events would have caused a huge need for some other manner of unity. The musical traditions, while varied from people to people, were able to be practiced without much interference from the Catholics or the slave traders at the time.⁹ The use of talking drums as a basis of this music was one of the likely reasons why it was able to be practiced without interference. The participants would have been able to pray and communicate messages through the use of pitched drums, or other instruments that took their place. Pitched drums, such and the *dundun* and the *bata* were traditionally used in multiple cultures and people groups throughout Igboland, so this would have been a tradition that spoke even to the young male slaves that were in Cuba.

⁸ T. Singleton, M.A.T. de Souza, "Archaeologies of the African Diaspora: Brazil, Cuba, and the United States," in *International Handbook of Historical Archaeology*. Eds. D. Gaimster, T. Majewski, (New York, NY. Springer 2009): 449.

⁹ Ayorinde, "Santeria in Cuba: Tradition and Transformation," 215.

A result of this need to communicate and build a community were the *cabildos*. *Cabildos*, originally known as *cabildos de nacion* or *cabildos de africanos* were “civil institutions that helped Africans to adapt to their new environment by providing practical assistance, a decent burial for the dead, and the gathering of funds to buy freedom for slaves.”¹⁰ Ayorinde speculates that the *cabildos* began as groups of people from the same cultural background binding together, but not united with those of other backgrounds as a method for the slave owner to potentially control rebellion. Later, these cultural boundaries broke down as a majority of people from Igboland arrived in Cuba.¹¹ These groups met at night, after work was completed, and were likely the roots of the *Santeria* religion.

The groups practiced drumming, singing, and prayer under the guise of Catholicism. What was unknown to the Catholic priests at the time was the importance of the drum rhythms themselves. As each deity had its own drum call and dance, the people were able to pray to those deities without interference. These groups also served an important purpose of creating a sense of unity and companionship amongst a people group that were subjected to traumatic diaspora with the need to develop a new sense of community. The resultant mixing of not only languages and traditions but also different styles of Orichas worship may have contributed to the ease with which the *cabildos* members were able to adjust their own worship to absorb the additions of aspects of Catholicism into their practices. If there had been keepers of tradition in these groups, the blending of religious traditions may not have occurred. The fact that the religious traditions were left to be carried on by mainly young men without the oversight of the ancestors provides some weight to this point of view.

¹⁰ Ayorinde, “Santeria in Cuba: Tradition and Transformation,” 210.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 210-211.

The importance of the *cabildos* for both preserving traditions and languages as well as providing a vehicle for assimilation of different people groups in Cuba cannot be underestimated.¹² These *cabildos* were comprised of people who would meet privately and assimilate their language and religious traditions with those of the Ikwere and combine them with the religious traditions of the Catholic priests. This religious practice became known as *Yoruba* or *Lucumi* and contained not only elements of Orichas rhythms and worship, but also had elements of Catholicism through the syncretism of Orichas worship and the worship of Catholic saints. These *cabildos* answered the need of a people who were displaced and lost their own traditions in the merge with the more dominant traditions of the Ikwere and other groups from Igboland.

These *cabildos* retained their importance even after that slave trade as they became established as community centers and centers for religious practice. Schmidt describes their importance as a vehicle to survive “the long periods of oppression.”¹³ These *cabildos* helped preserve aspects of traditional Orichas worship among displaced peoples and also led towards the development of one identity as a people, instead of a group comprised of many different identities. This new identity was referred to as “Lucumi-ship” and helped provide a foundation for new cultural traditions.¹⁴ The *cabildos* gradually morphed into “*Casas de Santos*” (House of the Saints) and provide support services for former slaves. This illustrates the importance of the

¹² Ayorinde, “Santeria in Cuba: Tradition and Transformation,” 210.

¹³ B. E. Schmidt, “The Creation of Afro-Caribbean Religions and their Incorporation of Christian Elements: A Critique against Syncretism,” *Transformation*, 23 no. 4, (2006): 238

¹⁴ Ibid.

cabildos in not only the period of time during the slave trade, but also how they were able to maintain their importance even after the end of slavery.

Through the *cabildos*, the practice of drumming the Orichas rhythms became a major element. This need for communication and religious blending resulted in *Yoruba* and led to the *Lucumi* musical traditions. Not only satisfying the need of a people group to communicate in the same language, but also in the same religion, despite differing origins, the *cabildos* provided a vehicle for the development of a new set of roots and traditions for people and cultures from many different locations in Igboland and the rest of Africa. If the slave trade had developed through the culture of only one people group, there may not have been a need for producing a new religion and traditions and as a result, the *cabildos* may not have been as present or important in the lives of the slaves. The desire for roots, personal connection through shared experiences, and a way to seek understanding of their situation may have contributed greatly to the development of the *Lucumi* musical traditions and its further development of *Santeria* in Cuba.

The hypothesis which addressed the first research question outlined in Chapter One, claimed:

The lack of cultural unity and language forced the slaves in Cuba to develop methods of communication based on shared traditions. These shared traditions helped create a basis for community building, strengthening of ties, development of a new religion adapted from traditional Orichas worship and Catholicism.

The research has shown this hypothesis to be true. In the instance of the displaced peoples in Cuba, the development of *cabildos* supports the conclusion that a lack of one unifying tradition created the need for the creation of a new tradition. This tradition fulfilled a few of the basic needs of a displaced people including a sense of community, commonality in religion, and

a common musical practice. While the slave trade brought people from many different locations and with differing cultural practices to Cuba, this need for a sense of community and way to continue religious practices grew into a new cultural practice that included singing, drumming, and praying. This new practice then grew and became a new important cultural element to the people affected by the slave trade. Eventually the *cabildos* became a stand-alone activity that, while rooted in Orichas worship practiced by the Ikwere, suited the needs of many different people as a response to their displacement. The singing, praying, and drumming that was practiced in these gatherings eventually became the root of *Lucumi* music, and in turn Latin American popular music, and the Santeria religion.

R 2: What was the role of the Catholic Church in the development of *Lucumi* traditions?

The role of the Catholic Church in the development of *Lucumi* tradition cannot be overstated. Schmidt describes the differences between the Caribbean slave trade and the slave trade in other location by pointing out that in countries ruled by Catholic kings, they considered themselves representatives of the pope.¹⁵ This led to

Spanish colonies ruled as Catholic units, and the Catholic Church was the only religion allowed in the Catholic colonies. But this also led to the rule that on Sunday and on the main Christian days the slaves would be allowed to go to Church. They were also allowed to organize small festivals in honor of a Catholic saint. All meetings of more than three slaves outside the work process were prohibited, but the Catholic Church enabled slaves to create their own social space.¹⁶

In an attempt to force the displaced people in the Caribbean to assimilate and become Christian, they supported the creation of the *cabildos*. These groups were permitted to practice

¹⁵ Schmidt, “The Creation of Afro-Caribbean Religions and their Incorporation of Christian Elements: A Critique against Syncretism,” 237.

¹⁶ Ibid.

religion and worship in their own manner, under the eye of local priests. As a result of the strong desire for conversion of the Ikwere and other displaced peoples, there was little attention paid to what was actually happening in these groups. A lack of knowledge of traditional religious practice among the Ikwere and those from Igboland allowed for traditional deities to still be worshipped, but under the guise of Catholic saints and religious figures. An example of this is described by Joan Dayan in Schmidt's article. In *Yoruban* mythology, Dambala is represented as a snake. During possession in *toque* ceremonies, the affected people slither on the ground and hiss. Dambala, however, is also represented as Saint Patrick, who was known for driving the snakes out of Ireland. While this appears to be in opposition, the story of Saint Patrick as being captured and forced into slavery appears to more truly be the reason he is associated with Dambala. The connection is not only based on the meaning of the saint and the Oricha, but also on the story that surrounds both.¹⁷

The renaming of the Orichas as saints allowed for the displaced people to still worship and practice the *Yoruba* tradition without objection. Rodriguez describes *cabildos* as “place(s) of entertainment where African slaves reunited every Sunday to dance and chant to their Orichas behind the back of the Spanish people.”¹⁸ While originally the *cabildos* utilized figures of the traditional *Yoruba* religion, the Catholic church outlawed them which, in turn, forced the participants to worship their deities secretly.¹⁹ The members of the *cabildos* then hid the worship of their own deities and replaced them with images of Catholic saints. This worship, while at first

¹⁷ Schmidt, “The Creation of Afro-Caribbean Religions and their Incorporation of Christian Elements: A Critique against Syncretism,” 239.

¹⁸ Omar Rodriguez, “Afrocuban Religion and Syncretism with the Catholic Religion,” <https://scholar.library.miami.edu/emancipation/religion1.htm>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

created as a reaction to rules against the practice of traditional religions, became a way to worship secretly until it merged into its own religious practice where the Catholic saints and the various Orichas were conflated into one being. The description of the conflation of Dambala and Saint Patrick is one example of a Catholic Saint being not only associated with, but fully syncretistic with an Oricha, however, there are many other examples as well.

This was a near perfect example of religious syncretism. Syncretism is always a risk for those participating in mission work as it may look on the outside as practicing Christianity, but is, in fact, the practice of a different religion either at the same time, or secretly. There are other examples of syncretised religions. These include Shango Baptism, practiced in Trinidad and Tobago, Voudou, practiced in Haiti, Sufism in India, and Rastafari in Jamaica.²⁰²¹ These are all examples of religions blending into new traditions and worship styles, each with its own unique influences and origins.

A few things make the *Yoruba* religion and the Orichas worship particularly well suited to syncretous relationships with Christianity. The *Yoruba* tradition involves what is known as “command language.”²² Command language involves requesting special favor or deeds from a deity in exchange for different types of worship or offerings. For example, one may pray to a deity for good luck and graces similarly to praying to God, or for the intercession of the saints for peace or guidance. The similarity between command language and prayer is one boundary that could easily blur. A command language prayer begins with what is called an *ofo*, a call for

²⁰ Minnesota Libraries Publishing Project, *World Religions: The Spirit Searching Syncretic Traditions*.

²¹ Schmidt, “The Creation of Afro-Caribbean Religions and their Incorporation of Christian Elements: A Critique against Syncretism,” 236.

²² Oyèrónké Olájubù, “The Influence of Yorùbá Command Language on Prayer, Music and Worship in African Christianity,” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 14, no. 2 (2001): 173

intercession.²³ In *toque* ceremonies, this is similar to the call to Ellegua to intercede and between humans and the deities. This may have been comparable to the Catholic practices of praying to the saints for intercessions. Not only is Command Language considered an invocation, it also follows a poetic form that could be compared to a litany or a chant, depending on the desired results. An example of a Command Language prayer is provided by Olajubu.

At daybreak, I met the chameleon on the leaf.
 It went with the leaf;
 At daybreak, I met the hippopotamus beneath the river
 It betrayed the water and went with the waters
 At daybreak, I met the rich one in town.
 He plucked the leaves at the apex and went with the masquerade
 Which makes divination for Ironron.
 May my personality-soul assist me to have money.
 Ironron
 The money I have is not enough for me.
 Ironron
 Personality-soul continue to assist me,
 Ironron.²⁴

The meaning of the prayer is described as beginning with a call for Alagemo, known as the chameleon to listen. This is the invocation part of the prayer. Following the invocation is the request for assistance in gaining more money and a description of another who has a lot of money. This provides a basis for the request. Ironron would likely have been the name of the person reciting the prayer.²⁵ A Christian version of this prayer is included by Olajubu in his

²³ Olájubù, “The Influence of Yorùbá Command Language on Prayer, Music and Worship in African Christianity,” 174.

²⁴ Ibid., 175.

²⁵ Ibid.

writings which showcases the similarities between traditional Command Language and African Christian Command Language.

In the name of Jesus
 In the name of Jesus
 In the name of Jesus
 In the name of Jesus
 Good Father I beg thee
 Good Father I beg thee
 Good Father I beg thee
 In the name of Jesus
 Father pray for your child.
 Perform wonders in his life.
 In a miraculous way
 Water gets into the coconut.
 Make the miracle in your child's life a wonder
 Hear us, you who hold authorities in heaven
 Jesus our Lord
 Amen.²⁶

This African Christian prayer follows the same pattern as the command language prayer described above. It begins with invoking the name of Jesus and the Father. Following the naming of Jesus, it describes a grounds for the request, “In a miraculous way water gets into the coconut”²⁷ Afterwards, a request is made for a miracle to enter the life of the person praying. This example above proved some evidence that beyond the influence of the *cabildos* and the Catholic Church, there were other reasons which may have caused the *Yoruba* religious traditions to easily be combined and absorbed into *Lucumi*.

Another aspect of tradition *Yoruba* practices in the *cabildos* was drumming. The utilization of drumming and rhythms allowed those participating in the *cabildos* the opportunity to continue their traditional prayer in secret, as the drumming language was not known to the

²⁶ Olájubù, “The Influence of Yorùbá Command Language on Prayer, Music and Worship in African Christianity,” 176.

²⁷ Ibid.

priests who had oversight, though lax, over the groups. Drums were not only used to play the rhythmic patterns associated with specific Orichas but also had the ability to mimic language by utilizing three distinct pitches that closely resembled the three pitches used in Igbo and other Yoruba based language groups. The addition of the use of colors and secret symbols, such as tools or other associated objects, created an even further depth to the layers of syncretism that was possible.²⁸ What set the *cabildos* themselves apart was the encouragement of the practice by the Catholic Church. This support and encouragement allowed the syncretism to continue until the point that the *Yoruba* religion essentially merged completely with Catholicism and created the new religion of Santeria.

The unchecked practice of the *cabildos* eventually created the Santeria religion, which is historically rooted in the drumming of the Orichas rhythms. Followers of *Yoruba* tradition were able to continue their religious practices without interference and with little outside knowledge. Once the Catholic church discovered the effects of their unintended support of the *Yoruba* religion, they outlawed the *cabildos* and attempted to outlaw the musical tradition associated with *Yoruba*.²⁹ As a result of the attempts to halt this tradition, the blending of *Yoruba* and Catholicism created an even more complex system of hidden codes. Certain colors or objects associated with Orichas could be found in or near the *cabildos*. The meaning of these items would not have been known to those outside of the group, which kept them safe from disturbance by the priests. The coded drumming patterns in the *cabildos* then became part of the cultural lives of the people that allowed them to pray to and call down their deities through the

²⁸ Ayorinde, "*Santería in Cuba: Tradition and Transformation*," 212.

²⁹ Morgan, "The Cultural Implications of the Atlantic Slave Trade: African Regional Origins, American Destinations and New World Developments," 140.

secret language of their rhythms. The Catholic church did not understand this utilization of the drums and it was able to continue undeterred until the drum patterns became part of the cultural landscape, removed from the original utilization of private and secret worship.³⁰

The *Lucumi* tradition itself is one of drumming, dancing, prayer, possession, rituals and trances. The word “*Lucumí*” refers to the Spanish word for the *Yoruba* people. Where *Lucumi* differs from *Yoruba* is in the blending of traditions. *Yoruba* refers more specifically to religious practice of those from Igboland, as the Ikwere are. *Lucumi* is the blend of religious practice from multiple cultures that blended as a result of the creation of *cabildos* and the displacement of different people groups and traditions. *Lucumi* then went further underground and became linked with the practice of worshipping Saints, in a reflection of the prayers of the Catholic priests. The result of the Catholic involvement -- creation of *cabildos* and the forced practice of “Catholicism” created *Lucumi* and later Santeria.

The hypothesis put forth states:

The encouragement of the Catholic Church of syncretic elements allowed the Orichas to still be worshipped, but under the names of Catholic Saints. The further encouragement of local worship groups to meet without an oversight by the Church allowed the *Lucumi* tradition to grow beyond the limits of what the Church would normally deem acceptable.

This hypothesis was shown to be correct in detailing the importance of the Catholic Church's involvement in the creation of what would later become *Lucumi* and the Santeria religion. Beyond what was hypothesized, the elements that the church encouraged went beyond supporting the process of the creation of this religion to actually holding a fairly high level of

³⁰ Morgan, “The Cultural Implications of the Atlantic Slave Trade: African Regional Origins, American Destinations and New World Developments,” 140.

responsibility. Harkening back to the first research question regarding the needs of displaced people groups and the creation of the *cabildos*, the church has been found responsible for creating this response among the people. The *cabildos* then grew and developed to what would essentially become the roots of *Lucumi* and Santeria. Potentially, if the church had allowed the displaced people to practice some traditions, there is a chance they may not have felt the need to create new traditions that syncretised so greatly with Catholicism. Combining this series of events with a lack of educated oversight, the church does appear to share a great amount of responsibility in the development of *Lucumi* and Santeria.

Research into visual syncretic elements that combined Orichas worship with Catholicism led can be supported by the existence of a collection of Santeria/*Yoruba* saint cards. In one of the cards Jesus is portrayed in the image of Obatala. The colors of Obatala are white, representing purity and calmness and the prayer card contains an image of Jesus wearing white, but with definitive African-styled characteristics. According to a spiritual guide to the Orichas, white is considered the most sacred color and Obatala is considered the patient and kind judge who settles disagreements between other deities.³¹ The robe is short and styled as a mix between a cloak and a loin cloth. The stance of Jesus/Obatala is wide with feet planted far apart and arms partially stretched out holding a staff. The image also contains a staff, a torch, and shells. This symbolizes leadership, light and truth, and Obatala's wife Yemana the goddess of the ocean. These items would have been found in the *cabildos* meeting locations as a way for members to worship Obatala in the form of Jesus, with symbolic items that represent Obatala through coded meanings. Further supporting this syncretic elements of representing Obatala as Jesus is found in

³¹ "Obatala: The Orisha Who Created the Sky and Mankind," *Orishas*, (June 8, 2023) <https://originalbotanica.com/blog/orisha-obatala-prayers-rituals>

his origin story. In the *Yoruba* religion, Obatala is the son of a god known as Olorun and created the earth and all living creatures. Obatala is known for leadership, compassion, and kindness, similar to some attributes of Jesus.³² Given this closeness in characteristics, it is easy to see how those worshipping in the *cabildos* were able to create a syncretic worship of Obatala through the guise of worshipping Jesus.

Conversely, it is understandable that the Catholic Church may have seen the worship of Obatala and considered it acceptably close to worshipping Jesus. As Obatala shared many characteristics, the participants in the *cabildos* were able to worship a deity who was very Jesus-like by simply changing the name with which they called Obatala. By replacing the name they were able to continue their worship directly under the supervision, however misguided, of the Church. The songs to Obatala then became the songs to Jesus which solidified the syncretic nature of *Yoruba* and Catholicism and very clearly shows the roots of Santeria. As previously noted, it is important to remember that practitioners of Santeria consider themselves Catholics as it has become at this point so interwoven and interlocked that the lines between both are almost impossible to untie.

R 3: Which forms of Latin American popular music still utilize rhythmic aspects of the calling down of Orichas?

Once *Lucumi* and Santeria entered the popular tradition of the displaced Ikwere and other people groups, the musical practices gradually became separated from strictly religious uses to popular traditions and dance. The beginnings of a number of Latin American dances appear to be rooted in the trance and possession practices of *Yoruba*. Those who were possessed by the spirits

³² “Obatala: The Orisha Who Created the Sky and Mankind,” *Orishas*, (June 8, 2023)

of the Orichas that were called down through drumming rhythms helped to create the musical styles of Rhumba and Samba. The music itself is at times referred to as *songo*, which separates the popular music utilization from the religious utilization of the *Lucumi* practice. This split may have occurred due to the outlawing of the practice of *Lucumi* and Santeria, in fact, the practice of any religion, in multiple point during Cuban history. The driving of religious practice underground caused essentially a second syncretism in which dances and music were performed separately from religious gatherings, but still maintained the prayer and possession aspects of the, now outlawed, *cabildos* meetings.

The bongo drum pattern known as a Martillo variation shares the same rhythm as the song for Elegua, recorded in a field recording in 1957 in Havana. The pattern is played on pitched drums, traditionally the *bata* drums, but in modern applications on the bongos or the *dundun*. This variation if written in 4/4 time is represented by five eighth notes played with alternating hand and strikes on the higher pitched drum or drumhead followed by two sixteenth notes. After these two sixteenth notes the right hand crosses over and plays one eighth note on the lower pitch before the left hand plays the final eighth note in the pattern on the higher drumhead. This pattern would be repeated as long as the song or prayer continues. In addition to the rhythmic and pitch elements, the finger strikes are also important.

The rhythm utilizes different strikes on the bongos. The initial strike is the right finger strike with the left thumb pressed down on the drumhead. The second strike is a left finger strike followed by a right finger strike and a left thumb strike. The solid remaining notes are finger strikes. The different pitches of the notes refer to the different drums used in a set of bongos, the *macho* and the *hembra*. This fill is a common fill in bongo music and Latin American popular music. Surprisingly, the rhythm is also found in jazz and rock variations of bongo playing.

Additional common fills for the bongos are derived from *bata* rhythms. These are Inle, Osain, Osun, Yewa, Oya, Orula, Oddudua, Shango, and Ibbaloque. Inle is an Oricha that was prayed to for health and healing and associated with the archangel Raphael.³³ Osain is associated with herbs, healing, and medicine.³⁴ Osun is known as the supreme and is a goddess of love, fertility, and purity.³⁵ Yewa is the goddess of death and is said to help bring the souls from the cemetery to the next life.³⁶ Oya is the sister of Yewa.³⁷ Orula is a future teller in and was prayed to as a diviner.³⁸ Oddudua is the wife of Obatala and in addition to the usage in bongo rhythms, a popular music piece has been written based on her specific rhythm.³⁹ Shango is the god of lightning, thunder, and justice.⁴⁰ Lastly, Ibbaloque is an accompaniment pattern that is designed to be played alongside the Orichas rhythms that are played during *Lucumi* ceremonies.⁴¹

The historical recording by Lydia Cabrera and Josefina Tarafa provide many examples of historically accurate Orichas drumming rhythms recorded during ceremonial use. The recording

³³ “Inle: Orisha of Health and Healing,” *Orichas*, (2018), <https://originalbotanica.com/blog/orishas-inle>

³⁴ Aiyejina, Funso, and Rawle Gibbons, “Orisa (Orisha) Tradition in Trinidad,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 45 no. 4 (1999): 44.

³⁵ B. S. Jeffries, “Oshun,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 13, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Oshun>.

³⁶ Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, Immaculata Olu Omojola, Mike Boni Bazza, “Women in Yoruba Religion and Culture,” *Augustinian Institute Makurdi* 2 No. 2 (2020), 124.

³⁷ Kanu, Omojola, Bazza, “*Women in Yoruba Religion and Culture*,” 124.

³⁸ “Orula, The Master Diviner,” *About Santeria*, <http://www.aboutsanteria.com/orula.html>

³⁹ Aldo Lopez-Gavilan, “Oddudua,” (2021) https://sonichits.com/video/Aldo_López_Gavilán/Oddudua#google_vignette

⁴⁰ L. Scranton, “Shango,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (January 31, 2022). <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shango>

⁴¹ Trevor Salloum, *The Bongo Book*, (Pacific, Missouri: Mel Bay Publications, 1997), 32.

of “Elegua” is played by two drummers and a percussionist on the bells/chimes. The main rhythm is the martillo variation described earlier, with a polyrhythm slightly behind the beat and played on the first and last beats of the variation. The chimes are played in a triplet quarter note pattern behind the eighth note martillo variation. The use of polyrhythms and elements of call and response is characteristic traditional African musical styles, which demonstrates the African traditional roots of musical patterns that are utilized in both historical and modern Latin American genres.

While the traditional *Lucumi* ceremonies would have utilized *bata* drums, the patterns and rhythms lend themselves easily to the more accessible, and less problematic bongos. The *bata* has some similar characteristics to the bongo. There is a large and a small head, with different pitches available on each head depending on how the drum is struck. The bongos and *bata* are both easily transported and played in a similar position. The relation of the martillo variation to Latin American popular music can be found in the *salsa* and the *bolero*.

Both the *salsa* and *bolero* are popular dances which have roots that are traceable back to the martillo variation, and then further back to the drum pattern for Elegua. In *Yoruba* tradition, Elegua must be contacted first before other Orichas may be prayed to, as he serves as a messenger. The colors associated with Elegua are red, black and white. Similarly, colors in *bachata* dancing are red, black, and white. *Bachata* dancing is a relatively new style of dance that originated in the Dominican Republic.⁴² The rhythm of *bachata* is derived from the *bolero* as previously shown to be derived from the martillo variation based upon the call to Elegua. This

⁴² Deborah Pacini, “Social Identity and Class in ‘Bachata,’ an Emerging Dominican Popular Music,” *Latin American Music Review / Revista de Música Latinoamericana* 10 no. 1 (1989): 70.

shows not only a link between rhythmic aspects of Orichas worship, Santeria, *Lucumi*, and popular music, but also a link to the traditional colors that were associated with the Orichas themselves.

After speaking with practitioners of Latin American popular music, specifically Latin American jazz and salsa, it was noted that there was not an intrinsic or even implied knowledge of the roots of the rhythms that were being played. Rather, they were played for purely stylistic and genre specific reasons, or to accompany dance styles.⁴³ Dancers may spin, twirl, and move along with these Orichas derived rhythms, as well as make movements similar to those that may occur during the possession events in the *Lucumi* ceremonies without a knowledge of the original religious ties. It appears that while the strong religious ties to *Yoruba* tradition and the original *cabildos* are not heavily present or followed among some modern specialists in Latin American popular music. There are, however, some musicians who are very aware of the Orichas worship derived roots of music and those musicians compose new pieces specifically with these traditional rhythms and Orichas in mind, and in fact name the pieces after the Oricha that inspired them.

The hypothesis stated

Latin American popular music utilizes Orichas rhythms and surrounding traditions in *rhumba* and *salsa* based musical forms and dances. These musical elements occur often without an understanding of the roots of the music and the meaning of the associated colors and religious elements.

As shown by the research explored, the Orichas rhythms are actively utilized in musical styles in Latin American popular music. The link between the traditional Orichas music may not

⁴³ Interview 1. In person discussion with Latin American percussion practitioner. April, 2024.

be obvious on the surface, but it is impossible to deny the link between the two. The tracing of the martillo variation backwards to the song for Elegua and then forwards again to its usage in the *bolero* and *salsa*, combined with an even further link to the traditional colors utilized in *Lucumi* and *Yoruba* solidify the hypothesis. The research went even further than the hypothesis in finding that not only were rhythms similar to calls to the Orichas, but they were exactly the same. Additionally, the finding that colors worn by dancers were related to Orichas --specifically Elegua, the Oricha that was required to be prayed to as an interceder was unexpected and shows an even deeper link than previously conjectured.

A second portion of the hypothesis was that the musicians were not aware of the roots of the music themselves, or perhaps had only a limited understanding of the *Lucumi* tradition and the *Yoruba* roots. While this seems to be true based on interviews and research, it is not responsible to make a blanket statement that no musicians have knowledge of the Orichas traditions. There are some musicians who specialize in presenting the Orichas in the context of modern music. While they are based on the rhythms of the Orichas with clear knowledge of the historical roots of the rhythm, it is difficult to say if this would make the music worship-related, or only derived from a rhythm for the purpose of entertainment and popular music.

Introduction to Part Two of the Thesis Research

The first half of this thesis was based on the gathering of knowledge on *Lucumi*, *Yoruba*, Santeria, and the Orichas traditions in both historical and modern contexts. All the research was viewed through the lens of a traumatic forced diasporic event that placed people in a position of having lost their ties to geographic homeland, language, family, and traditions. The particular mix of events and the misguided practice of the Catholic church in encouraging syncretism

combined to create the basis of Latin American popular music. The second half of this thesis will explore current events and practices of the Ikwere people and how the findings in the first half of the thesis could be applied to modern mission workers and the Ikwere.

R4: What is the current state of the Orichas worship among the Ikwere people?

The Ikwere people are considered an unreached people by the Joshua Project. In fact, while some people groups in Nigeria are considered 98-99% reached with a majority of Christians and up to 35% evangelizing, the Ikwere only are 20% Christian with only 2% evangelizing and the majority follow African Traditional Religion.⁴⁴ This means that the contact they have with mission workers is minimal and the people group are essentially isolated from outside and global influences.⁴⁵ Understanding all of the possible reasons for this would go beyond the scope of this research. However, Olumati in his article “The Symbolism of Obochi (Day) in Ikwere Traditional Religion” provides a few speculations. As a cultural insider, Olumati may be considered a source of information with unique insights. His article describes a series of symbols, events, and hours that are of high importance to the Ikwere.⁴⁶ African Traditional Religion permeates nearly every activity in the lives of the Ikwere in a daily manner. Olumati makes a statement about the importance of symbols not only for the Ikwere, but for humans by stating, “Man is a cultural being, homo-symbolicus, which in essence means that he is a symbol-

⁴⁴ Joshua Project. <https://joshuaproject.net/countries/NI>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Rowland Olumati (Ph.D), “The Symbolism of Obochi (Day) in Ikwere Traditional Religion: A Legacy of Lived Experience of Pentecostalism in Contemporary Nigeria,” *American Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences* 15, (2023): 25-26.

using animal. Indeed, his capacity to symbolize is often proposed as a criterion placing him apart from the beasts.”⁴⁷ These innate symbols and meanings are postulated as being inseparable from Ikwerre culture, which adds to the level of difficulty for those interested in reaching this particular people group. Olumati makes a recommendation and observation that the Ikwere need to be reached by those from inside the culture, not from those outside the culture.⁴⁸ As a group that has utilizes symbolism to a high degree, the possibilities of foreign mission workers interacting successfully are very low. In fact, Olumati mentions that Christian Ikwere are generally traced to a few evangelists that learned Christianity from other people in the wider Igbo people group, not as a result of foreign mission workers.⁴⁹

According to recent writings, it appears that the practice of *Yoruba* and Orichas worship is very much still practiced in the area. The three main religions in the area are African Traditional Religion (ATR), Islam, and Christianity.⁵⁰ African Traditional Religion may almost be considered a misnomer, as it brings to mind the idea that there is one African religious tradition that all people groups follow. As opposed to Christianity, which has various subgroups and practices but overall has a common root and set of beliefs, African Traditional Religion refers to any of the numerous religious practices that were traditional in Africa before the arrivals of Christian, Islamic, and Judaic influences. Awolalu defines African Traditional Religion as, “the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Africans. It is the religion which resulted

⁴⁷ Olumati, “The Symbolism of Obochi (Day) in Ikwerre Traditional Religion: A Legacy of Lived Experience of Pentecostalism in Contemporary Nigeria,” 24.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁰ Obogogbulam Agi Otto, Stephen Egwuatu Amadi, Kingsley Kayode Longe, *Religion and Human Security Apparatus in Ogba, Ikwerre and Yoruba Traditions*.87,90.

from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present African, and which is being practiced today in various forms and various shades and intensities by a very large number of Africans, including individuals who claim to be Muslims or Christians.”⁵¹

The benefits of practicing ATR are an attachment to traditions, maintaining the security of the people and traditional rules, maintaining ties to history, maintaining a congruent religious practice among a people group. In general, those who practice ATR are more resistant to change and influences from other religions and cultures. As religion permeates the life of those who practice ATR, it would require not only a change in religious ceremonies and practices, but in fact an entire overhaul of traditional cultural practices.⁵² One important point Awolalu discusses is that ATR does not have a tradition of evangelizing or missionaries. The traditions are held firmly by local people groups without the need to bring other cultures or peoples into their fold. This may be considered as a reason that practitioners of ATR are more resistant to change. The religious and ceremonial practices have been built into the very way of life for these people groups, including the Ikwere. Thus, changing practices and conversion is a bigger risk than simply changing churches. It could result in cultural ostracization and a loss of community ties.

As discussed previously, the diasporic effect of the slave trade destroyed many ties to lands and traditions among the displaced peoples which led to an assimilation of religious practices that became *Lucumi* and Santeria. The ability of some practitioners of ATR to assimilate and absorb aspects of different religions, including Christianity and Islam while still

⁵¹ J.O. Awolalu, “What is African Traditional Religion,” *Studies in Comparative Religion* 10, No. 2. (Spring 1976), www.studiesincomparativereligion.com

⁵² Ibid.

maintaining major elements of ATR speak to the likelihood of syncretic practices. The Ikwere people still practice the tradition of Orichas worship on a regular basis through ATR and ceremonial usage.

The predominance of ATR among the Ikwere and the response to Christian evangelization has led to the development of new types of pseudo-Christian churches in the region. These churches are viewed as modern responses to early mission work, which allowed for Christian practices to be combined through overzealous contextualization in Igboland. One of the best known of these churches is the Celestial Church of Christ. It is important to note that similarly to practitioners of Santeria, who consider themselves Catholic, followers of the Celestial Church of Christ consider themselves truly Christian, despite the inclusion of heavily syncretic elements.⁵³

The Celestial Church of Christ was founded in September of 1947 with the affirmation of faith stating,

In the deep mystery of the divine appearance, during prayer, of the winged angel bathed in intense light, word came from God to the Founder: “It is the wish of God to send you on an errand of preaching to the world. Many nominal Christians there are who, when confronted by difficulties and problems of this world, they run after fetish priests and other powers of darkness for all kinds of assistance. Consequently, on their death, they cannot see Christ because, by their actions, Satan has left his spiritual mark on them. To assist you in your work so that men may listen to and follow you, miraculous works of Holy divine healing will be carried out by you in the name of Jesus Christ. These works of divine healing and God's spiritual mark on you will testify to the fact that God sent you.” Thus was born the worldwide Celestial Church of Christ.⁵⁴

⁵³ Emmanuel Temidayo Ogunmefun, “Syncretism and the Aladura Christianity: The Celestial Church of Christ,” *The American Journal of Biblical Theology* 24(30). (July 23, 2023): 12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

As a religious scholar, Ogunmefun provides some insight into how the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) is able to flourish in Igboland and other regions of Nigeria. The evangelizing mentioned in the affirmation of faith is in direct contrast to the standard practice of non-evangelization in ATR. However, since the followers of CCC are from within the community, they were better able to reach those from insider, as opposed to the cultural changes that were required to become fully Christian in the eyes of mission workers (stopping all elements of traditional religious practice). Ogunmefun regards one of the main reasons why CCC is successful is the understanding of the importance of *juju*, essentially the practice of healing by medicine men and positive effects of religious rituals.⁵⁵ Interestingly, the foundation of CCC has been traced back to a similar event that created the *cabildos* and in turn the syncretic practice of *Lucumi* and Santeria. In 1918, a prayer group made up of members of an Anglican church met in order to pray for relief from the epidemic, as traditional *juju practices* were not effective. This group evolved into the Precious Stone Society and eventually branched four ways into the CCC.⁵⁶

While the CCC has specific documents that address fetishism, cults, black magic, and secret gatherings, Ogunmefun mentions that despite these writings, the practice in actuality is much different from the tenants of the church.⁵⁷ One of the main syncretistic elements is related to healing and illness. The CCC believes strongly in faith healing and prophecy, as well as illness caused by “agents of evil.”⁵⁸ In fact, the founding documents detail miracles that occurred through visions and trance states of the church's founder, known as Reverend Pastor Prophet

⁵⁵ Ogunmefun, “Syncretism and the Aladura Christianity: The Celestial Church of Christ,” 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

Founder. Like the papacy, it appears that highest level of church leadership is only passed on after the death of the current leader. The Founder details his miracles as being mainly faith healing oriented, as well as having the power of resurrection after a person was declared deceased.⁵⁹ The syncretism of healings by Jesus and healings by the Founder are very clear. As an additional point of interest, the Founder also had a trance vision of a miraculous snake.⁶⁰ As stated in Chapter Two, the snake has a special position as a sacred animal for the Ikwere, where they are known as *eke*.⁶¹ The official documents threaten excommunication for those who seek healing from witch doctors, however, they require all new members to undergo trance services by prophets of the church.⁶² In effect, this supports the idea of some elements of Orichas worship in the ordering of trance to become open to healing and receiving God. Researcher Charles Kraft refers to the religious practice of members of CCC as “dual allegiance meaning that since they find within Christianity little or none of the spiritual powers they crave for, to meet their needs of healing, blessing, guidance and even relief from demons, they continue their pre-Christian practice of going to diviners.”⁶³

In this church the Bible is combined with elements of African Traditional Religion. While there is emphasis on scripture and an order to turn away from traditional sorcery for healing, the inclusion of some elements of traditional religious ceremonies along with the

⁵⁹ CCC Church Founding Documents. https://www.celestialsanctumparish.org/docs/ccc_constitution.pdf

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Okeke, “Conflicts Between African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Eastern Nigeria: The Igbo Example,” *Sage Journal* .7 Iss. 2, (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017709322>

⁶² Ogunmefun, “Syncretism and the Aladura Christianity: The Celestial Church of Christ,” 11.

⁶³ Ibid., 14.

possibility of member essentially being Christian in name only, create a perfect storm of modern syncretism. The CCC has its own hymnal with accompaniment by talking drums, which is problematic in itself. Additionally, in order to maintain social traditions and ceremonies, African Traditional Religion and the worship of the Orichas through drumming are still practiced even by those who generally identify themselves as Christian.⁶⁴

This level of syncretic religious practice is just as deep as it is in Santeria, where it is difficult to find exactly where one religion ends and the other begins. George and Amusan describe three major components of religion that may offer a clue as to why Orichas worship continues so strongly in a country that is generally considered a Christian nation, despite the outliers in the unreached peoples, such as the Ikwere. The three elements of religion are beliefs, rituals, and experience.⁶⁵ The Ikwere are able to practice their traditional religion by not fully changing their belief system to Christianity and maintaining the cultural elements of ritual and experience. For example, a person may proclaim to follow Jesus as their belief, but the ritual ceremony may contain the drumming of Orichas rhythms and calls to the deities, in the form of Jesus, or of Jesus in the form of the Orichas. The experience refers to the social context of religious practice. This is a unifying element that supports community bonds. Thus, the Ikwere are still able to practice their traditional religion by living the ritual and experience portions of religion, even while proclaiming a different belief system.

⁶⁴ Tayo O George, Tolulope A Amusan. "Religion and Acts of Worship Amongst the Nigerian People: Implications for Development and National Unity," eds. A.S. Jegede, O.A. Olutayo, O.O. Omololu, B.E. Owumi. *Peoples and Cultures of Nigeria*. 309-325, 319.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 314.

Additional social aspects influence the Ikwere to continue the practice of Orichas worship and African Traditional Religion. The structure of the Ikwere society is one in which elders are in positions of power, similar to other people groups in Nigeria.⁶⁶ Showing respect to elders and ancestors would require participation in the culturally important ceremonies, echoing the point above regarding ritual and experience as important parts of religious life. It potentially could prove detrimental to an individual to not participate in these ceremonies as it may be considered an insult to their own elders and ancestors. Ostracization is a danger for people groups that are closely connected without much influence or support from outside sources. Combining the social needs to worship in a congruent manner and participate in traditional religion with the detrimental effects of being an outsider, it is clear that the practice of Orichas worship will likely continue, even beyond the Ikwere becoming more Christ oriented.

The hypothesis presented in the beginning of the thesis stated:

The Ikwere likely still worship Orichas in a similar way as they did at the time of the African slave trade diaspora. They may have pushed this worship under cover again due to outside influences such as missionary groups and globalism.

Current research has indeed found that the Ikwere still worship the Orichas in a similar manner as prior to the slave trade diaspora. The ties to ritual and experience and the importance of congruence in a tightly knit people group make it rather unlikely that a member of this group would break away from tradition in and halt Orichas worship. As portions of social responsibility are tied into religion, in this case the reverence of elders and near worship of ancestors, it may be seen as an affront to custom and disrespectful of the social structure. It is important to note that

⁶⁶ Okeke, "Conflicts Between African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Eastern Nigeria: The Igbo Example"

while the Ikwere do not worship ancestors, they do believe that the Orichas may communicate with deceased elders and in turn, the ancestors hold sway over the living.⁶⁷

A surprising find was that the worship of Orichas is not hidden after influence by missionary groups or globalization. The worship of God and teachings of Jesus follow some basic aspects of Ikwere culture, which has allowed for an assimilation of Christianity into Ikwere culture. However, it is worth noting that many religious practices are deeply syncretic in nature. The utilization of command language combined with prayer, the portrayal of Jesus as a deity along with other Orichas, the usage of traditional drumming rhythms and ceremonies during Christian prayer all point to elements of both religions being combined, instead of a true conversion. Perhaps a reason this worship is not hidden among the Ikwere in Africa is the ties to community, geography, and history which were absent from the displaced people affected by the slave trade. As previously conjectured, the forced removal of traditional ties led to disguised religious practices, where the maintaining of traditional ties allows African Traditional Religion to continue in the open.

R5: How are missionary workers currently communicating with the Ikwere people through the allowance or disallowance of musical traditions, specifically Orichas rhythms?

The history of Christian influence among the Ikwere can be compared equally to the events that affected the Yoruba people. Initial attempts at conversion relied upon colonial ideas of Western European culture being considered advanced and traditional Ikwere culture considered as less developed. The early mission workers required converts to Christianity to not

⁶⁷ Okeke, "Conflicts Between African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Eastern Nigeria: The Igbo Example"

wear traditional clothing, but to wear Western style clothing. Instruments were also banned and traditional hymns were sung without consideration of local musical genres and customs.⁶⁸ As a response to the colonial aspects of the early Christian mission workers in Igboland, a movement to create an African-based church gained momentum. This African church allowed for traditional worship practices such as dancing, drumming, and singing. People began to gravitate away from the Western based Christian churches that utilized the organ, harmonium, and the piano.⁶⁹

The concerns of the early mission workers were not unfounded as there are quite a few places in traditional drumming and singing that are closely and inextricably related to the worship of Orichas. Certain drum patterns and accents may seem innocuous from the outsider perspective, but are, in-fact, highly susceptible to syncretism. A further misunderstanding had to do with the language and different dialects in the region. Early church workers attempted to gain followers to the Church by replacing the text of traditional hymns with text in the Yoruba language. Yoruba shares the same language group as the Ikwere, but the dialectic differences contributed to division and strife between peoples.⁷⁰⁷¹ A further misstep at this stage was the lack of understanding of working with a tone-based language system, such as the Ikwere dialect. In fact, the definition of a word may change completely when the tone is steady, rises, or falls. Placing this text over traditional Western hymn tunes caused confusion and created a barrier to

⁶⁸ Emmanuel Olusola Fasipe, “The Use of Indigenous Musical Instruments in Traditional Christian Worship of the Yorub, Nigeria,” *Enthodoxology: A Global Forum on Art and Christian Faith* 10 (2022): 33.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 34-35.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 35-37.

⁷¹ Uchenna Oyali, “Bible Paratexts and the Framing of an Ikwere National Identity,” *Bible (Re) translation as Empowerment*, (PhD diss., Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies, (2018), 20.

Christian conversion.⁷² A movement was created among composers that allowed cultural insiders to create their own Christian hymns that cleared away confusion. Not only did the text and the tone make sense, the hymns were able to be accompanied by the traditional talking drums.

One such example is the hymn “Olorun Oba Ni Mo Gb’oju Le” composed by Emmanuel Fasipe. This hymn utilizes not only appropriate text that is not based on command language, but also follows the pitch patterns of the language and traditional talking drum-style accompaniment. The pitches consist of the first, third, and fifth scale degrees, if they were to be transcribed into the Western major scale, with the third scale degree acting as the home pitch. The pitches do not change with every syllable, but every syllable is assigned a pitch. For example, the opening word “Olorun” meaning God, also the name of the lead Oricha, follows the pitches of the third, fifth, then a return to the third scale degree, while the word “oba” stays on the same pitch for each syllable. Each time “Olorun” is sung, it follows the same pattern, providing a clear example of the importance of pitch in a tonality-based language.

The pitches on the hymn represent the pitches of talking drums, known as *dundun*. *Dundun* are capable of playing ranges of upwards of an octave including quarter steps and half steps depending on where exactly on the drum to strike is made.⁷³ As the Ikwere language is tonal, this allows the drums to very closely mimic speech patterns. The prayer described is written with notes categorized into high, medium, and low pitches. This is fairly standard for talking drum style playing as, while the Ikwere language is tonal, it uses a pitch system of high,

⁷² Fasipe, “The Use of Indigenous Musical Instruments in Traditional Christian Worship of the Yorub, Nigeria,” 34.

⁷³ Samuel Akpabot, “The Talking Drums of Nigeria,” *African Music Society Journal*, (1975): 38.

medium, and low as opposed to chromatic steps.⁷⁴ While the talking drums are not *bata* which is used in traditional Orichas worship, they do maintain some of the same qualities.

The talking drums, known as *dundun* have a similar intended usage as a method of communicative rhythms that can mimic speech patterns in the Ikwere language. The uses of the *dundun* expand beyond playing rhythms for dance and ceremonies and expand to “announce the arrival and departure of eminent personalities at a social gathering, can be used to recite peoples praise names, can be used to rain abuses when the need arises to the extent that is can be said that the *dundun* drums among others enjoy some 'freedom of communication.'”⁷⁵ *Dundun* are used in modern Christian worship to provide musical accompaniment.⁷⁶ The *dundun* are preferable to the *bata* because they do not have the same religious connotations and are not considered vehicles for possession.⁷⁷

Aside from choosing the *dundun* over the *bata*, there are also considerations regarding the rhythms that are performed and acceptable in Christian worship. Anything that has previously been related to the Orichas should not be considered appropriate, so the use of certain accented patterns are discouraged. Additionally, the differences in drumming styles between different, but closely related people groups, are also not performed.⁷⁸ This would help provide an

⁷⁴ Samuel Akpabot, “The Talking Drums of Nigeria,” *African Music Society Journal*, (1975): 36-37.

⁷⁵ James Adebayo John, “Talking Drums: Delineating between the Boundary of Uses and the Border of Abuses in South-Western Nigeria,” *New Media and Mass Communication. International Institute for Science, Technology, and Education: E-Journals* 34, (2015): 45.

⁷⁶ Atinuke Adwenike Idamoyibo, “Indigenous Music in a New Role,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 23 (3 and 4) (2016): 329. <https://doi.org/10.53228/njas.v25i3&4.108>

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

assimilation of styles, similarly to the blending of culture and language during the slave trade diaspora previously discussed.

This purposeful blending of traditional worship styles of drumming, call and response, periodicity and certain accented patterns, along with some changes to drumming styles based on the needs for a more congruent worship experience still does run the risk of syncretic worship. Despite the *dundun* not having the full relation to Orichas worship as the *bata*, they still are very capable of following the same musical patterns and accents that were used to call down the Orichas. In this case, it would be very important for the mission worker to be knowledgeable on this subject so as to not unintentionally support this occurrence.

To add a complication for mission workers in the area, *bata* drums and *dundun* are sometimes combined during worship services. When combined into one musical group, the *bata* players are considered the leader of the group. This is in part due to their claim that drumming heritage and the *bata* came directly from Ayangalu, the god of drumming.⁷⁹ What this creates is an inseparable link between *bata* drums and Orichas worship and a strong link to African Traditional Religion. It would seem to be nearly impossible to separate the *bata* from either of these traditions, whether or not they are used along with *dundun* in worship services, or popular music. Therefore, it stands to reason that for a mission worker to truly be cognizant of syncretism, they would likely need to avoid any usage of the *bata* drums, despite what some local common practice may support.

The Ikwere would be aware of the meaning of each drum strike and sound beyond what outsiders may experience. It would be very important to work with cultural insiders to determine

⁷⁹ Idamoyibo, "Indigenous Music in a New Role," 45.

appropriate rhythms and pitches that would be appropriate to Christian use and not unintentionally support the easy to syncretise musical aspects of *Yoruba* and Christianity as occurred in Cuba. In this manner, it appears possible for mission workers to utilize some aspects of talking drums and African Traditional Religion to reach unreached peoples.

Fasipe describes some musicians using the same rhythms during Christian worship and are generally used in Orichas worship. Even when using *dundun* there is a possibility of the talking drums aspect being used to say worship and praise Orichas as opposed to God. If a mission worker is not familiar with the background of a specific musician, they may unintentionally hire someone who plays for the purpose of Orichas worship and possession, instead of a true believer.⁸⁰ Concerns also exist regarding drums being used at all in worship settings considering the ease in which the musicians are able to “speak” in a non-appropriate manner during worship. Fasipe discusses the problem of the drummer usually being the most educated in drum language to where he is the only person that understands what he is telling the drums to say.⁸¹ This increases potential for the musician to play inappropriately. Lastly, there is a fear that the sound of the drums would end in a possession-like trance as a result of dancing to the rhythms.⁸² As possession is one of the goals of the Orichas worship ceremonies, it would stand to reason that people may feel they are possessed if drums are played in a similar, or even the same style during Christian worship services.

⁸⁰ Fasipe, “The Use of Indigenous Musical Instruments in Traditional Christian Worship of the Yorub, Nigeria”

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

In the face of the difficulties faced by mission workers attempting to work with the Ikwere, there are some areas of potential. While there are uses of talking drums that are inappropriate for Christian worship, such as those described previously, there are also positive uses of drums and other indigenous traditions. The educating of musicians in what is considered acceptable worship as opposed to unacceptable worship could be considered a good first step. All efforts to create praise that is true should be through the lens of non-judgmental understanding and rely heavily on the advice of cultural insiders. The role of the *dundun* and even the *bata* drums are important to Ikwere culture and attempting to negate their place in tradition and culture and replace them with feelings of shame, detrimental characteristics, and banishment could only serve to drive a wedge between the mission workers and the people they are trying to reach. There is a fine line between contextualizing worship and supporting syncretism, and that will be a major challenge to workers in the field.

A musical style that has emerged for the mission worker to be aware of is known as *juju*. *Juju* is based on *Yoruba* instruments, Orichas rhythms, and Christian hymns blended together.⁸³ This music, while originally for the purpose of popular music applications, is also used as a basis for Ikwere gospel music. While *juju* began as a popular music style and was played for the purpose of entertainment, there was an increase in the number of Christians in Nigeria which caused *juju* to become used for Christian religious purposes.⁸⁴ One would need to be aware of the crossover of this popular music genre, hymn singing, and modern Christian compositions.

⁸³ V. Gorlinski, "Juju," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 12, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/art/juju-music>.

⁸⁴ Aboyowa Arugha Ogisi, "The Origin and Development of Juju Music: 1900-1990," *Ekpoma Journal of Theatre and Media Arts* 3 No. 1-2 (2010): 33.

The talking drums are still used in this musical style, which continues to require close attention from those leading worship to make sure the musician is truly playing in an acceptable manner. As *juju* began as a performance-based genre, the musicians may also perform in a more flamboyant manner. Fasipe considered this detrimental to Christian worship as it is too closely related to possession and trance.⁸⁵

An example of the congruence of *juju* and Christian worship can be found by recordings made by Pastor Ekene. Pastor Ekene is from Igboland and is Ikwere. His music is Christian in text and meaning. While the instruments used are modern --including keyboards, bass guitar, drum kit, and following hymn-like chord progressions --it maintains aspects of traditional ceremonial music including the use of Orichas drum rhythms and the pitches of *bata* and *dundun*. The base rhythm in his video “Anointed Praise” is the same as the rhythm for the Oricha Shango. The Shango rhythm consists of a low pitched eight note followed by one high pitched sixteenth note and a low pitched sixteenth note and a quarter note that combines the low and high pitched together. Following the quarter note is a high pitched sixteenth note and low pitched sixteenth note and ending on an eight note of low and high pitches played simultaneously. What potentially makes this acceptable for Pastor Ekene as a cultural insider, is the rhythm is not played on the drums, but rather on the keyboard, using the right hand to play a higher chords, and the left hand to play the lower chords, similar to the *bata* drums playing in two pitches. The use of chromatic pitches is absent in the keyboard part, but the vocal line does sing up and down the scale of what closely resembles the Ionian mode. Other musical aspects that are in common between this musical example and traditional Orichas worship is the use of call and response.

⁸⁵ Fasipe, “The Use of Indigenous Musical Instruments in Traditional Christian Worship of the Yorub, Nigeria”

Pastor Ekene himself provides the call and the response through the use of prerecorded vocal lines. The call is intoned, followed by the response in chorus, which is then improvised upon by the caller once again.⁸⁶

The hypothesis stated:

Mission workers may be more aware in modern times than they were historically of the dangers of syncretism in religious practice and what may be acceptable or unacceptable. This may allow them to communicate in a more understanding and clear manner with the Ikwere people to achieve goals related to health, safety, and education.

The research has shown that the use of cultural insiders is paramount to reaching the Ikwere in a respectful manner and is the best way to avoid unintentional syncretism or unacceptable worship. The writings of Fasipe and the music of Pastor Ekene both showed a clear awareness of the issues in using instruments and styles traditionally associated with Orichas worship in a Christian context. The response to these was based on knowledge of the role of various talking drums, especially the *dundun* and the *bata*. While Fasipe was positive about the use of *dundun* in worship, Pastor Ekene avoids their utilization altogether and chooses to perform Christian music using instruments that have no relation to traditional ceremonial or religious practices.

The knowledge of not only correct or acceptable instruments during Christian worship, but also understanding the Ikwere language as being tonally based is also important. As in early examples of attempts to contextualize Christian hymns, the simple translation of English text to Ikwere, but using the same hymn tune, provides more opportunities for confusion, rather than

⁸⁶ Gospel Free Style Music. Pastor Ekene. Youtube Video. Sept. 16, 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=543838836337240>

clarity. The meaning of a word can change depending on the rising, falling, or stabilization of pitch, so writing music for use by the Ikwere in worship settings needs to be done with an expert as a consultant.

While the hypothesis had focused on outside of the Ikwere culture mission workers, the discovery of cultural insider Christians shows that modern attempts at reaching the Ikwere through some traditional musical idioms are gaining traction. In contrast to the clumsy writing and attempted forcing of musical change in the culture, blending some aspects of traditional music along with Christian Kingdom Goals appears to be received positively and could be considered an ideal way for mission workers to reach a people group that is considered largely unreached.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, RELATIONSHIP OF THE RESULTS TO THE LITERATURE REVIEW, LIMITATIONS, CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

Conclusion

The study of the musical aspects in the transmission of religious practice, the formation of new musical genres, and creation of a new religion was only one part of this investigation. Going beyond strictly research, the suggestions for current missionary workers in relation to the history of the Ikwere people, as well as their current needs and practices were included as a practical application of this research. While at first glance, Latin American popular music, the Santeria religion, a people group from Nigeria and talking drums appear to be unrelated, in truth they combined together through a combination of diasporic events, social constructs, misunderstandings, and suppression to create a new religion, new culture, and provide examples of syncretism taken to the furthest level. In addition to tracing historical elements and transmission, current effects and occurrences of syncretism were also discovered to be very active within the Ikwere people group. The study of these events and circumstances has led not only to a further understanding of cultural transmission through traumatic diasporic events, but also presents opportunities for those in mission positions to develop a clearer method of working with unreached people groups through proper levels of contextualization.

The need for this research can be noted in the fields of history, musicology, religion, and sociology. A more in depth understanding as to the mix of cultures involved in the slave trade in the Caribbean, especially Cuba, helps to provide historical context for cultural growth and change in the area. As a country that has been the subject of political and social strife and uprising, it is important to understand the backgrounds of one of the many cultures that make up

the current and past political and social landscape. The Atlantic slave trade itself provides a window into the wide mix of not only people groups involved, but also of the hugely detrimental effects of the trade not only on the people themselves, but on the countries from which they were removed. There is no amount of research or study that can truly paint a picture of the horrors the displaced people involved in the slave trade would have faced. It is hoped that providing some insight to their adaptations in the face of forced assimilations can help to provide a level of understanding that truly provide a sense of pride in the strength of response to traumatic events which they overcame. These events did not only affect the slaves historically, but continue to have long-lasting effects on current cultures and peoples around the world.

Regarding the field of musicology, the creation of a new musical genre that can be traced back to not only a culture thousands of miles away through musical patterns that remain the same hundreds of years later, but also forwards to new applications is a great source of interest. The drum rhythms utilized in Latin American popular music are based on many of the same rhythms that are used in the worship of the Orichas in traditional African cultures. These drum rhythms were played on *bata* drums, which were able to mimic language and are thereby referred to as a class of “talking drums.” These drums allowed for communication between peoples and groups without the knowledge and oversight of slave owners and priests. The creation of *cabildos* allowed for groups of slaves to meet and establish new cultural norms as a result of the traumatic effects of the slave trade. Through the rhythms they played on their drums, they were able to maintain some small connections to their previous lives and cultures. These rhythms eventually became part of popular musical styles as a result of religious parades and prayer groups. The tradition of dance elements as a method of calling down possession aided in the adaption of Orichas rhythms to popular music. The rhythms are found mainly in the dance-based music of

the Rhumba, Samba and Salsa, but can also be found utilized in strictly entertainment-based genres of popular music.

As a benefit to those studying religion, the syncretic worship of the Orichas with the Catholic saints provides an example of contextualism that has gone a step too far. While it is important to identify and work with local traditions, especially those related to music, it is imperative that there be a level of understanding of cultural and religious norms and practices that go beyond what may be immediately obvious on the surface. It cannot be assumed that instruments that are innocuous in one culture have no religious ties in another. The worship of the Orichas was able to continue not only through the continued playing of rhythms and dance, but also through the syncretising of Catholic saints. Substituting the name of a saint for the name of an Oricha was the outcome of this practice. After decades of this syncretising, the Santeria religion was developed. Santeria has followers in many different countries and a culture that exists separately even from the *Lucumi* and *Yoruba* cultures upon which it was based. The spread of Santeria also contributed to the spread of musical ideas.

In modern practice, the rhythms of the Orichas are still being utilized in some Christian based churches in Igboland/Nigeria through the Celestial Church of Christ. This church not only has a musical practice that combines traditions of Orichas worship and dance with Christian hymns, but additionally has syncretic elements in the format of prayer through the utilization of command language, as well as healing and magic. This church was developed from the inside out by those who originally practiced African Traditional Religion but then desired a conversion. The combination of elements of Jesus's life and miracles with the described miracles of the Founder Pastor of the CCC make it clear that this church, while Christian-adjacent, still follows aspects of traditional religion. The focus on healing and magic speaks strongly to the African

Traditional Religion which placed emphasis on healing and command elements in its traditional prayer system. There is also a focus on dance that leans seriously towards trance and possession. However the embodiment is by the Holy Spirit, not an Oricha.

From the viewpoint of sociology, this research provided a case study in cultural responses to traumatic diasporic events. These events, while focused on slavery in this paper, could be proposed to follow similar trajectories in modern diasporic events. As a world in a constant state of fluctuation and large movements of people groups, understanding techniques and tools that help to ensure the survival of cultural traditions is an important focus. The risk of cultural loss through the loss of traditional religion, language, geography and family ties is high, especially when dealing with a system of not only diaspora but also globalization. As a response to the stripping and illegalization of their culture, the Ikwere and other enslaved people groups were able to develop a new style of worship and music that allowed them to maintain some semblance of their former lives and traditions. Even more interesting is that the people who developed these new traditions were mainly male children and young adults. As a culture that relies heavily on the intercession of deceased ancestors and the reverence of living elderly, this phenomenon required an entirely new outlook on their way of life. This research showed how a society will attempt to survive trauma and respond in a way that mitigates damage while developing an entirely new cultural tradition.

Relationship of Results to the Literature Review

Regarding previously existing research, the literature review provided a foundation as a springboard for further study. Beginning with a brief examination of the history, background, and religion of the Ikwere, an understanding of certain elements of their culture is provided.

Although the thesis focused on the Ikwere people group, it is important to note that Igboland actually contains many different people groups, traditions, languages, and religions. Hailing from the River State in Nigeria, the Ikwere were one of the most heavily trafficked people during the Cuban Slave Trade. The cultural impact of the slave trade notwithstanding, there were additional influences as a result of colonial mission workers in the area.

The heavy-handed approach that attempted to force Christianity onto a group of people who were already victims of the Western World's demand for slaves was met with a high level of resistance. Forced attendance at mission schools, destruction of sacred elements, the changes of names from traditional names of honor to Christian based names, and the theft of artifacts showed high levels of disrespect to the Ikwere people. Despite these approaches, the Ikwere were able to continue to maintain their own tradition and religious practices, even though they were muted as a result of these influences. The worship of the Orichas brought the utilization of talking *bata* drums was one of these lasting traditions. The drumming of the Orichas rhythms entailed rituals of prayer, dance, possession, and trance. Each Oricha had their own rhythm, colors, associated sacred objects, personalities and other characteristics. The differing rhythms of the Orichas and the usage of *bata* and other talking drums would prove to be paramount in the development of new traditions during the slave trade diaspora.

The role of the *cabildos* was briefly examined because of the loss of primary culture and the need to develop a new culture. Among the practices of the *cabildos* was the drumming of rhythms and the associated dances. These meetings, which began with the support of the Catholic Church and priests, soon became a haven for the conservation of cultural and religious traditions, though adapted for new circumstances. Among these new circumstances was the forced practice of Catholicism. It became punishable to practice traditional religions, and so the

Ikwere people developed a new syncretic religious practice that combined Catholicism with traditional Orichas worship. This was not only through words and prayer, but also through music and associated symbols. This became the root of the Santeria religion. Followers of Santeria consider themselves Catholics. However, the religion is actually heavily rooted in traditional African religious practice combined with the necessity of forced conversion to Catholicism.

The combination of the *cabildos*, Orichas drumming, and Santeria connects to the development of Latin American popular music. Pitched drums are used in both *toque* ceremonies and popular music, although there are different drums that are appropriate for each. In popular music application, bongo drums take the place of *bata* for the performance of various musical variations. The dance movements of the Samba, the Rhumba, and the Bolero have been relatively firmly traced back to Orichas rhythms and *toque* ceremonies. Additionally, there are popular music artists who purposefully utilize traditional Orichas rhythms in their music. The music video “Shango” by El Chacal is one such example.

The literature review provided a base for understanding and examining further the role of Orichas rhythms in popular music, the creation of Santeria, as well as failed attempts at mission work, but further research was conducted in this thesis in order to draw stronger conclusions and serve as a helpful guide to understanding cultural effects of diasporic events as well as how to reach a relatively unreached people group. Further research attempted to address the following questions:

R1: How did the mixing of different African cultures combine to create a new culture with a new musical and religious tradition?

R2: What was the role of the Catholic Church in the development of *Lucumi* traditions?

R3: Which forms of Latin American popular music still utilize rhythmic aspects of the calling down of Orichas?

R4: What is the current state of the Orichas worship in the Ikwere people?

R5: How are missionary workers currently communicating with the Ikwere people through the allowance or disallowance of musical traditions, specifically Orichas rhythms?

In response to the first research question regarding the mix of different African cultures and the creation of new musical and religious traditions, it was found that the response to the stripping of cultural heritage and common language allowed for the creation of new traditions. When the slaves arrived in Cuba, they were not all from the same people group and the far removed from their geographic and cultural homeland and traditions. As a result and due to the need to maintain some semblance of their former lives, the response was to create new traditions that combined elements from multiple people groups. The research showed that it was exactly the mix of different cultures with no historical ties that supported the creation of these new traditions and religious practice. When there is no support structure in place for culture, new culture is created. The desire for humans to have connections with each other as a way to deal with extremely difficult circumstances is the basis for this research. A culture that reveres the elderly was especially affected by the loss of ties to ancestors and ancestral lands. The former religious practices were then modified more easily than they otherwise would have if the people group had all been from the same heritage and practices.

The second research question focused on the importance of the involvement of the Catholic Church in the unanticipated creation of new religious practices, specifically that of Santeria. The Catholic Church forced slaves in Cuba to forego their previous religious ties but allowed them to continue meeting in the form of *cabildos*. These *cabildos* supported current and former slaves through moral and financial support, as possible. The forced religious assimilation

caused the people to hide their traditional religion behind the names of saints. Traditional deities, known as the Orichas were reassigned names and characteristic of Catholic saints. After a period of time, the characteristics and names of saints and Orichas gradually blended together into a new religion known as Santeria. This fully syncretic religion combined almost equally the practices of Catholicism with African Traditional Religion.

The research did show that in response to research question number three, Orichas rhythms are currently used in Latin American popular music, especially those that are dance based. As the practices of the *cabildos* grew and were assimilated into the wider culture, the musical practices naturally followed. Latin American dances, especially the Rhumba, Samba, and Salsa dances. Not only are the rhythms of these based on Orichas rhythms, but certain dance moves and colors can also be traced to the *cabildos*. In turn, the original African religious practices that maintained their strength through a syncretic relationship with Catholicism. The research showed that not only were there general similarities, there were also direct rhythmic practices and drumming techniques that were preserved throughout time. These techniques and rhythms are actually listed in bongo books by the name of the associated Oricha but without further description of what these rhythms and drum pattern would have actually meant. The research showed that while there may be some with clear knowledge about the Orichas rhythms and their original intent, there seem to be an equal amount of those who are unaware of the religious associations of these rhythms.

The fourth research question focused on current Orichas worship traditions among the Ikwere. The research did show that this worship still occurs, though it is muted in some locations and has even taken the form of some popular music and Christian based hymns. It was also determined that, beyond strictly the drum rhythms, there were other aspects of this prayer culture

that could be applied to Christianity and Christian worship further supporting modern religious syncretism. The Ikwere people group were determined by the Joshua Project to be an unreached people group and the research in the literature review and this thesis have determined that numerous negative outside interactions with mission workers and overzealous non-contextualized evangelism worked to help the Ikwere rely even further on Orichas worship and other forms of African Traditional Religion. African Traditional Religion is the name given to current forms of traditional worship. This is considered the majority religious practice of the Ikwere at utilizes not only Orichas worship, but other forms of mysticism, command language, music, possession and trance.

The final research question explored current allowance or disallowance of the practice of Orichas drumming as part of mission work. It was determined that the Ikwere were better approached towards conversion by those generally considered cultural insiders. This is due to not only the aftereffects of aggressive colonial and missionary work in the past, but also because only a cultural insider will have the knowledge of the proper usage of the talking drums, whether speaking of the *dundun* or the *bata*. Even so, there are still dangers associated with drummers themselves playing rhythms and patterns to speak that even many insiders are unaware of. Proper contextualization will be very important, as allowing traditional instruments can help a people group in their worship, but in the case of Orichas and talking drums, there are many occasions where syncretism and misunderstandings can still occur.

Limitations

While this study aimed to be as complete as possible, there were certain limitations related to geographic challenges and availability of resources. The effects of these events on the Ikwere specifically have not been studied, as without the benefits of a cultural insider, there were some portions of the research that could not be considered. As there were no active mission groups in the area, “on the ground” information was difficult to come by and reliance had to be made on reaching out to local music professionals and reading current research papers on various topics dealing specifically with the Ikwere. There are times when research was broader and included the Ikwere instead of being focused on them. There were also no current videos of Orichas worship in Igboland, so historical sources needed to be utilized for that information. The research, though solid, relied on second- and third-party information, instead of the ideal first-person engagement that is most desirable in ethnomusicological research.

Considerations for Future Study

There is a need for future study as more positive interactions are made with the Ikwere people. Those working with this people group need to understand historical, religious, social, and ceremonial context for the actions and everyday activities of the Ikwere. African Traditional Religion is one that is all encompassing, and to attempt a full conversion without contextualizing properly can only lead to negative outcomes. Even without the goals of religious conversion, the desire to help in regard to education, economics and public health should all be processed through the lens of proper education and contextualization. As diasporic events continue around the world, the challenges faced by those affected by the slave trade will be felt by others. The lack of social engagements and community ties could lead to further syncretized religious

practices but also the loss of traditions. This needs to be studied in order to learn how to preserve traditions in new locations and not force assimilation.

An additional need is for those working with Latin American popular music and dance. Understanding the history of a genre of music and the history of its peoples is important. When working with a group that identifies with Orichas based *Lucumi* music or even those practicing Santeria, knowledge of best approaches and history can help build positive interactions. An additional level of appreciation for musical forms and dance can also be gained by further research.

The basis for future study would be to follow similar approaches, but with the ability to perform more first-person analysis and research. There is always a bit of information lost, even when working with audio and video recordings that could be experienced more clearly in person. Working with a cultural insider with Latin American popular music, Santeria and *Yoruba* experts, and those from within the Ikwere people group could take the research questions even further towards developing plans to better understand diasporic events, as well as learn methods of sharing Kingdom Goals with unreached people groups.

This thesis has attempted to provide a guideline for understanding the effects of traumatic diasporic events on religion, culture, music and people groups. Numerous topics were touched on beginning with the history and culture of the Ikwere people. The examination of a religion which utilizes drumming rhythms as a basis for calling down deities and invoking possession provided a fascinating basis of understanding for Latin American popular music and dance. Under the guise of syncretic religious practices, *cabildos* were able to support some semblance of traditional religion combined with the forced adoption of Catholicism. This new religion

combined both elements almost exactly and created Santeria. In the background of all this change lies a mainly unreached people group. Having become the victims of the slave trade, colonialist ideas, and aggressive missionary tactics, the Ikwere have continued to practice their faith and traditions in the face of adversity. There are, however, still needs that mission workers could address if they approached the Ikwere appropriately. Supporting health care, education, and economic needs through proper routes and with cultural insiders could help the Ikwere go from unreached to reached and help this people group remain strong and vibrant for the present and future.

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 18, 2024

Erika Ray
Michael Harland

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-1665 Orichas Roots of Latin American Music: Syncretism, Music, and its Possibilities for Missionaries

Dear Erika Ray, Michael Harland,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application per the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data-safeguarding methods described in your IRB application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents, **which you must use to conduct your study**, can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

This exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office