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An Ethnomusicological Perspective for a Television Documentary Film Shot in Calabar (Nigeria)

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Abstract

In August 2012 a television documentary about traditional music was shot in Calabar, Nigeria. The main focus of the documentary was to find the roots of *cumbia* music, originated by the Afro-descendents in the Atlantic coast of Colombia and widespread in all Latin American countries. I was involved in this project as scientific advisor and cameraman along with two Nigerian ethnomusicologists.
This experience reveals some theoretical, methodological and ethical issues related to filming music in traditional cultures: is it possible to convey an ethnomusicological content through a television format directed to a wide audience? What kind of contribution can a team of ethnomusicologists make to a research project whose ultimate goal is the production of a documentary for TV broadcasting? What are the dynamics that take place between the stakeholders involved (insiders/outsiders, academics/musicians, cultural mediators/village chiefs) inside the dialectical tension between culture and entertainment?

Keywords: Television documentary film, cumbia.

The documentary project

In August 2012 I had the opportunity to participate in the dual role of scientific advisor and cameraman for the production of a TV format entitled *Pasos de cumbia* (*Cumbia Steps*), a series of 11 video documentaries about the origin and spread of *cumbia* from Africa to Latin America. The television series was shot in three months in seven countries: Nigeria, Cameroon, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Argentina and Chile[1].

The project intended to outline the history of *cumbia*. *Cumbia* is a traditional music and dance born in the Caribbean coast of Colombia and then spread in different forms in all Latin America countries from Mexico to Chile. The Colombian *cumbia*, in its original form, has strong African musical traits (especially evident in the use of drums related to the cultural traditions of the Gulf of Guinea) and is widespread among the Afro-descendents of the Caribbean coast of Colombia.

The co-producer Vincenzo Cavallo, who is also the series' author and director, is an Italian videomaker with a PhD in new media, resident for six years in Kenya, where he founded the production company Cultural Video Foundation. During the pre-production, the videomaker's

first "step of cumbia" was to find an advisor who would provide some guidelines and tips to help him draw up the work plan and screenplay for what was supposed to be a "docu-musical", following the footsteps of *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (2005) by Fatih Akin. After reading my book *Cumbia. La musica afro-colombiana* (D'Amico 2002)[2], Vincenzo contacted me and came to my studio in Florence for an interview.

According to a theory expressed in my book, which crosses historical, linguistic, anthropological and ethnomusicological data, the origin of *cumbia* is to be found among the populations of Calabar, an inland port in South-East Nigeria with access to the Atlantic Ocean. The trans-Atlantic slave trade transferred many thousands of people (mainly Ekoi, Efik, Igbo and Ibibio) from Southeastern Nigeria and Southwestern Cameroon throughout the Americas, where they were known as "Calabarí" or "Carabalí" (reversing the l and r), after the port city of Calabar from which many departed. The destination of countless slaves embarked in this port was Cartagena de Indias, in Colombia. According to some ethno-linguistic studies (Del Castillo Mathieu 1982), in the last period of trafficking (1740-1811) the slaves who landed in Cartagena were mostly Igbo and Efik from Calabar. During the colonial era, moreover, in Cartagena de Indias, the main port of disembarkation of African slaves in South America, the African slaves were gathered in mutual-aid societies or brotherhoods (*cabildos de negros*) which were named according to their ethnic or geographical origin: *Congo*, *Mandinga*, *Carabali*, *Mina* and *Arará* (Escalante 1954). The *cabildos* were allowed by colonial authorities to express their devotion through music and dance in a sort of carnival held during the celebration of the Virgen de la Candelaria in the Cerro de la Popa (near Cartagena).

Influenced by this theory, according to which the musical-cultural component of the populations from Calabar had been prevalent in the conformation of the Afro-Colombian music and *cumbia* in particular, the film director decided to shoot the first few episodes of the documentary in Calabar, thus adopting a deductive approach. He invited me to be part of this "ethnographic-television mission" which would involve the participation of some local ethnomusicologists who could guide us and act as intermediaries on the field[3].

TV format

This TV format was inspired by the road movie or *travelogue* genres in which the presenter addresses the audience directly and in front of the camera expresses comments and reflections on the events that are observed or those that occurred during the day, thus adopting a subjective perspective. The format may be described as was a sort of a travel diary where the presenter's voice-over provides some historical and ethnographic explanations to the audience with the support of graphic animation.

Crew

The team[4] included myself in the role of scientific advisor and cameraman, Cuti Aste, a Chilean musician-songwriter who acted as the film's presenter, and photographer Marco Lapenna. Apart from directing the documentary, Vincenzo took on responsibilities as the film's producer in charge of organizational and financial matters. The "multitasking" of the team

members made it possible to work with a small staff and therefore limit the cost of production: Cuti Aste held the dual function of television presenter and sound engineer.

The fact that the presenter was also a musician was an added value, since he could interact musically with local musicians. Concerning my role, apart from being a scientific advisor, I was in charge of filming and arranging the lights. Moreover, my field notes served the same purpose as those of a production secretary -i.e. taking note of the date and place of the performances, the names of the ensemble and/or the musicians and their instruments, the title of the songs or the names of the dances or the musical genres, detailing everything that was happening around us, and integrating ethnographic observation and production notes.



Fig. 1. Vincenzo Cavallo (filmmaker), Marco Lapenna (photographer) and Leonardo D'Amico (ethnomusicologist).

Equipment

The high standard quality of the sound recordings and video shooting were guaranteed by the advanced professional technical equipment and the skills of the operators. In addition, the multi-cameras offered the chance to have different "perspectives" of the same performance (and thus more materials that could be analyzed). To record the different performances we used three cameras: a video camera SONY FS100U and two cameras DSRL Canon 5D and Canon 7D. All the cameras shot non-stop from the beginning to the end of the performances; however, due to their technical limitations, the DSLR Canon cameras could not shoot for more than 14 minutes. This proved quite problematic during the shooting in the village of Esuk Mba, in Calabar, where most of the performances lasted for more than 14 minutes, and this is why we used the video camera as a fixed camera for full shots. This video camera was positioned on a tripod while the other two DSLR cameras were used as moving cameras to shoot medium shots and close ups of the dancers and musicians playing during the performances.



Fig. 2. Marco Lapenna (moving camera) and Vincenzo Cavallo (steady camera).

Script

In pre-production phase, the director wrote a script with a dialogue list in which the protagonist (the presenter of the documentary) acts in the first person and interacts with both the "academics" and the "informants". During the production, however, the script simply became a track to follow with reference points concerning the musicians, the performances and their locations. The documentary, therefore, was a sort of road movie, with a narrative language based on a story and a protagonist travelling in Africa searching for the roots of the *cumbia*. The subjectivity of the protagonist was evident through his comments expressed in front of the camera, but at the same time it was balanced with the intention of providing "correct" information from the ethnomusicological point of view guaranteed by the indications and suggestions provided by the team of ethnomusicologists.

Advisors

The basic idea of the videomaker was to involve ethnomusicologists not only as "invisible" scientific advisors, but to make them co-protagonists of the documentary by putting them as "pro-filmic" presences in front of the camera and making them interact with the presenter and with other people involved, in this way highlighting their different points of view. His intention was to find a right balance between two purposes: ethnomusicological research and film production and, ultimately, between cultural and commercial purposes. In fact, it is unusual for the director of a low budget television production to involve a team of ethnomusicologists.

The presence of the ethnomusicologists as academic authorities could provide a sort of scientific legitimacy to traditional cultural expressions considered a legacy of the past which in some cases had lost their value and the function with which they were originally associated. The relationship with Nigerian public institutions (such as the Centre for Black and African Arts Civilizations in Lagos, the Cultural Center of Calabar, etc.) has been facilitated by the presence of representatives of the two universities involved (University of Pretoria, South

Africa, and University of Ferrara, Italy), and this has endowed the mission with an official status as well as enabling effective collaboration of these institutions. In addition, in this particular case the subject of the African cultural heritage in the Americas and the safeguard of historical memory is an issue still very much felt by the African authorities with whom we came in contact.

In the pre-production phase, a research team was set up including, apart from myself, two Nigerian ethnomusicologists: Prof. Meki Nzewi and his former pupil, Dr. Grace Ekong. The team members also served the function of cultural mediation, since they were experts in the territory with a knowledge of the local language and the local musicians belonging to the Calabar area, so that they acted as intermediaries between "us" and "them." The researchers and cultural mediators offered information of ethnographic and ethnomusicological interest, but in fact they also had the role of "intermediaries" for the economic agreements and conducted negotiations with local musicians, the chiefs of the villages, and representatives of public institutions.

A presenter-musician

The musical interaction with local musicians was another strong element that has enabled the establishment of a collaborative relationship. Cuti Aste, presenter of the television series, has played the diatonic accordion and drums on several occasions with African musicians, and even Meki Nzewi and myself, both percussionists, have played in some cases with local musicians. The musical competence of the presenter and the researchers engaged in the film production allowed an "interplay" or musical interaction with local musicians. To a certain extent, this capacity has facilitated the understanding of the musical structures, but it mainly helped us to open a "non-verbal" channel of communication.



Fig. 3. Cuti Aste (accordion) and Sina Peters (guitar) during a performance held at Peters' house in Lagos.

When we visited the village of Esuk Mba, I found three Efik drums, called *ekomo* ("drum" in Efik language). *Ekomo* drums, used to support dances such as *Ikpaya*, *Abinsi* and *Ekombi*, are of different types and dimensions: *ekpiri ekomo* ("small drum"), *ayara ekomo* ("male

drum"), and *uman ekomo* ("female drum"). The drum ensemble is completed by *nkon* (bell) and *nsak* (rattle). These drums had a strong resemblance to the Afro-Colombian drums, such as the *llamador* and *tambor alegre*, used in the Caribbean coast, and the *cununo*, used in the Pacific coast.



Fig. 4. *Ekomo* drums: *ekpiri ekomo*, *ayara ekomo*, and *uman ekomo*.

On one particular occasion, as Cuti and I began to play the drums, a circle of onlookers around us was formed and suddenly an old woman broke into the arena dancing in front of us. Later, Prof. Meki told us that what had happened had opened a channel of communication between "us" and "them" and that the fact that the old woman spontaneously decided to dance meant that we had been accepted by the community (this moment was immortalized by the cameras). The interaction with local musicians and elders in order to establish a more direct and friendly connection with them through music facilitated (apparently) the process of communication between "insiders" and "outsiders".



Fig. 5. *Ekomo* drum (Calabar, Nigeria).



Fig. 6. *Cununo* drum (Pacific coast, Colombia).

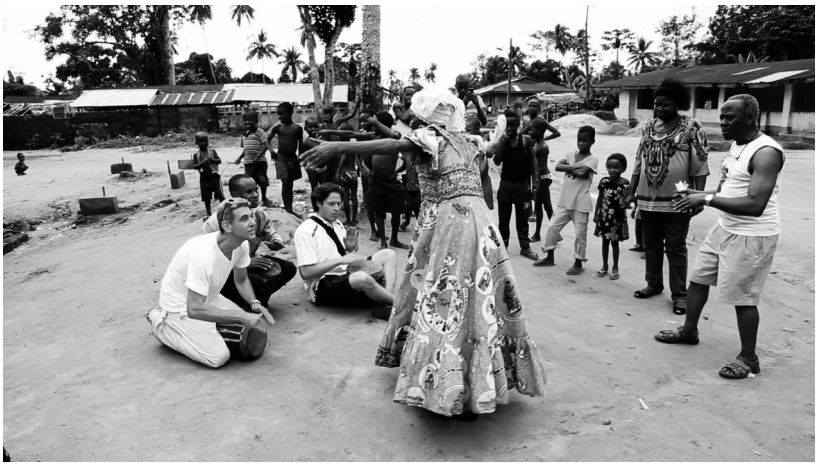


Fig. 7. Leonardo D'Amico and Cuti Aste playing *ekomo* drums while an old woman breaks into the arena dancing in front of them (Esuk Mba, Nigeria).

Safety

For safety reasons, during our trips in the area we were accompanied by two young soldiers. The threats of terrorists of Boko Haram (which in Hausa means "Western education is evil") made unsafe for Westerners to travel in Nigeria and for this reason the production decided to contact two soldiers for our safety. During our stay in Calabar, two young unarmed conscripts followed us as some sort of bodyguards, but in fact they had the control of our transfers across the territory.

Location

The choice of shooting locations was done primarily on the basis of a filmic/television perspective, focusing on the aesthetic dimension of images. That happened in the cases in which urban music groups were recorded in urban environments. But in representing music and dance associated with ceremonial or ritual practices in the villages, the locations was established by the director in accordance with the guidelines and recommendations provided by the leader of the musicians and dancers of the village. This was the case in the village of Esuk Mba, formerly the site of a slave market and one of the main ports of embarkation for slaves. During the survey, Etim Okon Inyang, the head of the group of musicians and dancers, who acted as an intermediary between us and the village chiefs, provided some guidance on where it was allowed to shoot and where it was not, according to the ritual obligations. The solutions adopted in this case had to meet on the one hand the esthetic needs of the film narrative, while on the other hand avoiding any departure from the rules and taboos imposed by the local communities. One of the locations chosen was the port of embarkation from which ships loaded with slaves left for the New World.

Ethics

From the ethical point of view, before shooting all the musicians received explanations about the purposes of the initiative (making a documentary for TV) and the motivations behind it (highlighting the musical ties / cultural links between Africa and Latin America through the slave trade), as well as the authority of the people involved in this project (largely related to universities). The filmmaking was presented as a cultural project that would evaluate the traditional musical heritage through the amplification of the media, but at the same time the commercial nature of the film production was at no time hidden. For this reason, it was not requested to perform for free, but a form of payment in cash or in goods, which was variable and negotiable, were given to all musicians recorded and filmed. Once the economic conditions were agreed upon, the leader or representative of the musicians had to sign a contract that would enable the use of images and music for television broadcasting.

Timing

Regarding methodological aspects, the production timing of a documentary for television broadcasting is generally very short compared to the time required by exhaustive fieldwork for ethnomusicological research. In our case we had only 30 days to complete three episodes in the series (which eventually were cut down to two in the post-production phase). Within this limited period of time, I had to reconcile the needs of a piece of ethnomusicological research with the requirements and technical demands of shooting of a docu-musical addressed to a wide and young audience.

For each performance it was necessary to locate a place "relevant" from both the point of view of philological (i.e. ethnographic) "correctness" and from the aesthetic (i.e. cinematographic) point of view; once identified, it required a period of time (at least a couple of hours or more) necessary to set microphones for singers and instrumentalists, positioning cameras and lighting (in the case of shooting indoors or at night). Moreover, the short daylight time forced the crew to work only for a few hours in the afternoon, till around 6:00 p.m. when sunset began. I was aware of the fact that a prolonged stay in the village would be necessary for an in-depth research, but it was incompatible with the production timing of the documentary (in our case, it was restricted to a couple of weeks for the Calabar episode).

Interviews

The fieldwork was not limited to audiovisual recording of music and dance, but also included interviews with musicians, village chiefs and all those members of the community suggested by the cultural mediators as custodians of traditional knowledge. After or before filming the performances, interviews took place which provided a description or an interpretation of the ritual dances. The ethnomusicologists participating in the team could offer their input during the interviews by asking questions to the "informants" or giving suggestions to the director concerning certain topics of ethnological or ethnomusicological interest. Be it as it may, access to the knowledge possessed by the secret/initiatory society of the Cross River basin, known as *Ekpé* (lit. "leopard") in Efik language, was off-limits to us (being not initia-

ted)[5]. In this case, the "authority" of the academics was completely useless to "open the doors" of a secret knowledge: for example, when Meki Nzewi asked the *obong* Bassey Bassey Umoh for further information about the meaning of the use of the ritual drums, he refused firmly to answer his question (this moment was filmed and included in the final editing). Indeed, inter

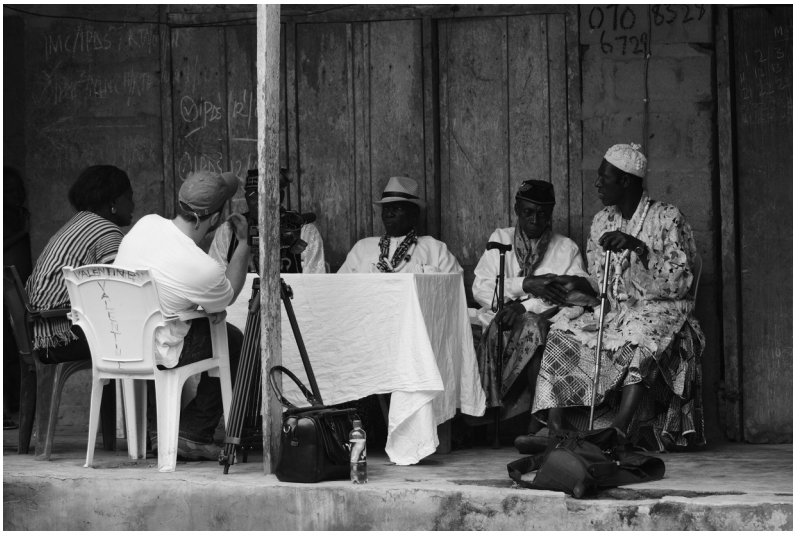


Fig. 8. Grace Ekong with Vincenzo Cavallo interviewing the village chiefs of Esuk Mba (Cross River State, Nigeria).

viewing requires building relationships for which a long stay in the village is necessary, as well as mutual trust with the local community representatives. This was one of the limits of our research due to the short time of film production.

Staging

Concerning filming music and dance associated to specific social occasions in the rural communities, the question that arises is whether the staging may affect its reliability in terms of ethnographic "re-presentation". Yet our main purpose was not to conduct an ethnographic research, but to make a docu-musical that could communicate "correct" information from the ethnomusicological point of view. For this reason, we filmed the ritual performance in the same places where they are usually held according to the local tradition. The "settings" in the village were agreed upon along with the community leaders (the council of elders and/or village heads, and the leader of the music and dance ensemble). This allowed us to minimize the risk of de-contextualization, even if the performances were unrelated to specific community needs, however induced by external factors (like being "commissioned" for the purposes of a television production). The aesthetic aspects of the film language were, insofar as possible, calibrated according to functional requirements and contextual settings.

Filming music and dance in Esuk Mba

Esuk Mba is a small village located in the district of Akpaboyo in Cross River State, Southeastern Nigeria, a few kilometers from the city of Calabar, inhabited by the Efik ethnic group. It is a rural village nestled in the forest on an inlet of the sea, which still retains the old slave market, now turned into a farmers' market. From here starts a path that leads directly to the sea where slaves were shipped to the Americas.

Four traditional dances have been planned following the suggestions by Etim Okon Inyang, a local traditional musician and leader of the village musicians, initiated to the *Ekpé* secret society. The dances were ekombi (a female dance in honor of the spirit of water or mermaid *Ekombi*), *abinsi* (a courtship dance in the form of a pantomime), *ekpa* (a funeral rite of the elderly) and the *ekpé* masquerade (and initiatory dance involving the use of masks).



Fig. 9. Port of Esuk Mba (Cross River State, Nigeria).

For the *ekombi* dance, we selected together with Etim the location respecting the rules (such as the fact that the dance in honor of the spirit of the waters should not be done facing the sea but turning the dancers' back on it) and that propitiatory libations should be made before the performance took place.) The meaning of this female dance was explained by one of the village chiefs, Joseph Edet Bassey:

> *Ekombi* is an Efik dance, a kind of dance performed when a maiden is to be taken out of the confinement room. It is Efik culture that a female child of 18 years and above is kept in the fattening room by the parents for a period of 3 months. At the completion of this period the parents celebrate the success of the *nkuhö* with *ekombi* dance. This dance is performed to bring out the fattened [girl] to the public. On such occasions the girl is showered with gifts. When there is a traditional marriage, *ekombi* is performed. Any marriage without the *ekombi* performance is not considered a proper marriage. *Ekombi* is regarded as a cult/social ritual for the traditional worship of the deity of the water spirit or Mermaid[6].

The dancers are young girls whose arm and leg movement imitate the waves of the sea. The ensemble consists of a chorus of male singers and drummers. The instrumental ensemble includes: *ekpiri ekomo* (small drum), *ayara ekomo* (male drum), *uman ekomo* (female drum), *nkon* (bell) and *nsak* (rattles).



Fig. 10. Young girls in traditional costumes dancing *ekombi* dance.



Fig. 11. Ensemble of singers and drummers accompanying the *ekombi* dance.

Abinsi, in contrast, is not a ritual dance, but a recreational dance for entertainment: "The *abinsi* dance is a dance of our village that we perform whenever we are done with our daily chores, tasks, engagements, whether government work, farming, fishing, etc. The *abinsi* dance is a dance performed for relaxation and recreation after a hard day's work"[7]. *Abinsi* could be described as a "courtship" dance in which the man shows his dancing skills to his woman with sexually allusive movements (the movements of the dancers involve the lowering and the vibration of theirs shoulders). *Abinsi* has no restriction; everybody can take part at the dance and there is no specific place or occasion in which it is held. It could be performed anytime and anywhere, so we chose one of the largest courtyards in the village. Usually, it is performed after a working day and traditionally during the full moon night, but for safety problems and technical reason, the director decided to shoot in daylight.

The so-called "mise-en-scene" has also played a decisive role in revitalizing nearly extinct traditional practices. In this regard, it's appropriate to mention the case of the *ekpa*. The *ekpa* is an Efik funeral rite performed with drums and danced in the village of Esuk Mba by the elder women's initiatory society in honor of a deceased man or woman over the age of 60. After the propitiatory libations, the dance begins and is performed around and above the tomb, while earth is thrown into the pit. Only when the burial is completed do the men come to dance with the women around the tomb. In the traditional percussion ensemble, used for all the dances in the village, an *ekpa* or big drum (*ibid*[8] *ekpa*) joins in, only and exclusively in its role as a "feminine" drum. The *ekpa music* is performed only by initiates, generally those whose mother or grandmother were part of the *ekpa* female initiatory society. The songs may have a moral significance or they may deal with the life of the deceased. It was indeed amazing to find some similarities between this ritual and the Afro-Colombian *lumbalu*, a funeral rite performed in the past by the older women in Palenque de San Basilio (a Colombian village inhabited by descendants of runaway slaves) for a member of the *cabildo* (council of the elders), where a very similar big drum was used called *pechiche* (D'Amico 2002).



Fig. 12. Women of the Ekpe female society performing *ekpa* dance around the tomb while a percussionist plays the *ibid ekpa* drum.

At the end of the *ekpa* funeral rite, an old woman came to thank us for having revitalized the *ekpa*, because it was almost extinct. It had not been held for over thirty years in the village and many young people of the village had never had an opportunity to see it. The "motivation film", thus, played a determinant role in the process of revitalization of a ritual that was to be almost extinct although it was still alive in the memory of the village elders of Esuk Mba.



Fig. 13. *Ekpé* masquerade performed by two masks: *Ekon Ekpé* and *Atemtem*.

The *ekpé* masquerade is performed only and exclusively by men initiated into the *Ekpé* secret/initiatory society. As Okon Etim Nkanda (one of the heads of the village) said during an interview,

> the reason for playing *ekpé* is that our forefathers used *ekpé* to maintain law and order in the village. Any stubborn person was disciplined through the *Ekpé* cult […] *Ekpé* would be used to enforce discipline where people behaved lawlessly and insolently. Then we used this [*Ekpé* society] to govern society totally[9].

Members of the *Ekpé* society act as messengers of the ancestors (*ikan*) and during the performances they wear masks. The ritual dance we attended was performed by two masks: *Ekon Ekpé* (mother of the *Ekpé*) recognizable by a costume made with dried plaintain leaves, and *Atemtem* (male man). This dance was also filmed in its own context, the village and the surrounding forest. A procession parades through the streets of the village and some paths in the surrounding forest with the mask shaking a stick (*ikpa*) to strike the uninitiated attending to the ceremony (non initiates and women are not allowed to come in contact with the masked

dancers). The masks then disappear in a secret place in the forest (to which we have no access). Meanwhile, the council of elders presides over propitiatory libations. Suddenly, the masks reappear delivering the stick to the elderly. Etim stops singing and bursts into the arena where dancing starts. He takes the stick delivered by the elders and his movements become more aggressive, reaching a state of trance. He gives back then the stick to the elderly who offer him a kola nut. At this point Etim regains consciousness. Drummers stop beating the drums and the ceremony ends.

It's important to point out that the ritual performances of the musicians and dancers of the Esuk Mba village were not "shows" for tourists (this small village in the forest is not a touristic attraction at all). Leaving aside the *Ekpa* mourning rite, the other social and ritual dances performed during our stay are still practiced and preserve their function in the community's life. Although a ritual performance such as the *ekpé* masquerade was "inducted" by external factors, it was "truly" celebrated in the village with the participation of most of the villagers and it is significant that Etim, the chief of the musicians and dancers, fell into a trance during the ritual dance.

Previously, we had recorded two Efik mask dances (*idèm ikwo* and *murua* or *mburua*), both associated to the *ekpé* masquerade or *idèm*, which were "re-proposed" by a company of professional dancers and musicians of the Cultural Center of Calabar (a Cross River State institution). But those performances, held in the gardens in front of the cultural center in the city of Calabar, seemed "cold" and "empty" of their original meaning, being totally de-functionalized and out of their original context. Even so, these performances represented for us a sort of "sampling" which enabled us to know better the symbolism associated to the masked dancer's gestures and movements explained by the *obong*, (paramount ruler of the Efik) Bassey[10] Bassey Umoh, during an interview held after the performances.

Critical relationships

The experience of an "ethnomusicological-television mission" has raised not only methodological issues but also ethical ones that concern all the actors or "stakeholders" involved: the team of production, the cultural mediators and the "informants". In this regard, our experience in Esuk Mba was an interesting *case study*.

We agreed for four performances for which a fee was established: 30,000 naira for each performance, amounting to a total of 120,000 naira. We took some pictures and some video footage around the village to find the right places to film the performances. Before we left, we saw Grace Ekong having a discussion with a young man on a motorbike who had followed our movements in the village at a distance. She said that he was the chief of the "youth council" of the village and he had not been informed about our presence. Returning from the village, Grace Ekong told us that there was a problem that jeopardized the operation: the problem was the intrusiveness of the crew who took photos and shot videos throughout the village without permission: an invasion that was creating unease and suspicion regarding the exploitation of the image of the place. We supposed that clearly the village chiefs were claiming a sort of "copy-right" on the village. Meki and Grace told us that an African village is not a "public"

place where you can go around everywhere freely, and that there are some restrictions that must be respected.

The film director pointed out that the survey was previously agreed when Meki Nzewi and Grace Ekong had gone to the village to plan all the arrangements the day before our arrival. Grace replied that, according to Etim, the survey should not include the use of camcorders and still cameras, and that our behavior had created suspicion and distrust toward us. We wanted to talk to the village chief but the problem is that currently in the village there are several factions in conflict with four seniors who claim to be the village chief, so that we should negotiate with all of them. Vincenzo decided to offer 150,000 naira (instead of 120,000) as the ultimate proposal. The next day, the two Nigerian musicologists went back to Esuk Mba to conduct negotiations, and Meki Nzewi decided to buy some kola nuts for the village chiefs (a traditional symbolic offering meaning peace) before the discussion got started. But it was all to not avail: they came back with a further request by the village heads: 100,000 naira plus drinks, in addition to the 12,000 already agreed with the leader of the musicians Etim.

At this point the critical situation threatened to compromise a part of the project if not the entire episode dedicated to music in Calabar. Vincenzo, the film's director refused to pay what he considered an "extortion" by the chiefs and the so-called "youth council", which were regarded as a criminal gang. The European working group suspected that the two African musicologists were unable to manage the situation and the relationship with local referents (the leader of the group of music and dance, the village chiefs, the young council), while the two Nigerian musicologists accused us of being arrogant and presumptuous, unable to get into the mentality of a people historically exploited by everybody. According to Vincenzo, the misunderstanding was due to a wrong approach, since the two cultural mediators introduced us as a team of researchers interested in filming some traditional dances and not as a television troupe whose aim was to make a documentary. This situation threatened to create an unjustified and dangerous gap into the working group: a gap between us (Europeans) and them (Africans). At the end of the discussion, through my mediation, the director and the producer of the documentary recognized that the village could benefit from the operation and, instead of money, they offered to purchase food and drinks for the musicians and dancers taking part in the four performances already planned.

The offer was rejected, however, and the chiefs insisted on their economic demands. Vincenzo raised the biddings, offering 50,000 naira in kind (beverages and food) for each of the four performances to be distributed among the musicians and dancers by Etim in his role of representative of the musicians and dancers of the village. Here came the positive response, although we would later discover that, in order to save the project, Grace Ekong has satisfied their economic requests (80,000 naira) with her own resources without telling us. Grace belongs to an Ibibio royal family and, according to Vincenzo, Etim took advantage of the situation and asked her for more money. The fact of the matter is that after the performances took place, we realized that no food or drinks have been purchased for the musicians and the dancers as agreed, and when the shooting ended some girls who had participated in the dances came to us asking for food and beverages. Evidently, the money paid to the Etim was not redistributed as agreed.

In summary, the "exploitation of image" claimed by the leaders of the village was a pretext to obtain economic benefit for some power groups within the village. Indeed, the exploited part turned out to be both us, who had to pay out more money than we had agreed upon, and all those people who took part in the performances without drawing any benefit in either cash or kind.

The ethical question of "exploitation" within the dynamics of the interaction between "observer" and "observed", researcher and informant, insider and outsider, must be repositioned in the logic of the market, which embraces not only the urban context but also traditional societies. This is an issue that must be addressed not simply in relation to an asymmetrical system of power and post-colonialist attitudes, but rather in the light of new dynamics in which the interests of a few prevail over the interests of a whole community.

In conclusion, to reconcile an ethnomusicological piece of research with the demands posed by a television production was not an easy matter for many reasons. In the first place, the short time imposed by the production company did not allow a long enough stay in order to conduct in-depth research work on traditional music, especially in rural villages such as Esuk Mba. Secondly, the relationship of the stakeholders involved in this project (production team, ethnomusicologists and mediators, musicians and their representatives, village chiefs, authorities, etc.) was complicated by the business affairs. Most of the difficulties we had to face during our experience in Nigeria occurred when our interlocutors saw professional equipment, immediately associating it to a big budget; therefore they saw in this project an opportunity for personal economic benefit. The prestige of the scholars and their affiliation with leading academic institutions facilitated the collaboration with national and regional public institutions involved in this project and should smoothen the relationship with village chiefs and local musicians, but indeed it did not help to generate a mutual trust and to allay suspicions that both their image and their knowledge were being exploited for commercial purposes. The two main problems mentioned above (time and business) are strictly correlated because we spent most of the time in exhausting negotiations, stopping the production for hours and sometimes for a whole day.

And yet, on the other hand, the economic motivation of the musicians was a decisive factor in achieving our goals. In our case, the availability of a budget for production allowed the payment of a fee or a "refund" for musicians and dancers that made possible the "re-creation" of performances which, without an incentive (in cash or in kind), would not have been possible. Perhaps in this type of small rural communities, the scientific or cultural aims and the prospect of mass media amplification of local cultural traditions does not constitute a particularly strong motivation for locals to show their cultural heritage. A simple reason for this is that the staging of performances involving many people always involves a series of unavoidable costs (pocket money for musicians and dancers, transport expenditures for artists and instruments, food and beverages for all the participants, etc.). Arguably, in this kind of sociocultural context, where the relationship with Westerners is often linked to profit, a single ethnomusicologist with a small budget would have few chances, in such a short time, of collecting audiovisual recordings of rituals, ceremonies or festivals moreover disconnected from the specific occasions in which they normally take place.

Additionally, it must be pointed out that originally the production planning contemplated a whole episode dedicated entirely to the traditional music and dance of the Calabar region. But during post-production, the production company decided for a different editing in which one single episode would include the section on the Calabar music and the portion devoted to exploring the music in Cameroon. This entailed the cutting of some scenes showing performances and the omission of further information of ethnomusicological interest.

Finally, the documentary series was broadcast in Chile in 2014 and in Colombia in 2015 (thanks to a co-production arrangement with *Señal Colombia*), and in 2016 it has received a nomination for the prestigious award India Catalina (*Festival Internacional de Cine de Cartagena, Colombia*) in the category "best cultural and entertainment documentary". A web platform (www.pasosdecumbia.tv) was likewise developed integrating television and the internet on which some excerpts from the live performances have been uploaded.

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1 The television series was co-financed by CNTV (Consejo Nacional Chileno de Televisión) and co-produced by the Chilean CBRA FILM and the Kenyan Cultural Video Foundation.

2 This book was a compendium of styles, repertoires, genres and musical instruments of the African descent populations of Colombia. The core of the publication was my thesis "Rhythmic and polyrhythmic patterns of Afro-Colombian music", enriched by contributions from further studies and research conducted on the two Colombian coasts.

3 Actually, this theory met the director's need to find a link between Africa and Latin America in order to validate a cooperation initiative between an African company and a Latin American. The idea was to develop a format consisting of a series of documentaries to be shot both in West Africa and in South America.

4 To form a team, Vincenzo decided not to go through "institutional" channels (such as embassies or government institutions) but surf the web instead. In this way he contacted Prof. Meki Nzewi, a Nigerian musicologist and novelist resident in South Africa (where he teaches theory and philosophy of African music at the University of Pretoria) for many years, who agreed to be part of the team. Through his academic contacts, Prof. Nzewi engaged the collaboration of two of his former pupils: Ade Okunade, a researcher at the Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Badagary (Lagos) who worked in the episode on modern African music shot in Lagos iyself; and Grace Ekong, a researcher of the University of Uyo, who joijed the crew for the episode on the traditional music of Calabar. Additionally, he also contacted Cameroonian historian Richard Enoh, a professor at the University of Buea, for the episode to be shot in the north-west of Cameroon.

5 Cross River Africans, enslaved and forcibly brought to colonial Cuba, reorganized their Ekpè society covertly in Havana and Matanzas into a mutual-aid society called *Abakuá* (Miller 2009).

6 Translated by Grace Ekong.

7 Interview with Joseph Edet Bassey, one of the heads of the village of Esuk Mba (translated by Grace Ekong)

8 The term *ibid* means "drum" in the Ibibio language.

9 Translated by Grace Ekong.

10 Bassey is the lineage of the Efik royal family.

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