IKORO DRUMS AMONG THE IGBO: ICONOLOGY AND DESIGN SYMBOLS

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Abstract

Ekwe (slit drum), later elevated to ikoro, is a popular traditional musical instrument associated with Igbo communities of Southeast Nigeria. It was used by the communities for sending coded messages to people before the advent of telegraph, telephone, radio, television and other modern ways of disseminating information. Among several communities in the present Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, Abia and Imo states, this idiophone instrument was and still is elevated to a monumental status, both in its physical size, symbolism and function. This is known as ikoro, ikolo or ukolo. This monumental icon, normally mounted at the community's public square such as a market, is often associated with a major deity or village government which uses it to transmit important information to indigenes under its control. The physical representation of this ponderous monument reflects the reason behind its production as well as the function it is meant to perform. Traditional carvers saddled with the responsibility of expressing the ideas inherent in these ponderous icons, constructed variety of ikoro drums in many Igbo communities. This paper examines the ikoro drum tradition, using documentary evidence, interviews and visual observation.

INTRODUCTION

Somewhere, in the heart of what is today the *Nkwo* market in Umunze, Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State stands what remains of the biggest wooden slit drum in Igbo land, or perhaps, in the world. Known as the *Ikoro Obibiaku*, it measures about 9feet diameter and 8feet long and requires the use of a ladder to get to its top to play it. In this ancient, carved, site-specific ritual and ceremonial tourist attraction are also contained some history, art and power. For example, one of the early Anglican Christian missionaries, Reverend G.T. Basden, in his work entitled *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*

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(1982:248), he referred to it as the "wonderful tom tom" of Umunze, noting that it was quite old having been in use for many years(188). Then, it was the focal point of this public, commercial, social and political centre with its relatively big shelter and large adjoining performance space. Over the years however, due to neglect resulting from lack of use and maintenance, this once monumental symbol of the village unity has progressively degenerationed so much so that the large performance spaces around it have been overrun by commercial activities while the carved decorations on the body have almost been obliterated by over a century of weather and termite attacks (see plates 1-4). *Ikoro Obibiaku* is one of the many such drums standing in the seven villages in Umunze. Others are *Ikoro Lomu* in Lomu village, *Ikoro Izo, Ikoro Ngele Ojii, Ikoro Ogbudu,Ikoro Ahudo, Ikoro Nsogwu,Ikoro Amabe, Ioro Ugwu Ika, Ikoro Ugwu Agbada, Ikoro Amuda and Ikoro Orie Ohadu.*

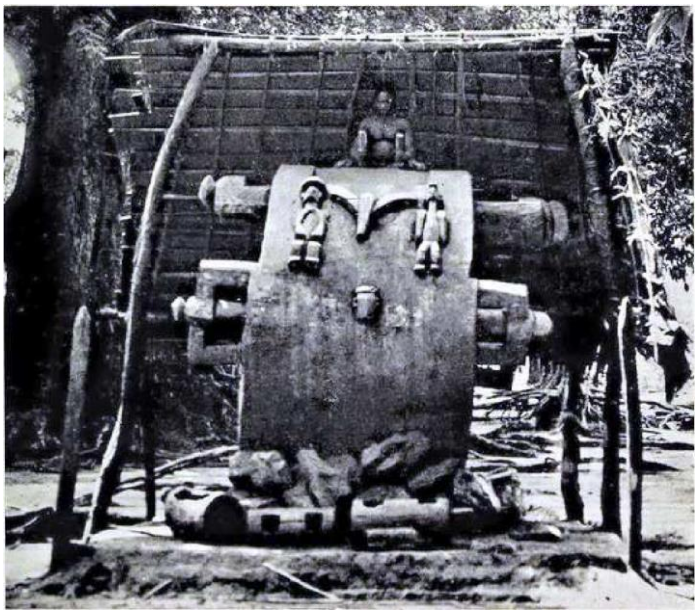


Plate1. A drummer on the *Ikoro Obibiaku* at the beginning of the 20th century. ©G.T.Basden

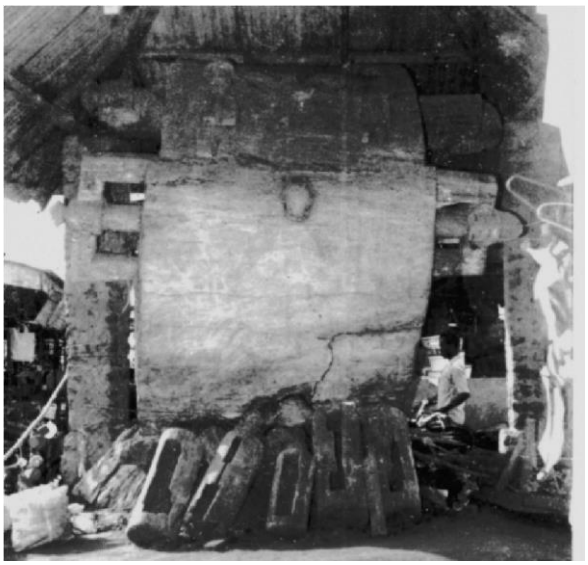


Plate 2. Ikoro Obibiaku in 1989 © Chijioke Onuora.



Plate 3. Side view of the *Ikoro Obibiaku* in 2016, showing the extent of dilapidation. © Chijioke Onuora

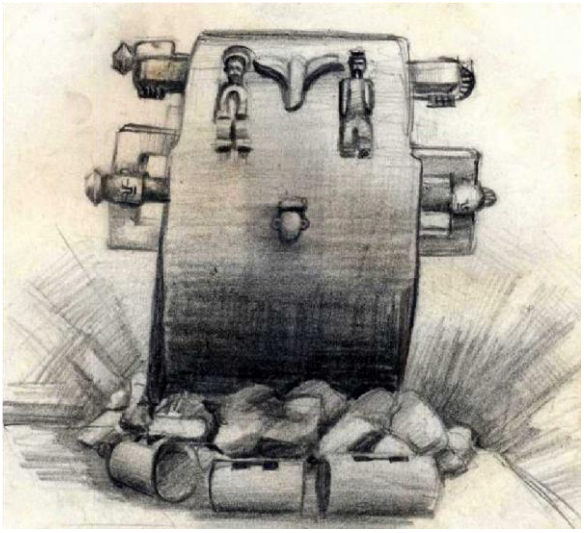


Plate 3. A reconstructive drawing of *Ikoro Obibiaku* by Chijioke Onuora

Ikoro is a monumental slit drum associated with Igbo communities, east of the River Niger. There appears not to be any physical deference between the *ikoro* and the *ekwe* log drums in that they are both related in outward appearance as musical and information dissemination devices. However, while a simple *ekwe* is smaller and could be used by men, women and children, *Ikoro* is bigger, male oriented and closely associated with warfare and other heroic deeds. Also, there exist other forms of *ekwe* instrument which are neither used by women and children nor referred to as *ikoro.* The *Ufie*, a pair of vertically placed slit drums and played for the *Ozo* titled chiefs fall into this category, so also is the *Ekwe Dike* and other drums owned by market deities for sending messages to people the same way the *ikoro* is used among the communities that own them.

Ikoro drums are used in some Igbo areas of Anambra, Imo, Abia, Enugu and Ebonyi states of Nigeria. *Ikoro* tradition has also been reported among the people of Mbembe in the present Akwa Ibom State (Lagarma. 2013:150) while Onwuekwe (2014: 3) is of the opinion that their rain forest habitat provided these people with ample quantity of sizable wood logs for the production log drums such as the *ikoro*.

Some accounts from Igbo scholars offer some insights on the use of Ikoro drums. Though Ikoro is a musical instrument, capable of

transmitting melorhythmic patterns (Nzewi,1991:60), it is principally a means of sending urgent information to the community in times of emergency, (Gore, 2008:61) such as war, (Largama,2013:8) or to announce the death of an important man, as recorded in Achebe (1958:96). *Ikoro* is therefore, a very important and highly prized community possession which is displayed in a shade at the village square. It is carved out of massive *iroko* or camwood trunk by specially gifted sculptors whose gouge and chisel marks leave pictorial suggestions of the meaning of this all important icon of village unity. The objective of this paper is to find out the philosophy behind the *ikoro*, drawing from the name, myths, form and visual embellishments on the body of some *ikoro* drums used by communities in different parts of Igbo land.

The word *Ikoro*

The meaning and the origin of the word *Ikoro/Ikolo* remains a problem. Some people, in trying to find its meaning, do so by using it as a prefix to *Ikorobia, ikolobia*, *okorobia* and *okolobia*, the short form of which are *ikoro, ikolo*, *okoro*, and *okolo*. These words share similar spellings with the subject matter but have different tone markings. In effect, they address the masculinity of a man. *Ikorobia/Ikolobia* means, a fine specimen of manhood whose physical characteristics qualify him to do whatever is required of a full fledged man. He brings 'raw' energy to bear on his exploits to the extent of, sometimes, overstretching himself like the tragic hero, Okonkwo in Chine Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Interestingly too, an *ikorobia* relies on his ability and agility to overcome many trying situations. Igbo elders know this and consequently developed the adage that 'the physical challenges that faces a man at his prime may have come at the right time – '*Ihe biara nwoke n'ikorobia biara ya na mma'*. This period is also literally seen as a time "the blood flowing in a man's body is still hot" – *mgbe obara nwoke na anu oku*. They go to wars, partake in wrestling contests and engage in physically tasking activities. It makes sense when one begins to link *ikoro* drum with the word *ikorobia* because it is these youthful and energetic young men that prove their worth by overcoming their opponents and severing their heads especially during wars in order to present them to the *ikoro*. This event even seems to tally with the main function of *ikoro*.

Surprisingly, owners of *ikoro* would not want to subscribe to this idea of *ikoro* originating from *ikorobia*. Many areas in Igboland refer to a cavity bored into a material as *Ukoro, ukolo, ikolo or ikoro*. These vernacular words share the same tone markings with *ikoro* drum. The people of Uburu (in Ebonyi State) who actually call their community drum *Ukoro*, also refer to a cavity bored into wood or other related materials as *ukorobo or Ukoro* for short. However, they still would not want to link it to their *ukoro*. During my field trip to various Igbo communities, they referred me to Ohafia/Arochukwu area (in Abia State) to find what *ikoro* stands for. This is where *ikoro* myths recorded by Aniakor (1983) becomes very relevant. One of the myths comes from Ohafia while the other comes from Umunze (in Orumba North of Anambra State) who traditionally lay claim to Arochukwu ancestry.

In Ohafia the origin of *ikoro* drums is associated with a legendary woman called *Nne Ubi* (mother of farmland). One day, *Nne Ubi* went to the farm to collect some firewood from a particular wood known as *ikiriko*. When she struck it with a stick, it produced some interesting sound from its cavity. She was so fascinated by this that she took it to the village and showed it to her friends. The news soon spread all around the village. When *Mazi Elu*, a gifted artist within the community, used two sticks to sound the log, the men were highly impressed and they desired to acquire it. They gave the womenfolk a gift of a goat and immediately asked Mazi Elu to carve a new drum based on the prototype acquired from the women. When the assignment was completed, they left the cutting of the slit which separates the male and the female sounds until a diviner was consulted. They were afraid to do this because they did not known the intentions (which often were unpredictable) of the deity believed to inhabit the drum. True to their fears, the deity was said to have demanded human sacrifice before the drum could be sounded. Disappointed by this request, they opted to give as many cows as would please the deity but it refused. Consequently, some men were said to have been sent to a distant market to buy seven slaves who were immediately killed and sacrificed to the drum by spilling their blood on it. From then on, the drum was referred to as *Ikoro*, the eater of human heads – *ikoro ota isi*. All over Igboland, many communities with an *ikoro* tradition were believed to have observed this ritual of human sacrifice as part of its

consecration, though the number of 'sacrificial animals' differed from community to community. Sometimes, the carvers of these ponderous drums were, unfortunately, sacrificed to what his hands had made. Such was the fate of one Amawbia carver who, after completing the tedious task of making a monumental *ikoro* drum for a community in Umunze, was waylaid by his patrons on his way home and sacrificed to the new *ikoro* (Basden, 1966:360).

The other myth from Umunze, a community in the present day Anambra State, is martial. According to oral tradition recorded by Aniakor (1983), Nze, the famous founder of Umunze desired to be martially superior to the people around him and therefore went on to train all his children (both male and female) in the art of warfare. To test them, he first sent out the females on a raid on a neighbouring community. The women were victorious as they came back with seven heads. However, they cried as they came back because they could not bear the sight of blood. Nze was displeased by this although he admired their courage. He felt he could not entrust the community's martial responsibility in their hands. He therefore sent out the men who returned with only one head but sang and jubilated as they came back. This pleased Nze, and to celebrate his sons' feat, he engaged a carver to make an *ikoro* which became known as *ikoro,* the war leader – *Ikoro ochi agha.*

Physical Characteristics of *Ikoro* Drum

The simplest form of an *ikoro* drum is a big slit drum from a cylindrical tree trunk. Except for its huge size and the monumental importance attached to it, is little or no difference between it and other slit drum types in Igboland. Some areas around Umuahia (like Ohuhu) have examples of such *ikoro* drums lacking extra projections or relieved designs on their bodies. This type, however, does not really help us much in understanding the *ikoro* because it is in the minority. The *ikoro* drums with extra projections and body decorations, in their simplest forms represent visual imagery of a male figure lying on his back. The abstract cylindrical mass of the drum forms the main body. It is on this cylindrical mass that a cavity is opened to produce the *ikoro* sound. The mouth of this cavity is in the form of two rectangular shapes joined b a narrow slit. The feet of this ' imaginary

man on lying on his back' are shown sticking out at one end of the drum while the head protrudes from the other.

In several Igbo communities, projections on *ikoro* show human heads on either side of the drum. Such heads range from near naturalism to pure abstraction. By the hairdo on the figures we understand that both male and female figures are often depicted on these projections. Very many of them have both hands behind their heads. This is true of the figures on *Ikoro* Obibiaku in Umunze where there are three male heads at one end of the drum and three female heads on the other end. Their faces are quite expressive. The precision with which the lines showing these expressions were rendered portrays the carver as a genius of his time. The hands behind their heads were also given a selective detailing. *Ikoro* Ogbudu in Ururo Village (in Umunze) appears more abstract. On either end of the drum, the carver showed the 'hands behind the head' as a head on a rectangular wooden block. In some other examples in Umunze, projections are shown in form of a man holding a victim's head as a trophy. On *Ikoro Udo* in Ubaha Village (Umunze), it appears on either side facing different directions, while on *Ikoro Izo* and *Ikoro Ngele Ojii* (Umunze), it appears on one side of the drum. In *Ikoro Ngele Ojii* the man's back is attached to the drum end and he stands on a projecting pedestal. He wears a scarified face (*ichi*) and holds a head which also bears some *ichi* marks. Some *Ikoro* drums bear a head, each projecting from both sides of the drum. This is true of some drums at Awka, Eziagu, Mgbagbu, and Uburu among others. In Ohafia some of these heads do not look skyward. Instead, their expressionless faces turn to the village square where 'the action is'. There could just be one head at one side (as in *Ikoro Eke Elu Ogo* in Ebem Ohafia) or two as in *Ikoro* in Elu Ohafia.

In Umuchu and Achina areas of Aguata, there exists an example of a standing figure on a projecting pedestal and holding a matchet with his right hand and his victim's head with the left hand in a manner reminiscent of the *ikenga* cult figure. A similar example of a man with a matchet is seen on an *Ikoro* drum in Achi (Oji-River area of Enugu State). Examples from Ohafia and Afikpo areas show a recurrence of a seated male figure at one end of the drum holding a knife in the right hand, and at the other end, a seated female figure bearing a child on her lap. A more recent, but similar example from Amuzu in Mbaise

shows a man wearing a pair of trousers and shirt and standing on a pedestal at one end, while a woman breastfeeding a baby is seated at the other end (plate 5).

The use of animal motifs as projections at drum ends is not very common. In Umunze it appears only at one end of *Ikoro Ngele Oji* in the form of a decorated animal head with a smaller mammal (probably a cat) surmounting it. On the body of *ikoro* drums, however, animal motifs are extensively used. In addition to human figures, other animal motifs used include the sacred python, goat, ram, crocodile (or lizard), tortoise, scorpion and bird. Of all the animals, the python is the most commonly used, especially in Aguata. It could be seen on the *Ikoro Ngele Ojii* and *Ikoro Udo* where it is swallowing an animal. It is also shown alongside other motifs on the bodies of *Ikoro Umuehu*, *Ikoro Ezira* and *Ikoro Ajala* (in Eziagu, Orumba North Local Government Area). In Amuzu (in Mbaise), it is often combined with the crocodile and tortoise motifs. In Enugwu-Ukwu and Adazi Nnukwu, the *ikoro* body is decorated with the spotted python and crocodile. Other design materials which add visual texture to drums include heavenly bodies like the sun, the moon and stars. These motifs are commonly used in Mbaise area of Imo state. Linear and geometric shapes are also seen on drum bodies. A ready example of such *ikoro* is the small one at Owerre Ezukala. In addition to a seated figure at one of its ends it has some boldly incised lines on the body of the drum.

All in all, whatever motifs that appear on *ikoro* drum, the human representation seems to be more persistent – either as head (which are sometimes arranged in rows as in *Ikoro Ezi* at Awka) or as full figures. Both the male and female figures are ever present and are positioned in various ways. While some are seated others are either standing or lying horizontally. Their activities vary as well. There are so many *ikoro* drums in Igboland. They are products of various artists that had their trainings from different masters, and so they were bound to produce things that are relatively different. Even when the theme, *ikoro*, is the same, the interpretation vary from place to place, and from artist to artist. The motifs added to the drum body are some scared statements which have meanings and add visual textures to the drums. Also, the size of a drum, setting and decorations on its body

help to define and distinguish it from others. No two *ikoro* drums are the same.



Plate 5. Ikoro from Amuzu Mbaise © Hector Ekeanyanwu

Ikoro as a Symbol of Heroic Achievements

What the two myths of origin outlined earlier show clearly is that *ikoro* was first and foremost connected with warfare and head hunting. The function and physical characteristics of *ikoro* drum explains this claim. On very large number of *ikoro* drums are carved human heads, or a man holding a human head, or a man holding a matchet in his right hand and a severed head in the left hand, or most recently man holding a gun. Sometimes the man holding a human head wears a scarified face so also does the severed head. Actually, this goes on to suggest that both men are great but the victor is obviously greater than the vanquished, irrespective of his status. It also goes on to reaffirm the Igbo which says that "when two great palm trees stand together, the taller (greater) one can easily be identified"- *Nkwu na nkwu kwulu, a malu nkwu ka nkwu.* To communities which own *ikoro*, only such victorious men are fine examples of manhood. They are believed to possess extra-powers (both physical and psychic) to be able to dare what the ordinary man could not. The effect of such extra forces became more evident in times of war when the 'intoxicating' war music was played. Once that happened," non-achievers" went for cover as they were the targets of those community heroes. Such nonachievers used to be very few in some communities like Ajalli because it was the practice for a person who could not get a human head during crucial wars to proceed on a self imposed exile. A popular Igbo maxim that holds that "it was never good for one to be alive and emit a ghostly odour- *Adighi ano mmadu mmadu, n'esi mmuo mmuo"*

captures this situation. In other words, fine specimen of manhood can clearly be identified during challenging or war situations. The fact was that a person went to war to kill or get killed and when none of the two happened, the person went to somewhere else to resettle. He could not stand the humiliation back home. He also stood a very slim chance of getting a 'choice wife'. An example of what a war hero could do on hearing a traditional martial music was reported in Alor by Ugonwafor Oyeka (personal communication January 11, 1989). During a burial ceremony of a onetime war hero, one of his contemporaries (then old) exhibited some dance (drama) steps, describing how he overpowered his opponent. Next, he ran to a cistern, stood on the decaying stems of palm fronds used in covering it and danced the *Abia* music amidst shouts of fright and disbelief from the spectators, some of whom took to their heels. No sooner had he jumped than the entire assemblage fronds collapsed into the cistern. He was believed to have psychically prevented the decayed wood from caving in while he danced. This parallels what happened during an *ikoro* dance in Uga, Aguata when a person was pushed down by a hero for attempting to dance to the *ikoro* and he died two days later. The natives attributed the death to the *ikoro* drum spirit anger. A simple explanation to the man's death is that the *ikoro* had eaten his head – *Ikoro ataala isi ya* (F. Nwankwo, personal communication, April 9, 1989). In Uburu (Ebonyi State) the behaviour of a hero on hearing the *ikpa* music is even more dramatic. He leaps several times into the air and in a flash, dashes into the bush or any other direction and does something that must suggest that there is abundance of strength in the hero (*ike di n'dogwu*). In the past, he either came back with a human head drippling with fresh blood or the slain body of a strong animal like the leopard. When the later happened, he became the killer of leopard/tiger (*ogbu agu*). He could become *ogbu ka agu (*killing like a leopard) or *ome ka agu,* he who kills his opponents in a cat-like manner. In Ohafia, almost everything about the *ikoro* is tension packed. The drummer never ceased to send out a war cry whenever he beats the *ikoro* drum. The heroes, in response danced to the beats in full military regalia consisting of a white and indigo striped loincloth and hat (*okpu agu*) to match their painted faces. He also had knives or bows and arrows, and the manes of ram (*nza ebunu*) tied to their left hand and sometimes carried human heads. It was this achievement that was symbolised in the physical form of the *ikoro*. These days, a true hero could be a person with

immense riches, a philanthropist, an exceptional academic, a renowned politician or any other male who towers above his peers in his endeavour.

Ikoro as the Symbol of Village Unity

Ikoro is a socio-political symbol of village unity. This symbolism derives from its monumentality in that is expressed in both physical and conceptual terms. As the community's collective voice, it is greater than any individual voice and its proclamations are mandatory. It is reflected the Igbo adage which says that "if one man cooks for the community it would simply consume it but if the community cooks for one man he gets stuck in the food (*onye sielu ora, o lisie ma ora sielu out onye, o to na nni*). Ikoro depicts a community's ability to speak with one voice which is expressed in the saying that "group is strength" (*igwe bu ike*). The community voice is therefore obeyed without question or delay. As a community's symbol of pride, *ikoro* drum lies at a conspicuous site at the village square where it could be seen and admired by all. This accounts for the energy and money that go into production. In Aguata area especially Umunze, Eziagu, Uga, Ajalli, and Ogbuna, the ikoro as a monumental form is celebrated today more than the function it is meant to add colour to. Though many of these drums have not been in use for some time now due to the impact of the Christian religion, no indigene would treat kindly any person that tries to destroy or steal an *ikoro*. In Ohafia, Abiriba and Arochukwu areas, *ikoro* drums are locked up in huts and are not seen easily as in Aguata/Orumba area and indeed, many other parts of Igboland. Although not as big as those in Aguata area, they are still very much in use. The emphasis seems to be more on function it performs than its form; it is functionally monumental.

In addition to the use of human head carvings on drum to show heroism in warfare and head hunting, there are other symbols which address other vital aspects of life. Today, the natives see them as mere decorations on drum bodies. This is a result of ignorance largely because the process of socialization which would have been effected by the past generation has been broken by the effects of Christianity. A good number of 'natives' cannot even remember when their *ikoro* drum was last used. To them, *ikoro* monuments remain a visible connection to the past.

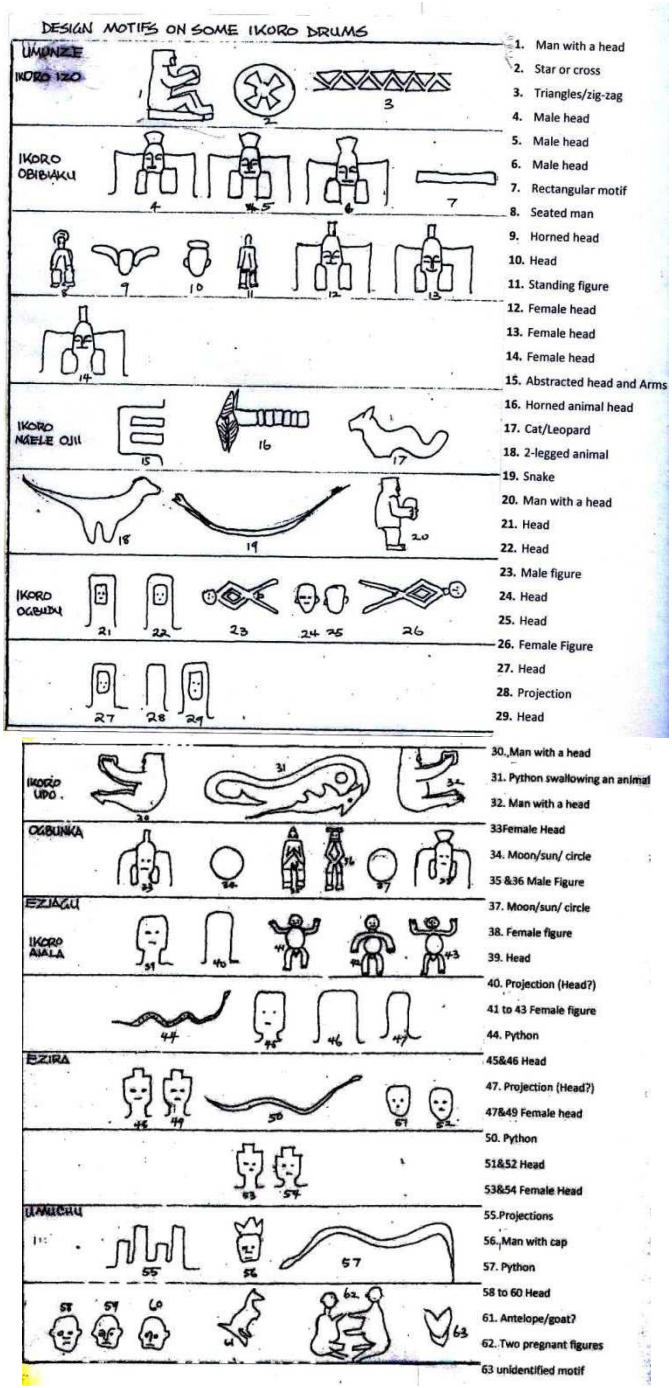
Motifs and Symbols Addressing the Igbo World View and Procreation

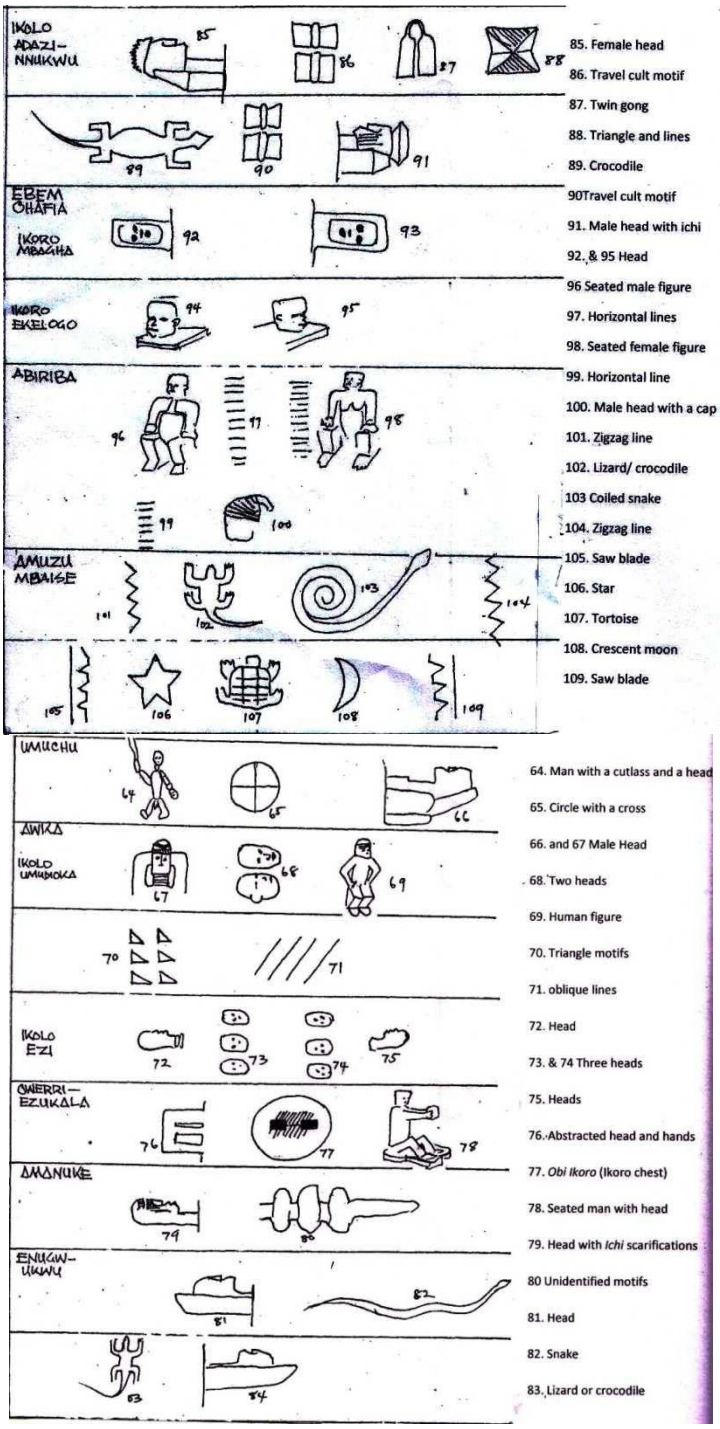
Using the dualistic view of the cosmos by the Igbo people, one can best describe the recurrence of both male and female forms on *ikoro* as a representation of this dualism in human existence. The Igbo man believes that things are in twos (*ihe di abua abua*). There is day and night, good and bad, spirit and human world, up and down, left and right. In the same vein, there is man and woman. Without woman there can be no man (and vice versa). Therefore, on many *ikoro* drums, the number of carved male figures at one end of the drum is balanced with equal number of females at the other end. The presence of male and female figures also suggests procreation – something very precious in the Igbo world. Every man prays for the continued existence of the family through procreation as demonstrated in such Igbo names as *Obiechina* (may the lineage not come to a close), *Amaechina* (may the compound not close down), *Ahamefuna* (may I not lose my identity). Nothing gave the Igbo person a sense of assurance than the fact that he still had a place to visit and stay when he died and became an ancestor. He must strive to get as many children as possible in order to actualize this ideal aptly illustrated in the name, *Maduakonobi* (the compound never lacks people) which in short, is called *Akonobi* or *Maduako*. In Igbo family therefore, when a man fails to get male children through his wife he, takes another one with the hope of getting male children to ensure the continued existence of the family name. *Ikoro* Eziagu has two female figures and a male figure on the drum body, probably illustrating the above idea. *Ikoro* Umuchu has a pregnant woman interacting with another figure while *Ikoro Ogbudu*, *Ikoro Ogbunka* and *Ikoro Obibiaku* (in Umunze) have a male and female fibures on the drum.

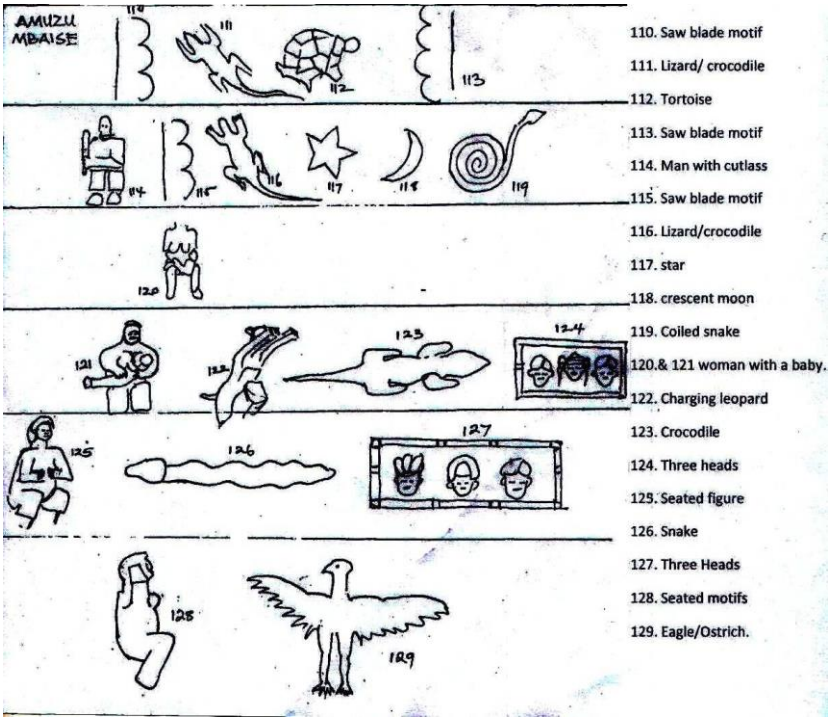
There are some meanings attached to the ritual animals which appear on *Ikoro* drum. The snake, the lizard (crocodile) and tortoise are sacred animals in many communities and are often not killed. They are also believed to be the primordial animals as told in folklore and myths. Many Igbo folktales that touch on origins and beginnings of life usually start with 'long long time ago, before the beginning of time, itself, when the lizards moved in twos and threes, and when the python moved along the pathways with royal gait…. Among the Igbo people, there is a school of thought that thinks that the tortoise shell symbolizes death, but a more popular belief is that the tortoise

represents the typical character of an Igbo man. 'His' tricks, successes and failures, are illustrations of Igbo wisdom (and foolishness). It is said in local circles that whatever story that excludes the *mbe* (tortoise) becomes tasteless. Consequently, on some *ikoro* drums, especially in Amuzu and Ngwa areas of Imo State, the tortoise is shown in constant relationship with the heavenly bodies (the moon and stars) and also with other primordial beings – the python and the lizard (crocodile). The python, as a messenger of the deity that owns the drum, represents that deity (O. Alachebe ,personal communication, March 4, 1989). In the shrine of Ajala, the deity that owns *Ikoro Ajala*, the same python was carefully sculpted in clay meandering its way around the *Ajala* figures. By appearing on *Ikoro Ajala*, Alachebe affirmed that the manifestation of *Ajala* deity on the *Ikoro* was complete. The use of python as a motif in *Ikoro* drum body is wide spread in Igboland and it shows the degree of importance attached to it as a sacred animal. For this reason, it is hardly killed by many Igbo communities. If it was inadvertently killed it was given a burial that almost equalled that given to a human being.

On an *ikoro*, a python is sometimes shown swallowing another animal, meaning a greater community symbolically swallowing a weaker community. It is in line with the Igbo proverb which says that though many animals exist in the forest, there exists the python who owns the forest (*Anu juru n'ohia ma o nwelu eke nwe* ohia). It is the linear incisions (*akika*) on the ikoro that could be termed exclusively decorative. For example, on the *ikoro* in Umudioka, Awka, oblique lines serve as background textures for figures carved on the drum while on *Ikoro Ngele Ojii*, the lines are used as a decorative device. It is true that the relief representations of forms on *ikoro* drums are statements which help to explain what the ikoro stands for, it is also clear that *ikoro* is the community's collective voice for making outstanding pronouncements that concern all vital aspects of the community's life. However, the representation of a man holding a head in his outstretched hands, a man holding a machete and a head, human heads on the drum, the myths attached to *ikoro*, the war cry sent out by the drummer while beating the *ikoro* and the language of *ikoro* significantly point to the fact the *ikoro* was first and foremost a martial drum. It was the martial success and quest for more successes that the first *ikoro* drum symbolised.


DESIGN MOTIFS ON SOME IKORO DRUMS
UMUNZE
IKORO IZO
IKORO OBIBIAKU
IKORO NAELE OJII
IKORO OGBUDU
IKORO UDO
OGBUNKA
EZIAGU
IKORO AJALA
EZIRA
UMUCHU
1. Man with a head
2. Star or cross
3. Triangles/zig-zag
4. Male head
5. Male head
6. Male head
7. Rectangular motif
8. Seated man
9. Horned head
10. Head
11. Standing figure
12. Female head
13. Female head
14. Female head
15. Abstracted head and Arms
16. Horned animal head
17. Cat/Leopard
18. 2-legged animal
19. Snake
20. Man with a head
21. Head
22. Head
23. Male figure
24. Head
25. Head
26. Female Figure
27. Head
28. Projection
29. Head
30. Man with a head
31. Python swallowing an animal
32. Man with a head
33 Female Head
34. Moon/sun/ circle
35 &36 Male Figure
37. Moon/sun/ circle
38. Female figure
39. Head
40. Projection (Head?)
41 to 43 Female figure
44. Python
45&46 Head
47. Projection (Head?)
47&49 Female head
50. Python
51&52 Head
53&54 Female Head
55. Projections
56. Man with cap
57. Python
58 to 60 Head
61. Antelope/goat?
62. Two pregnant figures
63 unidentified motif


IKOLO ADAZI-NNUKWU
EBEM OHAFIA
IKORO MBAGHA
IKORO EKELOGO
ABIRIBA
AMUZU MBAISE
UMUCHU
AWKA
IKOLO UMUDIOKA
IKOLO EZI
OWERRI-EZUKALA
AMANUKE
ENUGW-UKWU
85. Female head
86. Travel cult motif
87. Twin gong
88. Triangle and lines
89. Crocodile
90Travel cult motif
91. Male head with ichi
92. & 95 Head
96 Seated male figure
97. Horizontal lines
98. Seated female figure
99. Horizontal line
100. Male head with a cap
101. Zigzag line
102. Lizard/ crocodile
103 Coiled snake
104. Zigzag line
105. Saw blade
106. Star
107. Tortoise
108. Crescent moon
109. Saw blade
64. Man with a cutlass and a head
65. Circle with a cross
66. and 67 Male Head
68. Two heads
69. Human figure
70. Triangle motifs
71. oblique lines
72. Head
73. & 74 Three heads
75. Heads
76. Abstracted head and hands
77. *Obi Ikoro* (Ikoro chest)
78. Seated man with head
79. Head with *Ichi* scarifications
80 Unidentified motifs
81. Head
82. Snake
83. Lizard or crocodile



Conclusion

This paper has established that the *ekwe* slit drum, usually associated with the forest regions of Southeastern Nigeria was elevated both in size and meaning to become the *ikoro*. Also, the mythical stories behind the establishment of the *ikoro* as well as its physical characteristics point to heroic accomplishments in war and head hunting by community champions. In addition, the *ikoro* assembles the community to the village square in periods of danger and announces the commencement and end of important festivals as well as the death of a community hero. Furthermore, this paper affirms that carved images and motifs on each *ikoro* drum helps in its identification and understanding the general worldview of its owner. For example, a python swallowing its prey may be significant of a community subduing its neighbor while the tortoise and star motifs may be a celebration of the community's clever and witty dominance. These animals are also representatives of the deity that owns the *ikoro*. Therefore, each *ikoro* monument symbolically, tells its own unique

story as it spells out what is expected of the heroes of the land. This paper further affirms that carved male and female heads at either end of the cylindrical drum demonstrate the Igbo recurrent belief in the duality of existence while other decorative embellishments on the drum body derive from human and animal activities, as well as plants and abstract forms and shapes. The *ikoro* tradition which has existed hundreds of years before any contact with the Europeans or other civilizations has successfully been passed on from the ancient Igbo civilization to the present.

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