

# Music and Dance Traditions of Africa: Search for Indigenous Theories and Methods in Research

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the theory and methodology of researching, understanding, and appreciating the music and dance traditions of Africa, emphasizing the need for indigenous perspectives. The discourse examined extensive scholarly works and theories related to African music and dance, focusing on contributions from both African and non-African researchers. It addresses misconceptions held by non-African researchers and highlights the contributions of African scholars in rectifying these views. The study underscores the distinction between "geo-Africa," which focuses on the distribution and material culture of African ethnicities, and "eco-Africa," which examines the relationship between human activities and the environment. African scholars argue for the importance of their voices in African cultural studies, as they are better positioned to understand and explain their traditions. The study concludes that African voices have significantly advanced the theory and method in this field, promoting a comprehensive and culturally relevant approach to researching, understanding, and appreciating African music and dance.

**Keywords:** African music, Dance traditions, Indigenous theories, Ethnomusicology, Cultural context, Research methodologies, Ethnocentrism, African scholars, geo-Africa, eco-Africa, Cultural heritage, Postcolonial studies

## INTRODUCTION

Research theory is applied in many fields of study including music and dance and across cultures of the world. It intends to conceptually interpret the social structures as well as a phenomenon and their relationships. In other words, a theory is a set of principles that guides practices, explains the phenomenon, and offers a crucial tool for scholars in analyzing society in the humanities (Cody, 2003). According to Silverman (2000), research theories are very important because they give an empirical base and evidence to research findings. Research methods on the other hand are approaches or ways that investigate the phenomenon. In the social sciences, a method is a process that interrogates the social and cultural life of a people and significantly contributes to the validity and reliability of its research findings (Deacon et al., 2007).

Many scholars around the world contributed significantly to the theory and method of researching, understanding, and appreciating the music and dance traditions of Africa. The phenomenon also shows and reveals different perceptions and misconceptions about the understanding of music and dance as central to African culture by alien researchers and theorists. Ekwueme (1974:35) states: "the approach to the subject of African music emanates from equally varied perspectives: some came out with preconceived ideas into which African music must be fit, some dabbled into African music as a way out, having failed to make a success in the practice of the music of their own culture or to make significant contributions in the scholarship of it, and yet some approach things African with disdain or, at best condescension". While many thought of music and dance of Africa as two separate phenomena; "I cannot tell you exactly when African music was separated from the dance, as there were no direct lines of communication between Africa and the rest of the world. In fact, Africa was known as the "Dark Continent," which is a derogatory term offensive to many, and the images we had of Africa and her dances were the putative images created by Hollywood" (Green, 2018:3), some others

were of the view that Africans lack concise definition for music as well as dance as ascribed by the Western world. Hanna (1982) writes”

After considering a variety of dance forms through historical time and across geographical space and seeking common characteristics in the kinds of phenomena different people call to dance, or what Westerners would generally categorize as dance, I attempted to develop an overarching analytical definition. Such a definition should, I thought, transcend the participants' concept which undoubtedly includes some criteria that other groups exclude and debar some they encompass (p.57)

There is cultural ignorance, disregard for cultural diversities and a lack of concept of cultural internalization. Titon (2009) explained that music is universal but its meaning differs due to the diversity of cultures. This diversity came because of learning and transmitting cultural heritage from one generation to the other. The cultural inheritance according to Titon informs the people in understanding their situations and responding to such situations.

There are myriads of reasons such as cultural intransigence, ethnocentrism, and the detachment of the researcher from the realities of African cultures that provide ardent justification for concern for African voices (African scholars) who understand the complexities of African traditions and culture to provide comprehensive theory and method in researching, understanding and appreciating their music and dance traditions. Mapaya (2014) without missing words stated:

With the ascension of the African voice within the academe and the awakening by scholars in general to post-colonial realities, ethnomusicology no longer enjoys the authoritative status when it comes to the studying of African music (p. 2008).

The music and dance of Africa is the culture of Africa. However, one can hardly ignore the contributions of others from afar that have given the African voices a revealing synopsis of elaborate and time-tested theories and methods in researching, understanding and appreciating music and dance traditions of their own. The music and dance traditions of Africa encompass different eco-cultural and geocultural perspectives and need much more careful analysis and synthesis for better understanding and appreciation.

### **Statement of The Problem**

The primary problem addressed by this study is the pervasive misconceptions and biases that have historically influenced the research, understanding, and appreciation of African music and dance traditions. These issues arise primarily due to cultural ignorance, ethnocentrism, and the application of Western theoretical frameworks and methodologies that are often detached from the realities of African cultures. Non-African researchers have frequently approached African music and dance with preconceived notions and a lack of contextual understanding, leading to inaccurate representations and analyses. Many African scholars have identified a critical need to lead the discourse in researching, understanding and appreciating their cultural traditions, as they are inherently better positioned to understand and interpret the complexities of their music and dance practices. This process seems to be given little recognition. The study therefore seeks to fill the lacuna through the identification of African researchers' contributions to indigenous theories and methods in researching, understanding and appreciating African music and dance.

### **Research Objective**

The objective of this study is to identify and examine the theoretical and methodological innovations proposed by African scholars as contributions to researching, understanding, and appreciating African music and dance traditions.

## METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study begins with a thorough literature study that includes a wide range of academic viewpoints and ideas, both African and non-African, followed by a critical critique of current theoretical frameworks. Comparative examinations of African and Western scholarly techniques reveal cultural biases and emphasise the distinct contributions of indigenous African perspectives. Case studies of specific cultural practices like the mbira system in Zimbabwe and Zambia, as well as Baganda's gender conceptions, provide contextual depth. Synthesising indigenous conceptions and encouraging collaborative study with African academics guarantees a comprehensive and respectful examination of African music and dance, confirmed by peer review for scholarly rigour and relevance.

## Findings

1. There are significant misconceptions and biases in the study of African music and dance due to the application of Western-centric theories and methods.
2. African scholars are positioned to understand and interpret their cultural traditions and their contributions are essential for developing accurate and culturally relevant theories and methodologies.
3. The concepts of geo-Africa and eco-Africa are concomitant in understanding the distribution of African ethnicities and the relationship between human activities and the environment.
4. The study reveals that African scholars advocate for rejecting Western theories that do not align with African experiences or fail to address the basic principles of African structures in context.
5. The study also underscores the need for a holistic approach to studying African music and dance, considering the interconnectedness of various cultural, social, and historical factors.

## DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

### The African Voices, Theory and Methods

African voices are needed in African affairs. It is an undoubted fact that scholars from Africa stand a better chance in explaining issues about their culture and traditions to the rest of the world. Do African scholars have a place in the landmark of research theory and methods? How can they secure a significant place through their contributions to theory and method in researching, understanding and appreciating their type of music and dance traditions? These and many more overwhelming issues catch the eye of earlier and twenty-first-century scholars of anthropology and ethnomusicology. If a theory is a standard tool and the method is the process the tool is administered, then every researcher must be mindful of the appropriateness of the tool and the validity of the process. This calls for testing and retesting of tools and processes applicable to researching, understanding and appreciating the culture of a particular society.

To contribute effectively to the theory and method discourse regarding research, understanding and appreciation of Music and Dance of Africa, African scholars face two issues: 1. what is the cultural definition of music and dance of geo-Africa, and 2. How is music and dance conceptualized in eco-Africa? The geo-Africa, for this paper, consists of the distribution of various African ethnicities and physical or material cultures across the continent. This paradigm encapsulates the features such as origin, location, types and identity of the social constructs. Nketia (1976) revealed this when he indicated:

Traditional society is one in which people are linked by factors of ethnicity, kinship and common indigenous language and culture....it is the society that cultivates traditional music and dance as an integral part of its way of life (p. 5).

The geo-Africa, therefore, provides the foundation necessary for appropriating knowledge of various music and dance genres and their distribution across geocultural regions. Again, the African scholar should be able to postulate better assumptions that effectively correlate with the physical or material culture of the people.

The eco-Africa on the other hand comprises the relationship between human activities and the existing

with its sustainable contents. Nketia (1976) again wrote:

The arts of contemporary society are generally innovative and reflect new experiences or modes of expression derived in part from external sources and the African cultural environment (p. 5).

Barton (2018), states “to deeply explore the notion of how culture and society are reflected in music one needs to understand the meanings associated with it”. Music and dance is contextual; meaning the understanding of either is embodied in the culture. It can therefore be perceived by diverse cultures from a different cultural perspective. What makes meaning as music and dance to one culture may not be the same in another. These two should elevate African scholars above their alien counterparts toward an appropriate methodology for research into the music and dance traditions of Africa, giving better understanding and higher appreciation since they are indigenes of the African soil. The eco-Africa, therefore, relates to issues such as styles/modes, genre, aesthetics, and artistic expressions.

Notwithstanding, scholars from Africa are with reason compelled to be mindful of existing theories and methods and their shortfalls in researching into music and dance traditions of Africa. According to Youngman (1975), the approaches adopted by some researchers in the field of ethnomusicology and 'primitive' art are theories and methodologies that failed to appropriate the study of non-Western or nonelite arts. Meki Emeka Nziwe in an interview with Kamai Freire and Nina Graeff stated “a true African musical mind (in education and research sites) should eschew the flashy floating theory that marks Western intellectual mindset and procedure, and dispose itself to perceive the profound, humanity-focused theory-in-practice philosophy that marks indigenous African musical arts creativity, constructs experiencing and interactions” (Freire & Graeff, 2021:102).

Significantly, African scholars should emerge to fill the lacuna created by non-African researchers since they understand the content of African culture and traditions. For example, Drewal (1991), explained that there is a challenge to alien researchers on Performance Stereotypes in which performers have been either formally or informally trained in body techniques to recursively enact a particular style or mode of performance imposed. In this way, performers are denied creativity and a sense of improvisation. There is therefore a gap in self-reflexive monitoring of behaviour in the process of doing in addressing the challenge in theorizing and researching African Performance. This allows situational observation of performers within time and place of which African scholars stand a big advantage. Another area of concern to Drewal is the proliferation of Processual models. These models provide diverse views on Performance, whether temporal or ongoing social process. As much as there is a dilemma in determining the social process for African performers, the performance paradigm cannot inform social theory.

.....the study of performance in Africa, by and large, I think due to the prevalence of models that objectify performance and in this way implicitly deny its temporality. The embodied practices and actions of performers as human agents situated in time and place in Africa both constituting and constituents of the ongoing social process remain largely unresearched. And it is in this area that a performance paradigm can inform social theory (p.2).

It is therefore obvious that African scholars are positioned on a comfortable pedestal by taking advantage of these gaps to make a case for better understanding, appreciating and researching music and dance traditions of Africa.

Linguistically, African scholars must prove the sufficiency or insufficiency of terminologies used regarding traditional expressions and metaphors. The concepts underpinning the existing theories and methodologies should be looked at through the lens of "Africanness" rather than Western as Mapaya (2014) indicated in his abstract: "consequently, attendant fabrications usually packaged as theories or philosophies about, and on the phenomenon by some scholars are self-serving, and at worst, moot" (p.2007). In addition, Trehub, Becker and Morley (2015:2) reiterate, “many languages, including most North American Indian languages and several

languages in Africa such as that of the Basongye of Zaire or the Tiv of Nigeria, have names for individual genres of music but do not have a cover term that includes all of their musical genres".

One other important concern to African research scholars was drawn by Drewal (1991). It is the problem of the objectivist bias in Western epistemology. Certain established procedures and perspectives that disconnect Western academic subjects and African performance practices challenge researchers. In other words, Drewal asserts that it is incomprehensible to use completely Western research structures in understanding performance practices in the African context. According to her, in Africa, performance is encapsulated in rules, patterns and processes as opposed to the West where performance is "par excellence." (p.3) and a situation she says constrains the study of performance in Africa.

Second, I address the problem of the objectivist bias in Western epistemology which has established certain research procedures and perspectives and a consequent disjunction between Western academic subjects and African performance practices. I do not wish to suggest that objectivism is untenable as a scientific project, but rather that it has constrained the study of performance in Africa (p.3-4).

### **The Strength of African Voices in theory and methods of research**

The geocultural regions of Africa with unique music and dance characteristics for this paper can be classified into five components namely: North Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa, and Central Africa. Kuwor (2017:48) vividly describes Africa when he states "my point is simple. Africa is not a country; it is a continent full of fifty-eight countries whose cultures differ in many ways and at the same time produce commonalities that provide some sense of belongingness and identity that could be shared by the generality of the continent". Over the last decade, scores of African scholars significantly made their voices loud and clear to the understanding and appreciation of music and dance traditions of Africa through research theories and methods.

A Nigerian Professor of Music, Austin Emielu in his article entitled Tradition, Innovations, and Modernity in the music of the Edo of Nigeria: Toward a Theory of Progressive Traditionalism argued that the perception held about African music not being dynamic and innovative is unimaginable and that innovation and modernization within a culture is homogenous and represent cultural identity. Therefore, changes or innovations in a musical tradition only create space for music-making and appreciation. This sound argument corresponds with the submission made by the author in the form of a hypothesis when he said:

I submit that it is unimaginable to hold that certain cultures will remain cold, traditional, and stagnant, shielded from global cultural flows and exchanges, while others remain hot, dynamic, and innovative through exposure to these global cross-currents (Emielu, 2018: 207).

Emielu sought to change the narrative by bringing forward the problem of considering African music as stagnant and therefore propounded a theory that will help understand the phenomenon instead of as progressive traditionalism. The focus of his study unearthed relationships in social processes that help the researchers to understand the built environment to construct inductively based theory. He, therefore, suggests the following:

- It is problematic to assert that African Traditional music is stagnant and popular music is dynamic and innovative.
- Those cultural practices involving African music, popular or art music continue to experience innovation and transformation.
- That cultural iteration does not mean the destruction of culture but culture enrichment.
- Innovations and new developments contribute to the sustenance and contemporary relevance of old music traditions, which are accepted as, part of the developmental continuum rather than a loss of cultural identity or authenticity.



Similarly, Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza of Uganda unravels the misconception of gender definition in Africa. In an attempt to give new meaning to the understanding of gender for better research operations, she said:

it becomes quite difficult to explain a concept, which is conceived differently in one culture, through the language of a society that understands the same concept differently". Thus, "In order to understand Baganda's conceptualization of gender, the reader ought to deconceptualize the Western view of gender (Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 2009:368).

Her assertion for the definition was based on the Baganda of Uganda, where gender definition is not stereotyped instead it is fluid. The determination of gender therefore can be seen through symmetrical and symbiotic constructs of socio-cultural systems.

the dynamic process of assigning roles and defining relations of power and access to authority among people, based partly on the biological definition and partly on cultural traits that are socially determined (p. 367).

The discourse further revealed that practices of these socio-cultural dynamics coupled with the evolution of religion, colonial politics and Western education continuously **shape and redefine** gender within time and place among not only the Baganda people but also elsewhere in Africa where similar phenomenon exists. The unbalanced and negotiable nature of redefining gender now and then is therefore a necessary factor that distinguishes Baganda's understanding of the concept of 'man' and 'woman' from that of the Western. Therefore, in an attempt to come to terms with the concept of gender among the Baganda, one must eschew ethnocentrism, a tragedian's path and embrace the theory of relativism. Sylvia noted "...not every female is a woman and not all males are men. The assignment of gender is based on specific "culturally" assigned roles and identities". Accordingly, assigned roles to determine whether one acts like a man or a woman are dependent on one's biological, social and cultural inclination with a religious and colonial-politics predisposition. The ethnocentric approach to understanding gender as she asserted, will mean an attempt to ignore the principles of gender construction hence **reconstructing** gender as perceived by Baganda. To approach gender among the Baganda, Sylvia concluded that one must use an ethnographic approach to unearth the relationship between the past and the present. Kuwor (2017:48), indicates "to understand and appreciate the uniqueness and holistic nature of dance in Africa, one needs to do an in-depth study of this art form in its native soil to capture it from the emic perspective" to validate Anthony Shay's appeal that states, "an artistic director or choreographer can learn dances by using a number of methods. By far the most satisfying is fieldwork in which the individual goes to the place where the dance is natively performed" (Shay, 2002:43).

Another very important contribution to theory and method in researching, understanding and appreciating music and dance traditions of Africa was made by a Ghanaian Professor of music, Kofi Agawu in his African Imagination in Music. Agawu (2016) noticed a complexity in deciphering African music from music in Africa. His contribution brought about the ideology of truly African music and uniquely African music. He writes:

It may be helpful, however, to introduce one more distinction to convey my own (ideological) leanings on the question of establishing the domain of African music. It is the distinction between something being uniquely African as opposed to it being truly African... Claims about African difference often seek support from things that are said to be uniquely African, things not found elsewhere...that which is truly African, on the other hand, is always already desirable because it does not need to prove its difference; it only needs to act out its authenticity, to live out its status as sincere utterance (p. 12).

Further discussion on his assumption explains that this ideology is always paramount but difficult for foreigners to African culture to explain the uniqueness of African music – "the burden of establishing uniqueness (or of denying nonuniqueness)—a burden, incidentally, that is often marked in the writings of non-African scholars—should be rejected. In its place we should presume authenticity as a matter of principle and

go on to observe outcomes.” Hence students are admonished “to train their sights on what is truly African as opposed to what is (thought to be) uniquely African” (p. 15).

Additionally, Agawu (2016) believes that a better way to organize and understand musical performance is by circles and cycles and the classification of musical instruments should not be based on the Hornbostel-Sachs system (idiophones, membranophones, chordophones, aerophones and electrophones). His contribution also espouses the fact that there is a close relationship between music and language yet each event has a specific role in its characteristics. He, therefore, rejected the dimension of improvisation in African music and rather “make a case for the richness of the African melodic imagination” (p. 15).

Significant above all is the advocacy Agawu made entreating African scholars not to accept any kind of theory that does not pass the test of African experience or fail to address the basic principles of African structures in context. One of his great assertions states:

Others (and I include myself in this group), although no less enchanted by African rhythm, conclude that the complexity of African rhythm is rational; that there is indeed a "one"; that there are on- and off-beats, meter, and periodicity; and that the multiplicity of inference that some vocal outsiders claim to hear is not a free, anything-goes affair but ordered arrangements of beats that allow dancers to embody sounds (p. 2).

Finally, Agawu suggests three dimensions of African rhythm as timelines, polyrhythm, and the lead drummer’s rhythmic narratives and therefore prescribes a generative approach to the rhythmic organization to appropriately register what is in the mind of the African.

In this paper, I deem it necessary to acknowledge one of the great South African ethnomusicologists, promoter of African music, composer, folk singer, bandleader, and actor, Andrew Tracey even though the period of his contribution falls below the one under review. It is worth noting because his contribution to the research approach and theory in music is still significant and relevant. Andrew Tracey has not only propounded a theoretical model in terms of form and harmonic structures for the study of the types of mbira found in Zimbabwe and Zambia but also provided a better approach for research to understanding the cultural area of Zimbabwe and Zambia. Tracey in his assertion provided a tuning score, which he called kalimba and kankobele for the appreciation of the historical interrelationship between Zimbabwe and Zambia mbiras. This is what The Garland Handbook of African Music (2000) edited by Ruth M. Stone says:

Many mbiras have low tones in the centre, meaning they are on the left for one hand, and on the right for the other hand. However, if Andrew Tracey's theory about original mbira is valid, the layout of tones may more closely relate to the notes of the harmonic series than to any of the equitonic xylophones. It is possible that the low tones are often in the center because of the way the instrument lies under the hand (p. 399)

Tracey’s System of the mbira (Tracey, 2015) and its approach is significant, contributed to the body of knowledge of the instrument and its music, and laid a solid foundation for scholars in his field of study today (Kubik, 2010:233). The significance of his contributions to the music and dance tradition of Africa is shown in the abstract of Lucia Christian's Spirit of Africa: An interview with Andrew Tracey: It reads:

Andrew's world was very different from that of his folklorist father Hugh who founded ILAM; and the imperative to apply knowledge of African music through research, instrument building, teaching, and the digitization of recordings have been far greater for Andrew. One of his major innovations was the establishment in 1980 of the Ethnomusicology Symposium: an annual informal gathering of researchers on music in sub-Saharan Africa that gave rise to Proceedings that are still a major source for (southern) African music research.

Equally, a significant contribution from African scholar; Imani Sanga came with the review of Remmy Ongala's Postcolonial Cosmopolitan music in Dar es Salam: Dr Remmy Ongala and the travelling sounds. Sanga (2010) states that in Africa, cosmopolitan music is guided by "postcolonial consciousness" an embodiment of what I earlier referred to as geo-Africa and eco-Africa.

The cosmopolitan music in Tanzania, as in other African countries such as Zimbabwe .., and Nigeria, to name a few, is shaped by what I call "postcolonial consciousness," that is, an awareness of the postcolonial condition and the sense of subjugation brought on by what Achille Mbembe refers to as the "materiality of the postcolony" (2010:5): the totality of political, economic, environmental, and social factors that shape day-to-day experiences of postcolonial subjects (p. 64).

His review reveals that African musicians especially in areas that experienced colonial dispensation should be studied with the understanding that they are products partly of African and partly colonial identity. He rightly indicates, "Cosmopolitan music in Tanzania is a product of the musicians' engagement with this complex and multifaceted consciousness. As I illustrate in this article, the production of cosmopolitan music is a way through which these postcolonial subjects reposition themselves and assert their national, ethnic, racial, and other identities or attachments, especially those degraded by colonialism and neocolonialism" (p.64). Carine Plancke and Hélène Neveu Kringelbach (2019:6) referring Mbembe (1992), Werbner and Ranger (199), and Simone (1998) said, "in postcolonial Africa, the negotiability of subject positions and the constant revision of multiple identities have become central ways of navigating shifting power dynamics". Sanga affirms the fact that African cosmopolitan musicians are compelled to produce their work to meet the demands of their audiences. In other words, African cosmopolitan music is driven largely by the taste of the audience and determines the survival of the musician. This is not different from the assertion of Emielu (2016:82) which indicates that musicians create for society hence influenced by society. Society is not static instead, it is dynamic. It changes. Therefore, the works of the writers or musicians are likely to change. This brings to mind Jeff Todd Titon revealing that performance is situated in the community as people's music culture and the relationship between the community and the music makers affects music culture adversely or otherwise. The past, present and future history of the community reflects changes in the rules governing music thereby affecting music and its human relations (Titon, 2002).

Tosin Tume, a Nigerian playwright, director, choreographer, actor, dancer, singer and theatre scholar raised an argument to correct the erroneous impression about the African ritual dance being devilish as perceived by foreign religions in Africa. She made a point that "African dance: an esoteric art, is an embodiment of totality of the African way of life" (2011:1). She explained that Christianity and Islam have done more harm to African dance by perceiving the African way as evil. The argument further reiterated that African ritual dance "have in them illusion to events, places and symbolism of historical development (p. 2). To contribute to this discourse Eskay, Onu, Igbo, Obiyo and Ugwuanyi explain that understanding African culture gives a clear way to make meaning of the African way of life hence that pose:

Culture denotes an identifiable pattern of behaviour exhibited in response to diverse phenomena in their environment; a specific meaning is often attached to individual and group encounters in that environment. People create meaning from their interactions with their environment; these meanings and interpretations about humanity, nature and life give rise to a philosophy about that society. It is from this philosophy that individuals establish a reference point from which to judge the actions, or non-actions of a society (Eskay, Onu, Igbo, Obiyo & Ugwuanyi, 2012:473).

## CONCLUSION

In search of a comprehensive theory and method for understanding and appreciating the music and dance traditions of Africa, there were several misconceptions due to cultural ignorance, disregard for cultural diversities, and lack of cultural internalization on the part of alien researchers to Africa. One of such grievous misconceptions points to the fact that Western definitions can equally be applied to music and dance traditions



of Africa as a result of cultural intransigence, ethnocentrism, and detachment of the researcher from the realities of African cultures. African scholars, therefore, have never been left on the hook in contributing to theory and method in researching, understanding, and appreciating the music and dance traditions of Africa.

In the question of whether African voices have a significant place in specific contributions to theory and method in understanding and appreciating the music and dance tradition of Africa, the answer is in the affirmative. African voices have made significant inputs and positioned themselves in such a way that proved and set the stage for correcting misconceptions of alien researchers about African music and dance research theories and methodologies. Through the ardent works of African scholars, other researchers of the world came to appreciate a clear understanding of the distribution and characteristics of various African ethnicities, physical or material culture across the continent, and their relationship between human activities and the existing environment with its sustainability. This the paper refers to as geo-Africa and eco-Africa.

Significantly, African scholars with the help of the existing theories and methods can test and retest various approaches to fill the lacuna through self-reflexive monitoring of behaviour in the process of doing. African voices were strong in proving the sufficiency and insufficiency of African etymology that forms the basis for theories and methods in giving explicit traditional expressions and metaphors. Furthermore, they rejected Western structures and perspectives that disconnect African performance practices and laid proper rules, patterns, and processes as encapsulated in the culture of Africa.

African voices such as Anku, Emielu, Agawu, Nannyonga-Tamusuza, and Tracey sought to state the true nature of music and dance traditions of Africa through comprehensive analysis and synthesis as a result gave meaningful approaches to researching, understanding and appreciating African music and dance. While Emielu believes that Progressive Traditionalism is the best way to perceive the cultures of Africa, Agawu vehemently proposed that African scholars should reject the theory that does not pass the test of African experience or fails to address the basic principles of African structures in context. Nannyonga-Tamusuza revealed that the ethnocentric approach to the understanding of gender in Africa would mean an attempt to ignore the principles of gender construction hence reconstructing gender as perceived by Africans. Tracey unravelled the system of mbira, the historical interrelationship between the mbira of Zimbabwe and Zambia, and provided a tuning score that laid a solid foundation for scholars embarking on the field. Indeed, African voices (African scholars) have made significant contributions to theory and method in researching, understanding and appreciating music and dance traditions of Africa and are well-acknowledged among scholars in the world.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This study, therefore, offers the following recommendations:

1. Scholars should prioritize approaches that reflect the social, historical, and environmental realities of African communities. This could be done through the adoption and development of research methodologies that are rooted in African cultural contexts.
2. There should be greater collaboration between African and non-African scholars to ensure that research on African music and dance benefits from diverse perspectives and local expertise. Such partnerships can help bridge the gap between different cultural understandings and foster mutual respect.
3. There should opportunity to provide training and resources for researchers to develop a deeper understanding of African cultures. This includes learning about the historical and socio-cultural backgrounds of the communities being studied to avoid ethnocentrism and cultural misinterpretation.

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