

Collecting Folksongs in Nigeria: A Fieldwork Journal

Zainab Jerrett

The Bura are a West African people living within the present-day northeastern part of Nigeria. According to the 1989 Nigerian census, the population of the Bura people is estimated to be more than one and one-half million. Today, about half a million Bura people live on the Bui plateau, an area referred to politically as the Bui Emirate. It was formerly referred to as Bui Division until 1976 when a local government system and emirate councils were introduced by the Federal Government of Nigeria.¹ In Bui Emirate, the area mostly inhabited by the Bura tribal group covers five districts: Bui, Sakwa, Kwajaffa, Kwaya Kusar and Miringa districts.² Bura speaking people also dominate Garkida town in the present Adamawa State of Nigeria. Bui Emirate is the area or the constituency where the makers and owners of Bura folksongs are predominantly found.

The social context of Bura folk music

There are two ways of collecting folksong: in a natural context and in an artificial context.³ The artificial context is usually highly formal in that it is organized and scheduled by the mutual agreement of the collector and his or her informant. Generally, the awareness of a collector's presence in a folk music context changes the situation to one in which the actions and performances of the participants become self-conscious to some degree. On the other hand, if the collector is able to observe a natural context, he or she will be able to record what people actually do rather than what they say they do. Also, observing a performance in a natural context may reveal data which both the researcher and the informants take so much for granted that they would be unlikely to talk about it in interview sessions. In terms of my own research a natural context means the social context in which the folk music actually functions in Bura society, while an artificial context arose whenever folk music was performed at my instigation.⁴

Although the ideal place to collect research data is in its natural context, in a situation where it is not possible to observe and record a performance in its natural context an artificial context must be used instead by the folklorist. My own

experience made me realize that if someone is bent on observing and recording traditional music performed only in natural contexts, either that person will end up with insufficient material or they will have to spend a very much longer time in the field waiting for events to occur. For instance, during my five months of fieldwork in Nigeria there was not a single occasion on which I could observe and record Bura funeral songs performed in a natural context. I resorted to collecting Bura funeral songs by creating artificial contexts and by obtaining tape-recordings of such songs from individuals who had recorded them as sung by professional singers during the funeral ceremonies of their loved ones. Thus, during those five months of fieldwork I performed collected my primary data in both natural and artificial contexts. In this rather flexible manner, I studied the occasions, the meanings, and the reasons for performing various kinds of Bura folk music, primarily from the perspectives of the performers and secondarily from a scholarly perspective.⁵

My research trip to Bui Emirate

My field research on Bura folksongs in Bui Emirate (Bura society) lasted from December 1994 to April 1995. It was also a homecoming, an opportunity for me to spend time with my family.



Zainab Jerrett and her father in Bui Emirate

My research trip was typical of field research conducted by folklore scholars in that I had both good and bad experiences.⁶ I had some failures as well as successes in my attempts to collect data. The following is an informal record of my fieldwork experiences, to which I have added some observations on the social context of Bura folk music performance.

Prior to conducting my research, I identified and contacted three prominent Bura traditional musicians: Usman Boaja from Gusi, Musa Goadzang from Gwoadzang, and Saraya Mwarinkir D. Waziri from Marama. My aim was to gather information about their life stories, their music, musical performances, and views about Bura folksongs. To this end, I obtained their written consent to be interviewed on tape, and to have their performances recorded on both video-tape and audio-tape. My informants were also aware that I would take photographs of them as well as of their musical instruments. In the event, I interviewed more Bura musicians, as well as some fans of Bura traditional music, while conducting the fieldwork.

I planned to conduct my research in four stages: *Phase I:* December, 1994: To meet with all my informants to let them know that I have arrived, and fix dates for tape-recorded interviews on a one-on-one basis.

Phase II: January, 1995: To complete all the initial tape-recorded interviews.

Phase III: February to April, 1995: To conduct follow-up interviews.

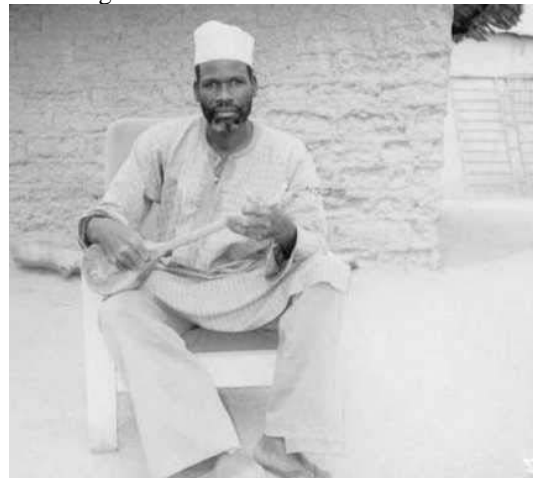
Phase IV: March to April, 1995: To make video recordings and tape-recordings of my informants, plus any other Bura folk musicians' performances on such occasions as weddings, festivals and funerals.

Following this plan, I arrived in Lagos from London on a British Airways flight on December 12, 1994. My first challenge was that my luggage was confiscated and hidden by customs officials at the Lagos Murtala International Airport, and I was forced to stay in Lagos for the four days it took to recover my bags. I was afraid I would never see my luggage again! Luckily I did eventually get my bags back, but the delay in starting my field research was frustrating. I eventually arrived at Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, on December 17, 1994 and spent four days there. On Thursday, December 22, I travelled to Biu Emirate where I was to conduct my field research. While in Biu Emirate, I started

the research process by attending a Christian wedding ceremony at Kidang, and observing the musical performances which took place during the wedding reception. I took photographs of the musical event including the performing musicians as well as the participating audience. I could not record the music on video or audio tapes because at that time I had not yet rented a video-recorder and a tape-recorder.

Musa Gwoadzang

On December 31, 1994, I went to Gwoadzang to visit Musa Gwoadzang. Fortunately for me, we met Musa Gwoadzang as well as his three wives and most of his children at home. To my great delight, after exchanging greetings and other pleasantries, the atmosphere was conducive for me to conduct the tape-recorded interview with Musa Gwoadzang. I had also borrowed a tape-recorder from my brother-in-law at Biu, Mr. Bata Ndahi, and loaded the tape-recorder with new batteries. I bought three new blank tapes at Biu Market and I took them along with me for recording the interview.



Musa Gwoadzang

My interview with Musa Gwoadzang lasted for about three hours. The interview took place in his house inside his guest room. At the beginning, my informant was a bit shy and inhibited so I tried to apply my skills as a folklore fieldworker by making him feel that he was the "master" of the occasion. I was anxious for him to provide me with answers to the questions I planned to ask him, and I did not want to be disappointed. First, I started reminiscing about his musical performances in the past and how my friends and I used to be participant audiences at his performances when we were teenagers. I sang to him a love song

which he composed about a girl he fell in love with. The girl's name is Yarami Audu. At this point, he started to laugh and to feel relaxed. He immediately took over the conversation and gave me his own interpretation of the "Yarami" love song. I had made him feel that I was not a stranger to him and his music, and this had broken the ice.

When I saw that he was ready to have an open and free conversation with me about his life, his music and his musical performances, I began to ask him some specific questions about these topics. However, when I listened to the tape-recorded interview afterwards, I realized that some of my questions were not ideal because they were either too lengthy or they were dichotomous questions, prompting simple "yes" or "no" answers rather than responses that would provide a good deal of information. For example, instead of open-ended questions such as "Please explain to me how and when you learned to compose and sing songs," I had asked questions like: "You are one of the well known Bura folk musicians in Borno State today, did you start composing and singing songs at an early age?" Or, "You sing religious songs, do you also sing satirical songs?" Thankfully, Gwoadzang's answers were usually detailed, clear and informative, and in the main I was pleased with how the interview went. During my field research on Musa Gwoadzang's folksongs, I subsequently got to know him better. I discovered that my earlier perception of him as a shy, quiet, intelligent and articulate gentleman was actually correct. I also came to understand and better appreciate his perspective on his music and his own performance style.

When the first interview was over, Gwoadzang's wives invited me for lunch but I was not hungry so I declined with humility and thanks. But I needed another way to express my gratitude. As a folklore fieldworker, I am aware of the ethics of reciprocity. This concept hinges on the need for a fieldworker to show reciprocity or appreciation to the individuals or group which he or she studied, for providing him or her with needed information. One can show appreciation with things within one's means or things that are acceptable to the individuals or group studied such as money, material gifts, thank-you cards, and letters of appreciation.⁷ Therefore, after my tape-recorded interview with Gwoadzang, I gave him five hundred Naira (N500.00), equivalent to about fourteen dollars and fifty cents Canadian

and I gave fifty Naira to his mother. At first because the value of the Naira had recently dropped, I felt the money I gave Gwoadzang was too little, but he did not consider it that way. He was very grateful and happy about it.

One thing which I could not accomplish was observing and taping Gwoadzang's performances at weddings, funeral ceremonies or festivals because he was not invited to perform at any of these occasions while I was conducting this particular field research. However, I took some photographs of him and his *yakandi* (banjo-like instrument), and on April 10, 1995 we organized a *hiridi* in front of his house so that I could video-tape one of his musical performances in context. A *hiridi* is an informal musical event organized in a particular Bura village or community at night to provide an opportunity for members of the community to socialize, dance, sing and have fun. During the *hiridi*, Gwoadzang composed songs including a song about me, in which he expressed gratitude to me for giving him money. I was pleasantly surprised. On my subsequent visits to his house I became better acquainted with him and with members of his family. They all became not just my new acquaintances but my friends as well.

Usman Boaja

After completing my interview with Musa Gwoadzang on December 31, 1994, I went to Gusi to meet with Usman Boaja. Unfortunately I did not find him at home. One of his children told me that he had gone to perform music at a wedding occasion in another village. I left a message for him with three of his children. I was a bit apprehensive about not being able to meet him and fix a date with him for the tape-recorded interview, and I was worried that my fieldwork with him might not be successful. Afterwards, I decided to put aside my worries because I knew that once we met he would want the interview to be conducted at the earliest possible time. I knew that he was the kind of person who would be interested in sharing his views with me, especially his biography, his music and his performances. I was not the first person to interview Boaja about his music. He had even been interviewed by outsiders such as German scholars, as well as by Nigerian television and radio reporters. Since he had already agreed to be an informant to outsiders, I was quite confident that he would be willing to openly and freely share his views with me, an insider. Boaja also knows my father and they both have mutual

respect for each other. As a result, I was sure that he would try to be available for the interview, at least for the sake of my father.



Usman Boaja

My much anticipated interview with him took place Wednesday, January 25. Earlier on that day, he sent a man from his village of Gusi to come to my house in Kidang to inform me that he was on his way to see me in my parents' house at Kidang. About three hours later, around twelve noon, Boaja arrived for the interview. I considered his coming as a great honour, first, because he is an elderly person and second because I should have been the one to go and meet him at his house. As custom demands, he did not see me immediately but went and stayed with my father in my father's sitting room. After he had exchanged greetings with my father, my father sent one of my junior brothers to go and inform me that Usman Boaja had arrived. We had eagerly awaited his arrival, and I was very happy to see him. It was like a dream come true. He did not recognize me immediately. Jokingly, he said I had changed greatly, I had become like *baturiya* (a woman from the West). It was a complimentary remark. I then went and cooked some food for him, my father and the other male visitors sitting in my father's sitting room. After they had finished eating, my father sent for me and told me that Boaja was ready to talk with me about his music. I then went into my room and brought out the equipment which I would use for the interview, including my note pad. Boaja and

I then went and sat in my brother's house which is only about twenty metres away from my father's house.

The people living in my brother's house had all gone to a nearby village market so the house was quiet and conducive for conducting an interview. Because Boaja had been interviewed before, he did not show any sign of shyness or timidity. On the contrary, he looked at me with direct eye contact. His answers to my questions were clear and straightforward. The information he gave while answering each question was detailed and chronological. Sometimes he would smile as he talked and other times he would appear to be serious, depending on the subject of our conversation. The interview lasted for about two hours and thirty minutes, and was a success: I came to know him better, learning about his personality, his family, and his music.

I also used the interview to obtain Boaja's interpretation of some of the songs in his repertoire which I had listened to and learned in the past, when I was a member of the audience at several of his performances. There was a particular metaphor which he used in one of the songs he had composed and sung in the 1980s which I did not understand, so I asked him to interpret it. Furthermore, I used the occasion to ask him to express his views about some critical allegations that have been made publicly about him. For instance, some people in the local community have complained that the invitation fees he charges are too high, and that he demands excessive beer and other material gifts from people who invite him to perform. His responses to these criticisms were quite insightful. When the interview was over, I gave him five hundred and fifty Naira (about sixteen Canadian dollars) for which he was very grateful.

On Friday, April 10, 1995 I went to see Boaja in his house in Gusi. One of the purposes of my visit was to take photographs of him and his family, and his *tsindza* (xylophone) instrument. I went with Richard Gana Malgwi who was to assist me in recording Boaja's performance on video so that I could concentrate on observing the performance. Richard is a specialist in video-recording and documentary. We did not meet Usman Boaja at home: we were told by his son that he had gone to Mbulatawiwi market. Actually we drove past the market when we were going to see Usman Boaja at Gusi. So we drove

back to Mbulatawiwi market to look for him. After a long search in the crowds of people, we eventually saw him. I told him we had been to his house and he told us he was in the market to buy prescribed drugs for his child who was sick. After he had bought the drugs, we went back to his house. My goal was to get acquainted with his family, especially his wives and his sons who he earlier told me were learning how to perform *tsindza* (xylophone music). But I only met with two of his four wives. His other two wives were shopping at the Mbulatawiwi market.

Boaja was willing to perform music for me to record and video-tape. People gathered in his front yard to listen to his performance. However, after playing for about ten minutes, he said he was feeling tired, and as a result, he could not compose and sing songs at that time. He did not want me to feel disappointed so he told me that he had been invited to perform music at a wedding occasion in Bindirim village on the following day and that I should go to the wedding and video-tape him there. He said he would be at the junction of the road that leads to Bindirim by 9:00 waiting for us to give him a ride. Richard and I then drove back to Kidang and slept at my parents' house. The following morning, April 11, 1995 we drove to Bindirim where the wedding was taking place. By 9:00 a.m. we were already at the junction of the road that leads to Bindirim but we did not see Usman Boaja waiting. I was surprised and a bit worried, but again I thought probably he had gotten to the road junction early and he took a ride with someone else to the venue of the wedding. Richard and I then decided to go to Bindirim and hopefully meet Usman Boaja there.

Unfortunately, when we got to the house where the wedding was taking place, Usman Boaja was not there. I was wondering what might have happened to him. "Could it be that his child's sickness got worse?" I asked myself. Meanwhile, Saraya Mwarinkir D. Waziri, who was one of my informants, was going to perform music at the wedding ceremony at Bindirim. Earlier, we had both arranged that I would record her musical performance on video. I was worried when I did not see Boaja but I became less worried or at least relieved when I saw Waziri at the wedding. Later in the day she performed music for the wedding audience and I recorded her on video. Usman Boaja had still not appeared at the wedding when I completed video-taping Saraya Mwarinkir D. Waziri's performance. It did not

dawn on me until late at night, when I reviewed my all-too-brief recording of his music, that when Boaja had agreed to meet at the road junction he probably thought we meant 9:00 p.m. and not 9:00 a.m. By then it was too late for me to go back to Bindirim because I had to return the video camera which I had rented for only twenty-four hours. I felt disappointed and blamed myself for the confusion.

Anthony Audu

January 22, 1995 was a good day for me because on that day I conducted a tape-recorded interview with two of my informants, Anthony Audu and Saraya Mwarinkir D. Waziri. It was a pleasant experience for me because each one of them decided to come to Kidang for the tape-recorded interview instead of me going to meet each one of them in his or her place. Saraya Mwarinkir D. Waziri lives in Marama which is about four kilometres away from Kidang. She walked all the way. Anthony Audu lives in Labu which is about ten kilometres away from Kidang. Like Saraya Waziri, Anthony walked all the way from Labu for the interview. In the case of Anthony Audu, I did not make prior contact and arrange with him to be my informant. It was after I had started my fieldwork in Bura communities that I decided to include him among my informants. Fortunately for me, he consented. I was grateful to both Anthony Audu and Saraya Mwarinkir D. Waziri for their cooperation and their enthusiasm.



Anthony Audu

During the tape-recorded interviews with both Anthony Audu and Saraya Waziri, I had trouble with the tape-recorder which I was using. Although the batteries were new and the tape was also new, sometimes the tape would stop recording during the course of the interview. I had to hit it or tap it with my hands before it would resume recording. I found that situation

very frustrating and embarrassing. Nevertheless, I was able to record most of the interviews on tape. I was glad that they understood the problem I was having with the tape. Each time the tape resumed recording, they would try and repeat at least some of the things they had said earlier.

Anthony Audu was the first person to be interviewed. Even though I had listened to Anthony Audu's music as an audience member, I had never had a conversation with him until the day I interviewed him. Nevertheless, he felt very free and relaxed, and he was open and friendly to me. He answered the questions which I asked him without inhibitions or hesitations. Some of the things he said were so funny that at times I found myself laughing. He came to the interview with his *tsindza* (xylophone), and he was accompanied by one of his apprentice-assistants.



Anthony Audu's tsindza (xylophone)

Audu was prepared to perform music in front of my father's house that evening for me to observe and to record on tape. Unfortunately, I made a huge mistake which I will never forget. Considering that he had walked all the way from Labu to Kidang, and considering that we had spent about three hours doing the interview, I thought that he would be too tired to play, that he would need some rest. I was wrong. I should not have discouraged him when he told me that he was going to perform music in front of my father's house that night for me to observe and record. Because of my suggestions he did not

play. It would have been a big musical event with a large audience from Kidang and the surrounding villages because people love to listen to his performances. I felt very unhappy with myself afterwards. I tried to arrange for him to come over to Kidang to perform music but he had been invited to perform at weddings and festivals in far away towns, some of which are outside Borno State.

Saraya Mwarinkir D. Waziri

Saraya Waziri arrived for an interview at my parents' house while I was still conducting the interview with Anthony Audu. She came with two of her friends who are also singers: Zainabu Mallam Daniel and Shetu Alasa. I briefly suspended my interview with Anthony Audu in order to go and welcome them. After exchanging greetings with them I requested them to give me time to complete my interview with Anthony. Meanwhile, my mother and the other women around already knew Saraya Waziri and her friends so they kept them company and conversed with them until I finished the interview with Anthony. My mother and her friends prepared some food for Saraya and her friends. I also bought *uwaha mumwasu ka tikira* (yogurt and spicy millet dough) as appetizers. I was glad that everyone there seemed happy and jovial.



Saraya Mwarinkir D. Waziri

When I was ready to start the interview with Saraya Waziri most of the other women left the room, except the two who came with her. Their presence during the interview was helpful to me because they provided answers and ideas to Saraya whenever she had trouble answering my questions. I also experienced problems with the tape-recorder during this interview, but the

problem was rectified when my uncle gave me another tape-recorder. The interview lasted for about three and one-half hours, during which I had the opportunity to know Saraya Waziri better, just as I did with Musa Gwoadzang, Usman Boaja and Anthony Audu. I discovered that Saraya is much more humble, friendly and humorous than I had expected. I found her philosophical thoughts and her ideas about the role of music in Bura society both educational and inspiring. I was very impressed by her intelligence, and I really enjoyed the interview.

After my interview with Saraya, the *Kidang Zumunta Mata* (Christian Women's Fellowship) were invited to our house, and she performed some of her music with them. Many people in our house and the neighbourhood came to watch and listen to Saraya and the Christian Women's Fellowship singing and dancing to the music produced by their voices and various percussive instruments.



Instruments used by the Kidang Zumunta Mata

I sang and danced with them while I recorded the music on audio-tape. Earlier, on April 9, 1995, I had taken photographs of Saraya in front of and inside Marama church when she was performing music before a large audience during a Christian Women's Fellowship meeting. The leader of the Christian Women's Fellowship announced to them that I was there to take photographs of Saraya performing music with them for my field research and they all agreed for me to document the musical event photographically. They all sang enthusiastically as I took photographs of their performance. Unfortunately on that occasion I could not record the performance on video because at that time I could not find a video-recorder to rent. Eventually, I was able to video-tape Saraya Mwarinkir performing with another Christian Women's Fellowship group at a wedding in Bindirim.

Looking back on the experience

The hijacking of my luggage, the days I spent trying to recover the bags and the resultant delays in starting my field research were only some of the unforgettable bad experiences on my Nigerian fieldtrip. The problems I had with my brand new tape-recorder were unexpected and frustrating. Worse still, traveling by road was unsafe due to constant attacks and threats by armed robbers. Whenever I was on the highway traveling to meet with my informants my mind was never at ease. These risks affected my field research in a negative way because it curtailed my desire to go and meet with musicians as frequently as I wanted. Indeed, I felt relieved to get back safely to Canada. Yet, on the whole, I was pleased with my field research, in part because I was successful in collecting the data that I needed for my thesis, and in part because of the warm cooperation and support I received from my relations and my informants. I made many friends with whom I keep in touch to this day.

Some conclusions from my research

In Bura society, as in other sub-Saharan African societies, songs are composed and sung for specific reasons and at specific occasions. This interrelationship between song types and their sociocultural and situational contexts has been noted by Alan P. Merriam. Merriam wrote that in Africa, a song

... tends to be tied to the socio-cultural events for which it is created, without the event the music is not produced ... songs are not thought of as independent and separable units with distinctive titles but rather as sound entities which are identified as a part of the interrelated set of activities that constitute an occasion. While Westerners tend to stress composer and song title, Africans stress the type of song and the situation of which it is a part.⁸

Although Bura folksongs are sung frequently in Bura communities or villages, they are socially controlled. That is, not all occasions on which social or communal activities take place are associated with folksong performances. John H. Kwabena Nketia makes this clear in his discussion of the context of Ghanaian folk music, and his view can certainly be applied to Bura folk music:

Not all activities or all occasions on which particular activities take place are associated with music. A beer festival or a procession

may, in one and the same society, be traditionally linked with music, while drinking in the home or walking by individuals may not. A millet beer (*Pitoo*) bar may be a place for making music, while the shrine of ... priest of the land, may not. This is to say a distinction is maintained between musical events and non-musical events.⁹

As David Evans observes with regards to African American folk blues performance, the performance contexts of Bura folk music are varied.¹⁰ The contexts of Bura folk music performance refer to the settings, occasions and purposes of composing and singing songs. Songs are performed in streets, market places, churches, farmlands, and bars, community leaders' front yards, and individuals' houses for general socializing and for entertainment. Songs are also sung at rites of passage such as naming ceremonies, wedding ceremonies and funeral ceremonies.



Drums used in Bura folk music

Though there are many ways in which occasions for singing Bura songs can be classified for purposes of analysis such as according to the number and gender, social status or age of the participants, a very useful classification system for the song observer involves the degree of formality of any occasion.¹¹ This is mainly because it is the level of formality of the occasion more than any other factor which determines the manner and the degree to which the collector is permitted to carry out her observations.

For reasons of convenience, the formality of the occasion for singing Bura folksongs may be broadly classified into two types: formal occasions and informal occasions. The formal occasion is one which is organized, solicited for, and sometimes scheduled. Included in this category would be activities performed on special occasions such as births, weddings, deaths, or at specific times of the year, as

calendar customs such as Christmas, Easter, New Year and Nigerian Independence Day celebrations. Informal occasions are those in which songs are sung incidentally or casually, and in which such performance is not required, is unscheduled, and is unexpected. An example is when a musician goes to a beer parlour and sings to entertain people at the bar and get free beer or when a person doing solitary work decides to sing to reduce boredom.

It should be noted that in Bura folk music tradition, not all occasions, whether formal or informal, have folk music performance. For instance, a child's funeral is complex and well planned but does not involve musical performance. This is because in Bura culture, as in many other cultures of the world, the death of a child is considered "untimely." Hence a child's burial rite and funeral are solemn and mournful occasions.

There are formal occasions in which the combination of a non-musical event and the performance of Bura folk music are both considered necessary to the tradition of the event. It is the degree of social organization and the number of traditional regulations that determine the "formality" of an occasion. Among the formal occasions at which folk music is performed are *kildzayeri* (weddings), *tuwayeri* (funerals) and festivals. Characteristic of most formal occasions, these events require complex planning and involve musical performances. Such events are considered incomplete without the performance of Bura folk music. Usually, although not always, Bura singers only perform the type of songs traditionally associated with a given formal occasion. For instance, *hayeri ar tuwa* (funeral songs) are sung mostly at *viyayeri ar tuwa* (funeral events). In the same vein, *hayayeri ar kildzi* (wedding songs) are performed largely at *viyayeri ar kildzi* (wedding ceremonies).

Some formal occasions which give rise to particular musical events may be the result of sociocultural obligations. For instance, spontaneous composition and singing of dirges by bereaved family members, particularly widows, during the burial rites and funerals of their deceased loved ones are inspired by grief. A Bura widow is expected to sing dirges when mourning the death of her husband. A widow who does not sing dirges during the pre-burial rites for her deceased husband will be made a

subject of abuse and ridicule in her community. She may be accused of not mourning the death of her husband or of having affairs with other men. In some cases, therefore, rather than singing dirges inspired by feelings of grief caused by the death of their husbands, some widows sing dirges because it is a duty imposed on them by their communities.

Generally speaking, singing at informal occasions is seen as a matter of personal desire and not as a cultural obligation. Often, the songs are sung either for self-amusement, to facilitate repetitive or strenuous activities or to reduce boredom, loneliness or personal tension. Examples of informal occasions include singing which arises in the course of doing solitary activities such as *dika pinau* (pounding corn), *hadla mthli* (grinding sorghum), *kukula faku* (tilling farmland), threshing, weeding, cutting firewood, drawing drinking water from the well, nursing a baby, cloth weaving and certain children's games. The informal occasions are therefore not organized or planned musical events.

Doing folklore fieldwork in traditional music is essential to our understanding and appreciation of traditional music. Only through fieldwork is the folklorist able to obtain the raw data upon which studies of folk music can be done and disseminated.¹² During my field research on Bura folksongs in Nigeria, I clearly had some failures as well as some victories. On the positive side, I successfully conducted one-on-one formal interviews with four prominent Bura traditional musicians and I recorded for posterity their perspectives on Bura folksong tradition and on the social roles of traditional musicians in Bura society. Moreover, I observed, recorded, and video-taped Bura folksong performances in both natural and artificial contexts.

Notes:

¹ *Biu Emirate: Borno State*. Maiduguri: Information Division, Ministry of Information, Home Affairs and Culture Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria, n.d., p. 5; J. G. Davies, *Biu Book*. Zaria: Gaskiya, 1956, p. 280.

² Information Division, *Biu Emirate: Borno State*, p. 5.

³ Kenneth E. Goldstein, *A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore*. Hatboro, Pennsylvania: Folklore Associates Inc., 1964, p. 80.

⁴ Goldstein, p. 82.

⁵ The following studies provided me with useful information on contextual studies of verbal art:

Bronislaw Malinowski. *Myth in Primitive Psychology*. New York: Norton, 1926; Alan Dundes. "Texture, Text, and Context," *Essays in Folkloristics*, Meerut: Folklore Institute, Delhi, 1978, pp. 22-37; Richard M. Dorson. "Introduction: Concepts of Folklore and Folklore Studies," *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed., Richard M. Dorson. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1972, pp. 45-47; Kenneth E. Goldstein. "The Induced Natural Context: An Ethnographic Field Technique," *Essays in the Verbal and Visual Arts*, ed., June Helms. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1967, pp. 1-6; Mark Slobin and Jeff Todd Titon. "The Music-Culture as a World of Music," *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples*, ed. Jeff Todd Titon. New York: Schirmer Books, 1984, pp. 7-8; Isidore Okpewho. "Introduction: The Study of Performance," *The Oral Performance in Africa*, pp. 1-20; George H. Shoemaker. "Introduction: Basic Concepts of Folkloristics," *The Emergence of Folklore in Everyday Life*, pp. 7-8.

⁶ Goldstein, *Guide*, pp. 32-33, 49 and 73.

⁷ The idea of ethical reciprocity has been suggested by Smidchens and Walls in the following observation: "Reciprocity is about as universal to social behavior as one can get, so it should be natural to the human interaction involved in fieldwork. But what is the nature of reciprocity between fieldworker and folk, and what forms should it take (e.g., money, gifts, prestige, psychological gratification)? Even where monetary gain is not involved – for either the fieldworker or the folk – what is *fair return* when the fieldworker's success brings good grades and academic recognition?" Guntis Smidchens & Robert E. Walls, "Ethics and the Student Fieldworker", in George H. Shoemaker, ed., *The Emergence of Folklore in Everyday Life*, p. 12 (Bloomington, Ind.: Trickster Press, 1990). I expressed my gratitude to my informants by thanking them, by giving them monetary and material gifts, and by maintaining contacts with them even after my fieldwork.

⁸ Alan P. Merriam, *African Music in Perspective*. New York & London: Garland, 1982, p. 140.

⁹ John H. Kwabena Nketia, *African Music in Ghana*. Illinois: Northwestern University, 1963, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ David Evans, *Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982, p. 40.

¹¹ Goldstein, *Guide*, p. 81.

¹² George List, "Fieldwork: Recording Traditional Music" in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed., Richard M. Dorson. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1972, pp. 445-454.