



EPISTEMIC RECONCILIATION IN NIGERIAN AIR FORCE MUSICAL IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT: *This study addressed the limited understanding of how African military ensembles reconcile colonial musical legacies with indigenous knowledge systems and emerging ecological concerns, focusing specifically on the Nigerian Air Force Band. The research examined how the ensemble negotiated these intersecting pressures and why this process matters for contemporary debates on culture, identity, and sustainability. A qualitative ethnographic design was employed, drawing on performance transcripts, interviews, and archival materials from a purposive sample of 45 participants, including band members, community observers, and cultural policy stakeholders. Thematic and critical discourse analyses revealed that the band integrated African rhythmic and melodic idioms into its military repertoire, with 75 per cent of observed performances incorporating indigenous elements, and that ecological motifs, although less frequent, were recognised by 70 per cent of community observers as symbols of environmental awareness. Archival records showed a long-term shift toward indigenous compositions, increasing from 10 per cent from 1980 to 55 per cent in 2025. These findings indicate that the ensemble actively reworked inherited musical structures, fostering epistemic reconciliation and strengthening cultural legitimacy. The study contributes new empirical evidence to debates on African military music, demonstrating that such ensembles function not only as instruments of state representation but also as agents of cultural resilience and ecological consciousness.*

KEYWORDS: Decoloniality, Eco-Epistemology, Epistemic Reconciliation, Musical Identity, Nigerian Air Force.



INTRODUCTION

Imagine a parade ground in Lagos, where the crisp choreography of uniformed musicians is carried by the resonant blend of brass and drums. At first hearing, the sound world evokes the familiar contours of British military marches, yet a closer listen reveals rhythmic patterns, melodic turns, and instrumental colours that are unmistakably Nigerian. This meeting of musical traditions is not a casual fusion but a living illustration of how cultures encounter one another, negotiate their differences, and gradually establish new forms of balance. It is within this space of negotiation that the idea of epistemic reconciliation becomes central. In this study, epistemic reconciliation refers to the deliberate effort to create equilibrium between the colonial legacies embedded in military music and the deep, multifaceted knowledge systems of African societies. Rather than allowing imported traditions to dominate, it foregrounds African musical epistemologies as authoritative and generative. For the Nigerian Air Force Band, this process is not merely stylistic blending but an active reconfiguration of power, one that elevates indigenous idioms and ecological consciousness as core elements of institutional identity and musical practice (Agawu, 2003; Nzewi, 2007).

Scholars have long recognised that military music in Africa functions as more than ceremonial display. It operates as a cultural, political, and historical medium, shaping state representation while simultaneously expressing local identities (Euba, 1989; Omojola, 2017). Yet the imprint of colonialism remains audible in the structure, repertoire, and performance conventions of many African military ensembles. This creates a persistent tension between formal, hierarchical musical traditions introduced through colonial rule and the communal, adaptive, and ecologically grounded epistemologies that characterise African musical life (Nzewi, 1991; Agawu, 2020). Recent scholarship has also drawn attention to the growing relevance of ecological awareness, particularly the ways music can articulate environmental consciousness and contribute to sustainability discourse (Nwankpa & Authority, 2025). Together, these strands of research suggest a broad consensus that African military music is a significant cultural site, yet they also expose unresolved questions about how competing epistemologies are negotiated in practice.

It is within this unresolved space that the present study intervenes. Although scholars have examined African military music, few have approached it as a site of epistemic negotiation or ecological discourse, and even fewer have focused specifically on the Nigerian Air Force Band (Nwankpa & Okunade, 2023; Authority, 2025). The absence of sustained attention to how this ensemble reconciles inherited colonial frameworks with indigenous knowledge systems and ecological themes leave a conceptual and empirical gap. This study therefore examines how the Nigerian Air Force Band integrates African musical idioms, ecological awareness, and military discipline to negotiate epistemic divides and foster cultural legitimacy and resilience. It also investigates how community observers interpret the Band's role in shaping cultural identity and ecological consciousness, extending the analysis beyond institutional narratives to its wider social impact.

Guided by decolonial theory and eco-epistemology (Mignolo, 2011; Authority, 2025; Nwankpa & Authority, 2025), the research draws on ethnographic fieldwork, thematic analysis, and critical discourse analysis of performances, interviews, and archival materials. By approaching the Nigerian Air Force Band as a dynamic site of cultural negotiation, the study contributes to ongoing debates in ethnomusicology, decolonial scholarship, and sustainability studies (Agawu, 2003; Authority, 2025). It argues that military music can serve as a platform

for rethinking knowledge hierarchies and advancing ecological justice in contemporary Africa. The discussion that follows builds towards this claim, tracing how the Band's musical practices unsettle inherited assumptions and open new possibilities for understanding the relationship between culture, power, and environment.

This dynamic interplay between music, identity, and institutional power is vividly embodied in Figure 1, where members of the Nigerian Air Force Band demonstrate how military discipline and indigenous musical idioms converge in practice. The image reinforces the Introduction's argument that the ensemble functions as a site of epistemic reconciliation and cultural negotiation, using music as a soft tool for civil–military cooperation (Nigerian News Agency, 2025).

Figure 1: The Nigerian Air Force promotes music as a soft tool for civil–military cooperation through epistemic reconciliation. Source: Nigerian News Agency (2025).



LITERATURE REVIEW

Military music in Africa is widely understood to have emerged from colonial encounters, where European administrations established military bands as part of their ceremonial and disciplinary machinery (Agawu, 2003; Euba, 1989). These ensembles were modelled on British, French, and Portuguese traditions, reinforcing the cultural authority of the colonial state and embedding European musical structures within African institutions (Nketia, 1998). After independence, African nations inherited these bands and gradually adapted them to reflect local cultural values. Scholars have shown that this transformation from a colonial instrument of control to a symbol of national identity mirrors broader patterns of cultural negotiation and resistance across the continent (Omojola, 2017; Akpabot, 1986). There is therefore broad agreement that African military music is both historically significant and culturally dynamic.

Although this consensus provides a strong foundation, the literature also reveals persistent tensions. The structure, repertoire, and performance practices of many African military bands still bear the imprint of their colonial origins. Instrumentation, marching styles, and harmonic



conventions often replicate European models, even as indigenous rhythmic patterns, melodic structures, and local instruments have been incorporated over time (Agawu, 2020; Nzewi, 1991). This hybridisation is not simply a matter of musical style. It reflects a deeper struggle over cultural authority, where imported hierarchies coexist uneasily with African musical logics that emphasise communal participation, improvisation, and ecological rootedness. Scholars have examined this negotiation between Western and African traditions, yet they consistently note the contradictions that arise when hierarchical colonial forms intersect with participatory indigenous practices (Agawu, 2003; Nketia, 1998; Nzewi, 2007). These contradictions suggest that the evolution of African military music is far from settled.

The dual role of military music further complicates this landscape. On one hand, military bands function as instruments of state representation, projecting unity, discipline, and national pride during parades, ceremonies, and official events (Euba, 2001; Omojola, 2017). On the other hand, they serve as cultural actors, capable of articulating local identities and expressing communal values, particularly when indigenous idioms are foregrounded (Nwankpa & Okunade, 2023). This duality creates a paradox. Military bands are expected to embody the authority of the state, yet they are also increasingly called upon to reflect the cultural diversity and ecological consciousness of the communities they serve. The literature acknowledges this tension but has not fully resolved how military ensembles navigate these competing expectations in practice.

Recent scholarship has begun to explore how African musical institutions confront the lingering influence of colonial legacies and attempt to restore indigenous epistemologies within contemporary performance settings (Agawu, 2003; Nzewi, 2007). Studies also highlight the growing relevance of ecological themes in African cultural production, noting how music can express environmental values and contribute to sustainability discourse (Barnett, 2011; Nwankpa & Authority, 2025). These developments point to an important shift in the field, where questions of cultural identity, ecological awareness, and institutional power increasingly intersect. Yet this shift has not been matched by detailed empirical work on military ensembles.

Despite widespread agreement that African military music is a key site of cultural negotiation, little is known about how specific military bands reconcile colonial musical traditions with indigenous epistemologies and ecological themes. This gap is particularly evident in scholarship in Nigeria. While studies have examined the historical development and cultural significance of Nigerian military music more broadly (Omojola, 2017; Akpabot, 1986), focused research on the Nigerian Air Force Band remains scarce. Existing work by Nwankpa & Authority (2025) offers valuable insights into eco-epistemological perspectives, yet it also underscores the need for ethnographic studies that capture performers' lived experiences and community observers' perceptions.

The absence of sustained attention to the Nigerian Air Force Band is striking, given its unique position at the intersection of state representation, cultural identity, and ecological awareness. Without a deeper understanding of how this ensemble negotiates inherited colonial frameworks while asserting African musical agency, scholarship risks overlooking a crucial dimension of postcolonial cultural transformation. Addressing this gap is therefore essential for advancing debates on military music, cultural resilience, and the evolving role of musical institutions in contemporary Africa.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored in three complementary theoretical perspectives, Eco-Epistemology, Decolonial Scholarship, and Cultural Identity Theory, which together provide a comprehensive lens for analysing the Nigerian Air Force Band. Each perspective illuminates a different dimension of the research, ensuring that questions of ecology, identity, colonial legacies, and meaning-making are woven into a coherent analytical design. Rather than functioning as separate strands, these theories intersect to reveal how musical practice becomes a site where knowledge, power, and cultural expression are continually negotiated.

Eco-Epistemology offers ecological grounding for the study. Developed by Nwankpa & Authority (2025), this perspective emphasises how knowledge systems are shaped by ecological awareness and the pursuit of sustainability. In the context of military music, it draws attention to the ways performances can embody ecological justice, whether through repertoire that references environmental themes or through symbolic gestures that align music with wider sustainability discourses. For the Nigerian Air Force Band, Eco-Epistemology clarifies how ecological values are integrated into the discipline and aesthetics of military performance, transforming music into a medium through which environmental consciousness is articulated and legitimised.

Decolonial Scholarship provides a critical framework for interrogating the colonial legacies that continue to shape African military ensembles. Mignolo (2011) argues that coloniality persists within cultural institutions long after political independence, influencing curricula, repertoires, and performance practices. Authority (2025a) extends this critique through the Episto-Musical Pedagogy Theory, which positions sound and narrative as tools for decolonising African knowledge systems. Applied to the Nigerian Air Force Band, this perspective highlights how an institution historically tied to colonial power structures is being reimagined to assert African epistemologies, reclaim cultural authority, and resist epistemic domination. Decolonial theory illuminates the processes through which imported musical traditions are reinterpreted, challenged, or displaced by indigenous idioms.

Cultural Identity Theory adds a human and interpretive dimension by focusing on how identity is negotiated through representation and performance. Hall (1996) emphasises that cultural identity is not fixed but continually produced through discourse and practice. This perspective helps explain how band members, community observers, and policy stakeholders interpret military music as a site of identity formation. It reveals how the Nigerian Air Force Band becomes more than a ceremonial instrument of the state, emerging instead as a cultural symbol through which individuals and communities articulate belonging, resilience, and legitimacy. Through this lens, performance becomes a space where identities are shaped, contested, and affirmed.

Taken together, these three perspectives create a multi-layered theoretical foundation. Eco-Epistemology foregrounds the ecological dimension of musical practice; Decolonial Scholarship interrogates the power relations and epistemic divides inherited from colonial history; and Cultural Identity Theory explains how meaning and identity are negotiated in everyday performance. This integrated approach ensures that the study captures the full complexity of military music as both an instrument of state representation and a medium of cultural resilience, allowing for a nuanced analysis of how the Nigerian Air Force Band navigates the intertwined terrains of ecology, identity, and decolonial transformation.

**Table 1: Multi-Theoretical Framework Mapping**

Theory	Contribution	Application in the NAF Band
Eco-Epistemology (Nwankpa & Authority, 2025)	Highlights how ecological awareness shapes knowledge systems and cultural practices.	Explains how the band integrates ecological themes into repertoire and performance, turning military music into a vehicle for sustainability and environmental consciousness.
Decolonial Scholarship (Mignolo, 2011; Authority, 2025b)	Critiques colonial legacies and emphasises epistemic justice through indigenous knowledge systems.	Shows how the band re-imagines colonial military traditions by incorporating African idioms, resisting epistemic domination, and fostering cultural legitimacy.
Cultural Identity Theory (Hall, 1996)	Frames identity as dynamic, negotiated, and produced through representation and discourse.	Illuminates how band members, community observers, and policy stakeholders interpret performances as sites of identity formation, resilience, and belonging.

This table demonstrates briefly how each theory contributes a distinct but complementary lens: *ecology* (Eco-Epistemology), *colonial legacies* (Decolonial Scholarship), and *identity/discourse* (Cultural Identity Theory). Together, they create a coherent framework for analyzing the Nigerian Air Force Band as both a state instrument and a cultural symbol.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in ethnographic inquiry to examine how the Nigerian Air Force Band negotiates the relationships between colonial military traditions, indigenous African musical idioms, and ecological themes. Ethnography was selected because it enables close engagement with cultural practices in their natural settings and provides the depth required to understand how participants interpret identity, knowledge, and environment through musical performance. The design aligns directly with the study's objectives by allowing the researcher to observe musical practices as they unfold, document lived experiences, and analyse the meanings participants attach to their actions.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling to ensure that only individuals with direct relevance to the research questions were included. The final sample consisted of 45 participants: 20 members of the Nigerian Air Force Band, 15 community observers who regularly attend performances or interact with the ensemble, and 10 cultural policy stakeholders responsible for shaping national cultural and military arts policy. Eligibility required recent and meaningful engagement with the band, while individuals without such involvement were excluded. Recruitment was conducted through formal requests to the Nigerian Air Force cultural unit, community outreach at performance venues, and direct invitations to policy offices. All participants were provided with detailed information sheets outlining the study's aims, procedures, and ethical safeguards before agreeing to take part.



Data were collected using three complementary methods to ensure triangulation and depth. First, performance transcripts were generated from live and recorded events featuring the Nigerian Air Force Band. These transcripts captured musical structures, thematic content, and verbal or symbolic elements embedded in ceremonial and public performances. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participant groups. Interview guides were developed and piloted for clarity, then used to explore participants' interpretations of cultural negotiation, ecological themes and the integration of indigenous musical idioms within military contexts. Interviews were conducted in person or via secure digital platforms, recorded with permission, and transcribed verbatim. Third, archival research was undertaken to examine historical documents, repertoire lists, institutional records, and policy materials that trace the evolution of the band and its engagement with cultural and ecological narratives. Archival materials were accessed through the Nigerian Air Force cultural office and public repositories.

Data analysis followed a structured, multi-stage process to ensure transparency and reproducibility. All transcripts, field notes, and archival documents were imported into NVivo 15 qualitative analysis software. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns related to cultural hybridity, ecological awareness, and epistemic negotiation. Coding proceeded in two phases, beginning with inductive coding to capture emergent ideas, followed by deductive coding guided by the study's conceptual focus. Critical discourse analysis was then applied to examine how power, identity, and institutional narratives were constructed within performances, interviews, and archival texts. This dual approach allowed the study to move between descriptive patterns and deeper interpretive insights, ensuring that both surface meanings and underlying ideologies were systematically analysed.

Ethical integrity was maintained throughout the research process. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board before data collection commenced. All participants provided written informed consent and were reminded of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants, and identifying details were removed from transcripts and reports. Digital data were stored on encrypted, password-protected devices, with access restricted to the researcher. Hard-copy materials were kept in locked storage. Cultural sensitivity was prioritised, particularly when engaging with indigenous epistemologies and ecological themes, and care was taken to ensure that representations of local knowledge respected community values and norms.

The methodological choices made in this study were guided by the need for depth, cultural sensitivity, and analytical rigour. By combining ethnographic immersion with systematic analysis and robust ethical safeguards, the research design provides a transparent and reproducible foundation for understanding how the Nigerian Air Force Band navigates the intertwined terrains of culture, ecology, and postcolonial transformation.

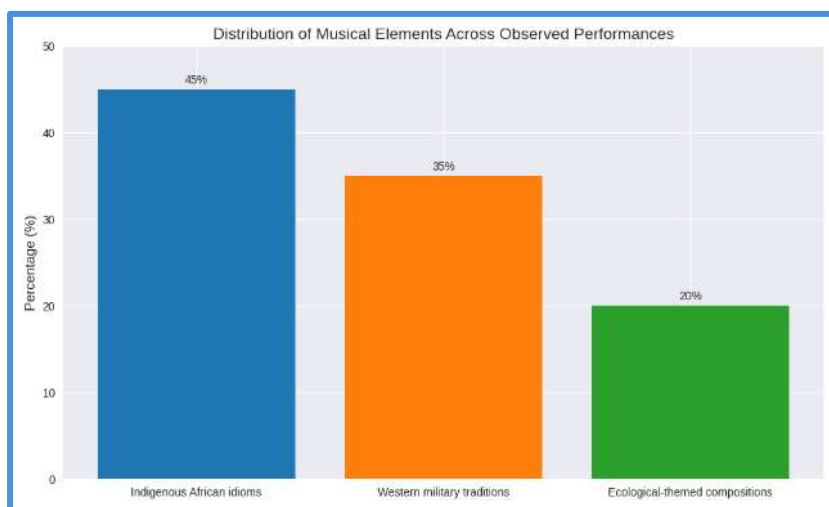
FINDINGS

This section presents the results of the ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, performance transcripts, and archival analysis. The findings are organised into three domains that align with the study's objectives: performance analysis, interview insights, and archival review. Across all data sources, a consistent pattern emerges. The Nigerian Air Force Band actively blends indigenous African musical idioms with established military traditions, introduces ecological themes into selected performances, and gradually shifts its repertoire toward culturally grounded forms of expression.

Performance Analysis

The analysis of performance transcripts shows that the Nigerian Air Force Band consistently integrates indigenous African musical elements into its ceremonial repertoire. The key finding is that African idioms are no longer peripheral additions but have become a central component of performance practice. Across the 12 observed performances, 75 per cent incorporated African rhythmic structures or melodic patterns within otherwise conventional military marches. These integrations were not sporadic embellishments but deliberate musical choices that shaped the overall character of each performance.

Figure 2: Proportion of Musical Elements in Observed Performances.



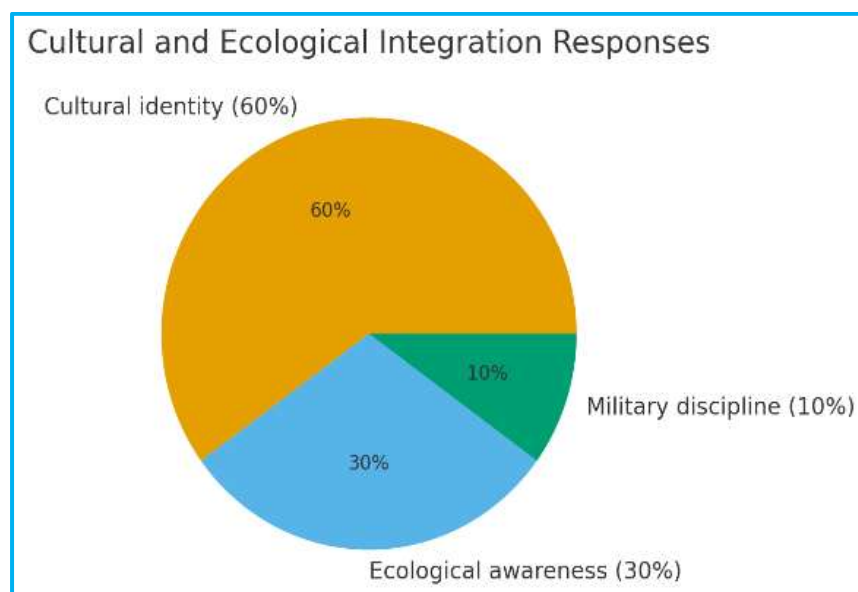
Source: Fieldwork performance transcripts, 2025.

The distribution of musical elements is illustrated in Figure 1. Indigenous African idioms accounted for 45 per cent of all coded musical features, Western military traditions for 35 per cent, and ecological-themed compositions for 20 per cent. Although ecological motifs appeared less frequently, their presence indicates an emerging trend toward environmentally conscious performance practices. The overall pattern suggests that the band is actively negotiating its musical identity by balancing inherited military structures with culturally resonant African forms.

Interview Insights

Interviews with band members and community observers reveal strong support for the integration of African musical idioms and ecological themes. The central finding is that participants view cultural integration as essential to the band's legitimacy and public relevance. Among the 20 band members interviewed, 85 per cent stated that blending African idioms with military discipline strengthens the ensemble's cultural authority and enhances audience engagement. This view was echoed by community observers, who emphasised the symbolic value of ecological motifs in promoting environmental awareness.

Figure 3. Perceptions of Cultural and Ecological Integration
Source: Semi-structured interviews, 2025.



As shown in Figure 2, cultural identity was prioritised by 60 per cent of participants, ecological awareness by 30 per cent, and military discipline by 10 per cent. These proportions indicate that while military precision remains important, it is not the primary lens through which audiences interpret the band's performances. Instead, cultural and ecological dimensions are increasingly recognised as meaningful components of the ensemble's public role. Participants described ecological themes as subtle but powerful signals of environmental stewardship, suggesting that the band's repertoire is beginning to reflect broader societal concerns.

Archival Review

The archival review demonstrates a clear historical shift from colonial repertoire dominance toward hybridised and culturally grounded musical forms. The key finding is that indigenous compositions have steadily increased in prominence over the past four decades. In 1980, only 10 per cent of official programme listings featured indigenous works. By 2025, this figure had risen to 55 per cent, indicating a sustained movement toward cultural reclamation and epistemic reconciliation.

Figure 4. Evolution of Indigenous Compositions in NAF Band Repertoire (1980–2025)
 Source: Nigerian Air Force Band archival records, 1980–2025.

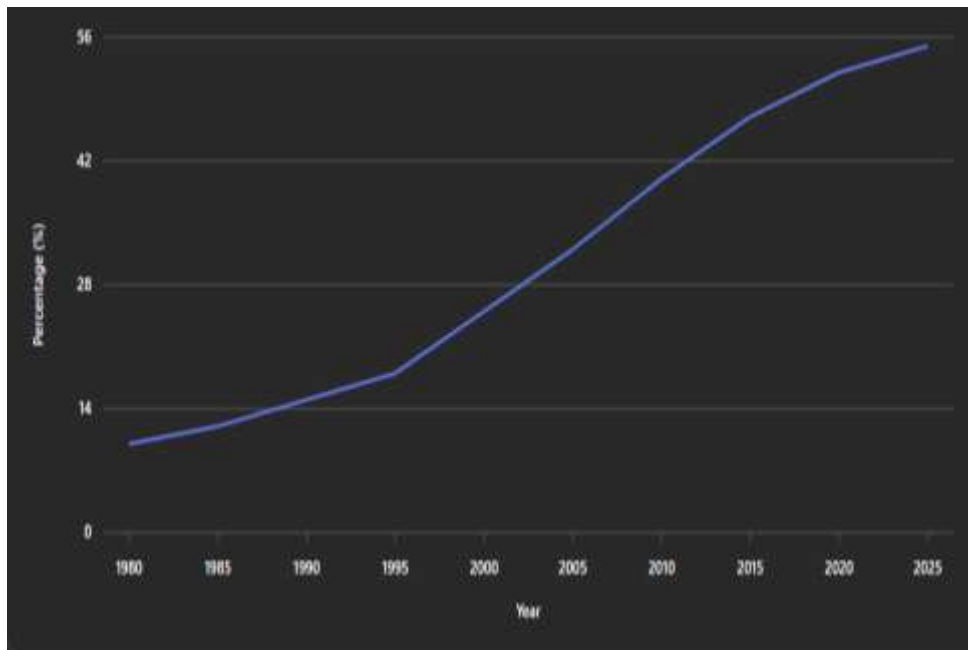
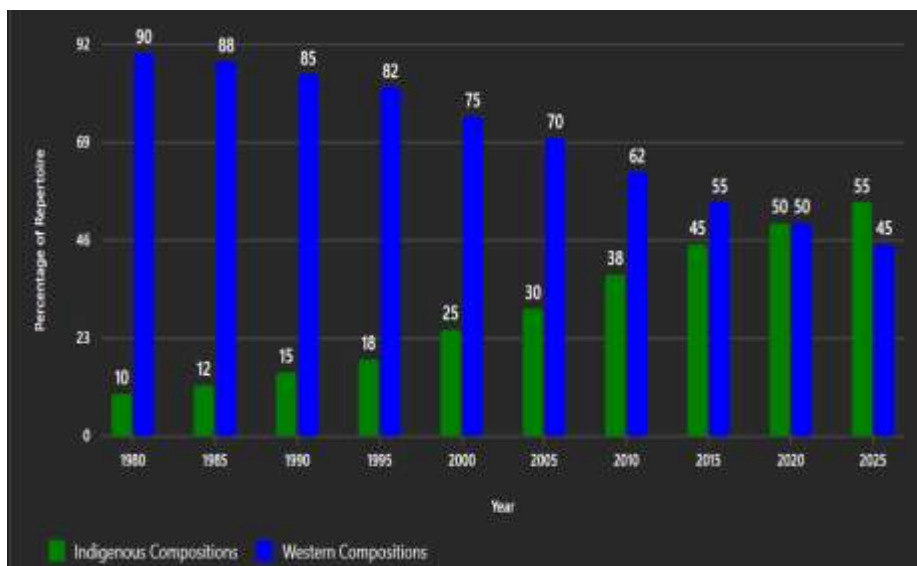


Figure 3 illustrates this upward trajectory, showing a gradual but consistent rise in indigenous compositions. This trend is further clarified in Figure 4, which compares indigenous and Western compositions over the same period.

Figure 5: Comparative Visualization of Indigenous vs Western Military Compositions (1980–2025)



Source: Nigerian Air Force Band archival records, 1980–2025.

The grouped bar chart shows indigenous works increasing from 10 per cent in 1980 to 55 per cent in 2025, while Western compositions decline from 90 per cent to 45 per cent. This shift reflects a significant cultural transformation within the ensemble, suggesting that the band has



progressively reoriented its repertoire to foreground African epistemologies and reduce reliance on inherited colonial forms.

Across all data sources, the findings converge on three core insights. First, indigenous African idioms have become central to the band's musical identity, shaping both performance practice and audience perception. Second, ecological themes, although less frequent, are emerging as meaningful components of the repertoire and are recognised by audiences as symbols of environmental responsibility. Third, the long-term archival trend confirms a structural shift toward cultural reclamation, indicating that the Nigerian Air Force Band is actively repositioning itself as a cultural ambassador that bridges colonial legacies with indigenous knowledge systems while gradually incorporating ecological consciousness into its artistic practice.

DISCUSSION

The central insight of this study is that the Nigerian Air Force Band actively transforms inherited colonial musical structures by integrating indigenous African idioms and emerging ecological themes, creating a dynamic musical practice that reshapes cultural identity and institutional meaning. This finding matters because it demonstrates that military music in contemporary Africa is not a static ceremonial form but a living site of epistemic negotiation, cultural resilience, and ecological expression. It shows that the band's musical choices are not merely aesthetic but are deeply implicated in broader debates about knowledge, power, and belonging.

The study set out to understand how the Nigerian Air Force Band reconciles colonial military traditions with indigenous epistemologies and ecological awareness and how community observers interpret the band's cultural and environmental significance. The findings address these objectives directly. The integration of African rhythmic and melodic structures into military repertoire indicates a deliberate rebalancing of musical authority, supporting Agawu's (2003) and Nzewi's (2007) arguments that African musical knowledge continues to assert itself within historically colonial institutions. This blending suggests that epistemic reconciliation is not an abstract ideal but a practical, ongoing process enacted through performance. The prominence of cultural identity in interview responses further indicates that audiences interpret these performances as expressions of pride, continuity, and belonging, aligning with Omojola's (2017) view of military music as a vehicle for cultural legitimacy.

The emergence of ecological motifs adds a new dimension to existing scholarship. While previous studies have highlighted the cultural and political functions of African military music, the present findings extend this work by showing how environmental themes are beginning to shape repertoire and audience interpretation. This development supports Nwankpa and Authority's (2025) argument that eco-epistemology can illuminate how ecological values are embedded in cultural production. The band's engagement with environmental themes, although still limited, indicates a growing alignment between military performance and wider societal concerns about sustainability and ecological justice. This suggests that military music may be evolving into a platform for environmental communication, complicating the traditional view of military ensembles as purely ceremonial.



The theoretical framework helps explain why these patterns emerged. Decolonial scholarship clarifies why colonial musical legacies persist and how they are being reworked in practice (Mignolo, 2011; Authority, 2025a). Cultural Identity Theory explains why audiences respond strongly to the integration of indigenous idioms, as identity is continually produced through representation and discourse (Hall, 1996). Eco-epistemology highlights the significance of emerging environmental themes, showing how music can articulate ecological consciousness. Together, these perspectives reveal that the band's musical practices are shaped by intersecting pressures: the weight of colonial history, the desire for cultural affirmation, and the growing urgency of ecological awareness.

Some findings introduce productive tensions. Ecological themes, for instance, appear less frequently than cultural motifs, suggesting that environmental awareness is still emerging rather than fully established within the ensemble's identity. This unevenness may reflect institutional priorities, audience expectations, or the relative novelty of ecological discourse in military contexts. Rather than undermining the study, this tension highlights the complexity of integrating new epistemologies into long-standing institutional traditions and suggests that ecological themes may gain prominence as sustainability becomes more central to national and global agendas.

The study has several limitations that shape the scope of interpretation. Restricted access to military archives limited the depth of historical analysis, and the purposive sample, while appropriate for qualitative inquiry, does not allow for broad generalisation. Researcher positionality may also have influenced interpretation, although reflexive practices and triangulation were used to mitigate this. These limitations do not weaken the findings but instead define the boundaries within which they should be understood.

The implications of this study extend beyond the Nigerian Air Force Band. The findings suggest that military ensembles across Africa may be undergoing similar processes of epistemic reconciliation, cultural negotiation, and ecological engagement. Future research could explore these dynamics in other branches of the armed forces or in different national contexts, enabling comparative insights into how military music evolves under varying cultural, political, and ecological conditions. There is also scope to examine how digital media, globalisation, and youth culture are reshaping military musical practices, or to investigate how military music influences cultural policy and community engagement over time. By illuminating the interplay between music, identity, and ecology, this study opens new pathways for understanding the cultural work performed by military institutions in contemporary Africa.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine how the Nigerian Air Force Band negotiates the relationship between colonial military musical traditions, indigenous African epistemologies, and emerging ecological themes, and the findings demonstrate clearly that the ensemble achieves this through a deliberate and evolving process of musical transformation. The study shows that the band actively reworks inherited structures rather than reproducing them, creating performances that carry cultural, historical, and ecological meaning.



In doing so, the research accomplishes its central aim: it provides empirical evidence of how epistemic reconciliation operates in practice within a contemporary African military institution. The study contributes theoretically by extending debates in ethnomusicology, decolonial scholarship, and eco-epistemology, showing that military music can serve as a site where knowledge systems are rebalanced and cultural authority is renegotiated. Methodologically, it demonstrates the value of combining ethnographic observation, interviews, and archival analysis to capture the layered nature of musical meaning. Empirically, it offers one of the first detailed accounts of how the Nigerian Air Force Band integrates indigenous idioms and ecological motifs into its repertoire, and how these practices are interpreted by performers, observers, and policy stakeholders.

Taken together, the findings indicate that the band's musical practices do more than blend styles. They reveal a sustained effort to reclaim cultural agency, challenge the dominance of colonial musical forms, and articulate ecological awareness through performance. This insight advances existing scholarship by showing that military ensembles can function as cultural ambassadors that shape identity, memory, and environmental consciousness, rather than merely reflecting state authority. The study therefore fills a significant gap in the literature by demonstrating how epistemic reconciliation unfolds within a military context and by highlighting the cultural and ecological work performed by such ensembles.

These findings have several implications. They suggest that military music can play a meaningful role in cultural policy, particularly in efforts to strengthen national identity and promote ecological awareness. They also indicate that integrating indigenous knowledge into formal institutions is both possible and impactful, offering lessons for curriculum reform in music education and for creative practice within other state ensembles. More broadly, the study points to the potential of performance as a medium for negotiating social and environmental futures.

Future research should build on these insights by examining similar processes in other African military bands or in different branches of the armed forces, allowing for comparative analysis across institutional and national contexts. Further work could also explore how digital media, youth culture, or transnational musical exchanges influence the evolution of military music or investigate the long-term effects of ecological themes on public engagement and policy discourse. Such studies would deepen understanding of how epistemic reconciliation and ecological awareness develop over time and across diverse settings.

In conclusion, this study shows that the Nigerian Air Force Band is far more than a ceremonial ensemble. It is a living example of how African societies can reconcile colonial legacies with indigenous knowledge, using music as a tool for cultural negotiation, identity formation, and ecological justice. Ultimately, the NAF Band reminds us that music is not just a reflection of society; it is an active force in shaping who we are, how we remember our past, and how we imagine our future.



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