

# Classification of Nigerian gospel music styles

*Femi Adedeji*\*/\*\*

**Abstract:** This article treats of the classification of the musical styles of music gospel in Nigeria that is a variant of the music conceived gospel and practised in Nigeria. The beginning its practice can be located in the sixties, although the first antecedent of music gospel Nigerian can be pointed as the music practiced in the churches Pentecostals in religious parades between 1930 and 1960. There are 12 qualifying styles: native, traditional “classic”, spiritual, a-cappella, instrumental, pop gospel, gospel “highlife”, gospel reggae, gospel *Fuji*, gospel-*Waka*, *Juju*-gospel and assortment. However, now, it is still verified the variants: gospel-Ekiti, gospel-Makossa, gospel-Enwele, gospel-rap, basically under foreign influence, mainly American. In any way, the musical diversity of the music gospel Nigerian attests the heterogeneity and the complexity of the music Nigerian in general.

**Keywords:** Nigerian music, gospel, religious music.

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to classify Nigerian gospel music styles with the purpose of bringing out their comparative elements and thereby enhancing their better understanding and interpretation. The paper attempts to answer questions such as: What is gospel music? How did the Nigerian gospel music

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\* Ph.D – Department of Music, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.

\*\* The author is an African musicologist, is also a composer, gospel singer and music producer. His areas of specialization include African Music Theory & Criticism and Music Technology, while his research areas are: religious music, music theology and gospel music.

originate and develop? Are there different styles of Nigerian gospel music? If yes, what are they and their distinguishing features? And what is the future of Nigerian gospel music?

Until recently, Nigerian gospel music was seen as an indivisible brand of Nigerian music, in terms of style. Vidal (2002) however attested to the heterogeneity of contemporary Nigerian gospel music when he observed that “religious revivalism is promoting various brands of gospel music among the various groups of religious creeds and denominations”. Ojo (1998) also mentioned some styles as inventions in the genre. Nevertheless, the styles were neither comprehensively highlighted nor categorized.

What then is Nigerian gospel music? The word *gospel* as a theological term refers to the good news of Jesus Christ, which includes his birth, miraculous power and works, death, resurrection and the salvation he offers to those who believe in him. Any musical expression outside this definition cannot be tagged as gospel. The term *gospel music* has been defined by Roberts (1973), Adegbite (1994), Kukoyi (1995), Ojo (1998) and many others. From their definitions, one could conclude that gospel music is a type of Christian music that principally aims at winning souls, and it was made popular by radio and television media, albums and public performances. As a distinct genre, it differs from church music on the basis of function, organizational structure and performance – practices/contexts. Nigerian gospel music is the variant of gospel music as conceived and practiced in Nigeria just as we have American or European gospel music. Nigerian gospel music differs from others on the basis of language, style and performance – practices/contexts. It occupies a significant position in Nigerian music as it is widely patronised by Christians and non-Christians alike. The chart below shows its place among other generic brands:

chart showing the place of gospel music in Nigerian music

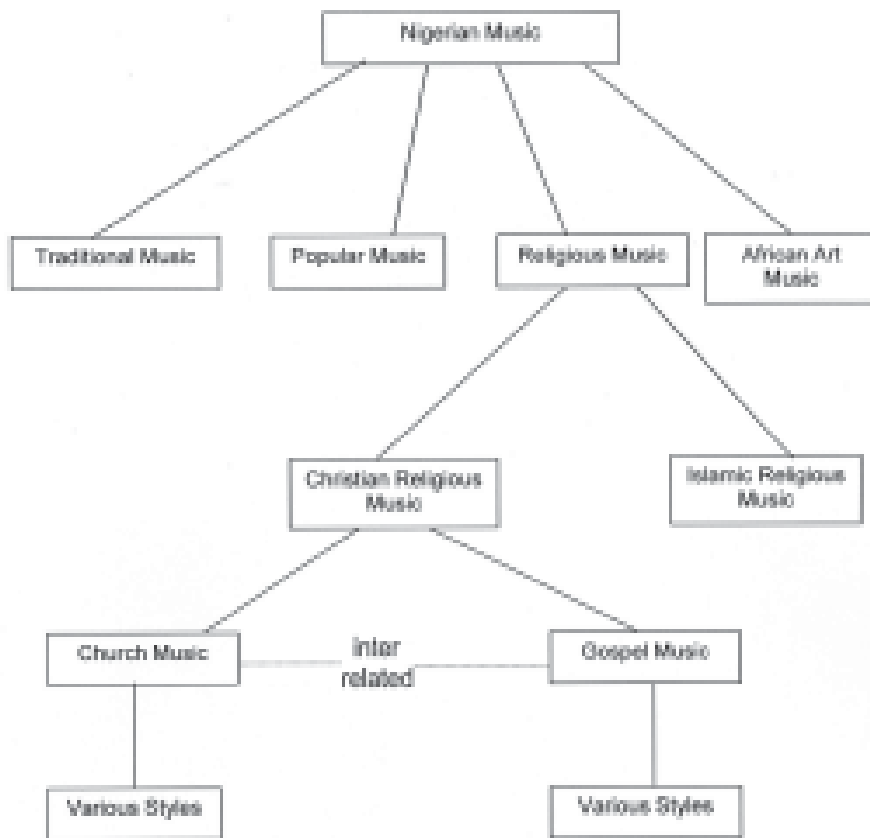


Fig 1

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

When and how did Nigerian gospel music start? There are few theories about the period in which Nigerian gospel music started. Firstly, Ajirire and Alabi (1992) suggested that gospel music started with the inception of Christianity in Nigeria. They wrote:

The Nigerian gospel music is as old as the Nigerian church. Apart from the normal church services conducted with songs, in Nigeria, Christian festivals like Christmas, Easter and Harvest are celebrated with a special service of songs performed by the choir (AJIRIRE and ALABI, 1992: 74).

Considering the definition of gospel music and other historical facts, the foregoing theory is not plausible.

Secondly, Ojo (1998) submitted that Nigerian gospel music started in the 1970s. He wrote:

Nigerian gospel music emerged in the 1970s as a distinctive genre when choral groups moved their performance from the liturgical setting in churches into the public domain. This transition adapted gospel music for entertainment and commercial purposes. The texts of the songs are based on biblical and traditional Christian concepts, but their performance combines both Western and traditional musical instruments (OJO, 1998: 210).

This view could not have been correct because of the historical evidence of the existence of gospel music prior to the 1970s.

The third view dated the origin of Nigerian gospel music to the 1960s. Apart from the submission of the pioneers, Makun (1997) and Awelewa (2000) had already supported this view in their works. Besides, all available records point to the validity of the 1960s as the period of origin, more so that the term *gospel music* was first used in Nigeria by the pioneers in the same period. We could therefore conclude that Nigerian gospel music started in the 1960s.

Having ascertained the time of origin of Nigerian gospel music, the next question, which is germane to this study, is “how did it start?” It is interesting to note that there are also some theories on the antecedent of Nigerian gospel music. Firstly, some writers have linked the origin of Nigerian gospel music to the spread of Euro-American gospel music. Etim (1998), in support of this school of thought, wrote:

Lady evangelist Toun Soetan and Gifty Duke traced the root of “gospel” to the Africans in the diaspora who spontaneously raise chorus during worship. This act, according to them, culminated into the gospel music of recent times (ETIM, 1998: 3).

This assumption is wrong, as there is no basis to support it. Nigerian gospel music started on its own without any foreign influence. The correctness of this view shall be proved as we delve into the historicity of the genre.

The first antecedent of Nigerian gospel music was the music used by  
228 Nigerian indigenous Pentecostal Churches on evangelistic parades between

1930 and 1960s. The music featured evangelistic native airs accompanied by *bembe* (a cylindrical double-headed membrane drum) and *agogo* (metal clapperless bell). It was the philosophy and practice of this music, on one part, that later developed into gospel music. This fact was supported by Prince S.A. Adeosun<sup>1</sup> in an oral interview.

As observed by Omibiyi-Obidike (1994) and Ojo (1998), another antecedent of Nigerian gospel music was the non-liturgical music of Nigerian indigenous churches. The “native airs” that were prominent between 1920s and 1950s among the Anglican, African and other churches fall under this category. This brand of music was used at Christian social functions such as naming, wedding and other festal church occasions. Of this, Omibiyi-Obidike wrote:

Gospel music originally was used in the church and was performed at special festivals such as Harvest, Thanksgiving, and so forth. However, with the electronic technology and the need for youths to have the type of music that caters for their social interest, gospel music was taken out of the confines of the church (OMIBIYI-OBIDIKE, 1994: 6).

Church choirs were responsible for this music. The continuous need for this brand of music by church members, and the failure of the church choirs to meet the increasing demands *vis a vis* their liturgical functions led to the development of Nigerian gospel music.

The third antecedent was the Christian music performed by missionary school bands during the colonial era. Teachers who were talented musically and had learnt how to play some musical instruments organized bands and choirs that performed at special Christian festivals and for the general public. This practice was one of the activities that developed into Nigerian gospel music. It was in support of this view that Okafor (2002) wrote:

That was the era in which Nigerians wrote very beautiful Handelian counterpoints, but in Nigerian languages. And that was also the period when people collected Nigerian folk songs and arranged them for the choral stage and even

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<sup>1</sup> Prince S.A. Adeosun, an elder of Christ Apostolic Church, Yaba, Lagos is a foremost Nigerian gospel musician. According to him in an interview held in his house on 17 August, 2000, he personally participated in evangelistic parades in the 1940s.

modified them and used the tunes for worship. That was the trend that really developed into what we call the gospel music of Nigeria of today (OKAFOR, 2002: 6).

Another musical activity that contributed to the formation of Nigerian gospel music was the ministration rendered by invited talented individuals, choirs and independent church musical groups on Radio ELWA, Igbaja, which was broadcast from the 1950s. The choir of Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) featured prominently in this development. It could be concluded that all the afore-mentioned development led to the birth of Nigerian gospel music in the 1960s. Pioneers were Prince S.A. Adeosun of Christ Apostolic Church Yaba, who released the first popularly known indigenous Christian religious album, titled *Kristi Mo Faraa Mi Fun O* (To You Oh Christ I Give Myself) in 1965, S.O. Akinpelu<sup>2</sup> of Christ Apostolic Church Oke Ayo Opopo Yemoja Ibadan who also released a popular album *Teje Re Ni Ko o Ro* (Consider Your Blood) in the same year, and Rev. Fr. T.M. Ilesanmi<sup>3</sup> who led the choir of St. Peter's and Paul's Catholic Church, Ibadan to release *Mo Ti Ko Le Mi Sori Apata* (I Have Built My House On The Rock) in 1967. During the formative years, Nigerian gospel music was church based. Practitioners were also the choir masters and music directors in their churches. They later formed their personal independent gospel singing groups during those years. Thus, gospel music at the initial stage was purely spiritual in motive, solely for evangelism and the upliftment of Christians. It was played solemnly and accompanied by light instrumentation comprising of *akuba* (local upright drums), bell and organ.

In the 1970s, major developments included the professionalization<sup>4</sup> of gospel music practice, the spread of Nigerian gospel music to the South-East as pioneered by Brothers Lazarus and Emmanuel<sup>5</sup>, and Nwokolobia Agwu<sup>6</sup>,

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<sup>2</sup> S.O. Akinpelu is one of the fathers of Nigerian gospel music. He is today an ordained Pastor of Christ Apostolic Church, Ibadan.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. Fr. Ilesanmi, a Catholic Priest, is a Professor in the Department of African Languages and Literature, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

<sup>4</sup> The practitioners started to see gospel music as a profession, by separating their groups from the church choirs and maintaining booking offices.

<sup>5</sup> Their debut in 1978 featured popular songs such as 'What Manner of Man is Jesus?', 'It is a great thing to serve Jesus' and 'Are you ready for the coming of the Lord?'

<sup>6</sup> A pioneered and led the Nwokolobia Agwu Gospel Singers in the 1970s. He released several albums.

the introduction of *spiritual* style pioneered by Shola Rotimi<sup>7</sup> and the *assorted* style led by Bola Are<sup>8</sup> and J.A. Adelokun<sup>9</sup>, the introduction of oratorio<sup>10</sup> form into Nigerian gospel music by S.O. Akinpelu and Bisi Adeoye-King<sup>11</sup> and the establishment of Christian singing groups in Nigerian gospel institutions of higher learning which also waxed gospel albums. Also, this period witnessed the beginning of active participation from the choirs of Cherubim & Seraphim Ayo ni o, Apapa-Osodi express road, Lagos and Celestial Church of Christ, Yemetu-Adeoyo, Ibadan.

It was in the 1980s that gospel music spread to the North. There were several developments that also took place during this period. Apart from the fact that many new gospel artistes joined the existing ones, gos-pop style was also formed. Carol Bridi<sup>12</sup>, a soloist, was probably the first to funkify Nigerian gospel music in 1984 (Ajirire and Alabi, 1992). Also, in the 1980s, Nigerian gospel music was taken abroad by Christ Apostolic Church Good Women choir led by Mrs. D.A. Fasoyin<sup>13</sup>, Panam Percy Paul<sup>14</sup> and Bola Are, as gospel music, because the artistes lived on it, became fully commercialized and it also assumed more entertainment functions. The establishment of Christian music promotion outfits such as Shalom Productions and Christian music producers and marketing companies e.g. Rainbow Records, Ibadan, greatly enhanced the development of Nigerian gospel music. Two national bodies established during this period, were Gospel Musicians Association of Nigeria (GOMAN) and National Association of Gospel Artistes (NAGA). It should be mentioned that more instruments were introduced during this period and

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<sup>7</sup> Rev. Shola Rotimi started his gospel music career at Jebba in 1972. He is now based in Lagos.

<sup>8</sup> Lady Evangelist Bola Are formed her group, Bola and Spiritual Gospel Singers in 1974. She is based in Ibadan.

<sup>9</sup> J.A. Adelokun of 'Ayewa' fame was the choir master of Christ Apostolic Church No 4, Ede, before he started his own gospel group in 1978.

<sup>10</sup> A musical form in which biblical stories are set into music.

<sup>11</sup> Pastor Bisi Adeoye-King formed the African philosophers 'Singers in 1971. He composed 'Itan Iku Jesu' (The Passion Story of Jesus).

<sup>12</sup> Carol Bridi from Lagos started singing with her elder sister in Churches in 1977. She released her debut titled: 'One Family' in 1984.

<sup>13</sup> Mrs. Fasoyin of Christ Apostolic Church, was the foremost Yoruba 'native' gospeller. Her songs are still used among African indigenous churches today.

<sup>14</sup> One of the most popular Nigerian 'gos-pop' artiste today. He started his music career in 1976 while at Kaduna Polytechnic.

the texture obviously became heavier. Also, Nigerian gospel music, which was taken out of the church in the 1970s, started returning to the church through new-generation churches that made use of gospel music as their official divine musical form.

New radical forms such as gospel-*Fuji* and gospel-*Waka* came into being in the 1990s. Prominent secular artistes such as Sonny Okosuns<sup>15</sup> and Ebenezer Obey-Fabiyi<sup>16</sup> shifted to gospel music as a result of their conversion and divine call. This development boosted the “ego” of Nigerian gospel music in the 1990s. On the one hand, traditional musical elements were incorporated more, thus giving rise to traditional “classical” style, and, on the other hand, American gospel music albums flooded Nigerian record stores and had indelible impact on Nigerian gospel music. Also in the 1990s, Christian recording studios, Christian music schools and some gospel music magazines were established. They all aided the development of Nigerian gospel music during the period.

The year 2000s witnessed the visit of foreign gospel artistes such as Kirk Franklin and Ron Kenoly<sup>17</sup>, introduction of high gate fees at gospel music concerts and the beginning of Asaph National Christian Music Workshop at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. In the history of Nigerian gospel music, two factors that had the greatest impact on its development were technology and musical styles of the periods. As far as recording technology is concerned, the 1960s were dominated by the use of phonodisc. In the 1970s it was cartridge. In the 1980s, the use of cassettes and video tapes dominated the recording medium, while in the 1990s and 2000s, CDs, VCDs and Digital Audio and Video Networks became prominent. Today, Nigerian gospel music has more than one hundred well-established artistes and groups that practise its diverse styles. It is imperative to mention that some of the factors that were responsible for the emergence of the styles apart from historical include socio-cultural, theological, economic and technological factors.

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<sup>15</sup> Evangelist Sonny Okosuns was an accomplished Nigerian reggae artiste before shifting over to Nigerian gospel music in 1992.

<sup>16</sup> Evangelist Ebenezer Obey-Fabiyi was a leading *Juju* artiste before he started his multi-dimensional gospel ministry in 1992.

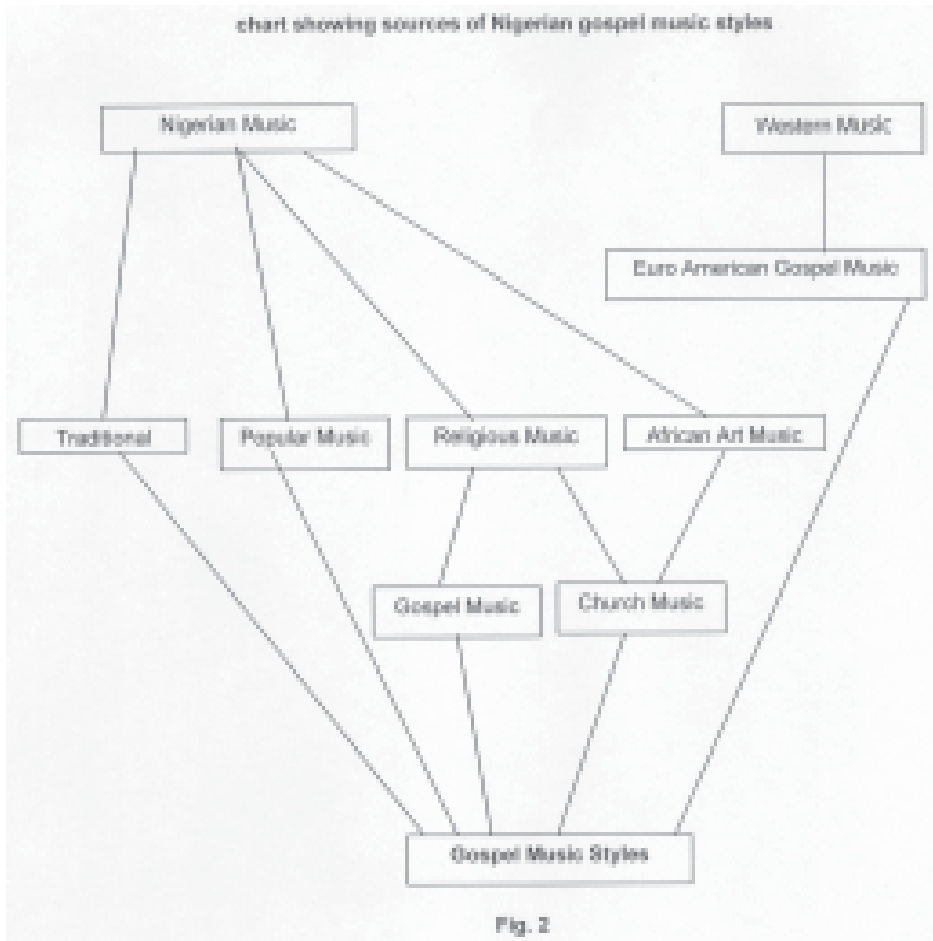
<sup>17</sup> Foremost American international gos-pop artistes.



## THE CATEGORIES

Apart from stylistic classification, a musical style could be categorized on various parameters, which include geographical location, usage, value and quality. For instance, Nigerian gospel music could be categorized into national and regional styles. The national styles are those which have nation-wide coverage, while the regional ones are those based at sectional regions and ethnic divisions. As a result, we can talk of Igbo, Hausa or Urhobo gospel music. They are all valid sub-types of Nigerian gospel music. In terms of usage, we can distinguish between gospel music as used in the church and the one outside the church. In this work emphasis is on the latter. In terms of value, Boyer (1979) distinguished between sacred and secular gospel music. While the sacred type is purely religious, the secular version is mainly for entertainment and may be found in club houses. Nigerian gospel music can also be classified on the basis of musical quality. Thus, we have serious and comic, or real and trash types. Our emphasis is on the former.

Style may be defined in this context as the aggregate result of peculiar manner of composition, form, melody, harmony, vocal style and instrumentation inherent in a particular musical expression. The manners in which these musical elements appear, or, are organized give the music an overall outlook, which is called style. The musical elements of Nigerian gospel music are derived from various sources which, in turn, serve as guides for the nomenclature of the main categories. The chart below illustrates this point better.



In line with the above, Nigerian gospel music is classified into three main categories – indigenous, foreign and popular music-based. These three are in turn sub-divided into distinct styles. There are twelve styles in all, namely: *native, traditional “classical”, spiritual, a-cappella, instrumental, gos-pop, gospel-highlife, gospel-reggae, gospel-Fuji, gospel-Waka, Juju-gospel* and *assorted*. The styles derive their nomenclatures from the practitioners, the audience and, in some instances, scholars. They are named after their instrumental style, antecedent forms, values and internal arrangements. The criteria used in this classification include among others, the source, beat, melody contours, vocal techniques, instrumentation and aural perception.

## THE INDIGENOUS STYLES

The indigenous styles of Nigerian gospel music are those which derive their musical elements mainly from indigenous musical sources. They include “native”, traditional “classical” and “spiritual” styles. This category differs from others on the basis that they originated here in Nigeria and hence sound more “African” because of their closeness to the root-traditional African music.

### 1. ‘NATIVE’ STYLE

The term “native” as used here refers to something folksy. It has been prominently used in connection with other genres such as “native airs”, “native blues” and “native beats”. The “native” style of Nigerian gospel music therefore is patterned after the indigenous “folk” tradition that employs indigenous language, beat, melodic patterns, folk singing style or traditional musical instruments. As a result of the predominant use of Nigerian languages, the “native” style of Nigerian gospel music has local variants such as Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, which make use of their respective vernaculars. The beat of the “native” style which is 6/8, uses the popular basic time pattern of otherwise described as bell rhythm or “konkonkolo” beat. This beat, like other Nigerian rhythms, has modes or versions (Vidal, 1978). The modes vary according to ethnic groupings. The melody uses pentatonic and heptatonic scales mostly, sharing indigenous melodic movements that hover around a tonal center which in most cases end in a descending order. Gospel musicians who play this style include Mrs. D.A Fasoyin and Pastor S.O. Akinpelu in the South West, Emmanuel Ijioma<sup>18</sup> in the East and Sanni Nadabo<sup>19</sup> in the North. Most of their works are in conformity with the theoretical elements identified above.

### 2. TRADITIONAL ‘CLASSICAL’ STYLE

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, the word “classical” is used here to mean something accepted or deserving to be ac-

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<sup>18</sup> Ijioma is a popular Igbo gospel artiste. His musical outfit is tagged ‘Emma Nme-Nme and His Unshakeable Voices’.

<sup>19</sup> Nadabo and his ‘Kalangu Gospel Group’ are based in Yanoko, Kano State.

cepted as one of the best or the most important of its kind; elegant but simple and traditional. The traditional “classical” style of Nigerian gospel music, which originated in the 1990s, is patterned after pure indigenous Nigerian “classical” traditions of court, religious or social music. These traditions make use of specific instruments which cannot be separated from the music. They also make use of pentatonic scales and modes which cannot be altered. The traditional “classical” style of Nigerian gospel music has Hausa and Yoruba variants. As of now, the most important forms are the shantu–gospel of the Hausa which makes use of *shantu* musical instrument and the Ijala-gospel of the Yoruba which employs *ijala* chanting style accompanied by *bata* or *dundun* drum ensemble. Pastor (Mrs.) Adum<sup>20</sup>, Sarauniya Rahila<sup>21</sup>, Bisi Adunbarin<sup>22</sup> and Olumide Akinola Oni<sup>23</sup> are the most prominent practitioners of this style.

### 3. ‘SPIRITUAL’ STYLE

The term “spiritual” style is coined to describe the style of Nigerian gospel music, which avoids elaborate instrumentation, dancing, and entertainment and in which the texts concentrate mainly on heavenly matters, holiness and condemnation of sin and corruption. The performance-style is also meditative in outlook. It is the most “solemn” of all the styles of Nigerian gospel music. Started in the 1970s, the “spiritual” style is limited to the South-West. Unlike the other two indigenous styles, the “spiritual” style uses the accordion as a solo instrument. The text tells stories and employs a lot of satires just as obtained in traditional “native” blues. The music is however monotonous and stereotyped in its rhythmic and melodic structures. The style is very popular among the African indigenous church worshippers. The progenitor of the style is Rev. Shola Rotimi, while other prominent practitioners include Niyi Adedokun<sup>24</sup> and Ojo-Ade.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Mrs. Adum is the daughter of Panam Percy Paul. She and her ‘Shantu Gospel Team’ are based in Jos.

<sup>21</sup> Mrs. Sarauniya also based in Jos, formed her ‘Yanmatan Shantu’ in 1998.

<sup>22</sup> A gospel artiste based in Redeemed Christian Church. She employs the vocal style of *Sango-Pipe* in her gospel singing.

<sup>23</sup> Evangelist Akinola-Oni is the leader of ‘Christ’s Satellite Ministries International’ which he formed in 1996.

<sup>24</sup> A radical Nigerian gospel artiste based in Ilesa.

<sup>25</sup> Evangelist Ojo Ade is the founder and Pastor of ‘Christ Gift Revival Ministries’, based in Lagos.

## 'FOREIGN' STYLES

The "foreign" styles of Nigerian gospel music are the ones that were borrowed from Euro-American gospel music. They bear much resemblance to their Euro-American parents in terms of compositional techniques, form, beat, instrumentation and performance styles. Although foreign in every sense, they still retain some Nigerian elements such as the occasional use of Nigerian languages, rhythm and vocal arrangement. They include a-cappella, instrumental and "gos-pop".

### 4. 'A-CAPPELLA' STYLE

The term 'a-cappella', literally means "unaccompanied" or "in the church style". The a-cappella style of Nigerian gospel music therefore is the one that is basically not accompanied by musical instruments but makes use of vocal imitation of musical instruments in order to supply steady rhythm needed for the melodic flow. The contemporary practice of a-cappella style started in the United States of America during the 19<sup>th</sup> century revival era as one of the resolves of the Christian church to discourage the secularization of her music. The Seventh Day Adventist Church in Nigeria adopted the a-cappella to replace all instrumental music in the church (Adedayo, 2002). Some of the a-cappella groups that sprang from the Seventh Day Adventist Church are the Jewels, In His Image, the Amazing Grace and the Ambassadors.

### 5. INSTRUMENTAL STYLE

The instrumental style of Nigerian gospel music is the direct opposite of the a-cappella in that it is exclusively instrumental, a music-without-word style, patterned after the American gospel "instrumentals". It is easily identifiable its use of hymn tunes and familiar Christian lyrical melodies. The dominating instruments are Western orchestral instruments, guitars, keyboards and synthesizers; African instruments are also added in some cases. The instrumental style is embraced by educated Christians and youths. Two prominent artistes who play this style are Pastor Kunle Ajayi<sup>26</sup> and Herbert Kunle Ajayi.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Pastor Kunle Ajayi and his 'Royal Music Organization' are based in Lagos. He has waxed several albums.

<sup>27</sup> Herbert Olakunle Ajayi is an Ibadan based artiste. His musical outfit is tagged: 'Kunle and Mary Ajayi with the Chosen Generation'.

## 6. 'GOS-POP' STYLE

According to Heilbut (1975), gos-pop is “a form of rhythmic gospel accentuated by soul music instrumentation, emphatic drumming and walking bass guitars”. The Nigerian version employs elements of Western soul, blues, Waltz, disco, funk, R&B, rock n’roll and recently hip-hop, emphasizing their beats, mood, sound ideals and singing cultures. The gos-pop is well embraced by Nigerian Christian youth, especially the educated ones. Besides, the new generation churches have incorporated the style into their liturgies. Panam Percy Paul, Lani Stevens<sup>28</sup>, Carol Bridi, Faith Ajiboye<sup>29</sup> and Lorine Okotie<sup>30</sup> are some of the popular exponents of the style.

## NIGERIAN GOSPEL MUSIC BASED ON POPULAR MUSICAL FORMS

Gospel music styles based on Nigerian popular musical forms are those that draw their beats, compositional and performance techniques and vocal nuances from the various brands of Nigerian popular music. These include highlife, reggae and *Juju* in which Western and African elements are combined, and, *Waka* and *Fuji* which are Islamised Yoruba popular music genres. The styles of Nigerian gospel music based on these forms are not only syncretic in outlook but are also controversial in terms of their acceptability as sacred forms. The styles include gospel-highlife, gospel-reggae, gospel-*Fuji*, gospel-*Waka*, *Juju*-gospel and the “assorted” styles. They differ from their secular counterparts on the basis of text, personality of the musicians, performance-practices and contexts.

## 7. GOSPEL-HIGHLIFE

Highlife music is principally an instrumental dance form that is accompanied with the voice. Its instrumentation is dominated by brass instruments

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<sup>28</sup> Lani Stevens, a music graduate is based in Jos. He runs a private music school in addition to his gospel music outreaches.

<sup>29</sup> Faith Ajiboye a Rhema Chapel Pastor, is based in Ketu, Lagos State. He is the publisher/editor of Today’s Music, a Nigerian gospel music magazine.

<sup>30</sup> Lorine Okotie the junior sister to the popular Pastor Chris Okotie, a former pop musician. She has released three albums.

such as trumpet, saxophone, trombone and tuba. Other characteristics include the use solo instrumental interlude and short song forms.

Gospel-Highlife as a style, employs most of the features of highlife music but differs in structural form and non-emphasis on brass instruments. The term gospel-highlife was first used by Collins (1997) to describe one of the revolutions in Ghanaian church music. It portrays the adaptation of highlife music in the liturgies of Christian churches in Ghana since the 1980s. Just as the original highlife is dying out, gospel-highlife is not very successful based on the fact of low patronage, due to changes in societal taste. However, artistes that are interested in it still minister with it. Rev. Joseph Iwolode<sup>31</sup> based in Lagos and Rev. Lere Olupayimo<sup>32</sup> in Osogbo are the two prominent of the artistes.

## 8. GOSPEL-REGGAE

Reggae, a Jamaican popular music filtered into Nigeria in the mid-1960s. It is characterized by pulsating accented rhythm, Rastafarian messages and a wailing singing style, which cries for freedom. It is actually the music of the oppressed, calling for justice and preaching love. Afro-Reggae (an African variant) was made popular in Nigeria by Sonny Okosuns, Evi-Edna Ogholi-Ogosi, Majek Fashek and Ras Kimono, the mandators etc.

Gospel-Reggae developed from the popular reggae, and therefore shares most of the musical characteristics with it but excluded Rastafarianism and replaced El-Sellaisie with Jesus. The instrumental texture of gospel reggae is lighter when compared with reggae proper. It usually comprises two to three guitars, one keyboard, trap set and congas. The term *gospel-reggae* was first used by Rev. Timothy Omotosho<sup>33</sup> in 1991, in his debut titled “I need Jesus in my life”. Its practice as a style however dated back to the 1980s, when it was introduced by Eugene Mbadiwe<sup>34</sup> and “the Jesus Man”<sup>35</sup>, and was later popu-

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<sup>31</sup> Rev. Iwolode established his group known as ‘Joi Music Outreach’ (a.k.a ‘Ranti Ile International’) in 1980. He is currently based in America.

<sup>32</sup> Rev. Olupayimo and ‘De African True Worshipper’ established in 1997, are based in Osogbo.

<sup>33</sup> Rev. Omotosho started his gospel music career in the 1980s in Ibadan. He is currently based in South-Africa.

<sup>34</sup> He was made popular by his debut titled: ‘Oh I had I known’ in the early 1980s.

<sup>35</sup> A name adopted after the release of the debut titled: ‘I am a Jesus Man’, in the early 1980s.

larized in the 1990s by Evangelist Dupe Ogedengbe,<sup>36</sup> Evangelist Sonny Okosuns and Rev. Martins Akarutu Balogun ('Broda' Martyns').<sup>37</sup>

#### 9. GOSPEL-FUJI

*Fuji*, from which gospel-*Fuji* took off, is a Yoruba Islamized popular music that makes use of Arabic-influenced melodies, hot rhythm and percussive instruments. The beat is either a fast 4/4 or a moderate 2/4. Developed from *Ajiwere* music used during the Ramadan fast, *Fuji* employs *sakara*, *conga*, *omele*, *agogo*, *sekere*, *agidigbo* and in, recent times, trap set and keyboards. One of the peculiarities of *Fuji* music is the use of plagal cadence at the end of each response or chorus section.

The gospel-*Fuji* style of Nigerian gospel music uses *Fuji* beat, instrumentation and melodic patterns with Christian texts. O'femi Odukale used the term gospel-*Fuji* as a track title in his *Divine Faaji* album in 1999, but the actual practice predated that period. Although the early practitioners did not use the term on their albums, the contents were obviously gospel-*Fuji*. Today, gospel-*Fuji* is popularized by Lady Evangelist Foluke Awoleye<sup>38</sup>, based in Lagos. Her musical outfit which is called Ipe Oluwa Gospel-*Fuji* Singers, is the most popular in South-West Nigeria.

#### 10. GOSPEL-WAKA

*Waka* is another Yoruba Islamized popular music that developed from semi-religious entertainment form used to welcome pilgrims returning from Mecca. Like *Fuji*, it also employs fast 4/4 or moderate 2/4 beat but it is characteristically less aggressive in terms of rhythm when compared with *Fuji*. As observed by Omibiyi-Obidike (1979), *Waka* performance always commences with the rendition of *madhu*, a panegyric/encomium especially on prophet

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<sup>36</sup> She composed a popular Yoruba gospel song 'E ba mi yin Jesu' in 1989, while at Christ Apostolic Church, Agbala Agbara Olorun Kii baa ti, Okota, Lagos State.

<sup>37</sup> 'Broda Martyns is a radical gospel-reggae artiste based in Lagos. His popular composition is 'Mushin Oloosa'.

<sup>38</sup> Foluke Awoleye is the most established of all the gospel-*Fuji* artiste. She formed her group 'Ipe Oluwa Gospel-Fuji Singers' in 1991.



Mohammed. This is rendered in free rhythmic Quranic chanting or *adhan* chanting style. The melody is characterized by Arabic singing technique of *fioratura*, trills, shakes and Indian slurring technique. Today, the instrumentation of *Waka* has been expanded to include *dundun*, *agidigbo*, conga, *agogo*, *sekere*, trap set, keyboards, guitars and *sakara* drums.

In the light of the foregoing, gospel-*Waka* as a sub-type of Nigerian gospel music, is an off shoot of *Waka* popular music genre. It makes use of *Waka* instrumentation, melodic characteristics and singing aesthetics. The style was pioneered and dominated by Lady Evangelist Serah Kokumo and her Ope-ni-Nii-Sola Gospel singers<sup>39</sup>, based in Lagos. Lady Evangelist Ibidunni Anifowose<sup>40</sup> is another famous artiste that employs the style.

## 11. JUJU-GOSPEL

Another style based on Nigerian popular musical form is *Juju*-gospel which is patterned after the secular *Juju* genre. *Juju*, according to Vidal (1983), “is a Yoruba commemorative and panegyric music” which started in the 1930s. Waterman (1990) described it as a local variant of West African palm-wine guitar tradition. Both views are correct. *Juju*, unlike highlife, is basically a vocal form accompanied with musical instruments. There are two types of *Juju* music as performed by their leading exponents. The first is the Sunny Ade’s aggressive, fast and highly syncopated type which employs hot rhythm and restless melodies most of the time, while the other one is the Ebenezer Obey’s cool, solemn and slow movement type, characterized by flowing melodies, rhythm and beats. One principal structural characteristic of *Juju* music regardless of the variants is the long song-form which makes use of diverse repetitions, recapitulation and medley techniques. *Juju* instruments today include *dundun* ensemble, conga, trap set, keyboards and guitars.

*Juju*-gospel, in line with the above, employs *Juju* musical nuances in its melodic, rhythmic, vocal and instrumental characteristics. It is however not based on commemorative and panegyric philosophies but on evangelistic and

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<sup>39</sup> This group which was formed in 1987, have ministered in many parts of the South-West Nigeria.

<sup>40</sup> Lady Evangelist Anifowose and her gospel-*Waka* singers her based in Lagos. The group became popular in 1994 with their debut ‘Ijo Jesu’.

Christocentric principles. The giant and most popular exponent of this style is Evangelist Ebenezer Obey-Fabiyi who disengaged from secular *Juju* in 1992 after yielding to the divine call of God.

## 12. 'ASSORTED' STYLE

The term "assorted" is adopted here to describe gospel music that is eclectic in approach, arising from the combination of more than one styles. It employs any of the styles already discussed and styles that are yet to mature such as Afro-beat, Afro-Jazz, Ekiti-gospel, Calypso, Makossa, *Senwele* etc. The "assorted" style has three major variants that are well established as at today and these are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. It also has the largest percentage of artistes when compared with other styles. Some of the notable artistes who practise this style from the South-West are Evangelist Timi Osukoya<sup>41</sup>, Bola Are, Toun Soetan<sup>42</sup>, Akin Adebayo of Celestial Church of Christ, C&S Ayo ni o<sup>43</sup> and Bayo Adegboyega<sup>44</sup>. From the South East we have names such as Stanley Kaosi<sup>45</sup>, Oluchukwu Okeke<sup>46</sup>, Ori Okoroh<sup>47</sup>, Ndidiamaka and Chinyere<sup>48</sup> etc., while the North has giants such as Ibrahim Tagwai<sup>49</sup>, Samuel Yipo<sup>50</sup> and Princess Yisa.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Evangelist Timi Osukoya based in Lagos, formed his 'Telemi Gospel Band' in 1986.

<sup>42</sup> One of the leading female Yoruba gospel singers, based in Ibadan.

<sup>43</sup> The choir of Cherubim and Seraphim Ayo ni o, of Apapa-Osodi express road, Lagos, is the most active church choir in Nigerian gospel music practice.

<sup>44</sup> He became popular through one of his compositions 'Atayero Wa'. He is currently based in Ibadan.

<sup>45</sup> He released his debut: 'The Goodness of God' in 1998.

<sup>46</sup> She is the most popular female gospel singer in the East.

<sup>47</sup> Ori Okoroh is a music graduate and a highly talented singer from the East. Her popular album is titled: 'Do you Know His Name?'

<sup>48</sup> A popular duo based in Onitsha.

<sup>49</sup> Pastor Tagwai based in Kaduna, formed the 'Evangelical Good News Singers' in 1992.

<sup>50</sup> Samuel Yipo is based in Zaria. He released '*Nine Da Nake Nine*' (n.d.).

<sup>51</sup> Princess Rachel Yisa based in Minna, she is the leader of 'Joyful Sound Praise Ministries'. Her popular album is 'Garment of Praise'.

## FUTURE OF NIGERIAN GOSPEL MUSIC

With the current trend of events as would be mentioned later, one could prognosticate into the future of Nigerian gospel music. Firstly, the genre is bound to experience changes in the future. The church which serves as the training/preparatory ground for Nigerian gospel music, continues to witness inventions on a daily basis. Thus, the philosophical ideologies of gospel artistes which stem from churches would definitely reflect the theologies of their churches. Also, the society which hosts both the church and the music, is not static in terms of civilization, education and social culture. As a result, the day-to-day life experience of the artistes changes which in turn would influence their compositions.

Secondly, new styles are bound to emerge in the future, as long as new forms of musical expressions continue to develop in other genres. For instance, as of now, Ekiti-gospel, gospel-Makossa, senseless-gospel, gospel-rap etc. are already in the making. Any of them might be developed into a well-established style in the nearest future.

Also, Nigerian gospel and popular music may continue to influence each other and move closer in the future. This is because on a daily basis, both continue to borrow ideas from each other. The foreign styles and the styles based on popular music are likely to flourish more as American gospel music culture continues to influence Nigerian gospel music practice. The indigenous styles with time might be readjusted to meet the taste of the modern youth who are addicted to modern urban cultures.

The current computer and information technology advancement is going to boost the globalization of Nigerian gospel music and consequently enhance cross-fertilization of ideas between national styles from different countries. As of now, gospel music is already being promoted, distributed and marketed on the Internet. This is likely to continue on a more profound level. There is the fear that good gospel music may be out of the reach of the poor as time goes on, since they can only afford cassette recording, which although is the cheapest, but is already gradually losing its prime position in contemporary recording technology.

Another factor that is likely to boost the quality and creativity of Nigerian gospel music in future is more participation of music graduates from Nige-

rian Universities and Polytechnics, most of who are going into Christian music practicioning. From the foregoing, the future of Nigerian gospel music promises more diverse styles, creative changes and a lot of improvement.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have identified and discussed twelve distinct styles of Nigerian gospel music, which sharply differ from one another on the basis of aural perception, beat, melodic curves, vocal style and instrumentation. It is obvious that the styles borrow elements from diverse sources. The success of a particular style is dependent on patronage of the society, as each style has its respective audience. Also, the diversified nature of Nigerian gospel music styles attests to the heterogeneous and complex nature of Nigerian music generally. The national styles of Nigerian gospel music would then constitute the aggregate of all the styles which are practised nation-wide.

While accepting the fact that some of the styles have little musical value, we must realize that they are legitimate musical expressions of the users; they constitute means by which the practitioners realize their evangelistic aims and thereby possess indispensable spiritual and psycho-social values.

This study has made the classification of Nigerian gospel musicians possible, as they can now be categorized according to their styles. We can now talk of a-cappella gospel musicians or gos-pop artistes. Finally, as implied in findings from this study, new styles are inevitable in the future. As mentioned earlier in this paper, proto – styles that are already in circulation as musical fads currently include Senwele-gospel, Ekiti-gospel, gospel-Makossa etc. They however need to be given some time to watch their survival and growth as substantive styles. This paper has however successfully outlined how and where such future styles could be categorized.

**Resumo:** Este artigo trata da classificação dos estilos musicais de música gospel concebida e praticada na Nigéria; o início de sua prática pode ser situado nos anos sessenta. O primeiro antecedente de música gospel nigeriana pode ser apontado como a música praticada nas igrejas pentecostais em paradas religiosas entre 1930 e 1960. Há 12 estilos classificatórios: nativo, tradicional “clássico”, espiritual, em capela, instrumental, gospel pop, gospel-highlife, gospel reggae, gospel *Fuji*, gospel-*Waka*, *Juju*-gospel e sortido. Entretanto, atualmente, verifi-

cam-se ainda as variantes: gospel-ekiti, gospel-makossa, gospel-enwele, gospel-rap, basicamente sob influência estrangeira, principalmente americana. De qualquer forma, a diversidade musical da música gospel nigeriana atesta a heterogeneidade e a complexidade da música nigeriana em geral.

**Palavras-chave:** Nigéria, música gospel, música religiosa.

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