

Indigenous Music in a New Role

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ABSTRACT

Music is a unifying force that repositions and resituates indigenous knowledge to suit contemporary needs for diversified usages, today including Christian worship. The incorporation of indigenous music in Christian worship inspires commendation and queries from the perspective of scholarship in the 21st century. Diverse musical performances, with vocal and instrumental styles and forms, function widely in contemporary Christian worship contributing to maintaining local Yoruba social and cultural identities. This paper focuses on changes and adaptations of indigenous music in Christian worship today, looking at the case of *Èsà* music. *Èsà* is a musical practice of the worshippers of the masquerade cult in Yoruba land in South West Nigeria. This is a chant/song that focuses on praises and adoration of the spirit behind the cult in the traditional settings. Agawu's post colonial theory is applied in the study of the appropriation of *Èsà* music in Christian worship. Agawu argues that "African music is best understood not as a finite repertoire but as a potentiality. In terms of what now exists and has existed in the past, African music designates those numerous repertoires of song and instrumental music that originate in specific African communities, and performed regularly as part of play, ritual, and worship, and circulate mostly orally/aurally, within and across languages, ethnic and cultural boundaries" (Agawu 2003: xiv). This article shows the chant/song relevance in Christian worship and how forms of Yoruba traditional music have been transformed into music for Christian worship and other Christian religious events. Christian *èsà* has become a new register of Yoruba music.

Keywords: *Music, reposition, indigenous, èsà, Christian worship, culture.*

1. INTRODUCTION

From the perspective of Nketia's (1986), African indigenous music expresses and transmits cultural knowledge through sound. Agawu (2003: 97), however, views music as text-woven, an act produced by performer-composers who conceived them. Previously, Merriam (1964) and Blacking (1976) described indigenous music as an expression that initiate from a cultural society. Whatever the approach, the creation of music is basically a decision of the people who conceive and practice it. Such is the situation of indigenous music in Christian worship in Nigeria: musicians, singers and Christian church goers have adopted and adapted the performance of the genres that were once predominantly restricted to the worship of the gods (Sango and Masquerade Spirit). This article discussed the specific case of *ÈsàÈsà* in Nigerian Pentecostal churches. The objective is to identify changes and adaptations of indigenous music in Christian worship today, looking at the reasons for and the functionality of the

repositioning of indigenous *èsà* music performance from the traditional setting to the Pentecostal churches.¹ It includes ethnographic data collected from Yoruba artists in Lagos, Ibadan, Ilorin and Ile-Ife. The artists were interviewed, using unstructured research questions in order to ensure a flexible method of data collection on the various aspects of the genre and the artist under investigation. In the larger vision, this study presents a first reflection on *èsà* music in the context of the 21st century musical practice in Africa.²

Èsà is a chant/song music that requires complete mastery of the use of words in chanting style based on a conventional pattern (in form of internal dynamics, oral modes of presentation from the multiple perspectives of words and song) and poetic formula, peculiar to chanting in Yoruba land. The dominant discourse of the chant/song recitation is praise (worship/adoration). *Èsà* music, which also cross-influences other common genres beyond the religious sphere, is received with a mix of acceptance and rejection by the new generation in South-western Nigeria. Rejection, whenever it is performed as an aspect of ritual worship in honour of a deity, as some feel too sophisticated to be associated with an indigenous, ritual, music genre. Rejection devalues the oral tradition, particularly as it is transmitted in vernacular. Acceptance is basically related to its new status as an adapted genre for Christian worship, even when sung in vernacular.³ It is worthwhile to note that although such integration could be seen as a challenge to Christian worship, there is no prohibition in the use of *Èsà* in contemporary Pentecostal churches as there are no formal restrictions regarding the inclusion or exclusion of such a music genre neither are there any known functional taboos.

This article theoretically relies on Agawu (2003) and Simonett (2014). Agawu's post colonial theory is applied in the study of the appropriation of *Èsà* music in Christian worship. Agawu argues that "African music is best understood not as a finite repertoire but as a potentiality. In terms of what now exists and has existed in the past, African music designates those numerous repertoires of song and instrumental music that originate in specific African communities, and performed regularly as part of play, ritual, and worship, and circulate mostly orally/aurally, within and across languages, ethnic and cultural boundaries" (Agawu 2003: xiv). Simonett (2014) re-examines the importance of musical experience within the traditions of indigenous peoples focusing on the theory of musical bio-diversity as a rescue for threatened musical traditions. The inclusion of *èsà* music in Christian worship may be seen as reflecting bio-diversity that accommodates the adaptation of indigenous music in a new

¹ See Kidula (2013:17) who considers "music as a persistent marker of continuity, change, and transformation".

² With thanks to Daniela Merolla for helping to carry out a major revision of the first version of this paper.

³ The chant is indeed influenced by various distinct Western Nigerian accents, cumulating into the performance of the genre in divers Yoruba dialects that are spoken in the region. Each group in this region has a peculiar music and performance culture associated with it.

performance role.⁴ We will see that there is a significant correlation between *èsà* performance in the church and its performance in the traditional settings; both function as a persistent source of elevated praise. Thus this article presents the church as a new space where practitioners of traditional genres develop their creativity. However, we will also see that there is tension between what the (old and new) oral genres represented in the early and mid 20th century and what they portray in terms of sound and textual content in the 21st century.

The interrogation of the nature of the verbalized drumming and *èsà* chants adapted to the new experience is made possible by contextualizing the transformation of *èsà* textual and instrumental elements in Christian worship. This article thus examines *èsà* presentation and performance qualities in Christian worship. Further, it discusses the variations in focus, text and instrumentation that occur in *èsà* music in the new context. Finally it identifies some traditional characteristics retained in *èsà* performance in Christian worship.

2. ÈSÀ MUSIC IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 21ST CENTURY

In this section, I present the transition, including changes and continuity, of the *èsà* genre from one sacred function to another one. In the traditional system, *Èsà* music evolved as a sacred art of Sango, the god of thunder and lightning, and the Masquerade spirit worship. Although there is a decline in the frequency of its performance in the traditional society, some form of intervention has arisen from the Christian churches. During the last decade *èsà* artists have collectively negotiated their loss of status in the indigenous settings, due to the dwindling practices of the spirits' cult, by refashioning their performance in the context of the Pentecostal Christian worship. *Èsà* music inclusion in Christian worship goes thus beyond its usual practice, which - as said before - leads to significant changes and modifications. This incorporation of indigenous music type into Christian worship exists within the circle of the Pentecostal churches, as not even a single example has been recorded amongst orthodox churches who however query the suitability of the adoption of the *èsà* genre in its new context. A new trend is further emerging in which young Christians perform *èsà* as an attempt to understand their indigenous musical practice. This experience relates to music sensibility as it exemplifies the music as a cultural system in new form and status.

A first remarkable modification is that *Èsà* music in the context of Pentecostal churches no longer shows connection to ancestral spirits; the

⁴ See also Hood (2015:239) quoting Titon who explains that “within the discourse of music and sustainability there are arguments for the dynamic maintenance of potentially threatened or endangered musical traditions.”

emotional behavior that evoke ancestral temporary residence in worshippers are similarly no longer visible. We will see below, however, that the performers and their performance revitalize expressive features of the integrated ensemble performances accompanying the music and may express historical/personal views that represent collective values as well as concern for the revival of the genre within the new setting.

Looking at *Èsà* presentation and performance qualities in Christian worship, we see that *Èsà* artists in the church hold musically the same authority as a chorus song leader. The songs they perform are usually repetitive and the instrumental accompaniment portrays the general characteristics of an all drum accompaniment of the *dùndún* ensemble. We find here a second modification as traditionally the *dùndún* ensemble plays during social gatherings while another kind of ensemble, called *bàtá*, plays sacred roles, but in the contemporary context their roles have been extended to the church where *èsà* music now finds new audience. I will discuss the specific drumming element of the *èsà* performance later on. There is a common norm among the ensemble members that the volume of the ensemble instruments is reduced when the chanter/song leader perform a musical section that is important to be heard clearly. When this occurs, the attention of the congregation is geared towards the understanding of the thematic musical sentence. Ashenafi Kebede argues that:

The performer communicates ideas to his listeners through music. Purely instrumental music, because of its illusive and intangible nature, may be harder to comprehend than vocal music. Meaning in vocal music is often direct, as long as the text sung is constructed to convey ideas and it is directly integrated with the melody. Sometimes melodies are primarily used to convey the message of the text; in this case, the text is considered more important than the melodies. This applies to the vocal music of oriental Africa. Words are also set to melodies, in which case the melodies are considered more important than the text (Ashenafi Kebede 1982: 16).

The curiosity and willingness of the audience to flow with the distinct musical statement made by the lead singer is always worthy of note; this is often followed by a song and dance sections where every worshiper is expected to participate. Active audience participation at performance reveals the extent of their cooperation with the artist. Cooperation is equally necessary between the artist and the instrumentalists. Chernoff points out that participation is crucial to giving meaning to traditional African music:

Traditional music is a very close form of participation or cooperation in which the resulting sound is the proof that the participation is working. Everything starts from the feeling of the people in cooperation, resulting in musical sounds within the bounce of the style being played. This means that one's participation, accuracy in rhythm, finding the right entry

points, the right coordination, the right relationship, normally precede other considerations (Chernoff, 1979: 72).

A third modification is that, as indicated by Jimoh Alayande (oral interview, Ilorin: 2014) the chant/song performance culture has transformed requiring the artistic competence of chanting and singing with piano accompaniment. This latter element expresses the intercultural traits adopted by the practitioners when they display an intentionally, naturally constructed tonal variation in the rendition of the chants/songs using biblical text and traditional serving as lubricator to the chants.

As fourth point, I will now consider some modifications concerning the *èsà* structure and textual content in Christian worship. Stylistically the performance is always in three major compartments that include the chant, the songs and the instrumental accompaniments. The chants focuses on the story intended by the chanter, the songs is woven around the chants to emphasize the significance of the subject matter of the chants while the instrumental accompaniments function significantly as cultural representative of the identified region. Babalolá makes the same observations in his categorization of the genre of oral composition stating that:

Each genre has its distinctive style of vocalization or techniques of vocal performance. Yoruba traditional poetry in general is best classified not so much by the themes as by the stylistic devices employed in recitals. There is a distinctive mode in which each genre should sound forth in performance and an experienced listener to recitals of the various types of Yoruba vocal art can name almost immediately, from the sound of the recital, the particular style of vocalization being employed by a performing vocalizer of whose identity he is ignorant (Babalolá, 1966: 26)

The structure of the new *èsà* performance is most often fashioned towards a distinctive direction given by **Introduction, Thematic Format, the Chant Proper, Closure, and the Artist's Label**. The Introduction presents the instrumental interlude that precedes the performance of the chant. The Thematic Format, the second conventional formula, reveals the thematic features of the chants and the song and varies from chant to chant depending on the intention of the performer and the event. The chant proper gives the narrative of the chant and songs. This story line is always sustained by songs serving as lubricating oil.⁵ The Closure is an aspect of the genre where the concluding remark is made by the chanter with a connecting song.⁶ Finally we have the Signature that clarifies the identity of the artist on his chants.

⁵ The songs perform in between the chant connect the fragments of the rendition making a whole, it serves as a kind of lubrication that smoothens the performance.

⁶ An example is found as follows (the section was performed in English language by Ishola Opo thus):

Such structure presents modifications in the Christian context concerning **Introduction** and **Signature**. The first conventional opening of the new *èsà* genre is Introduction and not Signature as found in the traditional *èsà* performance. This change has occurred because it is not appropriate for an artist in the church to praise him/herself instead of praising God. Thus, a Christian *èsà* artist often starts his/her chants by uplifting the attributes of God or by reverencing him. See example follows:

Texts of Èsà Chants and Songs (collected and transcribed by author)

| | ÌBÀ | BY: Ìsòlá Òpó |
|---------------|--|----------------------|
| <i>Ìsàré:</i> | <i>Ìbà ló lojó òní o, Mo júbà baba mi, Ìbà Jèsù Krístì ti Násárétì Àkòbì inú òkú</i> | |
| 5. | <i>Mo júbà kí bà mi se. Omo aládé àlááfíà, Ìbà Olórí ogun òrun. Jèsù krístì ni</i> | |
| 10. | <i>Òhun l'akódá o Òhun l'asèdá o Òhun la lélé o Òhun la lèlé o Òhun l'olúwa o ---- (2ce) Òhun lo lu'bùnkún o</i> | |
| 15. | <i>Jègèdè, jégédé o, Jé kó ye mí kalé, Mo júbà kíbà mi se.</i> | |

Translated version of the chant: reverence

| | |
|--------|---|
| Chant: | Today is the day of reverence, I reverence my Father. I reverence Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The first of the dead, |
|--------|---|

I pledge,
To Jesus Christ my Lord,
To be faithful, loyal and honest;
To serve Jesus Christ with all my strength,
To defend the unity of his body.
To uphold his honour and glory,
So help me God (3ce).
In Jesus Christ name I have pledged;
Kéyin naa o yaa pledge.

5. I reverence, let my reverence be accepted.
The crowned king of peace,
Reverence the Captain of the host of heaven.
He is Jesus Christ;
He is the first of all creation
10. He is the creator of mankind
He is the one that creates and is still creating
He is the one that abounds in creation
He is the Lord
He is the one that blesses
15. The one that is clothe with humility
Let it be well with me till the end.
I pay homage, let my reverence be accepted.
He is Jesus Christ

Conversely, Signature is the last conventional formula of the new *èsà* genre. This is because it is more appropriate for an *èsà* artist in the church to acknowledge God first before acknowledging him/herself. However, also in the Signature of the *èsà* performed in church certain utterances help to identify the artist. For example, *Ìsòlá Òpó* in the following chant makes the following utterances that identify him:

Ohunte:

*Nìhìn-ìn ni n oò dúró,
Kí n má baà jèko tó léegun;
Gégé bómo Níní ti n wí,
Eléyùí ó ju enu wa lo,
Èmi Ìsòlá Òpó,
Omo iyá Sàngó, eléégún télè,
Mo wá di Ìsòlá Òpó,
Olókikí Jésù.*

Translation

Signature: I will stop here,
In order not to put myself into trouble;
According to the words of Níní's son,
This is not too much for us to say.
I, *Ìsòlá Òpó*, the son of Sàngó worshipper,
And masquerade cult member.
I have now become *Ìsòlá Òpó*,
The one who sings the praises of Jesus Christ

Ìsòlá Òpó, whose real name is Dele Tomori, is a leading practitioner of the new *èsà* genre whose unique method of rendition can be classified as a rare *èsà* type.

The text of the Signature (“I, Ìsòlá Òpó, the son of Sàngó worshipper [...] I have now become Ìsòlá Òpó, The one who sings the praises of Jesus Christ”) reveals - as indicated above - the awareness of the artist of the historical and personal trajectory of the *èsà* performance from the spirits’ cult to the Christian worship as well as of the reuse of expressive features that allow the revival of the genre within the new setting.

The last modification that I would like to mention concerns the visual aspect. In the new context, there is more concern for the use of a horse whip, traditional attires as well as for the combination of the *dùndún* and the *bàtá* ensembles. The costumes described above suggest formal dressing of the chanter, singers and drummers.⁷ This is confirmed by Baba Alajede (oral interview, Ibadan: 2014) who submits that an emphasis on the visual and physical aspects of *èsà* performance is required even in Christian worship, where both male and female artists are costumed in elegant traditional attires with complementary head wears.

Looking at continuity, we should consider a few aspects. First, both *èsà* performance in the church and its performance in the traditional settings function as a persistent source of elevated praise. Second, the use of a sonorous voice, acceptable for chanting and singing of *èsà* songs that is evident in the recorded songs that were transcribed by the author. Third, stylistically the melody of the songs as lubrication to the chant shows distinct traditional elements with supporting imagery and other poetic formula representation on the dramatic usage of words in the notated song. Fourth, *Èsà* music performance establishes its own field of musical creativity that is distinct from others genres of music in Yoruba land. Olajubu (1998) emphasizes from a philosophical viewpoint the role of musical experience that incorporates artistic reaping of what is sown, as an autonomous aid to virtuoso performance in music. The *èsà* chant/music performance comes in the form of a dialogue between the chanters and the backup singers expressed by the use of verbal musical communication and recitative form. The repertoire sung by the artists is wide and includes thanksgiving, praise, worship, adoration, supplication and intercession. Basically, the lyrics of the song express the cultural values of greetings and appreciation. Jimoh Alayande (Oral interview, 2014) affirms that the nature of the new performance venue which is the church, and the targeted audience, has had a major influence on the contemporary form that *èsà* has evolved into. Nevertheless, the performance structure (in terms of form not content) of chant-song rotational principle abides. The audience’s attention is captured by rhetorical questions and coded words posed by the artist to the audience, thereby sustaining their interest in the performance.

⁷ *Dùndún* ensemble is a composition of five drums while *bàtá* ensemble is a combination of four drums. Whenever the two ensemble merge at performance, four drums of the former and only one drum (named *kudi*) of the latter are combined together to form a modern drum ensemble.

A last point is that we can interpret Ìsòlá Òpó's Signature, transcribed and translated above, as expression not only of change but also of continuity. Ìsòlá Òpó and the other artists interviewed were brought up in the traditions of the old *èsà* genre that contextually centered on praise and acknowledgement of Sango, the god of thunder/lightning and the Masquerade cult. Having acquired the chanting skill from childhood through observation, imitation and practice, they are able to form and sustain an *èsà* ensemble that engages in various types of performances. In the context of church performance, they therefore transform the performance by adopting the text of the Bible and expressing their Christian conviction.

Below I present elements of change and continuity concerning the drumming specifically.

3. ELEMENTS OF CHANGES IN CONTEMPORARY DRUMMING IN CHRISTIAN ÈSÀ PERFORMANCES

Looking at drumming we observe some overarching changes in Yoruba land as emphasized by Anku, (1995) in a discussion on cross-cultural dimension in drumming with reference to its stylistic differences thus:

Stylistic differences that exist between one ethnic tradition and another may be attributed to the cultural norms that they establish. For instance, there are several rhythmic possibilities within the permutation spectrum of 12 and 16 span frames; nevertheless each drum culture select and specializes in the use of only a few such composition (Anku, 1995:188).

Creative trends in drumming in Pentecostal churches, as in urban Yoruba social order show that adherence to cultural patterns are no longer in vogue. Urban drummers may now select from the several rhythmic possibilities as observed by Anku and manipulate them to suit their intention. The only principle guiding this culture is its adherence to the permutation spectrum of 12 and 16 span frames.

There is now greater cultural dissociation from the drumming heritage with regards to rhythmic accentuation in Christian *èsà* performances because most of the rhythmic patterns emerging from city drummers who perform at churches today, no longer follows strictly the misplaced accents that are easily considered misconstrued by non native hearer. This is because amusement that causes distraction is avoid during worship. Moreover, ethnic isolation that once existed between drumming styles have fizzles out. Traditionally, certain drumming patterns are associated with the gods. Religious traditional drummers are so restricted that the rhythmic pattern identified with the gods will never be played outside the contexts of festivals in celebration of the gods that include Sango (the god of thunder and lightning) Ogun (the god of iron) and Ifa (Oracle Divinity) among others). This has limited their relevance and marketability. Conversely, urban drummers sometimes reproduces such rhythmic patterns at

social events. Urban drummers adopt any pattern that fascinates them regardless of its background and attachment to the gods. These sets of drummers perform to please the audience who pay for their shows, unlike the traditional drummers who play strictly to appease Ayangalu (the god of drumming).

Other important elements of change in drumming during Christian *èsà* include the consciousness of phrasing order; this is generally referred to as fragmental compartments of rhythmic patterns at performance. The drummers at performance punctuate the singing of the lead vocalist in the band with several drum interludes at segmental succession. Another element of change is deliberately termination of melodic/rhythmic phrases abruptly in order to keep the audience spell bound to the music. Modern drummers also chose to adopt poetic drum patterns briefly, unlike the traditional drummers who adopt this pattern as narrative. Urban drummers also replace extensive drum patterns with proverbs and coded words, which make their performance memorable and exciting. Direct drumming with clarity of expression and sharpness of ideas is very common at social events because audience want qualitative performance to justify the money they paid for the show. Application of accent modulation is another important element of change in drumming. This is done to incite audience and to spore them to donate money generously to the drummers.

As indicated before, one of the major contemporary changes has been the fusion of *dùndún/bàtá* ensemble in *èsà* music. Traditionally *èsà* performance is accompanied with the *bàtá* ensemble only, but the contemporary performance now features a fusion of ensembles (Idamoyibo 2014). *Dùndún/bàtá* drumming in *èsà* performance represents the various artistic trends of musical knowledge extension at the Pentecostal churches. There is, therefore, a reflection of the dynamism of traditional culture in Christian worship. Drum music performance also reveals the Yoruba perception of music as an expressive medium. The organization of the drum musical performance can occur in both formal and informal contexts. Professionals whose musical creativity derives from revelation rather than mere imagination, perform the new genre to inspire people who ordinarily might not have had close association with the genre.

Another dimension of change as observed by Omojola (2012:142) is with reference to mood change in drumming. He affirms that during Yoruba praise section in Christian worship “the celebratory congregation song of praise, that accompanies the collection of offerings and tithes, features drumming, dancing, and call-and-response singing”. Drumming at this stage of worship communicates meaningfully to the audience, as the praise names of God are recited as an aspect of verbal drumming with congregational applause that reveals a working relationship between the drummers and the worshippers.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria has encouraged the adoption and dissemination of core traditional music with biblical text, accompanied by full *dùndún/bàtá* ensemble in Christian Worship. Dove Television features the recordings of RCCG performances very often. The Mount Zion Film Ministry in Nigeria has also improved the dissemination of the

drumming tradition through the media devices, television and radio. This is evident in the film entitled *The Prodigal Ones*. The recordings of performances in the church have encouraged the use of external devices in form of microphones, power amplification and speakers among others. This facilitates clearer output of the activities of urban drummers on stage. The use of these devices is inevitable especially during live shows at large halls where several audiences converge to relieve stress. Modern systems such as YouTube, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram and the video conferencing are also of great support to the performance of drum music. Drumming stylistic patterns in performance can now be transmitted and accessed live across the globe even within the convenience of one's living room and office. Other dimension of communication is the disconnection from cassette and its player to VCD, CD, DVD, MP3, and their player gives more recording space for drumming tracks. The impact of Smartphone such as Android, Iphone and Ipad has tremendously improved the transmission of drum music performance in across generations.

4. ELEMENTS OF CONTINUITY IN DRUMMING AT CHRISTIAN ÈSÀ PERFORMANCES

Looking at drumming we also observe some elements of continuity. Some drummers in Christian churches are still holding on to their belief in Ayangalu (the god of drumming) the legendry ancestors of drummers, and the custodian of drumming skills, although this may not be spiritually accepted by the church. Traditionally, no Ayan drummer plays his drum without due ritual consultation with the deity. Some of the drummers in the church, like their counterpart who are traditional drummers in the city squire and villages, hold a body of oral knowledge that project the heroic attributes of God or Ayan as applicable to the context of Èsà events in the *oríkì* (praise name) drumming genre. Olaniyan observes that:

The materials used poetically in traditional drumming practice are *oríkì* (praise name/praise poetry), *òwe* (proverbs), *itàn ibìlẹ̀* (folk history), *orin ibìlẹ̀* (folk songs), *àfò afojúinúwò* (imagination), *àfiwè ohùn* (imitation of sound) *ìrírí ojú* (contextual occurrence) *àlùjo* (drumming rhythm for the dancing) and *ohun t'o nloo* (current affairs (Olaniyan 2008:96).

The labels of the different genres of drum music reflect their traditional importance and there is no exception to this practice, it is a common feature within and without the church.

Other continuity practice is given by the extensively rhythmic with limited melodic function of the ensemble genres *dùndún* and *bàtá* because of their percussive nature. In their performance, drumming, singing and dancing are interwoven, though drumming plays principal roles while singing and dancing are subsidiary. As indicated above, the introduction of the *bàtá* ensemble in

social drumming is an innovation. Regular alternations of beats of the two ensembles provide a new understanding towards the realization of the dance patterned music in contemporary Yoruba society. Regular syncopated patterns of rhythmic formation are evident in the performance of the *Iyáàlù bàtá* and the *dùndún* that often leads to a vigorous rhythmic style. This consists of hemiola, hocket and other minor drumming techniques with rhythmic variation.

Other aspects of continuity are related to the peculiarity, function and significance of drumming *èsà* music. Its peculiarity refers to its exclusive association with membrane classification of drums and its tonal reflection capacity. Functionally, drummers play both rhythmic and limited melodic roles that are of secular (*dùndún* ensemble) and sacred relevance (*bàtá* ensemble). Significantly, drumming indicates the creative artistic competency of the Yoruba of South Western Nigeria to perform music. The formation of ensembles in the society is mostly determined by the ceremonies that justifies their usages. These ceremonies determine specifically the kind of the ensemble and the number of drums to be used at each event. The choice is taken according to the conventions governing the ceremony as there are prescribed rules guiding ensemble performance in Yoruba land. The *dùndún/bàtá* ensemble, apart from its rhythmic primary function, communicates oral literature publicly at social and contemporary Christian worship based on the drumming intelligence or skill of the master drummer. Although the *dùndún/bàtá* ensembles are not appropriate in the context of core traditional sacred events, because of the integration or combinations of ensembles that is forbidden by the gods,⁸ these ensembles are very important and relevant particularly in the shaping of Yoruba social musical entertainment and its contemporary usage as part of accompaniment in the church. The most distinctive and characteristics features of Yoruba social musical culture is nowadays tied to the performances of the integrated ensembles of the *dùndún/bàtá* drums. The pitches of the tones are clear and pleasant compared to other drum ensembles.

Dùndún/bàtá ensemble presents a flexible mode of oral performance that inspires a fixed adherence to the drumming ethics. The drummers are gentle men of noble character and their behaviour or manner at events expresses reverence to propriety within the cultural setting of the Yoruba. There is a subdivision of the classification of the ensemble and ensemble members that usually indicates a minor difference among classes of drummers and the composition of the drums. The constitution of the ensemble has undergone several phases of development. Originally, five drums formed the ensemble, namely *gúdúgúdú*, *omele*, *kánàngo*, *kerikeri* and *Iyáàlù*. In the 21st century context of performance, however, only four drums represent the ensemble (*kánàngo* is now considered obsolete). The duplication of the *omele* into *isáájù* and *ìkeyìn* is also a common practice today. (*Omele isáájù* and *ìkeyìn* refers to the playing roles of the instruments, the pattern played by the drums differ but

⁸ There are indeed purely sacred drum ensembles such as *àdàmò*, *aféré* or *àgèré* for such usage.

the drum is the same, but duplicated to play two rhythmic distinct roles). Four drums represent the *bàtá* at social performance namely *omele méta bàtá*, *Omele-ako*, *Omele-abo* and *iyáàlù bàtá*. The condition for performance has not changed; rehearsals are required for a drummer to be established with regards to fitness and ability to perform well. The construction of the drum in recent time is influenced by the global interest that centers on the promotion of local drums for internal and external, professional and amateur usages.

Omojola asserts *bàtá* as the oldest of all traditional drums, based on the interview he collected from active *bàtá* drummers. He puts this view as follows:

Bata drummers are often eager to assert that their instrument as the oldest of all Yoruba drums and that it has been associated with ancient Yoruba religion practices for as long human memory can recall. They also always stress that *bàtá* is a difficult instrument to master. It is generally believed that playing the drum demand considerable stamina; *bàtá* performances are sometimes led by two master drummers who take turns playing the *iyáàlù bàtá* (Omojola 2012:21)

Omojola's argument (on the historic claim of *bàtá* drummers, the demands of the instrument and the personnel required to play the drum) is fundamental in the understanding of a master drummer's task that must have informed the merging of the ensemble with the *dùndún group*.

As to continuity, the drum performance continues to function as an enhancement for productivity at work. Apart from professional drum performances, the drummers are also involved in other related occupational practices such as palm wine tapping and gate keeping at schools and private apartments. Others include drumming, building of drums and sales of musical instruments and other wares. They sometimes sing to entertain or accompany themselves in their occupational activities. They also sing at social gatherings without electronic and amplification equipment. The songs that are used to sustain drumming are in most cases spontaneous compositions that are created orally. The instrumental part of drum music performance may be viewed as boring if the internal relationship between instruments and the recycling performance practices that sustain long performances are taken for granted.⁹ Similarly, if the integrated patterns of the instruments earlier discussed in this study are not well comprehended, the pattern of the individual instrument may be assumed to be too complicated and of no rhythmical interest. Proper understanding of change and continuity, therefore, involves examining the distinct character, concepts or ideas, and the rules governing ensemble performance in the society.

⁹ Somewhat paradoxically, the performance of the old *èsà* genre may be wonderfully boring if rendered without the thematic songs, serving to connect the fragments of the songs.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has provided an overview on the reposition of indigenous music performance in Christian worship. *Èsà* is a chant/song genre with definite narrative style and rendition techniques, situated in South West Nigeria. The origin of the new *èsà* genre is linked to the traditional heritage and the re-awakening of the Yoruba musical culture in Christian worship. Christian *Èsà* music thus reflects the creative ability of the practitioners of this oral form. Bisi Adunbarin-Keji (oral interview, Lagos: 2014) observes that the participants' pleasure in including indigenous music in religious worship demonstrate the harmonious integration of Western and African cultures (*èsà* representing African culture - specifically the Yoruba - while the instrumentation represents both cultures as there is a fusion of African instruments with Western amplification devices) making it a unique and worthwhile research study. However, the integration of indigenous instrumental ensembles in the performances of Pentecostal churches is an issue of contention, due to the peculiar dialogue generated by the reuse of the traditional drums and the rituals associated with them as we have seen in the case of the example of *Ìsòlá Òpó's* Signature. Moreover, the influx of foreign elements and modern technology alters indigenous entertainment and worship music preferences. Moreover, quick modifications are further enforced by the processes of interaction and integration of genres that were once prominent in the worship either of the gods or of biblical texts. New *èsà* music can thus be viewed from different perspectives, ranging from the resistance to the dominance of Western oriented worship to the repositions of ritual tradition into a broader realm (Christian worship), a move towards a more humanistic and meaningful worship.

In my understanding, reposition restores balance in the treatment of indigenous music in contemporary worship in Yoruba land. The performance of *èsà* in Christian worship reveals the artists as the mediator between such a genre and their new audience. The role of these artists in restoring and maintaining this balance is enhanced by the willingness of the leadership of Pentecostal Christian congregations in South West Nigeria to accommodate the development.

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3. Isola Opo (Dele Tomori) Ile-Ife: 2000
4. Sis Bisi Adunbarin Keji, Lagos: 2014

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APPENDIX

OLÓRUN LÓ LE FÀ'NÌYÀN

(God Saves)

Arr. Atinuke Idamoyibo

Andante $\text{♩} = 80$

Q-lò-run ló

5
le fà - nì-yàn o Q-lò-run ló le fà - nì yàn Q-lò-run ló

9
le fà - nì-yàn o Q-lò-run ló le fà - nì yàn A-fà-pa-rò

13
sé - bé à ún gbìn - ká Q-lò-run ló - le fà - nì yàn A-fà-pa-rò

17
Q-lò-run ló le fà - nì-yàn o Q-lò-run ló le fà - nì yàn

BABA LÓNI 'LÉ AYÉ
(The Creator)

Andante ♩ = 80

Arr. Atinuke Idamoyibo

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Andante' with a quarter note equal to 80 beats per minute. The score is divided into four systems, each starting with a measure number (1, 7, 13, 19). The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

1 Ba-ba lóni-lé a-yé Ba-ba náà

7 lo lo lo run Ba-ba lóni lé a-yé o Ba-ba náà lo lo run

13 E-ni-yan wo Je - su won ri pe won ye E wa wo-se O - lo-rum Je - su

19 fun wa-la - yo E wa wo se O - lo-run o A-du-pe o Je - su o

2 25

Won ko wa wa sa yo won ra wa pa da

32

È-niyan wà là à yè ni to ri Jé-sù Ba-ba lóni lé ai yé E-lé-dù

39

ma-re lo lo run Ba-ba lóni lé ai yé o E-le-du-ma-re lo lo run

45

Ba-ba wa ra-wa pa da lo wo i ku

51

Notes.

1. In the notation, Western terminology is used to describe the tempo as *andante*: crotchet=80. Africans to some extent still depend on this term in the explanation of their symbolic works. This is so because most of the terms formulated by scholars in the continent have not been standardized for clarity.

2. The tonality of the notation is B flat major. The accompaniment is stylistically based on the fragmental movements of semiquavers and quavers with few rest punctuation. Bar 13 -21 reveals a repetition twice to show the importance of conclusion in Yoruba music. The music

terminates in bar 21 with a perfect cadence. The metric pattern is in simple duple crotchet time. Rhythmic points of attack vary from four to six punctuated notes with few rest symbols. Instrumental interlude of three and a half bars is evident in the notation, and a total of five systems of voice and piano accompaniment. The piano version of four semiquaver notes with the variant of other notes is present in the notation. Conclusion was drawn on the piece in bar twenty one. Through composed form of all call and all response pattern laid a formant for the piece. The second song was notated in the key of D major, with the minimum of four points of attack and maximum of six punctuated notes. The piece is in nine systems and fifty six bars. Three and a half bars of instrumental interlude were noticeable at the beginning of the piece while it concludes with eight and a half bars of instrumental postlude. The second song ends in bar 51 with a perfect cadence.