

Basil Chukwuka Okeke

Music in Christian Worship Today

A Cross-Cultural Historical Study
of Nigerian Examples



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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my late parents,
Chief Gabriel Okeke Onwukaike and
Mrs. Evelyn Chinonyelum Okeke (*Nne Okwukwe, Issele*)
in loving memory of their passage unto eternity.

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Abbreviations

AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
CBCN	Catholic Bishop's Conference of Nigeria
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CSSp	Congregatio de Saint Esprit
DMSSL	De Musica Sacra et Sacra Liturgia
IDLMC	Igbo Interdiocesan Liturgical Music Commission
ITS (TLS)	Inter Sollicitudines (Tra le Sollecitudini)
LMT	Liturgical Music Today
MR	The Milwaukee Symposia for Church Composers: A Ten-Year Report
MS	Musicam Sacram
MSD	Musicae Sacrae Disciplinae
NBC	Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation
NGDMM	The New Grove. Dictionary of Music and Musicians
NPS	National Population Commission of Nigeria
SMA	Society of African Mission
SS	Spiritus et Sponsa
SC	Sacrosanctum Concilium
SCDWDS	Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments
SCR	Sacred Congregation of Rites
VL	Varietates Legitimae

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Basil Chukwuka Okeke

Foreword

Since ancient times, chant and music have been an integral part of the Catholic liturgy and have accompanied over the centuries the participation of the faithful in the rites, but also the education of young Christians, pastoral care and evangelization.

The people of the countries that have known the Gospel in relatively recent times have shown a particular predilection for the expression of their religiosity through chant and music. In particular, Africa has always shown a predisposition for community musical expression in the rite, through the adoption of very typical musical styles, accompanied by the use of local musical instruments and also by dance

The Catholic Church has been aware of this trend for a long time. For example, one can cite the Encyclical of Pope Pius XII “*Musicae Sacrae Disciplinae*” of 1955 (§ 70), or Chapter VI of the Conciliar Constitution on Sacred Liturgy “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*” of 1963 (§ 119) and the Instruction on Sacred music “*Musicam sacram*” of 1967 (§ 61). The awareness of this predilection was accompanied by the promotion of forms of prayer and chant that could be part of the Catholic liturgy, composed in the style and practice typical of the original tradition of those places. This is to encourage the use of a repertoire suitable for distant musical cultures different from those typical of Europe, but also to allow the musical expression of these peoples according to their own cultural and aesthetic principles.

It is not difficult to see a clear link between these instances of openness and the general evolution of the musicological disciplines towards a greater understanding of music as a typical artistic expression in a per-

spective of cultural unity. This scientific approach began in the second half of the 1900s, starting with the expansion of so-called systematic musicology and ethnomusicology.

In the past, Catholicism arrived in these regions bringing with it the European musical tradition, in particular Gregorian chant and polyphony, imposing or trying to adapt this repertoire to the sensitivity of the various peoples, with heterogeneous results that generated discussions.

The directives of the Second Vatican Council, with the adoption of national languages and the admission of distant non-European musical styles, have currently allowed the development of a very heterogeneous and lively repertoire, but rather difficult to represent and study. Often these compositions are associated with the popular liturgical and religious music of the Latin Rite, with which they maintain some common traits, but also have many different elements. Although these ecclesial communities commonly celebrate the liturgy of the Latin rite, adapted to their national language, their liturgical and religious music maintains very different traits from the European tradition, remaining in fact strongly linked to the local musical tradition.

Furthermore, in these places the Catholic liturgical musical repertoire had to deal with the tradition of Christian worship of the Lutheran, Anglican and Baptist Church, in its numerous variations. In recent years, it has been also assimilating styles derived from the influence of pop music, but still spreading mainly through the oral-aural tradition, through the mass media and the Internet.

The musicological study of Father Basil Okeke provides a large amount of data on the liturgical-musical repertoire of the Catholic community of great importance in Nigeria. But it is above all interesting for its cross-cultural approach which allows us to examine the Catholic liturgical-musical repertoire considering all the elements involved. His attention to investigating the use of Nigerian languages in liturgical chant, various styles and forms of musical expression, the use of musical instruments, musical perception through the analysis of responses to a questionnaire, make this study a strong basis for further studies and insights.

This is also the result of the teaching and educational work provided by the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome, which has always

been open to students from all over the world, such as Father Basil Okeke, to guide them in their studies and to encourage knowledge of the musical practice of the Catholic liturgy all over the world

Rome, 8 February 2022

Prof. Nicola Tangari
Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music

General Introduction

Cultural musics from around the globe are today finding an abode in Christian worship. A participation in Sunday worship of a local liturgical assembly of a multicultural or bilingual setting, as one finds today in many countries of the world such as in North America, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, France, Brazil, South Africa, and Nigeria, leaves one often with the feelings of being at home at such gathering. There liturgical prayers composed within the African-European cultural experience of the early Church are said, hymns originating from different epochs and with diverse cultural undertones are sung, sermons are preached in one's own language and the ritual gestures of the worshipping assembly are expressed in varied forms.

On several occasions, the author has had the opportunity of worshipping at the Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady Queen of Nigeria in Gariki, Abuja, Nigeria. It was really a life revealing experience of how a nation's diverse cultural heritage has come to shape her musical participation at worship. A very small pipe organ intoned an entrance song in English and the congregation sang from what looked to be a collection of some Western Church hymns. The offertory procession witnessed a harvest of short cyclic songs, energetic, filled with native rhythms and colourfully expressive in several native Nigerian languages, particularly *Igbo*, *Yoruba*, *Hausa*, *Efik*, and *Ibibio*.

The accompaniment of these songs was an ensemble of native musical instruments from different Nigerian cultural backgrounds. At the end of the celebration, the worshipping assembly burst into a joyful shout of praise singing an anthem written in Igbo language but combining cultural-

General Introduction

ly structured *melody* and *rhythmic* phrases with western harmonic flavour. Amplified keyboard and Nigerian native musical instruments accompanied the anthem. The experience was enriching and showed how culturally heterogeneous assembly looks gathered at worship today. Besides, the experience passed on a lesson that in such an assembly, where people from different cultural backgrounds are united in hearts, minds and voices to sing and celebrate in their diverse cultural musical idioms the mystery of their salvation, there is no room for cultural estrangement of any sort.

Research has shown that such experience as described above was perhaps inconceivable in the past. In Catholic circles, for instance, worship in the pre-Vatican II's mode used to be defined in terms of the "Latin Mass". Thus, Latin plain chants and sacred polyphonies in this type of celebration constituted an *esprit de corps* that bound the worshippers and the priest celebrant to the mystery that is relived here and now in the sacred rites. Not until the liturgical reforms of Second Vatican Council (11th Oct.1962-8 Dec.1965),¹ indigenous songs from other cultures were excluded from Catholic worship and in most cases considered as essentially heathen in character and as such non-liturgical. As a case in point, during this period in Nigeria, pre-Vatican II masses and the chants accompanying these rites were all in Latin. The Western Missionaries treated Nigerian native songs with discontent, waving them aside as part of pagan cultic practices that merit no place in Christian worship.

In other ecclesial Communities (i. e. other 'Christian churches'), however, the situation appeared to be somewhat different. The musical practice of integrating into worship elements from folk or indigenous cultures was a much earlier practice in these churches. Folk musical idioms became, for instance, part of the household of Lutheran worship as early as 16th century, due to the musical reformation tactics of Martin Luther and other protestant reformers. Through borrowing, rewriting and adaptation of some already existing textual and musical materials, for example, Latin plain chants and folk tunes, Luther was able to produce for his newly founded 'church' a great many congregational hymns used directly in worship.

1 From 1967 onwards, permission to celebrate Mass (including the canon) in Vernacular languages came into force.

It is this practice of composing music suitable for Christian worship, which cuts across cultural boundaries and is all-inclusive of people's ways of singing and interacting spiritually and socially with one another that forms the bedrock of this research. Therefore, this investigation will examine the varied ways peoples' cultures influence their musical behaviours during worship, particularly as demonstrated in the case of Nigerian multifaceted cultural musicality.

A great deal of research has been carried out extensively in the field of music in culture, or what is often described by some music scholars as music of folk culture. From late 1950s through the mid-70s to today, music anthropologists, ethnologists and etnomusicologists such as Bruno Nettl (1956), A.M. Jones (1956), Charles Louis Seeger (1958), Brandel Rose (1961), Alan Mirriam (1964), and John Blacking (1976) have carried out series of scholarly studies in this direction. Likewise, numerous publications have presented scholarly treatment of Western Church music from a cultural perspective. Edward Foley's essays on liturgical musicology such as *Ritual Music. Studies in Liturgical Musicology* (1995), Anthony Ruff's work *Sacred Music and Liturgical Reforms, Treasures and Transformations* (2007) and others have offered some critical insights into the cultural origins and developments in Judeo-Christian worship music.

Very close to the nature of the discussion here, is the document of the *Universa Laus* (1981) organization, "Music-Liturgy-Culture" which speaks in favour of good resources from a particular culture becoming a starting point for worship music. Multicultural music making during worship has become today a burning issue especially in countries characterised by cultural pluralism. A clear evidence of this emerges in the writings and publications from North America. In *The Milwaukee Symposia for Church Composers* (MR, (1992), for instance, sections 56–63 focused on "Cross-Cultural Music Making."

Some African Authors have also contributed to the discussion on intercultural musical activities, though not in reference to worship music as such. Such authors include Nketia J.H. Kwabena in the *Music of Africa* (1974) and Akin Euba in the *Essays on Music in Africa vol. 2: Intercultural Perspectives* (1989). Godwin Sadoh's ethnomusicological publication (2007) also treated *musical interculturalism* focusing on the music

(consisting of his secular and sacred works) of a Nigerian composer and organist Ayo Bankole. To date, our research has not found any publication specifically addressing the issue of cross-cultural manifestations in Christian worship music with examples taken from Nigerian, predominantly Christian, cultures. Therefore, it is this perspective that focuses this book, which also seeks to be a catalyst for dialogue between music, culture and worship.

The book will also try to highlight issues and guidelines that help promote a healthy cross-cultural worship through a cultivation of authentic indigenous music appropriate for such worship. It hopes to elicit interest in the study of various manifestations of worship music in different cultures among and between liturgico-historical musicologists and ethnomusicologists. Perhaps such study may eventually culminate in the birth of a new branch of study to be referred to and designated as “comparative liturgical musicology”. This new field of study, requiring a combination of liturgical musicology and ethnomusicology, will investigate critical issues affecting the communication of gospel cross-culturally through music. It is also our aim, through this research, to make available to a larger audience – music scholars, liturgists, pastoral agents of inculturation, and other similar readers some Nigerian examples of worship music in their varied forms as conceived by the Nigerian composers.

Nigeria is a country with such a vast population and cultural heritage that one can not boast of exhausting any cultural, religious, social or musical issue regarding the whole country in research of this nature. Therefore, the work limits itself only to worship music as practised among Nigerian Christians, especially the ethnic groups inhabiting the southeastern and southwestern parts of Nigeria. Hence, it lays no claim to completeness on the issue of Nigerian cultural musical diversity. In addition, the work does not delve into the issue of the method to be adopted in the proposed new field of study of worship music. However, this lacuna leaves the door open for the development of the argument and further research in the same direction.

For scholarly approach coupled with the interdisciplinary nature of the subject in question, this study adopts partly a historical musicological method and partly ethnomusicological method (fieldwork supple-

mented by interviews and a questionnaire). The core of the research is music of worship that involves a combination of non-western musical idioms with those of European art music. Therefore, this two-fold methodological approach will be helpful in overcoming the problem of dichotomy often created by music scholars between the musicological approach to the study of music and the anthropological. In fact, this dual method will integrate both approaches, i. e., the study of music sound structure and that of its cultural context. Since the scope of this work includes ways of adapting cultural musics into Christian worship and introducing Christian gospel into various cultures, the process and method of liturgical inculturation will be engaged in the evaluation of the entire work.

This book has three major parts. Each part consists of three chapters. Part I (chapters one, two and three) defines and delineates some important concepts, perspectives and principles about music, culture and worship. Chapter one discusses the key concepts in the alignment of music study with that of social sciences. Chapter Two looks at the principles and guidelines that regulated and underlined worship music theories and practices for centuries and the Catholic Church's acceptance of the music traditions of other cultures into her worship. Chapter three traces and reconstructs from historical perspective the nature of the early music forms used in Christian worship in Nigeria.

Part II (chapters four, five and six), focuses on the diverse historical-musical standpoints that underline varied musical conceptions, behaviours and practices among Nigerian ethnic groups. Chapter four traces the historical path of Christian worship music in Nigeria. Chapter five takes up the Nigerian traditional musics and thoughts, examining in depth particularly the music cultures of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria – Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. Chapter six looks at the nature and distribution of traditional musical instruments in Nigeria. Part III (Chapters seven, eight and nine) is a cross-cultural study of the Nigerian examples of Worship Music. Chapter seven presents the early practice of music-making in worship in Nigeria and searches in it any antecedent of musical cross-culturalism. Chapter eight investigates current trends in music making during worship in Nigeria. Chapter nine, which serves as evaluation

and general conclusion of the book, takes a critical look at the issue of musical cross-culturalism in worship.

Finally, this book does not claim to exhaust the issue of music, worship and culture nor to have said the last word on the Nigerian situation with regard to the interplay of these themes. However, its originality lies in the fact that it is the first of its kind to attempt a study of Christian songs written by Nigerian composers and used in the worship from a cross-cultural perspective. In addition, it is also the first to experiment on the possibility of finding a meeting point between the church's teachings on music used for worship and the new theories and concepts proposed by social sciences for the study of music. It is only a contribution to the ongoing effort on how to get people from different cultural backgrounds, gathered at worship, to participate actively in the divine worship through songs born out of the peoples' culture.