



Research Paper

Pentecostalism and Kinaesthetic Movements: The Hub of Selected Church Music Scenarios in Akwa Ibom State

Ime Dan Ukpanah

Department of Music,
University of Uyo, Nigeria.

Abstract

Africans, including Nigerians, are distinguished among the people of many world cultures as being adept in kinaesthetic activities. Similarly, pentecostalism is experienced as a Christian way of life that favours a combination of spiritual inspiration and kinetics in displaying the dynamism of worship and ministration. Music as an expressive art wherein has the tendency of stimulating the intellect and emotion of listeners depending on the artistry and ethos of the performers. This study is concerned with exploring the robust innovative styles and contemporary art forms that are employed by selected Church denominations in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The approach involved, studying the kinaesthetic activities from within these Church music settings, the contemporary pentecostalism and their eminent shift from the earlier orthodox modes of worship. The principal method used in this research was naturalistic which involved active participation in worship experiences at various church settings. Other methods of data collection included a review of scholarly articles in similar directions. Observations highlighted that this cross-cultural fertilization of charismatic traits of pentecostalism and kinaesthetic tendencies of the indigenous people resulted in a musical currency which is not limited only to socio-religious boundaries, but, has transcendent effects on worshipers. It could be asserted that the diachronic and synchronic approaches be explored to establish an authentic shift of emphasis from one dispensation to another.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, kinaesthetic, religious, charismatic, ministration.

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I. Introduction

Africans are distinguished among peoples of many cultures as being adept in kinaesthetic behaviours. This kinesis and social cohesion are best expressed creatively in singing, drumming and dancing (Hornbostel 1928). On the other hand, the common features of pentecostalism include the exhibition of energetic and robust movements often associated with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to inspire man to act in various dynamic ways. This study is not discussing the *raison d'être* of Africa's social values nor the theology of the Parachute but rather focuses on the methods employed and operations involved in combining kinaesthetic and charismatic behaviours to create dynamic musical events in the churches under study. It is exploring the synergy of two cultural phenomena-kinesics (African-oriented) and charisma (Christian oriented) in transforming Akwa Ibom-borne Christian songs from its traditional contextual milieu to a Pentecostal form of worship. These two factors of body movement and spiritual dynamism seem to meet the needs and aspirations of old and young people alike, as well as, the faithful and music experts in the social milieu. This synergy seems to cause sudden and hearty excitement in the church music scene beyond what was handed down by the early missionaries who came in the mid-19th century and thereafter.

The three hypothetical questions that drive this study are:

When did this trend commence?

What is responsible for this shift of emphasis?

How is this practice sustained?

From the foregoing introduction, it can be observed that some of these questions are addressed in passing. An in-depth survey of the issues raised covers three broad perspectives, the past, the transition, and current history.

A. The Past

The main church setting before the advent of Pentecostalism in Nigeria which this study draws inferences are:

- i. Orthodox Catholic and Protestant forms of worship which derived their origin from Europe. The advent of these churches in Nigeria dates back to the mid-19th century.
- ii. African Independent Church with its form of worship, which derives its content within the continent. As the name implies, the proponents and practitioners of this form of worship cherish African elements in their Christian practices, as aspects of inculturation.
- iii. Traditional form of worship as practised by adherers to African Traditional Religion (ATR) stands on its own, with a hoar antiquity and seems to resist external influence either from Christianity or western education.

There seemed to exist a period of religious ambivalence between the three identified groupings listed above. No serious interactions were prevalent in those days. The only major interaction between members of diverse groups was during funeral services and allied occasions at the village level. As such, religious practices and trends were mainly custodied by members of the same group. There was no cross-fertilization of ideas. This was somewhat strange to the African culture. Chinua Achebe comments succinctly on that thus: these three forms of church setting persisted for some time before the Pentecostal form of worship emerged in the 1970s.

B. The Transition

Historically, Pentecostalism or Christian Revivalist Movement dates back to the dawn of the 20th century in the United States of America. The features of this movement include a reaction against the old and rigid forms of worship displayed by the so-called orthodox churches. It also reflects the expression of joy in worship and other ecclesiastical activities. This joyful exuberance is considered reminiscent of the Apostolic charism which started from the Day of Pentecost. It is believed to be the handiwork of the Holy Spirit under whose inspirational guide, the early believers were able to carry out unimaginable exploits. Besides, Africa, including Nigeria and Akwa Ibom people in particular are adepts at social cohesion and any division caused by a foreign body among them might have to some extent, centrifugal departure from the people's pathos. Consequently, the arrival of pentecostalism seemed to have acted as a centripetal force to bring them back into the fold of the bond of unity in Africa.

C. The Current History

There is a piece of background information on how pentecostalism emerged in Nigeria. Notably:

Nigerian Pentecostalism emerged in the 1970s as university-educated, charismatic youth began creating their own spaces for worship. Its roots are in the African Initiated Churches...and especially in American and British Evangelical and Pentecostal of the 1960s, which Nigerians encountered through international studies, Pentecostal outreach, and American televangelism and other Christian media. (Religion and Public Life at Harvard Divinity School).

As indicated above, Pentecostalism in Nigeria is an interaction of elements of African worship with an emphasis on its place among transcontinental Pentecostal webs.

From the foregone, it can be said that credit should be given to the Independent Churches which maintained some form of centripetal force to pull others to themselves before the advent of Pentecostalism in Nigerian. This was achieved through the homogenization of African content including musical elements in their worship.

The acculturation and inculturation of African elements into the pentecostal movement across the zone was challenging, expressing itself in many forms and occurring at different intervals during the 20th century. For example, it took some denominations of the Protestant churches in Akwa Ibom State, a period of two to three decades to adapt to some modern pentecostal trends in the mainstream of their worship. The attempt to include these local contents were readily accepted by some Christian denominations within the area under study.

Reasons for this shift of emphasis

The shift of emphasis from orthodoxy to Pentecostalism as evidenced in robustness and dynamism in worship, reflecting the African lifestyle is embedded in the people's socio-musical commitments. Lomax and Bohlman (1988) has painted a vivid picture of the musicality of Africans among some other world cultures thus: Those areas that seem "most musical" in popular estimation - Central Europe, Africa and Polynesia - are also renowned for their highly coordinated group singing and dancing. In other words, Africans, Polynesians and Central Europeans are seen as having an extraordinary talent for music, precisely because they are adepts at cohesive kinesthetic behaviors (p.56).

The Africans are adepts in cohesive kinaesthetic behaviours reflecting their complex rhythmic patterns and rigorous dance movements. Thus, the Africans take musical motifs and models selected from any other culture

or theirs, including hymn tunes and gospel songs, and improvise upon them in their usual ways to achieve new forms.

Smith (1974), reports on the contributions of independent churches towards the adaptation of local contents into church worship vividly thus:

The African given his traditional background has a tremendous capacity to employ drama, ritual and symbolism (and music) in ways that are creative and profoundly meaningful. It is to the credit of the independent churches that they have allowed such creative freedom to develop contextually relevant forms of worship (264).

Smith added the dimension of dramatic enactment and other elements to enrich the presentational form of the music. It should be noted that although some of the foreign Christian groupings outlined above may not acknowledge the benefits derived from African instrumental resources and other musical / extra-musical paraphernalia therein, yet, these essential commodities have made meaningful contributions towards the success of creative freedom. For example, traditional instruments are borrowed from African socio-religious / musical groups and are de-mystified, and, thereby, adapted into the church music milieu. Their rhythmic motifs are surreptitiously borrowed. Their song texts are even truncated and recomposed by the praise team to meet their aesthetic and semantic needs. One of such song texts widely used in praise nowadays in church denominations in Akwa Ibom State reads:

Vernacular

Abasi enye mi ayaya oboho
Kop nanga anye ase anam k'idem!

English translation

This our God is so beautiful
Oh, how I feel Him within me!

Kop Nanga Anye Ase Anam K'idem!

J = 120

A - ba - si an - ye mi a - ya - ya bo - ho kop nang - a 'se nang - a k' - idem.

Kop nanga anye ase anam k'idem! is a song text derived from *ekpo* music. It is a stylish dance motif reserved for the maiden dancer in *ekpo* music. The emotional upliftment suggested by this song text has endeared it to the praise singers who adapt it for use in churches.

It should be pointed out that the above situation is also found within Catholic worshipers, despite the inherent orthodoxy in their liturgy. The Qua Iboe Church also follows this trend by adapting indigenous African musical styles into its worship services. Furthermore, the two scenarios as found within the Catholic and Qua Ibo churches are also replicated by other churches. These churches include the Methodist Church of Nigeria, the Anglican Communion, and The Apostolic Church. Such adaptations include the playing of, and dancing to band music in the Church, and the use of indigenous musical instruments to accompany singing. This allows for the free flow of worship styles from one denomination to the other giving room to the cross-fertilisation of musical practices.

This is a clear indication of dialogue between faith and culture. In the same vein, modern pentecostal churches with their president-founders and charismatic lifestyles favour the adaptation of musical content emerging from America and the New World as well African content into their worship services. The methods of achieving these adaptations are discussed later in the next section.

Towards Sustainability of Adaptation of The Performance Practice

The gospel musicians are aware that these musical products must be sacred in outlook but they employ some of the indigenous methods in the development of known pieces to meet the taste and appreciation of all worshipers. By so doing, they contribute meaningfully to recreating new art forms from existing models. The following methods are identified as the means of sustaining the dynamic art forms in modern pentecostal church settings:

- (a) Performance composition;
- (b) Exoticism;
- (c) Applique;
- (d) Onomatopoeic representation;
- (e) Presentational forms;
- (f) Instrumentation;
- (g) Emergence of written Art Music of African origin; and
- (h) Extensive rehearsal.

Performance Composition

Nzewi (2007) has written extensively on indigenous techniques for the development of a piece, the foremost of these is performance composition. This phenomenon involves an open-ended composition whereby the performer is allowed some freedom to elaborate on existing musical motifs to recreate a new piece. The innovative styles involved in this process include repetition, sequential treatment of thematic materials, recreation of the song texts, improvisation, and extemporization. For example, the recreation of Asu Ekiye's Niger Delta song "Hosanna" takes various forms during performances at different Church settings. An example was cited earlier of how an *ekpo* musical item "**kop nanga ase ananga k'idem**" (**oh how I feel within me**) is refined and incorporated into the repertory of church choruses.

Exoticism

This is a method whereby the performers borrow themes and styles from foreign music scenes and use the same in their creative works. Nigeria, as pointed out earlier, is a besieged culture and the people have the freedom to borrow materials from other world cultures into their own to enrich the musical events during worship. It seems that exotic tendencies are a global phenomenon. Not only in music, but also in other areas of human endeavour. It tends to serve as a means of social cohesion the world over. Even within the Nigerian culture, there exists the practice of borrowing musical styles from other subgroups to make worship a wholesome experience. For example, a musical item, 'I got my mind made up' by Donnie McClurkin with its jazzy rhythmic accompaniment is always a delight of many people. Often, musical items from Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Efik, Ibibio, Annang and other sub-cultures are applied in a given worship session.

Applique

This is a term borrowed from plastic arts to denote the practice of juxtaposing new materials on an existing formal structure. For instance, singers do often invent new song texts on existing tunes. The familiar tune 'Auld Lang Syne' is often used with new song texts in the vernacular. The song leader is at liberty to extend or shorten the formal structure ad lib. After some elaborations, he may return back to the framework. Recently a praise singer was observed adding a fresh text to an already familiar tune "St Petersburg" thus: "*Ami nya nek eka eka unek*" meaning, "I will dance the mother of all dances", the text itself was very exciting.

Onomatopoeic representation

In this method, the performer may choose to imitate the sound of a certain musical instrument by assigning text to it and vice versa. Sometimes bird sounds are mimicked and translated as melodies on melorhythmic instruments. Because the people are adept at using words to paint pictures as Bebey puts it – "words lie at the centre of aesthetics", they do the characterization of the sound of certain animals and use them as thematic motifs in songs. Saxophones are also used to mimic the sounds of animals and humans and equally simulate the sounds of musical instruments in the songs.

Presentational Forms

Here performers have the liberty to mimic the musical nuances through dancing, dramatization and costuming. Sometimes even the lighting on stage can be manipulated to heighten the effect of the performance. When this paraphernalia and traits are correctly mixed, the musical taste will have the quality of '**Okop Umehe**' meaning, 'you hear the music and long for an encore'. (Darwin in Blacking 1983). This reflects the opinion of David Smith (1986) already cited above. This method helps to prolong a worship session as all worshipers and choristers alike have the freedom to contribute their quota. Sometimes, different Nigerian ethnic dance steps are often displayed with modern styles like "Etighi", "Keke" and "Azonto" are introduced. The young people who may not have the license to attend night clubs because of the latter's effect on Christianity will dance understandingly in Church to fill the gap they missed in town. The young and old alike in modern Church settings feel the urge to make meaningful contributions to praise worship and offertory sections during the service. This freedom of expression is considered to be the primary function of music as postulated by Alan Lomax (1960) thus, the first function of music, especially...folk music is to produce a feeling of security for the listener by voicing the particular quality of land and the life of its people (15). A one-time Nigerian Head of state in Nigeria who witnessed an exuberant display of musical rendition during a worship session in Akwa Ibom State commented on the impact of the ministration on worshipers.

Instrumentation

The combination of musical instruments by the Church bandstand is one factor which adds much colour to musical performances. The use of hourglass and konka drums to accompany praise worship enhances the beauty of cultural diversity in Akwa Ibom State. When the hourglass drum is played with a saxophone, the whole Church will be thrown into ecstasy. Credit should be given to the technological development of electronic

keyboards and synthesizers which have the capability of creating complex rhythmic structures to accompany African and foreign songs. These seemingly foreign rhythmic motifs when juxtaposed with indigenous African drumming produce a synchronic movement which forces an even and arrhythmic person to start nodding in approval. This serves as a boost to Pentecostalism which favours movements and robustness.

Extensive Rehearsals

The musicians have long periods of group rehearsals to achieve mastery without the use of written texts or scores. This is typical of cultures that imbibe oral tradition as a means of presenting their capabilities and history. This practice of extensive rehearsals is an ingrained habit inherent in the culture of the Akwa Ibom State people. Messenger (1957) has reported a habit of a long period of rehearsals *ekpo* cultural troupe in Annang land thus: The music so performed is the people's product or as Bebey (1975) puts it the 'people's art. Although individual creation is encouraged, the performer is not necessarily an ambassador of the composer but also a major contributor to the work of art. The bulk of musicians comprises mostly the youths who bring in their youthful exuberances to bear. Sometimes they obtain recordings of musical production across the globe and rehearse them for performances without musical scores. However adult choir wings, or as some call them 'classical choirs' still exist to serve as control groups. The latter performs music according to written scores without so-called freedom of expression as the youths seldom put it.

Implications of the New Forms

This study exposed the strength of Akwa Ibom State worshippers who excel more in the area of music-making during worship. Furthermore, it can be seen that such musical strength is more profound in the area of indigenous choruses and in Pentecostal songs that come from the American axis whose roots can still be traced back to the blacks (quote).

II. Observations

- i. Preliminary observations reveal that when it comes to the church music scene in an African orientation, there is a suspension of the dichotomy in musical appreciation between the old and young. It seems that the days of the youths accusing the elders of merely holding tenaciously to traditional liturgies are over. More so the days of old looking at the youths and their musical exuberance with suspicion and contempt are over. The allusion by Kubik (1980) that 'mid-20th century styles (in African music) are quickly dismissed as 'out-of-fashion' or 'colonial' by young people (207) may not apply in this context.
- ii. In the mid-20th century, for example, the standardised usage of four hymns with their orthodox tunes in worship sessions of some protestant churches seemed to fade away. The a capella rendition mingled with recitative singing of Gregorian chants sometimes without proper syllabifications in Catholic churches with Nigerian backgrounds was threatened as well. It can be presumed that the stage was set in the Pentecostal and even in Catholic churches within and outside Akwa Ibom State for the infusion of a where the old and young meet together to perform the fusion of a new art form that will carry the people who belong to the classical traditions of orthodox churches and along with those from African oriented and Pentecostal church movements.
- iii. Most church setups tend to have two or more choir groups to minister from time to time, the classical choir that performs from fixed compositions and the contemporary choir that performs their recreations of existing compositions.
- iv. Choir practices and dress rehearsals are normative to these choir groups. There is a full collaboration between choristers, instrumentalists and the congregation during worship and praise sessions. This is a departure from the performance practice within the church circle some three decades ago when most of the musical items were based on form-fixed compositions (Nzewi, 2007) which imposed strict control over liturgical services. This corroboration between musicians, church dignitaries and members of the congregation is reminiscent of St Augustine's confession that "singing is praying twice" (Blaklock, 1983). Besides, there is a spontaneous embracing of a belief system among the musicians and other worshippers in the church.
- v. There is equally an emergence of a dynamic performance practice which is derived from and developed by the vibrant lifestyle of the people. This further shapes the culture and habits of Akwa Ibom State people in other fields of human endeavour including securing and attraction of membership.
- vi. It is equally observed that good music in church worship attracts more membership than if otherwise was the case. This is an allusion to what happened during the 18th and 19th centuries revival in Christian churches in Europe and America. These revivals were anchored by pentecostalism.

III. Conclusion

The Akwa Ibom State people, indeed Nigerians and Africans make use of their bodies, intellects and the whole of their beings in music making. They love co-ordinated group singing reflecting the value of social cohesion. Their musical events are energetic and exhilarating. Their musical performance can be said to fulfil

the intrinsic demand of worshippers that should and must worship God in Spirit and in Truth. This musical dynamism and the suspension of social dichotomy to worship God together in love are the quintessence of revival as it happened in the churches in Europe and America two centuries ago. Akwa Ibom State's and indeed Nigeria's Africa's yearning for revival may likely reach its apogee in the 21st century.

IV. Recommendations

This study should be interesting to other researchers who may carry out other investigative works to lend support to the emergence of national revitalization and prominence in Africa.

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