

Abstract

Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) church is one of the African Instituted Churches (AIC) that has a peculiar way of worship other than the Western Instituted and Pentecostal Churches. There have been scholastic studies and reviews on C&S liturgical music, however, Aya-fifa as one of the liturgical music of the church has received little or no attention. This study therefore examined the structural forms, uses and significance of Aya-fifa as part of C&S liturgical music. The study was anchored on Robertson's theory of Sacredity. An ethnographic research design was conducted, data were collected with: non participant observation, purposive sampling technique to select a key informant, and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) was conducted with 8 prophets and spiritual heads in Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Church (CSMC) Ibadan district. Aya-fifa in C&S church can be liken to cantillation in the sense that, it is the melodic singing of 'speaking in tongue', it is a vocal music inspired by God, it usually have short melodies and is often on a pentatonic scale. It is principally used to commune with God and fellow Aaronites that are inspired to understand it. People that perform Aya are not necessarily musically inclined but they do this spontaneously according to divine inspiration.

Keywords: Aya-fifa, liturgical music, C&S church

Introduction and Background of the Study

The interest to conduct this research was kindled when the researcher was passing by a sound and recording studio and a C&S revival song (*Orin isoji*) was being played, the musician (Adebawale Sunday fondly called Oba Sioni) used Aya judiciously in that track and this captured the interest of the researcher in wanting to know more about this rare musical genre in the C&S church.

The early African Instituted Churches in south-western Nigeria include Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S), Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Celestial Church of Christ (CCC), and Church of the Lord Aladura (CLA). These churches possess unique qualities that distinguishes one from another which could be easily seen from the way of their modes of worship, dressing (uniform), history and experiences of the founder, core mission of the ministry vis-a-vis various beliefs (Oje, 2016:189).

The Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) church as one of the African Instituted (indigenous) Churches (AIC), has a peculiar way of worship other than the Western Instituted and Pentecostal Churches in Africa. The C&S church is more unique and known for the use of white garment (prayer gown), removal of footwear before entering the church, radical prayer (praying with vigour and all seriousness), dancing, clapping, and infusion of local musical instruments, deliverance and physical demonstration of the gifts of Holy Spirit.

One prominent of all the physical demonstration of the gifts of Holy Spirit in C&S church is the strong use of Aya (chanting of speaking in tongue melodiously) in their mode of worship. Aya-fifa is evident in almost all the church services but highly prominent in revival session (*Isoji*), deliverance and Night vigil where there will also be session(s) for singing revival songs that will be accompanied with clapping of hands. The performance of Aya sometimes begins with chanting the ancestral praise of some prominent icons (*Ijuba*) that have contributed immensely to the growth of the church like; Jesus Christ, St. Moses Orimolade Tunolase (the founding father of all C&S churches worldwide) the church leader, prophets or prophetess and so on.

Aya-fifa has some similarities with cantillation which has long been part of liturgical worship of the Jews, Christians and Islamic recitation of the scriptural texts and call to prayer. Nketia (1974:12) expresses cantillation as "a vocal technique identified with Islamic religion which has to do with voice projection and its accompanying mannerism of cupping the ear with the palm of the hand, or a slight degree of ornamentation". It is also related to speaking in tongue. As a matter of fact, Aya-fifa is a fragment of speaking in tongue; nevertheless, it has sharp contrast from cantillation and speaking in tongue. These were examined in the body of the study.

There have been different studies on C&S churches worldwide; but, Aya-fifa as one of the liturgical music of the church has received little or no attention in terms of research and publications, a gap in knowledge the study is set to fill.

Operational Definition and clarification of Terms

Aya-fifa: in the context of this research, is peculiar to C&S churches. It is quite different from the Islamic Aya that literally means a verse or chapter in the Holy Quran that can be learnt from Arabic scholars in form of recitation or Islamic cantillation during a call to prayer time. Although, Aya-fifa is similar to cantillation (Jews, Christian and Islamic) because of its melodic flows, musical sequences and pitches. Nevertheless, it is not a written word like the Psalms or other Bible passages or the Holy Quran that can be recited. Aya-fifa is an extemporised melodic singing or chanting of 'Speaking in Tongue'. It is a spontaneous action, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Aya-fifa is similar to speaking in tongue in the sense that, both are propelled by the Holy Spirit, but it is slightly different from the usual speaking in tongue. While speaking in tongue occur in speech, Aya-fifa is performed melodiously and sometime, rhythmically.

CSMC: this is the abbreviation of Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Church. A faction of C&S churches.

Liturgical music: these are church music that is used in religious rite of worship. According to Robertson in Adedeji (2014), liturgical music means 'the kind of music which spiritually, aesthetically, and practically consorts most closely with the sacred words of the Christian liturgies'.

Aaronite band/group: is a spiritual band in C&S church where only prophets, prophetess, dreamers, visioner/seer, dream interpreters, people who perform Aya and who also go in trance are members. A member of this group or band is called an Aaronite.

Method of Data Collection

The ethno musicological study engages a multi-dimensional approach which combine both field and desk work that form the core responsibility of an ethnomusicologist as suggested by Bruno Nettl (1964:62). An ethnographic with qualitative research design was conducted, data were collected with: non participant observation, purposive sampling technique to select a key informant, and FGDs was conducted with 8 elderly prophets (experienced) from the CSMC Ibadan district council of prophets and prophetess. Most of these prophets are spiritual heads or leaders in their churches. Data were recorded on tapes and later translated to literature after careful listening for analysis.

Brief History of the Origin of Cherubim and Seraphim Church

Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) church is an African Instituted or Indigenous Church (AIC), that was founded in Nigeria by Moses Orimolade Tunolase, a native of Ikare Akoko, Ondo state, in 1925. He was born in the year 1897 into the royal family of Ayibiriin Ondo State of Nigeria; his father was a warrior and Ifa priest while his mother a trader. A lot of mysterious stories that revolve round his birth and even before his mother gave birth to him were documented. His mother Odijoroto narrated some of the mysterious happenings to her husband who in turn summon an Ifa Priest to unravel the mystery.

...It was then predicted that the child of conception would be an important saint. They prophesied the child was being sent by the Almighty God to preach the gospel of his Son, Jesus Christ. The young parents could not comprehend this especially as the Christian Gospel had not yet been preached in this region of the world. It was further "predicted" by the village oracle that this expected child would be a male child pre-ordained of God as his special apostle to the pagans of Yoruba land. He was, therefore, to be treated as a Nazarene. The birth of Orimolade created mixed feelings for his parents; they were happy for their newest edition but were filled with embarrassment and apprehension in view of the circumstances surrounding his birth and the incidents which occurred on the day he was born. It is recorded that the new child "stood up in its birth blood" desiring "to walk out three times." However, the midwife that assisted during Moses' birth "pressed down the baby with force." It is generally believed that, because of her action, Orimolade could neither stand nor walk until he was well over five years of age. (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>)

Orimolade began his ministry from Anglican Church where he was taken to by his mother for spiritual healing since the *Ifa* Oracle said he is going to be a Nazarene. He started reading the King James Yoruba version of the bible and also preaches the gospel without any formal education or anybody putting him through the process of reading and writing. It was recorded that he started his

Evangelistic mission at age 12 after he could manage to walk with his legs and the divine revelation he had in his dream about being given a scepter and a crown which was understood as a confirmation of his ministry that can be likened to Jesus' experience "...and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22 NIV). His earliest evangelistic movement outside his home town was when he travelled to Irun in 1916 which is six miles away from Ikare and he openly confronted witches and wizards of that village and also pulled down Osijora one of the images that was worshipped in Irun. He preached the gospel to the villagers and a number of them got converted to Christendom. He travelled far and wide within the country preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and converting souls. Part of the places he travelled to include; Ogbagi, Akungba, Oka, Kiran, Ibilo, Merri, Ipele, Owo Benin City, Kabba, Zaria, and Lagos where he later died.

It was recorded that the church started as a prayer band or society (Egbe Aladura) that rely on the power of prayer and physical manifestations of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was experienced by the disciples or Apostles of Jesus Christ at the upper chamber (Act 2). The band became so popular as a result of organising special prayers for the sick and they receive healing.

Origin of Aya-fifa in C&S Churches

It should be noted that there are diverse version of records toward the origin and personality of the first person to have manifested this rare gift of the Holy Spirit, however, what remain sacrosanct of all the stories about Aya-fifa in C&S church was the first person noted to have performed Aya in the fold which is Miss. Abiodun Christiana Akinsowon. Histories have it that, she was a young lady, a member of one of the Western Missionary Churches in Lagos state. While some records addressed her as a young school teacher, some called her young fashion designer. Sp.A. Pro. (Special Apostle Prophet) J.A Oje (2014) asserts that, the lady was at work when she went in trance and began to speak in an unknown tongue. Prior to this incident, history has it that there has not been a physical demonstration of the Holy Spirit as regards speaking in tongue, performing Aya or going in trance in any of the Western Instituted Churches in Africa. The missionaries do not agree or believe in the gift of speaking in tongue. It was therefore strange to see her demonstrating this. So, many people believed she was possessed by evil spirit or she was mentally disordered because of the unknown words she chanted.

She was brought to Moses Orimolade Tunolase for deliverance, because, many people were aware of his deliverance, healing and prayer ministry. While Orimolade was praying, he discovered that the young lady on the contrary was not possessed by any evil spirit but was only manifesting one of the rare gifts of the Holy Spirit (to go in trance and perform Aya). Orimolade interpreted everything the young lady said and prayed for her to come to normalcy (to be released from the physical demonstration of the Holy Spirit). After this incident, Miss. Abiodun Akinsowon became a staunch disciple of Moses Orimolade Tunolase and she worked with him to grow his ministry. According to history, she was the only disciple Orimolade gave a title of honour 'Captain' which literarily translated to mean the head of all the women in the prayer band (Egbe Aladura) aside from the twelve disciples (baba nla mejila) who followed him about.

Theoretical Framework

This study relies on Robertson's theory of Sacredity which states that, if there is secular music that can be performed anywhere for entertainment, recreation, and for the fun of it, there should also be a music that should be called sacred which should be treated with decency and orderliness. Sacredity, therefore, deals with music that is designated exclusively for the worship of deity or supernatural being or force. Robertson gave four criteria that qualify any music to be called sacred which also distinguishes it from secular music. He asserted:

There was, indeed a marked antithesis between the secular music of the time (time of the early church fathers) and the kind of music felt to be suitable for Christian worship: restraint, tranquility, nobility and solemnity were not qualities to be found in theatrical entertainments or at private parties, nor could such music be said to express states of the soul! (Cited in Adedeji 2014)

This assertion implies that, if music is meant for God, the Supreme Being, such music should be made sacred which means not everybody can participates in it and it cannot be done as wished but orderly. Such music should be performed without any disturbance of whatsoever with all seriousness; it should be cautiously performed with reverence.

This study is anchored on the foregoing premise because, nothing is sacred unless it is considered and defined sacred by the people. Aya-fifa is considered and treated sacred in C&S church. Although, it can as well be performed outside the fore-walls of the church because it is an inspiration and gift from the Holy Spirit, but, wherever it is being performed, it is considered sacred. Not everybody is gifted and inspired to perform this rare genre of music either in the church or outside.

Findings and Discussion

Sp.M.I Pro. (Special Mother in Israel Prophetess) Balogun (2014), asserts that, Aya-fifa in C&S is not done for the fun of it because, it has its meaning which God and his people understand and it is not the language of the 'birds'. One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that is rare in today's churches is the interpretation of speaking in tongue. Many believers are gifted with speaking in tongue but, very few people can interpret what is said in the spirit. Every Aya inspired by the Holy Spirit has meaning and are understood as well interpreted by the inspired people around. Sp.A. Pro. Oje (2014) corroborated this by saying, "Aya is a heavenly language chanted in song but is used for communication between the inspired and God. Sometimes, two or more inspired persons can use it to communicate amidst themselves without others deciphering what they are saying".

True Aya from God cannot be learnt or purchased with any means because; it is a free gift from God. Although, some people perform this art through imitation after listening to various Aya either from the ones performed live in the church through the inspired or listening to recorded *Orin isoji* (revival song) where Aya is performed. However, Aya that is performed as a result of imitation or learning does not have any meaning and cannot be used for communication either with God or the inspired. Senior Apostle Prophet Otitodun likened Aya that is inspired by God as the light while, the imitated one as darkness. He (Otitodun) asserted that, the imitated Aya is a sin against the Holy Spirit which will never be forgiven eternally as seen in Mark 3:29.

"But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin."

Every performer of Aya in C&S church is a member of the Aaronite band or group, headed by the church spiritual head which could be male or female but, a prophet. It was revealed in course of the study that not every member of the Aaronite can perform Aya, not even all the prophets but the privileged in the band. There are instances where a non-member of the Aaronite or even a new convert as the case may be, were inspired to perform Aya but, this does not make the performer an automatic member of the band. The Aaronite has rules and regulations guiding their conducts which bind every member.

People that perform Aya are not necessarily musically inclined but they do this spontaneously according to divine inspiration.

Structural Analysis of Aya-fifa

Style of Performance

Machilis defines style as the distinctive or characteristic manner of presentation, construction, or execution in any art. He (Machilis) expressed further that, for the musician, the word embraces all the factors that determine the language in which a musical work is couched which depend on the procedures and devices of melody, harmony, rhythm, colour, form, and texture that make up its characteristic manner of presentation (in Oje 2016:34).

Aya-fifa, being a rare genre of vocal music, is peculiar to C&S church and it is considered a solo performance. The person inspired to perform this cannot be harmonised by someone else because, it is an inspiration from the Holy Spirit which does not follow a particular order and the art cannot be rehearsed before it is done. The performance can be done on free rhythm or to a specific rhythm where the performer(s) sing to. Many people can perform Aya, but one person at a time. Aya is mostly used in *Ijuba* (chanting the praise of some prominent icons in the church) and *Orin isoji* (revival song).

When it is used in *Ijuba*, it is performed on a free rhythm and code-mixed with speech. For instance, the performer calls the name of the person he or she is praising, chanted his or her praise and then accompany it with Aya. *Ijuba* is sacrosanct in the tradition of C&S church because it is believed that honour should be given to whom is due and as a matter of fact, it is scriptural. So, the performer of Aya starts the *Ijuba* with Jesus Christ (the overall head of every church of God), Saint Moses Orimolade (the founder of all C&S churches worldwide), and other prominent people that have contributed and still contributing to the growth of the church in one way or other which include; the

church leader, the spiritual head of the church, prophets, and Aaronite band members as the case maybe.

But of course, when Aya is used in *Orin isoji*, the person performing it may be inspired to start the Aya as a prelude which may also be on free rhythm or a relatively slow rhythm. As the revival song continues, the performer uses Aya as interludes to sustain the song's tempo and as well act as song linkers. This later use (as song linkers) of Aya in *Orin isoji* often occur when the performer has sang like two or more revival songs repeatedly, he or she may use Aya as a link to other revival songs and this continues to the end of the revival song.

Also, as part of the performance style of Aya-fifa, the performer during *Orin isoji* at times introduces a call and response song where the performer becomes the cantor and the audience provide the response. An example of this happens in the field and was recorded by the researcher. The song the performer sang was in responsorial as shown below:

Call: T'Oluwa nile	Response: aiye at'ekunre /2ce
Call: aiye at'awon to tedo o	Resp: aiye at'ekunre
Call: ofidi re kale sori omi	Resp: aiye at'ekunre etc

As the song goes on, the performer introduces Aya as call while the audience still maintain their response 'aiye at'ekunre' as long as the performer continues to provide the call.

Forms in Aya-fifa.

Forms in this context refers to those germane and fundamental characteristic elements or devices that characterise Aya-fifa as music. Omosilade (2012:93) defines form as the overall appearance of a musical piece. Also, Vidal (2012:96) identifies four vocal forms of Yoruba music which are: call and response antiphonal, through-composed, strophic and strophic responsorial. Of all the four vocal music forms identified by Vidal, strophic and through-composed are commonly used forms in Aya-fifa.

Strophic:

This is a form where a song is arranged to a specific melody which reflects on all the stanzas of the music. Loko & Loko (2012:280) opined that, strophic is a form where the melody or tune of a song or hymn is employed in all the stanzas of a particular music. Akpabot (1998:32) identifies five characteristics of strophic form. According to him, strophic melodies are usually: short, repetitive, non-modulatory, tending to move downwards after a start; and hovering around a tonal centre.

The transcribed Aya in figs 1&2 are samples from the Aya collected in the field. We decided to score just two because virtually all the Ayas are on strophic which means they have the same melody though, there are little variations in some stanzas.

Through-composed:

This form of music is when a music piece is having verses with different melody. This form occurs in Aya-fifa when there are two or more gifted performers. Example of this usually occur during *Orin isoji* (revival song) and *Ijuba* (chanting the praise of some prominent icons of the church). Each performer according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is free to perform to a melody while the other to another melody and so on still on that same rhythm or free rhythm as the case may be.

Melodic scale

Akpabot (1998:27) establishes six African music scales these include: ditonic, tritonic, tetratonic, pentatonic, hexatonic, and heptatonic. All Aya does not have a specific melodic scale because its not a music composed and arranged by the performer but as prompted by the Holy Spirit. So, it can be made up of any of the identified six melodic scale.

AYA1



Fig. 1. Staff notation showing a sample 1 of aya-fifa on a pentatonic scale.

AYA2



Fig. 2. Staff notation showing a sample 2 of aya-fifa on a pentatonic scale.

Figures 1&2 are both having four bars with an anhemitonic pentatonic scale that comprises of; doh, reh, mi, soh, lah.

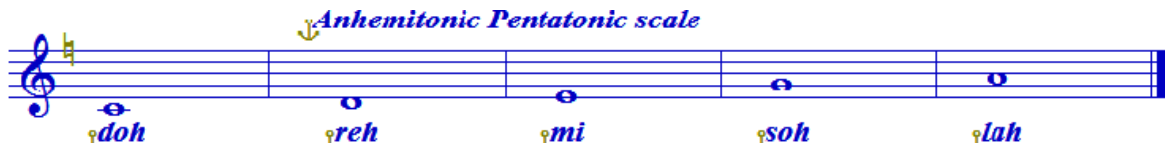


Fig. 3. Staff notation showing an anhemitonic pentatonic scale

The Aya was performed as prelude and interlude on a free beat though, it was represented in bars. This does not connote that Aya cannot be accompanied with musical instruments. In some of the recorded Aya, while singing revival song, Aya was accompanied with a keyboard, *Agogo* (bell), *Sekere* (rattle) and *Agbamole* (membranophonic instrument).

Melodic Rhythm

Oje (2016:50) submits that, melodic rhythm describes the value of notes used in the melody where by the notes that characterised a melody is examined to know whether they are short or long in duration. The notes that characterised Aya-fifa are usually short in durational value; it comprises of crotchets, quavers, and semi-quavers as examined in figs. 1&2 provided above.

Summary and Conclusion

It has been established in this study how Aya-fifa is part and parcel of C&S liturgical music which is treated with reverence as a unique gift given to the church that has distinguished it from other African indigenous or foreign churches in Africa or outside the continent. The origin of Aya in C&S church, differences and similarities in speaking in tongue, Islamic Aya and other religious cantillations were established in the study. Features that qualify Aya fifa as musical sound were considered in relation to forms, style of performance, melodic scale, rhythm and other elements from the samples of the transcribed Aya fifa.

In spite of all that has been said, this maiden research is open for further research and development because we have some constraints, one of which is the transcription of some of the recorded Aya collected from field into staff notation. The staff notation that is considered the most widely accepted musical notation cannot capture some musical flows of some Aya as a result of their tonal inflection when chanted. Also, some Aya were performed on free rhythms which make it quite stressful to arrange them on a specific music rhythm or scale as it were. These and others are challenges for music scholars to explore so as to bridge the existing gap in knowledge and to contribute more to scholarship.

References

- Akpabot S.E. *Form, Function and Style in African Music*. Lagos: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Ltd. 1998
- Bruno N. *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology*. USA: Schirmer Books, 1964
- Adedeji F. "Theories in Christian Sacred Musicology: An African Perspective". In, *African Musicology: Past, Present and Future*, A Festschrift for Mosunmola Ayinke Omibiyi-Obidike. Ed, Aluede C, K Samuel and F Adedeji. Ile-ife, Timade Ventures. 2014
- Loko O and O Loko. "Liturgical Forms of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church Movement (Ayo Ni O), an African Indigenous Church." in *Journal of the Association of Nigerian Musicologists* Ed, Idolor G.E, F Adedeji, J.N. Mokuwunyei, F Abiodun, D Agu, L Ekwueme and C.E Mbanugo Vol.6, 2012: 273-285
- Nketia J.H.K. *The Music of Africa*. London: Victor Gollancz LTD, 1974

- Oje, T.E. Stylistic Forms in the Music of Beautiful Nubia. An M.A Project, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. 2016.
- _____. "Tradition and Modernity in the Music of African Indigenous Churches: A Case Study of C&S Church in South Western Nigeria" in, *The Stage and The Screen*. Ed, Bakare O.R, G.R Adeoti, M. Olaniyan. UK, Alpha Crownes Publishers. 2016:187-203.
- Omosilade T. "The Stylistic Forms of the Music of I.K Dairo; a Nigerian Juju Musician" in *Journal of the Association of Nigerian Musicologists*. Ed, Idolor G.E, F Adedeji, J.N. Mokwunyei, F Abiodun, D Agu, L Ekwueme and C.E Mbanugo Vol.6, 2012:88-97 .
- Vidal A. O. *Essays on Yoruba Musicology*. Ed, Adedeji 'F. Ile-Ife: IMEF African Music Publishers. 2012.

<http://www.fountainofpeace.org/about-us/cherubim-and-seraphim-history/>

http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_Sacred_Order_of_Cherubim_and_Seraphim/

Interview

In-depth interview with Sp.A. Jacob Ayodele Oje, Church Leader of CSMC No 18 (Ile Ayo) prophet and also the spiritual head of the Aaronite band CSMC 18, Ilorin on 11/11/2014.

FGDs with members of the Council of Prophets and Prophetess, Ibadan District at the Ibadan District Headquarter Oke-Ado, College Crescent. Members include: M.S.A Pro. Sunday Omolaja (Leader-In-Charge C&S Lion of Judah Ibadan district), Sp.A Pro. Gabriel Ajayi (Leader-In-Charge C&S Kolajore), Sp.A Pro. Emmanuel Ojo Aliu (The District Supervising Prophet Ibadan District), S.A Pro Adebayo Otitodun (Prophet-In-Charge Ibadan District HQ), M.S.A Pro. (Dr) Ola Adegbite (The Secretary for Council of Prophets Ibadan District), Sp.M.I. Pro K.O. Okunoye (from C&S No2 Ibadan District) and Sp.M.I. Pro. E.M. Balogun (Spiritual Mother of CSMC Divine Mercy Km 145 Ibadan District). On 18/11/2014