

Decolonising the concept of solemnity in the Roman Catholic Liturgy of Igbo Land: A compositional study

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Abstract

Liturgical art music in Nigeria has been beleaguered by the confusion about what is truly African or traditional and what is foreign. This confusion is exacerbated by the Western traditional notion of the solemnity of the liturgy as opposed to the African notion of the concept. This paper investigates the theoretical constructs for authentic indigenization of liturgical music compositions in Nigeria many years after the colonialists have left and addresses issues pertaining to the unicity of style and peculiarity of form in African music. It problematizes the concept of solemnity in the liturgical music of Igbo land, arguing against the colonial concept of 'sanctity of immobility' insisting on the reflection of the African rhythmic and tonal sensibilities in the church's notion of authentic worship. The paper relies on ethnographic data for its findings, using the research composition method to arrive at its major contentions and recommendations. It also provides a unique compositional sample as a kind of pastiche for further study of indigenization in the context of solemnity in liturgical music.

Keywords: Decolonisation, Inculturation, Indigenisation, Solemnity

Introduction

A melodic or rhythmic line is said to be indigenous to the Africans when its peculiar sonic essence resonates with the people for obvious reasons. The first reason pertains to the folk-like melodic structure of the line, which may consist of call and response, call and refrain, solo and chorused refrain or mixed structural forms (Agu, 1999). The line may be modal, implying an unusual sense of tonality different from the major and minor tonality. It may be tritonic, quadratonic, pentatonic or hexatonic, consisting of a smaller number of notes than the usual heptatonic scale (Akpabot 1998).

Second, the harmonic structure may be rhythmically challenging, full of parallelisms, syncopations, overlappings and counterpoints. The harmonic line may be representative of a traditional instrumental music genre, usually polyphonic in texture and form. For example, the *hocket* technique of the *Ikorodo*¹ dance of Nsukka people of

¹ *Ikorodo* is a maiden dance music of Nsukka people of Enugu State, Nigeria that employs the use of *hocket* technique among the horns. This is a technique whereby four horns play polyphonically, each contributing its own note at strategic entry points.

Enugu State Nigeria or the xylophone ensemble of the *Ekwema*² of Eha-Alumona people of Enugu State – both of which constitute the subject for exploration in this paper. Both deploy the textual and formal polyphony typical of African traditional music. The central aim of this study, therefore, is to investigate how the concept of solemnity in African liturgy derives its resonance from such traditional music of antiquity.

Many years after the colonialists and the European missionaries left Nigeria and many years after Vatican II gave the impetus for inculturation in Christian worship, most African composers have continued to grapple with the pristine challenges of indigenisation,³ cultural identity, unicity of style and peculiarity of form. Decolonisation, in the views of Christopher Clapham (2020), "most basically entails a shift in perspective from looking at Africa through the lens defined by the institutions of colonial power...to looking instead at the indigenous origins of African societies

²*Ekwema* is a set of four xylophones playing harmoniously together. It is predominantly used in *Omabefestivals* – *Omabe* is a traditional masquerade of Nsukka people of Enugu State, Nigeria.

³ Indigenization is the process of adopting traditional styles in art, science or religion.

and the patterns of thought that these embodied" (p. 138). It entails freedom from Western musical expressions to a purely traditional one. Since contemporary composers cannot assume this level of intellectual autonomy unless a degree of consciousness is inculcated, the challenge of enculturation becomes paradigmatic. Many Nigerian youths of Igbo extraction who grew up in Western-influenced cosmopolitan areas, for instance, may never have heard any traditional music of their people. We have two challenges before us now: the challenge of inculturation and enculturation. While inculturation connotes the process of adopting the good elements of any cultural area into the Christian practice or worship of that area, enculturation denotes the process by which people acquire or become more involved in their cultural practices (Nwabeke, 1995). Therefore, the fundamental challenge faced by most contemporary composers is enculturation. According to Nzewi (1997, p. 72),

A composer of African modern music should enable a listener to appreciate the quintessential African harmonic, developmental and textural-structural idioms. Otherwise, the composition is of no consequence to a continuum of

African creative integrity. It will be a disservice, in fact, an insult, to Africans to categorize it as African modern music. It could be modern African's music.

Liturgical music composers are not left out of this challenge because whether music is composed for worship, entertainment or any other purpose, it should bear the emblem of the identity of both the composer and the intended performers. African composers (art musicians) with a liturgical bent must therefore reflect this cultural renaissance. Their compositions should carry their common identity as the music of other cultures of the world do.

Onyeji (2011) amplifies Nzewi's view that contemporary art musicians (including church musicians) need to draw from tradition in order to fashion out a kind of "creative continuum" between art music and traditional music that inspired it. Nzewi (1997) laments that many young African composers lack the insight into the need to identify and apply the creative idioms embedded in traditional music in their art music compositions. Liturgical art music in Nigeria has also suffered enormous limitations due to this confusion which many composers have about their indigenous music styles. A

form of cultural imperialism has taken place during the years of their musicianship starting from their primary and secondary school days. They learnt a lot of songs with foreign vocabulary. They learnt even their national anthem composed in Western language and style. They learnt their Church hymns and anthems full of Western air, styles, forms and genres. Their entire school music pedagogy is replete with Western genres like Gregorian chants, hymns, anthems, fugues, canons, sonatas, cantatas, concertos, symphonies, chorales and oratorios. This confusion in the area of liturgical music is exacerbated by the Western traditional notion of solemnity as synonymous with immobility.⁴ Liturgical music in Christian parlance has a Jewish background but later embraced the multicultural challenges of Hellenism. A historical review of this concept seems necessary for a more nuanced understanding.

Historical survey of the concept of solemnity in the Roman Catholic liturgy

The Christian liturgy owes its earliest musical traditions to Judaism and this influence can be noticed in early Christian liturgy in the areas of divine

worship such as the singing of psalms, hours of prayer (divine office), spiritual reading, the celebration of *pasch* and others. As Jones (1978, p. 39) puts it,

At its origin, Christianity was a Jewish religion. Jesus Christ was a Jew and his followers were Jews. Greek thought, culture and language had considerably influenced the Judaism of the first century, especially in the Old Testament and its basic languages were still Hebrew and Aramaic. The teachings of Jesus had, of course, great originality but whatever in it was tradition it owed to Judaism rather than to any other source...When therefore the question is asked against what background Christian worship arose, the only answer that can be given is Jewish worship.

Church history informs us that the early Christians continued to worship at the Jewish temples and synagogues before they were later excommunicated. After the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 A.D, it was substituted with the synagogue. It became probable that when the local church had to separate from the synagogue (due to early persecution of Christians), it modelled its worship on

⁴ Immobility here connotes lack of energetic rhythm or dance.

what it was used to in the temples and synagogues.

Leaver (1998) contends that the earliest liturgical music form of worship was found in the form of chanting/recitation of Psalms and Hymns used later in the Divine Office, but as the Church moved from comparatively simple domestic worship to the more complex worship patterns of basilicas, there was a restructuring of the liturgy to reflect or adapt to the imperial space. Other developments, especially with regard to the use of musical instruments being associated with "pagan orgiastic rites" which is as a result of exile contamination, need to be mentioned here briefly.

The attitude of the early Church fathers towards the use of musical instruments, dancing and the polyphonic style of music generally was very conservative. Many reverend fathers rejected all musical instruments in Christian worship. St John Chrysostom (349–407AD) argued that the psalms were divinely given to the Church, and were the inspired word and the earthly reflection of Divine harmony (Cole 1998). In general, the fathers could be categorised into two groups in relation to their attitude towards Christian music: those who

accepted polyphonic music provided its beauty ensured that 'vox' (sound) and 'mens' (meaning) agreed (e.g., St Basil, Cassiodorus and Benedict), and those who insisted that polyphonic music was contrary to the ascetical Christian ideals (e.g., St Jerome) (Ronan, 1967).

The Protestant reformers thought differently, especially because many of them (e.g., Martin Luther, Wesley, and others) were musicians. They launched the Church not only into the world of polyphonic music but also into poly instrumental music. The new wave of musical revolution in the 16th Century Church was strong and was responsible for pulling so many Christians from the Roman Catholic Church to other Protestant Churches. The Catholic Church later slowly accepted this polyphonic and polyrhythmic music culture which was earlier perceived as the Church's inveterate enemy to solemnity. After the revolt of Martin Luther, the desire for true Christian piety brought about a reform movement in the Catholic Church. This movement became part of the counter-reformation whereby the Church strove to recapture the minds of worshippers. In its desire to regulate every aspect of religious discipline, the Council of Trent paid attention to Church

Music. The Council of Trent by 1562 banned all seductive or impure melodies from Church Music, including all vain and worldly texts. The fathers of the council were very concerned about what they saw as the corruption of traditional chants by the singers who added embellishments (homophonic and polyphonic accompaniments) to the Gregorian Chants. They also objected to the use of instruments other than the organ in any religious service. In addition, they banned the incorporation of popular songs in church masses. This meant that all compositions that weren't originally designed for the liturgy were not allowed to be sung during masses. They thought that such practices interfered with the sacred spirit of the song and rendered them irrelevant. They also objected to over elaborate contrapuntal textures but approved of pure vocal lines that respect the integrity of the sacred texts. At this point, it seems worthwhile to remark on the role of composers like Giovanni Palestrina. Giovanni Palestrina met the need for reformed music. He created a universal type of expression suitable for the mood, insisting that what is sung in the liturgy would be agreeable to the ear by virtue of its vocal beauty. An example of his works is the 'Missa Salve Regina' (Hickok, 1993).

The 17th and the 18th centuries saw a number of operatic influences filtering into liturgical music, which affected the singing of the Passion of our Lord, the Exultet and the entire Eucharistic celebration. Hymns, anthems and chorus excerpts from J S Bach's Cantatas, popular oratorios such as George Friedrich Handel's Messiah, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Masses, Mendelssohn's Elijah, etc. began to be performed in Churches.

By the beginning of the 20th Century, the attention of some Popes who were musical was drawn to liturgical music. The *Motu Proprio*⁵ of St Pius X, 1903, had the objective of purging the church of the increasing influence of theatrical and operatic compositional style. He upheld plainchant as the purest form of liturgical music. The *Musicae Sacrae Disciplina*,⁶ 1955 of Pope Pius XII however appreciated the singing of hymns and other sacred anthems.

⁵ The *Motu Proprio* of Pope Pius X was issued 22 November 1903 with detailed regulations for the performance of Sacred Music of the Roman Catholic Church.

⁶ The *Musica Sacrae Disciplina* is an encyclical letter on Sacred Music issued by Pope Pius XII on 25 December 1955.

By the dawn of Vatican II, the language of *aggiornamento*⁷ was calling for the opening of the whole musical windows of the Church to the cultural musical influence of the people. The emphasis was on the active participation of the faithful in the liturgical celebrations. The *Musica Sacram*⁸ of March 1967 established three progressive degrees of solemnity involving the musical participation of the priest and the people as follows: 1. Chants of the Priest, 2. Ordinary of the Mass, 3. Entrance and Communion Songs, Responsorial Psalms and Songs for the Presentation of the gifts (Flannery, 1987).

The idea of inculturation came as a kind of Copernican⁹ revolution in the area of liturgical music, making it mandatory for the Church to begin to look at the concept of solemnity not only from a Western prism but considering the musical sensibilities of a people's

⁷ *Aggiornamento* originates from Italian language and means bringing methods and ideas up to date. This was a kind of ideology that reigned during the 2nd Vatican Council.

⁸ The *Musica Sacram* is the title of an instruction on Sacred Music issued by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on 5 March 1967 in line with 2nd Vatican Council.

⁹ The Copernican revolution was a major discovery by Nicolaus Copernicus in the 16th century that the earth was moving round the sun and not vice versa, as was hitherto believed.

worldview/culture. Indigenous composers have attempted to embrace the challenge of inculturation even in the area of liturgical music. According to Omojola (2019, pp. 163–4),

The connection between aesthetic, embodied and social spaces provide an important background for understanding how modern African performances tend to depart from traditional practice... More significantly, however, the process of connecting these spaces in ways that facilitate an integrated system of contemplation is often unarticulated by the composer or unbeknownst to the listener. The degree to which such connections are forged and the mode of forging them would certainly depend on the technical disposition, social experience and compositional vision of each composer.

African performances, even within or outside the Church, should remain truly so and must not depart from traditional ethos. This is exactly the impetus for the post-Vatican II project of inculturation.

The earliest record of inculturation of liturgical music in Igbo land was the

translation of hymn tunes into indigenous languages. By the early sixties, people like Raymond Arazu began attempting the rendering of original tunes with African identity. Such psalms as *Abu maka echichi* (Ps 2), *Ndi ilo m azogbuela m n'ukwu* (Psalm 55), etc. were composed in native air with traditional instrumental accompaniment (Arazu, 2011). Ever since then, several indigenous Catholic composers like Bede Onuoha, P. Anozie, Cyril Ezenduka, Peace Val Ihim, Fred Uche, Dorothy Ipere, Jim Madu, Joe Onyekwelu, Basil Okeke, Jude Nnam and the rest of us have continued to experiment with indigenous compositions, indigenous sense of rhythm, harmony and, most importantly, indigenous sense of solemnity. "The African therefore cannot be accused of lack of solemnity in worship because his cultural musical background necessitates a rhythmic vitality accompanying his/her singing which constrains him/ her to clap" (Agbo, 2006, p. 62).

Conceptualizing Solemnity in African Music

When is music said to be solemn and liturgical? According to Okafor and Okafor (2009, p. 13), "What is music in one culture may be sheer noise in another and what is noise in one culture may be

very meaningful in another." In the same vein, we can argue that what is sheer noise in one Church could be adjudged suitable "joyful noise unto the Lord"¹⁰ by another Church.

Umezina (2010) opines that the term *liturgical music* would more suitably describe those music genres that reserve the sanctity of worship or solemnity, arguing that several new musical genres that have found their ways into the churches lack this identity since they are not written or made up with the liturgy in mind. Agreeing with Deiss (1970), Umezina affirms that liturgical music is an integral part of the liturgical celebration and so does not enjoy an autonomous existence.

Granted that music not written or made up with the liturgy in mind should not pass as solemn or liturgical, we cannot however limit the source of liturgical music to the Church only. Agbo (2012) argues that the concept of solemnity today in the Roman Catholic Church must reflect the African rhythmic sensibilities and not what some scholars¹¹ have

¹⁰ See psalm 98:4.

¹¹ Private classroom communication with Adebowale Adeogun, a senior lecturer in the Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

derisively referred to as the "sanctity of immobility" (Agbo, 2006), outlining three senses of worship: the cultic, evangelical and celebrative senses. The cultic sense of worship has to do with the musical relevance to the ritual actions done for instance by the chief priest or president/ leader of worship. The evangelical sense of worship has to do with the musical relevance to what is being said during worship, the meaning of the texts and the sobriety of expressions. For example, when a musical text is said to be profane or mundane, it is considered inappropriate for the Christian liturgy. The celebrative sense of worship has to do with how the music affects the mood of worship. In other words, a particular form of music could be too joyful and dancelike at a time when the liturgical mood should be sober and mournful. A piece of liturgical music is therefore solemn when it achieves the purpose of putting people in the cultic mood of worship, articulates the motive for the worship and helps people to realize that aim (Agbo, 2012).

This implies that the identity of liturgical music and its solemnity may not necessarily emphasize the source or origin of a composition as much as the style and result/effect of its use in

worship. An ethnographic study of different musical cultures would therefore be necessary in order to best understand the cultic, evangelical and celebrative relevance of their musical materials. According to McGann (2002, pp. 79–80),

Music is integral and constitutive of liturgical action, and provides a practical method for testing this assumption within the actual worship of Christian communities. Moreover, it offers an approach to musical performance within worship events that focuses not only on musical texts, forms, and aesthetic qualities, but also on music as ritual action, on the performing assembly as subjects of the action, and on the independence of musical and liturgical processes....

Second, it opens the possibility that paying attention to culturally diverse music may be a key to discovering significantly new dimensions of our lived traditions, and of perceiving how these traditions are being shaped and handed on to future generations. It invites liturgical scholars to explore musics that may reveal a subversive memory regarding the historical shaping of our rites and the musics by which they have been celebrated. And it provides a way of

hearing and seeing the rhythms and sights of liturgical - inculturation - in - process, so as to understand better how we are being led into the future.

The concept of solemnity in the liturgy, therefore, automatically broadens out, as it moved from one culture into another. A given musical rendition that could pass as solemn in a typical African culture may finally pass as mundane or noisy to a typical European Church setting and vice versa. Therefore, liturgical theologians of African descent with an academic bent are in the best position to make relevant analyses here.

This study, therefore, concentrates on the three basic considerations for liturgical solemnity and suitability: the cultic, evangelical and celebrative sense of worship with an emphasis on the relevance of musical materials, motifs, forms and genres. It asks the following questions: what liturgical actions within the typical African context could be said to project or undermine the integrity of solemnity during worship? What musically inhibits the sobriety of the liturgical message? To what extent, if at all, can dance and other African rhythmic activities hamper the mood of solemnity?

Agu (1999, p. 33) suggests that "African songs are generally short, orally transmitted and easily committed to memory as a result of their short length and method of transmission." In liturgical music, therefore, they are likely to be quite congregation-friendly. Liturgical songs are generally meant for public participation during worship, for example, the Ordinary of the Mass.¹² It is therefore expected that compositions meant for the Mass can easily be memorisable by the congregation. So African songs could be said to be traditionally congregation-friendly. The scale system is usually modal and/or diatonic in conception and consists of intervals of full and half tones. Most African melodies are built on fewer notes: from 3 to 7 tones; in other words, tritonic, quadratonic, pentatonic, or at most hexatonic (Akpabot, 1998; Ekwueme, 2004). The pitching of African songs mostly depends on the tuning of each singer, the performing group and the instruments used in the entire ensemble. The tuning also depends on the voice quality of the singer/soloist and also on the vocal capabilities of the

¹² The Ordinary of the Mass are those sections of mass (liturgical worship of the Roman Catholic Church) that remain the same throughout the seasons, e.g., the *Kyrie* (Lord have mercy), the *Gloria* (Glory be to God), *Sanctus* (Holy holy), and *Agnus Dei* (Lord have mercy).

people belonging to the areas where a performing group exists. According to Agu (1999, p. 34),

It is important to mention that no African traditional music or folk song has a fixed pitch since they are not scored. Each group largely depends on its soloist, who always pitches all their songs correctly. There are, of course, occasional shifts, but most soloists never move far away from their constant tones with regard to songs based on the same scale and melodic framework.

Melodic movements of most African traditional songs are limited to the frequent use of small intervals between 2nds and 5ths. The melodic range is generally low with the average maximum ambit of tunes within an octave. The melodic contour could be undulating, ascending or descending. The vocal techniques employed are: 1) antiphonal singing, in which the chorus or choir responds to the soloist's call; 2) solo and chorused refrain, in which the soloist intones a song, connects another and yet another song in a row, while the chorus responds to the soloists' calls; and 3) mixed structural form, in which a combination of songs with different

styles and rhythmic patterns brings about more than one movement.

This paper embarks on what Euba (2014, p. 5) calls "creative musicology" which is "the application of musicology to composition" wherein "the product of research is the publication of its results in the form of speech discourse or even an entire creative idiom based on information derived from the research." It uses the approach of research composition where findings from field data are creatively applied in the development of new compositions. Research compositions according to Onyeji (2013) are compositions born out of such ethnomusicological study. The concept of solemnity has to be developed from a study of this trend and its application in traditional idioms, rituals of sacrifice and worship in a typical African milieu.

Musical Examples

The recent research findings of Emmanuel Asogwa¹³ who conducted an

¹³ Emmanuel Asogwa is a Catholic Priest and a student of the Department of Music, University of Nigeria Nsukka who conducted a field work on traditional sacred music for his undergraduate thesis, *Njikoka – An African Opera*. This work contains the sample music of the *Omabe* Sacred

ethnomusicological study of Omabe masquerade music – a traditional ritual music of Eha-Alumona people of Enugu State, Nigeria are hereby presented using a case study of just one touching musical rendition of a traditional ritual song used in the primitive ritual sacrifice of the Omabecult. An ethnographic study and transcription of the music are hereby presented:

Shrine of sacrifice used in the sample compositional study here.

MUSIC OF THE SACRED SHRINE FOR SACRIFICE

OMABE MUSIC OF EHA - ALUMONA VILLAGE, NSUKKA

Allegretto Forzando e Animato

The musical score is arranged in a system with the following parts from top to bottom:

- Udu (Pot Drum):** Rhythmic accompaniment with a steady pulse.
- Ichaka (Rattles):** Fast, repetitive rhythmic pattern.
- Ekwe / Ikolo (Slit Drum):** Rhythmic accompaniment with a steady pulse.
- Igba (Membrane Drum):** Rhythmic accompaniment with a steady pulse.
- Okpokolo (WoodBlock):** Rhythmic accompaniment with a steady pulse.
- Eno (Xylo 1):** Melodic line with a steady pulse.
- Ebo Igu (Xylo 2):** Melodic line with a steady pulse.
- Ebo Etiti (Xylo 3):** Melodic line with a steady pulse.
- Mgbe (Xylo 4):** Melodic line with a steady pulse.
- Tenor 1:** Vocal line with lyrics: a-ka t'e vu r'o gwe a ye le a ye le a
- Tenor 2:** Vocal line with lyrics: a-ka t'e vu r'o gwe a ye le a ye le a
- Bass:** Vocal line with lyrics: a-ka t'e vu r'o gwe a ye le a ye le a

Structural Analysis

This is a combination of very heavily instrumental music and chorus. The

instrumental ensemble consists of traditional percussion instruments such as *udu* (pot drum), *okpokolo* (wooden

clef), *ichaka* (beaded rattle), *igba* (membrane drum) and four xylophones playing in a highly polyphonic network with the chorus consisting of two tenor parts and the bass part.

The vocal is set on the aeolian mode using a pentatonic scale consisting of five notes: C#, E, F#, G#, and A#. The melodic contour is undulating, cutting across an intervallic range of a minor 6th from C#² to E¹. The time signature is ⁸/₈.

Take note of the solemn mood of sacrifice engendered here in spite of the loud and robust melo rhythmic framework/texture of the music. The melody is made horrific and solemn by the triumphant cry of the men who wear these masquerades or 'spirit manifests' singing the following lyrics full of onomatopoeic and metaphoric meanings:

Igbo: *A ka t'e vur'ogwe a ye le a ye le a ye a ka t'e vur'ogwe eh eh eh*

English translation: The flood (mighty power) has come to sweep the bridge/gutters.

This music evokes so much horror, especially among the women and uninitiated males, that people do not need to be told to run away when they hear the sound.

Consequently, solemnity in the traditional African cultic sense of worship is not the

so-called "sanctity of immobility" – a label that may fit most of the Western art liturgical music like the plainchant and hymn styles. Traditional worship songs must be rhythmically strong, emotionally pulsating, yet sensationally sober with lyrics and melodic lines that fit into the cultic, evangelical and celebrative moods of the liturgy/worship. In this context, dancing does not elicit frivolity or any mood of unserious business but puts the performers/Omabe worshippers in the mood of a very serious business.

Observe the harmonic structure of bars 1–4 above. Both the Tenor 1 and bass parts are in octave parallel movement, while the Tenors 1 and 2 maintain the parallel distance of a perfect 5th apart. In Western musical harmonic parlance, this breaks the law of harmony but in African music, it is a grand harmonic style. The xylophone ensemble is another interesting point to note. The four xylophones are fully engaged in serious polyphonic interlock of melo-rhythmic creativity as can be seen in bars 2–4 above. Its sonorous texture pierces the spirit and resonates around the whole community usually at night during the *Omabe* masquerade season.

A compositional experiment on decolonizing the concept of solemnity in the liturgy

Taking the above *Omabe* music as a principal motif, the author (who is a composer) now ventures into a sample composition titled ONYE GA-ADI KA KRISTI¹⁴ as a kind of pastiche for liturgical music inculturation. The Choral work presented below can serve as a communion song in a Roman Catholic liturgy without sacrificing the original accompaniment framework with a slight reduction in texture.

Textual Analysis

The text is carefully chosen with the following lyrics to convey a very solemn mood for the holy communion liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. It reflects the CoViD-19 pandemic situation and its challenge of faith against liturgical worship, especially in the reception of the holy communion. Chaka and Okpoko (2021) insist on 'Corporate Social Responsibility' entailing the respect of people's religious principles of freedom. In line with this ideological perspective, the composer maintains that although necessary precautions should be taken

not to contract the disease in great moments of danger such as this, the Eucharist remains the place of refuge for catholic Christians. When there is a major situation of danger such as was witnessed during the pandemic, especially when people face the danger of death, it is very essential that they be allowed access to the Church, the Blessed Sacrament¹⁵ and the essential ministerial services of their priests, if they so desire.

Section A [English translation of the Igbo texts]

Igbo: *Onye onye ga adiri mu ka Kristi mo?*
English: Who shall be to me like my Christ?

Igbo: *Ahu Kristi mo Obara Kristi mo*
English: Body of Christ, Blood of Christ given for me

Igbo: *Nke no na Eucharistia n'udi Achicha na Mmanya*

English: Dwelling in the Eucharistic species of Bread and Wine

¹⁴ The composition has been performed and recorded and is accessible through the following link: <https://youtu.be/U7H18ao6ego>

¹⁵ The Blessed Sacrament in the theology of the Roman Catholic Church is the centre of Divine presence made real in the Eucharistic species of bread and wine usually reposed in the tabernacle of every Parish Church.

Igbo: *Oso chuba mu e, mgbakwuru Kristi mo*

English: When I am in danger, I run to my Christ

Igbo: *Isi waba mu e, mgbakwuru Kristi mo*

English: When I have headache, I run to my Christ

Igbo: *Afo rubamu e, mgbakwuru Kristi mo*

English: When I have stomach pains, I run to my Christ

Igbo: *Onye Onye ga adirimu ka Kristi mo?*

English: Who will be for me like my Christ?

Section B

Igbo: *Sachabanu mu Kristi mo*

English: Purify me O my Christ

Igbo: *Ka m wee tosi k'I bata n'ime mo*

English: That I may be worthy to receive you inside me

Igbo: *Onye njo ka m bu site n'afu Nne m biko*

English: A sinner was I conceived, please

Igbo: *Onye njo ka m bu site n'Adam*

English: A sinner was I from Adam

Section C

Igbo: *Onye ga adiri mu ka Kristi mo?*

English: Who shall be to me like my Christ?

Igbo: *Onye ga adiri mu ka Kristi Onye jere n'obe taa ahuhu maka njo mo?*

English: Who shall be like my Christ who went to the Cross to suffer for my sins?

Igbo: *Onye jiri Ahu ya meere anyi nri k'anyi rie*

English: Who gave us his flesh as food for us to eat

Igbo: *Onye jiri Obara ya meere anyi mmanya k'anyi nuba*

English: Who with His Blood offered us a wine to drink

Igbo: *Onye ga adiri mu ka Kristi mo?*

English: Who shall be to me like my Christ?

Section D

Igbo: *Onye Onye O bu Onye?*

English: Who, who, who is it?

Igbo: *Onye ga adiri mu ka Kristi mo?*

English: Who shall be like my Christ?

An excerpt of the Composition is presented in Fig 2 below.

ONYE GA ADIKA KRISTI

FR. BEN AGBO

A
Moderato

Soprano
O nye_ O- nye_ O - nye_ O - nye_ O - nye_ O -

Alto
O - nye g'a - di-ri mu_ e_ e_ O - nye g'a - di-ri mu_ e_ e_

Tenor
O - nye g'a - di-ri mu_ e_ e_ O - nye g'a - di-ri mu_ e_ e_

Bass
O - nye O - nye O - nye O - nye e_ e_

A
Moderato

Eno (Xylo 1)
Ebo Ihu (Xylo 2)
Ebo Eiti (Xylo 3)
Mgbe (Xylo 4)
Udu
Igba
Ichaka
Ekwe/Ikolo
Okpokolo

S.
A.
T.
B.

Eno (Xylo 1)
Ebo Ihu (Xylo 2)
Ebo Eititi (Xylo 3)
Mgbe (Xylo 4)
Udu
Igba
Ichaka

Ekwe/Ikolo
Okpokolo

S.
A.
T.
B.

Eno (Xylo 1)
Ebo Ihu (Xylo 2)
Ebo Eititi (Xylo 3)
Mgbe (Xylo 4)
Udu
Igba
Ichaka

Ekwe/Ikolo
Okpokolo

S.
A.
T.
B.

Eno (Xylo 1)
Ebo Ihu (Xylo 2)
Ebo Eititi (Xylo 3)
Mgbe (Xylo 4)
Udu
Igba
Ichaka

Ekwe/Ikolo
Okpokolo

Agbo

Lyrics:
nye g'a-di-ri mu... ke Kris-ti mo... A-hu Kri-sti
O - nye g'a - di-ri mu... e e O - nye g'a - di-ri mu... e e e
O - nye g'a - di-ri mu... e e O - nye g'a - di-ri mu... e e e
O - nye g'a - di-ri mu ka Kri - sti mo... O O
mo... O - ba - ra Kris - ti mo... N - ke no na
nke no na Eu - cha - ris - - tia nke no na Eu - cha - ris - - tia
nke no na Eu - cha - ris - - tia nke no na Eu - cha - ris - - tia
A - hu Kri - sti mo O - ba - ra Kri - sti mo o

Looking at the above compositional schematics, the following points should be observed:

1. Form and Style: Effort is made to preserve the African compositional style using the call and response style. The soprano part carries the call while the alto, tenor and bass parts carry the response. See bars 1 and 3 where the soprano carries the call and bars 2 and 4 where the alto, tenor and bass carry the response. The overall form of the composition is the rondo – a kind of ABACAD, with the repetition of original episode climaxing in the coda section and which is a kind of faux bourdon – an inversion of parts with the bass part now sounding in the soloist's part, the tenor now sounding like the soprano, while the soprano line is moved to the bass part.

2. Melodic/Tonal Organization: The melody is woven around the pentatonic scale, employing the following five notes: E, F#, G#, B# and C# with a kind of modal cadence always falling on the mediant note, G#.

3. Harmonic Organization: The harmony is highly polyphonic in fidelity to the original motif of the composition – the ritual sacrifice musical background of the sacred shrine (*Omabe* music of Eha-Alumona). The vocal arrangement is in 4

or 5 parts with most of the parts independent of each other. Simple major and minor triads are used as reflected in the traditional cadences implied in the melody. The soprano is usually in counterpoint with the alto, tenor and bass.

4. The accompaniment framework: The accompaniment framework, evidently borrowed from the original *Omabe* ensemble, consists of the *Ekwema* (four xylophones playing in counterpoint), the *Udu*, *Ichaka*, *Okpokoro* and *Ikolo* supplying the pulse, timeline and obligato effects of the rhythmic accompaniment/orchestra. What may ordinarily be seen in the traditional Western sense of solemnity as a distraction due to the percussive dynamism and overall danceability of the accompaniment style is upheld here as a decolonisation strategy. As Clapham (2020, p. 151) suggests,

A decolonised African study can only emerge where it belongs, in Africa itself, led by the efforts of African academics to re-engage with their own societies, seek to understand where their problems lie, and develop theoretical as well as practical ways to deal with them...It is futile to expect any authentic attempt to

'decolonise' knowledge production about and for Africa to emerge from Northern Institutions...Africans must be left to decolonise themselves.

In the final analysis, the entire music does not actually evoke a dancing or jocular mood but rather a solemn and sober mood of worship following a purely African traditional sense of worship.

Evaluation and Conclusion

This paper has traced the content, origin and development of the concept of solemnity in the Roman Catholic Church up till Vatican II. It has investigated the original/traditional concept of solemnity in African ritual music of worship, taking a case study of *Omabe* masquerade music of Eha-Alumona people of Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria and has attempted to compose (as a kind of pastiche) a solemn communion song, using traditional idioms, instruments and employing a general traditional worldview.

It argued in line with Pope John Paul II (1982) that "A faith that does not become culture is a faith not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived." In other words, such faith is a faith that has not been decolonised. And so, the inculturation of

liturgical compositions is an assignment that must be done in order to fully indigenise Christianity in Africa. It is an assignment that can only be done properly through the joint effort of theologians with a liturgical bent and composers with ethnomusicological interests who are prepared to think outside the box. It is better done now when the artifacts and vestiges of our dying traditional music culture can still be accessed. The traditional dances of the people reflect the people's culture of entertainment, while their ritual music of sacrifice at the shrines, solemn ceremonies (like the burial of great men/women, tragic and heart-rending events) show how the people convey their mood of solemnity.

It is most unfortunate to discover that the challenge of the Vatican II Council on both inculturation and quality of sacred liturgical music is yet to be met. In Nigeria, some establishments like the Forum for Inculturation of Liturgical Music (FILM) have been consistent for several years now in organising a biennial music competition for all Catholic University Chaplaincies in Nigeria. But it does seem that the quality of the songs being promoted not, strictly speaking, following the Vatican II requirements on

inculturation and congregation-friendliness. Carter-Enyi and Carter-Enyi (2019, p. 45) give a mild criticism of the 2013 FILM Competition Judgment, making the following remark about one of the entries by Abel Obaji that was adjudged as the best motet,

Obaje's piece was not particularly indigenous in its harmony, but in a strong diatonic G major. This was unlike many other pieces that were modal or pentatonic. Along with the lack of indigenous instruments (the use of which is officially encouraged), the piece was among the most Westernised, and thus it was perhaps surprising that it was selected as the winner by the Judges for an inculturation festival.

It is therefore most probable that either the judges themselves were ignorant of the right standards of liturgical music inculturation or they had other considerations best known to them in their judgment or perhaps also, that no other choir came closer to the right standards.

I have argued against the colonial mentality of "sanctity of immobility" – a morbid sense of solemnity that believes that music is only said to be solemn when

it is dull, slow, mournful and unaccompanied. I have traced the origin of this negative feeling towards instrumentation and accompaniment back to the painful years of captivity of the Israelites in Babylon. Their contact with the "heathen" or foreign musical instruments was thought to have adulterated their monotheistic worship. It was therefore normal for the early Church fathers to have generally looked at musical instruments and polyphonic music in general as profane. This paper maintains that the use of local instruments, in themselves, do not constitute vanity, noise, impiety or insobriety. Some instrumentation goes into the most solemn and sacred of African traditional rituals of sacrifice, incantation, divination and religious festival celebrations.

What makes a piece of music solemn is a whole complex network of musical variables ranging from the melo-rhythmic essence of a mood, choice of lyrics, choice of key, choice of cadence, choice of melodic and harmonic notes, instrumental tone colour/texture, dynamics and overall musical "swag" or performance mood of the worshippers.

I, therefore, recommend that more ethnographic studies be conducted by modern researchers of liturgical music inculturation to ascertain how our forefathers worshipped, how they prayed, how they offered their ritual sacrifices and the kind of music that accompanied these solemn rituals before they would be in a position to determine how to retune their conceptualisation of solemnity according to the African traditional worldview. It is a noble assignment that

Vatican II has given all musicologists of a theological bent, the assignment of "adapting worship to the native genius" (Flannery, 1982, p. 119). This small-scale research work has only scratched the surface of this onerous task. It is expected that future composers would think towards home each time they want to compose for (or analyse) the liturgy and be able to generate what can truly be called African liturgical songs.

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