



THE ROLES OF TALKING DRUMS IN THE WORSHIP IN CHERUBIM AND SERAPHIM MOVEMENT CHURCH, ILORIN METROPOLIS

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Abstract

Music, Songs and Dance are not new in Christian worship especially among Pentecostal churches. Some denominations forbid the use of musical instruments such as guitar, talking drums, keyboard and others, citing the fact that they are not part of the New Testament Church worship. Many have argued that the use of some instruments are biblical, but does not subscribe to the use of talking drums because it is cultural and not spiritual. This paper examines the roles of talking drums in the worship in Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Church, Ilorin Metropolis. The study adopted Historical and descriptive methods for the research. In addition, interviews and participant observations were also



used to gather data. In the determination of population size, the study adopted the purposive sampling technique of 60 people, making it 6 members from 10 selected churches within the denomination in Ilorin City. The findings reveal that Psalms is filled with calls to praise God with every available instrument including drums. Though, the New Testament seems to be silence about instruments of worship, it admonishes that believers should sing songs in Psalms. C&S Movement Church is one of the indigenous churches in Nigeria and have brought into her worship, the use of all kinds of musical instruments including talking drums. The use of talking drums in the church does not only serve as pillar for other instruments to make singing and dancing in worship more melodious, it also allows congregants participation, play good roles in evangelism, ceremonies, and enable more souls to be won for Christ. While it is recommended that the use of talking drums in worship should be embraced in all churches because it is Biblical, the paper concluded that its uses should however be moderated to differentiate it from the way it is sometimes used in traditional worship and circular music.

Keywords: Music, Culture, Christian worship, C&S Church, Talking Drums

Introduction

Music is a well-known art in Nigeria, Africa and in the global world. Many authorities have suggested definitions, but defining music turns out to be more difficult than might first be imagined, and there is ongoing debate. A number of explanations start with the notion of music as organized sound, but they also highlight that this is perhaps too broad a definition and cite examples of organized sound that are not defined as music, such as human speech and sounds found in both natural and industrial environments.¹

The *Advance Oxford Dictionary* defines music as "the art of combining vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion".² However, some music genres, such as noise music and musique concrete, challenge these ideas by using sounds not widely considered as musical, beautiful or harmonious, like randomly produced electronic distortion, feedback, static, cacophony, and sounds produced using compositional processes which utilize indeterminacy.³



In most Pentecostal churches in Africa and in particular in Nigeria, instruments of all kinds like Drum set, Piano, Guitar, Saxophone, Trumpets including Talking drums, are included in worship. The proliferation of popular worship music has fueled the desire in local congregations to recreate that sound in their own churches. However, not all churches are thrilled with the trend. Some churches like Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries (MFM), Deeper Life Bible Church, Christ Apostolic Church (in some time past) and many more are against the use of talking drums in their church services.

Since modern worship music has gravitated toward a sound mostly associated with rock bands, some view the decibel level and predominant rhythm as detriments to true worship, which Jesus said must be “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). While some denominations even forbid the use of any instruments at all during worship, citing the fact that instruments are not recorded as being part of the New Testament church, many allows selected instruments except drums. They argue that the drums represent all that is ungodly about music and that talking drums in particular, do not belong in church. Some also objected to the use of talking drums in church because they are also used in Yoruba culture for traditional festivals such as *Egungun* festival, *Ogun* festival, *Oro* festival and *Alagemo* festival. Also, to some, the talking drums, as useful as they are for communication, can be used to invoke evil spirit through *oriki* (praise poems), proverbs and even cause violence, conflict and sustained rivalry or acrimony, not only between two individuals but also between two communities or villages whose audience can decode them.⁴

Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Church hold a significant place within the religious landscape in Nigeria and central to the religious practices of the church, is the profound role that musical instrument of all kinds including talking drums plays in her worship and ceremonies. With the rich history and general spiritual significance of music in the church therefore, this paper examines the importance and roles of talking drum in the spiritual and physical development of the church, particularly in Nigeria. The specific ways talking drums are employed in the worship of Cherubim & Seraphim Church, its theological significant, contemporary practices and impacts were investigated.



Conceptual Clarifications

Christian worship: Christian worship encompasses the entirety of a Christian's life. Whether they are eating, sleeping, working, or taking part in any activity, all should be done for the glory of God. This is expressed in 1 Corinthians 10:31 when the apostle Paul commands the believers, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." Therefore, worship is not confined to a specific place or time. Rather, worship is a holistic approach to life. There are, however, places, times, and occasions that worship is expressed and this is usually in the church of God. Christians worship both individually and collectively. They are expected to worship with their entire lives, in all that they do. Additionally, they worship with a pure and willing heart. Christian worship includes music, singing and prayers among others.

Musical Instruments: Musical instruments are all instruments used in church worship, blending traditional African instruments with Western ones. For example, Keyboard and Organ: These are often used to provide harmonic support and lead the musical direction during services. Guitar and Brass Instruments: Electric guitars, Trumpets, and Saxophones are also incorporated, particularly in contemporary gospel music. Traditional instruments like *Agogo* (a type of bell) and various types of drums such as Talking drums, Djembe, Bata drums, Combo and *Akuba* as it is called, adds a unique rhythmic dimension to worship. All the instruments are played by trained individuals to be able to follow the rhythm of songs and dance in worship.

Talking Drum: Talking drum is an hourglass-shaped drum from West Africa whose pitch, can be regulated to mimic the tone and prosody of human speech. It has two drumheads connected by leather tension cords, which allow the player to change the pitch of the drum by scraping the cords between their arm and body. It is a term that involves the use of drums or drum beats to disseminate properly conceived ideas, appropriately coded or articulated via meaningful and comprehensible drum beats that can be decoded or understood or interpreted by the target listeners who respond to the message of the drum beat aid of appropriate, desired or expected feedback. *Ayangalu* is believed to have been the first Yoruba drummer. Upon his death he was deified, and now counted among the ranks of the *Orishas*. It is believed by followers of the Yoruba religion that he is the patron spirit with the of all drummers, and that in the guise of a muse he inspires the drummers to play well. The word "*Ayan*" means drummer in the Yoruba language. This is why some Yoruba family names contain the prefix *Ayan*, such as



Ayanbisi, Ayangbade, Ayantunde, Ayanwande etc. This prefix marks its bearers out as hereditary custodians of the mysteries of *Ayangalu*.⁵

It is important to point out that while most drums can be used to say one thing or the other, the “speech ability or competence” of the drums is not the same. While some have limited speech ability or competence, some have unlimited speech competence. The *dundun* can be regarded as the straightforward Yoruba talking drum that uses a kind of surrogate language, while *bata* is a stammering talking drum that uses more or less a dialect of the language it imitates.⁶ So, these are the drums that come to mind when the phrase or expression “talking drums” is mentioned. *Bata* has not been accepted at all in most churches for service during worship because it is often used by the Sango (the god of thunder) worshippers during their festival.

Brief History of Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Nigeria

The Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Nigeria originated in the Early 20th century as one of the significant indigenous African Christian movements. It was founded by Moses Orimolade Tunolase who was born in Ikare to the Royal family of Omoboade Sodi, the legendary progenitor of the town.⁷ Ikare is an ancient Yoruba town in Akoko local Government of Ondo state in modern Nigeria and situated on the west by Ado Ekiti and on the East by Lokoja in Kogi state. As with all Yoruba, the people of Ikare have always practiced the traditional worship from their earliest times. Despite the lack of documentation, it is quite likely that Christianity arrived in that town somewhere in the final ten years of the 1900s. It was in this town that Moses Orimolade was born to the family of Tunolase of Okorun quarters. His mother named Odijorotan hails from Edo compound also in Ikare.⁸

According to Sheldon Kehinde, Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) Church is the first African indigenous church which was founded in Nigeria about 90 years ago in 1925 by Saint Orimolade Tunolase an Itinerant Evangelist who believed in efficacy of prayer. His Evangelical mission was characterized by a Great Revival, turning people away from idol worshipping to the worship of the true and living God. Orimolade received considerable media attention when he allegedly healed a girl, Christina Abiodun Akinsowon, from a long-term trance in which she could neither speak nor hear. After the healing event, Orimolade Tunolase and Abiodun Akinsowon teamed up, as father and adopted daughter, and offered their services to heal and pray for people.⁹



Orimolade and Abiodun claimed to have dreams and visions that facilitate the connection of God and humanity. They believe that in 1925, Jesus Christ directed them to name their group "Seraphim", after the order of angels (Isaiah 6). In 1927, they added "Cherubim" (also an order of angels mentioned in Isaiah 5) to the name of their church, making their congregation the Cherubim and Seraphim.¹⁰

Several years after the creation of the Cherubim and Seraphim, different denominations following in its traditions broke off and formed new churches. The Church of Aladura, which began in 1930 under the lead of Josiah Oshitelu, was one of the churches that began under "similarly spectacular circumstances" as the Cherubim and Seraphim. By the 1940s, the Aladura movement church had begun to spread throughout the world, from places in Africa to other English-speaking countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom.¹¹

Cherubim and Seraphim Church is presently divided into several sects due to argument and different perspectives of doctrines, before and after the death of the founder they've been disputes. Although, it's believed that the Eternal Sacred order of Cherubim and Seraphim strictly followed the founder. Now, we have the Holy Church, praying band, the Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Church, and the Cherubim and Seraphim Unification Church. After some years, some movements broke out from people who were once traditional worshippers and Islam to established C& S Church as divinely directed, such are the Agbojesu and Ona Iwa Mimo movement.¹²

Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Church is one of the early Church founded in Ilorin around 1947 and have now spread to about 24 branches in the metropolis. Both women and men have leadership roles in the church, but only men can go to the altar. Different level of seniority is signified through titles that are given to men members such as Leader, Evangelist, Apostle, Senior/Most senior/ Special Apostles and women members could be Lady Evangelist, Mother/ Senior/ Special Mother in Israel. Some also are called Prophet/ Prophetess if they are recognised as having been given the gift of prophecy or after training at their prophetic school.¹³

The congregation members are all assigned to a "bands" with the name of biblical character such as Esther, Dorcas, Mary or David. These are organised by age group and encourage each other by celebrating birthdays, praying for one another and building friendships. They meet up periodically and share what is going on in their lives so that they can pray together and even support one another financially if one of them is in need. Each band has its own president, vice president, and secretary.



Children are assigned a matron or patron who has responsibility to mentor them and encourage them in their journey of faith.¹⁴

Music and Worship in Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Nigeria

As an African Indigenous church, C&S has ‘inherited’ liturgical traditions reflected in its worship patterns. The church in diverse areas embraced new ideas in its liturgy, music, more women actively involved than previously allowed, and the creation of youth church, to mention a few. Sunday Adebayo opined that changes or innovations in the musical tradition of the church represent a form of continuity as people deviate from the norm to create additional space for music-making and appreciation. In the same vein, he pointed out that music in C&S churches in Nigeria have yielded to the modern trend, reflecting changes in the musical taste of worshipers.¹⁵

During worship in C&S, the congregation dress in white garments, and remove their shoes. This is to symbolise holiness as stated from the vision of the founder Saint Orimolade Tunolase that when you come to worship together you are to be holy. The removal of shoes on entering the church is to remind worshippers that they are coming on to holy ground as Moses did before the burning bush (Exodus 3:5). With the establishments of modern parishes, this vision is becoming obsolete as worshipers are now allowed to put wear shoes inside the church.¹⁶

The services have a structured liturgy which begins with a procession into the sanctuary, followed by an opening hymn and the introit – where the priest approaches the altar. Then the service proper begins with a confession and a psalm of sanctification for both the premises and the participants and songs of praise and rejoicing. Following the Apostles Creed is a distinctive element in the liturgy: the hour of prayer. During this hour people pray as they feel led by the Holy Spirit. This then followed by a sermon and a time when testimonies of God’s work can be shared. The service ends with a closing hymn and the sharing of the grace before the procession out of the sanctuary. Altogether the service usually lasts about three hours although that is varies as the C&S Church believes that it is important to give time for the Holy Spirit to lead and direct the worship.¹⁷



The Method and Purpose of Some Integral parts of Worship in C&S Church

Hymns and Psalm

Hymns are central to C&S Movement church worship and are typically drawn from both traditional Christian hymns and indigenous compositions. They are sung in various languages, including Yoruba, English, and other Nigerian languages. Hymns are often structured with rich harmonies and are accompanied by instruments like the organ, keyboard and drums. Ademiluka said “switching to *Alujo* (fast percussions) with heavy instrumental accompaniment to hymns is now a new norm in C&S Movement church”. The essence of this, is to make the liturgy livelier and shorten the length of the hymn.¹⁸

Psalms are literally those from the Bible, chanted or sung during services. They are used to invoke God’s presence, seek guidance, and offer praise. The recitation of psalms is often done in a call and response format between the leader and the congregation.

Choruses and Spiritual Songs

Choruses and spiritual songs are typically short, repetitive and easily memorized. They are often spontaneous and spirit-led, allowing worshippers to express their emotions freely. These songs may arise spontaneously during worship, led by the spirit and are characterized by their simplicity and repetitive nature, which allows the entire congregation to join easily. The call and response format is prevalent in the C&S Movement church worship, where a leader sings a line and the congregation responds. This interactive style promotes engagement and participation.

According to Abel Omidiji, songs, has great importance in the C&S Movement church. We believe it is important to praise with our whole heart so it is powerfully emotional, expressing joy and thankfulness to God for his provision for us. 1 Samuel 30:5–6 speaks of how King David strengthened himself in the Lord when he was distressed. So when we sing in praise we are also strengthened in Him. We believe that in the presence of God there is fullness of joy and we experience this as we worship. We find that we are elevated out of our day to day stresses and worries.¹⁹



Dance

Dance is also an integral part of worship in the C&S Movement church. It is seen as a physical expression of worship and praise. There are liturgical dance and spontaneous dance. While the liturgical dance is an organized and choreographed dance performance that often takes place during special services and celebrations, the spontaneous dance is the method in which congregants may break into units as they feel moved by the spirit, adding a dynamic and joyful element to the worship experience.²⁰

Musical Instruments for Worship in C&S Movement Church Services

Musical instruments hold a central and sacred role within the worship practices of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Nigeria, blending African cultural expressions with Christian traditions to create a vibrant and deeply spiritual experience for congregants. Femi Popoola asserts that the church incorporates a variety of musical styles to enhance its worship services. Musical practices in the church are diverse and deeply rooted in both Christian and African traditions. These practices are designed to enhance worship, foster community, and connect worshippers to the divine.²¹ Some of the musical Instruments used for worship in C&S are:

- i. **Keyboard and Organ:** These are often used to provide harmonic support and lead the musical direction during services. Harmonic Support: it ensures musical coherence and accompanies a wide range of musical styles, from traditional hymns to contemporary gospel.
- ii. **Guitar and Brass Instruments:** These include electric guitars, bass guitars, trumpets and saxophones are also incorporated, particularly in contemporary gospel music.
- iii. **Traditional Instruments:** Traditional instruments like the *Agogo* (a type of bell) and *Sekere* (a gourd with beads), maintain the cultural heritage of African music within the worship services.
- iv. **Drums and Percussion:** Drums are essential element of the C&S musical instrument. The use of traditional African drums, such as Talking drums, djembe, Bata drums, and Akuba as it is called adds a unique rhythmic dimension to worship. Other percussions like the



hand bells and clappers are also used to enrich the musical texture and maintain rhythmic flow.²²

Responding to the argument of some denominations that drums and other instruments are not mentioned in the New Testament for worship and therefore should not be used in the church, / The Psalmist was explicit on ways of praising the Lord God Almighty. He talks about using the voice, dances, the lyre, the flute, the timbres, the cymbal, the psaltery, the harp, the stringed instruments and organs, etc, sparing nothing to give praises to God, the Most High. Ibukun Ojuawo avers that praising God with drums like *Gangan* (talking drum), *Gbedu*, *Omele ako*, *Bata*, *Konga*, *Samba*, *Sakara* among others, is phenomenal in the C&S fold. They are one of the instruments used to worship and praise God, whereby when played, its sound causes the waist and the entire body of congregants to move in an uncontrollable manner all in a bid to express their heartfelt thanksgiving and gratitude to God with awesome dances and footsteps.²⁶ The roles of Talking Drums in C& S Church in Nigeria include:

Spiritual Connection and Participation

In the C&S Movement Church, talking drum enhance the spiritual experience and foster community. Primarily, it acts as a conduit for spiritual connection, facilitating worshippers' engagement with the divine. Though psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs backed with talking drums, congregants can express their faith, emotions, and devotion, creating an atmosphere conducive to worship and reflection. It unites congregants through shared singing and participation, fostering a sense of belonging and communal identity. This communal aspect is particularly evident in the call and response format commonly used in C&S Movement church, which encourages active participation.²⁷ Describing the relevance of talking drums in C&S Movement church worship, Ogunrinade David, assert that, talking drum can mimic the tonal patterns of Yoruba speech, allowing drummers to 'speak' through their instruments. Therefore, it plays a significant role in the church during worship. For example, "*kaabo se daa daa lo de*" meaning "you are welcome, hope you have arrived safely" can be played to inform people of the arrival of visitors or dignitaries being expected in the church. Also, "*ki le n f'oba pe oba o oba alase oba*" can be beaten to remind the people of the authority of God or Lord Jesus during the service. Again, the expression "*Baa ba se yi tan ao se mi si, a se se tun se*" meaning "we will celebrate this year and many more years" is a common expression usually beaten during



ceremonies, Band anniversaries and harvest festivals in the church.²⁸ There will be effective drumming if both the drummer and the audience understand the code of the drumbeat so that the latter easily deciphers and understands the message.

Evangelism

According to Olajide Ojo, the application of talking drums to other musical instruments in C&S Movement Church, act as a powerful tool for evangelism and outreach. The dynamic and engaging nature of C&S church music, particularly contemporary gospel, attracts people to the church in a relatable and impactful way. Through the use of talking drum in worship, the church can reach broader audiences and share its faith with the wider community. As a matter of fact, it has been discovered that many youths are endows with talents on the use of diverse musical instruments in which talking drum is not an exception. Talking drums therefore serves as good instruments both in church Choir ministration and on Television, Radio and in the production of songs in the recording studios for evangelism. Again, as part of evangelism, talking drummers are well accommodated into the church so as not to lose their talents to other circular musicians outside the church.²⁹

Marriage Ceremonies

Music in the C&S marriage ceremonies is both celebratory and solemn. The ceremony often begins with joyful hymns and choruses that celebrate the union of the couple. Along with other musical instruments, talking drum and percussion are used to energize the congregation and mark the festive nature of the event. According to Seyi Lanlokun, lyrics like “*emi la o ni yosi, ba ti fe ko ri bee na lori, emi la o ni yosi*” “why are we not going to rejoice since things goes as planned, why are we not going to rejoice” are often played by talking drummers.³⁰ Specific songs may be chosen to bless the couple and reflect on the sanctity of marriage. Traditional instruments, alongside contemporary ones, blend to create a rich, cultural tapestry.

Funeral Services

Funeral rites in the C&S church involve music that offers comfort and hope. Hymns and spiritual songs that speak of eternal life, resurrection and God’s comfort are used. The music provides



solace to the grieving and helps the congregation reflect on the life of the deceased and Christian hope of resurrection. Jejenwa Oyeniya says, talking drum could be used to elevate the sense of communal mourning and befitting burial given to the dead by the children. For example, lyrics like “*omo mi ni o sinmi/2x bi mo ba dagbalagba, ti mo ba darugbo, omo mi ni o sinmi*, meaning it is my own child that will bury me, if I grow very old, my child will be the one to bury me.”³¹

Ordination services

In an interaction with Sunday Adebayo, he says, ordination ceremonies are marked by music that emphasizes the gravity and joy of the calling to ministry. Hymns and psalms that speak of dedication, service, and the Holy Spirit’s empowerment are sung. The use of talking drum highlights the cultural and spiritual significance of the rite. During this occasion, lyrics like “*emi la o ni yosi, ba ti fe ko ri bee na lori, emi la o ni yosi*” “why are we not going to rejoice since things goes as planned, why are we not going to rejoice” are also, often played by talking drummers. Music helps to underscore the solemn commitment of the ordained and the congregation’s support and prayers.³²

Special Rites and Festivals

During special rites and festivals in C& S Church, music takes a celebratory and inclusive role. Festivals such as Easter, Christmas, and harvest celebrations feature a wide array of musical expressions, from hymns and choral anthems to drumming and dance. Ayantunde Ojo confirms that these occasions often involve the entire congregation in singing and dancing, reflecting communal joy and spiritual celebration. Talking drum and other traditional instruments play a significant role, bringing cultural authenticity to the celebrations. Again, the expression “*Baa ba se yi tan ao se mi si, a se se tun se*” meaning “we will celebrate this year and many more years” is a common expression usually beaten during such festivals.³³

In summary, while many musical instruments in the worship of Cherubim and Seraphim Church Movement serves to elevate the spiritual experience, reinforce theological themes and foster a sense of community bond, integrating talking drum into them creates a rich and immersive worship environment that honours both Christian and African heritage.



Conclusion

It has been unfolded in this paper that the uses of instruments including drums are traceable to the book of psalms in the Old Testament and the need to sing with psalms in the New Testament. Many Pentecostal churches employ the use of diverse musical instruments in worship with the exception of talking drums. Talking drums are viewed by some denominations with suspicion or singled out as not part of the church instruments because it is representative of worldly compromise.

Music holds a central and sacred role within the worship practices of the Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Church, blending African cultural expressions with Christian traditions to create a vibrant and deeply spiritual experience for congregants. The participatory nature of talking drums in the church worship fosters a sense of community bond. Congregational singing and dancing during services strengthen the bond among members, creating a unified worship experience. The belief in the power of music and talking drums in particular to invoke the Holy Spirit and bring about miracles is strong within the church. Talking drum is also one of the instruments that serve as a tool for evangelism in the church because youths with drumming talents are accommodated to spreading God's message and attracting new members.

Finally, it has been noted that the use of talking drums are not wrong in themselves for worship but only requires moderation in church services. Churches in Nigeria should therefore, embrace the use of talking drums in their worship because it may help increase a congregation's focus on the wonder of our great God and they can be pleasing to the Lord (1 Cor. 10:31). However, talking drum drummers must distinguish its uses from the way they are used for *oriki* (praise poems) and worship in Yoruba festivals.

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