

**THE EVOLUTION AND INDIGENIZATION OF  
CATHOLIC CHURCH MUSIC AMONG THE YORUBA  
PEOPLE OF SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA**

**BY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to explore the genesis and development of Church music; investigate the factors that occasioned the Second Vatican reforms vis-a-vis the Catholic Church music, and analyze the musical forms resulting from the Vatican II reforms. It further evaluated the impact of indigenization and the factors that influenced the musical forms resulting from Vatican II.

Seven Bishops, twenty Reverend Fathers, five diocesan choirmasters, thirty-five choristers and two living pioneer composers were interviewed. These people served as major representatives of the Catholic Church in Southwestern Nigeria. Information was also gathered through participant observation at church services. Data and pieces of music collected were classified, transcribed into staff notation and analyzed within the framework of ethnomusicological theory, while the secondary sources in the form of relevant books, journals and magazines from reputable libraries and the internet were utilized.

The study found out that the genesis and development of Catholic Church music among the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria passed through three stages. It started with the imposition of the Latinized form of liturgical

Church music, followed by the adaptation of European Latin tunes on wrongly translated lyrics and lastly, the indigenization of catholic church music where by indigenous composers write liturgical music within the frame work of Yoruba indigenous musical idioms. The study revealed that the imposition of Latin as the official language of the Church, Gregorian and Ambrosian Plain songs as the official music and the pipe organ as the official instrument of the Church among others were factors that occasioned Vatican II reforms (1962 - 1965). The study nevertheless discovered that indigenization resulted in the use of indigenous music, dance and musical instruments in the liturgical services. This development created popular and greater participation by the congregations, the numerical growth of Catholic members and unalloyed commitment in matters of faith and practices. In addition, the study revealed that almost all the composers and those in leadership position of Church music were priests, civil servants, artisans and non music professional. These people claimed to have received inspiration for their works from dreams, vision, homilies, folktales and traditional songs, among others. Furthermore, the study found that all liturgical songs collected from the field and playing of musical instruments were taught through the rote method and imitation. There was no standard notation

employed in documenting the compositions, neither had most of the choirmasters and composers been exposed to formal music education for the improvement of their musical skills.

The study concluded that music was an indispensable element in the liturgical services of the Catholic Church. The indigenization of Church music therefore, constituted an act and a process in the Catholic Church.