

ECUMENISM IN INDIGENOUS GOSPEL MUSIC: ITS IMPACT IN ISOKO AND URHOBOLANDS

ADJAGBARA, Francis Eseoghene

(Ph.D Student), Department of Music, Faculty of Arts,
Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14909095>

Published Date: 22-February-2025

Abstract: This study explores the role of indigenous gospel music as a catalyst for ecumenism in the Isoko and Urhobo regions of Delta State, Nigeria. The paper examines how traditional musical expressions have been adapted within Christian worship to foster unity among denominations. The study highlights how indigenous gospel music bridges faith traditions while preserving cultural identity by drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Diffusionism and Functionalist Theory in Christian Sacred Musicology. The research also discusses contemporary challenges, such as denominational rivalries and commercialisation, while proposing strategies for sustaining the ecumenical potential of indigenous gospel music. Ultimately, the findings suggest that indigenous gospel music continues to be vital in strengthening interdenominational bonds and promoting communal harmony.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous gospel music has played a profound role in shaping religious and cultural identities in various African communities. Among the Isoko and Urhobo peoples of Delta State, Nigeria, this genre has evolved as both a medium of worship and a vehicle for ecumenical unity. As a universal language, music transcends denominational differences and has historically been a critical component in religious practices. In recent years, indigenous gospel music has emerged as a bridge fostering cooperation among diverse Christian groups, enabling believers to participate in shared worship experiences despite doctrinal differences.

Christianity in Isoko and Urhobo lands was introduced through missionary activities during the colonial era. Western hymns and liturgical practices were initially imposed on converts, but these foreign forms of worship failed to resonate deeply with local believers. Over time, indigenous musicians adapted Christian messages to familiar musical styles, incorporating local languages, rhythms, and instruments. This fusion led to the development of a unique form of gospel music that is spiritually uplifting and culturally relevant.

Ecumenism, a significant theme within religious discourse, refers to efforts to promote unity among Christian denominations. The call for Christian unity, as expressed in John 17:21—"that they may all be one"—has inspired collaborative worship practices across different church traditions. Indigenous gospel music has proven to be a vital tool in advancing this objective in the Isoko and Urhobo regions. Through interdenominational concerts, joint choir performances, and community praise events, this music has helped to create a shared identity among Christians who might otherwise be divided by theological and ecclesiastical differences.

This study explores the intersection of indigenous gospel music and ecumenism, examining its impact on church unity, cultural preservation, and community cohesion. It further analyses how traditional musical expressions have contributed to spiritual transformation while addressing some of this movement's challenges. Drawing on theoretical perspectives and informant responses, the research provides insights into the enduring significance of gospel music as an agent of religious and social integration.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND ITS RELEVANCE

This study is grounded in two main theories: Diffusionism and the Functionalist Theory of Christian Sacred Musicology. These theoretical perspectives provide a structured approach to understanding the spread, adaptation, and purpose of indigenous gospel music in the context of ecumenism.

Diffusionism

Diffusionism explains how cultural traits spread from one society to another through various means, such as trade, migration, or religious movements (Titiev, 1959). In the context of indigenous gospel music, Christian hymns and liturgical practices introduced by Western missionaries were gradually adapted to local musical styles, leading to the development of a unique form of worship that resonated with the Isoko and Urhobo peoples. Furthermore, diffusionism highlights the role of indigenous musicians in modifying foreign musical elements to create a culturally relevant gospel music style that bridges Christianity and African traditional heritage (Rogers, 1962). This adaptation process facilitated widespread acceptance and enhanced the effectiveness of evangelisation.

Functionality or Role Theory

According to Adedeji (1999), sacred music must serve a purpose to retain its spiritual significance. Gospel music in the Isoko and Urhobo communities fulfils various functions, including worship, evangelism, and social cohesion. The role of music as a handmaid of religion ensures that it remains relevant in both liturgical and communal contexts, fostering unity among diverse Christian groups. Additionally, music serves a cathartic and didactic function, providing its audience with spiritual renewal and moral instruction (Samuel, 2013). This reinforces the significance of indigenous gospel music as an effective vehicle for spiritual and social transformation.

Definitions of Gospel Music

According to Adedeji (2008), the Nigerian public sees gospel music as many things in terms of its functional roles. To some, it is entertainment; to others, it is devotional music; yet to others, it is just like any other music. Defining gospel music based on its function will include its entertainment functions in both religious and social settings. Entertainment is, therefore, one of the musical functions of Nigerian gospel music. We propose the definition of gospel music as follows:

Gospel music refers to the Christian branch of religious music employed to propagate the gospel of Christ to Christians and Christians. It edifies the believers through its performance in both strict religious contexts (in the church) and social / entertainment contexts (outside the church), which has been made famous by the electronic media, technology and its performance.

Samuel (2013:32-45), in his discussion of "Church Music in Nigeria: A Historical Trend, identifies gospel music as one of the new forms that emerged from the liturgical music of the church in Nigeria, which has become the most popular with the general public out of the various musical forms practised as church music in Nigeria today. In his view, gospel music is one of the most widely accepted musical genres in contemporary Nigeria and, above all, incontrovertibly the most controversial because of its popular status and highly variegated nature. According to him, music has witnessed many revolutionary changes, especially recently. He suggests that the definition of Church music covers any music used as part of liturgical service. Church music includes hymns, psalms and canticles, special choir renditions in the form of "Native' and Western anthems, localised and imported gospel music, and "Native airs" and choruses. Also included in Samuel's definition of church music is vocal and instrumental music used by Christian faithful or bands at socio-religious activities outside church divine services. He traced the origin of church music in Nigeria to the advent of Christian missionary activities in the second half of the nineteenth century. Initially strictly reserved for worship, the music grew, developed, and became lucrative and variegated.

The inclusion of gospel music in Samuel's definition of church music is worthy of note; that gospel music is a branch of Christian music. An off-shoot of church music is a fact that cannot be overlooked in our discourse of gospel music, and we are, however, of the opinion that having developed from church music, gospel music carves for itself a unique identity that distinguishes it from church music, especially in terms of its performance context and styles. Gospel music can, therefore, be regarded as church music only when it forms part of the liturgy in Christian worship. We consider church music to be more restrictive and confined to the four walls of the church, and gospel music as a variation of the church music taken out

of the restrictions of the church and employed in social functions and serving in some cases as entertainment music which the church music does not encourage. A distinguishing feature between church and gospel music is the sanctity and sacredness of church music because of its use in worship as part of the liturgy, the adaptive nature of gospel music to different contexts within and outside the church, and the liberty that the performers have in the employment of the music. Robertson (1950:13), alluding to the sacredness of church music, states as follows:

There was a clear contrast between the secular music of the early church fathers' time and the music deemed appropriate for Christian worship. Qualities such as restraint, tranquillity, nobility, and solemnity were absent from theatrical performances and private gatherings, nor were they seen as reflective of the soul's deeper states.

Adedeji (2014:103-117) uses sacred music to describe church music, defining it as the music of the Christian liturgies or music used for Christian worship. It is a sanctified, holy, revered music for the worship of God. Robertson (1950:70) previously described liturgical music as "the type of music that aligns most closely—spiritually, aesthetically, and practically—with the sacred words of Christian liturgies." Robertson's definition of liturgical music emphasises its deep connection to the sacred texts of Christian worship, highlighting its spiritual, aesthetic, and practical dimensions. Liturgical music acts as a channel for divine expression, deepening the worship experience and cultivating a sense of reverence. Aesthetically, it aligns with the solemnity and sanctity of religious rituals, ensuring that its melodies, harmonies, and rhythms complement the sacred words rather than distract from them. It must be functional within the liturgical setting, supporting congregational participation, priestly chants, and other ritualistic elements. This holistic perspective underscores the essential role of music in Christian liturgies, where it beautifies the service and deepens the spiritual engagement of worshippers.

According to Adedeji (2014, p. 110), sacred music is the theological term for church music. Church music, according to Robertson (1950, p.71), is the liturgy set to music, not the liturgy as an excuse for music. When measured by the standards described by Robertson and Adedeji above, we may raise the question about the purity of Nigerian gospel music. This position further reinforces our definition of gospel music as a branch of Christian music or church music taken outside of the church to meet the social or entertainment needs of the church members, especially at social functions. **Historical Context of Indigenous Gospel Music**

The introduction of Christianity to the Isoko and Urhobo regions brought Western hymns and liturgical practices. However, these foreign elements often failed to resonate deeply with the local populace. In response, early converts and missionaries began incorporating Indigenous musical styles into Christian worship, creating a unique blend honouring faith and cultural heritage. This fusion allowed worshippers to express their spirituality in a manner authentic to their cultural identity, leading to a more profound and widespread acceptance of Christianity.

According to J. Enuwosa (2000:192-206), the history of gospel music in Urhoboland is broadly divided into two parts: the era of Adam Igbudu and the Adam Igbudu period. Although scholars are unsure about the origin of gospel music in Urhoboland, its development can be traced to the Protestant Churches, especially the Anglican Church. A combination of many factors led to the growth of gospel music in Urhoboland. These factors, including cultural influence and divine inspiration, birthed this unique type of gospel music known as *kirimomo*. As an Indigenous gospel music, *kirimomo* is employed to spread the gospel among the Urhobo people of the Niger Delta (Enuwosa: 1992). This indigenous gospel music also led to the conversion of the local people. This is precisely the point of the gospel, namely, conversion. Adam Igbudu (Enuwosa:2000) knew that if the gospel is to be meaningful for the people, it must be converted into songs in traditional melodies. In this respect, M.V Nabofa, discussing V. Massasi as quoted by J. Enuwosa (2000), noted:

The same duty lies on us about music. If Christianity is to become evident as belonging equally to the Africans with all other races, but at the first possible moment, the melodies of the land should begin to be collected, and Christian words should be composed in the same metre and form as the secular words. The songs can then be used in Church to supplement the translated hymns from home, if not displaced. (Enuwosa, 2000:50).

According to J. Enuwosa, Adam was a member and a vocalist of Isoko folk music known as Usini, a dancing club in Uzere. Usini was known for its classical, traditional Isoko music. Although he withdrew from the club after his conversion, Adam's gospel songs and hymns followed the Usini rhythm. Some of such songs he composed himself include *A-ko ma ogagakpobinio* (I have been given all Power Mt. 28:18), *Olorituairuora* (Lord begin your work), *Jesus Yo Akaba ra* (Jesus is my Stronghold) – Onosemuode. Enuwosa (2000), in an interview, reveals that "Urhobo gospel music, which began as

revival groups in the Anglican Church in Isoko and Urhoboland, is a product of specific social factors". Besides the difficulty of comprehension of European music, the influence of Urhobo traditional music on Christians also led to the development of Urhobo gospel music, which was patterned along the traditional music, especially the *Udje* and *Opiri* music.

Most Urhobo gospel music is composed from biblical passages. They are formed into short moving choruses, using native rhythms and tones and native musical instruments such as *isorogun*, *agogo* and drums. Hand clapping was substituted for *adjudge* (a leather hand fan used for dancing in Urhobo traditional religion). Therefore, this unique gospel music successfully contextualises the gospel in Urhoboland. This gospel music shows how important indigenous is among the people. It is a lesson that the local culture has a significant role in spreading the gospel worldwide across all denominations. In the concluding words of J. Enuwosa (2020), "The content of the gospel remains the same, but the method of dissemination can be different all over the world".

Developments in Ecumenism and Indigenous Gospel Music

Interviews and discussions with local church leaders, gospel musicians, and community elders indicate that indigenous gospel music continues to evolve, playing an integral role in fostering ecumenical unity. Many informants noted that gospel concerts, interdenominational praise nights, and collaborative worship experiences have helped bridge longstanding theological divisions.

One respondent, a pastor from an Anglican church in Isoko, highlighted how indigenous gospel music has led to greater cooperation among mainline and Pentecostal congregations. He stated, "Music has a way of breaking barriers. We find ourselves worshipping together through shared songs despite doctrinal differences." Similarly, a gospel musician from Urhoboland emphasised the need for more excellent institutional support to preserve and promote indigenous gospel music as a tool for unity.

Despite these positive developments, some informants raised concerns about the commercialisation of gospel music, arguing that financial motives sometimes overshadow its spiritual essence. One elder remarked, "There was a time when gospel music was purely for worship, but now, we see a shift towards entertainment and profit-making." This reflects the need for a balance between maintaining artistic integrity and sustaining the livelihoods of gospel musicians.

The Concept of Ecumenism

Ecumenism is the movement to foster unity and cooperation among Christian denominations. The term originates from the Greek word *oikumene*, meaning "the whole inhabited world," reflecting the broad intention of promoting Christian solidarity across theological divides. Historically, the ecumenical movement has been driven by a desire to fulfil Christ's prayer in John 17:21: "That they may all be one." This biblical foundation underscores the necessity of dialogue and mutual understanding among Christian communities.

The Second Vatican Council played a significant role in advancing modern ecumenism by emphasising the restoration of unity among all Christians as a fundamental goal of the Church (Vatican II, 1964). The council's *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism) acknowledges the legitimacy of diverse Christian traditions while calling for greater collaboration in worship, doctrine, and social engagement. Similarly, the World Council of Churches (WCC), established in 1948, has been instrumental in facilitating ecumenical dialogue and cooperation among Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican communities, promoting joint efforts in evangelisation, humanitarian aid, and interfaith dialogue (Hastings, 2000).

In Africa, ecumenism has taken on unique cultural and musical expressions. Indigenous gospel music has emerged as a vital tool for fostering unity among denominations, as it provides a shared medium of worship that transcends doctrinal differences. Scholars such as Enuwosa (2002) argue that music, particularly in African societies, serves as a vehicle for communal identity, reinforcing shared beliefs and fostering collective religious experiences. Indigenous gospel music in Isoko and Urhobo lands exemplifies this, as it blends Christian theology with local musical traditions, enabling interdenominational worship that strengthens community ties.

Moreover, Adedeji (1999) highlights the role of sacred music in the functionality of worship, asserting that it facilitates spiritual engagement and doctrinal continuity while accommodating cultural adaptations. Indigenous gospel music upholds Christian doctrinal values and integrates African musical elements, creating a unifying worship experience that appeals to various Christian groups. This fusion aligns with the diffusionist perspective, which suggests that cultural elements, including religious music, evolve through interaction and adaptation (Titiev, 1959).

However, challenges persist in achieving complete ecumenical unity through indigenous gospel music. Doctrinal disagreements, institutional policies, and denominational hierarchies sometimes hinder interdenominational collaborations. Nevertheless, the increasing popularity of joint praise concerts and inter-church worship services signals a growing acceptance of ecumenical ideals in Isoko and Urhobo Christian communities.

Ultimately, ecumenism in indigenous gospel music reflects the broader theological and cultural dynamics in African Christianity. As churches continue to engage in dialogue and cooperative worship through music, the potential for greater Christian unity in Isoko and Urhobo lands remains significant.

Indigenous Gospel Music as a Unifying Force

1. Interdenominational Worship and Collaboration

Indigenous gospel music is familiar to various Christian denominations, including Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and Pentecostal congregations. Joint worship events, such as Inter-Church choirs and community praise nights, feature indigenous gospel songs that resonate across denominational lines. These gatherings foster mutual respect and understanding, reinforcing the ecumenical spirit among participants.

2. Cultural Resonance and Spiritual Connection

Utilising local languages and traditional musical instruments, indigenous gospel music creates a worship experience that is both culturally relevant and spiritually enriching. This approach preserves the musical heritage of the Isoko and Urhobo peoples and enhances congregational participation and emotional engagement during services. The familiar sounds and rhythms facilitate a deeper connection to the divine, transcending doctrinal differences.

3. Community Cohesion and Social Harmony

Beyond the confines of church walls, indigenous gospel music plays a pivotal role in community-building. Public performances, festivals, and radio broadcasts of gospel music bring together individuals from various backgrounds, promoting social cohesion and collective identity. These events often serve as platforms for addressing communal issues, spreading peace messages, and fostering unity among the Isoko and Urhobo peoples.

Challenges and Future Prospects

Indigenous gospel music has significantly contributed to ecumenism in Isoko and Urhobo lands, yet it faces several challenges threatening its continued role in fostering unity. One of the primary concerns is denominational rivalry. Despite the common goal of spreading the Christian faith, doctrinal differences often create barriers to collaboration among different churches. According to Enuwosa (2000), while music can serve as a tool for bridging theological divides, rigid ecclesiastical structures and doctrinal conflicts often impede such efforts. This tension is evident in the reluctance of some church leaders to embrace interdenominational worship experiences facilitated by indigenous gospel music.

Another critical challenge is the commercialisation of gospel music. Many informants, including gospel musician Peter Egware, argue that financial motives have begun to overshadow the spiritual essence of gospel music. He stated, "What started as a divine calling has become a business venture. Gospel musicians today focus more on marketability than ministration." This perspective aligns with Blackwell's (1999) critique of the commodification of sacred music, warning that excessive commercialisation can erode its spiritual significance. However, scholars such as Hammond and Scullard (1970) counter this claim by suggesting that financial sustainability is necessary for artistic and production excellence in gospel music.

Furthermore, the increasing influence of Western musical styles threatens indigenous gospel music's authenticity. Elder Jonathan Edhere, a retired church elder, observed that "young musicians are gradually replacing our traditional rhythms with Western beats, disconnecting the music from its cultural roots." This phenomenon is not unique to the Isoko and Urhobo people, as studies by Adedeji (1999) highlight similar patterns in other African gospel traditions where modernisation often leads to cultural erosion. Scholars advocate for a balance that integrates contemporary musical elements without compromising indigenous authenticity.

Despite these challenges, there are opportunities to strengthen the role of indigenous gospel music in ecumenism. Encouraging collaborative productions among gospel musicians from different denominations can foster a sense of shared

purpose and unity. Educational initiatives, such as workshops and seminars, can help deepen appreciation for indigenous gospel music's cultural and spiritual significance. Youth engagement is crucial in preserving this tradition for future generations, ensuring continuity and relevance. Additionally, expanding the reach of indigenous gospel music through digital platforms, such as streaming services and social media, can facilitate more excellent interdenominational dialogue and appreciation (Rogers, 1962). While indigenous gospel music continues to be a powerful force for ecumenism in the Isoko and Urhobo lands, addressing these challenges is crucial for its sustained impact. By navigating denominational rivalries, mitigating excessive commercialisation, and preserving cultural authenticity, stakeholders can ensure that gospel music remains a unifying and spiritually enriching medium for future generations.

Vocal Techniques of Nigerian Praise and Worship Songs (Indigenous Gospel Music)

One of the vocal techniques employed in Nigerian praise and worship songs is the antiphonal singing style. The leader or soloist (cantor) calls in this vocal style, and the choir (or chorus) responds. For example (*Do do Oghene do: Figure 1*)

Doh, Oghene, Doh

Arr. Francis Adjagbara

Presto

7

2

14

19

Figure 1. Example of the song in partial repetitive motif

The cantor (or soloist) must be a good leader/director of songs to decide what songs will be sung and said in a Thanksgiving service. He or she must also decide what pitches to use – with or without musical accompaniment like the piano keyboard. The soloist determines how long each song will last and the variations to be introduced. The researcher discovered in fieldwork that most churches with their choirs rehearse most of the songs to be performed before church services with instrumentalists. In this way, the Nigerian praise and worship songs are well presented during most church services.

Correlation between speech and melodic contour in Nigerian praise and worship songs.

It is worth noting that Nigerian praise and worship songs, as a general rule, “conform with the principles guiding the relationship between speech – tune and melody” (Agu: 1999:40). The Urhobo language, like many other African tribes, has tonal levels. Agu acknowledges that while some African tribes have two tonal levels, others have three, and others have more than three. He identifies the speech tones thus: (/) high, (\) low, and (-) mid. In the song, *Jiro Jiro Jiro Oghene me*, *Jiro* has two tonal levels, which the composer respected Jiró.

Below is a graphical representation of the melodic contour of the piece: *Jiro, jir’Oghene me*.

Melodic Range: Jiro Jiro Jir’Oghene me

This melody has a range with an ambit of an octave which spans through the song.

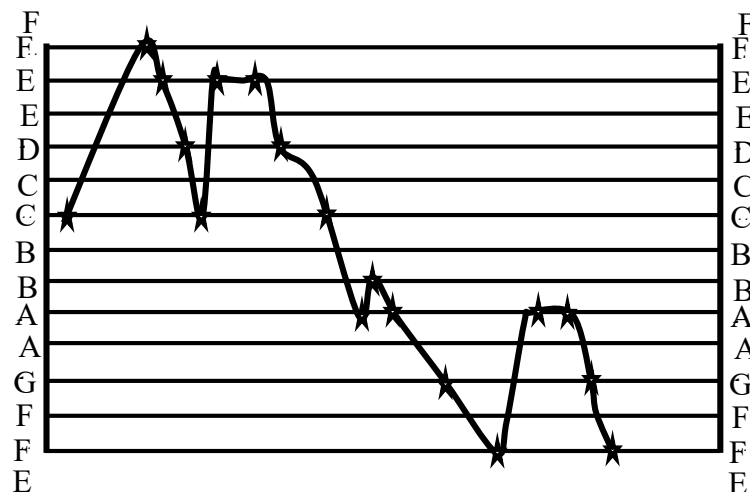


Figure 2. JIRO JIRO JIR’OGHENE ME

Each culture in Nigeria and Africa has its unique style of harmonising its songs. Although these songs have been greatly influenced by the Western harmony idioms used in church music, most have their harmonies in minor and significant 3rd, with few moving parallel and other nomenclatures. The researcher in Western idioms has harmonised some of the songs here to create variety.

Example of the song in Major and minor third intervals

Many songs presented here also use simple harmonic progression or cycles, often based around a drone or ostinato. The song ‘Doooh, dooh Oghene Doooh’ exhibits this same feature. Most songs use the perfect cadence (V-I) while maintaining the primary chord structure of I-IV-V-I, I-V-I-VI-V, and V-I-IV-V-I with few exemptions. Overall, the harmonic structure in

African music is often secondary to other musical elements, such as rhythm and melody, and tends to be simple and repetitive rather than complex and intricate.

The Rhythmic Structure of the Melody of Nigerian praise and worship songs

The rhythmic structure of the melodies of selected Nigerian praise and worship songs are of short durational values. The melodies employ crotchets, quavers, semiquavers and dotted notes. The effect of these short durational values of notes is that the melodies provide good metric organisation. This gives the melodies the quality of strong rhythmic character. For example (*Ode ri Jesu, Figure 3*).

ODE RI JESU

Arr. Francis Adjagbara

♩ = 80

Voice

Call

O - dẹ ri Je-su va vwa rhe

Chorus Ref

o-dẹ na ọ-vọn-re v'o-ga-ga e-de

o-dẹ na ọ-vọn-re v'o-ga-ga e-de

3

Call

E-de se

Call

E-de se

Chorus

o-tu re rie da ki muẹ

Resp

se Ẹ-djọ kọ djẹ

Resp

Ẹ-djọ kọ she___ o-tu re rie da ki muẹ

se Ẹ-djọ kọ djẹ Ẹ-djọ kọ she___ o-tu re rie da ki muẹ

6

Call

she o-no ri ruo na-na **O-dẹ na** o-dẹ na ọ-vọn-re v'o-ga-ga e-de se

Chorus Ref

she o-no ri ruo na-na o-dẹ na ọ-vọn-re v'o-ga-ga e-de se

she o-no ri ruo na-na o-dẹ na ọ-vọn-re v'o-ga-ga e-de se

Another effect of such short values of notes in the melodies is the presence of a basic regulative beat. This regulative beat is articulated in the clapping of hands and the beating of instruments such as the woodblock or *agogo* (metal gong). This regulative beat acts as an invaluable guide to the singer.

Meter

The most commonly used meters are the compound duple, compound quadruple, and simple quadruple. In a long way, this is influenced by the strong rhythm of the songs. Nigerian praise songs are energetic in rhythm and often accompanied by dance. Rhythm is a fundamental aspect of African music, and it plays a significant role in the overall sound and its feel, which is used to evoke specific moods and emotions. These rhythms are based on a combination of repeating cycles or patterns.

Other Ecumenical Urhobo and Isoko Gospel Songs That Have Spiritual, Social And Emotional Impact.

(*Oghenerukevwe Me Suine Jiro*, Figure 4).

Oghenerukevwe Me Suine Jiro

Unknown Call Arr Francis ADJAGBARA Refrain

Unknown Call Arr Francis ADJAGBARA Refrain

Voice O - ghe - ne ru - ke - vwe me sui - ne ji - ro, O - ghe - ne ru - ke - vwe me

Soprano O - ghe - ne ru - ke - vwe me

Alto O - ghe - ne ru - ke - vwe me

Tenor O - ghe - ne ru - ke - vwe me

Bass O - ghe - ne ru - ke - vwe me

8 Enlarged Refrain

Voice sui - ne ji - ro sui - ne ji - ro ji - r'O - ghe -

S. sui - ne ji - ro sui - ne ji - ro ji - r'O - ghe

A. sui - ne ji - ro sui - ne ji - ro ji - r'O - ghe

T. sui - ne ji - ro sui - ne ji - ro ji - r'O - ghe

B. sui - ne ji - ro sui - ne ji - ro ji - r'O - ghe

13

ne, O - ghe - ne ru - ke - vwe me sui - ne ji - ro.

ne, O - ghe - ne ru - ke - vwe me sui - ne ji - ro.

ne, O - ghe - ne ru - ke - vwe me sui - ne ji - ro.

ne, O - ghe - ne ru - ke - vwe me sui - ne ji - ro.

ne, O - ghe - ne ru - ke - vwe me sui - ne ji - ro.

JIRO

Arr. Francis Adjagbara

ji - ro ji - ro ji - ro ghe - ne

me

ji - ro ji - ro ji - ro ghe - ne me

ji - ro ji - ro ji - ro ghe - ne me

ji - ro ji - ro ji - ro ghe - ne me

ji - ro ji - ro ji - ro ghe - ne me

(Jiro, Figure 5).

OWE OYE FUJIRO

♩ = 80

O - ghe - ne o - we o - ye fu - ji - ro a - men,

O - ghe - ne o - we o - ye fu - ji - ro a - men,

O - si - vwi - gbe - le - te o - we o - ye fu - ji - ro a - men.

*(Owe Oye Fujiro, Figure 6).***3. CONCLUSION**

Indigenous gospel music is a powerful force for ecumenism in the Isoko and Urhobo lands, fostering unity, cultural pride, and spiritual growth. It acts as a conduit for interdenominational collaboration, providing a shared platform where believers from different Christian traditions can engage in collective worship and mutual edification.

By embracing and nurturing this tradition, Christian communities can continue to strengthen interdenominational bonds and uphold their cultural heritage. This is particularly vital in the face of modern influences that often challenge the preservation of indigenous identities. As scholars like Adedeji (1999) assert, sacred music must retain its cultural and spiritual essence to remain relevant within its community.

Additionally, indigenous gospel music contributes to the broader discourse on cultural preservation within religious spaces. According to Enuwosa (2002), music is an effective medium for sustaining theological and historical narratives, making it indispensable in fostering continuity between past and present religious expressions. Thus, as the landscape of Christian worship evolves, indigenous gospel music remains a testament to the harmony between faith and culture, ensuring that contemporary worship retains its historical and cultural authenticity.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abbot, W. M., (1966.). "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy." *The Documents of Vatican II*. Translated by Joseph Gallagher, New York: Herder and Herder,
- [2] Adedeji, F. (1999). *The Role of Music in God's Works*. Ile-Ife: Bolakay Prints.
- [3] Adedeji, F. (1999b). "Musical Revolution in Contemporary Christianity" in *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*, 2010, 244, 247.
- [4] Adedeji, F. (2008). 'Musical Revolution in Contemporary Nigerian Christianity: A Charismatic Development or Sacredized Profanity?' In Tunde Babawale and Olukoya Ogen (eds). *Culture and Society in Nigeria*. (Vol. 2). 366–393.
- [5] Adedeji, F. (2014). Theories in Christian sacred musicology: an African perspective, African musicology past, present and future (A Festschrift for Morunmola Ayinke Omibiyi - Obidike), Charles Algede et al., Eds. Ile Ife: Association of Nigerian Musicologists, pp.107-117
- [6] Agu, D.C.C. (1999). *Form and Analysis of African Music*. Enugu:
- [7] Blackwell, D. (1999). *Music and Spirituality*. London: Oxford University Press.
- [8] Enuwosa, J. (2000). A Hermeneutical Approach to the Gospel Proclamation Among Urhobo of the Niger Delta, Nigeria. *Bangalore Theological Forum* pp. 192 – 206.
- [9] Nabofa, M. Y. (1992). *Adam: The Evangelist*. Ibadan: Daystar Press.
- [10] Robertson, A. (1950). *Sacred Music*, London: Max Parrish and Co.
- [11] Rogers, E. (1962). *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York: Free Press.
- [12] Samuel, M. K. (2013). Church music in Nigeria: a historical trend. *Abuja Journal of Philosophy and Religions*. It is a Department of Philosophy and Religions publication, University of Abuja. Vol. 2, 2012/2013.
- [13] Vatican II, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism), 21 Nov. 1964, 1.