

# JOURNAL OF PERFORMING ARTS

Volume 4, 2011 Number 2

# JOURNAL

PUBLICATION OF THE  
SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS,  
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA.  
LEGON. ACCRA



*Defining Arts*

ISBN No. 0855-2606

## INTRODUCTION BY EDITOR

As there are twenty articles in this edition, I have, for ease of reading and access to the materials, categorised the articles into the following seven broad sections:

### SECTION ONE: THEATRE ARTS

This includes two articles that analyse specific Ghanaian and Nigerian plays that provide metaphors for the destructive effect of colonialism on traditional African life and also the changing gender roles in contemporary Nigeria. There are also two other articles that deal with the areas of directing and producing Literary Theatre and Theatre for Development.

### SECTION TWO: MEDIA AND CULTURE

This section contains one article which examines international co-productions, using *The Destiny of Lesser Animals* (2011) as a working example. Addressing international co-production strategies and modes of storytelling, the writer asks how the signs of globalisation feature within the film.

### SECTION THREE: POPULAR MUSIC

This section looks at popular music in connection with the economic opportunities it can provide for Ghana and Nigeria. A third article examines the African origins of jazz, including its multi-cultural nature of this genre and its psychological features.

### SECTION FOUR: THE PERFORMING ARTS AND GOVERNMENT/EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

There are four articles in this section: two of these articles deal with the importance of drama in education and drama being staged at heritage and tourist sites. The two other articles look at the role of two famous figures in the institutionalising of local performance. One is the Nigerian playwright Hubert Ogunde and the other is the Ghanaian traditional dance choreographer Professor A.M. Opoku.

### SECTION FIVE: FEATURES AND ROLES OF GOSPEL MUSIC

Both articles are on Nigerian gospel music. One examines the therapeutic nature of gospel music at the individual, social and national levels. The other looks at the feature of using multiple languages for the text of songs of both the gospel and the contemporary Islamic music idioms.

### SECTION SIX: PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC

The first paper examines the writing by the German philosopher Theodor Adorno on the ambiguities that emerge when aesthetically analysing musical pieces. The

second article looks at the philosophical and other issues related to African art-music.

**SECTION SEVEN: TRADITIONAL GHANAIAAN AND NIGERIAN 'MUSIC AND DANCE**

These four papers cover the traditional music and dance in Ghana's Upper West and Northern regions as well as a female performance genre from Kogi State in Central Nigeria.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                |         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Concept for Ghana Tourism: Encounter with the Past, The Use of Drama at Heritage Sites. <i>By Naa Kwaale Dove</i>                                                                              | 119-123 |
| Effective Communication: A Basis for Popular Education.<br><i>By Tabitha Harriet Deh</i>                                                                                                       | 124-130 |
| <b>SECTION FIVE: FEATURES AND ROLES OF GOSPEL MUSIC</b>                                                                                                                                        |         |
| Discourse on Illness and Healing in Selected Gospel Songs in Southwestern Nigeria. <i>By Adeola Taiye Shola.</i>                                                                               | 131-147 |
| Bi- and Tri-Lingualism: A Reflection of Code Mixing and Switching in Contemporary Yoruba. Christian Gospel and Islamized Music.<br><i>By Myke Olatunji, Dipo Babalola &amp; Yomi Daramola.</i> | 148-166 |
| <b>SECTION SIX: PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC</b>                                                                                                                                                        |         |
| Adorno's Riddle Character of Art. <i>By Ralf Alexander Kohler.</i>                                                                                                                             | 167-178 |
| Philosophical, Historical and Cultural issues in the Development of Modern African Art. <i>By Emmanuel Boamah.</i>                                                                             | 179-186 |
| <b>SECTION SEVEN: TRADITIONAL GHANAIAAN AND NIGERIAN MUSIC AND DANCE</b>                                                                                                                       |         |
| The Social Significance of the Djara Dance among the Dagbamba of Northern Ghana. <i>By Benjamin Obido Ayettey.</i>                                                                             | 187-199 |
| The Lunsu Institution of Dagbon: Sustainability in the Balance.<br><i>By Zablong Zakariah Abdallah.</i>                                                                                        | 200-220 |
| Musical Performance Practice in Ovia Osese Maiden Festival of the Ogori of Nigeria: Effects of Intermingling of Religions and Cultures.<br><i>By Peter O. Odogbor.</i>                         | 221-235 |
| Tuning Xylophones: Dagara Instruments in the Town of Nandom, North-West Ghana. <i>By Trevor Wiggins.</i>                                                                                       | 236-250 |

## **SECTION FIVE**

### **FEATURES AND ROLES OF GOSPEL MUSIC**

Both articles are on Nigerian gospel music. One examines the therapeutic nature of gospel music at the individual, social and national levels. The other looks at the feature of using multiple languages for the text of songs of both the gospel and the contemporary Islamic music idioms.

---

# DISCOURSE ON ILLNESS AND HEALING IN SELECTED GOSPEL SONGS IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

Taiye Shola Adeola

Department of the Performing arts  
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

## Abstract

*The study examined the discourse on themes of illness and healing in gospel music in Southwestern Nigeria since the early 1980s. It also identified factors responsible for the regular occurrence of these themes in Nigerian gospel music recordings. Adopting contextual, cultural–hermeneutical, musicological and discographical approaches this study carried out a textual analysis of recordings of selected gospel musicians from the Southwestern part of Nigeria. Interviews were also conducted with some gospel musicians to obtain information about the theology underpinning their songs, and their perceptions of what they considered as illness and healing. Lastly, secondary sources such as books, articles in journals, newspaper articles, and internet sources were consulted. As will be demonstrated the findings show that gospel musicians perceived illness not only as a state of physical but also as a spiritual, social and even political disorder that all needed to be restored to optimum functionality.*

## Background

Gospel music is one of the musical types that have developed over the years in Nigeria and it has become popular, engaging various themes and discussing relevant contemporary issues as they affect the lives of Nigerians. There is a continuous adaptation of gospel music to the changing circumstances of the performers and the audience within a historical milieu.<sup>1</sup> The popularity of musicians has become so much that several of them are household names and are commonly featured on Nigerian radio, television stations and print media.

An examination of the content of the music as performed by these gospel musicians reveals the treatment of various themes and issues determined by a number of factors, such as the prevailing political, economic and social situation in the country as well as the personal experiences of the musicians. The religious belief of gospel musicians is rooted in the Bible and their music refer often to the social, political and economic disorders in the Nigerian society as 'sickness', and so put in place of systems and structures to remedy and 'heal' these disorders.

---

<sup>1</sup> Matthews A. Ojo, "Indigenous Gospel Music and Social Reconstruction in Modern Nigeria" *Missionalia* 26:2 (August 1998) pp. 210 - 231

According to Akpabot (1986:1) one of the chief characteristics of African music is its association with social and ritual ceremonies that reflect the cultural beliefs and traditions of people. A strong aspect of such ceremonies is that types of music are used to heighten the meaning and importance of such ceremonies. Adrian Hastings (1976), discussing patterns of healing in Africa says that African concepts of health and sickness were an absolutely integral part of the social and religious structure or mesh within which people unhesitatingly operated.

Today gospel musicians can be found at the length and breadth of the country, but it is observed that the contribution to the gospel music industry is greater from the Southwestern part of the country. This is evident in the number of musicians and the volume of recordings produced by these musicians. The concentration of the early recording studios in this part of the country and the early exposure of the people to Christianity and consequently to Western forms of music could be responsible for this high visibility. Many scholars, like to Femi Adededeji<sup>2</sup>, have traced the growth of gospel music in Nigeria to the 1930s choral and church music in the Southwestern part of the country. Adededeji also says that it was only in the 1980s that gospel music spread to the North. However, the preponderance of gospel musicians in the Southwestern part of the country since the 1970s is the reason for the concentration of this study on this part of Nigeria.

Existing literature have dealt extensively with the subject of illness and healing and how they affect the society in various ways, but none have specifically dealt with the subject with particular reference to the gospel musicians' perception of the subject. This paper therefore embarks on content analysis of some Nigerian gospel songs in order to discuss the manifestations of illness and healing as presented in song.

### **Illness and Healing among the Yoruba**

The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity.<sup>3</sup> Health according to the New World Encyclopedia is a term that refers to a combination of the absence of illness, the ability to manage stress effectively, good nutrition, physical fitness and a high quality of life. The World Health Organization's definition of health has been criticized as being too idealistic, as

---

2 Femi Adededeji, "Pitch and Tonality in Contemporary African Music: Nigerian Gospel Music as a Case Study". *Research Review* NS 21.1 (2005) 1-10

3 World Health Organization. *Basic documents*. 39th ed. (Geneva:WHO, 1992)

some argue that health cannot be defined as a state at all, but must be seen as a process of continuous adjustment to the changing demands of living.

On the other hand the causes of diseases among the Yoruba were customarily attributed to several factors which Ade Dopamu<sup>4</sup> classified under three broad categories. Diseases can be explained in terms of natural or physical causation; secondly supernatural causation; and thirdly mystical causation. Consequently, the remedies to diseases have to be related to the beliefs about their causes. Scholars of African traditional religion as well as Islam and Christianity, generally agree that illness have both physical and metaphysical causations. A harmonious relationship with God maintains a balance and wellness in the society, while his wrath can result in both physical and social disorder with attendant consequences of sickness and infirmity. One remains healthy in a holistic sense, only by living in harmony with the whole creation. Effective healing therefore involves reconciliation with the entire cosmos.<sup>5</sup> Each of the religions has in it its own provisions for individual and societal health and wellbeing.

### **Themes of illness and Healing in Nigerian Gospel Songs**

The presentations of themes about illness and healing in Nigerian gospel songs is done directly by reference to sickness as it affects the physical body, and also indirectly through the use of symbolic representations and satires as to how it affects the spiritual, social, economic, political aspects of life. Illness is perceived by the Nigerian gospel musicians as either a temporary or permanent damage that has been caused to individuals or the country as a result of personal carelessness, leadership selfishness, individual godlessness and national sinfulness. One can conclude that in the mind of the gospel musicians illness is not only considered in terms of a loss of physical health that requires medical attention, but also in terms of things not working as they should; such as disorder, hardship, suffering, chaos and poverty. The phenomena of illness are therefore applicable to all spheres of human life, and healing is simply the restoration, repair, or recovery through divine intervention that brings relief from the pains illness.

---

4 P. Ade Dopamu, "Yoruba Magic and Medicine and their Relevance for Today". *Religions: A Journal of the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religion* Vol. 4, Dec. 1979

5 Andrew A. Kyomo, "The Environmental Crisis as a Pastoral Challenge in Africa". J.N.K Mugunbi and Mika Vahakangas (Eds), *Christian Theology and Environmental Responsibility* Nairobi, Action Publishers, 2001, p.58.

Evangelist Bola Are is one of the leading female gospel musicians in Nigeria and in the song excerpt below gives insight into the meaning of illness and healing.

### SÙGBÓN KAN Ñ BE LÁYÉ MI <sup>6</sup>

### TRANSLATION

#### Chorus:

*Sùgbón kan ñ be láyé mi  
Èmi kò fé e mó látóní lo  
Oba tó wo sùgbón Jábésì  
Wo sùgbón ayé mi*

There is a predicament in my life  
I do not want it from today henceforth  
The king who healed Jabesh's but  
heal the predicament in my life

#### Solo:

*Àìlówó lówó, sùgbón ni  
Àirómo bí, sùgbon  
Gbèsè àti àgbàná, sùgbón ni  
Àìtegbé ñ kó?  
Àiréni-boni-lásìrí  
Ìsòro àtodúmódún  
O ñ sisé bí erin  
Ò ñ jèje ìlírí  
Àìlókò gidí  
Àìláyá rere  
Àìlówó lówó,  
Èmí èsè nínú ayé re  
Àinísé lówó sugbon ni  
Ài tégbé ñkó  
Ó je tààrò kò sí talé  
Àìlálàáfíà ñ kó?  
Àìkólé ñkó  
Jésù jòwó ràn mí lówó  
Kójú ó t'elégàn mi láyé  
Oba tó wo sùgbón Jábésì  
Wo sùgbón ayé mi*

Poverty is a predicament  
childlessness is a predicament  
Debt and waste  
not measuring up to one's equal  
not getting help  
Persistent problems  
Working like an elephant  
but eating like a tiny ant  
Not having a responsible husband  
Not having a good wife  
Not having money  
The spirit of sin in your life  
joblessness  
not measuring up to one's equal  
eating breakfast and unable to eat dinner  
not having good health  
inability to build a house  
Jesus please help me  
let my mockers be put to shame  
The king who healed Jabesh's predicament  
heal the predicament in my life

The above song by Evangelist Bola Are is based on the Biblical story of Jabesh (1 Chronicles 4:9-10) who was named a child of sorrow because of the circumstances surrounding his birth: but after he prayed to God everything was turned around positively for him. Bola Are is based in Ibadan, Oyo State and is known for her unique style of praise and prayer songs. She used figurative and symbolic expression in this song to paint the picture of illness and healing. "Sugbon" which literally

<sup>6</sup> From her album titled Network News Ibadan: Okiki Jesu Record OJLP 28 Vol.28, 1990.

means “but” is a symbolic representation of predicament referred to in this song as a question mark, limitation or inadequacy in a person’s life that has to be healed by God. The illness which can manifest in form of poverty, hunger, joblessness, barrenness, and difficulty in getting a wife or husband is being presented in form of a prayer to God. Reference to healing in this song is specifically in the last two lines of the chorus, even though all those predicaments listed as “Sugbon” (but), i.e things for which healing is required. For instance in the line “*Oba to wo sugbon Jabesi, wo sugbon aiye mi*”, the king (i.e. God) healed Jabesh’s: “but” (predicament) he should also heal the “but” (predicament) in my life. “Wo” in this song means heal and in the Yoruba context of traditional medicine “wo” can also literally mean to look after or take care of, all in the context of healing and restoration.<sup>7</sup>

A song by late Bayo Adegboyega also gives us insight into the gospel musicians’ concept of illness and healing. An excerpt is cited below:

### IRE OWÓ, OMO, ÀLÁÁFÌÀ<sup>8</sup>

#### TRANSLATION

#### Chorus:

|                                           |                                          |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <i>Má fí kan gbà kan lówó mi</i>          | Do not give one and take another. I want |
| <i>Ire owó, omo, àlááfíà ni mò ñ fé o</i> | the blessings of money, children health  |

#### Solo:

|                                                    |                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Bówó bá ti dé, kómo má mà kú</i>                | My child should not die when I become rich                           |
| <i>Bówó bá ti wà, ká lálááfíà</i>                  | When I have children let me have sound health                        |
| <i>Báfinisùn bá fejó mi sùn ó</i>                  | When the accuser reports me to you                                   |
| <i>Bàbá mí mó má se gbó o</i>                      | holy father do not listen                                            |
| <i>Kókóró olá, kókóró iyè</i>                      | Key to wealth, key to life                                           |
| <i>owó Olórun lo mà wà</i>                         | are in the hand of God                                               |
| <i>Èdá, yéé lérí mo nígbà tí Olórun ti jù ó lo</i> | The creature should stop bragging because God is greater than you    |
| <i>Alèpara-má-lè-pokàn mi ò gbára lé o mó</i>      | I no longer trust one who can kill the body and cannot kill the soul |
| <i>Nípa ìgbàgbó o, olúwa yóó sèyí tó dára</i>      | By faith God will do that which is good                              |

All: Repeat Chorus

Solo:

<sup>7</sup> “Wo” is related to the Yoruba word “iwosan” (healing) or “wosan” (heal).

<sup>8</sup> From the record album ‘Oro Aiye n’fe Adura’, Lagos: SAACO/LP/001 1986

*Wàhàlà, ìdààmú, ìpónjú,  
 mo mà ñ fé kó dópín  
 Àseèrí, àsedànù, àgbàná,  
 kó dohùn ìgbàgbé  
 Àrán sí, àsà sí ayé ò, kélérù kó forí gbé*

Problems, troubles and tribulation  
 should come to an end  
 Fruitless labour, wasteful efforts and  
 spending should be a thing of the past.  
 the wicked one should bear his  
 wickedness

The importance of good health and the need for its sustenance is emphasized in the above song by the late Bayo Adegboyega. The song rendered in form of a prayer suggests three blessings that humans hope they can receive from God: "Owo" (money or wealth); "Omo" (Children) and "Alafia" (good health). These three things are considered very important and anyone who lacks any of these is considered incomplete, deficient, afflicted or cursed. The prayer request in the song is that none of these three will be missing in one's life. "Alafia" (good health) among the Yoruba is described as "Baale oro" (chief of wealth or riches) or "Ipekun oro" (the height of wealth or riches), meaning that one is unable to enjoy any other form of wealth if "Alafia" (good health) is missing. In the second verse of the song, reference is made to specific problems that can befall a man for which healing has to be sought. "Wahala" (troubles), "Idamu" (chaos), "Iponju" (tribulation), "Ase iri" (fruitless labour), "Asedanu" (wasteful efforts), "Agbana" (wasteful spending). Hence, the prayer in the song that "Baba je ko dopin" or 'Father let it come to an end'.

The above songs by Bola Are and Bayo Adegboyega gives us insight into the gospel musicians' perception of illness as a state of disorder, inadequacy, lack, limitation, sinfulness, suffering, poverty as well as physical ailments. And their perception of healing is the removal, redress or restoration of abnormal situations. This agrees with D. Mechanic's (1968) definition of disease as some deviation from normal functioning that produces personal discomfort or adversely affects the individual's future health. One may then draw a conclusion that any unusual or abnormal situation, whether temporary or permanent, that brings discomfort; disgrace, hindrances, limitations or other undesirable consequences in the life of a person; group or nation is a form of illness. Healing is simply a restoration of the abnormal situation to normalcy.

### **Specific areas of Illness and Healing Mentioned in Nigerian Gospel Songs**

Analysis of some recordings of gospel songs reveals that the subject of illness and healing is related to specific areas of individual and social life. The following five areas are identified:

**ONE: Physical Illness and Healing**

Physical illness and healing are expressed in the concern and prayer for deliverance and healing from sicknesses of all sorts. References are made to "Arun" (infection) and "Aisan" (illness) in gospel songs. Physical illnesses and infirmities mentioned include malaria which is common in Nigeria and other diseases like diabetes, hypertension, stroke, sickle cell anemia, HIV and AIDS. The reality of physical illness and the need for physical healing is illustrated in the song by the Good Women Choir cited below:

**ARA MI YÓÒ YÁ GÁGÁ<sup>9</sup>****TRANSLATION****Chorus:**

|                                                   |                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Bí mo bá fowó kan isétí aso rè ( x3)</i>       | If I touch the helm of his garment                             |
| <i>Ara mi yóò yá gaga</i>                         | I will be made whole                                           |
| <i>Ìgbàgó la fì ñ ríre gba lówó baba</i>          | We receive good things from God by faith                       |
| <i>Sá figbàgbó rò méni tó lè gbà ó arakùnrin</i>  | Brother hang on to the one that can help you                   |
| <i>Figbàgbó rò méni tó lè gbà ó arabìnrin</i>     | Sister hang on the one that can help you                       |
| <i>Ìgbà tí gbì ayé bá yí lù ó sá gbékè lé e</i>   | When the storms of life turn at you just trust him             |
| <i>Kó gbogbo àníyàn re lólúwa sá ti gbàgbó</i>    | and cast all your cares on God                                 |
| <i>Obinrin onisun eje to f'igbagbo to Jesu wa</i> | The woman with the issue of blood who came to Jesus with faith |
| <i>Níbè ló ríre gbà, ìsun èjè sì dúró láí</i>     | There she was blessed, The issue of blood ceased               |
| <i>Torí pó gbàgbó, ara rè sì yá gágá x 2</i>      | because she had faith her body was made whole                  |
| <i>Námànì figbàgbó we nínú omi, ó daségun</i>     | Naman washed in the water by faith and he became victorious    |
| <b>Solo:</b> <i>Ìwo arákùnrin</i>                 | You brother                                                    |
| <b>All:</b> <i>Sá ti figbàgbó rò mólúwa</i>       | Just hold on to God by faith                                   |
| <b>Solo:</b> <i>Ìwo arabìnrin</i>                 | You sister                                                     |
| <b>All:</b> <i>Sá ti figbàgbó rò mólúwa...</i>    | Just hold on to God by faith                                   |

<sup>9</sup> From the Good Women Choir's (C.A.C Ibadan led by Mrs D.A Fasoyin) album 'Odun nlo Sopin' Ibukun Orison Iye Records MOLPS 66. 1979.

This song is a declaration of faith that gives Biblical examples of people who were healed from sicknesses and delivered from situations that are considered unusual or abnormal. The song encourages people to demonstrate their faith in order to get healed as did the people mentioned in the song. The chorus and the first verse are based on the Biblical story of the woman with the issue of blood (as recorded in Matthew.9:20-21) who was miraculously healed by Jesus by touching his garment. "Ara mi yio ya gaga" (my body will be made whole) refers to expectation for physical healing after touching Jesus. "Ara" refers to the part of the body that is usually affected or infected with diseases, "ya" means healed while "gaga" implies the totality or perfection of the healing. Other references in the song are to Naaman who was healed of leprosy (2 Kings. 5:9 – 14) and Hannah who was healed of barrenness (1 Samuel.1:9 – 20).

### ***TWO: Spiritual Illness and Healing***

Reference to spiritual illness is in respect to the subject of sin which is believed to be responsible for many forms of illnesses. Sin involves insensitivity to the things of God, worldliness, a lack of zeal for the things of God, fighting in the church and disobedience of all sorts. Spiritual illness is evident in the moral decadence in the society, unrighteousness in the nation and a lack of faith which makes people, even Christians, to trust in other gods or idols for help. It is believed that it is because there is spiritual sickness that things have gone wrong in the nation as well as with individuals. Healing from spiritual sickness as found in gospel songs is by accepting Jesus Christ as Savior who will help individuals and the nation to live righteously and run away from the vices. The state of the Christian church is generally assessed by the quality of the lives of individuals that make up the church, and this is usually cited as a reflection of the spiritual state of the nation. The misdeeds, misconducts and shortcomings found in the church and in the lives of professed Christians are considered to be spiritual illnesses and repentance is believed to bring about the required healing. An examination of the next song by Evangelist Bola Are gives a clearer picture of what the gospel musicians perceive as spiritual illness.

#### **NÀÌJÍRÌÀ PADÀ WÁLÉ<sup>10</sup>**

*Nàìjírìà padà walé o ojó ñ lo*  
*Nàìjírìà padà wálé o baba re ñ retí re*

*Epo tá a gbójú lé ti tán*  
*Kòkó, obì, òpe, kofí*  
*Kò mà mú èso-wá mó-òn*

#### **TRANSLATION**

Nigeria return home, time is going  
 Nigeria return home your father is  
 expecting you  
 The crude oil you trust in is exhausted  
 Cocoa, kolanut, palm trees, coffee  
 no longer yield fruits

<sup>10</sup> From the record album 'Nigeria Pada wa'le', Lagos: Polygram Records, OJLP 22. 1986

|                                                |                                                |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <i>E rántí pé nígbà tómo onínàákúnàá</i>       | Remember that when the prodigal                |
| <i>parí ogún</i>                               | son exhausted his inheritance he               |
|                                                | ran back                                       |
| <i>Ó sá padà wálé baba rẹ̀</i>                 | to his father's house                          |
| <i>Nàìjíríà ronú kó o pìwàdà lóníí o</i>       | Nigeria, think and repent today                |
| <i>Nàìjíríà padà wálé o, baba re ñ réti re</i> | Nigeria return home your father's              |
|                                                | expecting you                                  |
| <i>Ìwo ilẹ̀ Nàìjíríà, gbórò olúwa</i>          | Land of Nigeria, hear the word of the Lord     |
| <i>Ìwo èdà inú rẹ̀, gbórò olúwa</i>            | All creatures in it, hear the word of the Lord |
| <i>Ó tó géé kí o yí padà sí Olórun</i>         | It is time for you to turn to the Lord         |
| <i>tó sèpilẹ̀ re</i>                           | your maker                                     |
| <i>Alámò tó mo Nàìjíríà ló ñ pè é kó</i>       | The potter who formed Nigeria is               |
| <i>padà wá sílé</i>                            | calling her to return home                     |
| <i>Kó má bàà tú ká yángá...</i>                | so that it will not scatter                    |
| <i>Ìrànlowó Nàìjíríà kò sí lówó</i>            | Nigeria's help is not in the hand of humans    |
| <i>èniyàn rará</i>                             |                                                |
| <i>Bí kò se lówó Olórun oba</i>                | It is in the hand of God the king              |
| <i>E tètè wá Olórun kásìkò tó pé jù o...</i>   | Quickly seek the Lord before it is too late    |

From the above song we can infer that spiritual illness is perceived to be turning away from God by individuals or a nation towards wealth. Nigeria trusted in crude oil and other agricultural produce which brought her wealth. As in 1986, when the song was released, Nigeria was going through an economic recession. It was a time when natural resources failed to sustain its economy. Nigeria in this song is likened to the biblical "prodigal son" (in Luke.15:11 – 32) who getting his inheritance from his father spent it lavishly in riotous living, that rendered him so destitute that at a point he had to serve as a slave in another man's farm. Wandering away from God brings suffering upon the nation and its citizens such as poverty, joblessness and other calamities. The song therefore calls Nigerians to return to God who is waiting, like a father, for his prodigal son. The song writers' call can be summarized in the words of Ijiomah J.N when he said there is an inner voice speaking to humanity that something is fundamentally wrong with mankind. Man, the crown of God's creation, needs to rethink, retract his steps, and take careful inventory of his whole life.<sup>11</sup> A call for 'rethink' or repentance is made in the words "*Nigeria ronú kó piwada lóníí o*". According to this song by Bola Are, spiritual illness is also manifested in disunity among the Christian churches and religious leaders, hence the call for unity.

11 Ijiomah J.N. "A Biblical Response to Globalization" in Ogbomoso Journal of Theology. Number 10, December, 2005, pp. 50-56

### THREE: Social Illness and Healing

Society is said to be sick when because its wellbeing is threatened by such vices as cultism, drugs, rubbery and laziness. The social structures are also referred to as being sick when water, electricity, good roads and shelter are not readily available or functioning optimally. The concerned citizens express this through various means, one being some of the songs of the gospel musicians. They also indirectly use satirical stories in their songs that present solutions. One of the issues commonly raised by gospel musicians as a social illness is penury. This may lead to sickness through expensive health services, the inability to pay house rents or build one's own house, and pupils dropping out of school which breeds miscreants in society. When poverty plagues the people it is believed by the gospel musicians that this is the work of the devil which must be put to an end by God.

Issues about relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children also form part of the sociological issues raised in Nigerian gospel music. Appeals are made for good relationships between husbands and wives, and parents are encouraged to raise their children in a godly way. Calls are often made for unity, understanding and togetherness between the various ethnic groups in the country. When there is problem of relationship in the home and in society, this is regarded as a social illness and healing occurs through the restoration of good relationship. Example of this is seen in songs by the late Bayo Adegboyega such as "*Oko nse bebe*"<sup>12</sup> and "*Ife laarin toko taya*"<sup>13</sup> "*Ododo ni ngborile ede leke*"<sup>14</sup> In the following song Bayo Adegboyega paints a picture of what was wrong with Nigeria as a nation in different spheres of her life namely: economic, political and spiritual.

#### ÀIRÍNÁ, ÀIRÍLÒ OLÚWA JÉ KÓ DÓPIN<sup>15</sup>

#### TRANSLATION

**Chorus:** *Ipá èsù gbogbo kó dópin x 2*  
*Àiríná, àirílò tó wà nígboro*  
*Àiríse, àiríje tó gbayé kan*

All of Satan's power should cease  
 Poverty and lack is prevalent in the town  
 Joblessness, hunger that has overtaken the world

*Èmí òkùnkùn tí ñ gbéraga*  
*níwájú ìmólè*  
*Isé èsù ni, a fé kó dópin*

The spirit of darkness that brags before  
 the light  
 It's Satan's work we want to cease

12 From Bayo Adegboyega's record album 'Ilu le koko', Lagos: Ibukun Orisun Iye Records, SAACO/LP/002 1987

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 From the record album 'Oro aiye n'fe adura', Lagos: SAACO/LP/001 1986

**All:** Repeat Chorus

**Solo:** *Gbogbo agbára láyé àtòrun* All power on earth and in  
*ñ be lówó Jésù* heaven is in the hand of Jesus

**All:** *Ki Jesu yara wa o bawa t'aye se* Jesus come quickly to restore the world

**Solo:** *Ilè tó ñ sàń fún wàrà àti fún oyin* Nigeria is a country flowing with  
*ni Nigeria* milk and honey

**All:** *Sùgbón àwon jegúdújerá* But the destroyers (spendthrifts)  
*Won ti solè yíi dahoro* have made the rich house desolate

**Solo:** *Bóbá ayé kò mú won,* If the earthly king does not catch them  
*Won ò le bó lówó oba òrun* they cannot escape the king of heaven

**All:** *Orí aláìsè tó ñ ìyà lówólówó á* The head of the sinless who is suffering  
*dá won léjò* will judge them

**Solo:** *Ni asiko yi t'oro aje wa o se dede* This time that our economy is not  
*se agbe* doing well

**All:** *Ki gbogbo Nigeria ka tera mo* Let all Nigerians work hard farming

**Solo:** *Ní àsìkò yí tí owó epo* This time that crude oil price is unstable  
*ñ se ségesège*

**All:** *Kí joba Nàìjíríà ko mú iwúrí bá* the Nigerian government should  
*isé àgbè o* encourage farming

**All:** Repeat Chorus

**Solo:** *Eni bá létí kó fí gbó* Whoever has ears should hear  
*Eni bá lógbón kó gba x 2* Whosoever is wise should accept what  
*Ohun tí èmí Olórun ñ wí* the spirit of God is saying to Nigeria  
*fún Nàìjíríà...*

The first part of the song makes direct reference to the negative predicaments of citizens and the writer prays for divine intervention because he saw these things as the work of Satan. The predicaments listed in the song include "Airina" (poverty); "Airilo" (lack); "Airise" (joblessness); "Airije" (hunger). This was the situation in Nigeria in 1986 when late Bayo Adegboyega released the album. It was a time when the military ruled the country and things were really difficult for the citizens, mainly because of the dictatorial style of the military and also the sanctions placed on the country by other countries as a protest against military rule. The song also discussed the political situation of the country and particularly the financial recklessness of the leaders who more or less ruined the economy of the nation. This is presented in the phrase "*Ile to nsan fun wara ati fun oyin ni Nigeria, Sugbon awon jegudujera won ti so'le yi dahoro*" meaning 'Nigeria is a blessed country flowing with milk and honey but the destroyers or wasters have turned it to a desolate country'. "Wara" (milk) and "Oyin" (honey) are symbolic objects signifying blessing and abundant resources with which the country Nigeria is blessed, but these resources are not enjoyed by the citizens because of the corrupt leaders who embezzle and mismanage them. These leaders are referred to as "Jegudujera" which translated literally means one who eats without leaving a trace. "Won ti so'le ola d'ahoro" is a description of the extent of destruction done to the economy of the nation by the leadership of that time. When the country is ill, relationships are affected, social amenities are inadequate, citizens live with suspicion and social vices increase. No wonder the song writer prayed for healing and that the evil that plagued the society should "Ko do pin", or come to an end.

#### **FOUR: Political Illness and Healing**

The political situation of Nigeria is plagued by many vices, which make not only the gospel musicians but every citizen say that the Nigerian political system is sick due to tribalism, thuggery and other negativities. A.U. Iwara defined this situation as 'identity politics'. According to him, it is a situation in which considerations of ethnicity, cultural and religious affinity predominates and influences decision-making, in terms of political appointments and the type and location of government projects to be executed. He further states that identity politics refers particularly to the political system in this country in which politicians campaigning for votes tend to rely, not so much on the strength of their political ideas and programs, but primarily on their ethnic, religious and social affiliations and connections<sup>16</sup>. Nigerian politics could be described as being plagued by corruption, killings, bad leadership,

16 Iwara A.U. "Identity Politics, Globalization and Socio-Political Engineering in Nigeria" in Duro Oni, Suman Gupta and others (Eds) *Nigeria and Globalization Discourses on Identity Politics and Social Conflict*. Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization. pp. 19–36 (2004)

embezzlement, rigged elections not fulfilling election promises and insensitivity to the needs of the citizens and so on. 'God fatherism' or when that people get to power without the necessary qualifications is another bane in Nigeria's politics today. All of these have grave consequences on the citizens and are criticized by gospel musicians. Bola Are's song "Nigeria Pada Wa'le" and Bayo Adegboyega's "Airina, Airilo, Oluwa je ko dopin" cited earlier for instance s gives us insight to the gospel musician's perception of political illness.

#### **FIVE : Economic Illness and Healing**

Economic crisis breeds poverty in the nation and is a major subject of concern for the gospel musicians. When the economy is not doing well it is said to be ill, and needs healing in form of a positive turn-around of the economy. Economic illness is manifested in the citizen's inability to make ends meet or get the basic comforts of life. It is also evident in the collapse of people's business and joblessness. One aspect of economic illness is the inflation that is prevalent in the country and the weakness of the Nigerian currency when compared to international countrys. This is illustrated in the excerpt from a song titled "Ilu le Koko" by Bayo Adegboyega.<sup>17</sup>

#### **ÌLÚ LE KOKO**

#### **TRANSLATION**

##### **Chorus:**

*Ìlú le koko o, Olórún wá sòlú dèrò*

The country is very hard, God come  
and soften it

*Ká rí je, ká rí mu, ká rí ná, ká rí lò*

Let's have enough to eat, drink, spend,  
use

*Ká rówó fí sìn ó*

Let us have money to serve you

*Olórún wá sòlú dèrò*

God come and soften the country

##### **Solo:**

*Ìlú o déédé le, àwon aráabí ni e bi*

The country is not just hard, ask these  
people

*Àwon jegúdújerá, àwon aráabí ni e bi*

Those who eat and finish everything

*Àwon àfèmi, àfèmi, àwon aráabí ni e bi*

Those who knows only about themselves

*Àwon bó-ti-le-rí-ó-rí, àwon aráabí ni e bi*

Those who don't care what happens

*Gbogbo àwon ajunilo, àwon aráabí ni e bi*

all those who are big

*Àwon kénimáníí, àwon aráabí ni e b*

Those who don't want others to have

*Àwon igi dá, eye fò, àwon aráabí ni e bi*

Those who fly when the tree brakes

*Ìlú le débi wí pé*

the country is hard to the point that

*Baba ò le bi omo bóyá ó ti yó*

A father cannot ask if the child is filled

<sup>17</sup> From the album 'Ilu Le Koko'. Lagos: Ibukun Orisun Iye Records, SAACO/LP/002 1987

|                                             |                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Àyàfi bóyá ó ti jeun</i>                 | but whether he has eaten                                 |
| <i>A ò lè jehun tó wù wá mó,</i>            | We can no longer eat what we desire                      |
| <i>Ohun tí a rí là ñ je</i>                 | We eat what we find                                      |
| <i>A ò lè sisé tó wù wá mó,</i>             | We can no longer have a job that we desire               |
| <i>Ohun tí a rí là ñ se</i>                 | We do whatever job we find                               |
| <i>A ò le gun mótò tó wù wá,</i>            | We can no longer ride the car of our desire              |
| <i>Okò tí a rí là ñ gùn o</i>               | We ride whatever car we find                             |
| <i>A ò lè woso tó wù wá mó,</i>             | We can no longer wear clothes that we desire             |
| <i>aso tí a rí là ñ wò o</i>                | We put on whatever clothes we find                       |
| <i>A ò lè gbélé tó ù wá mó,</i>             | We can no longer live in the house that we desire        |
| <i>Ilé tí a rí là ñ gbé o</i>               | We live in any house that we find                        |
| <i>Oluwa wá pàgbà yìí dà x 2</i>            | Lord come and change this season                         |
| <i>Kó o bá wa múgbà tó dùn wá</i>           | bring to us a good season                                |
| <i>Baba bojú wolè , dákun wá pàse ìtura</i> | Father look down, please command a refreshing time to us |

In the above song Bayo Adegboyega sings about the poor state of the Nigeria economy in 1987 and the attendant effects on the citizens manifesting in joblessness, hardships and financial constraints. He also talks about the cause of economic illness which fundamentally includes corrupt leadership and over-dependence on crude oil. He goes further to give suggestions of what he thinks are the way out. The song prays for healing of the economy by asking God to change the season of lack and poverty and bring in season that refreshes the country.

### Conclusion

It has been observed that there are terms, descriptions and symbolic representations in the gospel songs of south-western Nigeria for illness and healing that are connected with the expressions used in the context of the culture and traditions within which the musicians grow. Ideas for compositions and issues raised in the Nigerian gospel music are drawn from the daily occurrences in the society and are reflections of the social, economic, political and religious realities of the country.

It has therefore been observed that illness as reflected in gospel music refers not only to physical disability or ailments but also to sociological, economic, political and religious disorders. These phenomena are considered in gospel songs not only as they affect individuals, but also as they affect social groups, communities and the nation at large. The concepts of illness and healing in gospel songs reflect the

realities as they are experienced by the musicians themselves and the general masses which they often represent. In short the study showed that gospel musicians perceived illness not only as a state of a physical ailment or dysfunction but also a social disorder.

An attempt has also been made in this work to analyze the content of some gospel music recordings to bring out the manifestations of illness as perceived by the musicians who have evolved terms and expressions related to these states of health. Issues about illness in Nigerian gospel songs touch specific areas of human lives that are capable of being infected with one form of illness or the other: namely physical illness, spiritual illness, social illness, political illness and economic illness. However, gospel songs also centre on spiritual healing and resolution for both individual and of Nigeria as a nation. Nigerian gospel musician therefore not only use their music for as a tool for social commentary, but also in that it helps create an agenda for social reconstruction.

### Suggestions for Further Reading

- Ajirire, Tosin and Alabi, Wale (1992). *Three Decades of Nigerian Music: 1960–1990*. Lagos: Limelight Showbiz Publication
- Akpabot, Samuel Ekpe (1986). *Foundation of Nigerian Traditional Music*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books limited.
- Costen, Melva Wilson (2004). *In Spirit and in Truth: The Music of African American Worship*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Darden, Robert (2005). *People Get Ready: A New History of Black Gospel Music*, U.S.A: Continuum International Publishing Group
- Halter, Carl. (1955) *The Practice of Sacred Music*, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House.
- Hastings, Adrian (1976). *African Christianity*, London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
- Kirk-Green, Anthony and Douglas, Rimmer (1981). *Nigeria Since 1970: A Political and Economic Outline*, London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Martins, Peters J. (1995). *Sounds and Society: Themes in the Sociology of Music*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Mbiti, John (1969). *African Religions and Philosophy*, London: Heineman.
- Mechanic, D. (1968). *Medical Sociology: A Selective View*. New York: Free Press
- Omojola, Bode (1995). *Nigerian Art Music*, Ibadan: IFRA
- Onimode, Bade (1983). *Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria*. Ibadan: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Pass David P. (1989). *Music in the Church: A Theology of Church Music*, Nashville: Broadman.
- Spencer, John Michael. (1990) *Protest and Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion* Minneapolis: Fortress press.
- Waterman, Christopher Alan (1990). *Juju – A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.