CONTESTING NORMS: EMERGING TRENDS IN YORUBA ISLAMIC MUSIC IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: Contemporary Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria has changed in the last decade and Yoruba Muslim listeners are experiencing music in new ways. This article explores various trends in contemporary Yoruba Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria. The Yoruba are predominantly in southwestern Nigeria and extend to parts of central Nigeria and the West African coast of the Republic of Benin. The article draws on purposefully selected, recorded compositions of Yoruba Islamic artists produced on compact discs between 1979 and 2020, YouTube Videos and in-depth interviews to yield a comprehensive view of the music. It employs Vejlgaard's (2018) trendspotting theory as a theoretical framework to analyse the texts. It examines the tendencies that shape the re-articulation of religion through the "Muslim sound" and problematises an understanding of the direction of change in contemporary Islamic music. The article argues that contemporary Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria is a product of the quest for Islamic identity and the commodification of musical and social values. This argument puts in context the many dynamics behind the transformations in contemporary Islamic music in Nigeria. Muslim singers draw on the strength of Nigeria's thriving urban culture industry by adopting production, circulation, and marketing strategies that sustain the commercially successful Nigerian entertainment industry. This development is part of a global reality of social change and modernity transforming Islamic consciousness.

Keywords: commodification, digital media, gospel, innovation, Islamic, music, trend, Yoruba

Introduction

There has been a tremendous transformation in how Muslims in southwestern Nigeria experience Yoruba Islamic music.[1] In the early 1980s, only Muslims listened to Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, it had grown into a significant music genre enjoyed by all, irrespective of one's beliefs. "Islam" is an Arabic word meaning surrender, submission, or obedience. These attributes sum up its central message: "that human beings must surrender themselves to God" (Gulevich 2004, 33). According to Gulevich (Ibid.), followers of Islam are called Muslims, meaning "those who submit." Depending on the context, I use the word "Islam", where there is a strong identification with the doctrine of Islam, and the word "Muslim" refers to adherents of Islam. The Yoruba, one of Nigeria's three major ethnic

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groups, are predominantly in southwestern Nigeria and extend to parts of central Nigeria and the Republic of Benin. In Islam, "music" connotes instrumental music or singing accompanied by instruments (Otterbeck 2021; Sabri 1995). Although the Salafis and Ahlus Sunnah groups in many Muslim societies prohibit almost all forms of musical expression, music is more recognised by many other Muslims. For example, music constitutes a significant part of the religious practices of many Sufi orders (Qureshi 1995).

In southwestern Nigeria, the prohibition or censorship of music in Islam is largely absent. The typical approach to Islamic music among Muslims in this society is an endorsement of what expressly conveys religious sentiments and the disapproval of practices that contradict piety. Islamic music in this article refers to commercially circulated music, synthesising Islamic worship lyrics and traditional African idioms accompanied by musical instruments such as the drum set, electric guitar, keyboard and talking drum. This music is distinct from other genres of Yoruba music such as the *apala*, *fuji*, and *sakara*, which are generally performed by Muslims outside religious contexts (Omojola 2017, 415).

Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria is experiencing extraordinary growth because of its innovative content and secular sound. It is a mix of Yoruba cultural practices which answer to the forces of global capitalism. This collaboration of religion and entertainment has transformed the outlook of Islamic music in this context from its orthodox, *Assalat* (prayerful and Arabo-influenced musical styles) character into a thriving popular music genre.

Studies on Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria have focused mainly on the role of music in promoting Islam (Adekoya 2012) and the Islamic influence on Yoruba popular music (Olatunji 2012; Omibiyi-Obidike 1979; Omojola 2012). Literature, however, shows that not much work has addressed current changes in Yoruba Islamic music. Adekoya (2012) emphasises the role of music in promoting Islam, while Daramola (2007) appraises the contribution of *Alasalatu* women groups in promoting Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria. The *Assalat* group was established to provide a forum for Muslim women to interact and grow spiritually. According to Daramola (2007, 78), "the idea of music making began with the women singing *dhikr (*the remembrance of Allah) during their prayers when Arabic texts were melodiously rendered during supplications."

This article examines the trends and the driving forces behind the transformation in contemporary Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria. It explores the direction of changes that characterise innovation in Yoruba Islamic music. It analyses the tendencies that shape the re-articulation of religion through a "Muslim sound" and problematises an understanding of the direction of change in contemporary Islamic music. The article argues that contemporary Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria is a product of the quest for Islamic identity and commodification. This argument puts in context the many dynamics behind the transformation in contemporary Islamic music in Nigeria.

The data used for the study consists of purposefully selected, recordings of Yoruba

Islamic music artists produced on compact discs between 1979 and 2020, YouTube videos and in-depth interviews. I transcribed the lyrics of selected songs in Yoruba and translated them into English for interpretation and analysis. I draw on Vejlgaard's (2018) theory of trend spotting for the analysis. The following sections of this article provide the theoretical framework for the discussion, contextual background and an analysis of the trends in contemporary Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria.

Conceptual framework

Before discussing the patterns of changes in Yoruba Islamic music, it is necessary to articulate the multiple perspectives associated with the term, "trend." A trend is generally about "the direction in which something develops or changes over time" (Vejlgaard 2018, 6). Although the term enjoys much visibility in sectors such as economics, fashion and the media, "trends can designate the background movement of a society" (Erner 2016, 13). This opinion suggests that trends are discernible in several ways of life. Vejlgaard (2008, 20) says that "a trend is a process of change that (sometimes) comes about because of product development that (sometimes) results in new products." Thus, change is an essential part of the definition of trends. Vejlgaard posits that "a trend is often a reaction to what has become mainstream or has been on the market for many years" (2018, 7). A predictable pattern repeatedly occurs whenever a new trend emerges. Studying trends makes it possible to understand the emerging mindset that reflects changes and what is behind socio-cultural shifts. Vejlgaard's trend theory can be summarised as two broad aspects. The first aspect is that people create trends, and one should observe those concerned with new and innovative styles. The second aspect is that trend spotting is possible through observation, whether in real life or the media. He identifies certain conditions that should be met if a trend is likely to become visible in the mainstream. These conditions will be discussed in the analysis of the trends in Yoruba Islamic music.

Islam, music and the Yoruba

Contrary to Muslims' perception of Islam as a timeless, unchanging, universal religion, sufficient literature points to the contrary (Ogundipe 2018, 177). Several scholars (Asad 1986; Loimeier 2013; Soares and Otayele 2007; Starrett 1997) have shown that the assumption of a homogenous and singularly orthodox Islam is incapable of characterising the various contexts of Muslim cultures and societies. The paradigm of multiple cultures and communities in which elements of Islam are integrated into a plurality of local contexts proves relevant for discussing contemporary Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria (Loimeier 2013). The Yoruba contact with Islam is commonly traced to the period of trans-Saharan trade around the eighteenth century (Balogun 1978; Gbadamosi 1978). Many studies on Islam in Yoruba privilege the narrative in which adaptation and dynamic change have been critical to its development (Akinade 2014; Balogun 2011; Obadare 2016; Peel 2016; Soares 2006). Other studies explore the tensions and contradictions in religious encounters between Pentecostal Christianity

and Islamic groups in southwestern Nigeria, bringing to attention their dramatic responses to each other.

Whichever way one may conceptualise the recent developments in Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria, the dynamics of Yoruba culture operate primarily at its centre. Beyond the shared community values of Yoruba identity, scholars generally agree that shared culture, language and origin myths bind the Yoruba together (Falola and Genova 2006; Paden 2005). Complementing the Yoruba identity is the strong endorsement of religious pluralism. Christianity, Islam and traditional African belief systems are publicly accommodated and practised. Numerous studies have acknowledged widespread religious tolerance and fundamental spiritual freedom that acknowledges individuals' right to choose their God (Adesanmi 2012; Dopamu 1984). This multi-religious environment in Yoruba society is closely connected to the nature of Islamic music-making and its later development.

Analysis of trends in contemporary Islamic music

The analysis indicates that contemporary Yoruba Islamic music fulfils the primary conditions for trend spotting because of its reinvention and closure of the boundary between the secular and spiritual. In the early 1980s, mainstream Islamic music was characterised by Qur'anic recitation in Arabic and a music style that promoted supplication and worship. The common trend included preaching, evoking the love of Allah, songs of praise to Mohammed, embracing Islamic ethics, and rejecting values that promoted traditional African religions. For instance, the first generation of Islamic musicians in southwestern Nigeria, such as Nawar-Ud-Deen female singers, Abdulwahab Falowo, Abdullahi Akinbode, Lateef Fagbayi Oloto and Rafiu Babatunde, frequently began their performances with recitations from the Qur'an as a profound act of worship. This practice is evident in "Muhammad the One sent by God" by Abdulwahab Falowo, "Oh God, shower your blessings on the Prophet" by Nawar-Ud-Deen female singers, and "The Ninety-Nine Names of Allah" by Lateef Fagbayi Oloto, among others. In contemporary Yoruba Islamic music, however, there are variations in the lyrics and sound.

Contemporary Yoruba Islamic music features Islamic worship lyrics and is accompanied by a combination of Western and traditional instruments such as the drum set, electric guitar, keyboard, saxophone, *sákárà* drum and *gángán* talking drum.[2] The Muslim artists incorporate their melismatic vocal style, together with local and foreign musical instruments used by highlife, juju and fuji musicians, into their music to create a distinctive music style. These genres of music are the most important Yoruba *àríyá* (celebration) sounds frequently performed as dance music during life-cycle celebrations and festivities. This development also positions Yoruba Islamic music as dance music, with dancing as an essential feature of Yoruba Islamic music-making.

[2] Sakara is a small round drum, which is like a tambourine. It is beaten with a stick. The talking drum is an hourglass-shaped drum, whose pitch can be regulated to mimic the tone and prosody of human speech (Beier 1954). It appears in most styles of Nigerian pop music.

Although one would expect to encounter sacred performances characterised by Qur'anic recitations in this music, it does not necessarily conform to Islamic music in its strictest interpretation as the sonic content is a blending of the religious and secular.

A critical concern of key practitioners such as musicians, producers, and marketers in the Islamic music industry in southwestern Nigeria is how to reconcile the religious goal with the wide acceptability of the music. According to Sunday Esan, the Chief Executive of Okiki Films and Music Promotions, "the goal of the music is to come up with songs that will teach the tenets of Islam and do it in such a way that will attract much audience through the beat" (Interview 14 September 2018).[3] This factor accounts for the intermingling of vocal and compositional styles derived from Islamic consciousness and secular sounds. Occasionally, Islamic musicians remixed and adapted commercially successful secular and Christian gospel music in southwestern Nigeria. Such combinations would have been considered sinful several decades ago. However, the musicians' efforts have continuously yielded an increasing circulation and all-embracing music consumption. For example, Aminat Ajao, a leading Yoruba Islamic singer, remarks that people patronise her because of "meaningful percussion" and "danceable music." According to her, "a good beat attracts people to the music" (Transformation CD, 2017).

Yoruba Islamic music demonstrates a critical condition of trend-making; its emergence is a reaction to the early start of Yoruba Islamic music, mainly devoid of instruments. The introduction of musical instruments and secular sounds is part of the Yoruba Muslims' response to Christian evangelisation in southwestern Nigeria. As Abdullahi Akinbode, a pioneer of Yoruba Islamic music, remarks, "they created the music to keep Muslims closer to the faith" (Alabi 2017). The inclusion of various types of musical instruments, both local and Western, in Yoruba Islamic music purposely diverts people's attention from listening to music that is not deemed Islamic. It helps listeners to concentrate on the Islamically oriented pieces of music.

Regarding those who have promoted the changes in Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria, both male and female Muslim musicians, producers and marketers are actively involved in the culture industry. These trendsetters operate in Lagos and Ibadan, the major commercial cities in southwestern Nigeria. In the beginning, the male voice dominated the music, while women served as backing vocalists. However, there is now a considerable presence of female lead vocalists. Prominent singers include Aminat Ajao, Fatimah Jafarayat, Hafsat Sideeq, Kafayat Adeleke, Mariam Akiki and Rukayat Gawat. These women are Islamic music singers in their own right who actively reflect not only on religious and moral discourse but give voice to the complexities that define women's experiences of marriage, religion and culture. They deploy Islamic music to reflect on the themes of pain and violence inflicted upon women by men. Some of their album titles include, *Men are wicked*, *The character of men*, *My heart cry*, *Who is guilty*

[3] Okiki Films and Music is a music production and marketing company based in Lagos, Nigeria.

of adultery, *See what my husband turns me to*, and *Problematic in-laws,* among others.[4] They have extended the scope of Yoruba Islamic music through expanded themes from the religious and moral discourse to issues of gender identity and domestic violence.

The next category of trend spotting in Vejlgaard's (2018) model is replicating a trend or style for success. His emphasis that a trend must connect with the movie industry is evident in the aesthetic strategy of contemporary Yoruba Islamic music. The Muslim musicians' styles can be broadly divided into two categories: the recovery of the past through Yoruba folk opera, and, the incorporation of modern aesthetics of Nigerian video and popular culture. By combining the past and the present, Muslim artists have developed a hybrid character through constant borrowings of cultural resources such as the assimilation of Yoruba popular music percussion, the adoption of Western hip hop sounds and the incorporation of Christian Gospel tunes. This effort is part of the global realities of social change and modernity transforming Islamic consciousness (Otterbeck and Ackfeldt 2012).

The Yoruba folk opera describes a highly successful theatrical practice in southwestern Nigeria in the late 1940s-1970s, where Yoruba theatre companies performed musical plays (Beier 1954, 32).[5] It developed from the folk music tradition of storytelling. The tradition of narrating folk stories with songs to teach in an African context is not new; what is novel is the context in which they are used in the Yoruba Islamic music of the twenty-first century. According to Akinyemi (1998, 170), "in folk music, the mood has no bounds, and precisely this latitude allows much freedom for musical growth." Yoruba theatre practitioners such as Duro Ladipo, Hubert Ogunde and Kola Ogunmola popularised the genre by combining songs with dance and drama, using these hybrid forms to depict different aspects of Yoruba lifestyle and culture as they travelled around West Africa. Euba (1970, 93) reinforces this claim when he asserts that the Yoruba version of music drama has "lesser influences from European spoken drama, and little or no influence from Grand Opera." As part of historical recuperation, the artists adopt different elements from Yoruba folk music; for example, narrative ballads, game songs, praise songs (panegyrics), and proverbial songs. Most often, appropriate traditional Yoruba costumes are used during the performance. It is upon this neotraditional style that much of the contemporary Yoruba Islamic music is constructed. This shift from the exotic Arabo-Islamic heritage reflects the postcolonial

[4] Amina Ajao, 2018.*Ohun Ọkọ Sọ Mí Dà* (What my husband turned me to), Leed Music: Lagos. n.a. (VCD); Amina Ajao, 2020. *Ọ̀dájú Ọkùnrin* (Wicked Man). Leed Music: Lagos.n.a.(VCD); Seidat Sofiat, 2016. *Ìkà Lọkùnrin* (Men are Wicked), Olasco Films and Records: Lagos. n.a. (VCD); Alhaja Mistura, 2017. *Ìwà Ọkùnrin* (Character of Men). Libra Music: Lagos.n. a (VCD); Rukayat Gawat, 2020. *Ọgbẹ́ Ọkàn* (My Heart Cry). Okiki Films and Music: Lagos.n.a. (VCD); Seidat Sofiat, 2020. *Agb'ọ́kọlórí.* Okiki Films and Music: Lagos.n.a. (VCD); Rukayat Gawat, 2017. *Ìyá Ọko* (Mother-in-Law). Okiki Films and Music: Lagos.n. a (VCD).

[5] Theatre in Nigeria began in Yoruba land with the pioneering works of Hubert Ogunde, Kola Ogunmola and Duro Ladipo. Yoruba travelling and popular theatre artists had established themselves in Yoruba land for several decades (beginning in the 1940s) before the transition to the cinema in the early 1970s.

character of African literary and verbal arts. However, the cultural producers in this discussion are not singing against an exotic "Other"; the cultural recuperation appears as a response to the demands of a changing Yoruba society.

Furthermore, the Muslim musicians did not limit themselves to singing alone but also made considerable effort in terms of dance and dramatic performance. This kind of fusion has challenges, particularly in having professional entertainers perform the roles. The artists overcame the challenge through collaboration with one another. The involvement of other musicians is beneficial because it strengthens the quality of the performance and demonstrates that celebrated stars are involved in the musicals. The posters of Islamic music albums in Figures 1 and 2 below resemble a typical Nigerian Home Video film.

Figures 1, 2 and 4 illustrate promotional posters of contemporary Islamic music in

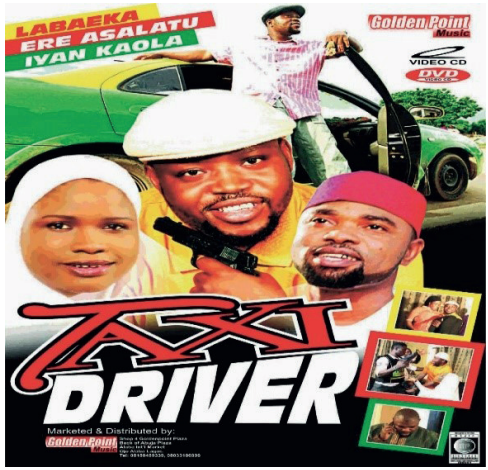

Figure 1. Yoruba Islamic music poster. Golden Point Music, Lagos, Nigeria. https://web.facebook.com/goldenpointmusic/?_rdc=1&_rdr. Screenshot taken by Author.

Figure 2. Yoruba Islamic music poster. Eleshinnla Digital World, Ilorin, Nigeria. https://web.facebook.com/groups/3092046287539861/about. Screenshot taken by Author.

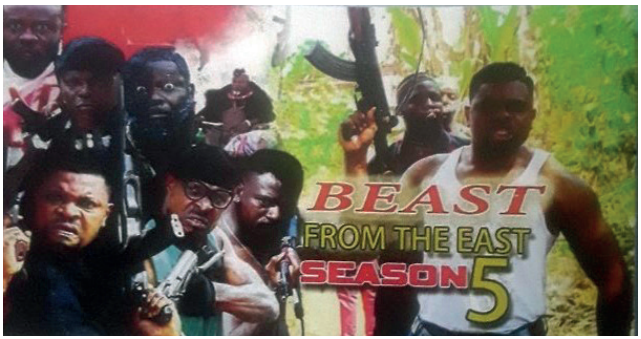

Figure 3. A Nigerian video film poster. Prime-World Production, Lagos, Nigeria. Source: Prince Iyke Olisa@Prinziyke/Twitter

Figure 4: Screenshot "If not for Allah" by Odunlami Ayeloyun. Okiki Films and Music, Lagos. https://m.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1606011276290650. Screenshot taken by Author.

southwestern Nigeria, while Figure 3 is a poster of a Nigerian video film, "Beast from the East", directed by Prince Iyke Olisa.

In the music video illustrated in Figure 1 (*Taxi Driver*), three Yoruba Islamic music artists, Abdul-Kabir Bukola Alayande, Ibrahim Labaeka and Sofiat Qamarudeen, participated in the production. While in the musical item illustrated in *Igbonara – Jealousy* (Figure 2), two Muslim artists, Aminat Ajao Obirere and Abdul-Kabir Bukola Alayande, jointly performed the music. A casual observer will likely perceive the visuals as a typical Nigerian home video. These images reflect the strategy of reinventing Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria through the movie industry. This feature makes Yoruba Islamic music highly contemporary. The posters bear the pictures of prominent Yoruba Islamic musicians as means of advertisement, and use descriptive titles that are often in two lines in extra-large font and bold lettering.

Furthermore, the images in Figures 1 (*Taxi Driver*) and 2 (*Igbonara – Jealousy*) reveal

symbols that summarise the music video's narrative content and conflict. In Figure 1 (*Taxi Driver*), for instance, there is a taxicab in the background and other significant markers of cab life. These markers are indicators of the spatial and temporal settings of the musical. A man (Abdul-Kabir) is represented as holding a gun and pointing at a woman (Sofiat) with a Muslim identity by way of her outfit. Figure 2 (*Igbonara – Jealousy*) depicts a couple fighting, with the man looking perplexed as the wife holds the man's clothing. These two images seemingly disrupt the religious role of Islamic music, where Islamic values are propagated. They project women's ideological thoughts (about their tribulation at the hands of men) through the deployment of implicit characterisations, making these characters express (through their speech, looks and actions) frustrations and regrets around marital life. These verbal and visual signs are semiotic epithets that create important qualities around women in marital relationships in an implicit method of binary oppositions and gender normative stereotypes. Such methods of characterisation are strategic in helping the musicals maintain a kind of detachment from the ideological stance in defence of women. Figure 1 (*Taxi Driver*) shows the female character adorning a headscarf as a marker of Muslim identity, while the clothing in Figure 2 (*Igbonara – Jealousy*) reflects traditional Yoruba wear, demonstrating the indigenisation of the music. The pictures of other Muslim musicians in Figures 1 (*Taxi Driver*) and 2 (*Igbonara – Jealousy*) also show the collaboration of the Muslim musicians with one another in the joint production of albums.

Beyond the advertisements, the Muslim artists draw on the strength of the Nigerian Nollywood culture industry by appropriating existing mediation, representation, production, and marketing strategies. Larkin (2008) refers to the mediation strategies of Nigerian video films as "aesthetics of outrage." This assertion describes the use of melodrama to organise dramatic narratives "around a series of extravagant shocks designed to outrage the viewer" (Larkin 2008, 172). The Muslim musicians are fond of displaying this Nigerian Nollywood imagery, as in portraying the image of a highly successful superstar. This outlook reveals that Islamic music celebrities enjoy much attention, even on social media. Many of the singers are dressed in the traditional dress of the Yoruba as they perform Islamic music. By their actions, the singers attempt to locate themselves within their social and cultural environments.

Now and again, Muslim singers imitate the dress sense and dance steps of hip hop stars, as exemplified in Figure 4:

Figure 4 above is a screenshot of Odunlami Ayeloyun performing the song, "If not for Allah." Here is the Muslim musician dressed in a short-sleeve shirt and trousers with a fedora hat. This image was a popular brand figure in Nigeria between 2010 and 2015. Famous film actors and popular musicians in Nigeria wore this hat. The artist's sense of fashion suggests the identity of a fashionable celebrity. The mansion and the glittering sports car foregrounded in Figure 4 are popular indicators of a highly successful life. The portrayal of the image of wealth is common in the Nigerian Nollywood film industry. The artist's adoption of the Nigerian Nollywood strategy reflects a creative response to a popular musical trend and the patronage system in the Nigerian culture industry.

Moreover, Muslim musicians deploy forms from the Yoruba praise singing tradition. This practice is expected in Yoruba panegyrics, which Barber (1991, 21) describes as "attributions, appellations, or collections of epithets addressed to a subject." Muslim artists generally adapt two sub-genres of the praise tradition: praise for the wealthy and praise for the Divine (Allah). Singing the praise of benefactors and patrons in Islamic music is now common. This trend is prevalent in secular music because the political economy of Yoruba popular culture conditions its practice. The Yoruba Islamic music artists engage in praise-singing to earn money. Occasionally, the Yoruba music performers embark on self-praise by alluding to their lineages and backgrounds. This development is exemplified in the verse below from Amina Ajao's song, "Aminat Ajao–Uncommon Favour":

Oluwa olóore tí ò kọ́mọ́ọ́nú,	Lord of uncommon favour,
Darí óore tí ò kọ́mọ́ọ́nú sí ọ̀dọ̀ mi.	Direct uncommon favour to me.
Lásìkò yí, darí ẹ̀ sí ọ̀dọ̀ wa,	Send uncommon favour to us at this time,
T'awọn to ṣe irú ẹ̀ fún ó kọ́mọ́ọ́nú,	Those You blessed much are uncommon,
Ká'ráyé lè máa fi irú ẹ̀ ṭọrọ.	That people may see me as worthy of emulation.
Demilade, Alhaja Amina,	Demilade, Alhaja Amina,
Ọmọ Ajao, Amira, òbí rere,	Offspring of Ajao, Ameera, Obi rere,
Mo dé.	I am here.
Ọmọ a jà, má jẹ̀bi ni mí.	Daughter of one who fights and is not dishonoured.

Translation from Yoruba into English by Author

In the above excerpt, Amina Ajao first praises God as the custodian of uncommon favour. She then calls on the Lord to direct uncommon blessings to her. This decision reiterates her inclination to the supremacy of the Divine. The beginning of this verse above echoes the Qur'an's memorable opening lines that remind the audience of the One God, Allah: "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful" (*Bismillah al Rahman al Rahim*). It is important to observe that the artist did not use the Islamic expression of the Divine Essence, *Allah,* which Muslims frequently use. Her choice of "Lord" instead of "Allah" suggests a sense of communicating with the wider public sphere. Another point is that Amina Ajao renders her praise names. Rendering praise names is one of the underlying components of Yoruba panegyrics widely practised by oral poets and popular musicians in southwestern Nigeria. Such a convention is unusual in Islamic music. This is a typical example of *bidʿah* (innovation) in Islam, "an innovation that has no roots in the traditional practice (Sunnah) of the Muslim community."[6] It demonstrates how the complex interplay between traditional oral forms and the Islamic religion is at once lawful (*halal*) and prohibited (*haram*).

The verse above illustrates another specific style of Yoruba panegyric, self-praise. The Muslim artist deploys praise epithets as exemplified by such names as "Ameera", "Demilade", "Obi rere", and the "Daughter of one who fights and is not condemned." The name, "Demilade", means the one who is crowned. "Ameera" refers to her title as the leader of Muslim musicians in southwestern Nigeria. "Obi rere", which means

[6] Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. Bid'ah. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/bidah. Accessed on 1 April 2020.

"good parenting", is an appellation bestowed on her by fans. The praise name suggests that Amina Ajao is a product of good lineage. "The daughter of one who fights and is not condemned" alludes to the traditional heritage of her hometown, Offa (meaning arrow). The town is noted for its ceremonial, wrestling festival. The festival demonstrates people's love for resilience and justice. Altogether, the above praise epithets of Amina Ajao epitomise the distinctive attributes that define her character.

Furthermore, Yoruba Muslim musicians actively promote religious tolerance and ecumenism through the joint production of albums with Christian gospel singers. This effort connects Muslim artists with Christians to inspire unity and friendship through music. In each case, the leading singers from each religion display their religious identity as they perform together. Joint productions in both religions are exemplary ways of promoting religious tolerance and creatively responding to the activities of Boko Haram and the Islamic State-West Africa Province (ISWAP) religious terrorists in Nigeria. Boko Haram, often translated as "Western education is forbidden", is "a radical Muslim movement in northern Nigeria and has become widely known in Western media for both its militant actions and its ultra-fundamentalist programme" (Loimeier 2012, 138). The Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), an offshoot of Boko Haram, is a Salafi jihadist militant group. It is primarily active in the Chad basin and fights an extensive insurgency against Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. The musical collaboration of Muslim and Christian gospel music performers is meant to counter the fundamentalist ideology of these militant groups. Few of the interfaith musical collaborations includes *Same* (We are the same) by Ibrahim Labaeka and Sunday Adebowale, *You cannot fight for God* by Idayat Ajogberu and Samuel Ajagunla, and, *Religious war is not the best* by Kamarudeen Odunlami and Mary Sokunbi. Below is an excerpt from *Religious war is not the best*:

Mùsùlùmí, Kìrìstiẹ́nì,	Muslims, Christians,
Àwa méjèèjì, T'Olúwa là ń ṣe	Both belong to God,
Ọ̀run gbọ́ o!	Heaven listen!
Ẹ máa tẹ̀lé wa.	We invite you to join us.
ọ̀run gbọ́ o!	Heaven listen!
Ẹ má padà o.	Do not forsake us.
Tùmísílẹ̀ ń polongo Jésù	Tumisile is proclaiming Jesus
Ayélóyún ń polongo Allah	Ayeloyun is proclaiming Allah
Ká rìn lọ́nà ìgbàgbọ́ ló tọ́ o.	Walking the pathway of faith is the best.
Ìjà ẹ̀sìn kò dàra.	Religious war is unacceptable.
Ayélóyún ń polongo Allah	Ayeloyun is proclaiming Allah
Tùmísílẹ̀ ń polongo Jesu	Tumisile is proclaiming Jesus
Ká rìn lọ́nà ìgbàgbọ́ ló tọ́ o.	Walking the pathway of faith is the best.

Translation from Yoruba into English by Author

This joint album was produced amid tension between Nigerian Christians and Muslims over the activities of religious terrorists Boko Haram in the northern parts of Nigeria in 2014. Both artists mentioned their names and different religious identities to call attention to inter-religious tolerance. They claim that Christians and Muslims are equal in the sight of God. Hence, there is a need to respect each other's individuality.

Through inter-religious musical collaboration, both artists foster cross-cultural dialogue and understanding.

Now and again, Muslim musicians draw from a commercially successful Christian melody and carefully adapt it to Islamic viewpoints. For instance, the song, "If not for Allah", by Odunlami Ayeloyun, is an adaptation of Asu Ekiye's song, "Back to base." Asu Ekiye is a Nigerian gospel artist from the Niger Delta region. The lyrics below are in pidgin English:

Everything whe I get na your own.	Everything I have is yours.
Everything me I be na your own.	Everything I am is yours.
Me I go dey use am to serve Allah,	I will be using it to serve Allah,
I go dey use am to serve Allah,	I will use it to serve Allah,
Me I go dey use am to serve Allah.	I will be using it to serve Allah.
This Allah na helele.	This Allah is Great.
This Allah na waya o.	This Allah is awesome.
This Allah na helele.	This Allah is Great.
Me, I come de wonder o	I am just wondering
I dey wonder o	I am wondering
Me, I go praise you	I will praise you
Welu.	Well.

Translation from Yoruba into English by Author

The utilisation of Nigerian Pidgin English in the excerpt above is particularly significant. Pidgins are used as "a medium of communication between groups who have no other language in common" (Ashcroft 2000, 146). Although pidgin was often associated with a lower social status, the language serves as a means of communication for most people in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Its adoption may be regarded as an attempt to transcend geographical boundaries. Pidgin could be constructed as part of this trend that revitalises southwestern Nigeria's Islamic music scene.

Abdul-Kabir Bukola Alayande (*Èrè Asalatu*) presents the most ambitious and probably highly successful adaptation of Christian gospel music. His style is a fusion of Fuji music, Highlife and Juju. This Muslim musician sounds identical to another gospel artist's style in instrumentation, chord structure, lyrical rhythm, speed and melody. He produced an album titled, "Reward of salat" (*Èrè Asalatu*), in 2008, where he sounded like a famous Yoruba gospel artist, Yinka Ayefele. The music was commercially successful, making Abdul-Kabir Bukola Alayande a superstar in Yoruba society. Since then, Abdul-Kabir Bukola has maintained the vocal likeness of Yinka Ayefele, the Yoruba gospel artist. Yinka Ayefele did not respond negatively to the imitation of his songs. Instead, he initiated an annual Ramadan lecture in 2016 to maintain goodwill with his Muslim fans.

In addition to the foregoing is the engagement of many Muslim artists with the hip hop sound. Gbadegesin Lawal (Lawizzy) and Tijani Azeez Olalekan (Angel Tjazz) are two prominent Yoruba Islamic music performers of this form. Lawal began his music career as a secular hip hop artist before the shift to Islamic hip hop. According to Gbadegesin Lawal, "the decision to sing in English is to attract more fans beyond Islamic religion" (Ojubanire 2016). He preaches the word of Allah and sings about the

teachings of the Prophet, reconciling people to the path of Islam. The melodies of his songs are derived mainly from the Nigerian hip hop version popularised by the late Nigerian hip hop artists, Da Grin (Oladapo Olaitan Olanipekun) and David Adeleke (Davido). Hip hop, a popular youth music brand, enjoys global appeal, and Nigerian hip hop artists appreciate this form. For instance, *Fall,* the official video of a prominent Nigerian hip hop artist, Davido, has over two hundred and forty-eight million (253, 360, 438) views on YouTube (December 22, 2022). Precisely because hip hop music enjoys global appeal, the adoption of syncretic sounds for religious purposes can be explained by a strong desire to exploit the economic viability of hip hop music.

Despite the popularity of Yoruba Islamic music, the rich display of musical vitality, and commercial success, there is apprehension regarding the trends associated with the music. For example, many orthodox Muslims find the adaptation of hip hop sounds unacceptable, mainly because of the hip hop dance style, twerking. The twerking dance is "a provocative dance performed by moving the hips rapidly back and forth while standing with the feet apart and raising and lowering the body in a squatting motion" (https://www.collinsdictionary.com/twerking). This dance routine is considered sensual and is perceived to have a negative impact on young people. Using the beat associated with this dance for Islamic music potentially raises the limits of *Bid'ah* (innovation) and *Sunnah* (habitual practices that constitute a model to follow). According to an Islamic cleric, Sheikh Habibullah Adam Al Ilory, "Islam is not against music, but musicians must remove the corrupting influences" (*Music in Islam* CD 2016). He observes that musicians should not desecrate Islamic ethics because of money. Another cleric, Sheikh Uthman Sanu Sheu, observed in a Ramadan lecture organised for Muslim musicians in Lagos that "Islam has its right paths; there is a difference between talking and getting into trouble; singing must not create problems for people" (www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKYD7apLUwo). Likewise, Moshood Olanrewaju Adepoju, the Vice President of Ahlus Sunnah Islamic organisations in Nigeria, condemns the recent development in Yoruba Islamic music. He asks, where did Muhammad sing and dance to praise Allah: "Islam does not permit women to be raised as singers because the voice is part of nakedness" (Interview 12 September 2018). This opinion echoes the strict position about music in Islam.

Furthermore, many Christians who actively listen to Islamic music have responded to the transformation in the music. According to Bidemi Adesegun, "Islamic music is no longer about Islam. It contains several lessons for life for all people" (Interview 5 January 2018). Ayo Adewale and Adebayo Phillip are Christians, and they belong to an online community that follows Amina Ajao. They believe that Islamic songs are inspiring. According to Adebayo Phillip, "I am not a Muslim, but I love Amina Obi rere's music. I pray I become rich to call her for a ceremony in my lifetime" (YouTube, 22 January 2022). These sentiments reflect how Islamic music is socially acceptable in southwestern Nigeria. Yoruba Islamic music singers have accomplished a remarkable expansion in audience reception and patronage.

Conclusion

The Yoruba enjoy a vibrant social life which might explain the widespread acceptance of the dance-like orientations of religious music. This article draws attention to the emerging trends and the direction of changes that characterise Yoruba Islamic music. It reveals the transformative possibility developed by Yoruba Islamic musicians as they continue to adapt to new musical sounds. I have argued that the quest for an Islamic identity as well as commodification drove the innovations in contemporary Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria. The article shows that the emerging trends in Yoruba Islamic music fulfil the primary conditions for trends as theorised by Vejlgaard (2018). These conditions can be summarised in three main points: the trend started as a reaction to the mainstream; many people are involved and have copied the trend, and there is a considerable influence of the popular media on the music and the performers. The concept of a trend in the context of the article is a modification of the original conception in Vejlgaard's formulation in the sense that its initial discussion within the fashion industry did not necessarily anticipate its application beyond that context. While fashion may trigger quick-developing trends, development in the music scene demonstrates that it too can initiate and develop trends.

The article reveals that contemporary Islamic music in southwestern Nigeria has strong roots in existing Islamic vocal music that is sung unaccompanied or with instruments. Its development and modernisation have occurred by incorporating local and global secular sounds. Muslim singers draw on the strength of Nigeria's thriving urban culture industry by adopting production, circulation, and marketing strategies that sustain the commercially successful Nigerian entertainment industry.

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