Àgídìgbo: ABUAD Journal of the Humanities Vol. 12 No. 2, 2024 E-ISSN: 3043-4475 pp. 442-455

# Sacred Sounds and Contested Spaces: Navigating Musical Ambivalence in NASFAT's Islamic Worship Practices in Nigeria

**Samuel Ayoola ADEJUBE** [1] **and Adebola Zainab AJALA** [2]

## Abstract

Music occupies a contested space within Islamic worship, reflecting tensions between tradition, cultural adaptation, and contemporary spiritual practices. While many religious traditions, including Christianity and African Traditional Religions in Nigeria, seamlessly integrate music into worship, Islamic perspectives on music remain complex and ambivalent. This study explores the reception of music within the Nasrul-Lahi-il Fatih Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), a prominent Muslim prayer organisation known for its innovative approaches to Islamic practice. Employing ethnographic methods, including interviews and observation at the Samonda branch in Oyo State, Nigeria, the research investigates how NASFAT members navigate the intricate relationship between music and sacred spaces. Findings reveal that NASFAT adherents exhibit a nuanced understanding of music, recognising its pedagogical and spiritual potential for enhancing religious education and fostering devotion. However, significant ambivalence persists, with respondents distinguishing between the permissibility of music in secular versus liturgical contexts. While music is embraced during informal gatherings for its ability to convey sacred teachings and build community, its inclusion in formal worship settings remains contentious, with clerics citing concerns about preserving the sanctity of sacred spaces. This research concludes that music, as a dynamic form of spiritual expression, plays an essential role in fostering religious engagement and communal identity. It calls for a re-evaluation of traditional perspectives that restrict its liturgical use, advocating for a more inclusive understanding of music's potential within Islamic worship practices. The findings contribute to broader discussions on religious identity formation, cultural innovation, and the evolving role of music in Islamic worship.

**Keywords:** Musical Ambivalence, Islamic worship practices, NASFAT, Sacred Space, Religious adaptation

1. Music Department, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria; samadejube@gmail.com
2. Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria; ajaladoyin@gmail.com

## Introduction

The intricate relationship between music and human existence extends beyond mere entertainment into the realm of sacred spaces, where it becomes intimately woven into the fabric of spiritual expression. Music, as a living art, also drives on the agencies of humanity and the socio-cultural activities surrounding humans. Crossley and Bottero (2015) discuss the interconnected themes that run through sociological work on music in their work: 'the social spaces of music.' From inter-activity, that is, interaction between artists and audiences, to inter-action, that is, musicking as a collective action: whether as a solo or group performance. The personnel involved in the performance are likewise important, such as managers, engineers and other stakeholders. This collective action seamlessly integrates into the rhythms of daily life (DeNora, 2003), including in spiritual and religious spaces that humans create to engage with the sacred.

The connection between spirituality and music is well-documented; however, religious organizations differ in their approach to incorporating music into worship practices. In Christianity, the role of music in religious worship is profound and integral. The Bible underscores its significance, as illustrated in the story of the walls of Jericho falling after the use of music and sound (Joshua 6:20). Adejube (2020) emphasises that music plays a pivotal role in Pentecostal worship and other Christian denominations globally, positioning it as a crucial element of sacred spaces in Christianity. Similarly, music holds a prominent place in religious devotion worldwide, transcending cultural and spiritual boundaries—from its use in Buddhism to propagate the Dharma to its role in African Traditional Religions.

Even African Traditional Religion in Nigeria can attest to the fact that music is a powerful weapon that cannot be overstated in terms of African Traditional Religious worship. There are scarcely any 'Irunmole' or 'Orisa' that can be worshiped in the absence of music. Worship holds a prominent place in Yoruba tradition, and in order for the Yoruba to carry out their worship with fervour and adequacy, many varieties of music are created to converse with deities due to the notion that each deity has a type of music sacred to its worship (Oluwagbemiga & Philo, 2019). However, it should be noted that music in Islam does not appear to have enjoyed the same privilege as music in other religions when it comes to the use of music in Islamic liturgy.

In contrast, the role of music in Islamic worship presents a complex narrative. Unlike other faiths where music is seamlessly integrated into liturgical practices, Islamic perspectives on music vary significantly. The term "music" (Arabic: *musiqa*) does not align precisely with the Western understanding of musical arrangements and performance. Instead, Muslims categorize auditory expressions under the broader concept of *handasah al-sawt* (the art of sound). This distinction reflects an Islamic worldview that diverges fundamentally from Western interpretations of music (Leap et al., 2021)..

Consequently, debates persist over the permissibility of music within Islamic worship. Although music occupies a place in Islamic social spaces, including cultural and celebratory

contexts (Daramola, 2007; Omojola, 2012; Abiodun, 2019), there is ongoing ambivalence regarding its use in formal worship, particularly within mosques. This ambivalence highlights the tension between individual and communal practices, as well as between personal spirituality and institutional expectations. The concept of ambivalence, as employed in this study, allows for an exploration of how members of religious groups, such as NASFAT, negotiate ambiguities and contradictions in their use of music within sacred spaces.

The Nasrul-Lahi-il-Fatih Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), founded in March 1995, represents a distinct form of Islamic practice in Nigeria. Initially formed by a group of young professionals seeking fellowship, NASFAT has grown into a prominent Islamic organisation, with a significant presence across the southwestern region of Nigeria (Obadare, 2016; Ibrahim, 2017). The group's activities reflect a blend of spiritual worship and modern socio-cultural engagement, fostering an inclusive space where music plays a subtle yet significant role. While NASFAT gatherings emphasise Islamic teachings and prayers, music—though not traditionally central to Islamic rituals—finds expression in their worship settings, creating a dynamic tension between religious orthodoxy and contemporary practice.

This study focuses on the ambivalence of musical reception within NASFAT's Islamic worship practices, with specific attention to the Samonda branch in Oyo State, Nigeria. It seeks to explore how NASFAT adherents engage with music, navigating the intersection between religious doctrines that traditionally constrain music's use and contemporary influences that encourage its incorporation. By examining this ambivalence, the research aims to shed light on how sacred sounds shape sacred spaces, challenging preconceived boundaries of music and spirituality in the Islamic context. This study also contributes to a broader understanding of how religious practices in Nigeria evolve, reflecting local identities and global trends.

## Music and the Sacred Space in Nigeria

In his research on African sacred space, Aluko (2019) examines the Obafemi Awolowo Institution, Ile-Ife campus as a limited sacred space that is available to accommodate the diverse religious groups in Nigeria's southwestern university. Many geographical locations that are not classified as religious grounds in the university in Osun State, Nigeria, and other campuses in the western area of Nigeria, are turned into sacred spaces where either large or minor religious activities take place. What all of these activities and religious organisations have in common is the piousness and sacredness they have allocated to a certain physical space.

A sacred space is defined by the labelling given to a physical/geographical site by a group of religious people. Such a space could have previously or concurrently been a social space. People could gather in a living room or a factory within a specific time frame and transform a little space in these buildings into a sacred zone where religious actions such as prayers, singing, and ablutions are made to the Divine. Sacred time refers to the timescale assigned to

the activities and practices in a certain sacred space. According to Aluko (2019), a sacred place is first and foremost a demarcated space, a space distinct from other places where the rituals individuals practise differ from what they do in other spaces. In a similar way, what is sacred about sacred time is the sacredness of deviating from one's normal routine at a particular time to do that which is sacred. The same can be said of the Muslims' five sacred times of prayer, which also coincide with the sacred mat in which it is used in praying at a specific location. At that point, the devotee and everyone else know that the secluded location is reserved for prayers and that no one should (de)sacred it.

According to Begbie and Guthrie (2011), music in societal structure is three-fold in nature: music making, musical language or form, and music hearing. These practices are solely social and culturally integrated, which means that how we create music is shaped by our interactions with others. Music is intertwined with culture, ideology, religion, and the relationships that underpin all three. Thus, when creating music, the sacred space that is created must be considered. Sacred places in Nigeria are not only created by zealous members of a religious organisation. It was said that Nigeria is a religious country, and thus, even during secular functions, the first and last few minutes are given to pay homage to a deity, creating reverence, albeit temporarily.

Saint Janet, a female pseudo-juju erotic singer who always begins her erotica performances with gospel songs, cites Samuel and Adejube (2019) in explaining the sacredness of most music artistes in the country. According to them, Saint Janet believes that there is nothing anyone can do apart from God; He (God) provides the inspiration for the lyrics as well as the creativity to improvise well during a performance, so it is necessary to give him adoration. As a result, any function, location, or event can be transformed into a sacred space for a specific period of time, as sacred space works in tandem with time.

According to Foley (2015), there has always been a belief that music has the power to change the moods and actions of gods and people. This is to explain music's undeniable power and ability to control the unseen. Foley goes on to say that philosophers have long associated a great deal of spirituality with the powers of music. While some claim that music has supernatural healing powers, others consider it to be one of the most important tools in religious worship. It has been noted over time that the power of music is unquestionably notable for evoking the gods and gaining spiritual insight, whether as a chant sung by a single voice or as a fully accompanied song for a ritual dance.

Music is used as an invocation tool by African Traditional Religion believers and worshippers. When used correctly and with the proper techniques, music can be used to summon the spirits of the immortals to mere mortals. As Norton (2010 describes the essentiality of music in Vietnamese spirit communion rituals, especially those honouring indigenous spirits. It creates a "songscape" that supports mediums believed to be spirit-possessed. Far beyond entertainment, the rhythms and melodies are crafted to evoke the spirits' presence, fostering an immersive and transformative connection with the supernatural realm. In the same vein, in

traditional African religious contexts, music functions as a powerful invocation tool, embodying mystical energies that summon psychic forces. It serves as a bridge between abstract concepts and tangible realities, with its textual elements carrying profound potency to produce concrete outcomes (Adegbite, 1991).

Music is an integral part of festivals, enjoyed by all participants. Ogunsanya (2024) highlights the multifunctionality of the *dùndún* drum in Yoruba culture, demonstrating how it extends beyond reproducing Yoruba speech melodies and oral poetry to perform diverse sonic functions. He further asserts that the talking drum's compositional and performance techniques have become highly specialized and standardized due to its extensive use in both social and religious Yoruba celebrations. Notable festivals associated with African Traditional Religion include the Osun Osogbo and Egungun festivals, among others. Similarly, in Christian worship, music holds immense significance. Just as adherents of African Traditional Religion regard music as a vital spiritual tool, Christians also recognise its power, making it an essential component of meaningful religious services.

**What about Music in Islam?**

In Islam, when it comes to the use of music in the religion, there are two major schools of thought. Those who support and those who oppose, both of whom draw their inspiration from the same source: the Holy Qu'ran. There is a clear difference made between 'music,' which is considered as sinful (haram) and morally degrading, and what musicologists refer to as religious usage music, which is regarded as good by Muslims but not as music (Daramola, 2007). Music is nearly non-existent in Islamic worship. This is due, in large part, to the orientation of Islamic religious practitioners, who completely disregarded it in Islamic liturgy. Music-making in Islam, whether acceptable or not, has been a contentious issue.

In Africa, the categorization of Islamic music is problematic. Music is frequently misunderstood in Africa, where sonic, verbal, and kinetic performances are intertwined, and aesthetic and ritual activities are frequently inextricably linked (Frishkopf, 2007). Several Muslims around the world may view music as impure (haram) and disagree with the concept of Islamic music entirely, predicated on conservative explanations of the Qur'an and hadith. Despite the fact that the pluralism of Islam in Africa makes the categorisation of music overcomplicated, Islamic influence has resulted in distinctive musical resemblances across a wide region. Nonetheless, parallels exist between Islamic sonic practices and broader musical practices, particularly in Africa and among the Yoruba of Nigeria.

The Islamic religion has a distinct art of reciting the Qur'an and 'call to prayer', which has influenced Muslim artistic expression. Although not to the same extent as Christian choral or organ music, Islamic worship incorporates music into the art of worship. Call to prayer is an art form that uses tonal variation and rhythm in the human voice. The words being recited are beautified through tone, rhythm, and word shaping while reciting the Qur'an. Various styles of reciting the Qur'an have been traced back to the days of Mohammed's teaching through the

process of oral tradition. These origins have been passed down through the generations (Parrot, 2009).

According to Parrott (2009), "...there is nothing explicit in the Quran concerning music. The Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) enjoyed listening to his young wife and her friends sing and play." The discourse surrounding music in Islamic tradition reveals intricate interpretations of its permissibility, with historical evidence indicating nuanced approaches to musical expression in early Islamic society. Auda (2008) explores how the absence of explicit Qur'anic prohibitions on music must be viewed alongside documented accounts of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) practices, particularly authenticated narrations of his presence during occasions where his wife Aisha (RA) and her companions engaged in musical activities. Otterbeck (2021) builds on this historical framework, highlighting how early Islamic practices have influenced contemporary interpretations of music's role within Muslim societies. This historical context offers critical insights into the practical application of Islamic principles regarding recreational activities during the prophetic era and their modern-day relevance.

Evidence of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) acceptance of certain forms of musical expression extends beyond private household settings to various communal celebrations (Auda, 2008; Otterbeck, 2021). These approved occasions included significant life events such as weddings, naming ceremonies, and religious observances, suggesting that early Islamic practice reflected a contextual understanding of music's societal role rather than a categorical prohibition. Otterbeck (2021) underscores how this historical precedent has shaped contemporary Islamic discourse on music, particularly in the development and reception of Islamic pop music within modern Muslim communities. This nuanced perspective considers both the occasion and nature of musical expression, providing an important historical foundation for contemporary discussions on music's permissibility in Islamic practice. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali in Yosuf (2014) explained that one important purpose of the performance of music being permissible is the ability of music to invoke the love of Allah, elicit love and longing for Allah, arouse joy, incite courage on battle day amidst others.

**The Ambivalent Use of Music in NASFAT, Samonda**

The authors engage the ambivalent statements, contradictory attitudes, incompatible values, and emotional internal clashes (Berliner, et al, 2016) as part of the larger task of understanding people's diverse (and often mutually exclusive) attitudes toward their lived experiences. Engaging this ambivalence allows for the ubiquitous analysis of the NASFAT's devotees' attitudes toward music in their sacred space. Thus, this musical ambivalence must be considered in the study of contradictions.

Members of the Nasrul-Lahi-il Fatih Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), Samonda branch, exhibit a sophisticated understanding of music's role within Islamic religious practice, reflecting a nuanced approach that moves beyond simplistic classifications of permissibility. Ibrahim and Katz (2022), in their exploration of Nigerian Islamic movements, highlight how such

perspectives often challenge binary interpretations of music's acceptability in Islam. Alhaji Hiskil Daud Opeloyeru, a respondent from the NASFAT Samonda branch, articulates this position by describing music as "a combination of words used in melodious ways which help in ensuring that lessons are not forgotten." He further asserts that music enhances the assimilation of teachings, a viewpoint that resonates with Ogunnaike's (2020) analysis of the pedagogical role of sound in West African Islamic traditions, particularly in the use of didactic songs to impart religious knowledge among devotees.

The respondents collectively emphasised that the Holy Qur'an does not explicitly address the permissibility of music, neither endorsing nor prohibiting its use. This absence of direct Qur'anic guidance raises intriguing questions about the basis for music's inclusion in Islamic worship practices. As noted in the responses, the Hadiths and Sunnahs provide critical interpretative frameworks that Muslims rely upon to navigate this ambiguity. These sources offer detailed examinations of the conditions under which music may be deemed permissible or otherwise, reflecting the importance of contextual and situational considerations in Islamic jurisprudence. Such reliance on supplementary texts underscores the dynamic interplay between scriptural authority and lived religious practice, allowing for diverse interpretations across different Islamic communities.

This nuanced understanding within NASFAT aligns with broader trends in Islamic thought, where music's role is often contextualised within its purpose and impact. For instance, the pedagogical and spiritual dimensions of music, as highlighted by Ogunnaike (2020), reveal its potential as a tool for fostering religious devotion and moral education. This perspective challenges rigid prohibitions by emphasising the transformative and instructional capacities of music. Within the NASFAT community, music becomes a medium not only for worship but also for reinforcing communal values and transmitting religious knowledge, reflecting an adaptive approach that bridges traditional Islamic principles with contemporary practices.

From the time of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), music and singing have played a role in communal celebrations, as demonstrated during his arrival in Madinah. Music was a cherished cultural tradition among the Arabs during the time of Prophet Muhammad (SWS). It frequently featured in worship rituals and was used to express both joy and sorrow. Music also accompanied events such as wars and festivals. An examination of traditions attributed to the Prophet (SWS) indicates that he not only appreciated music but also encouraged its performance during festive occasions. Reliable accounts further highlight that A'ishah (RA), the mother of the believers, listened to songs in the Prophet's (SWS) presence, underscoring his acceptance of music within appropriate contexts (Hassan, 2016). According to him:

> The Holy Prophet (sws) himself is reported to have encouraged people to use music on wedding ceremonies. On his migration from Makkah to Madinah, the women sang welcome songs on the Daff and the Holy Prophet (sws) expressed his approbation of this. At another occasion, a professional female singer and musician approached him and requested him to listen to her song. The Holy

> Prophet (sws) not only himself listened to her song but also took 'A'ishah (rta) to listen to her. The mother of the believers leaned on the Holy Prophet's (sws) shoulders and enjoyed the performance for a considerable time (2016; 1).

Some respondents, however, attribute the prohibition of music in Islamic religious worship to concerns surrounding its potential to encourage dancing. Dance is often closely associated with music, and it is rare to find musical performances that do not include dancing. This association raises issues within the Islamic context, as dancing is perceived to lead to the intermingling of genders, a practice discouraged in Islamic teachings. The prohibition of gender mixing, especially in religious settings, reflects broader concerns about maintaining modesty and avoiding actions that might compromise Islamic values. As a result, the restriction of music in some contexts is seen as a preventive measure to uphold these principles.

Additionally, some respondents during the interviews, highlighted a religious aversion to interfaith interactions during musical gatherings, further complicating the acceptance of music in Islamic worship. The Islamic tradition places significant emphasis on preserving the sanctity of religious practices and avoiding influences that might dilute or compromise them. In this context, music's association with diverse cultural and religious expressions can create tensions, as it may be perceived as facilitating exchanges that challenge the exclusivity of Islamic worship. These concerns reveal the multifaceted debates surrounding music in Islam, balancing its historical acceptance during the Prophet's time with evolving interpretations shaped by contemporary social and religious considerations.

Due to the fact that some other Muslim respondents do not believe that music can exist without the presence of musical instruments, musical instruments in the membranophone family are made with the membranes of dead animals. Because of the strong Islamic prohibition on animal slaughter, Muslims cannot say whether or not the animals used to make the drums were slaughtered in accordance with the Islamic prohibition. Besides, some Muslims believe that if all of these reasons are investigated and addressed, the performance of music is permissible. Such music may be permitted if the content of the music being performed does not include suggestive sexual actions or words. The primary goal of the religion is to promote peace and sanity among its adherents.

One of the interlocutors (name withheld), a young Muslim lady who also participated in this research, believes that the missionaries intentionally claim the absence of music in religious worship in NASFAT because they do not want to be associated with acts of Christianity and other secular religions that boastfully perform music in their mode of worship. She believes that the foundation of NASFAT was laid by Muslim faithful who could not bear seeing their fellow Muslim brothers and sisters left behind in their homes while their Christian counterparts left for their various churches in the morning and returned in the afternoon or shortly after midday.

The findings from this study offer significant contributions to theoretical discussions on religious identity formation, cultural adaptation, and spatial theory. Ibrahim's (2017) assertion that religious organisations strategically employ musical practices—or their absence—to define and maintain distinct identities is evident in the practices of the Nasrul-Lahi-il Fatih Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), Samonda branch. Members of this community navigate the ambivalence surrounding music in Islam by situating its use within pedagogical and moral frameworks. Alhaji Hiskil Daud Opeloyeru's description of music as a tool for enhancing the retention of religious teachings aligns with Ogunnaike's (2020) analysis of the pedagogical role of sound in West African Islamic traditions. This perspective challenges binary classifications of music's permissibility by framing it as a medium for spiritual and intellectual enrichment, thus reinforcing NASFAT's commitment to balancing religious authenticity with cultural relevance.

This nuanced approach also reflects Elawa's (2020) argument that religious organisations adapt cultural practices to maintain relevance while preserving their doctrinal integrity. NASFAT's interpretation of music demonstrates an adaptive strategy, where musical expression is permitted under specific conditions, such as festive occasions or as a tool for education, but remains restricted in contexts that could contravene Islamic principles. Respondents highlighted the absence of explicit Qur'anic injunctions against music, emphasising the reliance on Hadiths and Sunnahs to navigate this ambiguity. These supplementary texts provide interpretative frameworks that guide the contextual application of music in Islamic worship, underscoring the dynamic interplay between scriptural authority and lived religious experiences. Such practices align with Kania's (2013) framework, further elaborated by Deibl (2020), which posits that sacred spaces shape the interpretation and reception of musical practices, as seen in NASFAT's careful integration of music within its religious settings.

Moreover, the study underscores broader implications for understanding contemporary Islamic practices, as Ogundipe (2022) notes similar patterns of musical ambivalence across other Nigerian Islamic organisations. This wider phenomenon highlights the intricate balance between cultural adaptation and doctrinal adherence in shaping religious identities. Respondents also cited concerns about the association of music with dancing, gender intermingling, and interfaith interactions, which are perceived as potential threats to Islamic values. These concerns echo NASFAT's nuanced stance on music, where the organisation distances itself from practices perceived as secular or Christian to assert its unique religious identity. For instance, the young Muslim lady respondent, suggests that NASFAT's foundational ethos was influenced by a desire to provide an alternative to Christian worship practices, thereby addressing the social and spiritual needs of Muslim faithful. This insight not only enriches our understanding of NASFAT's approach to music but also invites further exploration of how religious organisations negotiate their cultural and doctrinal boundaries in pluralistic societies.

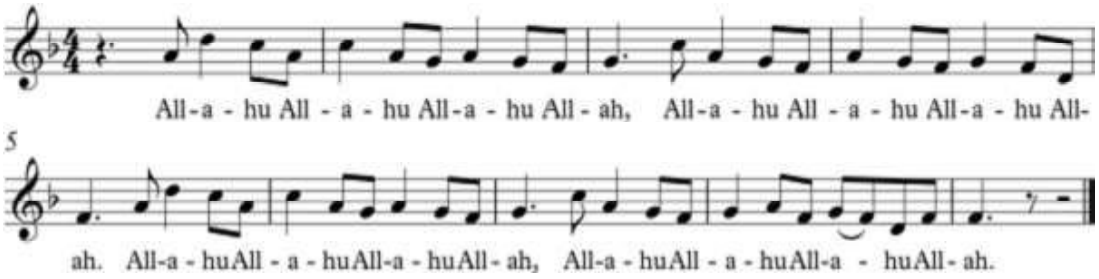
**Analysis of Music Used**

In contrast to the above-mentioned definitions and genres, religious definitions and classifications of music come into play against the popular field of gospel music, worship music, and ritual music found in both Christianity and traditional religion among the Yoruba of south western Nigeria. Muslims, particularly NASFAT, do not engage in gospel, ritual, or worship music. Nonetheless, among the NASFAT, a practice of rhythmic voices, choral renditions, and poetic incantations that fall within the realms of music is done. Members, however, do not consider this practice to be music. However, contrary to popular belief, they are music, but they are referred to as "waka" rather than music. Waka music has been historically said to predate its other Islamic music genres (such as *apala*, *fuji*, *were*, *dadakuada*, *senwele*, etc) and as a direct offshoot of the *alasalatu* music. Daramola (2007) also stated that waka evolved as a vocal music performed in a similar manner to semi-religious music.

Members of NASFAT presume that "waka," which is permitted in their religious institution, is not evil. This is because, according to them, "waka" is a moderate adoration of God that includes less self-passion and emotion but engages in supplication to God. Whereas "orin," which can be described as other types of music, shows devilish body movement in various shapes, heavy enthusiasm, emotions, and passion. This is because many human attitudes, other than Godly attitudes, are built on music. Thus, the use of music in religious arenas or institutions reveals a convergence between spirituality and religiosity.

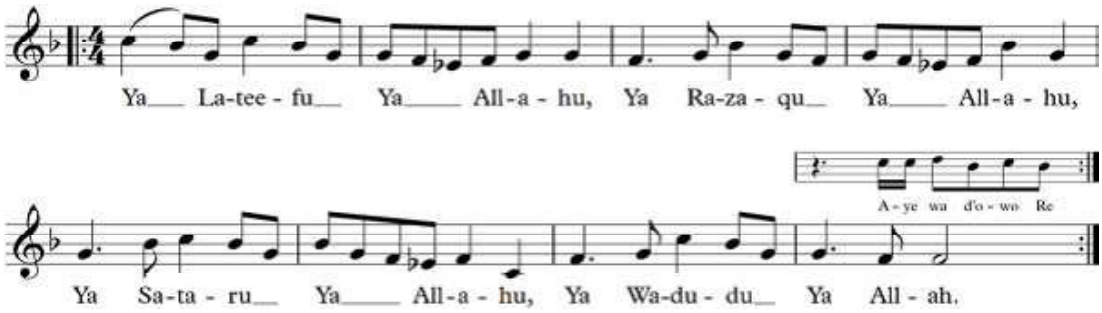
Moving on, one of the respondents stated that the content of the music used in NASFAT religious worship contains spiritual words. These spiritual words are prayers in which the members have a strong belief in their power. These words, according to the members, help them relieve stress and other pains. One account of the songs' utility comes from a woman who claims to have been in labour for some time. According to her, the doctors were already considering a caesarean section as a method of delivering the baby. She explained that she delivered the baby with ease because she had faith in her heart and had heard them perform a series of songs in NASFAT.

Members of the Samonda branch of NASFAT believe that the songs being performed help to lift the soul. This is to say that when a NASFAT member is down and out, when he or she hears and participates in the performance of a song, his or her mood changes automatically. Members of NASFAT strongly believe that the lyrics of songs performed in NASFAT are heavenly and have no qualms about the performance of such music. According to one of the respondents, simply singing Allah's name is enough to bring praise to God and perform miracles.




*Musical Figure 1: Staff notation of the song Allahu*

The song above shows a simple rhythmic movement of Allahu in repetition but in variation.




*Musical Figure: 2 Staff notation showing Ya Lateefu, Ya Allahu*

*Ya Lateefu, Ya Allahu*
Oh Allah, the subtle
*Ya Razaqu, Ya Allahu*
Oh Allah, the provider

*Ya Sataru, Ya Allahu*
Oh Allah, the confidant

*Ya Wadudu, Ya Allahu…*
Oh Allah, the loving

The lyrical content of NASFAT songs predominantly reflects supplications to Allah, with an emphasis on seeking divine favour and protection. A common feature across the recorded songs is their flexible duration, determined by the missioner's discretion. When time permits, the songs are extended, allowing for a more immersive experience, while time constraints lead to shorter renditions. The simplicity of the lyrics underscores their primary purpose: to seek Allah's assistance and protection, aligning with the spiritual focus of the worship sessions. In NASFAT gatherings, the cleric, referred to as the missioner, presides over the congregation

from a designated platform. The congregation, comprising both men and women, engages in collective prayer using the NASFAT prayer book, which is distributed by committee members to ensure inclusivity. During the prayer sessions, the missioner transforms specific prayer points into songs, enhancing their emphasis and spiritual resonance. These songs may be responsorial, involving a call-and-response format between the missioner and the congregation, or they may be sung solely by the missioner. Notably, there is no rigid structure governing the composition or performance of these songs, reflecting the dynamic and adaptive nature of NASFAT's worship practices. The missioner's ability to spontaneously integrate song into prayer demonstrates a creative approach to spiritual engagement, fostering a deeper connection between the congregation and the divine. This fluidity allows for a personalised worship experience, where the missioner tailors the musical elements to suit the flow of the prayer session and the spiritual needs of the congregation.

## Conclusion

The exploration of musical ambivalence within NASFAT's sacred spaces reveals a nuanced interplay between religious tradition, cultural adaptation, and contemporary worship practices. This study demonstrates that the relationship between music and Islamic worship is multifaceted, existing on a continuum shaped by theological interpretations, historical precedents, and evolving cultural dynamics. Key findings highlight that NASFAT members' reception of music is deeply informed by interpretations of Islamic texts, particularly the Hadiths and Sunnahs, in the absence of explicit Qur'anic guidance. This aligns with Canavan and McCamley's (2021) concept of "negotiated authenticity," where religious and cultural practices are dynamically balanced. The study also identifies generational differences, with younger members displaying more flexible attitudes toward music while remaining committed to Islamic principles, reflecting broader social shifts within Nigerian Muslim communities. Furthermore, the research underscores the importance of context, as NASFAT members carefully distinguish between sacred and secular spaces, didactic and entertainment purposes, and the content and intent of musical expressions, resonating with Deibl's (2020) insights into the spatial-temporal influences on religious practices.

The implications of these findings extend beyond NASFAT, offering valuable perspectives on the adaptive strategies of religious organisations in contemporary Africa. As globalisation and social change challenge traditional practices, understanding how organisations like NASFAT navigate these pressures while preserving religious authenticity becomes increasingly significant. This study contributes to the discourse on religious identity formation and cultural adaptation, emphasising the role of music as both a contested and integrative element of worship. Future research could explore how other Nigerian Islamic organisations confront similar challenges or investigate the long-term implications of shifting attitudes among younger Muslims. Comparative studies across Islamic traditions could also illuminate broader patterns of adaptation, enriching our understanding of religious negotiation in diverse cultural settings.

Ultimately, this research highlights the intricate balance between maintaining spiritual values and embracing cultural relevance, a dynamic that is central to the resilience and evolution of religious communities in modern societies.

## References


Abiodun, F. (2019). Singing Between What Culture (Dis)allows: The Expression of Emotion by Muslim Women Singers in Nigeria. *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies* 7(2):88–93.

Adegbite, A. (1991). The concept of sound in traditional African religious music. *Journal of black studies*, *22*(1), 45-54.

Adejube, S. A. (2020). Glossolalia: The Practice of Singing in Tongues in Nigerian Pentecostal Churches. *Journal of Christian Musicology,* 1. 158-173

Aluko, O. P. (2019). Sacred Space and Sacred Time on an African University Campus. *African Sacred Spaces: Culture, History, and Change*, 237.

Auda, J. (2008). *Maqasid al-shariah: A beginner's guide* (Vol. 14). International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT).

Begbie, J. S., & Guthrie, S. R. (Eds.). (2011). *Resonant witness: Conversations between music and theology*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

Berliner, D., Lambek, M., Shweder, R., Irvine, R., & Piette, A. (2016). Anthropology and the study of contradictions. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, *6*(1), 1-27.

Canavan, B., & McCamley, C. (2021). Negotiating authenticity: Three modernities. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *88*, 103185.

Crossley, N., & Bottero, W. (2015). Social spaces of music: Introduction. *Cultural Sociology*, *9*(1), 3-19.

Daramola, Y. (2007). Islamic and Islamized Musical Cultures among the Yoruba: The Contact, the Concept, and the Concord. *African Musicology On-line* 1(2):46–58.

Deibl, J. H. (2020). Sacred Architecture and Public Space under the Conditions of a new Visibility of Religion. *Religions*, *11*(8), 379.

Elawa, N. I. (2020). *Understanding Religious Change in Africa and Europe: Crossing Latitudes*. Springer International Publishing.

Foley, E. (2015). Music and spirituality. Shu-Kun Lin.

Frishkopf, M. (2007) Islamic Music," in The New Encyclopaedia of Africa *Journal of Communication*, *26*(3), 14-26.

Hassan, S. M. (2016) Prophetic Sayings on Music. Available on https://ghamidi.tv/articles/prophetic-sayings-on-music-537 Accessed December 05, 2024.

Ibrahim, M. (2017). Oral transmission of the sacred: preaching in Christ Embassy and NASFAT in Abuja. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, *47*(1), 108-131.

Ibrahim, M., & Katz, S. (2022). Remapping the study of Islam and Muslim cultures in postcolonial Nigeria. *Africa*, *92*(5), 663-677.

Kania, A. (2013). The philosophy of music. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

Leap, F. M., Abdalla, M., Taki, S., & Jebara, D. (2021). Approaching Music and Fine Arts from Faith-Centered Muslim Lenses. Curriculum Renewal for Islamic Education 153-178. Routledge.

Norton, B. (2010). *Songs for the spirits: Music and mediums in modern Vietnam*. University of Illinois Press.

Obadare, E. (2018). The Muslim response to the Pentecostal surge in Nigeria: Prayer and the rise of charismatic Islam. Prayer and Politics 75-91. Routledge.

Ogundipe, S. T. (2022). Contesting Norms: Emerging Trends in Yoruba Islamic Music In Nigeria. *African Music: Journal of the International Library of African Music*, *11*(4), 73-89.

Ogunnaike, O. (2020). *Deep knowledge: ways of knowing in Sufism and Ifa, two West African Intellectual Traditions*. Penn State Press.

Ogunsanya, A. O. (2024). (Re) Examining the Functions of *Dùndún* Talking Drum in the Inter-Cultural Music Process of Africa and the African Diaspora. *Àgídìgbo: ABUAD Journal of the Humanities*, *12*(1), 1-13.

Oluwagbemiga, O. E. & Philo, O. (2019). The Extra-Musical Functions of music in worship: A case study of Oberebe in Ogbere-Ode Musical Ensemble in Ipole-Iloro Ekiti. *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR)* 5(12) 102-105

Omojola, B. (2012). *Yorùbá Music in the Twentieth Century: Identity, Agency, and Performance Practice*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.

Otterbeck, J. (2021). *The awakening of Islamic pop music*. Edinburgh University Press.

Parrott, R. (2009). The importance of music in different religions. *Online journal, July*.

Samuel, K. M., & Adejube, S. A. (2019). Insidious eroticism in musical performances of Saint Janet. *Awka Journal of Research in Music and the Arts*, *13*(1), 18-35.

Yusof, M. (2014) *The Concept of Islamic Moderation in Music Art: Special reference to the song of nasyeed.* In: International Conference on ITMAR, 20-21 Oct 2014, Istanbul, Turkey.