

**RACHEAL OLATOUN SOETAN: A STUDY OF HER LIFE, MUSIC, AND  
LEGACY IN THE NIGERIAN GOSPEL MUSIC SCENE**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to examine Toun Soetan's personality profile, highlighting her music endeavours and life experiences to enhance comprehension and recognition of her societal impact, particularly within the realm of gospel music. The research work made use of information and documents from the internet, past interviews, works, and textbooks that expand on performance. The researcher was engaged by an unstructured interview method whereby Evangelist Mrs. Racheal Olatoun Soetan was interviewed. The results of the research work show that the texts of her songs are all based on Christian life. Most of her words are based on biblical aims and objectives. The life and accomplishments of the musician highlighted in this piece demonstrate that a person's difficult past does not have to hinder their success. Additionally, it seeks to offer a deeper understanding of Nigerian gospel music as a sub-genre of Christian religious music and offers guidance for aspiring artists.

**INTRODUCTION**

Music is a form of art that involves blending vocal or instrumental sounds to create beauty or convey emotions, typically following cultural norms of rhythm, melody, and harmony. It is a structured arrangement of sounds designed by experts to evoke feelings in listeners, causing emotional stimulation or excitement when performed or expressed using various instruments. Blacking (1995) sees music as a humanly organised sound. Music is a human phenomenon produced by people for people and existing, functioning in a social situation (Merriam 1964:487). According to Adeleke (2011), music multiplies like cells in human body from childhood to adulthood through inborn capacities and learned responses from home and school environment. In process of enculturation, communication, transformation and socialisation, music is very important.

In history, music is described as an important part of historical documentation, especially oral history (Blacking, 1970). In social psychology, music is described from therapeutic perspective as an organisation of sound patterns from self-expression, the essence of which is to purify human soul and ease social stress and disillusion (Adeleke, 2008). In language studies, music is often described from literary perspective as an integral part for poetry and oral composition (Olatunji, 1984).

Gospel music can be defined as a type of music of Christians that preaches the good news of Jesus Christ and is made popular by public performances, electronic media and information technology such as radio, television, and the media (Adedeji, 2004). Gospel music is a classic style of Christian music that plays a crucial role in Christian media. The development, presentation, importance, and interpretation of gospel music can differ based on cultural and social influences.

Gospel music serves various purposes such as providing enjoyment, serving religious or ceremonial functions, and being a commercial entertainment product. This music genre is known for its prominent vocal delivery, rich harmonies, and Christian-themed lyrics. Nigerian gospel music is a Christian music genre that was initially created with the intention of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, though its practices and content are not always restricted to that. Praise, gratitude, and adoration of God, caution, consolation, prayer, and entertainment of saints are all included. Religious, social, and moral values are also included, along with social and political commentary and generally Christian doctrines.

Similar to American or European gospel music, Nigerian gospel music is a form of gospel music that originated in Nigeria and is performed there as a branch of Christian religious music. It is distinct from others in terms of language, style, and performance, and because both Christians and non-Christians enjoy listening to it, it holds a prominent place in Nigerian music. Church music and Nigerian gospel music are not the same in terms of performances, organizational design, or purpose.

Unlike their European contemporaries, whose lives and works are well documented and appreciated, gospel artists in Nigeria are typically not often appreciated during their lifetimes and their works are not adequately documented. By focusing on the upbringing, professional background, educational background, social challenges faced, and creative output of a Nigerian gospel artist, this study now provides a solution to the issue.

The aim and objective of this work is to explore the personality profile of Toun Soetan, drawing attention of the society to her music activities and life experiences for better understanding and appreciation of her contributions to the society at large especially in the field of gospel music. It also aims at giving more insight to Nigerian gospel music as a sub-genre of Christian religious music, providing guidelines for coming Artists. The following objectives of the study are to investigate the life history and experience of Toun Soetan, examine her contributions to Nigerian Gospel Music document some of her songs through the use of music notation software.

This study will showcase the music and life of Toun Soetan among other gospel musicians. It will provide necessary information about the Artiste. It will also contribute to the acquisition of knowledge. The research made use of research and enquiry method to get information from the Gospel Artiste on her life and works.

### **THE ORIGIN OF GOSPEL MUSIC**

During the slave trade, African Americans sang spiritual songs and traditional hymns, which gave rise to gospel music. The spirituals were songs of hope performed by slaves prior to their release. After settling in North America, European immigrants brought traditional hymns to the United States. These hymns were composed in a book, and the white Americans sang them during their worship, mostly on Sundays. The white Americans sang these hymns during worship, primarily on Sundays, and they were written down in a book. The enslaved people on the plantations could hear these hymns being sung, so they changed them to a call-and-response style. A member would lead the group in a harmonious rendition of a single line from the hymn. This led to the creation of the Negro spiritual, which subsequently shaped the course of gospel music.

Gospel music has also been influenced by the Scottish "lining out" singing technique. Particularly the early black Christians who attended white churches used this style when singing hymns. The members would join the song leader after she had finished singing a section of the hymn in their own voices. Following the founding of their churches, black Christians subsequently adopted these singing styles. The rich customs of African-American churches are a major influence on gospel music. African-American spirituals, hymns, and sacred songs were among the musical genres that African-American churches in the US began incorporating into their services in the late 1800s. Hand clapping and foot stomping were common accompaniments to such music, which was mostly sung in churches.

Using a choir was central to the gospel music tradition. A group of willing singers from the church congregation made up the choir. Because choir members typically wore choir robes as part of their uniform, it was easy to identify them from the rest of the congregation. The gospel choir performed music in a call-and-response style akin to that of traditional hymns and sacred songs.

The gospel music industry underwent a transformation in the late 1930s when Thomas A. Dorsey, dubbed the "father of gospel music," started working for Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago. Former jazz pianist and composer Dorsey collaborated with well-known musicians. By fusing conventional gospel music with his studies of jazz and blues, Dorsey established a brand-new kind of gospel music known as gospel blues. Although it was first dismissed, gospel blues gained recognition as the new style of traditional gospel by the end of the 1930s. Gospel music comes in four different flavours (but these are not the only ones). Praise and worship, contemporary gospel, traditional style, and quartet style.

### **HISTORY OF GOSPEL MUSIC IN NIGERIA**

There are few theories about the period in which Nigerian gospel music started. Ajirire and Alabi (1992) suggested that gospel music started with the inception of Christianity in Nigeria. Considering the definition of gospel music and

other historical facts, the foregoing theory is not plausible. Ojo (1998) submitted that Nigerian gospel music started in the 1970s. This view could not have been correct because of the historical evidence of the existence of the gospel prior to the 1970s. Another view dates the origin of Nigerian gospel music to the 1960s. Apart from the submission of pioneers, Makun (1997) and Awelewa (2000) had already supported this view in their works. Besides, available records point to the validity of the 1960s as the period of origin; more so, the term gospel music was first used in Nigeria by the pioneers in the same period. We could therefore conclude that Nigerian gospel music started in the 1960s.

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### **THE INDIGENOUS STYLES OF NIGERIAN GOSPEL MUSIC**

The indigenous styles of Nigerian gospel music are those that derive their musical elements mainly from indigenous musical sources. They are as follows:

#### The Native Style

The term native refers to something folksy. The native style of Nigerian gospel music is patterned after the indigenous 'folk' tradition that employs indigenous language, beat, melodic pattern, folk singing style, or traditional musical instrument. As a result of the predominant use of Nigerian languages, the native style of Nigerian gospel music has local variants such as Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, which make use of their vernacular. The beat of the native style is 6/8, otherwise described as bell rhythm or *konkonkolo* beat. This beat, like other Nigerian rhythms, has modes or versions (Vidal, 2012).

#### Traditional 'Classical' Style

The traditional classical style of Nigerian gospel music, which originated in the 1990s, is patterned after pure indigenous Nigerian classical traditions of court, religion, or social music. These traditions make use of specific instruments, which cannot be separated from music. They also make use of pentatonic scales and modes that cannot be altered. The traditional style of Nigerian gospel music among others include Hausa and Yoruba variants. The two most important forms are the shantu gospel of the Hausa, which makes use of the shantu musical instruments, and the ijala gospel of the Yoruba, which employs the ijala chanting style accompanied by a bata or dundun drum ensemble.

#### Spiritual Style

The phrase "spiritual style" was created to characterize the Nigerian gospel music genre that eschews ornate instrumentation, dancing, and showmanship in favour of a focus on heavenly subjects, holiness, and the denunciation of sin and corruption. The outlook of the performance style is likewise contemplative. Of all the Nigerian gospel music genres, this one can be regarded as the spiritual song as mentioned in the Holy bible. It began in the year 1970. Unlike the other two indigenous genres, the spiritual style seems exclusive to the Southwest and features the accordion as a solo instrument. As seen in traditional nature blue, the language uses a lot of emotions and storytelling techniques. Despite its rhythmic and melodic frameworks, this music is stereotypical and repetitive.

#### Foreign Styles

Nigerian gospel music has a foreign style that was inspired by European and American gospel music. In terms of shape, beat, instrumentation, composing approaches, and performing style, they are very similar to their Euro-American parents. Even though they are completely alien, they still have certain Nigerian characteristics, including the sporadic vocal arrangement. They are listed below:

#### Acapella Style

The term acapalla literally means unaccompanied. The acapalla style of Nigerian gospel music, therefore, is the one that is basically not accompanied by a musical instrument but makes use of vocal imitation of musical instruments in order to supply the steady rhythm needed for the melodic flow. The style was adopted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria to replace instrumental music in the church (Adebayo, 2002).

### *Instrumental Style*

Nigerian gospel music is modelled after American gospel instrumentals and is purely instrumental, meaning it lacks word structure. This makes it the complete opposite of acapella. Its usage of well-known Christian lyrics and hymn tunes makes it easy to recognize. Western musical instruments such as guitars, keyboards, and synthesisers are the most commonly used instruments in gospel music. In certain instances, African instruments are also included.

### *'Gos-Pop' Style*

Gos-pop style is a form of rhythmic gospel accentuated by soul music instrumentation, emphatic drumming, and walking bass guitars (Heilbut, 1975). The Nigerian version employs elements of wisdom soul, blues Waltz, disco, funk, R&B rock 'n' and recently hip-hop', emphasizing their beats and sound ideas and singing cultures. Gos-pop is well accepted by Nigerian Christian youths, especially the educated ones.

## **NIGERIAN GOSPEL MUSIC BASED ON POPULAR MUSICAL FORM**

These are the ones who take inspiration from the several genres of popular music in Nigeria for the creation, performance, and vocal intricacies of their rhythms. These consist of juju gospel, gospel-high life, gospel-reggae, fuji, waka, and so on. The phrase "assorted gospel music style" is used here to refer to gospel music that combines multiple styles and has an electric approach. It uses any of the previously mentioned forms as well as other styles like calypso, makossa, senwele, Ekiti gospel, Afro-beat, and Afro-jazz. There are three main established variations of the asymmetrical style. They are Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba as of right now. Compared to other styles, it is also the largest artist. Among the well-known artists from the South West practicing this style are Evang. Akin Adebayo of the Celestial Church of Christ, Timi Osukoya, Bola Are, Toun Soetan, C&S Ayo Ni, etc.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The method involves practical research carried out on the background, life and work of Evangelist Mrs Toun Soetan. The research work made use of information and documents from the internet, past interviews, works and textbooks that expands on performance.

This research is based on field work and library research. It consists of interview, journals, books, netography for its data collections.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher is looking into the works of Evangelist Mrs Toun Soetan. *Iye ree, Darling Jesus, Sese ni inu mi dun, My life time*, were selected from among her several compositions, on the popularity, general acceptability and usage of those songs.

The works are selected from her various compilers.

In collection of data, unstructured interview method was engaged by the researcher whereby Evangelist Mrs Rachael Olatoun Soetan was interviewed. The researcher gather all data collected during the field work for review, analysis and general restructuring, by the band notes related to the works meant to be analyzed for the purpose of research and documentation. The data collected were analyzed through listening. The transcription done by the researcher and other music element made use of.

## **BIOGRAPHY OF RACHAEL OLATOUN SOETAN**

### Her Education

She attended St. Theresa Convent School, Ososami, Oke Ado, in Ibadan for primary school and finished in 1966. She attended All Pupils Girls Grammar School, Molete, and later went to Igbo Elerin Grammar School via Iwo in Osun State for her secondary school examination in 1972. She then proceeded to Ado Ekiti Teachers' Training College in 1977–1979 before gaining admission to the University of Ibadan for her degree programme in education in 1983.

### Her Passion for Music

Her passion for music has been there from a very tender age but started gaining expression in her secondary school days in the early and mid-70s, when foreign disco music took over our social cycle. She had her share of youthful exorbitance, channeling into disco music when she earned the nickname Toun Brown due to her imitation of our renowned James Brown musical styles. This lifestyle of love for the world continued with her after school and during her career as a civil servant. But her understanding of music changed when she gave her life over to Jesus and became born again.

### Her Marriage

She got married in 1980 while working on her first record. Her husband, Deacon Titus Jide Soetan, has been her strong backbone, an encourager, a supporter, and a lover of God. The union is blessed with four children who are doing well both spiritually and professionally.

### Her Performance

At the inception of the music ministry, Evangelist Toun Soetan ministered in churches, Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship programmes, crusades, revivals, and wedding ceremonies. Later, she stopped performing in weddings and other ceremonies because she was made to realize by instruction that she was not called into entertainment or performances but into worship ministry. Since then, she has been working in accordance with her call, and various testimonies of the demonstration of God's power have been in abundance.

### Source of Inspiration

Toun Soetan did not serve as an apprehensive musician under anybody before she became a seasoned gospel music minister. Since she gave her life to Christ, the word of God has been the source of her inspiration, her strength, and her songs.

### A List of Toun Soetan's Works

Toun Soetan started singing from the time she joined the Oritamefa Baptist Church Choir after giving her life to Christ. Her calling, gifting, discipline, and focus in the ministry made her succeed. In 1981, Toun Soetan released her first album, 'New Life'. After that album, she has released a series of others that are impactful, among which is 'Iye Ree'. Some of her other works are *New Life*, *Iye Ree*, *Baba wa Bamise*, *Darling Jesus*, *Jesu Olorun Mi*, *Mo ti Duro Le*, *Train Up Your Child*, *Sese Ninu Mi Dun*, *Cast Your Burdens*, etc.

## ANALYSIS OF TOUN SOETAN SONG

Evangelist Mrs. Toun Soetan developed a passion for music at a tender age. She was converted through music and, since then, has become a minister of the gospel through songs. She trained herself with Western music, and she loves worship songs.

One of the distinctive features of gospel music is the text, i.e., the lyrics (Femi Adedeji, 2001), and it is expected that the text in Christian music would be sacred and devoid of vulgar slang. This is evident in the music of Evangelist Toun Soetan. All the text of her songs is based on the Bible. It is important to note that there are other sources from which text for Christian music can be obtained. They may be from life experiences and issues such as love, morals, etc.

A critical look at the works of the musician discussed in this work shows that her songs are all based on the life of a Christian, as most of her words are based on biblical aims and objectives. The themes of her songs can be classified under the following headings:

- i. Song of prayer
- ii. Song of admonition
- iii. Song of evangelism
- iv. Song of love
- v. Song of praise

### Song of Prayer

Prayer is a form of communication where humans connect with the sacred, holy God, gods, the transcendent realm, or supernatural powers. It is a practice present in all religions, whether performed collectively or individually, using diverse forms and methods. While praying through music differs from verbal prayers, both approaches share a common goal of fostering a closer relationship with God. The gospel musician offered her prayer to God through her songs. An example of this is her song titled **Baba wa bamise**, meaning **Father, come and help me**.

### Song of Admonition

Words or messages that cannot be spoken or passed across verbally are at times put into music and sung to people to correct misbehavior and teach morals. Through songs, messages or words of admonition can be passed across to people in various places, such as places of worship, markets, etc. The gospel musician in her song admonished evildoers to stop and turn to God. An example of her song of admonition is "**Asiko mi lo, e lo sora**," meaning "**time is running out; beware.**"

### Song of Evangelism

One of the points of emphasis made by the gospel musician during the interview was the fact that gospel music is meant to evangelize. This fact is also reflected in her song, which has led to the salvation of many listeners. An example of her song of evangelism is "**Iye ree**, meaning **this is life.**"

### A Song of Love

Another important feature seen in the song of the gospel musician is love. Her love for God was expressed in her songs. An example of such a song is **Darling Jesus**.

### Song of Praise

Praise is a direct expression of warm approval or admiration for someone, demonstrating respect and gratitude towards God. Evangelist Toun Soetan's songs also include praise, admiration, gratitude, and commendation towards God,

who, according to her, has been her strength and source. Examples of such songs are Oseun o Baba, Ose o Jesu, Immortal God, Baba E Se, All Power, All Glory, etc.

## CONCLUSION

The life and works of Evangelist Toun Soetan, who is the focus of this research, have shown us that someone's background and challenges of life cannot limit their achievements in life. The past does not necessarily determine the future. The only thing that can limit one's life and career is one's personal disposition to life. When you are determined to be accomplished and focused with no distraction, you are bound to excel in all your life endeavours.

Evangelist Toun Soetan has proved herself unique by influencing lots of people through music. Her works serve as a challenge to other gospel musicians, especially those who study music in tertiary institutions. If someone who did not study music in school could eventually rise to the level of training gospel musicians in music school, then it is a great challenge for a great musical student.

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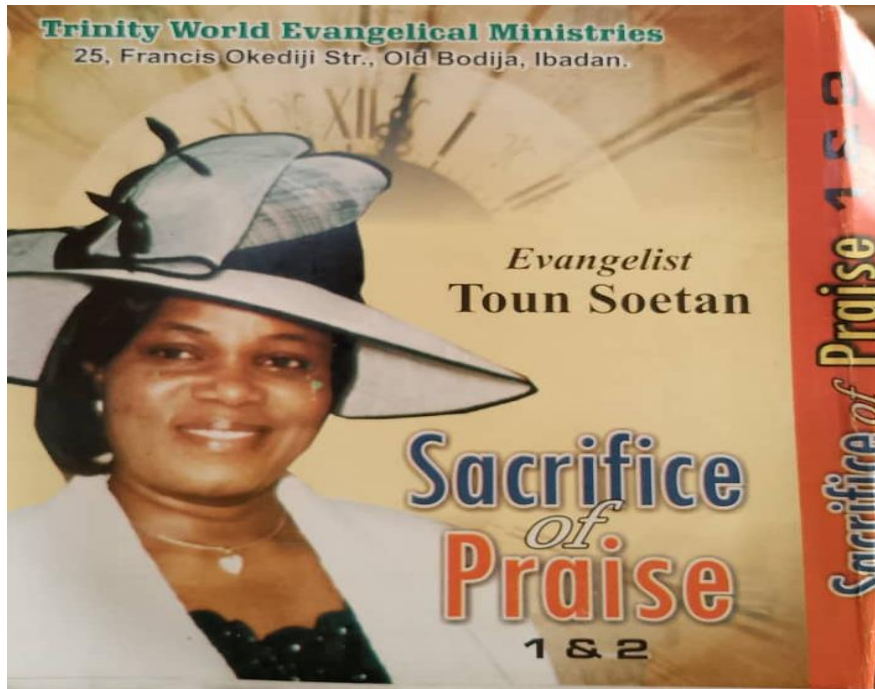
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APENDIXES



LADY EVANGELIST TOUN SOETAN



ONE OF THE ALBUMS OF EVANGELIST TOUN SOETAN  
SELECTED SONGS OF EVANGELIST TOUN SOETAN

# IYERE

COMPOSED BY TOUN SORTAN

Instrumental Prelude

Soprano    
 I-ye - re, i-ye - re, i-ye - re, i-ye - re, i-ye - re, i-ye -

Alto    
 I-ye - re, i-ye - re - i-ye - re, i-ye - re, - i-ye - re, i-ye -

26  
 S.    
 re o - lo-du Ju - su, i-ye - re, i-ye - re, i-ye - re, i-ye - re, i-ye -

A.    
 re o - lo-du Ju - su, - i-ye - re, - i-ye - re, i-ye - re, - i-ye - re, i-ye -

Instrumental Interlude

29  
 S.    
 re, i-ye - re, i-ye - re o - lo-du Ju - su, i-ye - re. O-ba ta bi

A.    
 re, - i-ye - re, i-ye - re o - lo-du Ju - su, - i-ye - re - -

31  
 S.    
 sa-ye o - ku-to-ri re O-ba ta bi sa-ye o - ku-to-ri mi, o ji-ya pa - po ka - ha-to-ri -

A.    
 Oa - o - o - o - o - o -

36  
 S.    
 ye, o se o Ju - su ma-du - po. i-ye - re, i-ye - re, i-ye - re, i-ye - re, i-ye -

A.    
 o - o - o - o i-ye - re, i-ye - re - i-ye - re, i-ye - re, - i-ye -



# CAST YOUR BURDENS

COMPOSED BY TOUN SOETAN.

Soprano

Cast your bur-dens - u-pon Je-sus - for he cares for - you Take your

Alto

Tenor

8

S.

trou-bles - to King Je-sus - there is rest for you. If - you know him bet-ter -

A.

T.

11

S.

- you - would love him deep - er - you - would praise him lou - der -

A.

T.

15

S.

- you - would lift him high - er - If - your heart is hurt - ing -

A.

T.

# SESE

COMPOSED BY TOUN SORTAN

Instrumental Prelude

The musical score is written for Soprano (S.) and Alto (A.) voices. It begins with an instrumental prelude for both parts, marked with a '7' above the staff. The lyrics are in Indonesian and are repeated across five systems. The first system of lyrics is: "Se-se ni - ru mi - dan - a - yo kun-nu o-kan". The second system is: "mi. Se-se ni - ru mi - dan - a - yo kun-nu o-kan mi.". The third system is: "Te-ri mo - ni-Je - su - a - yo kun-nu o-kan mi, -". The fourth system is: "- Te-ri mo-ni Je-su ke-ta-wa - a - yo kun-nu o-kan mi.". The fifth system is: "Te-ri mo - ni-Je - su - a - yo kun-nu o-kan mi, -". The Alto part consistently plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes, while the Soprano part has a more melodic line with some rests.

Soprano  
Se-se ni - ru mi - dan - a - yo kun-nu o-kan

Alto  
Se-se ni - ru mi - dan - a - yo kun-nu o-kan

S.  
mi. Se-se ni - ru mi - dan - a - yo kun-nu o-kan mi.

A.  
mi. Se-se ni - ru mi - dan - a - yo kun-nu o-kan mi.

S.  
Te-ri mo - ni-Je - su - a - yo kun-nu o-kan mi, -

A.  
Te-ri mo - ni-Je - su - a - yo kun-nu o-kan mi, -

S.  
- Te-ri mo-ni Je-su ke-ta-wa - a - yo kun-nu o-kan mi.

A.  
- Te-ri mo-ni Je-su ke-ta-wa - a - yo kun-nu o-kan mi.

S.  
Te-ri mo - ni-Je - su - a - yo kun-nu o-kan mi, -

A.  
Te-ri mo - ni-Je - su - a - yo kun-nu o-kan mi, -