



Ori-Oke Spirituality and Social Change in Africa

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

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Historical Perspectives of the Spiritual and Economic Potentials of *Ori-Oke* Basin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Mountain prayers in recent years, has become responsible for the various religions dynamism existing in Nigeria, and this unparalleled dynamism is mostly associated with Christians. The spiritual vigour and vibrancy are mostly driven the mountain prayers. Mountain prayers have become a common phenomenon among the Christians in Ilorin, and since the establishment of mountain prayers, mountains have tuned to prayer cities besieged by all manner of people, as well as Christians from various denominations, seeking divine intervention and solutions to their problems. Prayer Mountains are usually open to all religious denominations, and are noted for deliverance, healing and miracles. Apart from the religious significance, a different dimension has been added to mountain prayers and this is the economic potential of mountain prayers. Prayer Mountains have turned into business centres, where shops are erected and products like water, provisions, candles, anointing oil and various other goods are sold. These economic activities have become prominent and an added value to Prayer Mountains. The methodology adopted in this study was historical because the primary and secondary tools of research were based on oral interviews and available written documents of the churches, respectively. The paper concludes that Ori-Oke Basin is of historic, spiritual and economic significance, because those who participated in Ori-Oke Basin prayers regularly found it beneficial in finding solutions to their life's intractable problems, and additionally, it has economically empowered some of the people.

Introduction

The concept of praying on designated Mountains in the world began in South Korea. Prayer Mountains are rooted in religions

monasticism and its monasteries, where people connect themselves solely to God. The modern practice of Prayer Mountains was born in South Korea, in the late 1800s, when the opposition from the state religions and philosophies namely Buddhism and Confucianism began. The opposition also from the invading Japanese forces that was fighting the Koreans, at that time, made Mountain Prayers imperative. South Koreans who resisted, were persecuted or even executed. In looking for solutions to the problems, some Christians decided to go to the mountains for prayers in the mornings and evenings, calling on God and interceding over their problems.

In Nigeria, the concept of the Prayer Mountain is mostly associated with the Western part of Nigeria, and it was Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola who founded the Christ Apostolic Church that began praying on the mountains in 1944, through the inspiration of the power of God. Due to the pioneering work of Late Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola, his great spirituality and several visits and dedicated prayers and ministrations on several mountains tops, these mountains have become sacred and are being visited till date. That was how praying on Mountains began to spread to other places in Nigeria. The Yoruba people of the South-Western part of Nigeria, like the ancient Jews in their primitive history and religious experiences attach great religious importance to many objects which they believe are divine. The mountain top is believed to be a sacred location which facilitates and guarantees nearness to God, divine attention and unhindered answers to prayers (Adeola, 2016). *Ori-Oke* Basin in Ilorin, the capital of Kwara-State, Nigeria, was established in 1980 and it was initially a place of worship for various churches in Ilorin as a result of the problems members faced at the Sobi Mountain in Ilorin. Most of the churches began to move to *Ori-Oke* Basin for prayers and vigils. The founder of Jehovah Jireh Christ Church was one of the early worshippers at Basin Mountain. Other churches like Ijo-Ikala Apostolic Church of Christ also used the mountain at the early stage before the Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Church, Ilorin, acquired the mountain. The *Ori-Oke* Basin eventually metamorphosed to the Mount Sinai as a result of the great influence of the Cherubim Seraphim Movement Church, Ilorin (Ige,

2017).

The History of Basin Mountain Prayer (Mount Sinai)

The name Mount Sinai was given to the mountain by the Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Church. Mount Sinai historically was a place to hear God's voice (Exodus 19v9); it was a place God appeared to Moses and said, "Behold, I come to you in thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever". Apostle David Bamidele Aliyu was the first indigene who was actively involved in using *Ori-Oke* Basin. He was a member of Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Church Worldwide; he died as the Chairman, Maintenance and Development Committee of *Ori-Oke* Basin. After his death, Abioyi, became the Chairman, Maintenance and Development Committee of the *Ori-Oke* Basin. Ilorin has other mountains, but one of the most historic mountains is the *Ori-Oke* Basin. The mountain is located in Ilorin South Local Government area of Kwara State. The mountain is historic because, *Ori-Oke* Basin is presently owned by the Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Church. The land was bought in May 1993 with additional two plots acquired from Omoniyi Adeleke. The tenancy agreement was made on the 1st of February, 2012 between the general secretary of the Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Church, No 1, District headquarters Ilorin, Kwara state and Ibrahim Jaiyeola of Kulende area Ilorin (Abioye, 2017).

Following the use of mountains for prayers by the Christ Apostolic Church, many of the mountains are now being used for prayers by different religious groups and denominations (Adekeye, 2017). This has attracted many denominations and different churches, various people and various groups for prayers. The Prayer Mountain is seen as a Holy place where God expressly answers prayers. Individuals visit the mountains to offer prayers and make requests to God. At *Ori-Oke* Basin, Christians go for spiritual incubation and special prayers. In all these, Prayer Mountains have also become a place of economic activities where Christians and other believers transact business around the mountain. Some of the

items sold around Prayer Mountains are anointing oil, sachet and bottle water and candles. These are items that are mostly used during prayers on the mountain. These items when specifically blessed and prayed on during the mountain prayers, become sources of receiving divine healing, deliverance and miracles. Prayer Mountains were in recent times, greatly popularized by the new generation churches across Kwara State.

Spiritual Implications of *Ori-Oke* Basin

Prayer Mountains are places where people go to renew their spiritual state and communion with God, and that enables them to concentrate and experience miracles without distraction. Prayer Mountains provide a good environment for spiritual communion and also offer spiritual sanctuary for those who ordinarily would not go to church. *Ori-Oke* Basin is one of the most popular Prayer Mountains in Ilorin, because it attracts different individuals and people of diverse religions, social class and ethnicity for prayers seeking divine solutions for various problems of life. At *Ori-Oke* Basin, several pastors have been known to spend days praying and fasting in preparation for major ministrations, intercessions or crusades in their various churches, or when they had to minister in other churches on invitation. Because God spoke with Moses on the mountain, people see praying on the mountain as the most effective way of having solutions to life's challenges. The *Ori-Oke* Basin Mountain is being patronized by the rich and the poor and there is no discrimination of any form whatsoever once people arrive on the mountain for prayers, and this shows the high reverence and high esteem with what the mountain is held.

To go for prayers in *Ori-Oke* Basin as an individual, or group does not require any permission or prior notification. In Psalm 24v3-4 the Holy Bible says, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place, He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up His soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully". During the time of Abraham, God instructed him, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of

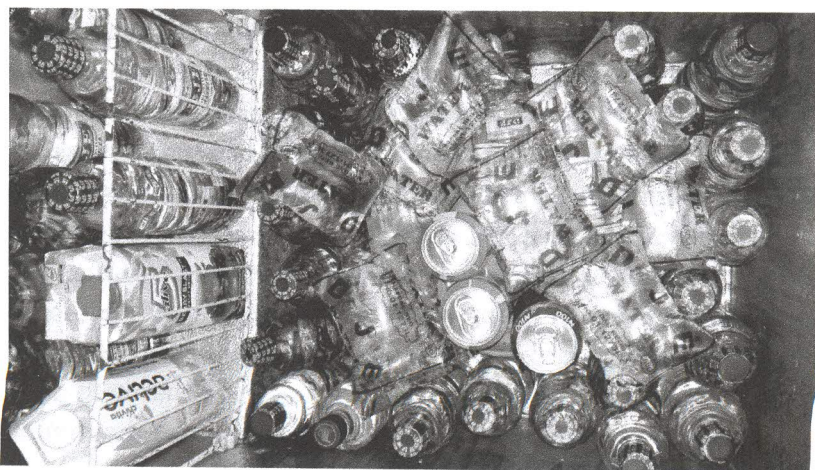
Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" Gen 22v2. This goes to show that God has always associated Himself with mountains, even from early biblical history. This is one of the important reasons Christians have attached a lot of importance to mountains. Christians believe that mountains and hills are endowed with divine presence culminating in their ascribing unlimited powers and spiritual significance to them.

Mountains Prayers are not out of place, there are many instances in the scripture where Jesus Christ went to the mountain for prayers (Matt 4v23). Mountain prayers provide a vital tool for effective Christian life, and a time of uninterrupted communion with God answers from the book.net. The Prayer Mountain is a facility built on a mountain of elevation owned by a specific church but used by all denominations and individuals for the Purpose of praying, fasting, meditating and studying the word of God. In Lk 9v28, the Bible says, "And it came to pass about eight days after, He took Peter, John and James and went up into the mountain to pray", that is to say that, right from inception, prayers have being offered on the mountains. Jesus Christ took his three disciples to the mountain for prayers. He thought them the importance of praying on the mountain and in solitude. However, it should be noted that prayers of Christian believers could be answered anywhere the name of Jesus Christ is mentioned with absolute faith in God.

Economic Potentials of Prayer Mountains

In recent years, Prayer Mountains have turned into business centres where shops are erected and items like water, anointing oil, among other items, are sold. Economic activities have become so prominent on the contemporary Prayer Mountains that the selling of these items has become a common phenomenon at *Ori-Oke* Basin. Transformations have occurred over the years because of the high demand for water, anointing oil, cooked food, bread, biscuits and candles among other items. These are the fundamental items associated with the regular prayers and visits to Prayer Mountains.

Shops and business centres have been established around the mountain. Another common item sold at the Prayer Mountain is cell phone recharge cards because of the importance of communication by the attendees. Recharge cards of all networks are being sold on the mountain, as users of Prayer Mountains, most times, take breaks to make calls to enable them communicate with their families or friends.



Shop 1, Showing Items Sold at *Ori-Oke* Basin, Ilorin.

Sachet and bottle water are commonly patronized items on the Prayer Mountain. Most users of the Prayer Mountain will always patronize these shops, because water is also seen as one of the key ingredients of healing, and it physically proffers solutions to some human problems. Individuals purchase water in pieces of sachets while some do it in bags to meet their spiritual and physical needs (Onundi, 2017). Obviously, the presence of *Ori-Oke* Basin has become a source of financial and economic benefits to some worshippers and some traders. In the course of my research, my resource informant told me of testimonies of some regular worshippers on the mountain, who came to the mountain to consult some prophets, who prayed for them using water for financial breakthrough. After some time, they returned to show appreciation to the prophet who prayed for them, the appreciation could be in kind or in cash. Some of the prophets or pastors praying for people

on the mountain earned additional income through this means. Most of these transactions are usually not known to the Chairman, Maintenance and Development Committee of the mountain. Most of these pastors also patronize these shops for the purchase of anointing oil, water and other items sold at the *Ori-Oke* shops (Owolabi, 2016).



Shop 2 Showing Items Sold at *Ori-Oke* Basin, Ilorin.

Anointing oil is one of the commonest items being brought to the mountain for prayers. The functions and spiritual significance of anointing oil cannot be overemphasized. The use of anointing oil is an integral part of the ordination process for priests, but it has also gained popularity over the years, and it is being used in different perspectives. Anointing oil has a lot of functions. In Mark 6v13, anointing oil was used with the laying of hands on the sick. It is

believed that anointing oil is very useful in healing; it is used in anointing people in which instance, it is applied directly on the head. Anointing oil is also used to make charms and fetish objects ineffective (Onundi, 2017). It is used to anoint objects, houses, shops, various items and business centres, among others. It is used to dispel evil spirits and nullify their actions on the victims. Anointing oil is also used on those who were into idol worship, witchcraft, rituals and various evils acts, especially when such people come to the Prayer Mountain for repentance and cleansing. Anointing oil is then applied on them as a form of cleansing and purification. It is also used to open the womb of those women who are barren (Adeola, 2016). It is believed that when prayed on, especially at the mountain prayers, the anointing oil brings instant healing when rubbed on the body, it remove spiritual curses and bad dreams. During the inception of Prayer Mountains, recharge cards were not sold on the mountains, but because of globalization, the use of the Global System of Mobile Communications (GSM) has become popular among the regular users of the Prayer Mountains creating business for traders.

The candle is an ignitable wick embedded in wax or an inflammable solid substance such as to allow that provides light. A candle is a lamp stick and is seen as a worthy offering to God to forgive and cleanse the sins of sinners. It is also used as an agent of sending away demons and evil spirits from the environment. Today at the Prayer Mountains, and because of the spiritual significance of the candle, shops around Prayer Mountains sell a lot of candles to those who have come to pray. Most denominations that hold night vigil prayers do use candles as a source of illumination during the prayers, and they are not allowed to come into the mountain with black, green or any other colours of candles; only the white candles are allowed on the mountain.

The users of *Ori-Oke* Basin also pay some money for some other services like the Maintenance of the toilets, while they are at the mountain. There is a box kept at the centre of the mountain, and this box is used as offering box. Those who worship are expected to drop offering in the box, but it is not mandatory or compulsory. There are

rules guiding the activities taking place on the Mountain because it is multi-denominational and open to everybody. Those in charge of the up keep and cleanliness of the Basin Prayer Mountain charge some fees to other prayer groups for using musical instruments, for example, during their prayer sessions. It is pertinent to note that some of the commercial activities are, most times, restricted to the gate, and outside the main premises of the Prayer Mountain (Segun, 2017). Some church leaders and administrators have however over the years changed the original spiritual focus of the church on mountain prayers because some of them have commercialized mountain top prayers. However, despite this short coming, mountain top prayers still remain efficacious, notwithstanding the modern realities of commercialization of the mountain top prayers (Ogunlade, 2017).

The Rules Guiding the *Ori-Oke* Basin

In spite of the fact that *Ori-Oke* is visited by all denominations, there are rules and regulations guiding the Basin Prayer Mountain.

1. Footwear are prohibited on the mountain
2. No lady menstruating is allowed to worship on the mountain
3. Rituals are not allowed on the mountain
4. There should be no fighting or physical scuffle that will disturb worship
5. Any group coming to the mountain for vigil must see the security men guiding the mountain
6. All groups must also consult the committee in charge of the mountain
7. Any person worshipping on the mountain must not litter the environment
8. No bicycle, motor cycle or car is allowed on the mountain
9. The mountain is not used as worship centre on Sundays
10. The women must cover their hair before prayers
11. An individual coming to the mountain must not use any other candle unless it is white in colour.
12. No pastor is allowed to collect money from the users of *Ori-*

Oke Basin. These are some of the rules guiding the *Ori-Oke* Basin prayers. 1st peter 1v15-16

The Significance of Ori-Oke Basin

One of the significant attributes of *Ori-Oke* is that the Prayer Mountain is seen as a holy ground, and people are not allowed to put on their footwear within the mountain premises no matter the status of the visitor to the mountain.

1. It is seen as a solution ground for overwhelming problems and a place where God's mercy flows freely.
2. Prayer Mountain is a place of deliverance.
3. Cherubim and Seraphim Movement usually holds yearly retreats for three days for all its members and other interested *Ori-Oke* users
4. Prayer Mountain attendance helps an individual to be more focused
5. It is a place of great solitude and reflection.
6. The Prayer Mountain is not only a good environment for spiritual communion, or spiritual sanctuary, it has also brought about unity among the Christian fold and Nigerians in general, truly making it ecumenical.

In spite of the spiritual and economic benefits of *Ori-Oke* Basin, there are also serious challenges in the environment like insecurity, dumping of nylons and other refuse and passing of excreta by those using the mountain (Salako, 2017). The rate at which the worshippers patronize the *Ori-Oke* Basin has also attracted criminals and encouraged criminality. Most criminals come in as worshippers to commit havoc, and as a result of this, the security men employed to guide the mountain have a herculean task of trying to identify criminals. Because of the indiscriminate dumping of refuse, cleaners were also employed to work and keep the place clean to avoid epidemics of various infectious diseases, breaking out on the mountain (Adeoti, 2017).

Conclusion

The Ori-Oke Basin has a lot of regular users and visitors who over the years have found a lot of spiritual blessings, solutions to intractable life's problems and fulfilment in praying on the mountain. It has attracted people of diverse backgrounds denominations and religions. It is truly ecumenical in every sense by unifying Nigerians. There is no doubt that it is of historic, spiritual and economic significance, and remains a great religious legacy. To some people, it is a solution centre and a place of solitude where God's mercy flows freely. To some other people it has provided a lucrative business and a major source of livelihood for them and their families, especially at a time of economic recession in Nigeria. Mountain top prayers still remain efficacious despite the modern realities of commercialization

Notes and References

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Oral interview of Owolabi Abialaba, 62years old, one of the Pastors in *Ori-Oke* Basin, 12th November, 2016

Oral interview with Akintola Kolawole, above 50 years, a member of Cherubim and Seraphim Movement, Ilorin.

Oral interview with Oluwaniran Johnson Sunday, above 78 years old. One of the members of Christ Apostolic Church who had used the *Ori-Oke* Basin for prayers, 2nd January, 2017. Place of interview, Ilorin.

Oral interview with Onundi Mary Modupe, above 60 years, business woman owning one of the shops in the mountain, place of interview *Ori-Oke* Basin, 10th February, 2017.

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Oral interview, Adeoti Olayinka, 57years, at *Ori-Oke* Basin, 10th February, 2017.

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