

RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING IN ILORIN METROPOLIS:

A CASE STUDY OF SOBI HILL.

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Dr. (Mrs) Lydia Bosede Akande

On behalf of the group.

PREFACE

The Vice Chancellor Professor Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah made it clear from the inception of Kwara State University that he would not condone lazy lecturers let alone redundant, read less, unproductive in teaching and research. He therefore appealed to all lecturers', juniors and seniors including professors, to make the university proud by engaging in meaningful and productive researches on current issues and challenges that will make it achieve her goal of being the University for community development.

He as well strengthened his appeal by making available Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) to any genuine research proposal considered and approved by the University Research Council

This incentive, no doubt, must have spurred almost every lecturer into serious research activities at different levels and departments.

The department of Islamic, Christian and Comparative Religious Studies was very young by then in terms of number of academic staff available.

The only available three permanent academic staff, then Dr. Sulaiman Sheu. Adua, Dr. (Mrs) Lydia B. Akande and myself, teamed together to work on a common interest, that appeared to us current issue and relevant to the community religious activities.

Unknown to us, not until when we decided to work together as researchers, then we got to the understand that each of us has been observing the movement of people on the top of Sobi Hill going about their religious activities. This was because the Sobi Hill was conspicuous to be seen for any passerby like us on our way to the University to and fro Malete-Ilorin almost everyday. As such suggestion by one of us to choose Sobi Hill as our research focus, was endorsed wholesomely. With the interest of the research group being the same, it made the

work collaborative and its end result successful.

Chapter one includes a background introduction, scope of the study, research methodology used and presentation of review of related literature. All this was done to prepare readers' mind for the issue at stake: tolerance among multi religious adherents and its consequences like the one at Sobi Hill in Ilorin metropolis.

Chapter two is the major focus of the work. The Sobi Hill as the center of attraction and Ilorin metropolis with its socio-economic and politico-religious phenomena were taken into account to arrive at the research finding. The legend story of the first inhabitant at Sobi Hill and how the name was coined from the circumstances surrounding the legend man were all revealed. The history of the visitation to the hill and religious activities on it was assessed. In addition effort was made to present data analysis in chapter three. Though as short as it were, it shows the cream of informants used in the process of data research collection and the reliability of the sources of information available to us. Finally research findings conclusion, and suggestions were offered for improvement.

Prof. Sulaiman Jamiu
Lead Researcher

TABLE OF CONTENT

	PAGES
Preface	i
Table of content	vi
Chapter 1	
Introduction	1
Purpose of study	2
Scope of Study	3
Research Methods	3
Literature Review	3
Chapter II	
Brief History of Sobi hill	12
History of Missionary Visitation to sobi Hill	13
Misunderstanding on Sobi Hill and God's Intervention	14
Hills and Mysticism	14-15
Religions practiced on Sobi hill	16
Religions understanding on Sobi Hill	16-17
Chapter III	
Data Analysis	18
Summary of Interview conducted with worshipers on Sobi Hill	20
Chapter IV	
Conclusion	22
Challenges	22
Observation	23
Recommendation	24-25
Notes and references	26-27
Appendixes	28-37

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Ilorin metropolis is a melting pot of almost all tribes in Nigeria, but more conspicuously from the northern part of the country. They include the Kanuris, Hausas, Nupes, Fulanis and the Yorubas. Although the Yorubas dominate the city by numerical strength and culture, the Fulanis rule and were assisted by the influence of Islam which cut across the remaining tribes the Hausa, Kanuri and Nupe. Before and after independence the description of Ilorin metropolis as predominantly Muslim is not an exaggeration. However, the influence of colonization in Nigeria that brought in influx of Christian missionaries can not as well be underestimated after independence. The monopoly enjoyed by Islam in the Ilorin metropolis was broken. The interest of many different researchers of various disciplines; history, sociology and religion, in this scenario, is the co-existence of the two different cultures and religions; Islam and Christianity in diversity and unity. This tradition has been existing for decades and hopefully will continue as such. Because there is hardly any week of the month that cases of religious crises are not heard of from the Newspapers, Televisions/Radio etc, from any part of the country. Ilorin the capital of Kwara State is however known as a state of harmony because of the peaceful and healthy co-existence of the people of the town irrespective of religious affiliation. Though cases of religious intolerances have been recorded in the past, nevertheless the level of harmonious co-existence enjoyed in the town can be favorably compared to other states where fear of sudden religious crises has rendered many homeless, killed, properties destroyed and innocent

bloodshed. All these had adversely affected the development of such areas and the nation at large. Social activities have been put at halt, academic programmes disturbed in institutions of learning, and economic activities too adversely affected. Based on the aforementioned, and at a time like this when cases of religious crises occasioned by Boko Haram sects have become the order of the day, this study investigates what informed the good relationship that exist between Christian and Muslim Worshippers in and around Ilorin metropolis with particular focus on Sobi Hill prayer area. The focus of this group of researchers is the level of understanding and tolerance by the adherents of the two major religions, Islam and Christianity that made up the peaceful and harmonious atmosphere of Ilorin Metropolis. What factors could have aided the community to achieve so much in the area of peaceful coexistence and meaningful development?

Purpose of Study

We believe that every research must have a purpose or purposes. Research, be it pure sciences, natural sciences, or social sciences in religion or history is a study of the status quo and its assessment to know more of it and bring out 'new discoveries'. What was discovered was to serve as means of more discoveries, progress and development in the future for the benefit of humanity. This study therefore is meant to discover the secret behind the peaceful co-existence of Muslims and Christians in Ilorin metropolis with particular reference to dual worshippers on the same Sobi Hill at the same time, yet without conflict. The study is to strengthen the cordial relationship that already exist and suggest way forward in areas of discrepancies if any. The study is meant to inspire further researches and put on record the unusual marriage of

convenience between the groups of worshippers.

Scope of Study

This study covers the general social relationship between Muslims and Christians in Ilorin Metropolis and limited to interactive relationship of the two religious worshippers on Sobi Hill. Sobi Hill was chosen as focus of study because of its protuberant posture in the metropolis, the feature that made it attractive to religious worshippers. The mere trooping of religious worshippers to it suggests the significance of this research particularly for religious academics like us.

Research Methods

The researchers adopted two basic methods in the course of their work; first, field and library. The field research includes interview and interaction with people in the area and beyond; observation and analysis of the material gathered. Secondly, related sources of information in prints and audio cassette record were also assessed and the questionnaires used for information collation analyzed.

Literature Review

Interaction Of Religions In Ilorin Metropolis

Religions do not exist in a vacuum. They are practiced by people living together in a community or society. This therefore, connotes that "the interaction of religions is the interaction of people"¹. Where there is positive interaction, religious harmony and healthy rivalry are experienced, but the opposite is the case where people of different religions think that their religion is superior to the other. In such

situation, conflict may result. Therefore, attention would be focused on interaction of religions in Ilorin metropolis with particular reference to Christianity and Islam, the two prominent religions in the city.

Social Interaction

The series of Churches, Mosques, religious institutions, posters, stickers and programmes on television and radio, suggest the social level of interaction of religions in the metropolis. Adherents enjoy relatively some level of social interaction, freedom and peace in promoting and propagating their religious beliefs and doctrines. The Radio and Television stations open and close with Muslim and Christian prayers, Islamic and Christian programmes are given equal slots. The same goes for the state owned publishing house. "The Herald" where specific pages are allotted to Muslims on Fridays and Christians on Sundays².

Similarly, development of churches in Ilorin is now on the increase compared to some years back. Today, churches could be seen in area believed to be predominantly Muslim settlements. For instance, places like Surulere, Ogidi and Ipata now have churches built there. In few cases, these churches are situated side by side with Mosques³.

In addition to the above is the fact that adherents of these religions in the metropolis belong to the same social clubs or associations. This is supported by Odumuyiwa when he states that:

Today, the adherents of the three religions accommodate and tolerate themselves in most part of the country. For example, in the southern part of Nigeria, especially among the Yoruba speaking race, adherents of the three religions are found in the same family. They sleep, eat and have many things in common. For instance, they keep the same social group, belong to the same society club, join hands together in marriage, naming and burial ceremonies of their kith and kins, irrespective of any

religion anyone belongs to⁴.

Also, it is a common phenomenon to notice in the metropolis that Muslims and Christians are coexisting peacefully.

There are times husband may be a Muslim and the wife Christian or vice-versa. Children from such homes in most cases are allowed to practice the religion of their choice, and are made to bear both Muslim and Christian names. Adewale supported this view saying that:

"In some families, the Muslim husbands give Muslim names to their children while the Christian parents of the mother give Christian names to the children combining the two religions in the children"⁵ Dahunsi supported this assertion by pointing out that:

Anthropologically, it affords opportunity of assessing man's role in forming and reforming interactive setting, hence it offers social advantage as it improves political, ethnic and commercial atmosphere, thus giving room for dialogue in a setting and on the media⁶.

It should be noted here that, more often than not, more Christians or Muslims will go against such intermarriage. The Christians' point of argument is normally based on the portion of the scripture that says "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:4). While the Quran 3:85) says: "And whoever seek a religion other than Islam it will never be accepted of him". Most Christian or even Muslim consider as unbelievers whoever is not of the same faith with them. This ideal should be discouraged in as much as both religions believe in one Almighty God. Regardless of religious background, when couples love dearly and see that they can effectively cope and live peacefully together for life, religious barrier should be removed from such intermarriages.

Religious Interaction

The efforts of the state government is commendable with its various moves at maintaining and sustaining the interaction among the religious bodies in the State. One of such efforts was the setting up in 2005, a body known as committee on Inter-Religious Affairs. Besides, there used to be a Special Assistance to the Governor on Inter-Religious matters. The present state government has increased it to two; one each for the two religions respectively.

Another effort by the government (past and present) in encouraging religious interaction and harmony in the metropolis and the state in general is the Government's sponsorship of Christians and Muslims pilgrims to the holy lands at government expenses. This step is perceived by many as a waste of government resources. It is the opinion of many people that individuals going to holy lands to perform religious rites and obligations should be made to bear their own expenses. We see the action as a good gesture on the part of the Government, however, we equally wish the distribution of the pilgrimage scholarship was done with all sincerity, equity and spirituality, if it should be done at all, instead of been "politicized" and atimes bastardised by some politicians. Moreover, and encouragingly too, when we compare the peaceful atmosphere in the metropolis with some other states of the federation, the peace, harmony and religious interaction recorded in Ilorin Emirate is far greater than elsewhere. Archbishop John Onaiyekan supported this view during the ordination of a new Bishop Ayo Maria Atoyebi in Ilorin on 17th May, 1992. He said that: "it should be made known to the world that Muslims and Christians relationship in Ilorin is cordial, this is evident in the fact that Muslim governor attends Christian programme"⁷. Christian clerics too do attend Muslim programmes in the town. A

practical example was in November 2004 at the Kwara Hotel where Christian clerics attended the dialogue session of the First International Islamic Conference put up by the World Muslim Congress, Nigerian Branch, with head office in Ilorin. There, thought-provoking papers were presented. A similar dialogues was put up between 7th and 11th August, 1978 by Professor I.A Balogun when he was the Head of Department of Religions, University of Ilorin.

Also, people of different faiths co-exist peacefully in the metropolis. There were times when Christians and Muslims celebrated their festivals on the same day, or where the Muslim celebration fell on a Sunday. They had comported themselves with maturity, each going to their various churches and Mosques without harassment. There were cases where Muslims were invited to Easter, Harvest or Christmas thanksgiving anniversaries. In seminars and conferences, they have related well to "emphasize what brings them together rather than what separates them"⁸. Muslims and Christians have been invited to fund raising programmes in respect of Mosque or Church building projects. No wonder the state appellation is "State of Harmony".

At Alore area of Ilorin which is mostly Muslim populated; the story was told of a Christian family from Ilesha named Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Olanrewaju. They had lived in this area for close to forty years. The wife is popularly called Mama Bose, a petty trader in a shop in front of their house. The relationship between this family and the Muslim around them is so cordial to the extent that the man was given freely a plot of land to build. When he was celebrating the marriage ceremony of two of his children, his Muslim neighbors were his immediate family members. This is to tell us how cordial Christian/Muslim relationship is in Ilorin⁹. In Asa Local Government the Chairman of the Christian Association, Rev.

Osaji, also confirmed in a discussion with him that good relationship and interaction exist between Muslims and Christians in the area. The Local Government Authority in the area for instance recognizes the presence of Christianity in Asa, and as such sponsors Christian pilgrims. There are also Christian representative at the Local Government Area Council. He specifically made mention of Alhaji Baako who readily supports Christian activities, though still practices his own faith.

The Christian Association in Asa divided the Local Government into zones. Each of the zones has at least seven to ten different Christian denominations. The zones are:

Zone A- Laduba, Ogbondoroko, Afon and Aboto

Zone B- Ote

Zone C- Eyenkorin

Zone d- Alapa and Bakase

Prominent Christians from this Local Government include the Retired Bishop Abimbola of Methodist Church and Pa Akinola who was the first executive chairman of Asa Local Government Area in 1976¹⁰.

Political Interaction

In issues relating to political appointments, religious interaction has played prominent role. Worth of interest too in the metropolis is the tradition of co-operative rule between Muslim and Christian. If the Governor is a Muslim, his deputy would be a Christian. This view was supported by Opeloye when he said;

Religion started to be an issue for consideration in a political appointment as from the reign of General Muritala Mohammed. He evolved a tradition of co-operative rule between the Muslim and Christian at the Federal level, that is, if the Head of State is a Muslim; his Deputy would be a Christian and vice-versa. It has also become the tradition in the state of federation with equal

population of Muslims and Christians¹¹.

In Ilorin, politicians have been seen relating together for the benefit of the state and the nation as a whole. Members of political parties holding meetings together belong to either of the religions. At the State House of Assembly, members of the different religions meet to deliberate on how to move the State forward. When the Governor is a Muslim, the deputy a Christian and vice versa (12). On this point we commend the view of Aderibigbe that "party politics in Nigeria has been able to rise above religious segregation and bias despite claims to the contrary in some quaters¹³.

Economic Interaction

At the economic level, interaction of the different religious affiliations in Ilorin has been encouraging. There are no separate markets for the Muslims or Christians. And as a matter of fact, most of the land bought by Christians where they built their Churches were sold to them by their Muslim counterparts. There are cases of business ventures jointly owned by these adherents. They sell goods together at the same market. They also belong to the same co-operative bodies or societies and employ the services of one another as farmers, tailors, carpenters, bricklayers and other area without any religious prejudice. In some of these co-operative bodies or societies in Ilorin, Christian or Muslim can be chairman or secretary or vice-versa. On this note, Adelowo pointed out that:

In economic matters, the relationship is one to write home about. There has never been either a Muslim market or a Christian one, all go to the same market and are affected by the same law of buying and selling¹⁴.

Education Interaction

In the area of education, the interaction noticed in the metropolis is commendable. Christian mission owned schools are attended by Muslim Children. Examples of such schools include Bishop Smith Memorial College, St. Anthony's Secondary School. Cherubim and Seraphim College, and St. Joseph's Nursery and Primary School. Similar thing occurred, though, both in a low turnout in Muslim schools like Ansari Islam Secondary School, Iqra College, Jama'atu Nasril Islam Secondary School, Mohammad Kamal, Al'Alim Nursery and Primary School. We may quickly mention, however, that government policy on Education allows any child to go to any school of his/her choice, be it Christian or Muslim. In his observation, Aderibigbe noticed the positive impacts of education on our religious system when he said:

In the education field the relation that has grown between Muslims and Christians has been largely positive. Not only has the schooling system in the country brought members of the two religions into close contact, developing in them attitude of co-operation and tolerance¹⁵.

Encouragingly too, with the government take over of mission schools, Christians were posted to Muslims schools and Muslims to Christian schools. All these were aimed at maintaining religious interaction.

Advantages of Interaction of Religions

From the aforementioned, we would realize that, the need for interaction especially between the Christians and Muslims in Ilorin today has become a pressing issue more than ever before because of the numerous advantages to be derived from such interaction.

In the first place, interactions of religions create room for unity in diversity, curbing religious chaos and cooling tension where there was one. The fact here is that, irrespective of our religions or

denominational difference, we still see ourselves as members of the same one big family of believers in God. This further ascertain that religions can only be practiced by the living adherents of such faiths, the dead dare not. This, thus, call for mutual respect, peace and harmony among people of various religions. Also through inter-faith dialogues, interaction provides adequate understanding of the doctrines, practices and belief systems of religion other than one's own. Hence, interaction of religion helps to clarify issues, clear gray area and afford us the opportunity to forget past wrongs. This support the declaration of the Vatican II conferences in New York, which states that:

The sacred council now plead with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values¹⁶.

This will further encourage friendly co-operation and promote social, economic, political, religious and educational development of the metropolis.

Similarly, interaction of religions enhances the spirit of tolerance and accommodation. Today, we see Christian girls marrying Muslim boys, so also Muslim girls are seen marrying Christian boys. Though such instances are not many, the fact that it exist is societal friendly. They believed that the same God is being worshipped. There are also Muslims and Christians living together peacefully as co-tenants. None of them attempts to condemn the religion of the other or hate one another for belonging to different religions.

In summary, the above advantages are necessary if for nothing else, but for the sake of peace, posterity and the stability of the metropolis, the state and the nation as a whole. Anything contrary will only make the much desired harmony to be elusive

CHAPTER TWO

Brief History of Sobi Hill

Sobi hill is a smooth steep-sides, dome-shaped outcrop, as described by Lea, (2010) He further sees it as the highest of a group of such hills that rise about 200 meters above the gently undulating savanna to the north of Ilorin, the capital of Kwara State of Nigeria.

Hardly could any African hills or extraordinarily big mountain be free from been shrouded in mystery; it does not matter from whom among religious believers prevalent in a particular community: African Tradition Religion, Christianity or Islam.

Sobi Hill in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria is not an exception. Oral tradition has it that one brave hunter from Oyo-Ile by name Kiniba was a good friend to the 5th Balogun Gambari of Ilorin, Ali during the reign of Emir Shittu. Kiniba the hunter was accommodated and offered to live beside a rock. The hunter was known for many mysterious happenings; sometimes he would predict success in an intended war to be waged by the emir through his Balogun. Example of such wars was Orimanpe Expedition. Gradually, Kiniba became popular with his predictions and the effective traditional medicine he offered to people of the town. Whenever this brave hunter paid courtesy call to the emir in his palace, people used to applaud him and praised him with pleasant expression like "Aboke ma bo eke", meaning the worshipper of hill (Oke) but, does not condone hypocrisy--- the king is greeting you.

As God would have it, according to a legend there was an extraordinary old pregnancy of a woman for over 20 years among the emir's people. When Kiniba got to know of this, he offered some medicine and assured them that the woman will deliver her baby peacefully. To the surprise of all, his prediction came to pass, the baby was delivered successfully!

Kiniba also had a very often expression to the people of the palace that they should be watchful of the pregnant woman; and that if the woman mess (in Yoruba so) she would deliver her pregnancy (in Yoruba bii). As such common expression on the lips of the people sagaciously to Kiniba whenever he visited palace was "Mess and Deliver it" i.e. "So bii". Gradually the expression become synonymous to Kiniba as father of So bii. That was how the hill around which Kiniba lived was known and called Sobi Hill (Oke Sobi)¹⁸

History of Missionary Visitation to Sobi Hill

Naturally, the first record of worship on Sobi Hill was by Kiniba the hunter and his African Traditionalist believers. It was gathered that the occational worship on the Sobi Hill, two big black and white cows were used for sacrifice on the hill, the meat of which would be shared by their followers and counterparts worshippers at Shao, a town of about 2½ kilometers to Sobi Hill. Presumably, Kiniba who resided in the area close to the Hill and was mostly busied by his hunting profession and occasionally as a traditional medicine provider or a times predicted events to his admirers in the metropolis. Because, he would disappeared to the bush sometimes, and reappeared some other times. However, the Sobi Hill protuberance first attracted Christian mission in the middle of nineteenth century probably in 1830. In 1940, another Christian missionary, whose name was not known visited the Hill and rebuilt the structure that was earlier built by the first missionary. The first reference of the visit by a Muslim "activist" was in 1950 in person of Sa'adullahi Muhammad Jamiu popularly known as Shaykh Nigeria. He was said to have caved out his own apartment on the Hill a few distance to where the Christians had their own; each group

performing their religious rite without any hindrance or rancor.

Oral tradition has it that the adherents of the two religions; Christianity and Islam were living together peacefully on the Sobi Hill for over a decade until 1964, when Shaykh Nigeria brought his followers (Ibadullahi). The name of the Muslim group was later changed to Qudam Dawah in 1968. All of them on both sides; Islam and Christianity were carrying out their religious activities on the Hill without hitch.¹⁹

Misunderstanding on the Sobi Hill and God's Intervention

The only record of misunderstanding available to the researchers was in 1970, but the trouble that would have erupted from such was eventually nipped in the bud by God's intervention. The story has it that the Christians accused the leader of the Muslim worshippers, Shaykh Nigeria of bringing people to the Hill indiscriminately. For that reason alone, Shaykh Nigeria's belongings were destroyed, when he was not around. By the time he came back, instead of retaliating, he simply relocated his camp elsewhere on the Hill, where he spent five days praying to God in solitary. Soon after the five days prayer, it was gathered that an unimaginable strong wind blew off and scattered their properties indiscriminately. This incident served as stabilizer between the two groups. Henceforth, they have been staying together amicably. The level of their tolerance was so encouraging that, the Muslims with respect allow the Christians to fully observe their religious activities on 31st of every December; while the Christians with all respect allow the Muslims to fully carry out their religious activities without any hindrance on January 1st of every year.²⁰

Hills and Mysticism

The position and importance of hills or mountains in the minds of different believers cannot be over emphasized. For African Tradition Religionist, who worship gods through spirits of different sort, consider hills, especially rocky ones as an abode of spirits or jins, (demon) as such they patronize it for their sacrifices. Muslim and Christians on the other hand, are quite similar in their perceptions and usage of hills different from Traditional Religionists. From centuries immemorial, in the early history of both Christianity and Islam, hills played significant roles in establishing messages of the ministry of the two religions. Prophet Musa (Moses) received God's revelation and got his mission commissioned on the Mountain Sinai.

Prophet Isa (Jesus Christ), visited hills times without number to pray, meditate in supplication to Almighty God. Prophet Muhammad, who came last and was the seal of prophethood, also received his first revelation from God on the Mountain of Noor (cave of Hera). Meanwhile, few years before he was 40 years old, when he was commissioned Prophet by Allah, he had been going to the hill for meditation and supplication.

The above instances therefore are premises upon which the perception of hills, mountains or remote desert places is predicated. They are places considered conducive atmosphere where religious practices and conscientious meditation could be done.

A kind of mysticism is attached to devotion and meditation carried out on such hills in which people try to get knowledge of truth and to become united with God through prayers.²¹

Religions Practiced on Sobi Hill

Sobi hill was a good place for quiet reflection and contemplation. A place where all one's tribulations, grief and challenges are put behind thought and concentrate on how to get closer to Almighty God. A place for one to devote his/her self to solitary unity with God and got his/her prayer answered by Him for being away from all attractions and distraction of any sort. Little should one wonder to see that the Sobi Hill is being patronized majorly by the adherents of the two prominent religions in Ilorin metropolis; Christians and Muslims. They go there individually or in groups depending on their motives and intentions. It could be an individual who has special issues or problems to solve between himself/herself and his/her God or a Pastor or a Reverend or a Malam leading their church followers/ mosque disciples to the Sobi Hill for more serious devotional prayer. All those found on the Sobi Hill, groups or individual, male or female young or old, Christians or Muslims, were all in the habit of "mind your business" facing squarely what brought them to the hill. No single African Tradition Religion was mentioned on the Hill. Probably they have extinct by time and influence of the two religions, Islam and Christianity.

RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING ON THE SOBI HILL

We (the researchers) visited Sobi Hill, in Ilorin East Local Government Area of Kwara State several times. Twenty (20) research assistants employed comprised of both Muslim and Christian students. They assisted in the distribution of questionnaires. A photographer was also employed to take pictures of events on and around the hill.

Several visits were made to people living on and around the site of the project. On many occasions, we observed groups of worshippers who were faithfully attending to their religious obligations.

We witnessed the activities of the various groups (Muslim and Christian groups on the hill) on three different occasions and interacted with them.

Apart from the questionnaires distributed to our respondents, oral interviews were also conducted with them to complement their responses on the questionnaires earlier filled by them.

Visits were equally made to other areas of the town to find out if there are cases of similar peaceful co-existence and respect among adherents of the two religions, Islam and Christianity living in the same area.

Based on the aforementioned and our interactions with our respondents and residents in and around Sobi Hill, our findings revealed that, the two different groups of worshippers on Sobi Hill have the spirit of tolerance and respect for one another's religion. One can see each group observing their religious obligations without any mutual fear; harassment or molestation of any kind. This clearly portrayed the peaceful atmosphere of Ilorin. No wonder, the appellation of "State of Harmony" is adopted by the state. A similar case of such tolerance, mutual respect and love was observed among members of the Rhema Church, Tanke, Ilorin, and the Muslim worshippers in a Mosque directly opposite the Church which belongs to Ahamadiya Muslim Jamaat. Reports of this research showed that, the two different religious institutions on same axis live together amicably. Cars are fearlessly parked at each other's car parking lot indiscriminately when occasions like wedding, or other festivities demand for it

To support this point, the general overseer of Rhema; Rev. George Adegboye gladly described the scenario as a healthy development.

From the record of information available with us, the Sobi Hill has never recorded a case of violence or peace disruption of the society.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSIS

Based on the nature of the title of our research, "RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING IN ILORIN METROPOLIS: A CASE STUDY OF SOBI HILL", it became very germane for us to send out questionnaires which were designed to solicit for relevant information on the subject matter to enrich our research. Hence, a total number of three hundred (300) questionnaire were distributed, out of which, two hundred and fifty copies were retired back. The following table explains the various categories of people that made up the 250 respondents considering their religions, age group, occupation and marital status.

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS 250

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS 250																
AGE OF RESPONDENTS		RESPONDENTS THAT ARE LITERATES							ILLITE RATES		SEX		RELIGION		OCCUPATION	
15-30	30 & ABOVE	Ph.D	MASTERS	1 st DGR	HND	NCE	OND	ILLITERATES	M	F	ISLAM	XTY	CIVIL SERVANT	TRADERS	OTHER	
200	50	NIL	05	15	20	70	40	100	180	70	130	120	80	150	20	

From the above analysis, the following is the summary of the information gathered from all the respondents. Only those from age thirty and above were able to narrate to us, brief history of the origin of Sobi Hill. They all testified to the fact that, the level of tolerance of the people of Ilorin metropolis especially in religious matter has being very commendable. They all confessed that no noticeable crisis between the two religious groups except for a Christian respondent who said a religious crises cropped up in the late 70s, but that the issue was timely addressed.

On the possible ways of improving on the existing relationship among

the various adherents in Ilorin metropolis and especially on Sobi Hill, the following forms the summary of the suggestions put up by all the respondents. That:-

- 1) Leaders of the two prominent religions, Islam and Christianity should organize programmes that will bring about peace and unity among adherents of the two faiths on the community.
- 2) Religious scholars should organize conferences, debates, discussions that will centre on issues that will promote peaceful co-existence and economic development.
- 3) Adherents of each faith should respect the doctrines or beliefs of others.
- 4) Shun issues that can lead to crisis
- 5) Government should put up more programmes that will promote religious harmony.
- 6) Government to bring to book anyone trying to disturb the existing peace of the metropolis.
- 7) Research of this nature should be encouraged among students of varied religions on our campuses in various institutions of learning.
- 8) Government to make the teaching of the prominent religions compulsory at all levels of our educational system.

Summary of Interview conducted with Worshipers on Sobi Hill

The following are the various categories of people we met on the Hill, and their views and experience about the Hill.

1) Pastor & Mrs Mike Jegede:

The pastor is the minister in charge of Fountain of Grace and Glory, Christian Center; Zango, Ilorin. To this couple, Sobi Hill is the mountain set apart to meet different needs of people. There, God meets with people with divorce problems. They testified to the fact that they have achieved solution to their problems.

2) Prophetess Olorunda Arinola Of C&S Aduragbemi. Testified to what he called God's wonders on the Hill, and that people come from different part of Nigeria to pray on the Hill.

3) Muslim Women Of Hasbunallah Society, Taiwo, Ilorin:

- The leaders of this group are Aafa Awori and Aafa Olosun.
- They also testified of God's mercies and answered prayers
- Also confessed that there have been peaceful co-existence among the worshipper on the hill.

4) Prophetess Esther Sanni

- She has a Shiloh (place of Prayer) on the mountain tagged KOSEUNTI (Noting is impossible for God)
- She is married to a Muslim, and they both practiced their faith without any form of problem. Their children take to either of the religions
- The research team met one of her daughters who is a Muslim (Aisha) that came to visit her mother on the hill only. She refused to take photograph with the group, probably because she is married to a Muslim husband and even pregnant as at the time

of our visit to the hill.

5) Adewole Gbadegesin

He is a furniture maker, and attends Christ Salvation Ministry, Surulere, Ilorin. He has a particular challenge that brought him to the mountain. He has been there for over 3 months as of the time of our visit on 2nd Feb. 2014.

6) Aafa Mohammed Soliu Abdulkadir (42yrs)

This Malam confirmed that, he heard testimonies from people about the mountain frequently as far back as 20yrs. Also confirmed that people come from Offa, Abuja etc to pray on the mountain

7) Aafa Abdulfatai (21yrs)

He is a National Diploma (ND) Accounting Student of Kwara State Polytechnic. He was their for God's intervention to his unemployment saga.

8) Abibullahi (33yrs)

Now bears Emmanuel, a C&S member. Has been on the hill for 8 months with his son Toyin to be precise. He was a Muslim convert to Christianity.

9) Garba Shuaib (30yrs)

- He is a panel Beater and a motor dealer
- He is an indigene of Ilorin, a Muslim, but resides in Akure. He came to the hill to seek the favour of God about his business because he had faced with a lot of challenges in the business.

10) Sunday Jimoh (35yrs)

He is a Christian and a Bricklayer from Shao, a 2½ kilometer distance from Sobi Hill.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

We have been able to deduce the fact that Ilorin metropolis is a model religions interaction and peaceful coexistence. Activities of various religion groups on Sobi hill located along Shao Road in Ilorin East LGA, Kwara State has justified this assertion of religions understanding and harmonious existence especially between the adherents of Christianity and Islam. Other places in the metropolis that also portrayed the city as a place of harmony are equally highlighted.

The literature reviewed are relevant to the topic in question. Series of visits made by the research team to the hill at different times to ascertain the level of interaction among the worshippers further confirmed our findings.

Based on the aforementioned, we therefore conclude that matters pertaining to religion in our society should be given adequate support and attention if our development is to be sustained.

Challenges

In the course of carrying out this work, despite the eagerness on the part of researchers, and availability of fund provided by the Kwara State University, a lot of challenges were faced. Among these are: the uncooperative attitude of some of the respondents. While very few of them responded appropriately, and were met on ground keeping to the time arranged for them, we had to make several visits and phone calls to get them to respond to our questions. Similar to this, is

the fact that, some respondents actually demanded for gratification, before we could get them to respond; while some of the respondents thought that the researchers were only out to exploit or implicate them or expose them for their (researchers) benefit: A kind of the fear of unknown.

Also, the task of climbing the hill on several occasions was very cumbersome. However we see this as a challenge, determination and commitment to accomplish the objective of the research.

Regardless of all the challenges mentioned, the outcome of the research is satisfactory and successful. It is believed that, the result will contribute to the existing body of knowledge, serve as model for other states to emulate, and as well lead to other research.

Observation

- 1) It was observed on the hill that, both religious groups commonly believe that for their prayers to receive attention by God, whoever is on the hill must not have any grudges against one another.
- 2) Similarly we also observed that, many worshippers have been there for quite some 2 to 8 months or more. Whatever food is available to any is shared by all.
- 3) The only building on the hill, house the properties of the religious groups without any form of mistrust.
- 4) It is not out of place to observe that many of the worshippers on the hill need financial assistance mostly to feed themselves for survival.

The spirit of live and let live radiates among them. The only building on the mountain housed the properties of all the worshippers regardless of religious affiliation. They share food and drink together.

Recommendations

With our findings, and for this harmonious co-existence to continue and for Ilorin Kwara State to serve as a model to other towns, villages where communal religious crises and violence have created troubles, rendering many homeless, and causing unwarranted deaths, we therefore put up the following suggestions among others that:

- 1) First and foremost, faith in the Power of God, the Almighty, who has the supreme Authority over everything, living and non-loving beings should be inculcated into our children to serve as foundation to all other beliefs or doctrines of the two religions. This is the core factor of the belief in searching for solution to problems with God in seclusion in the desert or on hill. As such everyone that goes to the hill and meets others has the same goal; to seek for solutions to problems with the same God, through different methods or styles, Islamic or Christian.
- 2) Parents should inculcate into their children the spirit of tolerance right from cradle. This is because, these children will grow up and exhibit to the larger society whatever type of behavior inculcated into them from home. Most cases of religious intolerances, crises are normally stirred up by youth of various societies.
- 3) Leaders of the two religious groups should from time to time preach to their followers the importance of loving one another. Let all know that the only antidote to peaceful co-existence is mutual understanding and love. Love your neighbours as yourself, and that, life is so precious, it should not be wasted.
- 4) Organized prayers to God, from time to time should be arranged

and directed by our religious leaders to avoid extremism and exaggeration of doctrines.

- 5) Our government should not fold arms and pretend as if all is well. All forms of intolerance, or religious crises should be preached against, through the various organs of mass media. Culprits should be brought to book and dealt with, precisely in accordance with the law of the land.
- 6) Creation of a ministry of religious affairs in a state like Kwara State, and possibly at federal level is not out of place for recommendation. This idea could be supported by the initiative taken by Kwara State Government when the executive Governor appointed two Special Assistants on religious affairs for Muslims and Christians respectively. Based on the outcome of this research it is believed that in a situation where a full fledged ministry exists with capable and reputable representative of the two major religions, matters of religious harmony, peaceful co-existence, mutual understanding and endurance will be positively handled squally.

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Pastor Mike Jegede. Minister in charge of Fountain of Grace and Glory, Christian Centre, Zango, Ilorin, discussing with Dr. (Mrs.) Akande on the importance of the hill to his ministry.



Prophetess Olorunda Arinola (4th from right), with members of her Church and the research team on the hill.



From left:- Garba Shuaib (come to the hill to seek the favour of God about his business), Dr. Adua, Dr. (Mrs.) Akande and Professor Jamiu.



Alfa Mohammed Soliu Abdulkadir observing his religion rites on the hill.



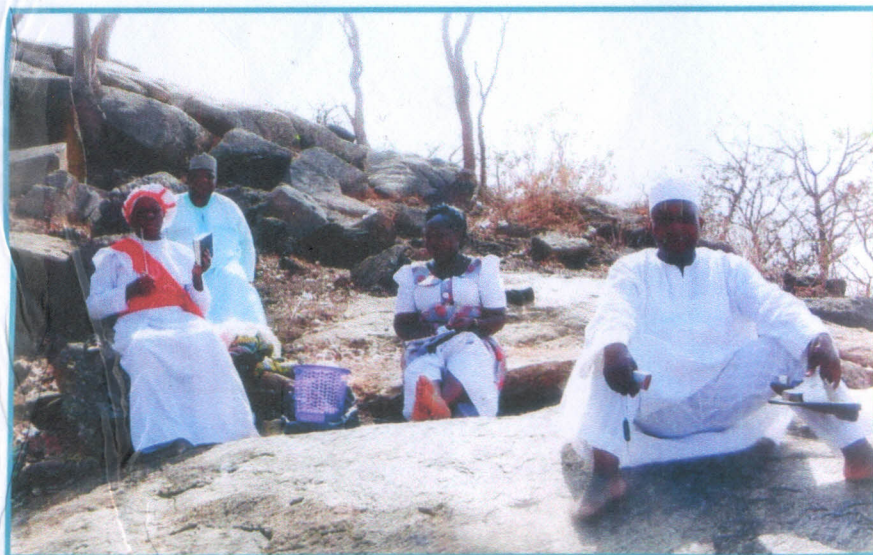
Muslim Women of Hasbunallah Society, Taiwo, Ilorin, With members of the research team on the hill.



Muslim Women of Hasbunallah Society, Taiwo, Ilorin, Returning from the Hill.



Adewole Gbadegesin, a furniture maker. has been on the hill for close to 3 months to pray about his business



Prophetess Esther Sanni, sitting behind her is Dr Adua, in the middle is Dr. Akande and Professor Jamiu first from right



from right:- Professor Jamiu, Alfa Mohammed, Dr. (Mrs.) Akande and Dr. Adua



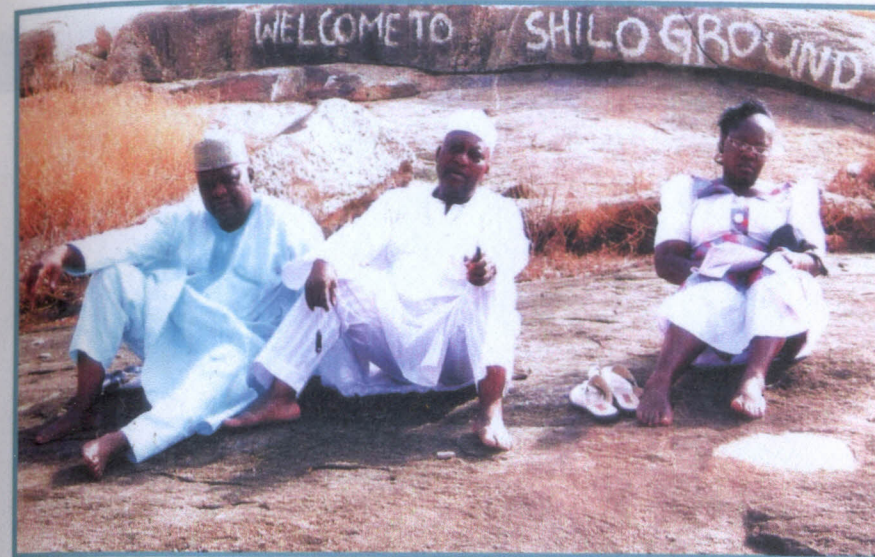
Members of Research team with worshipers on the hill.



Research team on adventure on the hill



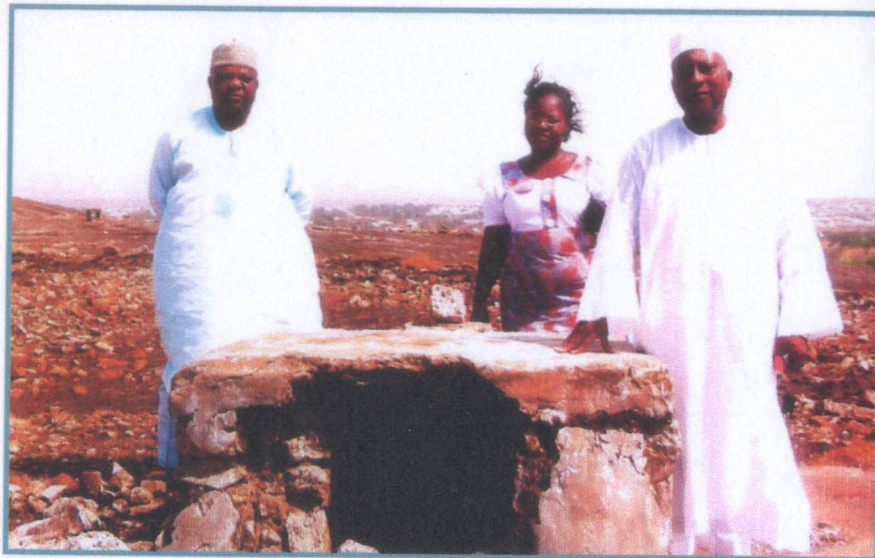
The only building on Sobi Hill, housing the properties of members of the two Religion groups on the hill.



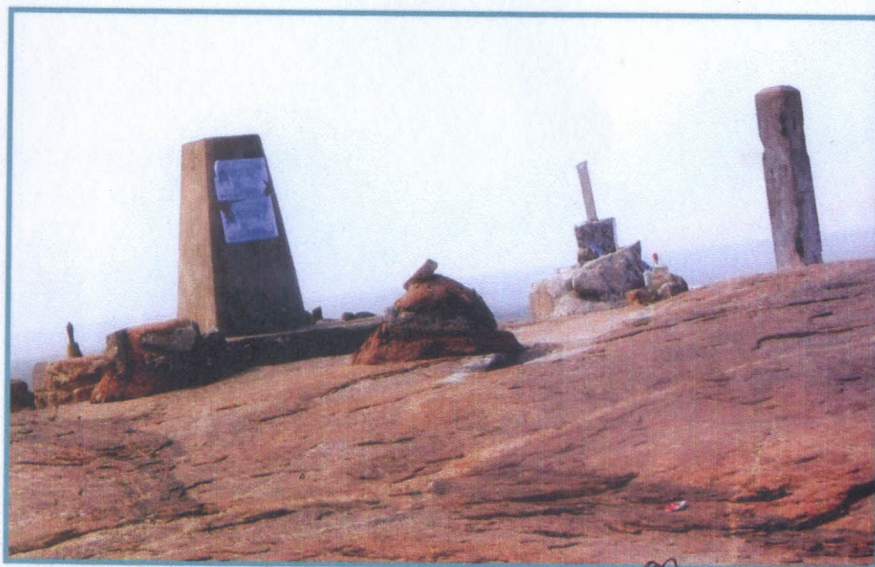
Research team on the Shillo Ground



Hill-B A bit lower to hill-A.



A structure on hill containing some of the properties of the worshipers.



Hill-A with instruments used for worship the hill



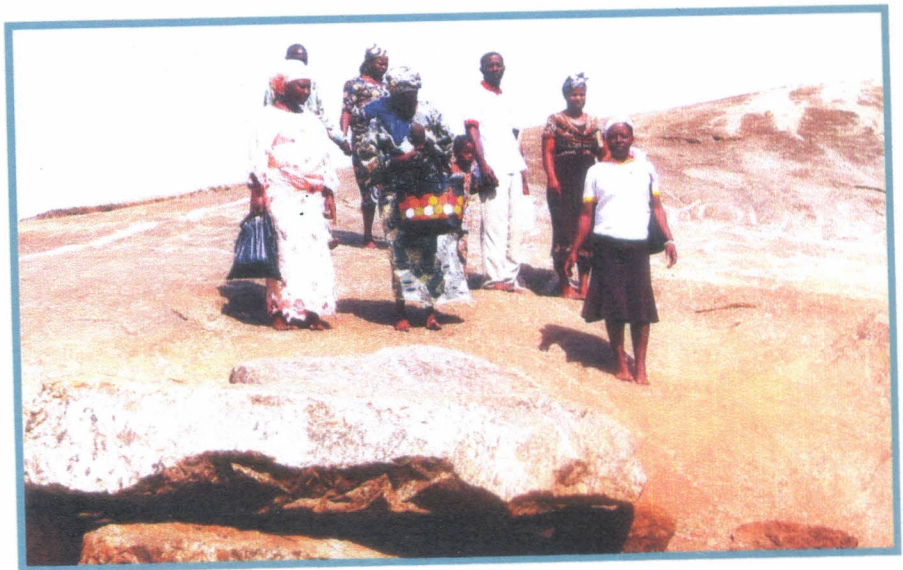
A place of worship on hill-B.



The research team while climbing the hill



Hill-B with bottles of water for worshippers



Members of Research team with worshippers on the hill.