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iv

CONTENTS

14
Social Discourse in the Songs Used at Ede Prayer Mountain, Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Studies have discussed the significance of traditional and contemporary songs and prayers in various religious domains across cultures. What we sing and/or pray about is to a very large extent socially constructed since prayer and music have communicative roles, especially in a religious context. Existing studies have focused attention on the spiritual constructs of songs and prayers but adequate attention has not been paid to the social implications of the songs used in Christian worship, particularly in non-conventional church spaces such as prayer mountains. This study investigates various social discourses in the songs used at Ede Prayer Mountain, Osun State, Nigeria, using the social constructionism as theoretical framework. Through ethnomusicological method of data collection, interviews were conducted with eight purposively selected participants at Ede Prayer Mountain. Also, songs recorded during the study were content analysed with the purpose of highlighting various social narratives in the songs. The study, concludes that the songs used at Ede Prayer Mountain are not purely religious in their discourse but to a large extent are entwined with social commentary.

Keywords: Prayer Mountain, music, prayer, social discourse, liturgy

Introduction

Studies have examined the significance of music and prayers in various religious domains across different cultures, whether traditional or contemporary (Owusu-Ansah, 2005; Neto, 2010; Fuist, 2015; Adedeji, 2017). Worship is a vital element in religion and the notion of worship is a polymorphous one, giving a broader meaning both in context and content. The essentiality of music in Christian worship or divine services has been explored in extant studies (Afolábí, 2000; Loko, 2011; Price, 2015). Music from earliest recorded time has always had a unique association with worship and has a great capacity for eliciting spiritual experiences. There is something about music that makes it an effective vehicle for the expression of an ultimate reality in spirituality (Atkins & Schubert, 2014, p. 77). Miller (cited in Loko, 2011, p. 14) aptly observed that music is not merely

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preliminary to worship, but vital to a meaningful worship experience. Simply put: there is no meaningful worship without music. The role of music to aid or distort a relationship with the divine has also been a subject of debate among scholars. In a study on music, spirituality and wellbeing, Dawn and Petersen (2015) found music to be a platform to praise and worship God where their spirituality is not confined to the institution of the church or to religion. They further observed that music in worship can enrich and enhance one's connection with God and with others through music.

Furthermore, prayer is another essential component of the Christian liturgy. Prayer can be defined as an act of communicating with God. In a religious context, prayer connects the human to the spiritual realm. According to Karin et al. (2015), prayer is the conscious act or attempt of opening oneself or activating a relationship to a higher being (i.e., God). It also means supplication, the vows and wishes of a superior being that transcends the material space (Simao, 2015). Therefore, prayer involves two entities- the divine and the human. The latter as a social being employs language in engaging the divine in prayers. The social dimension of the human beings cannot be separated from their spiritual involvements.

The spiritual import of music and prayers has been examined in extant literature; however, there is a dearth of studies on the social dimensions of songs as used in Christian worship, particularly in prayer mountains. If prayers and music are humanly constructed, this article investigates the social dimensions in the music, particularly songs used at Ede Prayer Mountain. Specifically, this study discusses how mental health and environmental discourse are implicated in some of the songs used at Ede Prayer Mountain. It also interrogates, though briefly, how divine inspiration influences the socio-cultural experiences of the participants in their creative process of composing songs on the prayer mountains.

Brief History of Ede Prayer Mountain, Ede, Osun State

Ede Prayer Mountain, popularly known as Ori-oke Baba Abiye, Ede (henceforth, Ede Prayer Mountain), was reported to have been founded and established in 1994 by the late Prophet Samson Àkàndé. He was an itinerant evangelist and Church planter who was reported to have gone from town to town and from village to village, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ under the leadership of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC). Shortly after his call into ministry and his quest for divine guidance for a successful ministry, Prophet Àkàndé had a divine directive to proceed to Òsogbo for a marathon prayer that was to last sixteen months under another prophet, Kómoláfé, in the house of Pastor Dúrósomó's father at Olóba Ìdó's compound in Òsogbo. The instruction given to him was that he must not leave the house for any reason until God appeared or spoke to him again. It was reported that "Akande took to the directive and remained isolated for sixteen months

doing nothing else but praying and seeking to know God's perfect will for his life" (Àkàndé, 2012, p.46). The act of withdrawing to a solitary place for spiritual empowerment is not a practice peculiar to Christians alone as exemplified by Jesus Christ and His disciples.

Shortly after the 16 months marathon prayer and fasting, God directed Prophet Àkàndé to look for a prayer mountain. In obedience to the directive, he went to Gbajeero Hill, a hill situated along Kuta-Ile-Ogbo Road, before River Oṣun. Prophet Àkàndé stopped there and began to pray, taking the hill for the God-appointed location. That day, there was a heavy rain which lasted four hours from about twelve noon to four o'clock, and there was no shelter around. After the heavy rainfall, the voice of the Lord came to him as he continued in prayer: "This is not where I have sent you. Go forward." Prophet Àkàndé and his train returned home that day. The following day, with two young men (Ezekiel and Akómoláfé), who were trainee evangelists, Prophet Àkàndé went again in search of the Mountain to which the Lord had directed him. After crossing Oṣun River and the railway line, Àkàndé and his entourage came to a hill situated between Awo and Ìwòyè towns. There, God spoke to him again, assuring him that it was the appointed location where He, God, would establish for Àkàndé, a spiritual "market". This marked the beginning of Ede Prayer Mountain.

Music and Prayer as Social Phenomena

Music and prayer have religious, social and cultural dimensions both in theory and practice. Prayer and music have social dimensions in their creation and performance. Music reveals to a large extent the social identity of a people, their culture, belief and myth. In the same way, prayer reveals what is negotiated in human social world (Bandak, 2017) and represents a fundamental aspect of religious life (Baker, 2008). The notion of prayer has received significant scholarly attention from sociologists and religion experts in the recent times. Studies have examined reasons why people pray, when they pray, where they pray, how they pray and what they pray about. (Lambert et al, 2010; Zondag, 2013; Bandak, 2017).

Music and prayer are humanly initiated. Arguably, it is inconceivable to hear a prayer or music without the human agency; hence the social interaction(s) witnessed whenever prayer and music are being performed or said as the case may be. While Imani (2006) posits that "music-making and, in particular, singing are human activities is not a novel one" (p. 99) and that music can also be initiated by non-human beings like birds, he, however, did not foreclose the fact that the human agency is very germane in the appropriation of music-making by these non-human agencies. Therefore, music and prayer as social acts may be engaged in by an individual or on collective basis as social commodities. Music and prayer, as social commodities can be produced or reproduced, requested and even exchanged.

An examination of prayer and music reveals some interesting relationships that exist between them both in religious and sociological discourse. Prayer, whether on individual or collective level, can add meaning to music. Prayer can be song and music; particularly, songs can be prayers.

More often than not music - songs and prayers- as vital components in worship are regularly employed in sacred spaces in various societies and these sacred spaces differ in their liturgical usage of songs and prayers. In Nigeria, especially in the south-western region, it is a common practice among Christians to regularly retire into designated sacred spaces to seek divine interventions on various challenges of life. These sacred spaces include mountains, hills, grooves and rivers, to mention but a few. However, the mountain seems to enjoy greater patronage given the fact that many significant events in the life of Jesus were experienced on the mountain. This probably explains the practice of consecrating some mountains for continuous prayer activities among some prominent Yoruba Christian clergy, particularly those from the African initiated churches (AICs). Notable among these clergy are the Late Prophet Samson Àkàndé and the Late Joseph Ayo Babalola.

Song Text and Discourse Analysis
Before interrogating some social discourse in the songs collected for study, the concept of discourse in literature shall be engaged briefly. Generally, discourse can be described as an extended communication dealing with some particular topic. Hence, discourse can be scientific, economic, religious, political and social. According to Foucault (1969), discourse is something that goes beyond the speaking, something more than the mere collection of sentences. In another term, "discourse is seen as a way of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and object to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity" (Gee, 2007, p. 21). Scholars have also explored the social dimension of discourse. Carbo et al. (2016) submit that discourse is a social practice, and as any other social practice, its conditions of production can be defined. It, therefore, implies that every discourse is anchored within a social context; hence "every discourse has a socio-historical context of production" (Carbo et al., 2016, p.32). For a discourse to be holistically understood, it must be analysed beyond the surface outlook of the text; hence the aim of discourse analysis is to look beyond the superficial aspect of what texts really say/mean by deconstructing discourses in order to underline the latent meanings (Beacco et al., 2002).

Shaw and Bailey (2009, p. 413) see discourse analysis as the study of social life, understood through analysis of language in its widest sense (including face-to-face talk, non-verbal interaction, images, symbols and

documents). It offers ways of investigating meaning, whether in conversation or in culture. Discourse analysis can be applied in various disciplines such as anthropology, linguistics, cultural studies, gender studies, social psychology and philosophy. This study is within the domain of cultural studies hence the application of discourse analysis as a conceptual framework. In religious domain, the two essential modes of communication are speech and music and both involve the use of text in their delivery. In Ede Prayer Mountain, prayers and songs convey various meanings which are socially constructed. The language of prayers and songs, as earlier mentioned, is a product of a socio-cultural context. Therefore, this paper investigates, from the perspective of social constructionism and discourse analysis, some underlying thoughts within the social background of the initiators, in this case composers and users of the songs used at Ede Prayer Mountain.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the social constructionism theory. The social constructionism theory is a broad epistemological approach to understanding (largely) how talk and text work to construct our social lives. The theory was introduced by Kenneth J. Gergen (1985) to a wider academic audience within the discipline of psychology. The thrust of this theory is that meaning in any discourse is socially constructed. Social constructionism focuses on the ways in which individuals and groups participate in the construction of their perceived social reality. It involves looking at the ways social phenomena are developed, institutionalized, known and made into traditions.

In this paper, the social constructionism model is used to bring to the fore how participants on Ede Prayer Mountain perceive their social realities using the agency of songs. The analysis attempts to understand how the songs are used to construct the day-to-day social experiences of the participants at Ede Prayer Mountain.

Methodology

Ethnomusicological method of data collection and analysis were used in this study. Interviews were conducted with eight (8) purposively sampled participants on the mountains (2 song leaders, 2 mountain prophets and 4 worshippers). During prayer meetings, songs were collected with the aid of a portable SONY recording device. Four songs that centred on mental and environmental issues were selected based on the objective of this paper, and these songs were notated using music writing software, Sibelius 8v, for a conventional notation of the songs.

Social Discourse in Selected Songs in Ede Prayer Mountain

Prayer sessions in Ede Prayer Mountain are heavily spiced with music, songs especially. In the course of this study, one common expression among the participants (henceforth used for prophets, musicians and

worshippers on the mountain) is *orin lèmí ìsìn* "songs are the lifeblood of a religious service". Thus, there is the regular use of songs during prayer sessions in the liturgy of Ede Prayer Mountain. According to one of the respondents on Ede Prayer Mountain: *àdùrà lobè, orin ni iyò nínú ìsìn ni Ori-oke* "prayer is the sauce while song is the salt used during prayer session on the mountain". These songs reveal different worldviews of the participants at this particular prayer space. These participants believe in some malevolent powers and that these powers are responsible for any social, physical, economic, psychological, marital and mental disorders that may be experienced in the day-to-day affairs of human lives. Adedeji (2017, p.115) also agrees with this notion that

> Africans believe so much in the concepts or existence of witchcraft, wicked spirits, gods, household enemies, powerful people in the society that control resources, etc. The popular belief is that they all contribute to the unending conditions of the oppressed.

The limited ability of humans to deliver themselves from these supernatural forces necessitated the need to rely on God, the Supreme Being, who is considered to have the infinite control of the universe. Nwosu et al. (2017, p. 349) assert that

> ...people harassed by ancestral forces, denied freedom, deprived of their just rights, and humiliated in their personal and corporate dignity do not rest until a proper balance of justice is received from God. Put differently, as long as human beings have limited knowledge to fight sickness and disease, death and evil spirits, including various types of misfortune and other challenges of life, the craving and longing for God will certainly continue.

This African worldview in the 'otherness' of the cosmos is still prominently held by Christians who patronise the prayer mountains.

As earlier remarked, singing characterizes the larger part of prayer activities on prayer mountains, especially in south-western Nigeria and the situation is not different at Ede Prayer Mountain. Songs used on the mountain reflect different religious themes such as praise, warfare, deliverance, Holy Spirit and prosperity, amongst others (Samuel & Ajose, 2018). More often than not, the songs are spontaneously composed during prayer sessions.

Many of the participants, especially the song leaders and the mountain prophets claimed that the songs were divinely inspired. However, an in-depth examination of the text of the songs reveals not only religious discourse but also social issues. The question is: if the songs were given by divine inspiration, how do social narratives dominate the song text? When asked how social issues are reflected in the divinely inspired songs, a respondent, who is a song leader, remarked:

> Yes, it is true that the Holy Spirit gives us the songs in diverse manner, sometimes in dreams, when praying or even when one is leading songs but the Holy Spirit will use what the people understand around them to explain issues to them in the spiritual realm. Again, the Spirit of God knows the problems of each participant at the mountain and he wants to meet them at the point of their needs using societal issues in the songs (Personal Communication, Field work, January 2018).

One of the in-house prophets at the mountain claims:

> Anyone who does not have the Spirit of God cannot be inspired to compose good songs because it is that Spirit that enables one to compose songs that will minister to the spiritual needs of the people. Even though the text of the song speaks about things happening around but the Spirit will still use it to accomplish His own purpose of deliverance, healing and breakthrough during prayer sessions. It is what the people know that God will use to minister to them (Personal Communication, Field work, January 2018)

Following the ethnographic accounts above, it is apt to consider the notion of inspiration as a phenomenon that interfaces the spiritual and the natural domains. In the words of Hedge et al. (1878, p. 314), "inspiration is the selection and use by the Lord himself of appropriate natural forms, human actions, and relations, to embody and express spiritual and divine truth in its fullness and harmonies". In the case of composers at Ede Prayer Mountain, the social discourse in their songs expresses 'spiritual and divine truths' which are manifested through musical compositions (human actions). These "compositions informed by various sources of inspiration provide an insight into contemporary issues related to human existence, living standards, socio-moral, political, religious and economic trends and their effects on the society" (Idamoyibo, 2012, p.24). Thus, the various human experiences are

usually used to capture or typify the intentions of the composers and by extension users of the songs during prayer sessions at the mountain. The songs collected during this study touched on various social discourses ranging from mental health to environmental issues.

Discourse on Mental Health

Musical example 1: Yio s'agolo de Po-ta
Yio s'agolo de Po-ta
Yio *s'agolo de Po-ta*
Eni ba bi'nu mi
Yio *s'agolo de Po-ta*

Translation
He/She will display insanity all the way to Port Harcourt
He/She will display insanity all the way to Port Harcourt
Whosoever takes displeasure in my success
He/She will display insanity to Port Harcourt

The expression 's'agolo' in Yoruba language is a lunatic behaviour of scavenging or picking cans on the street. From the song text, it suggests what the composer, and by extension, the users of the song, desire to see their enemies become, which is running into a state of lunacy/insanity. 'Po-ta' in the song above is an abbreviation of Port Harcourt, the capital city of Rivers State in south-south Nigeria. Port Harcourt is about 500 kilometres (almost five days' walk) away from the south-west region of Nigeria where Ede Prayer Mountain is located. They (composer and users) believe that the lunatic display of picking cans from Osun State to Port Harcourt, River State, is a long distance, thus impeding the so-called enemy from being able to stop the singers from their desired success or progress. In other words, the enemy will be so engaged in picking cans while the singers make progress in their lives. Such a physical display of insanity by any human being suggests the absence of mental health in the life of such a person.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) (2014), mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his

or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. This definition has been said not to sufficiently capture the concept of mental health. For example, Galderisi et al. (2015) believe that WHO's notion of mental health presents some societal and cultural bounds; hence they propose a new definition of mental health:

> Mental health is a dynamic state of internal equilibrium which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions, as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium (2015, p. 231-232)

Galderisi et al.'s definition seems to raise so many issues. Of interest to the researcher is the "use of their abilities in harmony with universal values of society" and "harmonious relationship between body and mind". It, therefore, means that mental healthiness is not only the absence of mental illness but the mental conformity to the societal values. Galderisi et al. (2015) further highlight what are the 'values' they were referring to as "respect and care for oneself and other living beings; recognition of connectedness between people; respect for the environment; respect for one's own and others' freedom" (p. 232).

There is a growing body of research on the significance of religion in mental health. These studies have shown positive correlations between religion and mental health (Lee and Newberg, 2005; Koeing, 2010; Brown et al., 2013). Despite the positive effect of religion, especially in the areas of physical and mental health, there are, though few, researchers who have observed the negative correlation between religion and mental health. According to Seybold and Hill (2001), some harmful emotions such as discontentment or anger with God or a congregation have proven to be correlated with impaired mental health. One will wonder: why the negative correlation with religion and mental health? Hadzic (2011, p. 231) provides an answer: "the misunderstanding of spiritual phenomenon often produces more damage than benefit." Little wonder why participants in a spiritual space will sing and pray to wish their enemies go into a state lunacy, it is clearly an indication of misunderstanding of spiritual phenomenon. Even though there is a divine order in the Bible "and all things, whatsoever ye shall

ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Mathew, 21:22, KJV), one can argue that participants take undue advantage of this divine directive to desire an unhealthy mental situation for their 'enemies', consequently causing more damage than benefit. In most cases, religious participants misuse these religious experiences for their own personal gains. According to Lee and Newberg (2005, p. 230), people misuse the intended religious message to justify their individual or group's self-serving motives, prejudices, hatred, and aggression. It is a common parlance among Christians that the spiritual controls the physical. If so, the physical damage of misunderstanding or misusing spiritual phenomenon should not be ignored. The damage to mental health, as seen in the definitions above, has serious implication on the individual and the society at large.

Another song that expresses display of insanity among participants is presented below:

Emi na fe dupe

Musical example 2: Èmi na fe dúpé

Èmi na fé dúpé
Gbogbo wa fé dúpé
Ẹni bání kámà dúpè
Yíó dìde lárin ọpọ̀ ènìyàn
Yio fasọ ara rẹ̀ ya

Translation

I want to give thanks
We all want to give thanks
Whoever does not want us to give thanks
Will stand up in a public gathering
And tear off his/her clothes.

The song text above says so much about the intent and desires of participants during prayer sessions at the mountain. The participants believe that if they are blessed by God and that some enemies want to hinder them from giving thanks to God, such enemies should be put to public shame by he or she tearing off his or her clothes. The tearing off of clothes is a sign of mental instability and such act is considered very disgraceful among the

Yoruba. Globally, the etiology of mental illness can be traced to natural (biological, emotional and psychological) or spiritual factors. For the Yoruba the cause of mental illness, more often than not, is linked to falling short of some spiritual order, thus incurring the wrath of the super-sensible beings. Okpalauwaekwe et al. (2017, p.1) noted that, in Nigeria, "the general belief is that preternatural or supernatural forces, witches, evil spirits and even God cause mental illness". It is then understandable why participants through the agency of songs can engage the supernatural world/Being to inflict mental illness on their enemies.

Conversely, societal and cultural perception of mental illness has continually determined the attitude of people towards mentally ill persons (Adewuya and Makanjuola, 2008). Mentally derailed persons are always stigmatized, particularly in traditional African societies. For example, in traditional Yoruba communities, before young people are allowed to marry each other, both families always conduct background checks on the health history of each other, especially the mental health status. Any family which has a history of mental illness/insanity is usually not granted such nuptial association no matter how acute or simple the mental illness/insanity may be. This societal perception of mental insanity among the Yoruba is revealed in a common prayer/saying: *yíó san kòsan, Olórun má fi wèrè dán wa wò* "whether curable or incurable, may God not try us with mental insanity." The fear of societal stigmatization is aptly captured by Mannarini and Rossi (forthcoming, p. 1) that people with mental illness are often subjected to discriminative and stigmatizing behaviours in the social context with the families and among friends. This foregrounds the theory of social constructionism that social discourse like songs in this article, are concerned with the meaning, notion or connotation placed on phenomena by the society. From the foregoing it can be deduced that there is always an interplay of social experiences with divine discourse during any religious activities as seen in the prayer-songs used on Ede Prayer Mountain.

Discourse on Environment Pollution and Degradation
Scholars have examined the role of religion in environmental pollution and degradation (White, 1967, Bratton, 1990; Chuveico, 2016). Some of these studies argue that religious activities have in one way or the other aided environmental pollution. Environmental pollution is a major threat to human existence both at local and international communities, and several interventions have been put in place to address it. What people sing reveals so much about their social views and ideologies. One of the songs that express the concept of environmental pollution in Ede Prayer Mountain is:

My problem is a nylon bag

Music example 2: My problem is a nylon bag

Call	Response
My problem is a nylon bag	it's a nylon bag x2ce
Mo gbe dani, mo gbe ju sile	it's a nylon bag
Ori buruku mo gbe ju s'onu	it's a nylon bag
Ibanuje, mo gbe ju s'onu o	it's a nylon bag

Translation

My problem is a polythene bag	it's a nylon bag x2ce
I carried and dumped it	it's a nylon bag
I dumped ill-luck and misfortune	it's a nylon bag
I dumped sorrow and tears	it's a nylon bag

In local parlance, the term 'nylon bag' refers to polythene bag. In terms of its utility, the nylon bag can be used to pack items for storage and, more often than not, it is used to collect waste and dump it into the waste bin. The composer, and by extension, the users of the songs, perceived their problems, spiritual or social, as something to be packed into a nylon bag and thrown away. Within a socio-environmental context, polythene bags are usually disposable no matter how long they may be used. Hence, the above song text underscores the fact that the composer sees his problem as something temporary which will eventually be over. The song serves as an encouragement for participants at the Ede Prayer Mountain not to be bothered with their problem which is just as a 'nylon bag' and it is good for

nothing other than to be disposed. If participants at the prayer mountain see their problems as 'nylon bags', the question that comes to mind is, where will this nylon bags be dumped?

In environmental discourse, this song contributes to the on-going global concern on environmental pollution as it relates to polythene. Grover et al. (2015) noted that polythene bags get accumulated at dumping yards, in gutters, drains, agricultural fields and even at roadsides, resulting ultimately in a huge stack of refuse. This stockpile becomes the breeding ground of dangerous insects like mosquitoes and flies which are the causes of various diseases and in the rainy season the condition gets worsened. If it is true that people are inspired based on their social inclinations, we can then argue that the waste management and environmental health education of the composer and by extension the users of the song is limited.

As earlier mentioned, the role of religion and religious practices in environmental degradation has been investigated by scholars. A pioneer in this regard is White (1967). This work has generated so many scholarly reactions following its submission that Judeo-Christian tradition is behind environmental degradation, by promoting the idea of human dominion over all other creatures (Chuveico et al., 2016). According to White (1967, p. 1205), Christianity, "especially in its Western form, is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen". The unfavourable ecological perception of the Christians at Ede Prayer Mountain which is capable of engendering environmental degradation is implicated in the song below:

Wiwo loye k'araba yi o wo

Wíwó ló ye k'áràbà yí o wó 2ce
Téwé bá ńyo, àràbà yí ó gbà
Wíwó ló ye k'áràbà yí o wó

Translation
This mighty tree should fall down (2ce)
If it's left with leaves on it, it will blossom
This mighty tree should fall down

Figuratively, the mighty tree in the song text above typifies chronic problems or anything that suggests unpleasant experience in the lives of the users of the song. These problems include infertility, unemployment, sickness, poverty, ill luck, academic failures and career retrogression, to mention a few. Participants at Ede Prayer Mountain believed that these problems which are represented as a 'mighty tree' are strongholds; and if they are not dealt with but are left to grow leaves and blossom, they may cause more havoc than good. Therefore, there is need for vigorous spiritual warfare of pulling down the strongholds. This notion finds support in the address of Paul: "for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10: 4-5, KJV). Hermeneutically, participants at the prayer mountain are fond of using the cited Bible passage to stress the need for participants to 'pull down the trees' of satanic activities in their lives. Therefore, if religions are both cultural traditions and personal choices (Chuvieco et al. 2016), it can be argued that the cultural traditions such as farming could have influenced the environmental perception of majority of the participants, especially the Yoruba, on the mountain. As farmers, they are conversant with different species and sizes of trees during their farming experience and this may inform their symbolic representation of a tree in a spiritual discourse using the agency of song in the prayer space. For the participants, spiritual warfare such as vigorous prayer rituals like praying, singing, keeping vigil and fasting are effective tools for uprooting the might 'tree'.

Conclusion

In this paper, it has been shown that songs and prayers are essential components of religious worship, particularly in the Christian domain. Songs can be used to express thoughts among humans and also between humans and God. However, how we pray, where we pray and what we pray about are not solely religiously/spiritually determined but are also socially determined, making music-songs and prayers social phenomena. Because people are a product of their culture, they can easily relate with social issues and find these social issues useful in negotiating divine intervention in their day-to-day lives. It can thus be argued that songs used in prayer spaces such as Ede Prayer Mountain are not purely religious discourse but to a large extent laced with social commentary.

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