

The dynamic nature of Christianity has necessitated its movement from the cathedral to the mountain top. This has occasioned a proliferation of Prayer Mountains throughout Africa. In Yorubaland of southwestern Nigeria, Prayer Mountain is known as Ori-Oke. Like many communities in Africa, the Yoruba are confronted with fundamental challenges in life for which people do not rest until they find solutions. Within the praxis of Nigerian Christian lexicon Ori-Oke is synonymous with the enactment of a sacred space on a mountain top characterised by various prayer regimes, rituals, exorcism and religious practices, aimed at eliciting the help of the divine to alleviate the existential challenges of devotees. This book explores the resacralisation of space on the mountains, highlighting how humans and the divine interact in Yorubaland. It brings into conversation 35 empirically rich scholarly essays on the role of Ori-Oke to those seeking divine intervention in their lives. Today, Ori-Oke have become centres of pilgrimage as a result of the lived experiences of devotees, creating unique religious value quite distinct from the aesthetic value of these mountain tops. The spirituality of Ori-Oke is anchored on the absolute belief in God and the infusion of traditional African worldview sensibilities in religious rites and worship. Ori-Oke spirituality employs resources of Christian tradition, introduced by the formal agents of Christianity, synthesised with traditional culture, to develop a life based on the precepts of an African Christianity. The book is an intellectual discourse on Ori-Oke spirituality, reflecting its contemporary relevance in a context of religious innovation and competition.

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Social Change in Africa**
CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

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'Orin Ori-Oke': A Thematic Examination of Songs used in Ikoyi Prayer Mountains, Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Prayer Mountaineering is a dominant religious activity practised by Christians in Africa; it represents a culture of setting apart specific spaces such as groves, thick forests, hilly places and mountains, river banks and so forth by African Indigenous Churches (AICs) for spiritual exercises. Prayer Mountains were peculiar places where founders of many AICs encountered divine interactions and over time have become places where a myriad of religious activities, including observance of prescribed period of seclusions, offering of special prayers and related activities take place. There is a proliferation of Prayer Mountains in Oyo, Osun and Ekiti states. While religious, social and economic activities of Prayer Mountains have received scholarly investigation, no known study has examined their musical activities. This study, therefore, investigates the musico-cultural practices taking place in Ikoyi Prayer Mountains, Osun State, Nigeria, using ethnographic research approach. It also identified thematic orientations and attendant dynamics embedded in the song texts. Songs were musically represented using Sibelius 7.5 music notation software and data subjected to content analysis.

Introduction

Music remains one of the important elements in religion that performs several functions such as communicative, invocative, and intercessory amongst others. Many world religions, from traditional to contemporary societies, communicate with the 'other' world through music as a viable means to achieving such communication. Among Christians, the incessant use of music in worship reveals its essentiality in Christian divine services. The idea of conducting

Christian worship without the use of music is almost inconceivable, as breath is to living so music is to divine service. Scholars have unequivocally emphasized the importance of music in Christian religion (Afolábí, 2000, Loko, 2011, Price, 2015).

In African traditional societies, music accompanies the day-to-day activities of the people. In its religion, music is considered a potent force in the observance and performance of religious rites by its worshippers. It is believed that music aids smooth connection with the divine, not only in African traditional religions, but also religion of other world cultures. Like every other religious worship, African traditional worship engages music and prayers in its divine worship. A thorough examination of these worship components will reveal the nexus between each of them. For instance, music, vocal or instrumental may be offered as a prayer and prayer also offered in form of music. While music helps humans to communicate their feelings with each other, prayer, on the other hand, serves as means of communicating with the divine. Both prayer and music can be engaged whether at individual or collective (congregational) worship.

Prayer is another indispensable element of religion. In his broadest sense, “prayer is a discursive act that bridges human limitation and the spiritual realm” (Baquedano-Lopez, 1999, p.197). Generally, prayer can be defined as an act of communicating with God. In religious context, prayer connects the human to the spiritual realm. People pray with the understanding of their human limitation and dependence on the ‘other’ world. “The spiritual world is populated by hierarchies of different beings. Prayer always starts with a relationship to one of these beings. When we pray, we immediately make a feeling –connection to a specific spiritual being” (Evans, 2015). The connective nature of prayer between two persons validates the communicative function of prayer.

However, the act of Prayer Mountaineering as seen in the frequent visit to some specific prayer spaces or mountains popularly referred to as *orí-òkè* (mountain top) or *orí-òkè àdúrà* (Prayer Mountain) is regular routine among the Yorùbá Christians of southwestern Nigeria. The belief in the potency of certain sacred spaces in African religion, especially the Yorùbá, accounts for the patronage and

proliferation of Prayer Mountains within the southwestern part of the country. It is believed that these Prayer Mountains are potent and are capable of aiding speedy answers (Falaye, 2015: 12) to prayer requests made in such places. Like the sacred grooves and forest in African traditional societies, Prayer Mountains too have sacred priest attached to them. The priest are sometimes referred to as *Bàbá orí-òkè* (Father in charge of the mountain) or *Bàbá Alàdúrà* (Father of prayer). The spiritual head of the Prayer Mountain is believed to be vested with some spiritual authorities that can help mediate with the Supreme Being.

The establishments and leadership of these Prayer Mountains in southwestern Nigeria can be linked to the expanded religious activities of the African Indigenous Churches (AICs) to some other sacred spaces outside the conventional church spaces. As classified by Aiyeboyin (2002), AICs in Nigeria include Christ Apostolic Church, The Church of the Lord (*Alàdúrà*), Cherubim and Seraphim Church and The Celestial Church of Christ. These African indigenous churches also referred to as the *Alàdúrà* movement, meaning in Yorùbá, “the prayer people” because they pray more than other churches (Kofi, 2011: 150) are known to be people given to incessant prayers and believe in the powers of prayers, dreams, revelations and prophecies.

Emphasis on prayers is evident in theology as well as practice in the *Alàdúrà* movement (Fálàyè, 2015: 12). The need to expand their prayer haven void of distraction and noise led to the establishments of Prayer Mountains outside their initial church buildings. It is believed that such mountains provide a serene and spiritual atmosphere to commune with God in fasting, prayer, and worship (Aina, 2006: 3). Given the supernatural powers claimed to be divinely vested on these Prayer Mountains, patrons believe that chronic issues, spiritual or physical can be resolved only at such sites. Prayer Mountains, either on a hilly site or at ground level provide a more conducive atmosphere of worship and divine revelation. The conducive atmosphere is characterized among other things by the solemnity and calmness of the location of the Prayer Mountains, which helps to focus the attention of a person on the spiritual events

taking place on such site. In the words of Smith, “ritual practice and spaces on the truly important, that which is spiritual or divine; they encourage us to pay attention” (Kilde, 2008: 185).

Prayers and music (songs, drumming and dancing, in Africa) play significant roles in any divine worship. Prayer Mountains are inherently unique in their establishment, mode of worship and religious operations as oppose to the mainstream churches. Given the vast musical activities that accompany prayer sessions in various Prayer Mountains, which has been obviously ignored in extant literature on sacred spaces, Prayer Mountain in particular, there is the need for an ethnomusicological examination of the musical form and content of these ‘Prayer Mountain-songs’ (*orin orí-òkè àdúrà*) as well as the socio-cultural ideologies that influence or shape the production and usage of music in the Prayer Mountains.

Music and Prayer as Modes of Communication in Religious Worship

Music and prayer are inseparable components in any religious gathering and/or worship but are distinct acts of worship. Both can be used to communicate thoughts, feelings, emotions, ideas, and message among individuals or group of people. Sometimes, this communication may be between the divine and the human. Prayer is a form of religious or spiritual activity common to all the “Abrahamic” traditions (i.e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and has strong parallels in other religious traditions e.g., Buddhism, Hinduism, and Shinto (Lambert et.al, 2010, p. 209). Generally, prayer can be defined as an act of communicating with God. In religious context, prayer connects the human to the spiritual realm. When we pray, we immediately make a feeling—connection to a specific spiritual being (Evans, 2015, p. 2). The connective nature of prayer between two persons validates the communicative function of prayer. Prayers can be sung or said (Baquedano-Lopez, 1999, p.197).

Like prayer, music is also a kind of communication. The combinations of various elements of music with or without text help to convey various meanings and interpretations to performers (producers) as well as listeners (consumers). In Christian liturgy, like

other religious liturgy, prayers can be said using music (song) while music (songs) can be used as prayers. Music and prayers are known to perform several functions in religious functions or gathering. Some of the functions include but are not limited to invocative, intercessory, petitionary, educative, informative and entertaining. Commenting on communicative function of music in Christian worship, Olujoku (as cited in Loko, 2011) noted that:

In spiritual churches music at worship is a manifestation of man’s conscious expression of praise and thanksgiving to God; it was also a reflection of man’s spiritual upliftment, yearning and true worship. Music involving handclapping, swaying, dance movement and the jingling of bells usually spur worshippers to a state of spiritual ecstasy. He further explained that even at prayers there are song punctuations as evidence of the belief of a prayer already answered. (p.19)

Through music, worshippers can make their requests known to God as well as articulate their religious, social and economic concerns.

History of Orí-òkè Ìkòyí, Osun State, Nigeria

Orí-òkè Ìkòyí is located in a village in Osun State of Nigeria, about 2 km from the Ife-Ibadan express road. The mountain is believed to have been founded and established in 1936 by the Late Apostle Ayo Babalola and four other men of God. In an interview with the present camp pastor, Pastor Femi, at the mountain, he claimed that late Babalola and his team were divinely instructed by God to travel from Ilesa, another major town within the state, and go to Ìkòyí town to locate a mountain where He (God) had deposited divine supernatural powers and that a sign will be given to identify and confirm the mountain. Apostle Babalola and his team arrived at Christ Apostolic Church, Oke-Alafia in Ìkòyí and met with one Baba Osuolale who was the *baba ijo* -father of the church (a title given to a revered elder in the church) and narrated their mission in Ìkòyí to him. Together with Baba Osuolale, the team went on the search for

the divine mountain as instructed by God throughout the whole of Ìkòyí village; they didn't get confirmation of any sort. After several search, Baba Osulale led them to a hamlet known as Ero-omo in Ìkòyí village where the community, elders in this settlement took Babalola and his team to Ìkòyí mountain in Ero-omo village. Traditionally, this newly found mountain is usually venerated at the basement by the community from time immemorial. It was reported that while ascending the mountain, late Apostle Babalola and his team together with the elders from the village saw the footprint of an angel on the rock, a sign which was divinely promised to authenticate the spiritual potency of the mountain. Sighting this sign, they rejoiced, praised and worship God on the top of the mountain and immediately consecrated it as a place for prayers, a purpose the mountain still serves till date. Among those who journeyed to the mountain with Babalola are Late Prophet Babajide, Baba Ologiri and Baba Abudaale.

Late Ayo Babalola and his team were said to visit the mountain and could stay up to a month to pray. After praying at the end of each day, they usually descend to the hamlet at the basement of the mountain where they were given a room to provide shelter during rainfall and safety from dangerous and wild animals such as lion, snakes and other strange beings which were natural habitants on the mountain. For convenience, Late Ayo Babalola and his team saw the need to construct an accommodation on top of the mountain; this necessitated the construction of the first building on the mountain.

Ikoyi is largely an agrarian community with considerable timber exploitation from the surrounding forest. The Prayer Mountain is about 1.5km farther from the village. It is a large mass of solid rock about 250m above sea level with 420 constructed steps to ease climbing to the summit. The mountain top is flat with slight undulations in the immediate vicinity. Ikoyi village and the surrounding settlements can be clearly viewed from the mountain top. Located on the mountain top are three church buildings adjacent to one another and constructed in the 1940s, 1974, and 1997, respectively. They have the capacity to sit 100, 300, and 1500 worshippers at once, respectively. Directly opposite these buildings

is an expansive flat and open surface arena, which serves as the crusade ground on the mountain top with a capacity to accommodate over 3000 worshippers at once. Social amenities such as electricity (via a generating set), water, and toilet facilities are available. The church auditoriums serve as both a place of worship and "accommodation" for "pilgrims" on the mountain, together with the surrounding trees that provide shade during the hot tropical sunshine in the daytime. Food items are brought by individuals (those not fasting) for their personal needs. This particular mountain is exclusively for male worshippers irrespective of age. Located about 600m away and separated by a deep valley is the twin Prayer Mountain for "female" worshippers, but a couple (i.e. a woman and her husband) can go there together, especially over problems common to them. The administration and control of these mountains are the responsibility of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC).

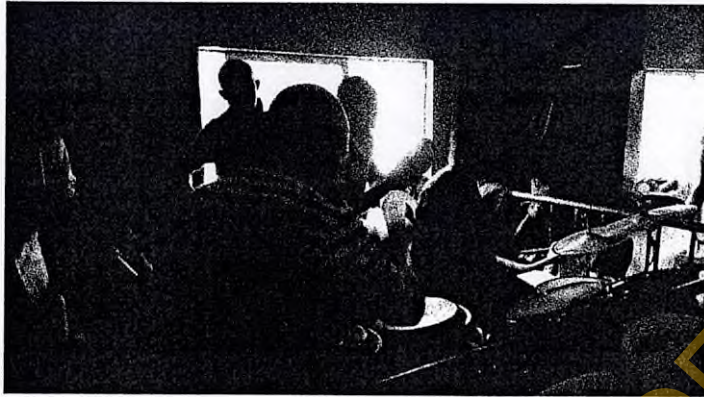
Methodology

Ethnography method was employed in the study. A total of five (5) visits were made to the mountain. The researchers participated in all the general sessions of prayers at the mountain both day and night. Interviews were conducted with different categories of people on the mountains: three (3) in-house ministers including the residential pastor on the mountain, 5 musicians and 10 participants.

Music and musical activities in Orí-òkè Ìkòyí, Osun State, Nigeria

Music is a vital component in religious worship especially in Prayer Mountains. A careful and critical observation of the music and musical activities on the mountain seems different from what is obtainable in the mainstream church setting. For instance, there are no permanent musicians on the Prayer Mountain. Musicianship is voluntary. Pilgrims with musical skills who have also come for prayers are encouraged to provide both vocal and instrumental

accompaniments during music performances. In Ìkòyí Prayer Mountain, music making is very participatory during the joint prayer sessions. Apart from the musicians who play from the instrumentalist stand, some are also seen to either play the *agogo* (bell), *sekere* (maracas) or tambourine. Some men also assist as backup singers during singing. Unlike the mainstream church settings where musicians especially instrument players are engaged professional, musicians are mainly volunteers in Ìkòyí Prayer Mountain. Whether or not this practice is the same in other Prayer Mountains in southwest Nigeria is a discourse space will not permit us here.



Cross section of musicians at Ikoyi Prayer Mountain (Field work, January 2017)

Although this Prayer Mountain is known for incessant prayer activities, it should be noted that music especially songs are of significant use during prayers sessions. Every moment of prayers is interspersed with vigorous songs with instrumental accompaniment. One phenomenon that is of remarkable interest in the songs used in Ikoyi Prayer Mountain is the spontaneous compositions of these songs. The respondents (ministers and the pastor in charge of the Ikoyi mountain) all claimed that most of the songs used during their ministrations are divinely given or inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The symbiotic relationship that exists between the songs and the prayers is of great importance both in context and content. Prayer

points (text) are generated from songs and song text are generated from prayers. A thorough examination of the music typology used in Prayer Mountain reveals the following:

1. Use of European hymn/tunes

It was observed at different times during the worship session at Ìkòyí Prayer Mountain that the worship leader makes use of few European hymns sung in Yoruba language. Some of the hymns commonly used hymns include “O worship the king” sung to the tune of Hanover, and “All the power of Jesus Name” sung to the tune of Diadem. The use of European hymns in Ìkòyí Prayer Mountains can be traced to the activities of the early Christian missionary in Nigeria. Hymn singing was part of the Christian liturgies handed over to the African believers by the various European missionary groups. The major musical practice in the early Yoruba churches was singing of Christian hymns because it involved congregational participation (Owoaje, 2014, p.1). While singing of hymns forms part of the musical activities in Prayer Mountains, the manner at which these hymns are performed is worth discussing here. For instance, some of the hymns were performed in free time manner not minding the time signature of the hymn. Indiscriminate use of fermata (a long sustain or pause) in between phrases of the hymn. This intentional alteration of the hymn rhythmical is noticed only when the hymns are used at the beginning of the worship session for invocation, a practice which is African in nature. An excerpt is seen below:

E.. wo.. le fOba.....	O worship the King
O..ni..fe.. .ju.. lo.....	All glorious above
E..so...ti..i..pa.....	Oh, grateful sing His power
A.. ti..i..fe..re.....	and His love

2. Use of western pop-gospel songs

The use of western popular gospel (pop-gospel) music was also observed in the music used in Ìkòyí Prayer Mountain. In this work, western pop-gospel songs are Christian songs which were composed,

performed and recorded from the west, Europe and United States of America, and were made popular here in Africa through the mass media, specifically, electronic. Such songs include: “Thanks” and “Blessed be the name of the Lord”, by Don Moen, “Trading my sorrows” by Twilla Paris to mention a few. Acculturation is highly responsible for this musical mix as witnessed on Prayer Mountain. People, irrespective of their religion, ethnicity or gender, carry with them their cultural belongings wherever they go. The denominational affiliations (Pentecostal, African indigenous churches) as well as the attendant worship/musical style of the participants at the Prayer Mountain is evident through the use western pop-gospel songs in Prayer Mountains.

3. Use of African indigenous tunes

One of the notable contributions of the AICs to the Christian liturgy in African is the inclusion and observance of some African indigenous tunes. This was made possible because Africans wanted a more ‘natural’ way of worship which they at home with, a lieu way they found with the use of existing folk tunes in their worship. Yoruba Christians find these folk tunes as readymade music raw materials that can be reproduced to suit their musical needs in their newly found religion. Hence, the use of Yoruba indigenous tunes in the songs used in Prayer Mountain. An example is given below:

Thematic Examinations of Song used in Ìkòyí Prayer Mountain

Songs used in Ìkòyí Prayer Mountain reveals various themes which include thanksgiving and adoration, quest for the power of Holy Spirit, spiritual warfare, prosperity and healing.

Themes on thanksgiving and adoration

It is a known practice in African societies that homage is given to those who deserves it. Among the Yoruba for example, a king, who epitomizes leadership and authority, is revered and adored by his subjects in the community. In same manner, participants at the Prayer Mountain see the need to adore and worship their heavenly

king who is the supreme being in anticipation of “special blessings – children, prosperity, victory over enemies, or any of the manifold things of this life of which they feel in need for their spirit, body or estate” (Idowu, 1962, p. 113). Kings in Yoruba societies like every other African society are adorned with gorgeous royal apparels which distinguish in the community. The song below gives a clear description of the royalty of God as seen by the participants on Prayer Mountain:

Oba t’ola re n mi legbe legbe
Oba t’ola re n mi rie rie
Gbogbo eniyan e ba mi gb’Oluwa ga

Translation

To the king whose royal apparel sways powerfully
To the king whose royal apparel sways majestically
Everyone, please join me to hail this Lord

Oba t’ola re

7
O - ba t'o-la re n mi len-gbe, len - gbe O - ba t'o-la re n
mi ri - e, ri - e gbo- gbo'e-ni - yan e - ba mi gb'O - lu-wa ga

Themes on the Holy Spirit

A detailed examination of the songs used in Ìkòyí Prayer Mountain reveals a myriad of musical, cultural and religious elements embedded in the songs. First, is the acknowledgement and believe in the power and the direction of the Holy Spirit (Ayegboyin, 2010). All the participants, both ministers and pilgrims at the mountain remarked that the Holy Spirit is largely responsible in enabling them to do the impossible, hence the incessant request for the power of

churches. Since the days of the apostles, we have not seen such a manifestation full of great wonders of the power of God like this in this land (Ogunriade & Ogbale, 2013, p.150).

From the testimony given above, it is obvious why participants at Prayer Mountains craved for their own 'fair share' of the power of God as manifested in the life of Late Babalola. More importantly that this Prayer Mountain as earlier mentioned was founded and consecrated by Late Ayo Babalola, the participants believe that the mountain provides a contact point with some residual powers which Babalola encountered on the same mountain. It is pertinent to note the questioning character of the above song text: *Agbara temi nko o Baba?* (Father, where is my own power?). The Father in this context refers to God, the giver of all good gifts. It is believed that the supernatural powers that Babalola manifested was given to him by God and that the same God is still willing to give same power if they, the participants at the Prayer Mountain, ask in faith.

Themes on spiritual warfare

Generally, African worldview holds that 'what happens in the seen world is formed and directed from the unseen world' (Masondo, 2014, p.8). This suggests why Africans, Yoruba in particular, believe that certain force(s) is/are responsible for their fortune or misfortune as the case may be. This view to engage in warfare with the 'other' world is not only African; it also finds footing in the Christian teachings as expressed by Apostle Paul when he declared "For we *wrestle* not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, *against spiritual wickedness in high places*" [italics mine] (Bible: Ephesians 6: 13). As earlier mentioned, participants who engage in Mountain Prayers, claim that the mountain is the most preferred place to engage in spiritual battle. Spiritual combat through prayers is evident in the songs used in Ikoyi Prayer Mountain.

Fire for Fire

Translation

It shall be fire for fire
 No matter how intense the spiritual war may be
 The hosts of heaven are combat ready
 It shall be fire for fire

The text of the song above clearly shows the warfare perception of the participants at the Prayer Mountain who are combat ready to face the 'other' world as seen in the expression: 'fire for fire'. The song also highlights that the fact that the participants at the Prayer Mountain believe that the metaphysical powers are stronger and can subdue that of the world's evil powers. During the rendition of the above song, the tempo is very fast, with sonorous clapping of hands, vigorous dance accompanied by all available musical instruments.

Themes on prosperity

Prosperity to an African man implies the total state of his wellbeing – mentally, socially, economically and physically. In the belief of the Yoruba in respect to the concept of prosperity, the Supreme Being – "Olodumare is the fountain of all benefits. He is the author and Giver of all good things that man can possess-children, wealth, possessions, good living, good character, everything that exists for the benefit of man" (Idowu, 1962, p.53). Arguably, one of the prominent reasons while Prayer Mountaineering is a common practice in African, Yoruba of southwest Nigeria particularly, is the need for economic prosperity. This is overtly necessary given the poor socio-economic situation witnessed in the region and the need for a spiritual 'intervention' to improve the socio-economic status.

Sunmi Siwaju

Musical score for Sunmi Siwaju, featuring two staves of music with lyrics underneath. The first staff contains the lyrics: Sun-mi si-wa-ju ma_jen de-roe'-yin Sun-mi si-wa-ju. The second staff contains the lyrics: ma_jen de-roe' yin O-lo-run o - ri o - ke yi o, sun... mi si-wa-ju.

Translation

Move me forward
Never to be backward
O God of this mountain
Move me forward

It is evident from the above song text that participants at the Prayer Mountain desire a positive social mobility. The expression 'move me forward' reveals the quest for a progressive and increased life of one who feels some form of stagnancy and redundancy. Attendance register at the Prayer Mountain shows that participants are from different social, religious/denominational, ethnic and educational background. More often than not, Prayer Mountaineering is in a quest for a 'better' lifestyle, physically and spiritually. Since in the belief of the Yoruba that prosperity is an 'all-in-one' experience, it is important to note that prosperity could be achieved in any sphere of man. Joblessness, infertility, late marriage, lack of admission, spiritual/ministerial inefficiency, incessant ill-health to mention a few are regarded as been sign of backwardness.

Conclusion

This article brings to the fore the fact that the religious experience of a people cannot be divorced from their cultural orientation. The Prayer Mountain as a physical and spiritual/religious space do witness myriad of musical activities which to a large extent are culturally influenced. African, Yoruba specifically, socio-cultural beliefs and values are consciously reflected in the songs generated and performed during prayer sessions at the Prayer Mountains. The

study reveals that that the need for the person and the power of the Holy Spirit is of paramount interest to the participants at the mountain. This power they claim can help them navigate the world of uncertainties. Warfare is another significant theme in many of the songs used at Ikoyi Prayer Mountain. It is generally believed that the mountain is a place to wrestle with the evil powers that might be responsible for their mischief. This suggests why songs at the mountain are 'war-like' both in text and tempo.

Although the songs are claimed to be divinely inspired, the question that comes to mind is: where and does the divine intercepts the natural-man and his cultural inclination? The music typology of the music witnessed at the Prayer Mountain can be regarded as a total brand of religious/spiritual music.

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