



Traditional Rain Control Practice Through Indigenous Knowledge System and Technology Among Ikire People of Osun State, Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper aims to trace the history of rain prevention, and examine for documentation, the rituals involved. Traditional rain control in this context is considered as a process involving the making and preventing of rain to modify atmospheric condition of a place using Indigenous Knowledge and Technology (IKT). Rain control ritual is an age-long indigenous knowledge and technology aimed at influencing weather condition. As part of a broadened African society, the art of preventing rainfall is a part of the heritage resources practised by the people of Ikire in Osun State. This ritualistic art which is put to use mainly during socio-cultural gatherings such as festivals, feasts, burials, weddings, and naming ceremonies is called *òjò wíwó* or *òjò mímó* in local parlance. The help of rain doctors is sought by people who want to carry out any of these activities during rainy seasons to avoid disruption. Ethnographic method was used to elicit information. Research findings traced the art of rain prevention to Orunmila a god in Yoruba mythology. The rituals involved the use of the details of IKT which is significant in the response of the people to the ever-changing climate.

Keywords: *Indigenous Knowledge and Technology; Rainmaking; Rain prevention; Rituals*

Introduction

Indigenous knowledge and technologies (IKT) are products developed by a group of people who share the same culture and occupy the same geographical space. According to Loovers (2021) & Sullivan (2016), indigenous knowledge is anchored in the knowledge systems of a region, local communities, or indigenous peoples. It is also known as traditional knowledge (TK) or local knowledge (LK). Tharakan (2017) posited that indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are internalized by indigenous civilizations and are uninfluenced by contemporary scientific knowledge systems. These knowledge systems have the distinctive quality of being linked to a specific culture. Seepe (2001) asserted that indigenous knowledge systems are complex and were amassed through many generations when tribes interacted with their environment. Oral tradition, which incorporates culture, stories, legends, myths, rituals, laws, languages, and songs, is the primary means through which indigenous knowledge is transmitted (Janke & Sentina, 2018; Kala, 2012; Kala, 2004; Turner, Ignace, & Ignace 2000). According to Tharakan (2017), there are many contexts in which indigenous knowledge can be found, including scientific, technological,

ecological, agricultural, and therapeutic ones. In contrast, Kala (2012) defines it as knowledge of midwifery, ethnobotany, traditional medicine, craft skills, and climate as well as traditional subsistence methods. Hence, since the climate is under the coverage of indigenous knowledge technology, this paper looks into traditional rain control as practised by the people of Ikire.

Rain is nature's endowment to man. Iwu (2014) noted that rainfall is God's gift to the human race and it is not only sacrosanct but also an extraordinary sign of His love for mankind for whom he is ever ready to show goodness and provide for. The use of indigenous knowledge and technology to control rainfall is therefore woven around rituals aimed at causing variation in weather conditions to give room for rain or inhibit it. The art of rain control is an essential part of most, if not all African traditional societies and it is rooted in their worldview and interaction with cosmology. The traditional rain control system is part of the human attempt at dominating his environment both biotic and abiotic and it employs the indigenous knowledge and technology of the people of a cultural group (in this case Ikire) as a means of responding and adapting to the unreliability and uncertainty of climate. Whilst the knowledge of rain control is of two parts- making and prevention, the art is usually the prerogative of the various individual who either learnt or inherited it. Thus, traditional rain control is an indigenous expression of African Traditional Religion. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to examine the traditional rain control system with emphasis on rain prevention as found amongst the people of Ikire. Themes of interest include the history of rain prevention, and the rituals involved.

Literature Review

Some scholars have previously researched the art of rain control. Martins (2022) researched rainmaking to validate the indigenous knowledge of the art. Umegbolu & Obiwuru (2021) investigated how the Igbo people in ancient times handled the unpredictable nature of weather by studying rainmaking, the impact of religion on it and whether its making or prevention is spiritually inclined. Nnamene (as cited in Abah, Chukwuma, Okoye, Ekwueme, Agbo, Okoro, Ezeanya, Otegbulu, & Anichebe, 2019) contested the use of indigenous knowledge in rain control because he believed it is unnatural and that instead of consulting rain doctors when rain is needed to be made or held, humans need to offer prayers to God and have faith in him. Ombati (2017) discussed the rituals of song and dance for a change in climate to assist agrarian communities in making rain. Andrew (2017) studied the art and science of rain making (Ura Yilan) as practised by the TIV of central Nigeria to know the factors responsible for the arts and the techniques used. Gumo (2017) studied the vital nature of rainmaking through rituals which he said is necessary because of the African tribe's reliance on agriculture as a means of livelihood. Iwu (2014) noted the intricacy and difference in rain-making rituals based on geographical location and that though the art of making rain lacks total clarity, Africans are without doubt rainmakers. Christian (2014) pointed out that rainmakers play crucial roles in their provision and control of rainfall based on their understanding of the climatic course which is rooted in religious beliefs. Semenya (2013) opined that rain is God's gift to man and that the art of rainmaking including its prevention does not mean humans can influence it. Balogun (2012) submitted that rain can be controlled as knowledge is bestowed on some persons. He grouped rainmaking into four- the first of which is indigenous knowledge of herbs, shrubs and leaves. The second is the use of crystal stone. The third is the religious method of praying to God to send down the rain or hold it while the fourth is the scientific method of injecting chemical substances into the atmosphere as well as cloud seeding. In all of these literatures, the art and science of rainmaking have been the focus of discussion with little if not nothing on its prevention. Also, some of these scholars Nnamene (as cited in Abah, *et al*, 2019; Semenya, 2013) may not be wrong in their ascription of rainfall making and prevention to providence but they failed to consider the fact that nature has blessed man with knowledge with which nature can be manipulated to produce such things like rain and withhold same when necessary. Hence, this study stands to fill the gap by discussing the prevention

of rainfall using indigenous knowledge strategies as practiced by the Yoruba tribe with evidence from Ikire.

Research Questions

1. How did the art of rain prevention begin?
2. What are the methods of preventing rainfall in Ikire?

Research Objectives

This study aims to

1. Document the history of rain prevention.
2. Examine the rituals of rain prevention and the various indigenous knowledge and technology systems used in preventing rainfall.

Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on cultural theory. Cultural theory can be traced to the 1970 book “Natural symbols” by Mary Douglas who was inspired by Basile Bernstein and Durkheim. In the book, Douglas related religion, rituals and symbols to other branches of social thought. She argues that ritual-like speech can be approached as transmitters of culture generated in a social relation and exercising a constraining effect on behaviour with each embedded within a social context. Implying that what is desirable in one culture can be rejected in another (Offermans, 2010). As premised by Serrat (2008), the cultural theory is embedded in social science disciplines and is a branch of anthropology, semiotics, sociology etc. It seeks to define heuristic concepts of culture. That is, it centres on how a particular phenomenon relates to matters of ideology, nationality, ethnicity, social class and gender. Cultural theory is adequate and relevant to this study as it enhances our understanding of the relationship between man and his environment by paying close attention to the adaptive nature of indigenous knowledge and technologies to control rainfall as an element of climate

Research Method

The study employed ethnographic research design. This design allows the researcher to obtain firsthand information from the concerned informants while giving the researcher ample opportunity to relate for a certain period with the informants on the research theme. All people with traditional skills of controlling rains and those with historical background of the theme within Ikire in Irewole Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria are targeted population slated for the study. However, purposive sampling technique was used to select thirteen (13) informants comprising eight (08) rain doctors and five (05) elders. These rain doctors have a sound knowledge of the rituals of withholding rain either by inheriting or by learning it and have practiced same for a period of more than 35 years. These rain doctors supplied information on the origin and rituals of withholding rain. The remaining five elderly respondents are culturally educated and their knowledge of oral history as relates to rain control was needed to corroborate and crosscheck the claims of the rain doctors. Qualitative instrument consisting of unstructured interview was used to obtain needed information. Data analysis was done on thematic basis.

Study Area

The study area is Ikire an ancient town made up of many villages and hamlets. Located in Irewole Local Government Area of Osun State, the town has earth's geographical coordinates of latitude 07° 30' North and longitude 04° 20' East and lies within the basin of River Osun. It covers a landmass of approximately 978.67m² and shares boundaries with Ife in the southeast, Apomu in the southwest, Ibadan in the west and Gbongan in the East. Its shared boundary with Ibadan in Oyo State makes it the access point to Osun State from that direction. The climate of the area is tropical and belongs to the rainforest vegetation zone (OSSG as cited in Bamidele, 2016). The tropical climate and rainforest vegetation of the area make it conducive for arable and cash crops. Some of the cultivable crops grown are *Manihot esculenta* (cassava), *Colocasia esculenta* (Cocoyam), *Zea mays* (Maize) *Elaeis guineensis* (Palm tree), *Kola acuminata* and *Kola nitida* (Kolanut), *Lycopersicon esculentum* (Tomato), *Musa paradisiaca* (Banana), *Musa acuminata* (Plantain), *Citrus sinensis* (Orange), *Carica papaya* (Pawpaw), and *Theobroma cacao* (cocoa). The people are involved in trading, palm oil processing, aluminum pot making and basketry while some are apprenticed in skills acquisition, others work for the government as civil and public servants. Socio-politically, the Akire of Ikire seats at the apex of the traditional governing councils and he is assisted by male and female chiefs. The people are predominantly Muslims, quite a number of them are Christians while the rest are devotees of the African Traditional Religion of Ifá, Òsun, Ògún, Sàngò, Oya, and Obátàlà to mention a few (Bamidele, 2016).

Findings

History of Rain Prevention

The history of the art of rain prevention according to informants can be traced to Òrúnmìlà who in Yoruba mythology is the second in command to *Olódùmarè* (God in Yoruba). Òrúnmìlà in the time when he dominated the earth, planned to throw a party for the 401 (*òkànlénírinwó*) spirit beings (*irúnmolè*). On hearing this, his enemies vowed they would do all they can to stop the party from holding and in executing their plans, they proposed to employ the service of rain (*èjì* or *òjò*) to disrupt the party and frustrate Òrúnmìlà's effort. On hearing what the enemies planned, Òrúnmìlà insisted that he was going ahead with the party and that nothing can put a stop to it.

On the day of the party, Òrúnmìlà gathered materials such as sulphur- *imi ojo* (see plate 1), shea butter- *ori* (see plate 2) and the divination tray- *opón ifá* (see plate 3). The sulphur was grounded and spread on the divination tray, and on this, he made an impression of two verses (*odú*) of Ifá which are *òtúrá* and *ìká* and put the shea butter in between these two verses.



Plate 1: Sulphur (*imi ojo*)
Source: Fieldwork 2022



Plate 2: Shea butter (ori)
Source: Fieldwork 2022



Plate 3: Divination tray (*opón ifá*)
Source: Heritage Auction (2007)

He was said to have carried this concoction (*ipèsè*) outside of his courtyard, held it on his palms with his face towards the sky and started chanting some incantations:

called
A mó roro lorúko tí àn pe òjò,
È dà gírìgírì wo jà lorúko tí àn pe òjò,
A dí fá fún Òrúnmilà ló jó tí Òrúnmilà
fé se ìnàwó fún àwon òkànlénírinwó
irúnmolè,
Àwon òtá Òrúnmilà ni ìnàwó rè kò ní
se se;

Crystal clear is the name by which the day is
The disorderly rush into the market is what we call rain
This gave rise to Orunmila to consult the Ifa oracle on
the day he was to host a feast for the 401 spirit beings
His enemies threatened that the feast will not hold

Wón ní tó bá sé se èjì ni won á fi bàjé	That if it does, they would disrupt it with rain
Òrúnmilà ní yó sé se;	Orunmila said the party would hold because
Ó ní amó roro tí se òjò òré mi ní se;	Crystal clear which is the day is my friend
E dà gírìgírì wo jà tí se òjò òré mi ní se;	The disorderly rush into the market which is rain
my friend	
A mó roro ìwo ni mo pe loni o;	I call on you today the clear as crystal day
E dà gírìgírì wo jà, emi o pè o loni;	I do not call on the disorderly rush into the market
called rain	
Imí ojó ní àbùrò òrùn;	Sulphur is the sun's younger sibling
Ní ojó tí òrì bá yó kan imì ojó	When sheabutter melts and gets in contact with sulphur
Ní ojó nàà ni òrùn ran,	That is the day the sun shines
Ní ojó tí órún bà ràn ni òrì n yó,	Sheabutter melts when the sun shines,
Èlà gbòrùn, ìwo ni mo pè ló ní o (3ce)	The bright sun (3 times) I call on you today
È dà gírìgírì wo ojà mi ò pè ó lóní o;	Disorderly rush I do not call on you
Kí ìwo ójó kí o rée máa rò sí igbó àti ijù;	You rain; go and fall in the forest and the thick bush
Kí o rée máa rò sí ibomirin;	I beseech you to rain elsewhere
Ò tú ra iká, wá lo rée ká ójó ní lè lónì;	Rain disperser, disperse this rain today
Kó tú ká, kó mà lo rée ròd sí igbó kóo	Let the rain be dispersed to the forest and
máa lo rée ròd sí júu	thick bush.

After the incantation, and still facing the heaven, he placed the sacrifice on the roof of his courtyard and the cloud that was suppose to let down the rain moved to another part away from the venue of the party and the rain was forestalled and a successful party was held.

Rituals of Rain Prevention and the Indigenous Knowledge and Technology Systems Used

The ritual of rain prevention from time immemorial has followed the above stated path. The ritual is a very simple one devoid of complex ritualism and the process is followed when there is a need to alter the weather to forestall rain. However, with constant interactions with the environment and improved cultural knowledge bearing in mind that indigenous knowledge systems are adaptive, other methods of controlling rain were developed. These methods are stated below:

- The use *àfòse* or *olúgbohùn* (see plate 4). *Àfòse* or *Olúgbohùn* meaning speak and make it happen are indigenous technological tools that are believed to carry much power and potency with the efficacy of making whatsoever is said whilst holding it and touching it with the tip of the tongue happens. Thus, amongst the many functions of this tool, *afose* or *olúgbohùn* can be used to request that it does not rain in a place for as long as the bearer wants it.



Plate 4: *Àfòse*
Source: Awosegun (2020)

- Another method of preventing rain in Ikire, is the use of a bunch of brooms, *Aframomum melegueta*- alligator pepper which is called *atare* in local parlance (see plate 5), an empty bottle usually of Schnapp (see plate 6) and water. The procedures for this are- fill the bottle with water, put an alligator pepper inside it, hit the head of the bunch of brooms with the palm and remove a broomstick from it. Insert the broomstick head down into the bottle containing water and alligator pepper, place these items in an open space facing the sky whilst rendering the incantations stated under the history of rainmaking and for as long as these items (see plate 7) are not removed from where they are placed, it will not rain in that area.



Plate 5: *Aframomum melegueta*
Source: Fieldwork 2022



Plate 6: *Empty schnapp bottle*
Source: Fieldwork 2022



Plate 7: The preparation
Source: Fieldwork 2022

- In addition, another method used is that of corn pudding - *èko* (see plate 8) and *Garcinia kola*- bitter kola-(*orógbó*) (see plate 9), the corn pudding is opened, the bitter kola is inserted into it and both are buried in a dugout (see plate 10s). Fire is set on the hole and its content and as long as the fire does not go out, there will be no rain in the area. The incantations used here are the same as the above-stated one.



Plate 8: Corn pudding
Source: Fieldwork 2022



Plate 9: *Garcinia kola*
Source: Fieldwork 2022



Plate 10: The preparation
Source: Fieldwork 2022

Discussion

Rain control has cultural significance not only among the Yoruba speaking people but across the country and Africa at large. Traditional rain control method using indigenous knowledge and technology has proved useful as evidence from Ikire has shown. The art which is devoid of any complexities, do not in any way take credit away from the creator who is believed to have made the modifications of weather possible by gifting man with the knowledge to be able to make and prevent it. The findings of the work has presented ways by which rain is prevented in Ikire and it follows the submission of Iwu (2014) & Semanya (2013) that the rituals of rainmaking varies from not only a cultural group to another but also, from country to country.

Based on this, making rain in the study area does not involve the song and dance for climate as put forward by Ombati (2017) & Andrew (2017). This is because rain can be prevented in Ikire without people noticing as the rituals are often of the simplest form of technology, deeply rooted in the people's traditional beliefs and devoid of any ceremonial act. In addition, traditional rain control as an art is not a core economic activity because there are no full time practitioners neither is it hereditary in contrast to the description of Ombati (2017), Semanya (2013); Danfulani & Haruna (1998). This is because it is not a sole means or a core of livelihood and although the practitioners may get a token from practicing, it is a passive craft that anyone who has the knowledge of the rituals can engage in it. It will also be suitable to add at this junction that there are no known negative effects of the act of preventing rain but rather, the knowledge could be deployed to check excess rainfall to prevent flooding.

Conclusion

This paper stems from the author's observation of rain prevention rituals during ceremonies and it has tried to give a description and explanation of the ritual surrounding the control of rainfall. With constant interaction with their environment, people have exploited natural resources' not only for economic but also for sociocultural gain. While some people may be in doubt of the workability of preventing rainfall using indigenous technology, the people of Ikire who have witnessed its many occurrences, have attested to its possibility and proven it to be true and it is not surprising that even a child who observes the clearing of a hitherto heavy cloud is quick to say "won tun ti wo ojo yi" meaning this rain has been prevented again. Findings of the research shows that indigenous knowledge systems

cuts across the peoples' life and its usage makes life meaningful in the cultural setting. Hence, this work has added to the body of knowledge, the art of rain control in Yoruba land with emphasis on prevention using indigenous knowledge and technology with evidence from Ikire in Irewole Local Government Area of Osun State, Southwest Nigeria.

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