**Death of 36 cows by lightning in Ondo village: Science and myth of the matter! Nigeria**

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The cows killed by lightening

**Ademola Adegbamigbe**

The death of 36 cows, caused by lightning in Ijare in Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State on Saturday 21 September has provoked serious debates among Nigerians. While some are scientific in their reactions, not a few swore by their grandfathers’ tombs that it was African mesmerism that was on display. They argued trenchantly that lightening was directed by the villagers to fight against the Fulani ogre that has, for years now, been too difficult to tame by common sense and conventional security apparatus of state.

The mountain called Oke Owa in the town looked innocuous just like any other- igneous rock with contours, cracks and promontories here and there. Trees, shrubs, herbs and climbers grow at such portions where soil gathered as alluvial fans and these enable them to take roots- habitat for fresh flora and fauna.



Ijare town in Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State. Photo credit: OSRC

It was the lush green grass and shrubs that actually attracted some Fulani pastoralist into the area. That day, the extra-terrestrial got angry and sparked. In other words, lightning struck 36 cows dead on the Oke Owa mountain, a sacred area in the community. Ijare lies around 20 km north-northeast of the city of Akure. From Akure, a traveler would move towards the Federal University of Technology, on the highway to Ife and Ibadan, detour to Ilaramokin, Chief Ade Ojo’s town (where Elizade University is situated) and Ikota before hitting Ijare town.

Amara, a resident, was quoted by saharareporters: “On Saturday, I saw the Fulani herdsmen with their cows while they were entering the bush and climbing the mountains. But this morning, a hunter that was passing came to inform us that he saw the same cows but they were already dead. We rushed there and was shocked to find the cows all dead.”

Traditional Prime Minister of the town, Chief Wemimo Olanira said: “We counted no fewer than 36 cows already dead. They would be there and no one would be allowed to touch them. The place is not meant for ordinary people and even the king that goes there, does so with great caution. Incidents like this happens when people desecrate the scared land. Also, spokesperson for the police in Ondo, Femi Joseph, confirmed the incident.



Chief Wemimo Olaniran. OSRC photo

Olaniran, added that “anyone who desecrates any sacred part of Ijare will suffer this kind of fate; it happened in the past. Where the cattle died is called Owa where the Olujare visits once a year. The innermost part of the cave is where he stays for 24 hours in seclusion, performing some traditional rites. So, no individual is permitted to visit there. At our own end, it was an act of God for which nobody can be queried.”

According to an Ondo State Radiovision Corporation report, it is the king, called Owa, who could only visit the mountain once a year. Apart from the king, only virgins could visit it. The journey from the foot of the hill to the top , according to OSRC, takes half an hour and how “the herdsmen made their way to the top was a source of concern to many,”

Another villager painted a traditional picture of the town in a telephone interview with TheNEWS: “Ijare people are described as Omo Elewe Obi (prowess in cola nut production. There is a particular festival called Odun Olofin. A masquerader, dressed in fresh palm fronds, goes about and can spot any harmful charm worn by anyone in the crowd. He would just rush at the carrier of the juju and confiscate it. He is so fearful that people are not allowed to step on any of the fronds that drop from his body. Attendants always rush to pick them up to avoid calamity. My brother, people fear Ijare people because it is believed they have supernatural powers. Others are so uncharitable so much that called Ijare people witches and wizards.”

**It was Mr Richard Akinnola who, on Facebook, corrected the error made in many news reports about the incident. He argued: “It wasn’t thunder that killed those 36 cows in Ondo state but lightning. Thunder doesn’t kill, lightning does. Chiedu Mbonu** agreed with him, saying, “honestly most people don’t know that and that’s why you will always hear them telling someone ‘thunder kill you there.’ Yusuph Sulaiman also reacted: “Very correct, scientifically proven, whenever there is a serious lightning strike, a voltage of not less than 70,000v descends with it and that is capable of striking anything living to death. That is why thunder/lightning arrestors are designed to help the said voltage to the earth.”

Udeme Ikono asked humorously, “Please where can I order such lightning？The cows parading and ravaging our farmlands are over 200. Emmanuel Uhunmwangho also added: “Lightening and thunder occur at the same time, since light travels faster than sound, lightening will get to you, before you hear the sound.

**True. Richard Brill, a professor at Honolulu Community College, explains in scientificamerican.com:** “Thunder is caused by lightning, which is essentially a stream of electrons flowing between or within clouds, or between a cloud and the ground. The air surrounding the electron stream is heated to as hot as 50,000 degrees Farhenheit, which is three times hotter than the surface of the sun. As the superheated air cools it produces a resonating tube of partial vacuum surrounding the lightning’s path. The nearby air rapidly expands and contracts. This causes the column to vibrate like a tubular drum head and produces a tremendous crack. As the vibrations gradually die out, the sound echoes and reverberates, generating the rumbling we call thunder. We can hear the thundering booms 10 miles or more distant from the lightning that caused it.

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“When the lightning is within sight, however, we see it first because the speed of sound in air is considerably slower that that of the electron flow. Thus, the sound behaves more like a shock wave than an ordinary sound wave. The shock wave follows the path of the electrons like a fist in a sock. The speed of sound is even more insignificant when compared to the speed of light. The light from the flash reaches us in a fraction of a second, whereas the sound lags along like a snail following an interplanetary rocket.”



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Also, nationalgeographic.com, explains: “Lightning is an [electrical discharge caused by imbalances](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/jetstream/lightning/lightning.html) between storm clouds and the ground, or within the clouds themselves. Most lightning occurs within the clouds.

Sheet lightning describes a distant bolt that lights up an entire cloud base. Other visible bolts may appear as bead, ribbon, or rocket lightning.

During a storm, colliding particles of rain, ice, or snow inside storm clouds increase the imbalance between storm clouds and the ground, and often negatively charge the lower reaches of storm clouds. Objects on the ground, like steeples, trees, and the Earth itself, become positively charged—creating an imbalance that nature seeks to remedy by passing current between the two charges.

Lightning is extremely hot—a flash can heat the air around it to temperatures five times hotter than the sun’s surface. This heat causes surrounding air to rapidly expand and vibrate, which creates the pealing thunder we hear a short time after seeing a lightning flash.”

That is as far as science could go on the phenomenon of lightning and thunder. On  the Ijare matter, Nigerians have different reactions that bear on the metaphysical.

To Aniefon Akpan, “There’s a kill and it is real ,that’s the koko (crux of the matter)… Jungle justice to the rescue. Enough of unnecessary encroaching.” Science notwithstanding, Emeka Oparah reacted to Akinnola’s post that, “Amadioha is the god of thunder, which uses lightening to cause harm and do damage.” And Kayode Ogundare reacted too that then Sango must be Amadioha’s first cousin. Niggas do basically the same things.