

# Our Shrines Are Most Holy Places; Contrary to What the Movies Show on TV

In the heart of every traditional African community lies a sacred space—a shrine, a grove, a sacred stone, or a hidden enclave nestled deep within nature. These are not just physical locations. They are portals of connection and frequency generators to the divine, our ancestors, and the spiritual order that governs the universe. Yet, the portrayal of these spaces in mainstream media—particularly in movies and television, from Hollywood, Nollywood to Kumawood—paints a picture that is distorted, fearful, and deeply disrespectful but reveres those of foreign cultures. **We need to clarify that our shrines are indeed among the holiest places on Earth**, borrowing the interpretation of holiness by popular religions. However, our proverb says, *‘Until the lion learns to tell his own story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.’*

## The Miseducation

Horror movies and action thrillers often depict African shrines as dark, dangerous places filled with skulls, blood, and evil incantations. They depict the priest as a maniacal villain, twisting the rituals into scenes of terror. Unfortunately, many viewers—especially the younger generation—consume these narratives without critical examination. Over time, they internalize the lie that anything African and spiritual must be demonic, primitive, or anti-progress (Ani, 1994; Asante, 2003). Such movies always end with a pastor praying and destroying a shrine. **Funny and ironically though this may sound, most of these pastors and movie stars line up at genuine shrines for help.**

Such behaviour is not accidental. It is part of a broader legacy of colonial and neo-colonial distortion. When colonial powers arrived on the continent, they recognized that the greatest threat to their dominance was the Africans' spiritual autonomy and identity (Wa Thiong'o, 1986), as is also vivid in King Leopold's popular letter to African missionaries. Thus, they set out to demonize our gods, our ancestors, and our sacred spaces—replacing them with imported ideologies, religions, and cultural systems. The media has simply inherited this propaganda machine and refined it (Mbiti, 1969; Okon, 2012).

## The True Nature of Our Shrines

In traditional African spirituality, **the shrine is a place of peace, healing, wisdom, and divine order where quantum physics is at its best** (Asamoah Boadi, 2024). It is where one goes to seek guidance, give thanks, or reconnect with the ancestral spirits. It is not a place of fear, but of reverence. Contrary to what movies show, **there is no chaos in a well-maintained shrine—only cosmic order** (Gyekye, 1995; Abimbola, 2006). This should not be mistaken for fake shrines and priests who are destroyers and have no connection with our true Ancestors.

Here, the elements—earth, fire, space, water, and air (NAMASHIVAYA)—are not fictional characters but living intelligences causing quantum realities to happen and producing what we now call artificial intelligence (AI). Trees, rivers, rocks, and animals are not mere props but sacred beings in the spiritual ecosystem (Yai, 1993; Kwapong, 2019). The shrine serves as a communal

meeting ground between the seen and the unseen, between the living and the ancestral, and between the physical and the metaphysical. The shrine guides every ritual with profound philosophy, ethical codes, and cosmic laws of pure mathematical realities (Idowu, 1973).

### **A Place for Healing and Justice**

Traditional healers like *Akomfoɔ*, *Babalawo*, *Ngangas*, *Shamans*, etc., operate from shrines not to harm people, but to heal. They are masters who are skilled in directing and manipulating energies for our benefit. Herbal medicine, spiritual diagnostics, and ancestral communication have been used for centuries to cure diseases, resolve conflicts, and restore harmony in communities (Olupona, 2011; Agyeman, 2021). Even in matters of justice, when formal courts fail, people turn to the shrine to swear truthfully or seek divine arbitration—it is the universal supreme court. Can we say the same of the manipulated justice we often see in modern institutions?

### **Reclaiming the Narrative**

It is time for us to stop outsourcing our identity to filmmakers who neither understand nor respect our ways. The saddest thing is when our people (even those who have been visiting there for support) are at the forefront of this misrepresentation. African creatives must rise and reclaim the narrative by producing films, documentaries, and art that reflect the *true* essence of our spirituality (Asante, 2003; Echeruo, 2017). Our priests, priestesses, shrines, and deities must be portrayed with dignity and depth—not as caricatures of evil, notwithstanding the need to identify the false ones and clean up the system. Unfortunately, some individuals misuse these places to wish harm upon others. However, remember that you leave yourself exposed to be harmed when you go out of your being to harm others; this is natural justice that happens both above and below.

Furthermore, there must be a national conversation around **spiritual literacy**. Just as we teach civic education and religious studies in schools, why not include indigenous African spirituality in the curriculum—not as folklore, but as a valid and sophisticated knowledge system (Amadiume, 1997; Dei, 2014; Quan Baffour, 2011)? This would be simple with a national day to learn about our traditions and honour the wisdom of our Ancestors.

### **Honouring Our Sacred Spaces**

To those who still fear shrines, I say: visit one with a sincere heart. Sit under the ancient trees, listen to the chants, watch the libations being poured, and feel the energy that connects us to our ancestors. You will not encounter demons. You will encounter yourself. Because the shrine is not just a place—it is a mirror of the soul and a compass for the community.

Let us honour our shrines. Let us clean them, protect them, and teach the next generation that these are not relics of a forgotten past—but vibrant, living sanctuaries of divine wisdom. Let the world know: **our shrines are most holy. And we will no longer accept their demonization.**

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