

The do's and don'ts: A theological inquiry into the *Kpim* of *Ori Oke* in Ilorin metropolis

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Abstract

It is an interesting and refreshing fact that every human society is conventionally structured and subsequently sustained by certain rules and regulations whether written or unwritten by which both social and religious life is regulated. In the religious arena, the holy writ or tradition serves as a functional apparatus in order to attain and guarantee religious order, righteousness, and holiness. Conceptually, *Ori Oke* means Prayer Mountain, one which is secluded from interruption for the purpose of solitary prayer and worship of the transcendental God. Thus, every *Ori Oke* (prayer mountain) in Ilorin metropolis is identified and associated with rules and practices which have been a *sine-qua non* for orderliness, harmony, purity, and security. However, non-compliance with the rules and regulations has been a major problem confronting some attendees and as well as a source of worry to insiders. This, as a matter of fact, elicits lots of concern from troubled members who are alarmed at the extent of violations at odd hours and in unexpected places thereby leading to a critical question of the roles of instruction in *Ori Oke*. The thrust of the paper is, therefore, to examine the theological and historical aspects to show the indispensable role of Christian traditions or holy writ in the sustainability of peace, orderliness, purity, inclusion, and continuity. The paper adopts a historical-liturgical and expository approach leading to the fact that vigilance and extra care must be employed by *Ori Oke* caretakers in order to get rid of unholy practices in the holy land.

Keywords

Dos; don'ts; theology; Kpim; Core; Ori Oke; Ilorin

Introduction

Present-day Christianity is no longer domiciled at the cathedral; instead it has gone to the level of a mountain top, waterfront, hills, forest, campgrounds, prayer cities, among others. This Christian regime is

characterized by the contestation of space. Within the agora of Nigerian Christian lexicon, mountain prayer elicits different prayer regimes, rituals, religious beliefs and practices aimed at procuring the assistance of the Divine to ameliorate the existential challenges of the attendees. Thus, these mountain top prayer regimes are called *Ori Oke* in Yoruba language. It is interesting to note that *Ori Oke* has become a source of comfort and succour to those in distress and the troubled, and a haven from the billows of life. Again, it has become a pilgrim centre for many people, thereby creating a montage of unique religious value quite different from what ordinarily we know of it. Uncompromisingly, this prayer section is also strong in Ilorin Metropolis. Therefore, it is the thrust of this chapter to examine and explore the rules and practices of *Ori Oke* with theological insight.

Conceptual meaning of Prayer Mountain (*Ori Oke*)

To start with, Prayer Mountain (*Ori Oke*) is a prayer site or a place of solitary worship of the Transcendent God in a secluded and retired area which is free from interruption and obstruction of the hassles of life. *Ori Oke*, as a Yoruba concept, has many connotations. Etymologically, *Ori Oke* means “destiny at the top”. Metaphorically, it means hilltop. Therefore, in Yoruba theology, it depicts mountain top, hilltop and in Christian theology, it means Prayer Mountain. Today, *Ori Oke* is synonymous with Christ Apostolic Church and Cherubim and Seraphim. For instance, Christ Apostolic Church names its branches (*Oke-Isegun*) mountain of victory, (*Oke-Idande*) mountain of deliverance, (*Oke-Igbala*) mountain of power, (*Oke-Alafia*) mountain of peace, and among others. Also, *Ori Oke* connotes that the mountain top is closer to God and not everyone can climb it. While some indigenous churches like Celestial Church of Christ and Cherubim and Seraphim can refer their altar as *Ori Oke*. Periodically, it can be said by some Christians when fasting that they are on the mountain. In Christian theology, Ayegboyin and Ishola (1999:78–79) succinctly describe *Ori Oke* thus,

Prayer Mountains are places of worship or saying solitary prayers. These prayers, which are usually away from the hustle and bustle of life; are observed as sacred places, churches, permanent buildings or huts have been built on some of these hills with resident pastors,

prophets and prophetesses to assist those who come for spiritual assistance.

As a matter of fact, *Ori Oke* harbours all kinds of attendees because they believe that once they throng *Ori Oke*, their prayers are answered, and their problems or challenges are solved. It is believed that prayers offered in these sacred places are always efficacious. Consequently, they use these sacred places as a sort of prayer closet (Ayegboyin 2011:172). *Ori Oke* has changed the pace and direction and enlarges the scale of communicating the gospel. The emergence of *Ori Oke* has marked the beginning of a substantial Christian awakening and innovation in the Christian community. The practice of visiting sacred mountains constitutes a major factor of deliverance and conversion for these churches. Usually, the general atmosphere in these sacred places, particularly on the mountains, gives psychological relief to worried souls. Our investigation reveals that mountains or sacred hills have a significant and symbolic value to seekers. The people believe that mountains have symbolic importance in the Bible. Mountains are described as sites for transcendental and spiritual experiences; a site where the mundane meets with the sacred, i.e. hierophant meets with an epiphany. Mountains or sacred hills are spots where people encounter God. In other words, mountains are a spiritual *rendezvous* between God and humanity. *Ori Oke* is secluded from obstruction and is fitted by impressiveness and grandeur in order to rise up to the thoughts of God that formed the mountains.

Our examination also reveals that despite plethoric spirits in the African worldview – that inhabit spaces like sacred hills, mountains, grooves and forests – the spirit of God permanently resides in *Ori Oke* so far visited. This corroborates the position of Irenaeus as quoted by Gornik (2011: 289) that “for where the church is, there is the spirit of God; and where the spirit of God is, there is the church ... Christian faith is neither unchanging nor static, but living and breathing in the spirit of God.”

Theoretical framework

In the light of the foregoing, it can be deduced that ecology is concerned with nature and religion, and perhaps Christianity in particular. Ecology

depicts the study of the relationships between living organisms and their interactions with their natural or developed environment (Encarta 2009). Kizito (2011:16) asserts that human beings depend on the available resources on earth, in order to meet their various needs. It is of interest to note that in intelligent nourishment of the universe, humanity is aware that no artificial intervention can successfully attempt to reorganize it. Kizito (2011:17) again opines that for long, creation has been seen as a composite of raw materials, capital assets, with no other value than furnishing to the human species tools and instruments of production and consumption. The awareness that these natural objects had to be seen as subjects struggling for their own sustenance, and should be seen in total independence of human beings, is only a minor responsibility on the Christian ecological scene. Humankind has long been considered as ecologically separated from the rest of the species and has been endowed with managerial mastery of creation and the right to exploit nature's beauty. Without denying the right place, human persons should protect and preserve the environment as they are the image of God the Creator.

Alamu (2015:170) comments that man must interact with his environment and natural *habitat* such as animals, the plants, the trees, the air, and the urban world so as to keep his environment secure and intact. Ogunbodede and Ikotun (2010:269) argue that environmental features such as hills, mountains, rivers, plants, animals and forests are a matter of cosmic necessity for religious activity and development in the universe. In relation to ecology and religion, they opine more importantly that the practical demonstration of environmental impacts on religious development can be observed and established from different dimensions of worshipping on and of hills/mountains, worshipping beside or inside rivers, or water bodies, as well as worship in the forests and other environmental features. These are more pronounced in the traditional or African belief system, as these features are often used as places to commune with God in worship/prayer.

The above shows that the nexus between religion and ecology is evident in the contestation of space in the environment. In this regard, religion and ecology serve as the means to an end and not the end in themselves. Evidently, a handful of these areas are sacred spots and they are distinguished by their environmental nourishment and flourishing

because their trees are evergreen and preserved as the environment is protected, preserved, sustained and maintained by the owner, community and other stakeholders. In the timeless beginning, every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own *genius loci*, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men and show their ambivalence.

Schaeffer (1972:26) observes that ever since humans became a numerous species, they have affected their environment notably. People have often been a dynamic element in their own environment, but in the present state of historical scholarship, we usually do not know exactly when, where or with what effects human-induced changes came in. As we entered the last third of the 20th century, however, concern for the problem of ecological backlash was mounting feverishly. Geuton (1992:23) asserts that “because we are to elevate the human race above all the rest of creation, and they do what they wish with it, [this] is what brings the ecological imbalance. Today the rampant environmental crisis has prompted theology to redress the wanton destruction of the environment, exhibited by daily pollution of the waterways, the land stripped of its natural resources, indiscriminate destruction of the natural *habitat*, deterioration of the topsoil necessary for growth, the air being fouled by the toxic industrial emissions, drastic alteration of the world’s climate, the grave depletion of the ozone layers and the subjection of human beings to the dangerous sun’s rays. The earth’s equilibrium is now more unstable and complex as science and human civilization progress. The active witnesses of today’s ecological crisis are pointing accusing fingers at a religious worldview and a conception of the earth and humanity based on the biblical categories of subjugation and domination. The effects of these ecological and environmental backlashes are in essence the extinctions of certain trees, animals and other species that have added glamour and beauty to our very world. Ecological preservation cannot be over-estimated. Therefore, the environment that accommodates all things has become interestingly tenuous, and this has in turn begun to threaten the quality of life, both for human and non-human on the planet. This environment is threatening the sustainable development and undermining the integrity of fundamental life-support system that provides emotional and spiritual sustenance as well. Today, the contestation of space which is associated with Prayer Mountains and environmental problems through noise pollution is a 21st century human-

induced construct. To this end, the hallmark of this paper is built around this theoretical clarification.

An overview of the *Ori Oke* phenomenon in Ilorin metropolis

Before we discuss the historical account of *Ori Oke*, it will be appropriate to consider briefly Ilorin and its geopolitical formation. Jawondo (2002:161) asserts that the pre-seventeenth century history of Ilorin is still very much unknown. There is a general consensus that Ilorin was established in the 17th century by a hunter called Ojo Isekhuse from Oyo ile (Jimoh 1994:25). He was known to be a peripatetic hunter who erected transit camps at the point of a legendary rock on which they sharpened their iron and other hunting implements, and from where the town allegedly got its name Ilo-Irin. (*Ilo* means “sharpening”; *Irin* means “iron”) (Jimoh, 1994:25–27). In the same vein, Jawondo and Salihu (2011:76) affirm that Ilorin was derived from (Ilu-Erin) as earlier accounted for by Jimoh. Though other oral traditions have been advanced, the former tradition is most popular among the others. Jawondo (2002:162) however observes that from 1754, Ilorin came into historical limelight. This was due to the courage of Pashin, the son of Laderin, who challenged the tyrannical government of Bashorun Gaha of the Old Oyo Empire between 1754 and 1774.

Ilorin, being a part of Yorubaland under the control of Afonja, was initially peopled by members of the Yoruba ethnic groups. The pastoral Fulani settled at Ago area headed by Olufadi while Hausa/Nupe/Baruba settled at Gambari quarters under the leadership of Mallam Bako. The Oke Suna settlement was under the leadership of Solagberu (al-Tahir) (Jawondo 2002:162). As time went on, these various ethnic groups in Ilorin gradually interacted with one another as prompted by military, political, social, economic and religious necessities. That was the beginning of the transition from “Areate” to Emirate. Ilorin is predominantly Yoruba.

The people of Ilorin were essentially farmers. They farmed for subsistence. Most farmers too were hunters, hunting for games within and outside Ilorin. As the population grew, other professions like cloth weaving, Mat making, basket works, leather works, dyeing, blacksmithing, beadworks, pottery, embroidery were skilfully practised along with hunting and

farming. (Jawondo 162). Ilorin is today part of the Northcentral of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

On the aspect of religion, adherents of African Religion largely populated Ilorin up to the beginning of the 19th century (Jawondo 2002:163). From the 19th century, Islam took over Ilorin emirate. It was established that some Muslim scholars who settled at Oke Suna vigorously and intensively engaged in Islamic teaching, preaching and converting the natives to Islam. Thus, Islam became established and attained an appreciable influence which it maintained until the coming of Shaikh Alimi in 1817. The settlement of Shaikh Alimi in Ilorin greatly increased the spread of Islam (Jawondo 2002:165). However, Christianity came to Ilorin late in the 19th century. When Christianity penetrated the south-western part of Nigeria, it was not permitted in Ilorin. Jawondo (2002:166) argues that the “Ilorin Emirate authority was considered friendly with the missionaries but refused vehemently to grant them the permission to preach the Gospel or establish mission stations. This was based on the fear that Christianity might contaminate Islam, the state religion”. As a result, permission was granted for mission stations to open on the outskirts of the town from 1917 (2002:166).

Indeed, Christianity came much later to Ilorin community which is predominated by Islam. Till date, one hardly finds churches in the city centre, except areas dominated by visitors or immigrants and some few Ilorin people. We must not fail to establish that the existence of these missions and western education opportunities brought about the migration of people in search of western education from other areas to Ilorin (Jawondo 171). It is of interest to note that the establishment of African Indigenous Churches such as the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Christ Apostolic Church and Celestial Church of Christ saw to the emergence of Prayer mountain (*Ori Oke*). Again, the incessant ethno-religious crises in the northern part of Nigeria in the late 1990s and early 2000s also saw to the upsurge or relocation of people to Ilorin and its environs. With the upsurge of people to Ilorin metropolis, the patronage of *Ori Oke* also increased.

It is fascinating to note that *Ori Oke*, as earlier pointed out, is a prayer spot or a place of solitary worship – secluded, withdrawn and free from interruption by the hassles of life. It is believed that *Ori Oke* is a sacred

prayer ground where prayers are easily answered, and problems of life are solved. Some adherents opine that *Ori Oke* is a place where a person can have quiet time with God. It is also believed to be a place of retreat; a place to recharge or refill spiritually. Some attendees at the *Ori Oke* explain why they prefer *Ori Oke* to their churches. According to them, the churches today are prayerless, full of fanfare and social jamboree. But *Ori Oke* is a special sacred place where the individual can commune with his/her Maker expressly without spiritual assistance from resident prophets and where answers are received with the same frequency.

Historically, there are three major schools of thought as to the origin of Prayer Mountains. The first school of thought is of the view that the idea of a prayer mountain began with Moses (Ex 3:4,19,20) who encountered God (Yahweh) on Mount Sinai and in the burning bush. The proponents of this school especially some Old Testament scholars strongly believe that Moses spent some days with the Lord in Mount Sinai and the Mosaic tablet or Decalogue was delivered to him. Anytime Moses was to have a retreat, Mount Sinai was his destination. The burning bush also served as a holy ground hence he was asked to remove his shoes. Today, in virtually all the prayer mountains in Ilorin, the first instruction is to remove your shoes.

The second school of thought as supported by some New Testament theologians that *Ori Oke* started with the account in Matthew 17:1–5. They note that Jesus always retired from the congregation as well as his disciple to a quiet place in order to have time with God. Some opine that Jesus would retire to recharge for the assignment ahead. In addition, they assert that the prayer mountain has a systematic and symbolic value as couched in the Bible. Mountains are sacred sites or spots where there is an encounter between God and man or where there are supernatural experiences and sensational encounters.

The last school of thought (cf. Adamo 2005; Ayegboyin and Ishola 1999) claims that the emergence of African Indigenous Churches prompted the spread of the Prayer Mountain. They opine that the great revival of 1930 by Apostle Ayo Babalola blossomed into *Ori Oke*. In fact, these prayer mountains are synonymous with the Cherubim and Seraphim and the Christ Apostolic Church.

In spite of the divergence in the triadic schools of thought, none can be ignored because they serve as precedents or reference points to the import of *Ori Oke*. Clearly, the latter school of thought brought the importance of *Ori Oke* to the limelight. Some of the *Ori Oke* in Ilorin metropolis includes the following:

1. Ori Oke – University of Ilorin campus
2. Ori Oke Egbala (mountain of salvation) – Olunlade
3. Ori Oke Isegun (mountain of victory) – Tanke
4. Ori Oke Aseyori (mountain of so shall it be) – Irede
5. Ori Oke Agbara (mountain of power) – Sobi
6. Ori Oke Irapada (mountain of redemption) – Balogun, Tank
7. Ori Oke – Basin
8. Ori Oke Apata Iyanu (mountain of miracle) – Odo Owa

Suffice to say that some prayer mountains are owned by Churches such as Cherubim and Seraphim especially the ones at Basin, Tanke and Odo Owa. However, some others are owned by communities, for example, Sobi Mountain while other prayer mountains are owned by individuals, for example, Irede, Olunlade, Balogun Tanke and the University of Ilorin Campus.

It could be recalled that despite the belief in a gamut of spirits in the African worldview, the Holy Spirit is very pivotal to all *Ori Oke* – which enhances Christian faith. One of the investigating surveys of the *Ori Oke* in the University of Ilorin Campus, where we fully participated in their Tuesday meetings, during the praise and worship session, some people became spirit possessed, ecstatic and some were slain in the spirit. Asamoah-Gyadu (2013: 5–6) captures the whole essence by saying that “their aim is the revitalization of church life through the restoration of the *charisma pneumatica*, the graces of the Spirit to its worship life. In the same vein, Macchia (2006:158) stresses that:

A global shift is occurring today toward a new Christendom with its greatest strength in the non-Western world. This new Christendom ... tends to encourage charismatic, widely participatory, and

missions-minded congregations. The strength of the renewed Christendom ... is not in its sense of tradition or theological brilliance, but in a powerful experience of communal praise, liberation, and missions.

These Prayer Mountains have resident pastors, prophets and prophetesses who assist attendees spiritually. Although some of these pastors, prophets, and prophetesses lack adequate theological knowledge, they often possess charismatic gifts that the people seek after. Roman Catholic philosopher and theologian Donald Gelpi (1971:83) asserts that “the Charismatic experience finds expression in a variety of Spiritual gifts which are granted by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the entire community.” Miller (1997: 3) reflects holistically on *pneumatic charismata* as they affect clients and the resident pastors on prayer mountains. According to him:

Not only are the new paradigm churches doing a better job of responding to the needs of their clientele than are many mainline churches, but more importantly they are also successfully mediating the sacred, bringing God to people and conveying the self-transcending and lifechanging core of all true religion. They offer worship in a musical idiom that connects with the experience of broad sectors of the middle class; they have jettisoned aspects of organized religion that alienate many teenagers and young adults, and they provide programming that emphasizes well-defined moral values and is not otherwise available in the culture in the culture. In short, they offer people hope not meaning that is grounded in a transcendent experience of the sacred.

Here, they strongly believe in prayers, while some cultural elements like water and olive oil can be prayed on or at times left for days or months depending on the level of faith of the individual. Furthermore, these Prayer Mountains are open to the public at specific times of the week.

It is also interesting to note that both Christians and Muslims throng Prayer Mountains for special prayers. Virtually, all prayer mountains accommodate Muslims and they all pray in the name of Jesus. At times, some of the Muslims disguise themselves when visiting a prayer mountain. However, the Sobi Sacred Mountain has space for Christians and Muslims to pray separately. It is heart-warming, despite the religious intolerance

between Muslims and Christians in contemporary Nigeria, to note a healthy religious interaction and harmony in Ilorin. In Sobi Sacred Mountain, a house has been built to accommodate both Christians and Muslims who at times spend days and weeks on the mountain. This *Ori Oke* has succeeded in fostering the spirit of live and let live, coupled with the spirit of *Orita* – the triadic meeting point. There are Islamic clerics and prophets who assist the attendees. Some of these people come from neighbouring cities like Ogbomoso, Osogbo, Oyo, Ibadan, and Lagos. Furthermore, there are commercial activities going on in some of these Prayer Mountains as well as hostels built for visitors to pass the nights when the need arises. Perhaps, some of these prayer mountains today become tourist centres especially Odo Owa and Sobi.

The Do's and Don'ts of *Ori Oke*

All the prayer mountains located in Ilorin metropolis observe similar rules and practices except in few cases, maybe in the area of doctrinal differences amongst some churches. Friday-Otun (2018) has helped to showcase the rules in this paradigm:

The specific practices and rules explained

1. Rules and regulations of the prayer mountain, *Ori Oke*, are binding on everybody
2. No shoes, sandals, and slippers of any kinds are allowed on the mountain
3. Using of perfume is not allowed on this mountain
4. No burning of coloured candles and incense on this mountain, or, No burning of any kind of candles on this mountain.
5. No eating of pepper and oil on this mountain
6. Do not litter, defecate or wash anything on this mountain
7. Do not disturb others while praying
8. Only water and olive oil are allowed on this rock

9. Once you are on this mountain till 6:00 pm, you must not go down until the next day
10. Women in their menstrual cycle should not come up for prayer during the menstrual period.
11. All women should cover their heads during prayers
12. Everybody on the mountain should participate fully during the environmental sanitation periods.
13. God is clean and holy; this mountain should be kept clean as holy at all times

The synthesis and correlation of those practices and rules to the Bible

Looking closely at rule II, it portrays that when God called Moses at Mount Sinai, where he saw that the bush was burning but not consumed, he had a voice that he should untie his shoes because he was on holy ground. This suggests that in all prayer mountains, rule II must be strictly obeyed irrespective of the denomination. This implies that the mountain is the dwelling place or residence of God and as such it must be kept holy. Theologically-speaking, it was opined by some pastors at *Ori Oke* that the removal of shoes or sandals is biblical because as observed earlier, Moses at the scene of the burning bush was asked to remove his shoes because he was standing on holy ground (Ex 3:4). Therefore, everyone who throngs the prayer mountain must comply with this rule. In addition, members of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church and of the Celestial Church of Christ also enter the church barefooted because they believe that the church is a meeting point between the human and the Divine.

On rules XII, XIII, and XIV, environmental sanitation is crucial and sanctimonious in all the *Ori Oke*. It is said that “cleanliness is next to godliness”. *Ori Oke* hygiene is a must for all attendees. It is believed that God is holy, and his people must be holy. The success of the *Ori Oke* operations solely depends on the presence of God. The neatness, cleanness, and holiness character of God are traits to be imbibed by all members of *Ori Oke* in order to encounter his presence and to receive the divine

blessings that accompany the act if being in His presence. (Friday-Otun 2018:524–525).

Avoidance of unholy practices is strictly stressed. Virtually in all *Ori Oke*, the most pronounced of these unholy practices are adultery and fornication. The Bible has consistently and explicitly condemned these practices. In some *Ori Oke*, some attendees may be asked by some *Ori Oke* leaders to come under the spiritual watch-care of such leaders and after some days of the prayer vigils, they may be tempted to have sexual intercourse with them. Also, some attendees may feel relaxed to stay in such *Ori Oke* with the opposite sex and in the night, they may be tempted to engage in fornication.

The use of water and olive oil for pronouncing a blessing on the attendees is permitted on *Ori Oke*. This is frequently done in order to help and strengthen the faith of the attendees. These two materials are commonly used in the prayer mountains. Often, water and olive oil are left for days or even months in the open. The use of water and olive oil has become a ritual in African Indigenous Churches, Pentecostal, and Neo-Pentecostal churches. Theologically, it is stated that Aaron, David, and other anointed biblical characters were anointed from a horn of oil. Furthermore, those on the mountain cannot come down after six o'clock in the evening until the next day. It is believed that Jesus used to retire in the evening to the mountains to recharge until the next day.

It is the belief of African Indigenous Churches that women in their menstrual circle are unclean. Therefore, they are not expected to touch anything within the premises of the church vis-à-vis Prayer Mountains. This is in tandem with the book of Leviticus. Any attendee who feels unaccomplished can solicit the assistance of spiritual leaders to help pray or to join him/her in prayer. This can strengthen the faith of the attendee. Lastly, praying in the name of Jesus is a *sine qua non* in all the churches and mountain prayer. The name is the power, pillar, and strength of Christianity (Phil 2:9–10). All the attendees who throng *Ori Oke* pray in the name of Jesus. Even, some Muslims who throng *Ori Oke* to pray also pray in the name of Jesus – except on those *Ori Oke* that belong to them. To this end, the do's and don'ts of *Ori Oke* anywhere are the *Kpim* – core of their existence and patronage. It can be deduced from the foregoing that a handful of these

rules and regulations have biblical cum theological imports while others have a socio-cultural montage. Their relevance cannot be overestimated considering the fact that all the Prayer Mountains recognize these biblico-cultural instructions.

The specific local cultural beliefs and practices and taboos that have informed the practices of *Ori Oke*

Some food items are forbidden during fasting. Any meal taken with soup or stew is forbidden in the breaking of such a fast at the concerned *Ori Oke*. Rule III is explained in the socio-cultural context. To start with, the use of perfume may constitute a danger because it is attractive to bees. So, to avoid being attacked by bees while praying, some *Ori Oke* adopts this rule.

Rule IV, and V are explained in the socio-cultural context of the attendees and organizers and their background. However, with regard to rule IV, churches vary in their use. Attendees from Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S), and some Aladura churches believe in using candles and incense while praying. Furthermore, it is strongly believed by owners or founders of *Ori Oke* that since the mountain is holy and it is a dwelling place or meeting point of man and God, only white candles are allowed to be used. Theologically, burning coloured candles and using or applying incense on the mountain may be misinterpreted but some attendees infer that they are warding off evil spirits. However, in the Cherubim and Seraphim Church and Celestial Church of Christ, the use of coloured candles depicts warfare against the forces of darkness. Generally speaking, the use of candles is synonymous with white garment churches or African Indigenous Churches. But in the New Testament, the use of candles and incense is not emphasized. It is strongly believed that these indigenous churches marry Christian practices and indigenous traditional elements – syncretism. But the Christ Apostolic Church and the Pentecostals forbid the use of candles of any kind. (Friday-Otun 2018:522). Rule V is applied to the mountains where participants engage only in white or dry fasting. White fasting is the kind of fasting broken daily especially in the evenings with saltless food items.

Rules VI, VIII, IX, X, and XI are focused on women, instructing them not to climb the mountain while menstruating; to remove earrings and any other ornaments and to cover their heads before climbing the mountain for prayer. These rules are hinged on the beliefs, habits, and conventions of all the *Ori Oke* (Friday-Otun 2018:524). It is believed that God and His angels could be distracted during prayers and also prevent God from answering prayers when the gatherings consist of women who are menstruating or women who are putting on earrings or uncovering their heads. Furthermore, beautification materials put on by women have been regarded by some *Ori Oke* operators as sources of idolatry and bewitchment. According to some *Ori Oke* leaders, God is against the use of these materials from the Biblical point of view. In addition, the Bible urges women to always cover their heads while praying because of the Angels (1 Cor. 11:3–10).

An assessment of the category of attendees

Like the biblical stance in (2 Tim 2:20) that in a great house there are vessels of gold and silver, so likewise vessels of wood and clay. In the light of the above, it is obvious that among the *Ori Oke* attendees, there are those who have good intentions and motives to throng prayer mountain as a result of the fact that it is fascinating and inviting to those with existential challenges of life. These types of attendees pray for success, triumph, and victory over their problems, while attendees with evil intentions or motives, desecrate the prayer mountain.

An assessment of the impact of *Ori Oke*

It is holistically observed that those who throng prayer mountains are business-like people who know the reason(s) while they leave the comfort of their house for a long journey or a distance. This suggests that it is not a social or religious jamboree or sight-seeing, but rather a spiritual exercise that is war-like. According to one of the attendees “going to *Ori Oke* is equivalent to going to the war front”. Consequently, upon the enormity of the issues of life at hand. Virtually all the *Ori Oke* attendees attest to the fact that their prayers are answered, and life is changing for the better. However, those who do not have anything to show are sets of attendees who have no serious business going to *Ori Oke*. *Ori Oke* is not meant for miscreants and the unserious-minded ones.

The taboos and the reason for their promotion

The taboos associated with the various *Ori Oke* are the *Kpim* core value restricting attendees and operators alike not to go beyond their bounds. This barrier is the social connection that checkmates both operators and attendees. Again, this barrier protects peoples' culture and Christianity. The taboos have also promoted Nigerian Christianity to date.

An appraisal of the do's and don'ts of *Ori Oke*

Despite the rules and regulations guiding *Ori Oke*, non-compliance is a major problem confronting attendees and their spiritual leaders. Often, Bororo herdsmen disturb the resident pastors, prophets and prophethood of the *Ori Oke* because their cattle defecate on the mountain and it is difficult to remove the rubbish from the holy ground. Again, it was reported that some young men and girls who visit Prayer Mountains do engage in sexual immorality, especially at night. All these unholy attitudes defile some Prayer Mountains and subsequently render them unsuitable for worship. Although some of the dos and don'ts are theologically founded, while others are socio-cultural, human constructs and conventions, what is evident is that they elicit much concern from members who are alarmed at the rate of violations at odd hours and in unexpected places.

Concluding remarks

This paper has given an exposé of 21st century Nigerian Christianity, in that Nigerian Christianity is no longer domiciled in the cathedral as it has morphed into the Mountain top, waterfront, hills, rocks, campgrounds, lakes *inter alia*. This Christian projection as embedded in the contestation of space is situated in the mountain top. In a nutshell, this mountain top has elicited a gamut of prayer regimes, rituals, religious beliefs and practices aimed at securing the assistance of the Divine to alleviate the existential challenges of the attendees. Within the province of religion, holy writ or tradition serves as a functional apparatus that guarantees social order, harmony, righteousness, purity, and security. However, non-compliance with the dos and don'ts has been a major challenge confronting some

attendees and resident prophets and prophetesses. Nevertheless, these dos and don'ts are indispensable for Christian traditions in the sustainability of peace, orderliness, purity, harmony, and continuity. To this end, these dos and don'ts must be upheld and adhered strictly to religiously with utmost despatch coupled with much vigilance in order to sustain and retain the purity and moral efficacy of *Ori Oke*.

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Oral source

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- An interview with Joseph Ambali, resident prophet, 58 yrs, *Ori Oke Egbala*, Ilorin, 27th May 2016.
- An interview with Yinka Sherif, resident Islamic Clergy, 42 yrs, Sobi Mountain, 18th May 2016.
- An interview with Theophilus Oluwaseun, resident Pastor, 40 yrs, Aseyorin, Tanke Ilorin 10th July 2016
- A display of Christian Banner captioned “Women in the Gap” by Pastor (Mrs) B. Olotu, the founder of Daughters of Deborah International Ministry, Ilorin, Kwara State.
- An interview with the general overseer, Bishop J.O. Olajide, 50 yrs, Apata Iyanu School of Prophet and Pastors, Odo-Owa.
- An interview with the Vice-Chancellor, Pastor A.G. Olaniyan, Apata Iyanu School of Prophet and Pastors, Odo-Owa.