



## The Impact of Christianity on the *Ohen* Festival of Ikao in Edo State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

Ohen festival of Ikao people in Owan East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria is celebrated to appease and honour the goddess of fertility and productivity. In the past, the celebration of the festival had a lot of ritual elements that were considered to be of spiritual and physical benefits to the people. Today, however, such ritual significance and meaning attached to the festival have disappeared because of the pervasive impact of Christianity affecting the cautiousness of celebrants who see the ritual elements as fetish. The study, therefore, examines the impact of Christianity on the essence of the festival. It adopts historical, analytical and ethnographic approaches in determining the level of damage that Christianity has done to the traditional beliefs and practices which originally characterised the celebration of the festival. The study reveals that a lot of people in the community including the women now attribute prevailing cases of barrenness and other ills among young indigenes of the community to the loss of the spiritual and ritual essence of the festival which the people believed prevented such ills in the past. The festival is now purely a secular event, retaining only its entertainment value in which songs, dance, comic skits, dialogue, make-up and elaborate costume display constitute appealing spectacles to observers and participants. Finally, this paper affirms that there is, unfortunately, nothing the Ikao people can do to regain the missing spiritual and ritual significance of the festival, but only to harness the entertainment potential of the festival for material and socio-economic benefits.

**Keywords:** Christianity, *Ohen*, Ritualistic elements, Festival, Ikao people.

## Introduction

Festivals form an integral aspect of a people's way of life. In African traditional culture, detaching festivals from the people will be an exercise in futility. And this is exactly the case with Nigeria. Nigeria is very rich in festivals as it offers a variety of them with sound and rich cultural heritage. Festivals are rooted in the culture of the people and Nigerians are known for one form of festival or the other (Ekweariri and Edi:266). Festivals abound in Nigeria, with each rooted in the cultural heritage of the people. It is pertinent to note that the cultural heritage of the people of Edo State of Nigeria is outstanding. These festivals are celebrated or performed in commemoration of one event or the other, and sometimes they are celebrated in honour of a particular god, goddess or a deified ancestor.

Festivals are periodic ceremonies, of communion between gods, the living and the dead (Okpadah: 42). Festivals revolve around different beings and deities ranging from potent gods and goddesses to hills, mountains, trees, rocks, valleys, rivers, spirits, and deified ancestors. These festivals are performed to either celebrate or appease these gods, spirits or ancestors. Supporting this assertion, Oyin and Irele in Ekweariri and Edi, affirm that every festival is attached to a supernatural being or deified ancestor and that may be said to be religious at base and inspiration (267). Most festivals are attached to one deity or the other.

Accordingly, AbdulRasheed Adeoye (112) informs that ritual festivals are based on the remembrance of some heroes, their deeds and events of immense significance. Owing to the sacredness and reverence for these deities and gods during some of these festivals, the time of their celebrations is usually seen as a peace period where any form of conflict or quarrel is seen as sacrilegious.

During the celebration or performance of these festivals, different types of costumes (masks or masquerades) and make-ups are worn by the celebrants or performers. Ekweariri and Edi averred:

History has it that since the beginning of time, festivals have been accompanied by parades, masquerades, pageants, and other forms of revelry that have their origins in pre-Christian



rites, particularly, fertility rites that were connected with the coming of spring festivals and the rebirth of vegetation. (266)

Festivals have been part of man since the early ages. Many festivals in Nigeria have a very long history, and every year, they attract a huge crowd as they celebrate a unique aspect of the people's culture. This is because one of the fundamental intents of the audience for attending such festivals and ceremonies is to be entertained. Since most festivals are usually celebrated with pomp and ceremony, an atmosphere of conviviality and merrymaking is always created during their celebrations. This, according to Ekweariri and Edi, provides a meeting point for people from all walks of life to converge on a set venue and participate in the festivals either as spectators or participants (264). They further maintained that most festivals are communal based and that in whatever way one looks at it, it incorporates elements of theatre from the theme to characters, audience, space, costume, and makeup to design elements, acting, singing and dancing (268).

Most festivals in Nigeria are usually marked with lots of merrymaking, where relatives and old friends meet to exchange pleasantries and goodwill. The story is not different from *Ohen* of Ika people. In Ika community, the *Ohen* festival is a milestone celebration for women who become grandmothers for the first time. This joyous occasion honours the fertility god, highlighting the importance of the festival as a way for new grandmothers to express gratitude and celebrate the arrival of their first grandchild. In the past, the festival was rich in ritual elements that held profound spiritual and physical significance for the people. However, the widespread influence of Christianity has led to a decline in these meaningful traditions, as many celebrants now view them as taboo or fetish, diminishing the festival's original spiritual and cultural importance. The festival's religious and sacred significance has been diluted by the influence of Christianity. Many community members, including women, now believe that the decline of the festival's spiritual and ritual practices has led to the prevalence of barrenness and other issues among young people in the community, which were previously prevented by the festival's sacred essence. Although the Ika people cannot restore the lost spiritual and ritual

significance of the festival, they can still leverage its entertainment value which has been enhanced by Christianity to reap material and socio-economic benefits, salvaging some aspects of their cultural heritage.

### **The Origin and Celebration of Ohen**

The people of Ikao celebrate the Ohen festival to pay homage and appease the goddess of fertility and productivity. While written records of the festival's origin are scarce, oral traditions suggest that Ohen is as old as the Ikao community itself. According to Imoukhuede (in an interview), the festival's roots can be traced back to early agricultural practices, when yams were a vital crop for the community's survival and economic prosperity. In those times, yams were revered and treated with the same respect and care as human beings.

The Ohen festival is deeply rooted in religious and spiritual traditions, where the yam is revered as a symbolic "child" in Ikao mythology, closely tied to deities, ancestral spirits, and gods of fertility. The festival's primary objective is to express gratitude to these divine entities for a plentiful harvest and solicit their blessings for continued prosperity and fertility, acknowledging their profound influence on the community's well-being.

According to Imoukhuede, a certain woman's daughter was experiencing a series of tragic childbirths, with each child passing away just two days after birth. Desperate for a solution, the woman who was called "Ohen", drew inspiration from the community's deep respect for yams, which symbolized new life. She planted a seed yam, symbolizing her grandchild, and tenderly cared for it, believing that as the yam grew, her grandchild would thrive. Miraculously, when her daughter gave birth again, the woman's nurturing of the yam coincided with her grandchild's growth, and the child flourished.

This story may shed light on the symbolic yam planting tradition practiced by Ohen celebrants during the festival. As Imoukhuede's account suggests, the festival honours the legacy of a remarkable woman named Ohen, who inspired the celebration. Ohiomoba confirms that the festival is a tribute to Ohen's memory, which is why it bears her name, recognizing her as the founder of this cherished tradition. As a result, the Ikao people revere Ohen



as a deity of fertility and productivity, believing that she bestows the gift of children upon them, and thus, they honour her with celebrations and festivities to express their gratitude for her blessings.

The Ohen celebration is a grand and festive occasion, consisting of three distinct phases, as described by Adenike (in an interview). The first phase commences shortly after a child's birth, where the child's grandmother, the central figure in the celebration, embarks on a door-to-door procession, carrying a traditional white chalk. With a warm greeting of "Obothei", she acknowledges the community members, who respond in kind. This special greeting is a hallmark of the Ohen festival, reserved for those who have previously participated in it. As she moves through the community, she graciously marks those who respond with a sprinkle of sacred chalk, symbolizing blessings and unity.

According to local beliefs, the white chalk is imbued with the blessings of Ohen, the goddess of fertility, and whoever comes into contact with it will be bestowed with her divine favour. With this belief, many individuals, especially those eagerly awaiting the blessing of children, enthusiastically join in the celebration, excitedly receiving the generous sprinkling of white chalk from the celebrant, hoping to receive Ohen's blessing and protection.

Explaining further, Adenike states that seven days into the celebration of the festival, the biological father of the child, accompanied by a female virgin of about 8-12 years old, goes round the houses of all the chief priests in the community thanking and informing them of the birth of his child (2020). These priests, according to Adenike, appreciate the celebrant by showing him some love. Any other well-wisher can also shower on him some money. These monies are collected by his escort, the young virgin girl.

She further enlightens that the second phase, known as "Abogbemi" (hand-clapping), precedes the main Ohen festival and can take place anytime - from days to months before the final celebration. On the eve of Abogbemi, the celebrant goes door-to-door, inviting the community to join in the festivities. During the celebration, the celebrant's body is adorned with

intricate black markings, made from the locally sourced “Ubihi” plant extract, skillfully applied by a traditional makeup artist. The beauty of the design is a testament to the artist’s expertise. The celebrant is also adorned with beads, adding to the overall grandeur of the occasion.

Additionally, Adenike elucidates that *Abogbemi* is performed in an open arena/stage in front of the celebrant’s house. She informs that the only musical instrument played during the celebration of *Abogbemi* is the maracas complemented by the clapping of hands by the women (2020). The presence of an audience is very momentous all through the celebration as it plays a significant role in enhancing the overall outlook of the performance. The festival is usually marked with lots of merrymaking that continues till dusk.

The third and last phase is the celebration of the main *Ohen* and it normally lasts for five days. In an interview, Adenike, who participated in the festival in 2018, described the first day's events: The celebrant, accompanied by women who have previously celebrated the festival, proceeds to the farm, carrying a seed yam and hoe. She plants the yam, symbolizing the growth of a child, just as the yam matures. Afterwards, the celebrant, still accompanied by the women, pays respects to the community chiefs, starting with the paramount ruler. Following this, she returns home to continue the festivities.

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As previously mentioned, the presence of an audience is crucial in the *Ohen* performance, as they significantly contribute to the overall spectacle. The festival, characterised by joy and merriment, takes place on an open stage in front of the celebrant’s residence, providing a vibrant setting for the



celebration. The audience's enthusiasm and anticipation further enhance the festive atmosphere, making the event a truly communal and spirited experience.

During the celebration, the celebrant distributes money to all the women who have previously participated in the festival. The celebrant, adorned with white chalk and decked in large white wrappers and beads, dances with grace, captivating the audience comprising family members, friends, and well-wishers, including those who have previously celebrated the festival. The audience participates either as spectators or active contributors, with some generously showering her with money as she dances, adding to the joy and festivity of the occasion.

Generally, according to Adenike, there are not many activities on the second day through the last day of the festival apart from the fact that the performer, escorted by women who had celebrated the festival in the past, goes around to thank all the chief priests every morning and every evening. However, on the last day of the festival, the celebrant again goes to the farm to show gratitude to *Ohen*, the god of fertility. Adenike explained that while the *Ohen* lasts, the celebrant is forbidden to go to the farm or stream. She affirmed that it is sacrilegious for the celebrant's blood to be spilled during the festive period, adding that it is an abomination for her to cry during the period of the festival. Thus, the celebrant cannot weep even when she is bereaved.

The significance of *Ohen* cannot be overstated. Individuals who have celebrated the festival are highly revered and respected, while those who fail to observe it are viewed with disdain. Consequently, those who neglect to celebrate *Ohen* are denied certain traditional burial rites, and their funeral ceremonies are not considered befitting. In essence, *Ohen* is a celebration that confers dignity and prestige upon Ikao women, highlighting their importance and value within the community.

Unfortunately, the religious and ritual aspects of *Ohen* have been watered down by Christianity. Some aspects of the festival have gone into oblivion. The entire first phase of *Ohen* has been forgotten completely. Those who

celebrate the festival are now perceived as fetish, just as others are regarded as uncultured and uncivilized by some Christian faithful.

### **A Brief History of the Ikao Community**

According to the available information, the history of Ikao has not been adequately recorded, likely due to the lack of interest from scholars. Instead, the people's oral traditions provide the basis for understanding the community's origin. One widely accepted account, as shared by Balogun Unuogwemol, in an interview, traces the roots of Ikao back to a migration from Ile-Ife, a significant cultural and historical hub in the region.

According to Balogun, three brave brothers, *Urhue*, *Utho*, and *Ihiegbe*, set out from Ile-Ife with their wives in search of better opportunities, eventually settling in a place now known as *Urhue-Okhunhi*. During their journey, they valiantly fought and won numerous battles. Upon reaching their destination, the eldest brother, *Urhue*, suggested they establish a settlement, which they named *Ghokha*. As their families grew, they built separate homes, leading to the formation of three distinct quarters within *Ghokha*, each named after the brothers: *Urhue*, *Utho*, and *Ihiegbe*.

Balogun further informs that three-quarters later relocated to settle in their present-day locations owing to security reasons. The name *Ghokha* was, however, corrupted and pronounced Ikao. To date, the three quarters, *Urhue*, *Utho*, and *Ihiegbe* are still united as one indivisible community with *Urhue* as their traditional/political headquarters (Balogun 2020).

Ikao is located at the north-west end of Owan East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. Ikao shares common boundaries with Igue, Otuo, Okpe and Igarra, the administrative headquarters of Akoko-Edo Local Government Area of Edo State. It is situated in a friendly landscape that is overlapped by hills (James 214). As stated above, Ikao is made up of three main quarters. These are *Urhue*, *Utho*, and *Ihiegbe*. It is noteworthy to state that the *Urhue* quarter usually produces the paramount ruler known as *Oba* or *Ovie*.





The primary occupation of the Ikafo people is farming. This can be attributed to the large expanse of agricultural land on which it is situated. A lot of farm crops such as cocoa, pea, cola-nut, Duca-nut (ogbonor), yams of various species, cocoyam, maize, plantain, and cassava amongst others are produced in the town. According to Ezesinachi in James posits:

A man is adjudged rich based on the abundance of crops he possesses by traditional standards. Wealth in itself confers honour and dignity. Consequently, people strive to be wealthy and since what an individual, working alone can hardly acquire wealth, it makes people marry as many wives as they could. Many children are born and large-scale farming is practiced. More hands, more wealth and greater recognition are achieved. (214 - 215)

Ezesinachi's position above succinctly depicts the average Ikafo man as he is adjudged rich based on the number of bags of cocoa, sticks of maize, drums of palm oil, and size of his yam ban amongst others.

### **The Advent of Christianity in Ikafo**

Christianity was introduced to Nigeria in the 15th century by Portuguese traders. At that time, the natives received Christianity with indifference. Even when the missionaries journeyed into the hinterlands to trade and preach to the natives, the people showed little or no interest in Christianity.

Consequently, the white imperialists introduced education, the weapon they used to preach and convince the inhabitants. Thus, those who embraced education also accepted the Christian religion. They practised Christianity and preached the gospel to their families and kinsmen. Over time, the Christian religion grew and spread to all nooks and crannies of the country; and a good number of Nigerians accepted and converted to Christianity.

Arguably, Christianity entered *Ikafo* the same way it entered Nigeria. Like many other towns and villages in Nigeria, the people of *Ikafo* practised their Indigenous religion before the coming of Christianity. This indigenous religion was highly reverend; and somewhat linked to their festivals which were celebrated at different periods of the year. Their religion was highly

sacred, even as their festivals were loaded with ritualistic elements before the coming of Christianity.

According to Afemikhe, in an interview in 2016, Christianity was introduced to *Ikao* in 1916 by Christian traders from *Ogori* and *Mangogo* (now part of *Kogi State*). This was the Anglican (Orthodox) denomination of Christianity. The Anglican faithful in *Ogori* played a significant role in spreading Christianity to various towns and villages. The *Ogori Mission* evangelists, sent out by Saint Peter's Anglican Church between 1911 and the 1960s, played a crucial role in spreading the Gospel to other parts of Nigeria, benefiting the adherents of the faith.

Afemikhe further contributes that Sawyer was among the traders who were adherents of the Church Missionary Society in *Ogori* sent to *Ikao*. He settled very close to a river called *Oke Ibade* at *Urhue, Ikao*. Sawyer was overseeing the Anglican Church at *Utho, Ikao*. As stated above, Sawyer was able to convert many *Ikao* people to the Christian faith (In an interview in 2016).

Many Mission Stations and schools were established by the adherents of the Anglican faith in *Ikao* and its environs. One such school was established at *Utho, Ikao* (Anglican Primary School). Following the Government acquisition of mission schools across the nation, this school is now named *Atemonokhai* Primary School, *Ikao*. The school was founded by the missionaries in order to train their children on how to read and write in the Yoruba and English languages in order to boost their trades with other Christians, especially in Yoruba land. However, many pupils who were trained in the school were engaged by the Anglican Mission to preach and train pupils in the Mission schools that were established by the Anglican faith members in the area. As a result, many people became Christians and also became educated. Many of the adherents of the Anglican faith in the areas were engaged in trading, and other professions to earn their living and also spread the Good News wherever they went. Amongst these were Messrs Josiah, Ekperobe, Imoukhede, Daudu, Afemikhe, Aiyedun, Peter, James, Gabriel, Bello, and Martins.



The catechist/teachers used many strategies such as house-to-house evangelism, the use of open places for evangelism, class meetings, visitations and Sunday services amongst others to convert the people (Owolabi 99). The influence of Christian missionaries was very strong at that time as they served or acted as District Officers. Their influence as Government officials assisted the spread of Christianity in the area. The protection given by the District Officers at that time helped Christianity in *Ikao* and its environs.

Contributing also, Samuel Imoukhude (in an interview) states that the Christ Apostolic Church was later established in *Ikao* in 1930 by Joseph Ayo Babalola who in the company of his revival group visited many towns and villages including *Ikao* for one month. Babalola left representatives behind at *Ikao*, *Otuo* and other neighbouring villages who eventually established the C.A.C church in these areas (2016). Notable amongst them were Apostle Ileoba, James Daudu., and Samuel. Today, apart from Anglican and Catholic churches, many other Pentecostal churches have recorded their presence in *Ikao*. Among these are the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Living Faith (Winners), Perfect Love, and Christ Revival Power Ministry.

### **Influence of Christianity on *Ohen***

Arguably, rituals form the crux of traditional Nigerian festivals. In recent times, however, the sacred components of these festivals have been downplayed. The reason for this is not far-fetched. The growth of Christianity in Nigeria has pervasively impacted its culture and many other facets of her social life. The Christian missionaries brought with them Western culture which permeated Nigeria's well-organised socio-cultural background. Many indigenous communities, with their culture and traditions, existed in Nigeria before the arrival of colonialism in the 19th century. There were several large and developed systems in the regions, including the Benin of Edo State.

As noted by Yerima (41), "Christianity, a religion which came with the colonial rulers, was to be a tool with which the religious and spiritual aspects of the lives of the natives could be affected". Flowing from the above, it is

clear that Christianity and civilization were intended to destroy the culture and tradition of the Nigerian people. Western colonialism saw to it that Africa was plundered and her culture and resources were sequestered by precarious white colonizers during the period of the colonial encounter (Agho 2).

The Christian missionaries came with a new religion that was alien to Nigeria. They preached and propagated Christianity, and asked for a total negation of some aspects of Nigeria's culture and tradition. Corroborating this, Yerima noted that:

The Christian missionaries preached a new religion and also, an evolutionary social ethic which asked for a total negation of the traditional aspect of Nigerian life, which was spiritual and secular. Christianity was then viewed to be destroying the very foundation of African society. (41)

Howbeit the Christian missionaries brought education and civilisation to Nigeria, their primary objective was to exploit the socio-economic life of the Nigerian people for their selfish interests. Thus, Christianity was seen as a veritable medium to be used to actualize this goal. Christianity in Nigeria was initially met with some degree of resistance because of the hitherto existing traditions and cultural religions. This resistance forced the missionaries to introduce education, nay, and civilisation to the indigenous natives.

Affirming this assertion, Lord Lugard informs that the primary aim of the colonial imperialists was the propagation of civilization in Africa. He further asserts thus:

It was the task of civilization to put an end to slavery, to establish courts of law, to inculcate in the natives a sense of individual responsibility of liberty, and justice, and to teach their rulers how to apply these principles; above all, to see it that the system of education should be such as to produce happiness and progress. (40)



The Christian missionaries brainwashed the Nigerian people and made them feel that their cultures and traditions were mundane, archaic and inferior. They encouraged Nigerians to see and regard the religious and sacred aspects of their cultures and traditions as barbaric and profane.

While exploiting the cultures and traditions of the Nigerian people, the Christian missionaries introduced ‘Christian festivals’ such as Christmas, Easter, Ash Wednesday, and Mothering Sunday, amongst others. These festivals were celebrated in a manner that gradually eroded the religious and sacred aspects of most Nigerian festivals. In fact, in some cases, they became a replacement for some of the Nigerian festivals. Festivals in Nigeria became the product of the large-scale despoliation and subjugation of Nigeria by colonial imperialism (Agho 2).

Christianity was an agent of great change in Nigeria. It destabilized the status quo, bringing new opportunities to some, and undermining the power of others. The spread of Christianity paved the way for commercial speculators, and, in its original rigid European form, denied people pride in their culture and festivals. It is in this connection that Ekweariri and Edi (264) express concern that traditional values are being overshadowed by Western influences, leading to a loss of cultural heritage. They note that even in traditional festivals, Western dress styles dominate, threatening the cultural ethos. Unfortunately, the cultural values of the people are being eroded through acculturation and enculturation, making way for the adoption of foreign cultures that hinder the growth and development of indigenous culture.

Although, Stanis Iyorza cited in Ekweariri and Edi, opined that acculturation is not a crime, they were, however, quick to point out that the evil about the process is that it causes a people to abandon aspects of their cultures and embrace new ones which may be detrimental to the ideals of their culture (264).

With Nigeria subjugated and dominated, Christianity began to blossom and subdue Nigeria's cultural heritage. Nigerian traditions and cultural practices paved the way for foreign culture as Nigerians became fully acculturated

and assimilated. Nigerian ways of doing things became primitive, archaic and regrettably unacceptable in the public domain. As noted earlier, not only that certain aspects of African festivals were lost or destroyed, some of the festivals were completely replaced with Christian festivals.

The mores and lifestyles associated with Christianity have been assimilated and to a large extent, indigenised in Nigeria. Most aspects of Nigerian festivals have been abandoned. The deified and ritual constituents of the festivals have been abandoned and forgotten. The story is the same with *Ohen* of Ikao. The ritual aspects of the festival have disappeared, and the festival has almost turned into a mere entertainment concert. The religious and ritual aspects of the festival have been watered down.

For instance, the aspect of the festival where women have to go to the farm to plant the symbolic seed yam and offer sacrifices to *Ohen*, the goddess of fertility, has been expunged because that aspect is now seen as a fetish. Consequently, Adenike blames cases of barrenness in the community on this aspect of the festival that has been obliterated.

Explicating further, Adenike, in an interview, posits that it was hardly possible for any indigene of the community to be involved in an auto accident while all the ritual components of the festival were still intact. She laments, “Today, our people now get involved and die in motor accidents”. She disclosed that the first phase of the festival where the father of the newborn, in the company of a young virgin, goes around the homes of all the traditional chiefs and priests in the community literally symbolizes the dedication of the newborn child to the goddess of *Ohen*. According to Adenike, the entire first phase of the festival has been forgotten.

Supporting Adenike’s claim, Afemikhe, in an interview, also attributed some of the social ills in the community to some aspects of *Ohen* that have been windswept. He informs that it was hardly possible for any woman in Ikao to indulge in adulterous acts. According to him, it is the belief of the people that any woman who commits adultery is always exposed and disgraced during the festival by the goddess as such a person is forced to confess her wrongdoing during the ritual propitiation to the *Ohen* goddess.



He laments that since that aspect of the festival has been jettisoned, their women now brazenly commit adultery.

Arguably, Christianity has forced the people to forget some of the ritual components of the festival. On the other hand, Christianity brought civilization Ika community. Some of the ritual components of *Ohen* were actually perceived to be barbaric and archaic. Before the coming of Christianity to Ika, celebrants of the festival were walking barefooted but today they are now put on shoes. Some of those who still celebrate the festival are now perceived as fetish, archaic, barbaric, and uncultured. The festival is now purely a secular event, retaining only its entertainment value in which songs, dance, comic skits, dialogue, make-up and elaborate costume display constitute appealing spectacles to observers and participants.

### **Conclusion**

The advent of Christianity in Nigeria has significantly impacted the traditional belief systems, leading to the erosion of some cultural practices and the adoption of new customs. In Ika, the influence of Christianity has resulted in the decline of the community's cultural and ritualistic heritage, including the *Ohen* festival. The spread of Christianity and Western civilization in Nigeria has been widespread, often perceived as superior to the indigenous cultural practices. As a result, the *Ohen* festival, once deeply revered and cherished, has lost its former significance, and its values are no longer held in high esteem.

The moral excellence of Nigeria's society has overnight transformed into moral decay. Nigeria's rich cultural heritage and festivals are now seen as barbaric and old-fashioned. The assimilation of Christianity is inimical to the growth and development of Nigeria's cultural heritage. The impact of Christianity and civilization on Nigeria has provoked a discontinuity of most Nigerian traditions and cultures, thereby forcing some of them to go into extinction. Consequently, this study emphasizes the need for Nigeria and Nigerians to begin to look inward by initiating and developing possible options for truly Nigerian cultures and traditions.

## Recommendations

At this point in the country's national history, Nigeria and Nigerians, particularly political and opinion leaders must begin to revive their cultural heritage. It is high time Nigerians started appreciating their cultures and traditions, such that the alien culture inherited from the White imperialists will be discouraged. In this regard, the role of parents cannot be underestimated. They should ensure the moral behaviour of their children and wards, by paying attention to the kinds of films they watch, the types of clothes they wear, and the type of language they speak. Speaking of our indigenous languages should be encouraged while de-emphasising the learning and speaking of foreign languages. The teaching of native dialects should be incorporated into the curriculum of schools and should be made compulsory to at least the post-primary school level.

More so, the array of traditional festivals in Nigeria can also be showcased periodically in the form of competitions amongst the different villages, local governments or states. Undoubtedly, this form of competition will not only enhance the revitalization of Nigerian traditional festivals, but it will also engage the youths meaningfully. Thus, social vices and unrest will be curbed. Cultural Day celebrations should equally be organized in schools where traditional or local delicacies and cuisines, as well as native attires, songs and dances, will be showcased.

Nigeria should be able to protect itself against any onslaught on its cultural heritage by stemming the foreign dominance of its traditions and cultures. The use of locally produced goods should be encouraged, even as the buying and utilisation of foreign ones should be discouraged. This, to a large extent, will encourage the production or manufacturing of local products, thereby boosting Nigeria's economy. In all of these, the role of the media cannot be overemphasised.

The government at all levels should, therefore, be thinking in the direction of funding competitions where traditional festivals will be displayed. Radical revivalism of Nigeria's cultural heritage is very important at this time government is thinking of diversification of the economy. If the above are carefully considered and implemented, no doubt, Nigeria will be a destination for tourist attractions across the globe.





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