

CHRISTIANITY AND THE FUTURE OF IKEJI FESTIVAL OF ARONDIZUOGU

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Abstract

In pre-Christian Igbo-land, traditional religion played a significant role in shaping behaviour, social and cultural identifications, and principles of socialisation. However, with colonialism and the advent of Christian missionaries, Igbo-African cultural values were largely marginalized and viewed as pagan and fetishistic, largely due to their unfamiliarity to western missionaries. Despite this historical context, the Ikeji festival remains a culturally significant event among the Arondizuogu people of Igbo-land, despite being challenged by Christians as unchristian and superstitious. This paper advocated for a reconsideration of the relationship between Christianity and Ikeji festival. This reconsideration is based on the fact that, despite Christian disregard for the festival, it continues to hold a significant place in the cultural heritage of the predominantly Christian Arondizuogu people. As such, the paper called for a new approach that will facilitate the Christianization of Ikeji festival and the Igbonization of the Christian faith. It, therefore, adopted Inculturation as a theoretical framework, which served as a negotiation tool for the discourse. The hermeneutic and Igwebuiké theological approaches were also adopted for the interpretation of Ikeji festival and the establishment of a connection between Christianity and culture, respectively. This paper serves as a valuable contribution to the limited literature on the relationship between Christianity and Ikeji festival.

Keywords: Ikeji Festival, Christianity, Igwebuiké Theology, Igbo, Culture, Arondizuogu

Introduction

The African continent has more than 3000 ethnic groups and some 2000 different languages. This makes the continent home not only to amazing biodiversity and natural beauty, but also to cultural diversity expressed in rites, rituals, festivals and cultural ceremonies. During such festivals and cultural ceremonies, the African culture and tradition is manifested through a retinue of art forms, such as music, dance, art and celebrations. While some are mainly social, some are cultural primarily and others are religious in the main. This is not to say that the social, cultural and religious elements do not interact. In fact, among the African people, there is always an inescapable religious element in every form of festival. The social and cultural dimensions are also hardly lacking in presence.

Some of the festivals celebrated around the African continent include: Zimbabwe's Harare International Festival of the Arts, taking place in April, which showcases the creativity, resilience and strength of the Zimbabwean people; Morocco's Fez Festival, which is a world sacred music festival, garnished with Moroccan songs, Italian renaissance music, Balinese dance, and African sufism; Knysna Oyster Festival in South Africa, which focuses on Oysters; Ouidah Voodoo Festival, celebrated each January, which is in honor of traditional religion and the associated cults; Festival of the Dancing Masks in Burkina Faso, which celebrates history and music; Timkat in Ethiopia, which is an Orthodox celebration; Tunisia's International Festival of the Sahara, a four-day event which celebrates the rich culture of the Sahara Desert and its people; the Great Wildebeest Migration, which focuses on the great migration of natural wildlife that takes place through Tanzania and Kenya. These festivals provide great moments around Africa.

This notwithstanding, the present paper focuses on the Ikeji festival of the Arondizuogu people of Imo State, South East of Nigeria. It is a festival that makes a beautiful synthesis of social, cultural and religious elements, and which brings not only the sons and daughters of Arondizuogu back home, but also visitors from within and outside the country to witness the richness of the ceremonies that spice up the days of the festival. A cursory glance reveals that scholars from several disciplines have concerned themselves with the description, analysis, and more recently, the interpretation of Ikeji festival. Yet little explicit theoretical effort has been devoted to the future of Ikeji festival in relation to the advent of Christianity.

While focusing on Ikeji festival, the uniqueness of the present discourse is in its study of Ikeji in relation to Christianity. At a time when the Christian faith is predominant in Arondizuogu, many questions have emerged: what is the future of Ikeji festival given that it is considered by most Christians a pagan festival? In the face of the present concept of the festival as fetish, and given that participation has been on the increase, how can such a festival be Christianized so that it can be celebrated across religious borders? How can a

bridge be built between Ikeji festival and the Christian faith? It is within this context that the Igwebuike complementary concept of evangelization and culture is employed.

Theoretical Framework: Igwebuike Complementary Concept of Evangelization and Culture

The theoretical framework employed in this research is the *Igwebuike* wholistic and complementary understanding of evangelization and culture. *Igwebuike* as a thought current focuses on the bigger picture of reality and believes that all parts of reality are interconnected. How would this approach affect this discourse on the relationship between Ikeji festival and Christianity? There are two dimensions to this framework that are relevant to the present paper:

- a. *Igwebuike* understands culture as an incomplete enterprise that continues to evolve as long as the human person continues to adapt himself or herself to the environment. When this approach speaks of culture as incomplete, it means that even the Christian culture that was brought by the missionaries was not complete and thus needed the African incomplete culture for its completeness. For the grounding of Christianity in Africa, therefore, the African culture becomes the missing link. While the African culture finds completeness in the Christian culture, the Christian culture would reach its full potential in the African culture¹. The incompleteness of the Christian culture here referred to does not speak of the core of the Christian faith, it rather refers to the cultural garment in which it was clothed and brought to the African people. It is within this context that the Christianization of Ikeji festival becomes relevant.
- b. Within the context of the *Igwebuike* framework which is complementary, the African culture is understood as not only completing the Christian message that has been brought to Africa, but makes the Christian message richer and more meaningful to the African people than it came². Referring to the richness of encounter, Torrance writes that: "One becomes human by making use of the energy available from outer sources to become a better integrated personality, to interact at a deeper level with the environment, and to achieve greater fulfillment of his potentialities"³. One loses his or her humanness when he or she is estranged, isolated, rejected, and cut off from other sources of information, inspiration and spiritual strength. This also happens each time a culture denigrates the other rather than allowing the other to enrich her.

¹ Kanu, Ikechukwu A., "Igwebuike theology of Ikwa Ogwe and the Inculturation of the Gospel message". Published in OGIRISI: A Journal of African Studies. Vol. 16. No. 1. pp. 15-28. A publication of the Department of Philosophy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, 2020.

² Kanu, Ikechukwu A., "Igwebuike Theology of Udi: God's unchanging revelation and man's changing culture". Published in the *Catholic Voyage: African Journal of Consecrated Life*. Vol. 17. No. 2, pp. 12-24. A publication of the Conference of Major Superiors of Nigeria, 2020.

³ Torrance E. P., What it means to become human. In Scoby M and Graham G. (Eds.). *To nurture humanness* (pp. 3-13). Washington, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1970, p. 10.

This theoretical framework would help to advance the discourse on the connection between the African culture (Ikeji festival) and the Christian faith.

Ikeji Festival among the Arondizuogu People

Etymologically, the concept festival is from the Latin *festum*, which means “public joy, merriment, revelry”; a second Latin word *feria*, which means “abstinence from work in honour of the gods”. These concepts are used in their plurals, *festas* and *feriae* respectively, which suggests that festivals last several days and include many events⁴. From the Latin *festas*, we have the Italian *festas*, the French *fete*, the Spanish *fiesta*, the Portuguese *festas*.

This etymological dimension notwithstanding, Alessandro Falassi defines festival as:

A periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds and sharing a worldview⁵.

Focusing on the relationship between aesthetics, tourism and festivals, Alessandro Falassi adds that:

The colourful variety of dramatic intensity of its dynamic choreographic and aesthetic aspects, the signs of deep meaning underlying them, its historical roots and the involvement of the natives have always attracted the attention of casual visitors, have consumed travelers and men of letters alike⁶.

Kurath H., Kuhn S. M., Onions C., Jose Machado and Babcock P.⁷, taking from the contemporary English understanding of festival, observe that it involves the following:

- a. a sacred or a profane time of celebration, marked by special observances;
- b. the annual celebration of a notable person or event, or the harvest of an important product;
- c. a cultural event consisting of a series of performances of works in the fine arts, often devoted to a single artist or genre;
- d. a fair;
- e. a generic gaiety, conviviality, cheerfulness.

⁴ Glare P. G., *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, p.686; Egidio Forcellini, *Lexicon Totius Latinitatis*. Padua: Typis Seminarii, 1940, p. 468; Charles Du Cange, *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis*. Niort: Favre, 1884, pp. 462-463

⁵ Alessandro Falassi, *Festival: Definition and morphology*, p. 2

⁶ Alessandro Falassi, *Festival: Definition and morphology*, p. 1

⁷ Kurath H. and Kuhn S. M., *Middle English Dictionary*. Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952, pp. 451-529; Onions C., *Shorter English Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973, pp. 742-743; Babcock P., *Webster Third New International Dictionary*. Springfield Mass: Merriam, 1976, pp. 815-841.

From the following perspectives, it can be said that in every festival, there is always a social function and a symbolic meaning that are connected to a series of values that the community recognizes as essential to its history, identity, survival, ideology and worldview.

It is from the foregoing that Ikeji festival of the Arondizuogu people of Imo State, South East of Nigeria is understood as an annual religio-cultural celebration among the Arondizuogu people consisting of a series of events, performances and marked by special observances. The social functions and symbolic meaning of Ikeji festival is connected to a series of values that the Arondizuogu people recognize as essential to their ideology, worldview, social identity, historical continuity, and her physical survival.

The origin of the Ikeji festival in Arondizuogu is shrouded in mythology. Many versions exist. For some, Ikeji began as a ceremony to mark the end of one planting season and the beginning of another⁸. The festival has its roots from its variant celebrated in Arochukwu, the parent community of Arondizuogu⁹ long before Mazi Izuogu settled at Arochukwu. For others, it originated from the parent community - Arochukwu where it was celebrated around the month of September, in line with the Igbo calendar of new yam festival celebration. During that time, Mazi Iheme, who was a regent placed by Mazi Izuogu in the new Arondizuogu settlement to manage it, would travel to Arochukwu to celebrate the feast in his master's household and to pay him all the homage rites due to him as his master and lord, in accordance with Aro tradition.

The next year, after visiting Mazi Izuogu, Mazi Iheme would return the favour by extending an invite to his master to the new settlement-Arondizuogu to officially seek his permission to till the land. This was usually done in March/April and was a celebratory occasion where Mazi Iheme would entertain his master to a grandiose feast and colourful masquerade displays during his stay¹⁰. During this visit, Mazi Izuogu would bless the land before the people cultivate crops. After the death of Mazi Izuogu and Mazi Iheme, it became the responsibility of Iheme's descendants to fix the dates of Ikeji¹¹.

Ikeji festival, as it is normal with rural festivals is an old event that has lasted for about 300 years, it is agrarian and centred on fertility. It announces the culture of the Arondizuogu people and renews periodically the lifestream of the Arondizuogu community, thereby, creating new energy. It involves a rite of conspicuous display of symbolic elements, rite of conspicuous consumption of food and drinks, prepared in abundance and made generously

⁸ Uche Ohia, *Ikeji Festival of Arondizuogu: An Introduction*. Silverduck Publishing Press, Nigeria, 2014. P. 2; Kanu, I. A. and Precious Okoye, *Tourism, the diaspora and Ikeji festival of Arondizuogu: Culture and the exigencies of modernism*. *OCHENDO: An African Journal of Innovative Studies*. Vol. 3. No. 2. 2022; Aro People, culled from the Wikipedia Encyclopedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aro_people. Accessed on October 6th, 2022.

⁹ Nat Okafor-Ogbaji, *Ikeji Festival Arondizuogu, ancient and modern*. Lagos Printing Press, Nigeria, 1998. P. 11-12.

¹⁰ H. A. P. Nwana, *Arondizuogu Traditional Values*. Standard Publishers Ltd, Nigeria, 2005. P. 24 - 27.

¹¹ Kanu, I. A., *Ikeji Festival of Arondizuogu: Retelling the Stories and Rekindling the values of an Ancestral Homeland*. *International Journal of Religion and Human Relations*. Vol. 9. No. 1., 156-179, 2017.

available. It also involves ritual dramas staged at festival sites, and rites of competition, which often constitutes its cathartic moment.

Christian Perspectives about Ikeji: A Survey

The process of building a bridge between Ikeji festival and the Christian faith will require a survey that will present the way Christians feel about the festival. Thus, in other to get the feelings of contemporary Christians about Ikeji festival, the researcher engaged in a survey. 50 persons of the Christian faith from different Arondizuogu communities were interviewed regarding what they find in Ikeji festival that are incompatible with the Christian faith.

Results

The participants were slightly skewed in gender towards male. However, participants represented a range of ages and distribution across different communities within Arondizuogu.

Table 1: Gender and location of participants

Characteristic	Category	Number of participants (No:50)
Gender	Male	28
	Female	22
Communities	Ndiakuwanta	7
	Ndiakeme	7
	Ndiuche	6
	NdiAmazu	6
	Ndiawa	6
	Ndiejezie	6
	Ndinjoku	6
Ndimoko	6	

Table 2: The Major theme in participants' responses

Theme	Sub-Theme	Theme Dimensions	#Cited
1.	What do you think are the aspects of Ikeji festival that are opposed to the Christian faith?		

Indifferent	✧ Complete Indifference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They do not have the flare for festivals as such 	3
	✧ Partial Indifference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have other engagements that keep them away during the festival 	
Aware of contradictions but still participate	✧ Feel guilty afterwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They avoid the aspects of the festival which they suspect to have pagan elements 	13
	✧ Feel it's of no consequence on their faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand it more as an entertainment and the celebration of a local culture rather than a spiritual event • Are part of those who provide entertainment during the festival, and so participate by providing entertainment to attendees 	
Do not participate at all	✧ Consider it evil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is considered as paying homage to ancestors, and thus incompatible with Christianity 	6
	✧ Do not have the flair for festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving rites and rituals and has got to do with the invocation of spiritual powers outside of Christ • Involves rites of competition that involves use of mystical powers and black magic • Involves masquerade rites • Involves visit to shrines 	

Interested in building a bridge between Ikeji Festival And the Christian faith	✧ Can be made a Christian festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in sorcery can be removed 	24
	✧ Can remove elements that make it look like a pagan festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The invocation of spiritual powers and black magic can be removed • Christian elements like beging with prayer at Churches can be introduced to make Christians feel at home with the event 	
Do not believe that there is any cause for concern	✧ Understand Ikeji as related to Christianity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold that it promotes purity as in the Christian faith • The ancestors honored are like the Christian saints for African traditional societies 	4
	✧ Can be combined with the Christian faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a moment of thanksgiving which the scripture encourages 	

The responses from the respondents show that Ikeji festival is a very important event among the Arondizuogu people. Their responses is presented in the pie chat below.

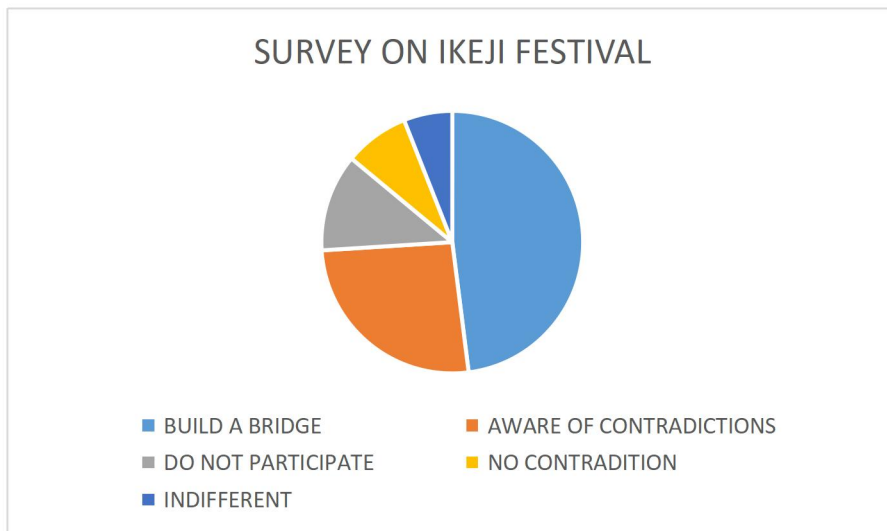


Figure 1: Pie chat showing the responses of respondents

From the survey carried out, that the people who do not participate in Ikeji festival are only 6% of the number of people who were interviewed shows that the festival occupies a very significant place in the life of the Arondizuogu community. The importance of this festival to the people is also evident in the fact that those who do not participate as a result of what they perceive as contradictory to the Christian faith are only 12% of the interviewed population. There are 8% of the interviewed population that are of the view that there is no contradiction between the Christian faith and Ikeji festival. Interestingly, 74% understand that there might be contradictions between Ikeji festival and the Christian faith but still fully participate during the festival. However, 48% out of the 74% are of the view that there is a need for building a bridge between the Christian faith and Ikeji festival.

Inculturation: Towards a Dialogue between the Christian Faith and Ikeji Festival

Based on the findings of the survey on the perspectives of Arondizuogu Christians on the Ikeji festival, it has become very important to initiate the process of building a bridge between the Christian faith and Ikeji festival, which is an aspect of the religio-cultural experience of the Arondizuogu people of Imo State, Nigeria.

In this section of this research, the researchers are not interested in pointing out the particular areas in Ikeji festival where such bridges can be built in relation to the Christian faith. Rather, the researchers are more interested in the proposal of a theoretical path or a concept that would guide such a relationship. And the theoretical path or concept that is proposed is the concept in Catholic theology which has served as an instrument for the reconciliation of faith and culture, which is INCULTURATION.

Inculturation was defined by Walligo as:

...the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his Gospel of salvation ever more understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time. It is the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought patterns of each people.... It is the continuous endeavour to make Christianity 'truly feel at home' in the cultures of each people¹².

Thus, inculturation becomes a process that plies the pattern of the 'Word made-flesh', which would involve the gospel taking life and flesh in the beliefs of people who welcome Christ and the values of the gospel. Just as Christ became man so as to win salvation for all, the gospel must become 'culture' so as to win the heart of 'local people'. John Paul II defined inculturation as "the incarnation of the gospel in autochthonous cultures, at the same time,

¹² Waliggo, J., *Inculturation: Its meanings and urgency*. Kenya: St Paul, 1986, p. 11.

the introduction of these cultures into the life of the church”¹³. Crollius and Metuh further stress the need for reciprocity in the relationship between the gospel and cultures¹⁴.

When the Second Vatican Council was formally inaugurated on 11th October 1963 by Pope John XXIII with different continents in attendance, Karl Rahner described it as “the beginning of a tentative approach by the church to the discovery and official recognition of itself as world-church.”¹⁵ Though the word ‘Inculturation’ was not particularly used in any of the sixteen conciliar documents, the Church treated inculturation as a major issue pastorally.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (SC), was the first conciliar document that was approved by the Second Vatican Council. It was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 4, 1963. The constitution favored the revision and adaptation of the liturgy into particular circumstances and cultures because the Christian faith implanted in mission territories could no longer be confined to a Euro-centric cultural manifestation. Although *Sacrosanctum Concilium* upheld the use of Latin in the Latin rite, it favored the translation of liturgical texts from Latin to the vernacular language¹⁶. Thus enabling the people to hear God speaking to them in their own tongues and languages.¹⁷ Karl Rahner captures it so well when he observed that “the victory of the vernacular languages in the church’s liturgy is a clear and urgent signal of the coming-to-be of a world church, with its particular churches each existing autarchically in its own cultural group, rooted in that culture and no longer exported from Europe.”¹⁸

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (GS) was promulgated on December 7, 1965 by Pope Paul VI. *Gaudium et Spes* is the conciliar document that gave the highest attention to the topic of faith and culture and opened the floodgates for the proliferation of the theologies of inculturation within Catholic circles. The document gives room for the dialogue between the faith and the cultural value of different cultures. The document rightly noted that, “the human person can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture.”¹⁹ The document did not only recognize the importance of culture within

¹³ Udoidem, S. I., *John Paul II on inculturation: Theory and practice*. Maryland: University Press of America, 1996, p. 2.

¹⁴ Metuh, I. E., Incarnating Christianity in African world-views. In Justin Ukpong (Ed.). *The Church in Africa and the Special African Synod* (pp.9-23). Port Harcourt: Ciwa, 1993; Metuh, I. E., *African inculturation theology: Africanizing Christianity*. Onitsha: Imico, 1996; Crollius, R., *Inculturation: Newness and ongoing progress*. Nairobi: Pauline, 1986, p. 43.

¹⁵ Karl Rahner, “Basic theological interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” in *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 20, 1986, pp.77-89.

¹⁶ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, in Austin Flannery, (ed.), Documents of Vatican Council II, Vol. 1, No.36, Mumbai: St Paul Press, 2010.

¹⁷ Cf. Acts 2:16

¹⁸ Karl Rahner, *Concern for the Church*, trans. Edward Quinn, New York, Crossroad, 1981, 80.

¹⁹ *Gaudium et Spes*, in Austin Flannery, (ed.), Documents of Vatican Council II, Vol. 1, No.53, Mumbai: St Paul Press, 2010.

the church, but also outside the church. It holds that human identity and transformation is deeply rooted in culture.

The Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (AG), promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965 principally opines that the church is missionary by nature. Though the term inculturation was not used explicitly, the document uses the analogy of incarnation to justify church among cultures. The document states that:

Christ's incarnation is the paradigm for the young churches, insisting that if the church is to be in a position to offer to all the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, then it must implant itself among every group of people in the same way that Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the people among whom he lived.²⁰

In 1969, at the closing session of the First Plenary Assembly of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) on evangelization and the cultural adaptation of faith, Pope Paul VI recognized the diversity of cultures and he urged African Bishops to recognize that:

An adaptation of the Christian life in the fields of pastoral, ritual, didactic and spiritual activities is not only possible, it is even favored by the church. The liturgical renewal is a living example of this and in this sense you may and you must have an African Christianity.²¹

The Pope recognized the presence of God in African cultures and the need to preserve African cultural heritage.

The Synod of Bishops on Evangelisation in 1974 was particularly concerned about the superficiality and shallowness of the Christian life in Africa caused by the lack of genuine dialogue between the Gospel and religio-cultural values of the people. This was the statement made by the Bishops at the Synod:

Our theological thinking must remain faithful to the authentic tradition of the church and at the same time be attentive to the life of our communities and respectful of our traditions and languages, that is of our philosophy of life. Following this idea of mission, the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar consider as being completely out-of-date the so-called theology of adaptation. In its stead, they adopted the theology of incarnation.²²

²⁰ *Ad Gentes*, in Austin Flannery, (ed.), Documents of Vatican Council II, Vol. 1,, No.10, 22, Mumbai: St Paul Press, 2010.

²¹ Pope Paul VI, address at the closing of the All-African Bishops' Symposium. (Cf also, Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, New York: Paulist Press, 1990, p.129.

²² Aylward Shorter. *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, New York: Orbis Books, 1988, p.213.

The implication of this is that, the Bishops advocated for the incarnation of African cultural and artistic riches into the Christian faith so as to enable the Gospel to take flesh in the daily lives of Africans.

Pope Paul VI in 1975 issued an Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelisation). In this document he showed how the gospel message could be integrated within any given culture by bringing the Good News of Christ into all the strata of humanity, so that humanity itself becomes a new creation. He Pope puts it this way:

Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life.²³

Saint Pope John Paul II was known for his extensive travels to the local churches around the world. These travels afforded him a firsthand encounter with diverse cultures. He is the champion of a dialogue between Christianity and the various religious-cultures of the world. It is the Pope who established “the Pontifical Council for Culture to help the Church be involved in the saving exchange in which inculturation of the Gospel goes hand in hand with the evangelization of cultures.”²⁴

In the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, he simply defined inculturation as “the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures.”²⁵ His definition points to a seamless dialogue between faith and culture. The implication of this is that, the gospel values purify and enrich the culture and the cultural values enrich the church in the areas of the liturgy, Christian life and theology.²⁶

However, in *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979) the word ‘inculturation’ was for the first time mentioned in a formal papal document. The document used inculturation and acculturation alongside, which is the encounter between cultures that leads to the birth of a new culture.²⁷ It is crucial to note that acculturation is a necessary condition for any inculturation process.²⁸

²³ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1975, p.63.

²⁴ John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Council for Culture, 14 March 1997, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 26 March 1997.

²⁵ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991, no.51.

²⁶ Eugene Chianain, *Inculturation: A Conditio Sine Qua Non for Effective Evangelisation in Cameroun in the Light of the Light of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa*, Unpubl. Ph.D. Dissertation, Univ. of Toronto, 2018, p.27.

²⁷ Gregory Olikenyi, *African Hospitality: A model for the Communication of the Gospel in the African Cultural Context*, Nigeria: Snaap Press, 2001, p.47.

²⁸ Ibid,

Saint Pope John Paul II on 6 January, 1989 made it public that there will be a Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. The Pope in *Instrumentum Laboris* stated the *telos* of the synod as: “To assist the Church in Africa to deepen, her commitment to the mission of evangelization, taking into account her history and development as well as the whole cultural, social, political and economic context in which she lives.”²⁹

The synod deliberations were held in Rome from April 10th to May 8th 1994 and it represented the most important ecclesial gathering for Africa since Vatican II. It was the first time that the pastors of Africa gathered *cum et sub Petro* to reflect on new ways and means of carrying out the evangelising mission of the church on the continent that is highly religious and culturally immersed in their daily experiences on the one hand and full of social, political and economic problems on the other hand.³⁰ The outcome of the synod was the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa* that was given in Yaoundé-Cameroon on September 14, 1995 by Pope John Paul II. The main highlight of the document was its emphasis on inculturation as a necessary condition for effective evangelization.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, if the building of a bridge between the Christian faith and the Ikeji festival will be possible, as a conclusion, the researchers are of the view that certain proposals will have to be put into consideration. These include the following proposals:

- a. There is need for a better understanding of Ikeji festival and also of the history of Christianity as many positions are taken on the basis of ignorance.
- b. There should be a conscious effort towards the removal of prejudices from both sides about the understanding of both Christianity and the traditional culture and festivals of the Arondizuogu people.
- c. There is need for a complementary understanding of culture and Christianity. They are not enemies to each other but can complement each other for the building of a better humanity and society.
- d. There is need to identify the possible areas of connections between Christianity and Ikeji festival, so that inculturation can take place within a historical concrete experience.
- e. There is need for the identification of the possible elements in the Ikeji festival that require reform or change, or that needs the purification of the Gospel message.

²⁹ John Paul II, *Instrumentum Laboris*, of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, Feb 1993, no.1.

³⁰Eugene Chianain, *Inculturation: A Conditio Sine Qua Non for Efective Evangelisation in Cameroun in the Light of the Light of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa*, Unpubl. Ph.D. Dissertation, Univ. of Toronto, 2018, p.32.

- f. There is need to see how festivals can be employed as medium for the promotion of positive values, history, identity and the good of the human society, which the Christian faith also stands for and promotes.

It is believed that these proposals would assist in creating the mindset and the appropriate state of mind for negotiating between the Christian faith and Ikeji festival.

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