Indigenous Performances as Change Agent for the Future: The Transmogrification of *Ubochi Obasi Festival*

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Abstract

In Africa, festival performances embody an aspect of the people's way of life. These cultural festivals have in the past played dominant and effective roles in the community by imparting cultural values to the young ones as well as correcting, and purging the ills of the society. Before now, communal concord towards environmental preservation, and the sacredness of certain articles of faith in a traditional festival was held supreme. However, the practices in recent festivals such as the Iri ji (New yam festival), Ekpe (Masquerade festival) and Mgbede (Initiation rite into womanhood) are fast eschewing traditional African patterns by not observing the rites and rituals which enhances the festival's moral aesthetics and economic functions. Emerging trends in traditional performances reveal that, traditional, cultural and religious practices that were hitherto beneficial to the people as agents of social control, judicial control, environmental preservation and sanctity of life, which in Igbo cosmology hold cultural and religious underpinnings, are fading away. These traditional practices/religious beliefs cum rituals are now perceived as demonic, obsolete and paganish without consideration to their environmental, economic and spiritual importance. A case in point is the Ubochi-Obasi festival of the people of Umuobasi village in Nnentu, Abia State. The festival is on the verge of abandoning every cultural legacy it is known for

and has evolved into an admixture that breeds disharmony amongst its people. The methodological approach of this study uses expository, historical analysis and dependency theory. This is to assess the transmogrification of Ubochi-Obasi as the communal conscience of the people. The study reveals that transmogrification of the festival has affected the prospects of development for the people of Umuobasi. The researcher recommends a return to the cultural and religious underpinnings of the festival in order to revive the people's cultural values as paradigm for sustainable development.

1. Introduction

The concept of festival conjures the image of cultural spectacular festivity. It highlights a joyous mood, feast, singing and dancing, ritual and jubilant celebrants. No matter the country or culture, festival provokes certain aura that is both secular and religious. African festivals in the past exhibit some aspects of the people's culture, upholding their myths, legends, rituals and communal norms. Traditional institutions in Africa have thrived on religious traditions and culture. Its socio-political, economic and secular life has been shaped by their cultural and religious beliefs.

These beliefs and culture are the structure, the model upon which every activity rests. Basically the African man has a strong belief in the Supreme Being (Chi-Ukwu), as the creator of all life and the universe. The Africans share in the belief of good and evil as well as their consequences, the Almightiness of God and his transcendences is a belief that shape and guide the African person and his/her interaction with the entire world. The belief in deities and pantheons of gods is also rife among Africans. Hence the cultural traditions manifest in the festivals. But each community,

tribe or clan share similarities with others in terms of cultural and religious traditions. While religious belief is similar among Africans, one will notice differences in religious practices such as in articles of sacrifice, rites of birth and passage, ancestral adoration, ordinances, festival patterns and cultural beliefs. Ekweariri and Ogbonna points out that:

> Festivals are annual celebrations of African heritage, culture and tradition. They are woven around diverse beings and physical phenomena ranging from powerful gods and goddesses to hill and water spirits and generally of illustrious ancestors. (135)

Culture is the people and the people are their culture. When people refer to modernity, they talk about other people's culture because "it is in the diversity of cultures that humanity derives its existence and certainly development" (Duruaku, 5). One can appreciate cultures only from the perspective of the owners of the culture. But analyzing other people's culture from personal perspective, one fails to see what makes that culture unique. That is why Nwosu Patrick informs that:

> It is evident that there are vast cultural and religious potentials in Africa which can benefit and enrich the faith traditions that have established in African soil. That is why it behooves the faith traditions, particularly Islam and Christianity to heed the exhortation of the Vatican Propagation of the Faith issued in 1659 to missionaries going on evangelism. (174)

It is a reality that Africans maintain a relationship with their ancestors, gods and spirits. In the African world spirits are said to be in living and non living things. Hence there is a relationship, a co-habitation between spirits; living and the living-dead. This is believed to form a balance and the bedrock upon which the society

is formed and maintained. Both the living and the living-dead act as moral guardians of the society and forestall peace and stability. It is based on these beliefs that the people honour and venerate the relationship with the supernatural. The venerations often come in forms of festivals, ceremonies, title-taking and rituals. Moreover, the African culture celebrates life with its ups and down. Hence in death we witness singing and dancing just as we dance and sing in the rites of birth. Prior to the existence of Christian missionaries in Nigeria, traditional societies exist and served purposeful functions. They still exist within the ambiance of some *Ofor* bearers, but are modernized in Christianity and other religious forms.

This paper x-rays the functions of festival as change agent for the future using the *Ubochi Obasi* festival as paradigm. The structure of the festival and its process reveals that its preservation will orchestrate peaceful co-existence, ensure sustainable development and empower the people of Umuobasi Nnentu. This study looks at the historical importance of *Ubochi-Obasi* festival, its functional value and an expository understanding of the festival in action. The paper highlights the contribution of the festival towards the preservation of nature and the nurturing of the environment. Also the paper examines the transmogrification of *Ubochi-Obasi* and the need to re-emphasize the content and context of the festival as originally conceived.

2. The People of Umuobasi

Umuobasi is a village in Nnentu Ngwa. Like every other African village, the people express themselves in songs, dance, wrestling and dance drama. Umuobasi is one of the villages in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State, it is among those clans traditionally identified as Nnentu-ama-isii. The Ama-isii designates the six clans that make up the village (Nnentu), and they

are Umuobasi, Eziukwu, Okpuala, Ahiaba, Umuebeke and Umuokennunu. The first three clans cannot marry from among themselves; because they are related in blood, the last three clans can marry from any of the other clans. The community is now identified as Okporoenyi Autonomous Community; hence all the Clans are now Villages. The people of Umuobasi clan (Village) are the head of the clans and were basically agriculturists, hunters and traders. But with the advent of civilization and white-collar jobs, the people have progressed from agriculture and hunting to professional jobs.

Again, Christianity now permeates the people's belief, while very few individuals hold faith with the religious faith traditions of the people; the majority of the people of Umuobasi village have embraced Christianity totally. The *Ubochi Obasi* festival is said to have manifested from a myth that the people of Umuobasi are descendants of Obasi. Yearly in their religious calendar, the head of the clan presents the people to *Obasi* in thanksgiving for the life, riches and health given them for the past year and a prayer for the New Year to be better than the previous. It is out of this myth that the living continues to honour *Obasi* every year on the first Afor day (we shall see how it was changed to the second day of the first month of the year) of every year.

2.1. Background of *Ubochi-Obasi*

Historically, the *Ubochi-Obasi* was instituted by the ancestors for the purpose of thanks giving to *Chi-Ukwu* (Almighty God) for each year. In appreciation of the awesomeness of God, the people mapped out four days from *Afor-nta* to *Afor-ukwu*. Amidst the festivities associated with *Ubochi-Obasi*, the festival functioned to re-enact norms and values as a vehicle towards regulating social attitudes.

The triadic pattern of events in the festival shows the efficacy of the religious tradition of the people of Umuobasi. The *Ubochi Obasi* festival is said to have thrived over the years. The exact date of its beginning is not known but conjecturally; the elders say that it has been in existence before the colonial impasse. During festivals and ceremonial performances, African religious traditions are visibly involved. This evidently confirms that the people's religious traditions are part of their culture and everyday life. The festivals either celebrate an event in the people's life or calendar or at the same time observe a religious tradition. Tejumola and Ato observe that "festivals are sprawling multi-media occasion-that is, incorporating diverse forms such as singing, chanting, drama,, drumming, masking, miming, costuming…with episodes of theatrical enactments ranging from the sacred and secretive to the secular and public" (355). This culture of dance and music in a festival is oftentimes accompanied with the rituals of libation, thanks offering and prayer. Festivals exhibit to a great extent the people's lifestyle, belief and aspirations. These performances are artistically rich, functional, spectacular, religious and cultural.

The *Ubochi-Obasi* festival like most festivals in Africa anticipates the arrival of the community guardians (ancestors) as guests during the festival. This confirms what Echeruo refers in *Odo* festival as the arrival of "the spirit of the departed returning for a six-month stay of communion with the departed" (143), therefore the people prepare towards the festival taking into cognizance the physical and the spiritual realms, the moral norms and values of the people to be sure not to offend the ancestors. The village squares, paths and compounds are swept and weeded and abominable acts, and all human errors that may offend the gods

and ancestors are cleansed and the people purified by the chief priest before the festival day.

Also the festival lasts for four days. It starts on an *Afor Nta* day and ends on *Afor Ukwu*. The Afor market day is the market day of the people of Nnentu Village. That day is therefore remarkable, sacred and sanctified. History has it that when the festival began, it began on the Afor market day and that the elders usually gather at the village square on the first Afor of the year to proclaim the beginning of *Ubochi-Obasi* with thanks giving prayers, libation and a schedule for the four days activity to mark the *Ubochi-Obasi.* The schedule include the cleansing ritual, *iwa odo oru* (cutting of the paths to the farm lands); *ivo uzo*- weeding of village paths, *ile-ala*- inspecting homes and latrines, pruning of trees and *igbu-nkwu*-harvesting of ripe palm fruits.

Again, the people are reminded by the *Onye isi ala* (head of the clan, which usually is the eldest man of the clan from the ruling line) of the need to be at peace, and abstain from any form of violence, fight or stealing because each of these is abominable at this period and attracts heavy sanction on the person and his family. However, the festival which takes place under the *Ukwu Orji* and *Ofo* tree at Ama Ukwu (village square) surrounded by fresh bamboo and palm fronds shade-stands, where people sit on stones, tree stumps and carved woods to watch the performance at the arena is beginning to lose its goals and magnificent potency due to secular and Christian influences. *Ubochi-Obasi*, a festival of repute is annually garnished with cultural elements such as the *Ikoro* dance, Ekpe masquerade, wrestling, folktales, songs and the religious cleansing and purification rituals.

2.2. *Ubochi Obasi* as Festival Theatre

The dramatic and theatrical function of *Ubochi-Obasi* becomes according to Echeruo "the ideal festival, communal feast which features re-enactment and re-dedication for every individual in the community…reinforces common values, shared bonds and common taboos" (138). Usually, the period of any festival in Umuobasi commences with cleansing.

The *Ubochi Obasi* festival of the people of Umuobasi-Nnentu Ngwa in Okporoenyi Autonomous Community of Aba South Local Government Area (Abia State) is one of the indigenous performances that celebrate the people's life aspirations, reveal their belief, culture and identity. Through this festival the totality of the people's identity and developmental aspirations are captured. Like other festivals, the elements of dance, songs, props, costume, and make up, space (stage), use of instruments and movements, scenery and audience participation are features of the *Ubochi Obasi* festival. Hence, in Igbo land, festival as the performative and expressive arts that uses human persons for expression is on the decline as a result of imperialistic and corrosive influences. The Western cultures that are obviously evident in education, technology and Christianity are causing a dislocation between the African and her roots.

Consequent upon these phenomenal changes there is a decrease in oral performances which hitherto were regarded as pivotal in the molding of character and society, moral instruction, orientation and self-employment as well as a key factor in economic and cultural development of the people of Umuobasi Nnentu. Consequently, aboriginal *Ubochi Obasi* festival was laden with the people's cultural traditions. It was structured to last for four days. The festival begins two days before the end of the year (December 29), and ends on the second day of the new year

(January 2nd), which is the peak of the festival. From *Afor Nta* to *Afor Ukwu* is four days (excluding *Afor Nta,* so we have *Nkwo, Eke, Orie,* then*, Afor-ukwu.*) Hence the elders of Umuobasi people will gather at *Ama-ukwu* on the *afor-Ukwu,* four days before *Afor nta,* to thank *Obasi*, and inform the gods and the communal ancestors that *Ubochi Obasi* will take place. On the Orie before *Afor Nta*, an announcement is made by a Town Crier reminding people of the rules and regulations of the festival and the processes. These rules include peace and orderliness, no fighting, quarreling, stealing and disturbances of any kind. If any death occurs during this period, it is not announced until after the festival.

On *Afor Nta*, all male and female adult at the sound of the Ikoro, gather at the village square for prayers and cleansing. The *Onye isi ala- Oji ofor ala* (The *Ofor* holder) will call on the Almighty God, thanking him for the year that is about to end and the year that is to come, confess the sins of the community and ask for purging of the sins of the community, after which a cleansing is done. The next day being *Nkwo* (Day 1), the men, women and youth embark on general cleaning- with the weeding of village paths by the women; this is done amidst singing, drinking and finally the women gather at the Ama-ukwu to sing and dance. The significance of weeding the paths is to keep the environment clean since they have invited the ancestors and people from other villages. Also of more importance is that the ancestors may be displeased with the living if they find the environment dirty when they arrive to partake in the festival. On the same day, the men and youth will cut the village paths, prune the trees and harvest ripe palm fronds. In the evening of the same day, women will bring food to their husbands and children at the village square to eat and make merry. The men and youths will get palm fronds and use it to

form shades (canopies) at the village square. The *Eke* day (Day 2, usually the first day of the year), both men, women youth and children gather at the village square with foods cooked from their homes.

The traditional *Ipa nri*- (food inter-change) is done- as people exchange the food they have brought with another. At this point you give out what you have cooked and eat what another person has given you. The entire village will make merry. The same day, both men and women chairman and leader will account for the financial status of the Village Union Meetings, explain the projects they have carried out within the year, their challenges and prospects for the coming year. The same day, the purification ritual takes place as every first male of the family represents their families. While the purification ritual is going on, the women embark on a sanitation inspection exercise because on that same day, women leaders and their executives (Called *ndi ole-ala*) march from house to house to inspect kitchens, cooking utensils and latrines. Those found unclean are brought to the village square for punishment. People that have committed offences/ abominations are summoned and their penalties/ purifications are attended to.

On *Orie* (Day 3, January 2nd), the day begins with seven canon gun shots to held the peak of *Ubochi Obasi*. People gather at the village square for a joyful celebration. It is a day of thanksgiving. *Orie* is the grand finale of the festival, the village square is decorated with shade stands made up of bamboo wood, palm fronds and tree trunks as seats. The shades are built in arena because all performances on that day will take off from the arena. While the masquerades will first dance at the arena before touring the six clans of the village, the women will sing round the village square. Inside the arena is another round hut built with bamboo

wood and palm fronds, with tree trunks as seats for the ancestors. The *Onye isi ala* and *Ndi Oji Ofo* sit there, from that arena, ritual and thanks offerings are made to declare the ceremony open. At the end of all presentations and festivities, the *Onye isi ala* announces the projects programmed for the year, such as *Iwa oru* (sharing of farmlands), *Igbu-nkwu* (harvesting of palm fruits) *Itu aka obi* (sharing of lands to men who are qualified and ready to move from their father's house to their own.) On the *Afor-ukwu* (Day 4), the elders gather at the village square with kola nuts and drink offerings to thank Obasi (God) for a successful festival.

Prayers and purifications are performed by *Onye isi ala- Oji Ofo* and the elders. On this day, the Ekpe masquerade and the Ikoro dance is performed. The spectators are drawn from neighboring villages, indigenes from far and near return home to participate in *Ubochi Obasi*. From the village squares, youths carry their own dance and masquerade into the streets. This day masquerades do not flog. It is a day that affirms that festival establishes social interaction between peers and other groups.

The *Ubochi Obasi* contains the elements of theatre. Because apart from dance, drumming and singing, the performers are costumed- the *Ekpe* masquerade adorns a mask, a sack-cloth, *Egede*, *asaghara, atani* (palm frond and seed rope rattles) and raffia, the *Ekpe* cult members that are not masked will tie George wrappers and wear makeup made up of *Nzu* (white chalk) used to design their face. The *Ikoro* drummers tie George wrapper and traditional cap, the women are in their uniform which goes with a George wrapper, while the men tie a George wrapper on their waist or with whatsoever they are wearing. The youth will also tie George wrapper on whatsoever they wear. Again, there exist a dialogue between the solo singer and the drummers, though operatic, the women serve as Chorus.

The performance space is the arena at the village square and extends onto the streets. The spectators (audience) are the people of the community and neighboring villages. They circle the performers –some sit, stand, or climb on a tree and watch from there. As the youths move around with their troupe, some spectators follow them around. The performance on the final day of Ubochi-Obasi is not an exclusive preserve. Men, youth, women and children participate in one ceremony or another. While the rituals reside within the exclusive preserve of the elderly, men, women and youth are either involved in masquerading, dancing, wrestling and songs.

During *Ubochi Obasi* festival season people troop in from wherever they are. First, because it is towards the end of the year, and secondly because the festival is significant. It revalidates the people's dreams, aspirations and cultural traditions. *Ubochi Obasi* embodies the communal conscience of the people. The community records upsurge in the demand of food items, life stock, traditional artifacts, palm wine and local gin. Sons and daughters of Umuobasi use this opportunity to contribute towards the development of the village by donating money to the projected projects. Men and women of the community contribute towards the festival through levies and monies realized from natural resources such as palm fruits, are accounted for. This festival has over the years strengthened the people of Umuobasi. It has helped them to foster peaceful co-existence, execute projects such as pipe born water, install electricity and build for themselves a Postal Agency. Up until 1996, many developmental projects were executed independently by the people of Umuobasi without government's assistance.

3. Theoretical Consideration

The need for a theory in this study is to consider the relationship that exist and the processes going on, in order to arrive at a possible solution or findings. Thus, Dependency Theory is vital in this study, so as to analyze the effect of cultural imperialism on *Ubochi Obasi*. Matunhu explains Dependency Theory as:

> That the development of the metropolis was a result of the active underdevelopment of the non metropolis communities. Put differently, the metropolis is dependent for its development on the underdevelopment of its satellite. For instance, human capital has flowed and continues to move away from Africa to the developed world. (2011, 69)

Therefore, Dependency Theory holds the satellite captive and "by such a scenario, western transnational corporation should dominate markets, resources, production and labour" (Nwamuo, 18). In relation to this study, festivals are "dependent development", and are not merely to entertain, but are enshrined with social and economic functions.

Therefore festivals should rise above the level of dependency by playing out their social, economic and judicial functions. If the original significance of festivals is emphasized, norms and values enshrined in such festivals will help to facilitate peaceful co-existence and sustainable development. The centre will no longer hold the satellite captive but will highlight the satellite. Nwamuo affirms that "according to the model, the periphery is compelled, under complexly orchestrated circumstances to depend on the centre for socio-economic growth" (17). Whereas, the festival of *Ubochi Obasi* attracts spectators and tourists, its economic dividends will add to the communal sustenance.

Festivals benefits the people, depends on the people, yet the center benefits from it majorly, especially through its economic functions.

3.1 The Present Ubochi-Obasi

However, the people who returned from the devastation of war after 1970 leaned on their cultural and religious traditions as paths of healing through religious rituals, dance, folktales, songs and masquerading. Hence, the people of Umuobasi-Nnentu revitalized their traditional festivals in order to preserve its functions. Often times, the people of Umuobasi gathered at the village square (Ama-Ukwu) to re-enact their war experiences, discuss the farm lands, events of the war and the need to help each other rebuild their losses. This yearly festival with its revitalization after the Nigerian Civil War, took a new form as it is now referred to as *Obasi-Day*. So, *Ubochi-Obasi* and *Obasi-Day* are one and the same retaining some of its features and January 2nd yearly as the festival date, and the same venue at Ama-ukwu (The Umuobasi Village Square). This became an annual festival in the life of the people of Umuobasi-Nnentu.

3.2. Trends and Transmogrification

Emerging trends in *Obasi Day* reveals that the four days festival (*Afor Nta* to *Afor Ukwu*), has been reduced to a one day event. The present *Obasi Day* is disrobed of the usual clamour and décor thereby devoid of both moral aesthetics, environmental and cultural significance. This affirms the opinion that "attention is shifting from the villages with the common culture and traditions of, among others practices (sic), the moonlight night tales, to the urban centres and their attendant heterogeneity and atomization" (Duruaku, 7). The communal dream and essence of the people of Umuobasi Nnentu usually expressed in their festivals is now

demonstrated in *Obasi Day* every 2nd January of each year.

Gradually, the festival began to lose its bearing as participation in the four days activity conflicted with the church doctrines and programmes. While those that worshiped with the Pentecostal Churches argue that certain activities in the festival are against their faith, such as masquerading, *Ikoro* dance, and the purification rituals, those with the orthodox churches complained that it coincided with mission work (the same time that they would go to clear and weed the church compound).

The festival starts on the 2nd January with a mass at the St Gabriel's Catholic Church, Nnentu. After the Church service, after noon (1 pm), elders, youth, women and children gather at the village square; each group sit in their canopies as the *Onye isi ala* prays generally for God to bless and protect everybody. Then the Village Chairman will address the people and announcements will be made regarding Igbu *odo oru* (clearing of bush paths and allocation of farm lands at Egbelu), and whether the palm fruits will be sold out or harvested by the people, and any other relevant information. This will be followed by singing Christian songs from the women and music from the Disc Jockey (D.J). Youths and Children often dance to the tunes from the Disc Jockey, while the elders nod their heads as they enjoy the tunes.

The routine of cleansing, purifications, clearing of footpaths roads, inspection of kitchens and latrines, correction and punishment of abominable deeds, and moral and judicial controls have been jettisoned from the festival. The argument is that those traditional acts are demonic and paganish. To some youth, those activities are strange to them and no one has bothered to explain to them their meanings and significance. How so, in many ways, the youth may not be at fault here since they have actually not seen or experienced the significances of the old *Ubochi Obasi* festival,

rather, they have witnessed and experienced the glamour of the present day church. How then will they be able to learn through the moral ethos and cultural values of the people, since they are often confronted with immorality, dishonesty, violence and corruption?

The chairman and chairwoman no longer give accounts of stewardship on *Obasi Day*, neither are those who committed abominable deeds punished, or is the land purified. Hence, attendance to the festival is now very poor. People hardly leave their base to travel home for the festival because there is nothing alluring, besides even those residents at home hardly come out for the festival. Those that attend are not restricted to any costume except the women- they wear the Umuobasi Women's uniform. Youths are not encouraged in any way to attend the festival because such attractions as colourful costumes, African dance, masquerading, punishment for abominable deeds, satiric songs; folktales and inspection of kitchens and latrines are no longer part of the festival.

The crime rate in Umuobasi Nnentu has risen to a crescendo. This is so because a great number of the youths are jobless. Also because they are ignorant of the cultural norms and values, they have embraced armed robbery, kidnapping, touting, rape and even ritual killings. The cultural custodians and traditional rulers are somewhat helpless since they have failed to resuscitate the cultural norms and values, they and their communities are left in the hands of helpless Nigerian police.

3.3. Impact factor

Festival can be referred to as an agent of socialization because it contains moral lessons, values and norms which are imbibed by the participants and spectators. The presence of supportive values facilitates sociological functions of festivals especially, now that

the value system brought about by colonialism cum formal education has corrupted African values. This informs Onuegbu and Obiah's assertion that "colonial legal and administrative policies purposefully discouraged Nigerians from owning a business and achieving economic independence" (126). The same colonial approach made western culture and values more attractive, hence, indigenous people jettisoned their own culture and embraced the British 'superior" religion and culture. Nigeria passed through similar experience with India, but India took from the British, those empowerment skills such as education and technology. India retained their language, cultural festivals and religion. Today, India has synthesized westernization with Indian cultural and religious values.

The impact of Indigenous festival on a country like Nigeria is enormous. It orientates the youth towards their culture and exposes them to cultural significance of events and situations. For instance, the significance of the purification exercise in *Ubochi Obasi* is to sanctify the people and attune them to the communal dream and essence. It ensures that togetherness and unity of the community is maintained. When festivals are properly carried out, awareness of what constitutes abomination, taboos, security concerns and profane is created and at such moments, the oneness and sanctity of the community is assured. Festivals serve the function of moral education, judicial and social controls. As a change agent, festival will groom the youth towards skill acquisition, integrity, uprightness and respect for man and nature.

The absence of indigenous performances such as festivals for its transmogrification, a forum that brings people together to reaffirm their identity, has fostered disunity, insecurity and individuality. Prior to this mishap, each individual belonged to a community and was bound by its ethos. Communal conscience

overrides individual selfishness, hence individual idea aligns with communal aspirations. But recent developments reveal that individual aspirations override communal conscience, hence, youths at eighteen years of age aspires to own a house, a flashy car and live in opulence from the derivatives of crime- they put action to words by getting it either by hook or crook. The aftermath is that materialism has become a lifestyle that is trending now. Education, longsuffering, discipline, dedication and earning a living in the right way is what the youths consider as foolishness. They embrace the lucrative and glamorous Western virtues together with its vices.

Undeniably, conflicts and ills exist within the African climes but it is now heightened that people no longer consider the consequences of their actions. On the other hand, the absence of traditional education and knowledge has devastated the natural resources. While the environmental campaign to plant a tree a day is superfluously going on, Christians are cutting down economic trees in the villages because they have been told that such trees are demonic. A frantic call has been made by scholars, and according to Iheanyichhukwu Elekwa, a professor of Biochemistry, he opines that:

> The society and particularly the Church must try and see reason here, and begin to moderate, if not cease altogether, the notion that Native Doctors are disciples of Satan. I am talking about the demystification of the African traditional medical practices and the bringing of such practices into the domain of scientific medicine. (79)

The above indicates that grounded knowledge in one's culture, indigenous forms and environment, enhances growth in any chosen field and facilitates sustainable development. Ojua affirms this when he posits that an individual wears a cultural stamp as identity, hence:

> …each person's social personality is the product of his culture. In this sense, we may have a typical Obodoukwu man (Igbo man); always industrious, kind and calculative, a typical German man always hardworking but with ethnic segregation, a Kora (Korea) man always crafty but industrious, an American with his air of liberty, an English man with his diplomatic finesse, Calabar man with his cleanliness among others. (4)

Today, the Igbo man can hardly be described as "always industrious, kind and calculative" because the 'get rich quick' syndrome, a foreign infusion, has eroded basic tenets and principles of the Igbo. The traditional festivals need to be revived since they carry the stamp and trademark of the people's heritage and social values. This researcher joins her voice with other scholars to re-echo that "our cultural background was characterized by truth, social justice, fear of God, respect for elders, care and love for our visitors. These virtuous cultural habits should be rekindled in our society. The current aspects of our cultural pollution occasioned by our contact with Western and Arabic cultures should be jettisoned" (Ojuah, 4). It is therefore prime to recommend that a re-orientation of the citizenry is apt and necessary in order to inculcate those positive aspects of our heritage that can improve and empower the youth.

4. Conclusion

Change towards the positive direction is hoped to emanate from the youth in order to resuscitate the economy, politics and technological developments. Though the Nigerian youth have been adversely affected by cultural imperialism, there is still hope that the newly introduced Cultural and Creative Arts in Secondary School curriculum will ameliorate the situation. Also, that

traditional institutions as custodians of culture will begin to revive indigenous festivals as ways of imparting cultural values and norms through revisiting relevant cultural festivals, folklores, and myths as well as sponsor cultural troupes/groups. Again, it is advised that positive aspects of indigenous festivals be highlighted during state and national events as part of entertainment and the spectacular.

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