

**THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF FESTIVALS IN NIGERIA: IGUE FESTIVAL IN
BENIN AS A CASE STUDY, 2000-2020**

BY

OSARUMWENSE FAVOUR ONAIFO

ART1801019

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
FACULTY OF ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
NIGERIA**

SEPTEMBER, 2023

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **OSARUMWENSE FAVOUR ONAIFO** in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin, under my supervision.

MISS. OSARENOMA OMORUYI
PROJECT SUPERVISOR

DR. ALBERT ONOBHAYEDO
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

DATE

DATE

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the Almighty God for his guidance and unending love throughout my study in the University of Benin. And also to my Sweet loving late brother Victory Onaifo for is unending love throughout my study in the University of Benin.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

There are many Festivals in Nigeria, some of which are dated to the period before the arrival of the major religions in this ethnically and culturally diverse society.¹ Festivals in Nigeria can be categorized into four, which are music, film, cultural, Christian and Muslim festivals. Most importantly, celebration of cultural festivals such as Argungu fishing festival (Kebbi State, North Western Nigeria), Calabar Carnival (Cross River State), Carniriv (River State) to mention a few is acclaimed to be a unifying force connecting people from different race and background together.² This is because celebration of these cultural events in most cases remind people of their past. It is regarded as heritage resources that facilitate social cohesion. Celebration of cultural festivals serves as vehicle that drives the economy of a community through the derivable economic benefits especially during the festive period.³ Against this backdrop, this study examines the socio-cultural and economic impact of the Igue festival to the contemporary Benin Kingdom.

The Igue festival is the biggest and most flamboyant of all the festivals celebrated by the Oba and people of Benin Kingdom. It is normally celebrated with a lot of pomp and pageantry during the first half of the month of December (first fourteen days of the month) of every year.⁴ The Igue festival is a set of annual cycle of rituals and rites that are performed to purify and strengthen the Oba and the kingdom in preparation for the

New Year. According to Bini history, the Igue festival has been celebrated for more than 1000 years. The modern day Igue begins with the Ague, which is a period of fasting when the Oba and his chiefs go into strict seclusion.⁵They are not allowed to see anyone during this period. It is only after successful completion of the Ague that the Igue can begin in earnest. The British invasion and consequent capture and sending into exile of Oba Ovonramwen saw the interruption of Igue celebrations in 1897. It was not until the restoration of the monarchy in 1914 that the celebration of the festival was restored. During the celebration of the Igue festival, it is forbidden to hold any burial or funeral ceremonies in Benin kingdom.⁶This is because Igue is seen as a period of joy, and should not be interrupted with any form of public mourning.

Importantly, this study examines the historical origin and impact of the Igue festival in the present Benin. The study will also observe the discrepancy of old and in the contemporary time as it's relate with the Igue festival in Benin City; showing its strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, the research work revolves round the fact that, though with some constraints, economic activities in Benin were well managed and elaborates during the Igue festival, as it served the people well by helping to keep them united, stable and creating a sort of prosperity that made Benin a remarkable Edo polity that inspired her neighbors.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim is to examine the socio-cultural and economic contributions of the Igue festival of Benin, from 2000 to 2020, while the objectives are;

- a) To examine the tradition of origin of the people of Benin, the political and socio-cultural activities of Benin, particularly as it relates the Igue festival in pre-colonial times.
- b) To examine the nature, operational mode and manifestations of the Igue festival.
- c) To examine the socio-economic and political impact of Igue festival on Benin people.
- d) To examine the changing roles of Igue festival since the advent of western influence in Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

The study will cover manifestations and operational mode of Igue festival in Benin. In other words the study will cover the historical background of Benin people, the origin, nature and the contemporary impact of Igue festival on Benin socio-cultural and economic wellbeing, from 2000 to 2020.

Methodology

In order to achieve a comprehensive and interesting study, a descriptive and historical method will be employed. This which essentially provides opportunity for the utilization of data collected from primary and secondary sources, but mostly primary resources which includes oral interviews and archival materials conducted due to the fact that there are no much materials on the Benin kingdom. Thus notable elders and researchers in communities within Benin will be interviewed and the Local Government Council will be visited for archival materials.

Primary Sources

The two major primary sources that make of this study are oral tradition and pictorial evidences. Interviews will be carried out with academic and non-academic environments with people who were familiar with Benin history and the Igue festival.

Secondary Sources: Secondary sources employed for this research include: textbooks, journals, as well as other documented materials these will help to develop supplement the information obtained from the primary source, which will be from both private and public libraries. However, this study will be subjected to an historical analysis of the qualitative method of research.

Literature Review

Not much research has been done on the socio-cultural and economic impact of the Igue festival in the ancient city of Benin. This however cannot be said of Nigeria where there are numbers of works which deal with on the festival activities of the people. There are however certain literature that deals on relevant aspect of Benin history and the nature of the Igue festival. Some of the literatures include:

Charles Osarenomase Osarumwense work titled “Igue Festival and the British Invasion of Benin 1897: The Violation of a Peoples Culture and Sovereignty,”⁷The author presents the sovereign nature of the Benin Kingdom, its social-cultural and economic uniqueness rooted in the belief and respect of deities. The author posits that the Benin Kingdom was a sovereign state in pre-colonial West Africa. He asserts that a remarkable aspect of the Benin culture was the Igue festival.⁸The work focused on the

Britain violation of the sovereign of the Benin people and how it affects their culture. This study will fill the gap by examining the socio-economic contributions of Igue festival to contemporary Benin.

Ikponmwosa Aikhionbare's work titled "The Igue Festival of Benin Kingdom, Nigeria,"⁹ the author asserts how the Igue festival is the biggest and most flamboyant of all the festivals celebrated by the Oba and people of Benin Kingdom. The author identifies that it is normally celebrated with a lot of pomp and pageantry during the first half of the month of December (first fourteen days of the month) of every year. This article is about the events of the Igue festival of Benin Kingdom, Nigeria. The author later reiterated that the Igue festival is a set of annual cycle of rituals and rites that are performed to purify and strengthen the Oba and the kingdom in preparation for the New Year.¹⁰ However, this work will be very useful to this study especially when examining the historical antecedence of Igue festival; but was silent on the role of Benin women in the Igue festival.

Benjamin Obeghare Izu, "Music and Associated Ceremonies Displayed during Ugie (Festival) in the Royal Court of Benin Kingdom, Nigeria,"¹¹ The author examines the Oba of Benin Royal Ugie ceremonies, which is an annual religious and cultural event celebrated by the Benin speaking people of Edo State, Nigeria. As a communal and spiritual activity, the Oba and people of Benin kingdom mark the Ugie festivals with Musical and dance performances. Within this context, the author adopts the historical and participant approaches as its method of contending that some events during the Oba of

Benin Royal Ugie festival ceremonies are colorful theatrical performances. The organizational structure of the Oba of Benin Palace as it relates to the observance of Ugie festival ceremonies is also discussed in this work. The author also examines the role Ewini music plays in the various Oba of Benin Royal Ugie festival ceremonies, thereby looking at its origin, socio-cultural context, formation procedure, instrumentation, and organizational set-up.¹²

Arówósegbé, Deborah Bámidélé, “Women in Imolè Festival in Àkókó Area of Oñdó State, South West, Nigeria,”¹³ The author examines the role and place of women in the society as depicted in Imolè festival (a female dominated festival) in the identified geographical location. The theoretical framework is based on traditionalist approach and womanist theory. Traditionalist approach deals with the culture of the society while womanism focuses on women and their rights in the society. The author shows that women play a very significant and relevant role in the religious life of their people as ritual specialists, food providers, entertainers and peace-loving people. The author concludes that women are not evil objects; they are created for good and harmony of human life. He later suggested that women should see the traditional image of the women as depicted in Imolè festival as a challenge to womanhood, and in particular the Nigerian women. Women should maintain the few good attributes of uprightness and vivacity and should use woman diplomacy productively.¹⁴

Hope Obioma Opara in his book titled *Understanding the Festival Scene in Nigeria*,¹⁵ the author outline Independent festivals currently function as an environment

to provide networking for arts practitioners, showcase and develop artists, provide entertainment for the general population and offer branding opportunities to sponsors. The better funded festivals also attract international tourism, create income for local businesses, enable community cohesion, provide skills development, increase real interest in and engagement with the arts in Nigeria, empower young people and provide a positive image for Nigeria within and outside the country.¹⁶

Jude Cocodia in book titled *An Analysis of Traditional Political Organizations: Lessons for the Present*,¹⁷ The book which is a discourse in political history, adopts the descriptive approach as it tends to assess tenets of socialism and egalitarianism as obtained in some ancient societies of Nigeria's south-south region. The contention of this work is that, in as much as most of the tenets of politics and government as we know it today have been a part of life in our ancient communities, our history ultimately becomes a rich source of knowledge from which we can draw inferences from to explain the failure and successes of present day societies, as well as make predictions which is what the essence of political science is all about.¹⁸ Thus the crux of the book is to establish patterns of government as well as access methods of conflict resolution inherent in some traditional Nigerian societies.

According to Damien Izu, article titled "The Ugie Festival Ceremonies as a Demonstration of Ancient Benin Culture in Nigeria,"¹⁹ The main focus of the article is on the music and associated ceremonies enacted during the royal Ugie (festival) of the Omo N' Oba N' Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba of the Benin kingdom. There are cycles of Ugie

rituals held periodically within the confines of the Benin royal palace. Some of these ceremonies are of a private nature, while others are public. During these Ugie ceremonies, the palace is always the centre of ritual activities aimed at the well-being and prosperity of the Omo N' Oba and the Edo people. According to Damien Izu,

These festivals are usually celebrated with music and dance, which provide entertainment throughout the period of the celebrations. Apart from their entertainment value, festivals provide an opportunity for the memories of our forebears to re-assert themselves in the consciousness of the people, with the hope of leaving the world a better place. Festivals also form a part of the heritage of humankind and have traditionally been passed on for posterity. These festivals constantly remind people of their past which is usually compared with the present so as to ascertain whether communities are progressing or not and to document other dynamic changes. Furthermore, festivals enable celebrating communities to devise programmes to improve the areas in their culture where these have been neglected.²⁰

The first book on the review list is J. U. Egharevba's book, "*A Short History of Benin*".²¹ Egharevba examined through oral traditions, the origin of the people, founding of the Benin kingdom and also, the first period of the kingdom. Though he argued that some women actually ruled Benin during the first period, which however, was not acceptable to most Benin historians. Nonetheless, little reference was made on how colonial rule altered the role of women in Benin.²² In addition, it is important to know that though this work was done based on oral interview, with no reference to any work, it is however an important historical work that has proven useful to Benin historians and

researchers, as well as to those who wish to study Benin history. His work has also helped other historians and writers in the reconstruction of Benin history.

Bradbury's "*The Benin Kingdom and the Edo-speaking people of South Western Nigeria*",²³ gave a clear description of the kingdom's location, traditions of origin as well as the different organizations in Benin.²⁴ This work is essentially useful in the chapter two of this research study.

In as much as we agree, that these contributions and views have their own merits towards understanding the origin, nature of Igue festival, and tradition of origin Benin kingdom from pre-colonial to colonial era, but we must also agree that they have not been able to give a total study of the socio-cultural and economic impact of the Igue festival in the contemporary Benin. This research seeks to fill that vacuum that has been created for a long while by various scholars.

CHAPTERS OUTLINE

Chapter One

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This chapter comprises of an introduction to the research work, the aims of the research and the range the research work will cover. Relevant works pertaining to the research topic was reviewed.

Chapter Two

POST-COLONIAL ECONOMY HISTORY OF BENIN

This chapter examines the economic activities of the ancient city of Benin in post-colonial times. The study will capture how ancient history of Benin activities influences the post-colonial economic activities of Benin especially as it relates to festivals and tourism potential in post-colonial Benin.

Chapter Three

THE NATURE OF THE IGUE FESTIVAL

This chapter gives the antecedence of the Igue festival; it outline the various purpose of the Igue festival as it relate to the annual ritual for Oba of Benin and ritual rites to promotes peace and harmony in Benin. The chapter will observe the costume, processes and customs that should be observe before, during and after the Igue festival.

Chapter Four

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE IGUE FESTIVAL

This chapter examines the achievement of the Igue festival on the people of Benin. It focuses on the Igue festival impacted into the economic activities of the people, and how its strengthen the socio-political institutions of the Benin people.

Chapter Five

CONCLUSION

This chapter focuses attention on the western impact on the Igue festival. It also highlights the various significance of the festival and the changes as its regard festival rites and customs.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER TWO

POST-COLONIAL ECONOMIC HISTORY OF BENIN

Introduction

This chapter is centred on the economic nature and economic activities of post-colonial Benin and how the ancient city help in generating revenue and job creation for Edo state government.¹ The study further interrogated the economic potentials of the various recreational centres in Benin, ancient historical structures which attract tourist and there by generate revenue for government, sculptures and artifacts built within Ring road that depicts the historical achievement of ancient Benin rulers and soldiers who fought in the expansion of Benin kingdom to an empire and those who fought against the invasion of Benin kingdom.

People and Geographical Location of Benin City

Located in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, Edo State was created in 1991 when the old Bendel State was split into two in a state creation exercise that also led to the birth of Delta state.² The state is made up of eighteen Local Government areas which are Akoko-Edo, Egor, Esan-Central, Esan-North-East, Esan-South-East, Esan-West, Etsako-Central, Etsako-East, Etsako-West, Igueben, Ikpoba-Okha, Oredo, Orhionmwon, Ovia-North-East, Ovia-South-West, Owan-East, Owan-West and Uhumwonde.³

Benin City is the capital and largest city in Edo State in southern Nigeria. It is situated approximately 40 kilometres (25 mi) north of the Benin River and 320

kilometres (200 mi) by road east of Lagos. Benin City is the centre of Nigeria's rubber industry, and oil production is also a significant industry.⁴

Benin City was the principal city of the Edo kingdom of Benin, which flourished during the 13th to the 19th century. It was captured in 1897 by the British, after the Edo assaulted an earlier British expedition, which had been told not to enter the city during a religious festival but nonetheless attempted to do so. Before burning the city down, the British pillaged it, taking many of its famous bronzes, ivory, and other treasures.⁵

Although traces of the old wall and moat remain, the new city is a close-packed pattern of houses and streets converging on the palace and compound of the *Oba* (sacred king) and the government offices.⁶ In the main square sits a statue of Emotan, a woman honoured for assisting a 15th-century prince attempting to regain power and who later became Oba Ewuare. The present *Oba* retains traditional and advisory roles in government.⁷

The indigenous people of Benin City are Edo, and they speak the Edo language and other Edoid languages. The people of Benin City are known as Edo or Benin. The people of the city have one of the richest dress cultures on the African continent and are known for their beads, body marks, bangles, anklets and raffia work.⁸

The Mid-Western Region was a division of Nigeria from 1963 to 1991, from 1976 being known as the Bendel State. It was formed in 1963 from Benin and Delta provinces of the Western Region, and its capital was Benin City. It was renamed a province in 1966,

and in 1967 when the other provinces were split up into several states, it remained territorially intact, becoming a state.

During the Nigerian Civil War, the Biafran forces invaded the new Mid-Western state, en route to Lagos, in an attempt to force a quick end to the war. While under Biafran occupation, the state was declared as the “Republic of Benin” as Nigerian forces were to retake the region. The republic collapsed a day after the declaration as Nigerian troops overtook Benin City. In 1976 it lost Ughelli to the new Rivers state and was renamed Bendel. Edo State was formed on 1991 when Bendel State was split into Edo and Delta States.⁹

People & Culture

Edo State has a population of approximately 4million and it is made up of three major ethnic groups; namely the Binis, Esan, Afemai, Owan and Akoko Edo. However the state has a high presence of residents from across the country. Benin City, the state capital, has a history of being one of the foremost destinations of the Europeans during their exploration of Africa continent some centuries ago. All the ethnic groups within the state have many things in common and apart from sharing a common origin, they are also exposed to the same cultural influence. These similarities are manifested in their religious worship, folklore dances, festivals, arts and crafts.¹⁰

Economy History of Benin

Contemporary economic history of Benin City is a wide range of economic activities that take place within Edo South Senatorial district and such undertakings are dominated by agricultural related enterprise, commercial activities, buying and selling of goods and services.¹¹ In today Benin economy, there is various investments in different sectors of the economy and these include;

Hotel Industry: Hotel businesses have been a major boast to the economy frontiers of Benin City. This industry over the years has created massive job opportunity for all sectors of discipline. Hotel business is popular business that generates revenue for the state government and also is one major industry in Edo where investors can comfortably invest to earn profit within a stipulated year.¹²

Transportations Industry: This kind of business in Benin City helps a lot of citizens in Benin City to earn lot money for their day to day activities. According to Mr. Efosa Uwadiae, explain how he use transportation business to start his life, get married, take children to school and even build two houses at Oluku area in Ovia north east local of Edo State.¹³

Eki Oba Market: One of the most famous and prominent market in our contemporary Benin kingdom is Eki-Oba market. Eki-Oba market is situated right in front of ring road this market harbour, varieties of textiles materials, cooking utensils, foodstuffs and other wholesale goods and services. The market is mostly attractive to commuters and travelers

because of its proximity to ring road and the nature of things sold in the market. Eki-Oba market has brought economic traffic to ring road because of its proximity to ring road.

Igun Economic Street: The act of broadcasting in Benin is situated in Igun Street which is located at left hand side of ring road that cut across Sakponba road. Igun Street is one of the economic location in the act of Benin, a place where tourist and foreigners go to purchase Benin bronze and artifacts and the main route to Igun street is the road network linking ring road to Sakppnba road which served as an easy transportation and thereby promote economic activities within the king square

Urhokpota Economic Potential

The Urhokpota Hall was built in 1906, few year before Nigerian became a country. The glaring summation is that the collapse of Benin Empire paved way for the possible amalgamation that crystallized into a country, which Florence Sham called “Nigeria”. For the purposes of continuous records, a senior administration officer in the office of the District office Mr. Crewe Reade conceived of the idea to build the hall when he noticed that the spot had an unusual crowds gathering to organize some form of agitation to the Oba palace.¹⁹

The architectural design is a combination of a typical County town hall building common in Victoria time in Britain, with an elevated semi pyramidal wall-Clock-House platform as those found in West Minster Abbey or the City Hall of Manchester In England. The Hall was built to accommodate and hear those who would want to representation to the Oba of Benin, motivated by the newly established indirect rule

system, which the British colonialist brought after conquest. The areas in question have been known severally as “Unue-Ogun”, “URHO-OKPERE”. The space on which Ethiope Publishing House is buith was also called “Eki Ekpokoro”²⁰

Since the erection of the Urhokpota Hall, it has played host to many conferences in the Old Western region. Several meeting of Obas and chiefs have been held there. Most importantly, the grand coronation activities that require public audience is done outside the hall by ah reigning Oba. In the past, there use to be by the side of the Hall a building of the Native Authority Police.²¹ Since the creation of Midwest State, Which many of us are privileged to have witnessed, the Urhokpota Hall played host to many cultural festivals in which 1 was a participants. Ah the Midwestern State festivals of Arts and culture organized from 1964 to 1974 were ah done at the Hall. .Many notable theatre groups from Ori Olokun club to the Federation of Boys and girls club, and the emergence of Edo cultural group, Ozolua Play House, Ovonrammven theatre group, in the early 60s helped to establish what now flourishes as a renewed effort at consolidating our cultural heritage.²² The Urhkpota spot is the democratic spot OT the Benin people in term of participation, articulation, agitation and expression of political demand, of both partisan and non-partisan nature. We did not copy political agitation from any other part of the World, it has been an inherent part o our political culture.²³

The Economic History of Benin in Contemporary Times

As many cities economy in Nigeria continues to diversify, the state of Benin City has emerged as a hub for technology, agriculture, real estate, and industry. Edo State has

been a prime location for investors looking for high-growth opportunities. With a population of over two million people and a rapidly expanding economy, Benin City boasts has been a strategic location, abundant natural resources, favorable investment climate, and innovative developmental initiatives that make it an attractive destination for foreign direct investment (FDI). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Edo State has attracted over \$1.2 billion in foreign investments in recent years, confirming its growing reputation as a viable investment destination that offers wealth of opportunities for investors looking to establish a foothold in Nigeria.

One of the most exciting developments in Benin City is the Edo Innovation Hub. Established by the state government, the hub is a vibrant community of entrepreneurs, investors, and technologists working to develop innovative solutions to local problems. With a focus on digital solutions and emerging technologies, the hub is driving growth and attracting investment to Benin and the state at large.

Another major development in the Benin City is the Geographic Information System (GIS). The GIS system is a powerful tool that provides detailed information on the Benin City and other Town resources, demographics, and infrastructure in Edo. It is a valuable resource for investors looking to identify opportunities in the Benin and make informed decisions about investment strategies.

In addition to technology and innovation, the Benin City has also home to a thriving agricultural industry. The Presco and Total Joint Venture are prime example of the state's potential in agriculture. The partnership has been aimed at the production of rubber in

large quantities. With the world's increasing demand for rubber, the partnership has poised to make significant contributions to the state's economy and to the rubber industry as a whole.

The state's solid minerals sector also has vast untapped potential, with opportunities for investment in the mining and processing of minerals such as gold, granite, and marble. Moreover, the state's agricultural sector is a significant contributor to its gross domestic product (GDP), with the production of oil palm, rubber, cocoa, and other cash crops. The palm oil industry in Edo State is dominated by Presco and Okomu Oil Palm Company, with Presco being the largest palm oil plantation in Nigeria and one of the largest in Africa, with over 23,000 hectares of oil palm plantation.

The real estate sector in Benin City has also experiencing rapid growth, with a large number of new projects underway. From luxury apartments to commercial developments, the sector offers a range of opportunities for investors looking to capitalize on the Benin City growing economy. As the population continues to grow, demand for housing and commercial space is expected to increase, making the real estate sector an attractive prospect for foreign investors.

Fortunately, there are organizations such as Buildzone Housing Solutions that are working tirelessly to bridge this gap and create a more favorable environment for businesses and residents. Buildzone Housing Solutions plans to establish a business model that allows civil servants, corporate workers, and the general public to build or buy their dream homes. This initiative is in line with the company's drive to give back to its

host community and close the housing deficit gap in Africa one city at a time. While Benin City is rich in opportunities, it is important to note that there are also challenges that need to be addressed. One of the most pressing issues is security. However, the state government has taken steps to address this issue through various initiatives and partnerships. For example, the state government has partnered with security agencies to deploy new technologies and training to enhance security across the Benin City and Edo state in general.

Sculpture and Artifacts

One of the most important economic impacts of Ring Road is the location economic advantages which have to do with the sculpture and artifact that was built by government which promote the historical origin and history of Benin. For example, the sculpture of the Oba Benin, the Queen mother, the traditional rulers of Benin, the Benin invasion and war sculpture that is erected around Benin preaches about the historical history of Benin kingdom and this has attracted a lot of fun seekers who comes to snap photographs with it and also as well who comes to get tourist and educative knowledge about these sculpture which in turn promote economic activities in Benin.²⁴

The Igun bronze casting is also one of the most important factors that has impacted on ring road. Although the Igun bronze casting is located in the out sketch of ring road a closed proximity between Sakponba road and Igun Street. This bronze casting has great impact on Benin and it is situated in a road linking to Ring road. Therefore, over the years one can say that Igun bronze casting has been a major source of impact on the

economics of Edo state because bronze are most times taken away from on Nigeria and sold in Europe and other continent of the world.²⁵ Therefore one can say that Igun bronze casting which is part of Ring road facilities has help to promote economic activities.

Another aspect on impact of ring road is to Agbado in street due to the strategic location and the mass population that pass the ring road. The adjoining street of ring road as becomes a sum of commercial activities which has promoted economic gain in Benin.²⁶ For instance mission road is one major street that accommodate traders who sell solely on provisions and consumable goods such as cream, soaps, bournvita, biscuits and some other consumable goods. Mission road has been one of the major economic booms due to its link to Ring road.²⁷ Economic activities in mission road as become a major source of interest on the government of Edo state basically the road is more than a market in Benin due to its revenue generation its has contributed to Edo state and also job creation it has created in a state that virtually it has become a source of wealth for Edo state this is accredited to its link to ring road. One other road that is also very key to ring road is the Ekehuan road. Ekehuan road is a direct link to Ring road and it annex Oba Ekioba market which also promote economic activities and this area features basically foodstuff, sales of phone accessories, wears, bookshops and other goods and services.²⁸

Ekehuan road has also promoted business activities, generate revenue for Edo state, create job opportunities for the state although this can also be accredited to its link with ring road. Akpakpava road is another key that link with ring road and which has increased in economic activities. Akpakpava road has Agbodo market, stalls where

traders sells kitchen utensils such as gas, stove, broken plate and others and this has promote economic gain for the government of Edo state and also created jobs and wealth for people in Benin.²⁹

Conclusion

It should be noted here that ring road which is also known as King Square have momentum economic potentials which have not been fully annexed by the people and government. Therefore, there is need for the government of the state to draw out master plan on how these economic potentials in king square can be annexed.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURE OF THE IGUE FESTIVAL

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, it was seen that Benin evolved a unique and impressive socio-political and economic organization which revolves around the Oba. The socio-political sophisticated civilization was characterized by a grandiose of festivals among which the Igwe Festival stood out. So this chapter would examine or investigate the origin of this festival and its nature and significance up to 1897. It is our contention in this chapter that although, the origin of the Igwe festival like most important phenomenon in history, is not certain, it was a significant event in the history of Benin which played a predominant role in the socio-political, cultural, and religious lives of the people. Thus, the Igwe festival reached its climax in the period up to 1897.

Origin of Igwe Festival

The Igwe festival has proven to be a significant festival in the history of the Benin people during the pre-colonial period till present lime. To this great people, it meant a period of giving thanks to Osanobua (God) for the gift of life; and also ask him for blessings, peace and prosperity. It usually begins with the Ague ceremony; a period of national fasting in Benin. At the end of the fast, the Otuc-Ugierha begins.¹ The festival played a great role in the kingdom especially in the pre-1897 era. Yet, as mentioned above origin of the Igwe festival is not really easy to trace and has caused quite a great intellectual debate among scholars. On the one hand, there are scholars who argued that

the Igue Festival has been celebrated by the people from time immemorial and may be as old as the nation itself. According to Ero in his book, Igue and other festivals in Benin Kingdom, The Igue Festival has been celebrated in Benin from time irnrnemorial.² He posited that the festival could be traced to the Odionwere period, during which the position of the Odionwere must be celebrated because he rose to become the most senior among the Owere. During his installation as the Odionwere, he makes sacrifices to his head for making it possible to get to the age of the eldest man in the community.³ This making of sacrifices of the Odionwere became the beginning of the Igue festival. Thus according to Ero: “Every year, the Odionwere makes sacrifices to his head. He invites people to rejoice with him. It later developed to other people in the community to make sacrifice to their heads after the Odionwere in their respective homes.⁴ Since the Odionwere celebrated his own annually, and the people did theirs annually too, after that of Odionwere, it became a custom that at a certain time of the year, one must thank his head for success in life., this is the origin of the Igue Festival”.⁵

This annual celebration continued up to the period of Ogiso. Infact, during the Ogiso period, the festival was not fixed on a special month but instead, on the very month the Ogiso was crowned⁵. But with the emergence of the Oba dynasty, the Igue festival became an event celebrated between September and October every year.⁶ Other prominent Benin historians have contended that the Igue festival was the brain child of the Great Oba Ewuare. According to F. B. Eweka, Igue Festival is a festival heralding

good luck and it began in the era of the Oba Ewuare the Great who reigned over Benin during the 15th century (1440-73).

There is a prominent account in Benin history which traced the origin of Igue festival to the events in the 15th century. According to this account, the death of Oba Ohen in the 14th century and his misrule ensured that none of his Sons stayed long on the throne. After the death of his first two sons, the throne was vacant for some months, due to the earlier banishment of his other two sons, Ogun and Uwaifiokun. Who now wonder from place to place.⁷ This political interregnum worsened the problems of the Benin people, there was political unrest and as a result of these predicaments the oracle was consulted and it was discovered that unless a member of the Benin royal household occupied the throne, these problems would not cease. A search party was therefore sent to look for Oba Ohen's sons. Uwaifiokun, the youngest son of the Oba Ohen returned to Benin and reported that his elder brother Ogun was dead, and Uwaifiokun was crowned as the Oba of Benin. Meanwhile, his brother Ogun was still alive.⁸ It was said that Ogun continued wandering from place to place, until he came across people who helped him develop mystical power and he learnt the art of herbalism and was able to use the charms he acquired to command the obedience of the spirit. On a particular evening, tradition has it, that he struck a leopard and snake, used the animals as sacrifice for his own safety and with the sacrificial snake and leopard, he prayed to gain the throne which his younger brother was occupying.⁹ With the sacrifice, Ogun was said to have promised the gods and his ancestors that in the event of gaining the throne from Uwaifiokun, he would make it a

point of duty to sacrifice a leopard and the serpent at the end of every year. With the help of Emotan, Ogun succeeded in eliminating his brother, Uwaifiokun and he was crowned the Oba with the title “Ewuare N’ Ogidigan”. On ascending the throne, he fulfilled his promise by celebrating with a live leopard and serpent every year and henceforth. The ceremony eventually named “Igue festival” came into existence’. Despite the controversy generated by the origin of this great festival, in Odionwere era, although in a less ostentatious, grandiose and flamboyant style, however, the emergence of Oba Ewuare the great in the 15th century witnessed some innovations that expanded the Igue festival. The importance and significance of this festival in Benin kingdom in the period before European conquest in 1897 as would be shown later span through political, social, cultural, religious and economic spheres.¹⁰

Igue Festival Up to 1897

Igue festival reached its peak or climax in the period before the European conquest in 1897¹², during this period, it was said to be celebrated during the Georgian month of September to climax a series of ceremonies including Ughiodudua, lkpolti. Egute, Ehor Ugioro, Ugigunorsiokuo and Ihiekhu.¹¹ The Igue festival was celebrated with much pageantry cows, goats, fowls, leopards and other animals were slaughtered to placate the spirits of the departed Obas and the numerous gods of the people. Human sacrifices were also made during the period of Igue festival. Infact, it is said before the European Era, the number of human beings slaughtered during the period of Igue approximated in quantitative terms to that of the lesser animals.¹²

The festivals are a seven days event with the combination of nine major ceremonies viz: Otue-Ughieroba, Ugierhoba, Ughie iron, Utuelguoba, Igue Oba, Igueirien, Ugie Fmobo, Igue-wbioha, Igue Edohia and Ugie Ewere. These ceremonies carry on their tail performances that are both presentational and representational. It begins with the anointing of the Oba's head with chalk signifying purity and the blood of the sacrificial animals slaughtered after which the Otue Ugierhoba is an occasion when all the chiefs with individual groups of dancers go to the palace to greet and pray for the Oba in preparation for the subsequent ceremony-Ugierhoba. At this time, chiefs dress in their full ceremonial robes according to their ranks Ugierhoba.¹³

Ugierhoba

During this colourful and special ceremony, homage is paid to the spirit of the departed Oba. It was during this event that the ceremony shifts from the main palace to the Ugha-Erhoba, the ancestral hail. It features traditional dance displayed by the chiefs. The most colourful ceremony of the Igue festival, Ugierhoba provides an opportunity for the chiefs to renew their allegiance to the Oba and to seek his favour, loyal citizens are also honoured with chieftaincy titles.¹⁴

Ughie Iron

This ceremony commemorates the battle fought against the restoration of the monarchy in Benin by some elders led by chief Ogiarnen. Ugie iron features a mock battle between the Oba and the elders represented by the Uzarna.¹⁵

Otue Iguoba

During the Otuelguoba, the Oba gives the Kolanuts to his chiefs in order of hierarchy. The Ekoko masquerades from Ule village, whose cult is connected with the Oba Ewuare and his mother, appear to bless the Oba. The Ekoko is a ritual masquerade in which for fourteen days before their appearance, the high priest performs all necessary rituals and the priestess of Ekoko prays for the Oba, and after the prayers, all the members of the masquerade takes turns to greet the Oba. This act is to wish the Oba well in all his endeavours especially in the performance of the Igue festival.²¹

Igue-Inene

This part of the ceremony is exclusively for the members of the Oba's family (Ihogbe) and some important chiefs. It is held at the Oba's harem and celebrated by the yes of the Oba. Cows, goats are slaughtered during this ceremony.²²

Ugie Emobo

This is usually celebrated at the palace main gate to a pavilion of red clothes. It is used to drive away all evil spirit still unsatisfied by the year's sacrifices. During the celebration of Ugie Ernobo, all chiefs and palace functionaries are to be in attendance.²³

Igue Edohia

This is the day all the people of Edo perform their individual worshipping of their heads. In this ceremony, there is always dancing and singing.

Ugie Ewere

The Ugie Ewere is the final ceremony of the series of festivals. It is one of peace and light-heartedness, following more solemn of the ritual year. Ugie Ewere is the festival of the Ewere leaves, a symbol of good luck and joy. It is the most popular of life heralds the dawn of a Benin year, new vow, newness of life and freshness of life. A new hope for the future.²⁴ The citizens drive away evil spirits from the city with fire bands. They sing “Ubirie” and dance to the nearest shrub land in the early morning to collect the Ewere (Holy leaves) singling “Ewere Ewere no oyoyo’. Those who collect the Ewere leaves cut a piece of it and put it on their foreheads and give a piece of the leaf to anyone as a mark of blessing and good luck. The Igue festival ends with the Ewere ceremony, when the leaves are finally given to the Oba in a joyous mood.²⁵

Nature of Igue Festival in Benin

It could be argued, the Igue festival, got to its peak before the conquest of Benin Kingdom in the 1897. Thus, during their period, the Igue festival played a key role in their socio-political, religious and economic life of Benin kingdom. From the cultural point of view, the Igue festival in the pre-colonial period proved to be a period to display the unique cultural heritage of the people, during this period, Benin traditional regalia and beating of the royal drums was usually displayed. In this, the Oba and his chief’s dresses in elaborate traditional attire, gathered before the people of Benin and the chiefs display their ceremonial swords, Eben.²⁶ Moreso, the traditional dances displayed by the chiefs during the Igue festival shows the cultural prowess of the people. Socio-politically, the

Igue festival is an eloquent testimony to the preeminent position enjoyed by the Oba. The festival is centered around the Oba. It was during the Igue festival for instance that chiefs review their allegiance to the Oba.

According to Phillip Koslow in his book, *Benin, Lords of the River*, “Due to the powers of the Oba, a number of ceremonies were designed to reinforce the aura surrounding the Oba. These were the only occasions on which he allowed himself to be seen by the people, who would come to the capital by thousands from the surrounding countryside, among this greatest occasions were the Igue festival”.²⁷ Thus, Igue festival reinforce the socio-political pre-eminence of the Oba during the period before colonial interlude.

Furthermore, the Igue festival reinforces the solidarity and nationalism among the Benin people. It gave them the belief that they belonged to a single monarch. Thus, Igue festival could be said to have promoted unity among the people. The celebration of Igue festival provides room for socialization in which stories about the deities, past heroes are told by the elderly people to their young ones and this enables the younger generation to learn such traditions and pass such information to the upcoming ones. Through such socialization, the traditions, cultural as well as religious lives of the people are maintained.²⁸ Interestingly, the period of Igue festival was as it is, still a time of great economic boom for the Binis and their surrounding neighbours. Agricultural productions such as yam, kolanuts, livestock like fowls, goats, were usually sold at an inflated price

by the producers and sellers of these commodities.²⁹ Moreso, the Oba and his chiefs enjoy plethora of gifts and presents from his subjects.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it could be seen that the Igue festival, inspite of the fact that its origin, like most important phenomenon, has generated controversy among scholars, its significance and importance in the great Benin kingdom especially during the pre-colonial period is not in doubt. Infact, during this period, when Benin was a sovereign kingdom and its Oba at the helm of affairs, the great Igue festival got to its peak, and its sufficiently demonstrated above, played key role in the socio-cultural, political, and religious and economic life of the kingdom. This festival that was usually celebrated with great pomp and pageantry objectify the fact that the Benin kingdom evolved a great civilization which centers on the Oba. However, from 1897, after the British invasion and conquest of Benin, and the subsequent deportation of Oba Ovonramwen, followed by the suspension of the monarchy, this great festival as we would see in the succeeding chapter, entered into a period of precipitous decline.

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CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE IGUE FESTIVAL

Introduction

This chapter seeks to examine the Social-cultural and economic impact of Igue festival, that creates social changes in the lives of local people, improvements in infrastructure, lifestyle changes etc. Economic impact can be quantified in terms of monetary benefits and overall economic development of the Benin society.

In recent years festivals are being used for promoting tourism. It helps in boosting the economy. This time-limited event encourages visitors to visit the place during the events. During the event, visitors have a unique chance to interact with the local community, gaining a deeper experience of the ambience, customs and local culture.¹

Igue festival is celebration of art and culture, song, dance, custom masquerade display and tradition of Benin. Igue festival could be a Global tourist destination, if properly annexed and given the needed publicity through the mass media and other socio-media plat-forms.²

Impact of Igue Festival for Tourism:

According to B.W. Andah, “Toruism connotes the main the mobilization of people’s cultural and natural resources, especially those aspects which make people unique from other people, Viz...” by cultural resource, one may refer to those rich, material and non-material attributed acquired within a given society and which can be

transmitted from one generation to another.³ Among some of these festivals, belief, dance, diet, architecture, wood working, metal working, stone working, law etc.

There are some other cultural resources which may appear as artifacts of different kinds. Monumental building and shrines. Others have been recognized as part of culture because of their importance in society. This has to do with features and landscapes. Most of these cultural resources form centres for tourism/tourist activities.⁴

As regards to the present work, the central point is Igue institution, and tourism development in Benin City. From our earlier studies, one could understand that the main role of Igue “in tourism development is focused on the festival associated with it in which people come from far and near. It has been mentioned that the occasion of the outing ceremony of the Igue festival, both the returning from, and going back to the spirit world ceremony which is commemorated with elaborated festivals. Among the Benin people in particular, one of the greatest feasts of the Igue festival which is of great tourism importance is the Traditional display and dancing competition.⁵ This celebration occurs around December once every year after they must have returned around journey.

This feast is the grand-finale of Oba appearance because immediately after it, the Oba will climb the throne hills in an atmosphere of great and descend once more into the land of the dead. The main stage of this festival is located at the Oba palace. On such days, people from far and wide are invited and entertained lavishly. Photograph masquerades are also taken and their music recorded and stored in various forms. The mask photograph and image are of great importance to the tourists. Of great tourism

importance are the houses and groves of the Oba during the festival. L.C. Eke Chukwu noted that “among the cultural site resources which help in the promotion of Nigeria are archaeological sites, historic site, museum and monuments, sacred grove (which include Oba palace, groves and shrines)”.⁶

Igue festival attracts tourists to visit the place Of Benin City. According to the E. F. Iyoba says that festivals can lengthen tourist seasons, extend peak season or introduce a “new season” into a community. Events such as Igue festival do not only serve to attract tourists but also help to develop or maintain a community or regional identity. It is also important to note that Igue festival is seasonal and religious Ceremony.⁷

Igue festival has a highest share in tourism which foreign tourist visits the ancient Benin. With others tourism destinations make Benin City one of the most visited states in Nigeria in turn making Benin City a place to be reckon with, when it comes to Tourism. The state has well developed social physical and industrial infrastructure. That all of great tourist attractions, the most famous being Igue.

Fig: 1



Picture Showing the Late Oba of Benin receiving royal Greetings during Igue Festival in Benin Kingdom

Igue festival attributed economically to the ancient city of Benin. According to chief Obanor Nosayaba asserts that “to local business, Igue festivals were considered as a market for service Igue festival was an opportunity for commercial stalls, booths, merchant, tents and activity areas, including the provision of music and artistic expression. Provide an excellent sitting for the introduction of new kinds of services to customers; festivals include a variety of offers”.⁸ However, the variety of offers tends to draw consumer with many different lifestyles and shifting preference which can, among other things, lead to problems of safety for festival participants. Culture and traditions of Igue festival are being filtered by the international interest in their culture. This enhances the residents of the Benin’s pride and promoted the preservation and cultivation of the local culture. Igue festival is celebrated in Benin for by the people or residents. The Oba,

send invitation to his British friends before the festival. Thus Igue festival helps in promoting and preserving the traditions and culture of ancient Benin.⁹

Igue festival attracts journalists and other opinion leaders. For these audience festival are a media-event, generating an opportunity for a magazine or a new story, such stories may be different from the destination's typical media frame i.e. the way in which it's regularly covered in the news media.

Benin is a city with number of restaurants and hostels with variety of foods. During Igue festival hotels and restaurants are open over night. The income generated during this festival get doubled or tripled. Visitors from the city and from other cities visit the Oba palace to see the decorations, lighting. It requires the food and beverage service there are hundreds of stalls serving food, tea, coffee and drinking water. The stall owners replied that they earn over 50,000 per night. Hotel owners on the main city roads provide information that it was peak time for their business. It provides 3 times more income than other days of the year.¹⁰

Igue festival also promotes the town and region on a much wider scale. Igue festival is a buzzword and are being used a tool to market Benin culture and to entice tourists. However in doing so, a process of education is required for the local community in understanding the benefits that tourism can bring to Edo people. There is a general lack of awareness of the attributes and facilities with the areas that can be marketed.¹¹

During palace festivals and ceremonies especially when the Oba or monarch observes the annual ceremony called Igue, the City of Benin or Benin Kingdom is a place

worth visiting during this period the palace ground and other parts of the city are tastefully decorated with collaboration from corporate bodies, Government agencies, individuals, and multinational operating within and outside the kingdom.

At the accessions, the Oba and other celebrants made up of the Oba's family (Ihogbe), chiefs, and other palace functionaries are gorgeously dressed with elaborate adornment of beads, customized flowing garments and headdresses. There are variation in the size, decoration and colours worn by them depending on the social standing or hierarchy.

As earlier observed, tourism is the exhibition of culture. To this end, it is worth mentioning that Nigeria and indeed Benin kingdom are endowed with numerous and diverse tourist attractions which are categorized into natural (eco-tourism) and man-made resources Benin traditional art objects, the production centres at Igun street, the new carving centres that emerged since the reign of Oba Eweka II when the carvers relocated from their traditional base at Igbe sanmwan street, the Benin artistic museum where some of the Benin art work are kept for the viewing public as well as other numerous galleries and artistic museums that have these treasure of time scattered all over the world, full into this category of man-made resource attraction. The conquest of Benin kingdom in 1897 led to the seizure of treasures by British soldiers that soon became the most highly prized of all African art, their value undiminished to the day.

The three art traditions of Benin kingdom and their factors of production which include their production materials and methods, working environment comprising the

workshops, shown rooms or galleries can meet the desires or galleries can meet the desires and aspiration of her numerous visitors if the art tradition are well developed, equipped with modern state of the art recreational facilities and the entire art business is properly managed and Preserved. A lot of people travel to obtain service from the Benin art works.¹² For example, scholars visit art museum and galleries worldwide where Benin art can be consulted and if possible purchased in search of information. Art collectors are not left out as travelers continue to visit the production centres and showrooms to buy and commission the production of specific works of their choice to adorn both private and public place. There is however, room for improvement if the facilities and conditions of service/ production are improved upon. This brings to mind the issues of climate and facilities development in Benin art.¹³

As the writer has earlier noted, tourism is also boosted by researchers and scholars (both local and foreign) who travel far and wide in search of knowledge concerning the Benin culture. To understand these Benin traditional art works, scholars became interested in the social system of Benin. The religious and leadership systems were of particular focus, the materials, techniques, working condition, facilities, aesthetic and the essence of the artist in the kingdom became very necessary in understanding the objects. An art object could then not be adequately studied and appreciated from its aesthetic point of view only, but also the insights from which they were made.¹⁴

Fig: 2



Picture showing Traditional Dance by the Benin Chief at the Oba Palace during Igue Festival

Activities of Igue festival that might be of interest to tourist:

- i.* Masquerade Display: During the Igue festival the Ekoko masquerade from Ute Village, whose cult is connected to the Oba. Ekoko is a ritual masquerade in which for fourteen day before their appearance the high priest performs all the necessary and the priestess of Ekoko masquerade prays for the Oba and after this prayers, all the members of the masquerade take their turn to greet the Oba. It is to wish the Oba well in the performance of the Igue festival. The function of the masquerade on parade during the Igue festival is also a source of entertainment for visitors.

- ii.* Mock Battle: the essence of this battle was to commemorate the battle fought against the restoration of the monarchy in Benin by some elders led to chief Ogiamwen. Today, Iron features a mock battle between the Oba and the elders represented by the kingmakers (Uzama-Nihinron), the traditional sword “Eba” is used to perform these rituals this is a site of attraction for tourist.
- iii.* Costumes: Costumes make the festival colourful the celebration of Igue festival is apparent in the array of colour. During the Igue Festival the “Umogun” (Oba) dress in his full traditional regalia of beads. This event is usually a spectacle to behold as chiefs in their complete ceremonial robes (white robes from the waist down with bare chests, and beads around the neck and hand), according to the hierarchy in the palace, display their artistic powers to the admiration of all.
- iv.* Dance or Traditional Dance: Igue festival offers an opportunity to display offers an opportunity to display the emblem of the Benin Chieftaincy title Eben during the ugie dance. During this ceremony the chiefs appear in traditional dress in accordance with the type of costume the Oba bestowed on each chief at the time of confirms his title. As the chiefs dance at Ugha – Erhoba they freely display their Eben and make some graceful and stylish steps. Here again, the chiefs individually perform a regal dance called “Esakpaidse” with the royal sword (Eben). This elegant display usually welcomed with “Iyare, Iyare....” Song by the people as the Oba twirls his Eben

in the air. While this is happening, the Omo N' Oba is majestically seated on the Ekete (Royal Chair) placed on the Ogiukpo (platform) of the ancestral alter 'from where the admires the dance steps. One could easily deduce that the chief's dance steps epitomize great chief confer.

The highlight is the dancing of the Oba. The Oba dances majestically and gracefully with his Eben round the sacrificial offerings amid shouts of Iyare! Iyare! from the Chiefs, members of the royal place functionaries and the crowd, then stops and twirls the Eben in homage to the ancestors. Basically, the Ugie-Erhoba rituals are used to make profitation to the spirits of the departed Obas. This part of the festival is worth seeing by visitors or tourists.

v. Traditional Music

Ewini music is very important to reinforce value orientations on Ugie festivals because where Ewini music is employed, people seen ecstantic. The reasons for its employment, and especially the broader purpose which it series, appear to be locked in the sacredness of the music. The songs and instruments used during its performance such as the Emma – Edo, consisting of small drums, egogo (gongs) and Ukuse (maracas). These are musical instruments that are played to give an original perception of royal music during the ceremony and merriment. The significance depends largely on their cultural implication, orchestrated by the tradition of the Benin people. Tourist are interested in this aspect of the festival.

- vi.* The Ancestral Altar:- The Omo N’Oba personally performs sacrifices at the shrine of Aroto (mother earth) to appease the earth deity. At the shrine, the Oba prays with a bowl of Kola-nuts, after which the Isekhure also takes his turn to pray with the bowl of kola-nuts. After the prayers, tradition requires that the Isekhure pick one nut from the bowl and break it. From this broken nut, the Omo n’oba then pick one piece and places it on the ground. Following this act the offered animal for this rite is slaughtered by the Omo n’oba, Ahe (goat) s used for this rite with this rite concluded, the Omo N’ Oba returns to sit on the throne and await the chief’s homage and dances. This another tourist potential of Igue festival.
- vii.* Display of Artwork:- During the Igue festival Art work such as beads, carving, bronze are displayed at the Oba palace, at this time there are fun fair at the palace to display different commodities. The Ugie carnival instituted few years ago has added colour, glamour and Glitz to the festival. Through the street carnival, art exhibition are displayed to the admiration of all. The arts and crafts on display during Ugie Carnival are source of income to the artists. Foreign exchange can be earned from this aspect of the carnival which goes to show that Igue festival is economically viable and profitable.
- viii.* Decorations: During the Igue festival which is a seven days event the Oba palace is well decorated with various artworks, lighting and photographs of the past Oba’s the impact of multinational companies such as MTN, western

Union, Coca cola and Guinness is felt here as they provide the needed materials used and refreshment for visitors.¹⁵

Conclusion

It has been established in our study that Igue festival if well harnessed is a great tourism resources and will help a lot in the forgoing, it can be seen that the greatest aspect of the role played by the festival in boosting tourism development is enmeshed in the elaborate feasts associated with historical tradition of the people of Benin Kingdom in ancient time on such says, people gather from far and near and pleasantries are exchanged. The costume of the Oba and chief are very attractive, Gift of different kinds ranging from money, fowls, sheeps, ghoats, and even cows are given to the Oba. The gathering of people on such days exactly depicts what tourism is all about, as it involve the temporary movement of people or persons from one destination to another.

For Igue festival to become an international brand the government should provide the needed security for the tourists, the celebration of festivals should be incorporated into the development policies of the country, reviving and reviewing the festival of Arts and culture (FESTAC) which is one of the means of advertising and promoting the key concept of traditional festivities the role of the mass media is also important to give the festival the needed publicity.

Endnotes

1. E.B Eweka, *Evolution of Benin Chieftaincy Titles*. (Benin City: Uniben Press).
2. *Ibid.*
3. Interview, with Chief Nosayaba Obanor, Ages 65, Traditional palace Chief, Benin City, 15/08//2023.
4. Interview, with Mr. Nosa Enadeghe, 50 Oba Palace Liberian, Benin City, 17/08/2023.
5. Interview with, Mr Oghogho Evis Osaze, 45, Oba Palace Assistant Liberian, Benin City, 17/07/2023.
6. *Ibid.*
7. J. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin* 4th (ed) (Ibadan University Press, 1968).
8. *Ibid.*, p.9
9. Interview with, Chief Osamudiamen Eribo, 62, Odionwere of Aruosa Street Benin City, 10/07/2023.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. Interview with, Mr. John Oviesu, 64, Igun Bronze Caster, Igue Street, Benin City, 1/08/2023.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

From the preceding chapters, it is seen that the Benin kingdom in the period before the European incursion evolved a unique and impressive civilization, which centered on a potentate, the Oba, and formed the pivot of administration, integration and social control, the giver and interpreter of laws. The leadership this potentate provided was effective and indispensable to the smooth civilization thrived by the Benin people. Since social discourse was not alien to the people of Benin during this period, there existed a number of grandiose and flamboyant festivals among which the great Igue festival stood out.

The Igue festival is a spiritual and indigenous event celebrated yearly in Benin from time immemorial to thank Osanobua for a fruitful year and to reinforce the pre-eminent position occupied by the great Oba. Indeed, due to the powers of the Oba, a number of ceremonies were designed to reinforce the aura surrounding the Oba. These were the only occasions on which he is seen by the people especially the common people. Igue festival could therefore be said to be one of the most important and the most widely celebrated amongst the numerous festivals in the kingdom and thus formed the heart and soul of Edo Nationalism.

Although the origin of their great festival is still bedeviled with controversies, claims and counter-claims, historical records still give room for plausible conclusion which is that the Igue has been celebrated in the Benin kingdom from time immemorial,

although in a less flamboyant and grandiose way. however, the innovations of the Great Oba Ewuare in the 15th century launched the Igue festival into the path of its greatness and from this period the Igue festival got to its peak and played a significant role in the socio-political and economic role of Benin.

Infact, during this period, before the colonial rule, the Igue festival was so significant that no proper discussion would be made in the history of Benin without making reference to its significance. It was celebrated with much pomp and pageantry. Cows, goats, leopards, and indeed other animals were slaughtered to placate the spirits of the departed Obas, the plethora of the gods of the land and to pray for the sustenance of the ruling Oba. During this time, the great Igue festival had enormous significance in the sociopolitical and economic organization of Benin kingdom during the pre-colonial Era. It is not just a period to show-case the pre-eminent position occupied by the Oba in the kingdom; but also, the Igue festival provided a perfect opportunity for the various titled chiefs to re-affirm their allegiance and commitment to the great Oba.

Igue festival also reinforces solidarity and nationalism among the Benin people. Indeed, this festival that was usually celebrated with great pomp and pageantry objectify the fact that the Benin kingdom evolved a great civilization which centered on the Oba. Little wonder, the festival got to its peak during this period before colonial interlude. However, from 1897, after the British invasion and conquest of the Benin kingdom, and the subsequent deportation of the Oba Ovonramwen and the suspension of the monarchical system of the Benin kingdom, the great Igue festival, as though ii was

obeying the law of motion, entered a precipitous period of decline. The Igue festival during the colonial period, up to this present time, therefore became a shadow of itself.

The reasons for this, as can be clearly seen from our research is the conquest of the Benin kingdom by the British in 1897 which led to the colonization of the Benin kingdom and the subsequent suspension of the monarchy, the later reduction and demystification of the power of its monarchy, the rapid influx of Christian religion, especially the Pentecostal type of Christianity and the Western influence it brought did much to ensure the decline in the significance of the Igue festival. Thus, colonial rule and its hangovers, especially the emerging Pentecostal type of Christianity all germane when discussing the reasons for the declining of the Igue festival.

Interestingly, in spite of this decline of significance, the Igue festival is saddled with, it is still an eloquent testimony to the fact that the great people in the era before colonial interlude evolved a sophisticated and elaborate sociopolitical structures with unique festivals and cultures. It is still a period to showcase the unique cultural heritage of the people of Benin. This is no doubt a great potential for tourism. The government should therefore harness this great tourism potentials of the Igue festival and use of opportunity it presented to turn the lives of the people around economically and also to create additional revenue for the Edo state government.

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Festus Omoruyi,	54yrs,	Traditional Palace Chief,	Benin City	28/07/2023
Obanor Ogieva,	67yrs,	Traditional Palace Chief,	Ere, Benin City,	21/07/2023
Obaro Osamudiamen,	67yrs,	Traditional Palace Chief,	Benin City	28/06/2023
Omorodion Eghosa,	67yrs,	Retired Military Officer,	Igun, Benin City	21/07/2023
Osaro Omogiava,	56yrs,	Traditional Palace Chief,	Benin City	23/07/2023
Osaro Oroboa,	56yrs,	Civil Servant,	Benin City	23/06/2023

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