

## **Regaining the Lost Heritage: A Critique of the Revival of Igue Festival in Benin, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract:**

This research work focuses on Igue festival in Benin Kingdom from the period when it was at its peak up to when its significance began to witness serious decline. In that regard, this research is particular on the period from 1897 up to the present day, when the Igue festival entered a precarious state of unpardonable decline after the invasion of Benin Kingdom by the British. It will also look at some possible practical suggestions in making sure that the festival does not go into total extinction.

**Keywords:** Heritage, Revival, Igue Festival, Decline, British

### **Introduction**

There is a general belief that Benin Kingdom operated and still operating a unique and impressive socio- political and economic organization which revolves around the Oba as the supreme head of the Kingdom. The sophisticated socio-political civilization was characterized by a grandiose of festivals among which Igue Festival stood out. This work would therefore examine the origin of this festival and its nature and significance up to 1897 and when it started to decline. It is our contention that although, the origin of the Igue festival like most important phenomenon in history, is not certain, it was a significant event in the history of Benin Kingdom which played a pre-dominant role in the socio-political, cultural, and religious lives of the Bini people. Thus, Igue festival reached its climax in the period up to 1897.

The aim of this research work is to examine the declining significance of Igue festival in Benin. In an effort to achieve this aim, the objectives would be;

- i. To reconcile the conflicting arguments surrounding the origin of Igue festival.
- ii. To examine the reasons responsible for the decline of Igue festival
- iii. To examine the impact of western influence in the decline of the Igue festival.
- iv. To suggest ways on how the festival can be revived to regain its lost glory.

The significant of this work is that it will serve as an additional source of material to other scholars who want more information on the given topic

### **Origin of Igue Festival, Stages and its Celebration up to 1897**

Igue festival has proven to be a significant festival in the history of the Benin Kingdom and in the lives of the people during the pre-colonial period till present time. To this great people, it meant a period of giving thanks to Osanobua (God) for the gift of life; and also to 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 Otue-Ugierha begins (Osarumwense 2014). Igue festival played a great role in the kingdom especially before the invasion of Benin Kingdom by the British in 1897. The origin of Igue festival is not really easy to trace and has caused quite a great intellectual debate among writers/scholars. Again, there are scholars who are of the opinion that Igue Festival has been celebrated by the Binis 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*, he reiterated that Igue Festival has been celebrated in Benin from time immemorial (Ero, 2003). He is of the opinion that the festival could be traced to the Odionwere period, during which the position of the Odionwere (Eldest of the Elders) was celebrated because he rose to become the most senior among the Owere (Elders). 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 (Ero, 2003). This making of sacrifices by the Odionwere became the beginning of the Igue festival.

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 has done it. 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 (Ero, 2003)

This annual celebration continued up to the period of Ogisos era and during that time, the festival was not fixed on a special month but instead, on the very month the Ogiso was crowned (Ero, 2003). But with the emergence of the Oba dynasty, the Igue festival became an event celebrated between September and October every year (Ero, 2003). Other notable Benin historians have argued that the Igue festival was the brain child of Oba Ewuare the great. According to E. B. Eweka, Igue Festival is a festival heralding good luck and it began in the era of Oba Ewuare the Great who reigned over Benin during the 15<sup>th</sup> century (1440-

1473). There is a prominent account in Benin history which traced the origin of Igwe festival to the events in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. According to this account, the death of Oba Ohen in the 14<sup>th</sup> century that was characterized by 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 wander from place to place. This political lacuna worsened the problems of the Benin people, there was political unrest and as a result of these predicaments and after the oracle was consulted 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 who was 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 (Eweka, 1992). It was said that Ogun continued wandering from place to place, until he came across people who helped him develop mystical power and 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 (Egharevba, 1968).

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" (Osazuwa, 2017). On ascending the throne, he fulfilled his promise by celebrating with a live leopard and serpent every year and henceforth, the ceremony eventually named "Igwe festival" came into existence (Osazuwa, 2017).

Igwe festival has been celebrated for a long time, even during the Odionwere era, although in a less ostentatious, grandiose and flamboyant style, however, the emergence of Oba Ewuare the great in the 15<sup>th</sup> century witnessed some innovations that expanded the Igwe 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.

Igwe festival reached its climax before the European conquest in 1897 (Osazuwa, 2017) during this period, it was said to be celebrated during the Georgian month of September to climax a series of ceremonies including Ughiodudua, Ikpoleki, Egute, Ehor Ugioro, Ugi gunor Isiokuo and Ihiekhu (Patrick, 2017). Igwe festival was celebrated with much pageantry and animals like cows, goats, fowls, leopards and other animals were slaughtered to placate the spirits of the departed Obas and the numerous gods of the people (Ayeni, 1975). Human sacrifices were also made during the period of Igwe festival. Infact, it is said that before the European Era, the number of human beings slaughtered

during the period of Igue festival approximated in quantitative terms to that of the lesser animals (Ayeni, 1975).

The festivals is a seven days event with the combination of nine major ceremonies viz; Otue-Ughieroba, Ugierhoba, Ughie iron, Utue Iguoba, Igue Oba, Igue irien, Ugie Emobo, Igue-wbioha, Igue Edohia and Ugie Ewere. These ceremonies carry on their tail performances that are both presentational and representational (Ayeni, 1975). 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 which 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/ regalia according to their ranks (Infoguidenigeria, 2016).

**Ugierhoba:** During this magnificent and colourful ceremony, homage is paid to the spirit of the departed Obas. It was during this event that the ceremony shifts from the main palace to the Ugha-Erhoba, which is the ancestral hall. 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 and loyal citizens are also honoured with chieftaincy titles.

**Ughie iron:** This ceremony commemorates the battle fought against the restoration of the monarchy in Benin by some elders led by chief Ogiamen. Ugie iron features a mock battle between the Oba and the elders represented by the Uzama palace chiefs (Eweka, 1992).

**Otue Iguoba:** During the Otue Iguoba ceremony, the Oba gives the Kolanuts to his chiefs in order of hierarchy. The Ekoko masquerades from Ute 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 (Ayeni, 1975).

**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 wives of the Oba. Cows, goats are slaughtered during this ceremony (Nevadomsky, 1993)

**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 (Igbinidu, 2016). During the celebration of Ugie Emobo, all chiefs and palace functionaries are to be in attendance (Osemwengie, 2017).

**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 "XXX Oyemwe" meaning "I serve my head in a joyful mood" (Eweka, 1992).

**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 all that heralds the dawn of a Benin year, new vow, and newness of life and freshness of life. A new hope for the future (Igbinidu, 2016). The citizens drive away evil spirits from the city with fire bands. The sing "Ubirie" and dance to the nearest shrub land in the early morning to collect the Ewere (Holy leaves) singing "Ewere Ewere no Oyoyo". Those who that collect the Ewere leaves cuts a piece of it and put it on their foreheads and giving 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 (Ero, 2003).

**Significance of Igue Festival in Benin.** Igue festival got to its peak before the conquest of Benin Kingdom in the 1897. Thus, during this period, the Igue festival played a key-role in the socio-political, religious and economic life of the people 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, and during this period of celebrations, Benin traditional regalia and beating of the royal drums was usually displayed. The Oba and his chiefs dresses in elaborate traditional attire, gathered before the people and the chiefs display their ceremonial swords, (Eben), (Osakpolor, 2016). In addition, 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 pre-eminent position enjoyed by the Oba. The festival is centered on the Oba. It was during the Igue festival for instance that the chiefs review or renew 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" (Osakpolor, 2016). Thus, Igue festival reinforces 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 respected and maintained by all (Koslow, 1996).

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 produce such as yam, kolanuts, livestock like fowls, goats, were usually sold at an inflated price by the producers and sellers of these commodities (Ede-Oghogho, 2016). During this period, the Oba and his chiefs enjoy plethora of gifts and presents from his subjects.

### **The Declining Period of Igue Festival**

From the above findings, it is seen how Igue festival, which is an annual cycle of rituals and rites are performed to purify, strengthen and emphasize the mystical powers of the Oba and Benin kingdom got to its peak and played a significant role in the socio-political and economic organization of the kingdom during the pre-colonial period. However, after the British invasion of Benin in 1897, Benin kingdom was captured, its monarchy and its paraphernalia of government suspended. Consequently, Igue festival thereafter entered a sharp period of decline in terms of significance to the people in particular and the kingdom in general. Therefore, this work will not be complete if the nature and reasons that has contributed to the declining significance of the festival as well as the different arguments among scholars as to whether the significance of Igue festival is in decline or not are not well articulated.

Igue festival as an annual celebration in Benin Kingdom is said to be as old as the kingdom itself (Ede-Oghogho, 2016), though the festival is actually still celebrated till today but not as glorious as before the British invasion. Before the British conquest, the significance of the Igue festival as was sufficiently demonstrated in the work is not in doubt and is generally accepted by all. However, recently, there have been arguments amongst scholars as to the importance of this festival. One school of thought argued that Igue festival is no longer as significant and relevant as it used to be, and therefore entered a period of decline following the changes brought about by the British conquest and the subsequent colonial rule that followed. While others maintained, that Igue festival has not declined in anyway, in spite of colonial rule.

To begin with, there are observers who asserted that Igue festival has declined greatly in its significance especially as a result of the changes brought about by the British conquest of Benin Kingdom in 1897, the subsequent colonial rule that followed the reduction of the powers of the Oba and the expansion of Christianity especially the Pentecostal type of Christianity. Thus, Ekpenede Idu is of the opinion that:

The present day Igue festival is a shadow of its former glory and the present format of Igue is very different from that of 1896. The Igue Uhun mwen used to be stepped in mystique and the rites and rituals were hidden from the public. But when the Christians and other enemies of the Oba within continued to accuse Oba Eweka II of performing human sacrifices, he decided

to make the celebration and rituals of Igue public (Edeghogho, 2016).

The above assertion could be construed to mean that the Igue festival in the post 1896 has declined greatly in its significance and has lost its true essence.

On the other hand, some observers have maintained, dismissing as an error in conclusion, the assertion that Igue festival has declined. Thus, Aiko, in an interview, argued that:

Igue festival as a spiritual festival has not in any way declined in its significance, in the sense that whatever needs to be done within the house, family and especially within the palace is still being done. There is no reduction or decline in any way (Igbinidu, 2016).

It would therefore be an aberration for anyone to conclude that Igue Festival has lost its essence, since according to him, the three main things needed for the celebration of Igue in house, which is coconut, kolanut and cock is still being used for the necessary things (Igbinidu, 2016). Conclusively, he argued that Igue festival could not be said to have declined in anyway.

Whatever these arguments are, whether they are correct or not, Historical records suggests that there is a great distraction or decline in the significance of Igue festival, presently, especially when compared to what existed in the pre-colonial period. In the first instance, the advent of the British rule brought so much disaster to the throne of Benin and hope was almost lost as to whether Benin would ever have its Obaship (Obobaifo, 2017). Note that Igue festival revolves around the Oba. The British conquered Benin and exiled its monarch to Calabar (Obobaifo, 2017). Benin kingdom, therefore lost its grandeur and monarch almost extinct. In such a situation, Igue festival which as pointed out in this work revolves round the Oba, could not be celebrated without the Oba, even if it was, it would be on a very low key. Igbafe reported that:

The deportation of Oba Ovonramwen and the stripping of that institution of most of its ancient privileges, there began a decline in the privileges of the Benin monarchy (Igbafe, 1979).

The invasion by the British adversely affected the celebration of Igue festival even up to this present time. As at the time of the restoration of the Oba in 1914, things had already begun to take a new turn. Benin was at this time clearly under the British jurisdiction, with the Oba as a puppet or a figure head, and due to some deliberate policies and restrictions geared towards demystifying the Oba and reducing his authorities, Igue festival during this time continued to witness sharp decline (Igbafe, 1976). In 1917, Chief Agho Obaseki, the then Iyase and prime minister of Benin Kingdom was said to have converted to

Christianity which made him to refrain from all traditional practices, the most important of which were the palace rituals (Omorogieva, 2017). This conversion of the Iyase, as records show was to affect greatly the celebration of Igue festival during this period. In 1918, the Oba as a result of this and other skirmishes refused to perform the Igue festival with the claim that he cannot perform it without his Hale (Igbafe, 1979). This again dealt a severe blow to this great event and its significance.

While the colonial rule period progressed, Igue festival which had already begun to decline continued without stop. Due to the pressures from the British colonial government and some of the allegations from the newly Christian converts that human beings were being sacrificed during the celebration of Igue. Oba Eweka II introduced new reforms into the Igue Festival and such reforms include making all the rituals done during the Igue festival public (Igbinidu, 2016). By implication, most part of the Igue festival which was hitherto done in the night became afternoon affairs. This has reduced the mystery and importance of the festival.

In addition to the reforms made by Oba Eweka II as a result of the allegations of some Christians and pressures from colonial government that made the Oba publicize some of the important sacrifices and rituals performed during Igue which has reduced its very essence. The proliferation of Christianity in Benin especially the emerging Pentecostal type of Christianity whereby everything is considered diabolical is also a factor in the reduction. The Igue festival has continued to decline in its significance (Igbafe, 1979). Infact, many Christian families in Benin today do not celebrate this great Igue festival because of the fact that they are Christian adherents and would be considered as idolaters should they participate in the celebrations and rituals of the Igue festival (Igbinidu, 2016).

The cumulative effects of all these are that Igue festival, to a great extent, lost its essence and significance in terms of committed participants. To say then that Christianity, especially the emerging Pentecostal type of Christianity has contributed greatly to the decline in the significance of Igue be stating the obvious.

Amongst other things, rapid urbanization, industrialization and expansion of Western education is said to have contributed its share or quota to the decline that Igue festival is saddled with today (Ede-Oghogho). Firstly, the wave of the rapid migration by sons and daughters of Benin with the aim of searching for greener pastures in other parts of Nigeria in particular and the world at large has further ensured that most citizens of Benin are not usually around during the celebration of Igue and therefore, do not participate (Ede-Oghogho). Some who had acquired western education, instead of participating in the celebration of this great festival with pride, has actually looked at it with disdain. All these have actually reduced the natives of Benin participation in the celebration of Igue festival. And herein lies the decline in the significance of the Igue festival.



Interestingly, the decline in the significance of the festival can be seen from the fact that during the pre-colonial period, Igue was celebrated with total restrictions to strangers and foreigners, but this is no longer the case presently as many foreigners troop into the palace to celebrate or witness the festival (Omorede, 2017). In fact, it was reported that the period of the celebration of Igue in pre-colonial times was uncompromising and spiritually adhered to (Osarumwense, 2014). It was during this period that the British attempted to visit the Oba. This attempted visit was declined and when an effort was made to impose the visit, the party involved were ambushed and dealt with seriously (Osarumwense, 2014). This set a stage for the conflict between Benin and the British which led to the conquest of Benin. Thus, it could be concluded safely that the Benin people due to the significance attached to the festival during the pre-1897 guided and protected the rules of the festival, so much so that they did not mind if it would cause confrontation with the British. This is no longer the case, because many foreigners and strangers take part in this festival. Infact, some rules guiding Igue festival has been relaxed which has further fostered its decline in significance.

Thus, for all these reasons, highlighted above, the great Igue festival has continued to decline in its significance especially when compared with what was in place during the pre-colonial period. However, it is also important to point out that inspite of this precarious decline in the significance of the festival; it has continued to serve other purposes in Benin in this contemporary period. First and foremost, the present Igue festival serves as an eloquent testimony to the fact that the Benin in pre-colonial period thrived a unique socio-political and economic structure. It is also a period to showcase the various unique cultural inheritance of the people. For instance, it was the only period when the Oba dresses up in his full traditional regalia (Ede-Oghogho, 2017). These, to a large extent, testify the grandeur of the Benin monarchy during the pre-colonial period. Furthermore, Igue festival presently serves as a tourist attraction and therefore a source of revenue for the residents of Benin and its environs who engage in businesses during this period.

**Suggestions on how the festival could regain its lost glory:** Some of the practical suggestions we thought could help revive the festival with a view to regaining its lost glory, and they are;

Firstly, the Oba of Benin Kingdom and major stake holders in the kingdom and in the diaspora should focus more on how to channel their contributions to the welfare of the people by way of using the period as an opportunity in helping one another. Secondly, the festival should be used as an avenue to offer scholarships of different categories to indigenes of the Kingdom who has done so well in their various schools or endeavors. Thirdly, the period of celebrating Igue festival should a time to reach out to the widows, less privileged and people with various degrees of disability. Fourthly, Debates amongst school children in Benin should be organized by the palace and topics to be discussed

should strictly be related to the history of Benin kingdom and various prizes be given to the winners and this by no means will boost the popularity of the festival

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing discussion, it could be seen that Igwe festival, in spite of the fact that its origin, like most important phenomenon, has generated controversy among scholars, its significance and importance in great Benin kingdom especially during the pre-colonial period is not in doubt. In fact, during this period, when Benin was a sovereign kingdom and its Oba at the helm of affairs, the great Igwe festival got to its peak, and as it sufficiently demonstrated above, played key role in the socio-cultural, political, religious and economic life of the kingdom. This festival that was usually celebrated with great pomp and pageantry objectify the fact that Benin kingdom evolved a great civilization that centers on the Oba.

However, from 1897, after the British invasion and conquest of Benin, the deportation of Oba Ovonramwen, and the suspension of the monarchy, this great festival as we would see in this research, entered into a period of precipitous decline (Osarumwense, 2014).

The reasons for this decline have been sufficiently illustrated above. But, it is important to note that, it is not the intention of the present writers to demystify this great festival, but to show how the festival has changed in its significance presently especially when compared with the pre-colonial Igwe. Nevertheless, in spite of this conspicuous decline, Igwe Festival still serves other important purposes. First it serves as important evidence to the fact that Benin Kingdom thrived an impressive socio-political structure, it is a period to showcase the enormous cultural inheritance of the people and the only period when the Oba dresses up in his full royal regalia.

It is also seen that Benin kingdom in the period before the European invasion evolved a unique and impressive civilization, which centered around 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 Igwe festival stood out (Osarumwense, 2014).

The Igwe festival is a spiritual and indigenous event celebrated yearly in Benin from time immemorial to thank Osanobua (God) 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. Igwe 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 (Osarumwense, 2014).

Although the origin of this great festival is still bedeviled with controversies, claims and counter-claims, historical records still give room for plausible conclusion which is that Igue festival has been celebrated in Benin kingdom from time immemorial, although in a less flamboyant and grandiose way in recent time. However, the innovations of Oba Ewuare the great in the 15<sup>th</sup> century launched the festival into the path of its greatness and from this period Igue festival got to its peak and played a significant role in the socio-political and economic role of Benin.

In fact, during this period, before the colonial rule, Igue festival was so significant that no proper discussion would be made in the history of Benin without making reference to its significance. It is not just a period to show-case the pre-eminent position occupied by the Oba in the kingdom; but also, 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 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 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 it 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 emergence Pentecostal type of Christianity all germane when discussing the reasons for the declining of the Igue festival, (Obobaifo, 2017).

Interestingly, in spite of this decline of significance, the festival is still an eloquent testimony to the fact that the great people of Benin in the era before colonial interlude evolved a sophisticated and elaborate socio-political 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 these great tourism potentials of Igue festival and use the 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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