

## INVESTIGATING INTO *IMO-OKA* CULTURAL FESTIVAL WITH AN EYE ON FAITH-CULTURE DIALOGUE

**Evaristus Ifeanacho, PhD**

Department of Religion and Human Relations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka  
eo.ifeanacho@unizik.edu.ng

DOI:10.13140/RG.2.2.30371.98087

### **Abstract**

*Imo-Ọka festival which is celebrated every year by Awka people is gradually being misunderstood due to infiltration of agents of vandalism. Sequel to that, the festival that is supposed to create peace and conviviality, often times generates fracas. More so, the younger generation seems to be totally ignorant of the history of the festival. Such ignorance is evident in the fact of not knowing that man is naturally astride of two cultures: the divine culture and the temporal culture. The temporal culture is that into which one is born and consequently forms the foundation of one's life and ultimately of a people. On the other hand, the spiritual culture has to do with the way they commune with the divine Being independent of what name they call it. The way of communing with transcendent varies from place to place. It makes for a beautiful diversity that abhors monotony. The researcher therefore called for a faith-culture dialogue in order to eradicate the conflict that exists between the Christian faith and Imo-Ọka festival. The researcher employed the qualitative method of sourcing information through literatures, journals and interviews which helped in unravelling the inner content of Imo-Ọka festival and established the possibility of its dialogue with Christian faith. The research unveiled the rich content of this festival and how its richness could be better preserved and how the aspects that no longer cohere with the signs of the time could be transformed or chiseled out.*

**Keywords:** *Imo-Ọka*, festival, faith and culture, dialogue, inculturation

### **Introduction**

Every religion exhibits a kind of protectionism that presents a seeming superiority towards others. Such is most experienced between Christianity and other traditional religions or heathen practices. But the Church must go out and encounter others in order to be true to her name and mission. The Church cannot be missionary unto herself; she must reach out. The first step of reaching out is that understudying a particular culture or cultural festival in order to be truly and fully abreast with its content and avoid reacting out of ignorance or exaggerated misconception. It is necessary to be armed with such disposition in order to be fully grounded regarding the history, content and teaching of such cultural festival. Such was the pastoral methodology of the Fathers of Church in the face of Greco-roman cultures.

It is important to note that man is generally astride of three patrimonies: the genetic, spiritual and cultural patrimonies. Each person has a genetic patrimony (Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) deriving from the genes of the parents that eventually determines the character of the person. This is a natural hereditary given of each individual. Such DNA accounts in the long run for the family traits that gives one a family identity be it in his/her physiognomy and in his/her general mode of behavior. The

spiritual patrimony on the other hand accounts for one's relationship with the divine which is most often influenced by one's family religious background. It eventually determines whether one becomes a Christian, (Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal etc.) a Muslim, a Traditional Religionist, Buddhist, Hinduist etc. The cultural patrimony refers to those cultural elements inherited from one's father/male ancestor. According to UNESCO, it has to do with traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts. (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>) It represents the idea that the tangible and intangible culture of a specific social group is its property, owned collectively and passed on from one generation to the next. According to UNESCO “intangible cultural heritage” means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention#art2>). The intangible aspect of cultural patrimony/heritage goes to shape one's self-identity, self-esteem and relationship with others.

### **Cultural festival: inner logic**

Every culture reflects a people's beliefs, abstract values and overall perception of the world (weltanschauung). This is manifested in their rituals, symbols, festivals etc. Cultural festival falls within the category of the tangible aspect of a culture but with a mixture of the intangible feature within the conceptual framework. Traditional festival reflects a complete embodiment of the manifestation of a people's culture. Such festival is celebrated with a particular season of the year to re-echo a message be it sad or joyful in a people's traditional history. In that regard, Nsofor and Maduakor (1979) maintain that “festivals in Igbo society are...periods set apart by communities or groups of individuals for commemorating important events which may be connected with homage to God, gods, ancestors and spirit or they may be connected with the transition from one season to the other...in almost all case, festivals are part of these commemorative events and rituals overtones can be detected in majority of these festivals” (p.43). There is always something to celebrate in the life of a people. That is why every town or even village has some festival that recalls of particular event in their history. For Onyeneke (1987),

every Igbo community whether at the village group, village or major lineage level occasionally observes festivals. They are public celebration of events considered important and of high value by community. Events that invite public celebrations may be those of life crises of individual birth, puberty, marriages, title taking....death, celebration, marking the farm cycles of planting and harvesting and the veneration of local deities personal 'chi' (gods as personal spirit) and the community ancestors.

In fact, festival as Basden (1960) observes is characterized by “dancing, music, feasting and general manifestation of pleasure and enjoyment with congratulations for the years past and good wishes for the year ahead.” However, it goes beyond that. Apart from the feasting and merriment that go with such celebration, it is more fundamentally a time to have introspection into the spiritual message like unity, togetherness, friendliness etc. that such festival portends. It is such message that really gives a more enduring meaning to the whole celebration. Mbiti (1986) aptly expresses the beneficial role of festivals when he affirms that,

Through festivals the life of the community is renewed. People are entertained, and their tensions find an outlet. Festivals also bring together the people as a group, thus strengthening their unity and cohesion. Religious and social values are repeated and renewed through communal festivals. Artistic talents are utilized to the full, in the form of art, music, drama and oral communication. Where the festivals involve beliefs concerning the unseen world, the link between human beings and the spirits is renewed (p.137).

In a similar vein, Ezenagu (2014:43) maintains that festivals “are entertaining events which offers opportunities for celebrating and learning age long traditions. It makes a people a homogeneous community and provides an avenue by which the people can be identified. They represent an invaluable and priceless heritage by which the image of the people can be reflected.” All in all, such traditional festivals are cultural entertainment that helps to display the cultural endowment of a people to the outside world. In as much as, it demonstrates a way of honouring the gods it more particularly goes to strongly deepen social ties among people.

### ***Imo-Ọka (Awka) festival: getting to know more***

*Imo-Ọka* festival stands as a prominent event in the cultural identity of Awka people. It is a yearly event that remains very significant for Awka community. According to Nwosu (2015), it really plays a focal role in encouraging identity, unity and continuity among the people of Awka community. The *Imo-Ọka* festival is marked by a series of cultural activities embellished with cultural rituals and symbolic gestures that go to reflect the shared history and values of the Awka community (Nosike, 2024:27).

Ọka people before the arrival of Christianity were adherents of traditional religion. There are several indigenous festivities that are embedded in the practice of traditional religion. Each month of the year is marked with one feast or the other. In the words of Okafor (1992) “every month of the Oka year had a Feast attached to it, by which the month was known.” All others had one Feast or to other attached to them. However, with the passage of time, and most especially with the embracing of Christianity most of those feasts faded into oblivion. It is the *Imo-Ọka* festival that is still largely celebrated. In the traditional calendar of Awka people *Egwu Imo-Ọka* falls on the *Ọnwa nbu* which is the month of May in the Gregorian calendar.

To fully understand the festival of *Imo-Ọka* it is important to go to its origin. History has it that Awka is known for blacksmith and woodwork. Nmah (2016) noted that before the advent of the British people in 1905, Awka people were known for their resourcefulness, inventive skill and for their bravery. Their inventive skill is evident in iron, copper and bronze work. They are professional blacksmiths known for the production of hunting

implements like spears and arrows, weapons of war like guns and knives, musical instruments like metal gong. Such skill disposed them to defend their territory when there was external invasion. In fact, at that time they were surrounded by other towns that were threatening their security. According to Okafor (1992) among the ancient people that inhabited the neighbourhood of Awka and equally menaced their security were: Umuezekwu, Abo-Enugwu, Umuokwa, Nwolu, Uvume, Amantogwu, Inyi, Ntoko, Norgu. But these peoples were effectively resisted and driven away by Awka people.

Nonetheless, in tracing the origin of *Imo-Ọka*, the Umuezeukwu appeared to be the first remembered because of the attendant death of Nomeh. Umuezeukwu was known because famous native doctors originated from there. So when Nomeh, a most beautiful daughter of the Awka people fell sick, some native doctors were invited from Umuezeukwu to cure her. Unfortunately Nomeh died in the process. The Awka people got highly infuriated believing that Umuezeukwu had murdered their daughter. Consequently, they launched an attack on Umuezeukwu and eventually defeated and scattered them. Thus, Nomeh was buried at the point that is today regarded at the shrine of *Imo-Ọka*. In fact, the *ọlulu Imo-Ọka* (the grove of *Imo-Ọka*) is actually the point where she was buried.

Later, the spirit of Nomeh began to haunt her Awka relatives. They believed that she was angry because her life was abbreviated before marriage and thus she died childless. Moved by the desire to appease her spirit and to stop the continual haunting of the living, the Awka people had to travel to Idoma land, particularly to Akpoto who were reputed native doctors. Akpoto literally means we-have-entered. History has that in 1830 Lander brothers (John and Richard Lander) were in Nigeria to study the river Niger. They travelled the surrounding towns. It was during this period that they went to interact with Igu people presently called Igbira Koto located in the present day Kogi State. When the local people caught sight of the white men, they started shouting Akpoto, (A-kpo-to), Akpoto, Akpoto, ... which means "we have entered". They erroneously thought that the white men came for war; and gripped by fear they exclaimed that they had entered trouble. Consequently, the Lander brothers recorded all the people in that region as Akpoto people because of the similarity of their language (Adojoh, 2020). Akpoto is today regard as derogatory. But according to Okpeh (2007), one certainty can however be risked and that is: the term 'Akpoto' may well be of a geographical application describing a kingdom of that name. This kingdom must have covered the entire area presently occupied by the various ethnic groups in the Benue valley region. The people of this kingdom must have also been known and referred to as Akpoto.

They invited a group of them to prepare some traditional medicine that could appease the spirit of Nomeh. When the Akpotos arrived, they prepared the medicine: the *Akwali-oda omumu umuoka*, that is, an *akwali* to bring fertility for *Umuoka* and ward off evil. This *akwali* was located at the exact burial point of Nomeh. Hence the *akwali* from that moment was regarded as *Akwali Umuoka* or *Imo-Ọka*, that is, the goddess of fertility for Awka people. Sequel to that, the evil that bedeviled the town owing to the death of Nomeh was averted. In remembrance of that, the Awka people began to celebrate it as a deity of fertility and the festival is carried out every year. Akin to that is the story of *Enwe Imo-Ọka* (monkeys dedicated to *Imo-Ọka*) which refers to the important role monkeys played in alerting Awka people about enemies that ambushed to invade Awka. Upon reception of that alert, the Awka people were able to launch an attack and defeated their enemies.



Consequent upon that all important role, monkeys were from then regarded as a sacred animal that could not be killed by Awka people in remembrance of a sentry role that it played. Such respect is accorded some other animals like tortoise, python, cow etc in some other towns depending on the role they played in their history. It is never worship. Following the restoration of calm in Awka, those native doctors that came from Akpoto were not allowed to depart for Idoma land for fear that they could replicate the same medicine for another people who could then become more powerful than Awka people or by so doing even reduce its effectiveness. As a result of that, they were entreated to settle in Awka town and carry on with their trade as native doctors. Later, Awka people became wary of them account of their proficiency in strong medicine. Consequently, they were relocated and settled in Ọkpụnọ. With the passage of time, the Akpotos expanded in numerical strength and thus became a large community. Hence the name Ọkpụnọ-Ọkachi that is, Ọkpụnọ settlement brought about by the Awka people (Okafor, 1992).

With the passage of time, the craze of Neopaganism made an influence on the celebration of the festival of *Imo-Ọka*. In recent time, leadership tussle regarding which village should carry out the role of the chief priest dealt an unhealthy blow on the celebration. It even resulted in some killings that marred the original spirit of the celebration.

Evidently, the celebration of *Imo-Ọka* reflects a moment in the history of Awka people. It was a moment the people of Awka sought for a way of calming the spirit of *nwa-ada* Awka that wreaked havoc in the town. The main preoccupation was to douse the heat of the havoc and restore peace. The means known to them at the time was the fetish method that was provided by the medicine men from Akpoto. It is similar to one who invites a priest to pray for a deceased whose spirit disturbs the family or the neighborhood. In most cases, the priest after praying installs a crucifix on the grave as a sign of Christ that conquered death and resurrected on the third day. In the light of that, it does seem right to regard everything pertaining to *Imo-Ọka* festival as heathenish. It is therefore pertinent rather to think of a faith-culture dialogue. The Church must go out to listen to people's culture, study it and dialogue with it. A blanket condemnation may appear an antiquated method of evangelization. Christ himself is the protagonist on inculturation in the way he understood and dialogued with the Jewish culture. The Fathers of the Church toed the same line.

### **Appeal to Patristic antiquity**

Gregory the Great was one of the Fathers of the Church that used persuasive approach in his missionary encounter with the Anglo-Saxons. In fact, his attitude towards paganism was not of total condemnation but persuasion. He believed that when they are thus liberated, they can be reconciled to Christ through the profession of the Christian faith. Within the circumference of this broadminded approach is the insistence on respecting the culture of the people but without compromising the faith. Consequently, since the culture of a people carries with it their overall world-view, evangelization has to employ culture. Such accommodation will help in the acquisition of the proper knowledge of the culture in order that the Gospel can take root in it. Gregory manifested the importance of employing the culture of the people as a vehicle for the transmission of the Gospel message. When the Gospel encounters a new culture there are always new cultural perceptions with their attendant problems that challenge the faith and which the pastor of souls ought not disregard. Addressing these new cultural challenges does not lessen but

strengthens and solidifies the content of faith. The one faith has to find a home in different cultures in order to purify them from within.

It is indubitable that even if he destroyed the external superstructures of paganism, the internal religious beliefs that had taken strong root with the passage of time could not be easily demolished. For, as Mayr-Harting (1991:29) affirms “old religious instincts do not die easily. The application of force even strengthens the defensive fortresses of the mind because people naturally take pride in their culture or even cultural festival. No amount of ridicule or unguarded discourtesy can guarantee a sudden shift of cultural position. Only a seasoned evangelization through unprejudiced but patient preaching and enduring catechesis can achieve that end. Use of force risks implanting a superficial faith. Thus Gregory the Great (2004) instructs that,

the temples of idols in that nation should not be destroyed, but that the idols themselves that are in them should be. Let blessed water be prepared, and sprinkled in these temples, and altars constructed, and relics deposited, since, if these same temples are well built, it is needful that they should be transferred from the worship of idols to the service of the true God; that, when the people themselves see that these temples are not destroyed, they may put away error from their heart, and knowing and adoring the true God, may have recourse with the more familiarity to the places they have been accustomed to (11,56).

In a similar note, Gregory (2004:11.56) in the same spirit of encouraging evangelization through dialogue with culture upheld that the pagan feasts, solemnities and sacrifices should not be abolished but transformed into Christian religious celebrations. Such transformation has to be a patient exercise laden with a prolonged catechesis. For it is undoubtedly impossible to cut away everything at once from hard hearts, since one who strives to ascend to the highest place must needs rise by steps or paces, and not by leaps. Gregory's tolerant disposition in his process of cultural adaptation in the evangelization of English people is the fruit of the inspiration he drew from the sacred Scriptures in Israel's encounter with God. God allowed the Israelites, Gregory explains, to make use of the same sacrifices, which they were accustomed to offer to the idols. This accommodating spirit was with a view to generating in them a personal conviction towards a sincere but solid change of heart. Such conversion of heart will have to “omit some things in the sacrifice and retain others, so that, though the animals were the same as what they had been accustomed to offer, nevertheless, as they immolated them to God and not to idols, they should be no longer the same sacrifices.”

Nevertheless, inasmuch as he was zealous for the conversion of the pagans, he was also fully aware that it had to be a gradual process. It is always difficult to estrange a people from their native religious culture. To attempt such estrangement would be to foment a religious crisis of an unimaginable extent. The approach has always to be as insistent as it is broadminded, as tactical as it is dialogical, as charitable as it is persuasive. The new methods according to Markus (1963) “to be adopted by the mission were to take account of the deeply-rooted popular cults, and, as far as possible, to accommodate them.” This new attitude reveals the fact that the bedrock of Gregory's missionary activity in England and elsewhere can no doubt be the pastoral concern for the good of souls. The pagans were thus treated and addressed charitably. When they were thus placated and pacified, when their temples were so honoured and appreciated, their acceptance of faith would assume a natural process. This accommodating spirit goes to manifest the dynamism of Gregory's

pastoral strategy. It is a strategy that is elastic in its approach and responds to the signs of the time.

In fact, one who engages in the work of evangelization as we could decipher from Gregory's elastic attitude need not be too drastic but has to weigh the situations at hand and react accordingly. Borrowing from St. Paul, Gregory (1979:6,35,54) maintains that a successful step in the process of the propagation of faith calls for "being all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:2). This broadminded disposition does not however entail relegating one's integrity to the background but it rather involves a humble condescension that will help in understanding the culture of those being evangelized, with the aim of allowing the Gospel message to transform and elevate it. Be that as it may, Wood (1994:12) observed that Gregory's remarkable modification in his missionary strategy remains crucial for the harnessing of the theoretical and practical aspects of evangelization.

Therefore, it was not an imposition of the faith but an evangelization that listened to the cultural background of those being evangelized. Such attention to the local culture also requires the maintenance of adequate pastoral elasticity when needed. He increasingly discouraged the use of force or any other form of constriction as a means of conversion. Rather, for Gregory, the Gospel has to be preached through charitable means and above all through the testimony of life.

### ***Imo-Oka: the meeting point with faith***

The meeting of two cultures, for example, the divine culture (faith) and temporal culture (in this case *Imo-Oka*), is most often fraught with conflict and tension. The tension is consequent upon the divergence in their objective. The former has a transcendent goal; the latter, though ultimately geared towards the supernatural, is more so weighed down by its earthly ties since it has to do with man's way of life. In this meeting of the two cultures, the Church in all her apostolic endeavours insistently and tirelessly continues to combat the worldly cultures that go against the divine culture. Such is the experience when *Imo-Oka* meets with faith in which Christianity (faith) does not aim at bringing a totally new culture but it rather renews, rejuvenates and purges the *Imo-Oka* festival.

Eliade sees the secret of the success of the spread of Christianity in Europe as being the church's success in taking over the images and myths of Europe and raising them to a higher level (1961:160, 161). Pre-Christian elements were clearly preserved and raised to a new level. In this way, Richards (1980) observes that,

Christianity had over the centuries become adroit at absorbing many of the most obvious pagan festivals, symbols, holy places and deities. It was official church policy to turn pagan temples into Christian shrines and convert their festivals into Christian celebrations. This was encouraged both by St. Augustine of Hippo and by Gregory himself in his famous instructions to Augustine of Canterbury. Pagan wells were renamed for Christian saints. Many of the old pagan temples were converted and re-consecrated as churches, the most famous conversion perhaps being that of the Pantheon in Rome into the church of St. Maria ad Martyrs by Pope Boniface IV (p.20).

More so, the Christian solemnity of Christmas witnessed a similar cultural transmutation. A situation where a pastor of soul incites the overzealous faithful, through his preaching, to indulge in a desecration of the sacred geography of the Traditional Religionists is a total

negation of what evangelization is all about. Worst still, a wholesome iconoclastic tendency against their religious artefacts in the name of bringing them to the faith is nothing but an uninformed method of spreading the gospel. Such bespeaks of a breach of religious freedom. Such pastors must as a matter of urgency be reminded of the words addressed by John Paul II (1982) to the Bishops of Nigeria,

The Church truly respects the culture of each people. In offering the Gospel message, the Church does not intend to destroy or abolish what is good and beautiful. In fact she recognizes many cultural values and through the power of the Gospel purifies and takes into Christian worship certain elements of a people's customs. The Church comes to bring Christ; she does not come to bring the culture of another race. Evangelization aims at penetrating and elevating the culture by the power of the Gospel (n.3).

Therefore, John Paul II (1998, n.71) affirmed that “the Gospel is not opposed to any culture, as if in engaging a culture the Gospel would seek to strip it of its native riches and force it to adopt forms which are alien to it.”

In short, the missionary activity is primarily concerned with preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth. To achieve this, imminent cultural problems could be obviated if the pastors of soul are groomed and properly abreast with the unavoidable necessity of spreading the faith in the perspective of culture.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Culture and religion have an intermingled co-existence that cannot be bifurcated. Faith cannot be lived out in a vacuum but within a cultural ambient. Evidently, the spiritual journey towards eternal life is done in the everydayness of our cultural existence; which also involves our way of communing with the Supreme Being. This research observed that the festival of *Imo-Ọka* remains a part and parcel of the cultural history of Awka people. However, there is need for faith-culture dialogue in order to reform some cultural aspects and even uncivilized additions that are no longer congruent with the signs of the time. There is need for an informed understanding in order not to condemn it totally as heathenish. As Nmah (2016:85) recommended, in respect of *Imo-Ọka* festival, there should be reformation by the Church and the natives to make it entertaining, informative and educative. Religious education is also suggested, because of its transforming, empowerment, changing, self-discovering, and capable of killing ignorance associated with dark ages or ancient rites.

There is need for an open mind instead of antagonistic or narrow-minded disposition. That demands a prolonged catechesis that will persuade those devoted to *Imo-Ọka* to be open to dialogue. More so, the Church has to be dynamic, patient and motherly in her evangelization process. For in the words of Gregory the Great (2004:11,56), “it is impossible to cut away everything at the same time from hardened minds, because anyone who strives to ascend to the highest place, relies on ladders or steps. He is not lifted up in one leap.”

Further still, just as shrines during the early Catholic evangelization were converted into places of worship without destroying the shrines, in the same way since *Imo-Ọka* has to do with fertility and restoration of peace and more so since the festival is celebrated in the



month of May, it could be converted into a grotto of Our Lady. It however demands a prolonged faith-culture dialogue geared towards deepening of the faith through a better understanding of a people's culture.

## References

- Basden, G. T, (1966). *Niger Ibos*. London: Frank Cass.
- Eliade, M. (1961). *Images and symbols*. London: Harvill.
- Ezenagu, N., (2014). Harnessing Awka traditional festival for tourism promotion. *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol.2. No.5, pp. 43-54.
- Gregory the Great (1979). *Moralia in Iob*. Adriaen M. (ed.). Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 143.
- Gregory the Great (2004). *Registrum Epistularum* (The Letters of Gregory the Great) 11,56, vol. 3. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.
- John Paul II, (1982). Address to Bishops of Nigeria. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- John Paul II, (1998). *Fides et Ratio*. (Encyclical on Faith and Reason) Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Kirby, J. Sts. Peter and Paul, the True Romulus and Remus (<https://www.ncregister.com/commentaries/sts-peter-and-paul-the-true-romulus-and-remus> accessed 22/7/2024).
- Lineamenta ad Synodum Pro Africa Celebranda. In Palermo, S. (ed.), *Africa Pontificia*, vol.2, Roma, 1993.
- Markus, R.A. (1963). The Chronology of the Gregorian Mission to England: Bede's Narrative and Gregory's Correspondence. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* XIV, Cambridge, 16-30.
- Mayr-Harting, H. (1991). *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, London: B. T. Batsford.
- Mbiti, J. (1986). *Introduction to African Religion*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- Nmah, P.E., (2016). Christianity and Awka socio-religio-cultural identity crisis: areas of conflict. *Ogirisi: A New Journal of African Studies*, vol. 12.
- Nosike, J. et al. (2024). Christianity and Culture in Awka Town: A Critical Review of Imo-Oka (Awka) Festival and Its Effects on Christian Witness in Awka Town. *International Journal of Religion and Societal Development*.
- Nsofor and Maduakor (1979). Traditional Festivities of Anambra State, Enugu: Cultural branch information unit cabinet office.
- Nwosu, C. (2015). The role of traditional festivals in promoting cultural identity and unity: A case study of Imo-Oka (Awka) Festival in Awka Town, Anambra State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(2), 69-77.
- Okafor, A. (1992). *The Awka People Onitsha*: Chudo Graphic Prints.
- Okpeh, O.O. (2007). Origin, Migration and settlement of the Idoma. In Y. A. Ochefu and T. A. Varvar (ed) *A history of the peoples of Benue State*, Makurdi: Aboki Publisher, 2007, p.56
- Onyeneke, A. (1987). *The Dead Among the Living: Masquerades in Igbo Society*, Nigeria: Asele Institute.
- Richards, J. (1980). *Consul of God, the Life and Times of Gregory the Great*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

UNESCO. Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention#art2>

UNESCO. What is Intangible Cultural Heritage? <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>.

Wood, I. (1994). The Mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English, in *Speculum* 69.