

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE RENAISSANCE OF IGBO TRADITIONAL RELIGION

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Abstract

This paper examines the Igbo Traditional Religious Renaissance, a revival of indigenous beliefs that transforms the cultural and spiritual landscape of the Igbo people in Nigeria. It investigates the implications of this resurgence on cultural identity, religious practices, and social cohesion. Through field research and historical analysis, the study demonstrates how the revival of traditional beliefs challenges Christianity's dominance while fostering a renewed Igbo identity. Additionally, it examines the relationships between traditional practices and contemporary social issues, with a focus on rituals, community engagement, and moral teachings in the context of globalization and pluralism. The paper argues that this renaissance serves as both a means of cultural preservation and a framework for navigating modernity, enriching communal and spiritual lives. By employing qualitative methodologies, this study contributes to the discourse on the resilience of indigenous belief systems and underscores the importance of cultural heritage in the quest for identity in a globalized world.

Keywords: Implications, Religion, Renaissance, Traditional

Introduction

Religion is a vital aspect of human existence (Oguechuo, Nweke, 2025). For the typical African, religiosity is not an isolated activity but a defining characteristic of identity and existence. Specifically, among the Igbo, traditional religion remains a vibrant and functional belief system. It plays a pivotal role in shaping moral values, social conduct, and communal cohesion, thus serving as a central pillar of their cultural and spiritual orientation. The Igbo people exhibit a deeply rooted religious consciousness, characterized by an acute awareness of the sacred, a firm belief in the existence of a supreme deity, God the creator, and a recognition of the spiritual realm. Oguechuo, Nweke (2025) assert "...the belief in the supreme being is a reality, but every religion has its unique way to describe the nature of this supreme being. God is most of the time, the basic object of many religions, and as such, religion could also be defined in terms of the worship of God"(p.34). This religious sensibility fundamentally shapes their interaction with the divine, guiding their worship practices and their understanding of life's origin and purpose (Chukwu, 2018). Notably, Igbo traditional religion is not an isolated system but is intrinsically interwoven with cultural practices, making their cultural identity and religious devotion mutually reinforcing in their approach to Chukwu, the ultimate source of life. Igbo traditions are predominantly transmitted through oral means rather than written texts, relying on the dynamic interplay of storytelling, music, ritual festivals, and spiritual beliefs to sustain cultural continuity across generations. These practices encompass a complex system of reverence for both higher and lower deities, belief in spiritual entities, and recognition of a supreme being. Central to this worldview is the ancestral veneration, which reinforces communal identity and moral values.

In recent years, the Igbo people have experienced a significant revival of their traditional religious practices, a phenomenon characterized as the Igbo Traditional Religious Renaissance. This resurgence represents not merely a nostalgic return to ancestral ways but an active re-engagement with spiritual and cultural paradigms that have the potential to reshape contemporary Igbo identity. Historically marginalized by colonialism and the subsequent spread of Christianity, Igbo traditional beliefs have persevered and evolved, finding new expressions amid the complexities of modern life.

This paper aims to investigate the implications of this renaissance on various aspects of Igbo society, exploring how the revival of traditional religious practices intersects with cultural identity, social cohesion, and responses to globalization. Over the past several decades, there has been an increased interest in indigenous religions as practitioners seek to reclaim their heritage and assert their cultural uniqueness in a world dominated by monolithic global influences. The exploration of this dynamic

underscores the resilience of the Igbo people as they navigate the tensions between traditional and modern expressions of religion.

Methodology

This work employs both the primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary sources of information were drawn from group discussions, interviews, and the researcher's personal observations of events. Secondary sources of information were obtained from textbooks, journals, and other relevant but unpublished materials. The primary sources were used to determine why there is a renewed interest in traditional religious practices among Christian faithful, as observed in the present time. It is then necessary to interview people, especially adherents of African Traditional Religion and some members of the Christian faith. It has been observed that there is a decline in the participation of the youth in the church, while they record massive turnout in traditional festivals and participation in masquerades. The secondary sources, which include journals, textbooks, and other unpublished works, are utilized because previous research has been conducted on the topic in question. It is pertinent to consult such materials to gain insight into the opinions of other researchers on the topic in question.

Conceptual Clarification

Igbo Traditional Religious Renaissance

The Igbo traditional religious renaissance is conceptualized here as the regeneration, reawakening, and revival of Igbo traditional religious heritage, values, and practices, which have been phased out or relegated to the background by colonization and Christianization (Eze, 2020). The quest for Igbo Traditional Religious Renaissance has become imperative in order to rediscover Igbo traditional values. According to Mbeki in Asiegbu (2010), it aims at reclaiming the pride of the Igbo. This does not imply a return to the glorious and primordial past. Rather, it depicts an attempt to restore the cultural heritage of the Igbo, placing them on par with Western and Asian cultures in a world of globalization. This was brought about by the Igbo predicament between adopting the values of a Western advanced technological society and lifestyle, and maintaining Igbo traditional values.

With the arrival of the missionaries, it became evident that the method of evangelization used by the Igbo failed to respect the cultural context of the Igbo people (Asiegbu, 2010). Nevertheless, the mixture of colonization with evangelization confused the message of Christ with other material and personal agendas. Ezech (2016) put it this way: as salvation from evil and sin was preached on one hand by one set of Europeans, the exploitation of human and material resources to the peoples' disadvantage was carried on by another set. As a result, Jesus Christ, the central figure in the salvation message, came to be both admired and mistrusted.

In addition, the mixture of colonization with evangelization also introduced the idea of supremacy of both European religion and culture over Igbo Indigenous Religion and culture. Ekwunife (2011) describes the relationship between colonial evangelizers and slave nations, particularly in terms of culture and religion, as one of superiority and inferiority in human relationships, and partly in terms of superior versus inferior cultures (p. 67). In terms of race, it could be described as a superior versus an inferior race; in terms of religion and religious practices, the god of slave masters will consistently be regarded in thinking, feeling, and action as the supreme God versus the 'nothing god' of Igbo traditional religion and culture (Ekwunife, 2011). As a result of this, Igbo gods retreated. However, while the gods were on retreat, they left behind their artifacts in the form of the Igbo Indigenous Religion in preparation for a more radical re-emergence.

Furthermore, there were anti-witchcraft cults and the spirit world among various tribes in Igbo land and Nigeria at large. These cults, which often originated from anti-colonial sentiments, were suppressed by colonial authorities and strongly discouraged by Christian missionary activity (Ekwunife, 2011). More recently, they have demonstrated a dynamic return not only in Igbo land but across Nigeria. The cults are not so much a revival of indigenous religious beliefs, but rather a recognition that the old gods never went away. Also, many years after the dissemination of the Christian message by European evangelizers, there is a resurgence of the gods from their retreat in a more subtle and nuanced manner

(Ekwunife, 2011). Christians in Igbo land transposed the paradigm from Igbo Indigenous Religion into Christianity, such that one wonders about the real identity of Christianity in Igbo land.

As Oguejiofor (2001) notes, while the gods of African religion were said to be in retreat, a careful interpreter will notice that while the artifacts of the gods have largely been wiped out, the creedal structure that underlines their relevance has been very largely left intact and has in more recent years been strengthened by a type of Christianity that has now gained overwhelming support in Nigeria. The major effect of the return of the Gods in the form of transposition of categories from Igbo Indigenous Religion to Christianity is that these categories, while remaining African Indigenous Religious paradigms, have been clothed with the garments of Christianity (Oguejiofor, 2001). The negative influence of this is evident in the practice of Christianity in Igbo land today. From the foregoing, it is evident that the return of the Gods is the basis for the revival of Igbo traditional religion.

This concept aligns with the African Renaissance, which Uhuru (2014, p. 54) describes as a vision and mission for change and development premised on the understanding that the future of Africa and the diaspora lies in the fundamental processes of renewal, reinvention, and rebirth. These required changes, according to him, need to occur in people's mindset and world outlook, which in turn requires changes in material conditions as well as in the institutions and processes of intellectual, political, economic, and religio-cultural governance.

From the beginning of Western dominance, some Africans rejected the alien cultural forms imposed upon them by the Arabs and Europeans. Thomas (2015) notes that certain West African societies rejected Christianity. Those cultural groups that rejected Christianity and Islam have been referred to by some practitioners of traditional African cultural forms as the faithful remnants that kept the African gods alive (Thomas, 2015). The African remnants scattered throughout the diaspora and survived numerous attacks from those who promote violence, which is a concomitant of white power. African culture has survived despite the forces it battles on a daily basis. These forces aim to drive black culture and the people who honour their heritage out of existence. The African remnant that survived modernity struggled to keep alive the knowledge passed down to them. Proponents of African culture struggle against those who insist that all people must serve the god of Western imperialism. According to Thomas (2015), the re-Africanization of the black mind gained momentum in the mid-twentieth century, following the emancipation of African nations from European tyranny. The new sense of freedom created mass movements by Africans on the continent and throughout the New World. In Africa, there was a resurgence of African cultural forms, and in the United States, this movement was known as the Black Power Movement (Thomas, 2015).

The revival was strengthened by the realization that there was truly nothing to be ashamed of in African culture and heritage; contrary to the European attitude that African people bowed down to idols of blood and stone, and most of what was in African culture was considered bestial in nature (Ugwu, 2008). On the other hand, Onyeidu (2002) objects to that by pointing out that African people do not bow down to stones, wood, blood, or other objects of worship; rather, it was the spirit conceived to be incorporeal and invisible behind these objects that were the target of the worshippers (p.48). Onyeidu (2002) further maintained that this phenomenon is common to most world religions. For instance, no one addresses a Christian or a Judaist in those derogatory languages, even when the crucifix, rosary, and other images abound in their religion. The African God is a God of justice and is not far from Africans because He answers whenever He is called upon to dispense justice. Basden (1966) adds that:

The downright truth is that the Europeans find it difficult to fathom the native mind. They are generally ignorant of the essential spiritual element that will equip them to unravel the intricacies of the native mind and their ancient laws and customs (p. 5).

In Africa, traditional religion is bound with culture. This means that in traditional Igbo culture, life is intricately bound with their religion. To interpret one's cultural life effectively, one's religion must be addressed appropriately. So, the missionaries handed on the baton of hatred for African traditional society, religion, and culture to African Christians. Moreover, as it stands, many Igbo Christians hate any

association with African traditional religious culture because they sincerely believe it to be satanic. Oguechuo, Nweke(2025) " This African Traditional Religion (ATR) has long served as the cornerstone of African spirituality, culture, and identity. Its intricate tapestry of beliefs, rituals, and practices is deeply embedded in the worldview of many African societies"(p.28). Ekwunife (2012) further maintains that the Christians and Muslims deny the votaries of African traditional religion the status of "Supreme God". These so-called world religions apportion to African Traditionalism 'gods' and, at best, call their system polytheistic while claiming monotheism as a fitting term for their system.

However, the Igbo traditional religious renaissance must be situated within the cultural context, which challenges the right of Europeans to impose their cultural and spiritual values on Igbo communities. This cultural project, according to Uhuru (2014), can be traced back to the 15th century, when Europe sought to make Christianity a universal religion in order to contain Islam, African religions, and Asian belief systems. The rebellion of the African masses both on the continent and in the Diaspora against enslavement and against European colonialism was, in fact, a reflection of the struggle for an African recovery and regeneration. This is why, throughout this period, African intellectuals made attempts to assert their African identity and achievements. These were part of the process of the African Renaissance struggle.

In this struggle, Othman (2014) notes that cognizance must be taken of the visionary efforts of pan-African advocates of the 20th century, such as Kwame Nkrumah, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, among others, who offered Africans the right to self-determination. These pan-Africanists, in their quest to emancipate the continent from oppression, mobilized Africans from the Diaspora and within the continent into pressure groups. With steadfastness, they slowly but steadily liberated Africans from the many injustices they were subjected to by the imperialists. African states gradually gained their independence, and the Organization of African Unity, now the African Union, was formed as a recognized global outfit defending the interests of the continent and its people. The struggle, according to Uhuru (2014), took a global approach with the aim of rehabilitating the image of the black man, wherever he may be, as an expression of black identity.

This is the right step in the right direction, especially at this period when the African appears to have lost his identity and personality. The African has adopted the garb of modernism and Western civilization to the detriment of his much-cherished African values. As Mavimbela (1998) observes, there is reason to believe that part of the explanation for Asian resilience is that Asian cultures were able to limit the extent of Western influence on their social life. For instance, their written languages and traditions provided a more solid foundation for cultural resistance. They maintained written religious cultures with verifiable histories in Hinduism, Islam, and so on. Cabral (1973) calls it a "return to the source," which for him meant the critical appropriation of the vigour, vitality, and the ebullience of African existence by the assimilated African elites who had been alienated from their source by Portuguese culture and history. It is this memory that was reawakened and reignited by the anti-colonial struggle. In this regard, the major concern of the early pan Africanists, according to Davidson (1994), was to claim for the blacks of Africa as well as of the Americas the same real equality of human values with other people, which was precisely what the black culture of enslavement and imperialism had denied all black peoples. Anyadike (2016) sums up Mbiti's (1982) position on this matter thus:

The traditional cannot be simply pushed away; to think so is an illusion which only succeeds in turning the traditional into a subconscious force, all the more resentful because it is ignored. The best approach is to try to satisfy it by means of modern expressions. This harmonization of the traditional with the modern is called "creative synthesis" which counters the rise of a bastard culture, the main impediment to Africa's advances (p.8)

To some, according to Etuk (2002), the terms "cultural re-birth", "cultural revival", etc., have tended to connote and conjure a deep desire to rediscover and return to the ways of life of Igbo of various communities, for the sake of being authentic Igbo. He recalled that about twenty years ago, it was the philosophy that fired a great deal of nationalism in emergent nations of Africa. This was notably the case in the African nation of Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the strongman used 'authenticity' as an excuse for a spate of persecutions on the Christian church, including compelling

Christians by the nationality law to abandon their Christian names in favour of authentically Congolese names. President Mobutu SeseSeko was quoted by Igodo (2019) as saying:

None of my ancestors had these sonorous first names. I admire those who love and fear God, not the God of Westerners but the Supreme Being revealed to us through our traditions. Thereafter, church newspapers were banned, all confessional organizations were banned, and the Cardinal of the Catholic Church was exiled. The President himself dropped his Christian name, "Joseph," and took on "SeseSeko" because his ancestors did not have the sonorous first names (p.183)

However, it is interesting to note that Christianity has borrowed the lively method of Igbo worship, such as singing, dancing, drumming, and spontaneity. In a bid to revive the traditional justice system, people still consult various deities in their respective communities in Igbo land for unravelling mysteries and settling cases ranging from fraud, land snatching, theft, adultery, murder, and other criminal incidents (Etuk, 2002). They also seek protection, provision, and blessing from such deities. Additionally, most communities in Igbo land observe a day called "Cultural Day" to celebrate the culture and traditions of their respective communities.

On such occasions, traditional dances, songs, masquerade displays, and lectures are observed to remind the people of their history, origin, and identity. From time to time, conferences and seminars are held to educate, acquaint, or remind people of their history, culture, and traditions. For example, the Ahajioku Lecture, held in Owerri, Imo State, every year, commemorates the New Yam Festival (Okafor, 2014). Most individuals in Igbo land now drop foreign names attached to their names in their bid to reclaim their identity and return to Igbo culture. To sustain the quest for the renaissance of Igbo customs and traditions, the culture and traditions of the Igbo people are now packaged in movies, popularly known as Nollywood, for others to watch and appreciate. According to Obiefuna and Aniago (2010), movies transcend cultural boundaries worldwide. African films, which often reflect Igbo (African) worldviews, images, ideas, values, and styles, are watched today by people from other countries, and in one way or another, they have an impact on their psyche. Mbiti (1980) noted that:

The God described in the Bible is none other than the God who is already known in the framework of Traditional African Religion. The missionaries who introduced the gospel to Africa in the past 200 years did not bring God to African continent. Instead, God brought them. They proclaimed the name of Jesus Christ. But they used names of the God who was already known to African people such as *Mungu, Mulungu, Chukwu, Olodumare, Ngai, Asis, Katonda, Jok, Modimo* etc. These were not empty names. They were names of one and the same God, the Creator of the world and the father of our lord Jesus Christ (p.65).

Despite the onslaught of modernity, Igbo traditional religion has survived. The return of the gods who were purportedly in retreat at the inception of colonialism is a demonstration that they never went away but rather went into hibernation, waiting for the right time to counterattack. Oguechuo and Nweke (2025) assert, "Amidst all the negative effects on African Traditional Religion by rationalization, the religion is still waxing strong and finding its place back in the lives of many African people" (p. 33). The much-awaited opportunity appears to have presented itself for an African traditional religious renaissance, as the colonial religions, such as Christianity and Islam, seem to fail to meet some of the people's needs in their host communities (Igodo, 2019). People now seek solutions to their spiritual problems elsewhere, other than the church and mosque. Even the elites and the highly placed in society now resort to traditional means of getting solutions to their problems. It was discovered that politicians, pastors, evangelists, and even the elites now patronize traditional medicine men for solutions to their spiritual problems, which is a clear indication that the Gods have returned (Igodo, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

Identity Theory, notably articulated by psychologist Erik Erikson in the mid-20th century, provides a foundational framework for understanding the complexities of identity formation and transformation throughout the human lifecycle. Erikson proposed that identity develops through a series

of psychosocial stages, each characterized by a central conflict that individuals must resolve to achieve a coherent sense of self. This framework can be particularly illuminating when applied to the context of the Igbo Traditional Religious Renaissance, as it allows for an exploration of how cultural and religious identities are shaped by historical, social, and personal factors.

Cultural identity, as part of Erikson's theory, suggests that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept from the communities to which they belong. In the context of the Igbo people, the renaissance of traditional religious practices can serve as a catalyst for reaffirming cultural identity among individuals and groups. The revival of these ancient practices provides a means for the Igbo to reconnect with their heritage, facilitating a collective sense of belonging and purpose that can counterbalance the influences of globalization and the dominant narratives brought by colonial history and missionary activity.

Moreover, the transformation of identity in the wake of this renaissance can reflect broader societal dynamics, including shifts in community cohesion and individual beliefs. As traditional religious practices gain prominence, they may foster unity among the Igbo, reinforcing communal ties and shared values that have been increasingly challenged by modernity. This revitalization can create an environment in which individuals feel empowered to embrace their cultural roots, leading to a stronger group identity that celebrates Igbo history and spirituality.

Additionally, the renaissance may influence individual beliefs by providing space for personal exploration within a framework of traditional values. This means that as individuals engage with these revitalized practices, they can negotiate their identities in relation to contemporary social realities, thus blending traditional beliefs with modern experiences. The interplay between personal belief systems and communal identity can lead to a rich tapestry of cultural expression, further enhancing the resilience of the Igbo in an ever-changing world.

By employing Erikson's Identity Theory, we can analyze the implications of the Igbo Traditional Religious Renaissance more deeply, considering how these dynamics of identity formation and transformation contribute to a renewed sense of self for individuals and a revitalized sense of community among the Igbo people. This exploration not only underscores the significance of cultural heritage in shaping identity but also highlights the adaptive capabilities of indigenous belief systems in the face of contemporary societal challenges.

The Renaissance of Igbo Traditional Religion

The resurgence of Igbo traditional religion has garnered significant attention in recent years, manifesting through various movements and organizations dedicated to revitalizing indigenous spiritual practices. This renaissance is largely characterized by a collective reawakening among the Igbo people, as they seek to reconnect with their cultural heritage and assert their identity in a rapidly globalizing world.

One prominent movement is the formation of groups such as the Iyalorisa and the Odinala societies, which promote the teaching and practice of traditional rituals, beliefs, and philosophies. These organizations often host workshops, seminars, and cultural festivals, aiming to educate younger generations about the richness of Igbo spirituality. Additionally, numerous public figures and cultural activists have emerged as advocates for the revival of traditional religion, utilizing platforms such as social media to spread awareness and foster community engagement.

Faith-based organizations have also adapted to modern contexts by incorporating elements of Igbo spirituality into contemporary religious practices. This blending often leads to the creation of hybrid forms of worship that appeal to both traditional practitioners and those who identify with Christianity, demonstrating a dynamic exchange that reflects the complexities of modern belief systems within the Igbo community.

Cultural Practices

The renaissance of Igbo traditional religion has led to the revitalization of various cultural practices, rituals, and festivals that hold deep significance for the Igbo people's identity and spiritual life.

These practices often function as a means of cultural expression and community bonding, offering a framework for individuals to connect with their ancestry while navigating contemporary challenges.

Among the revitalized rituals is the *Iwa Ji* (New Yam Festival), a celebration that marks the end of the planting season and the beginning of the harvest season. It is a time for thanksgiving to the earth goddess and the ancestors, involving offerings, communal feasting, and dance. The resurgence of this festival has not only reinforced agricultural traditions but has also fostered communal ties and unity among the Igbo people, serving as a platform for cultural reassertion.

Beliefs surrounding ancestral worship have also experienced a renaissance, with many Igbo individuals actively seeking to engage with their ancestors and uphold familial ties. The practice of *Nso Ani* (rituals honouring the earth goddess) has seen a revival, with families performing rites to seek blessings, protection, and guidance. This practice highlights the importance of ancestry in shaping one's identity and the continuity of cultural values across generations.

In addition to these festivals and rituals, contemporary interpretations of traditional beliefs have emerged, incorporating aspects such as healing practices, divination, and the use of herbal medicine into modern therapeutic contexts. This blend of tradition and contemporary understanding reflects a broader trend of cultural preservation while allowing for adaptations that meet the needs of modern practitioners.

Overall, the renaissance of Igbo traditional religion signifies not just a revival of practices but a profound reconnection with the values, beliefs, and identities that define the Igbo people. As these movements gain momentum, they contribute to a vibrant cultural landscape that celebrates heritage, fosters community cohesion, and empowers individuals to navigate the complexities of modernity while remaining anchored in their rich cultural history.

Navigating Dual Faith: The Coexistence of Christianity and Traditional Beliefs in Igbo Society

In Igbo society, the occurrence of inexplicable misfortunes often prompts the consultation of a diviner, whose role is to determine the underlying cause of the adversity, propose appropriate remedies, or identify those responsible. Notably, some Christians also turn to diviners to gain insight into the origins of past events, understand present circumstances and discover means of preventing future misfortune affecting their personal well-being or that of their family. Through his pastoral engagements with Igbo Christians in Attakwu, located in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State, the researcher observed clear departures from orthodox Christian practices among his parishioners. A pattern of dual allegiance is distinctly apparent, as reflected in their daily choices and conduct, suggesting a blending of Christian faith with indigenous religious beliefs and practices.

A notable incident involved a Chairman of St. Anthony Outstation and Vice Chairman of the Catholic Men's Organisation (CMO) at St. John's Parish, Attakwu, in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. He was reported to have participated in a nocturnal ritual at the village market square alongside adherents of Omenala (traditional religion), where a sacrifice was offered in memory of his late mother, who had passed away over a decade earlier. Significantly, the deceased was known as the mother of a Catholic priest (Mama Fada). News of the incident reached the researcher, accompanied by reports that Omenala practitioners were mocking Christians due to the man's actions. Upon investigation, the allegations were confirmed to be accurate. Consequently, he was suspended from receiving the sacraments and stripped of his leadership roles within the church. The incident provoked considerable controversy within the community. What was particularly striking was his lack of remorse; he justified his actions by asserting that other church members had engaged in similar rituals in the past, and he therefore saw no justification for his punishment.

In contemporary times, it is not uncommon to find individuals identifying as Christians seeking guidance from local deities. Among certain founders of new-generation churches and self-proclaimed prophets, both male and female, there is a widespread reliance on charms in the pursuit of prophecies and miraculous claims. These spiritual figures not only utilise such objects themselves but also prepare and distribute them to their followers and clients. This practice reveals a troubling syncretism, where

traditional mystical elements are integrated into Christian worship, thereby undermining doctrinal authenticity and raising serious questions about spiritual integrity and theological consistency.

Another notable case was reported at one of the outstations, St Mark, located in Amaigbo, Akegbe Ugwu, Awkawnaanaw, within Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. In this community resides a well-known Dibia (traditional spiritual practitioner), Nwafor Okonta, whose services are regularly sought by prominent politicians, businessmen, and even pastors. He is reputed for preparing charms aimed at attracting congregants to churches, enhancing commercial success, and offering spiritual protection. His residence, situated near St Mark Outstation, initially lacked a perimeter fence. Concerned about being publicly identified due to the visibility of his compound, some of his pastor-clients advised him to construct a fence to conceal his activities. However, Nwafor Okonta prioritised completing the structure of his duplex over fencing. Subsequently, these pastors took it upon themselves to mobilise resources and erect a fence around the property. This account, based on eyewitness testimony, raises serious ethical concerns and casts doubt on the spiritual integrity of certain Christian leaders.

Equally troubling is the increasing tendency among some Christians to swear oaths using traditional religious objects or deities, rather than the Christian Bible. They argue that such traditional symbols of authority administer swift and decisive retribution for violations, in contrast to what they perceive as the more forgiving or delayed judgment associated with the Christian God (Chiorazzi, 2015; Iheanacho, 2022). If such trends persist, they may pose significant challenges to the future credibility and doctrinal purity of the Christian faith within these communities.

A case was reported to the researcher by a parishioner of Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Woliwo, Onitsha. She was a salesgirl to one Mr Vitalis, a Christian. At the close of work on a fateful Tuesday evening, Mr. Vitalis raised an alarm that money was missing from his office. He called all his workers and questioned them, but none agreed to have taken the money. A few days later, Mr. Vitalis, a practicing Christian, brought a Dibia called Odunze Njaka to administer an oath for the workers, instead of using or relying on the Bible as a Christian.

In a related instance, a theft occurred in the researcher's home village, Umuokeada Logara in Ngor Okpala Local Government Area of Imo State, involving the disappearance of the community's generator used for water supply. Even though approximately 90% of the residents identify as Christians, the communal response to the incident revealed a complex interplay between religious identity and traditional beliefs. During a village assembly convened to address the matter, opinions were divided: while a few suggested seeking spiritual intervention from Rev. Fr. Edeh in Elele, Rivers State, the overwhelming majority advocated consulting a diviner for a swift resolution. Strikingly, about 95% of those present—including professed Christians—voted in favour of the diviner. This scenario underscores the enduring influence of indigenous religious practices within Christian communities, highlighting a practical reliance on traditional methods in moments of crisis, despite formal adherence to Christian doctrines. Given the above cases, it is evident that there is a problem with the practice of Christianity among the adherents. There is double allegiance, a Christian in the church and an Igbo Traditionalist at home or at night.

Findings

The investigation into the implications of the Igbo Traditional Religious Renaissance reveals significant insights into the complexities of religious identity and cultural practices among the Igbo people. Through various case studies, it is evident that many Igbo Christians are engaging in syncretic practices that blend indigenous beliefs with Christianity, reflecting a dual allegiance that complicates traditional and orthodox Christian teachings. The findings highlight a notable shift in the approaches to spirituality, as individuals often resort to diviners and traditional rituals for guidance and solutions to personal and communal challenges. This phenomenon showcases the resilience of Igbo traditional religion and suggests a cultural renaissance that seeks to reclaim and celebrate indigenous heritage while navigating contemporary societal pressures.

Moreover, the revival of traditional practices has significant implications for community cohesion and identity formation, underscoring the importance of ancestral veneration and cultural continuity. The

resurgence of festivals and rituals, such as the Iwa Ji (New Yam Festival), and practices aimed at ancestral worship underscore a collective effort to reconnect with cultural roots. The acknowledgement of these practices alongside modern Christian practices challenges the notion of a singular religious identity, reflecting a layered understanding of spirituality in Igbo society.

Conclusion

The renaissance of Igbo traditional religion serves as a critical reminder of the intricate relationship between culture, identity, and spirituality in the lives of the Igbo people. This phenomenon is more than a mere revival; it represents a profound transformation in how the Igbo navigate their beliefs amidst globalization and the influence of dominant religions. The persistence of syncretism poses challenges for the integrity of Christian doctrine while simultaneously providing a framework for cultural reclamation and identity affirmation. Furthermore, the simultaneous adherence to traditional and Christian beliefs exemplifies the Igbo people's adaptive capabilities in preserving their cultural identity in a rapidly changing world.

Recommendations

It is essential to implement educational initiatives that promote awareness and understanding of Igbo traditional practices, alongside Christian teachings, to encourage respectful coexistence and appreciation for both belief systems.

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