

OJUDE-OBA FESTIVAL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANITY IN IJEBU-ODE

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Abstract

This research is an investigation into the Ojude Oba Festival and its Implications for Christianity in Ijebu Ode. It is borne out of the observation that this festival is becoming quite popular and indispensable to people of that ancient city. Although a Muslim festival, today its celebration cuts across the various religions in Ijebu land. The concern of this project however is the indiscriminate involvement of Christians in this festival, which in one way or the other encroaching on their services to God and the church. The researcher adopted the historical research design, employing both primary and secondary sources to gather information. Primary sources include oral interview with selected personalities and participant observation by the researcher. Secondary sources include books, journals and the Internet. The study reveals that participation of Christians in the celebration is presently having an adverse effect on Christianity in the land. This is because it usually leads to low attendance in church services; involvement in traditional rituals by Christians, which amounts to syncretism; and often push them into indebtedness due to their lavish expenses during the festival. Consequently, the study recommends that church leaders should emphasize conversion among their members, so as to produce mature Christians who will be able to distinguish between what is worldly and that which is godly. They should also explore how they can take advantage of the period of the celebration to propagate the gospel.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Yoruba communities of the south-western part of Nigeria are replete with many social and cultural festivals. It is observed that while some of these festivals are neutral, some had continually posed serious challenge to Christianity. Ojude-Oba festival is observed to be posing certain challenges to Christianity, especially Baptist work in the land. Some areas of challenges identified include low attendance at church services during the festival, participation of members which usually push them into indebtedness, syncretism and the undiscerning manner by which Christians participate in the festival.

Ojude Oba, a unique tradition durbar held every third day after Eid-el Kabir is reverential to all sons and daughters of Ijebu. On this occasion, Ijebu people wherever they are visit home to reunite with their kith and kin. The age long, carnival has become remarkable.⁴⁸ As Ojude Oba festival matures into a world-class cultural event, the Christian in Ijebu-Ode needs to rise to the challenge by strategizing in order to see how they can use the occasion of the festival to gain back lost ground for Christ.

For a number of reasons, the question of missions and culture is of prime importance. Christianity is itself a culture. When cultures, particularly widely differing ones, impact upon one another, both are bound to be affected. Nothing is more deeply entwined with a peoples' culture than their religious beliefs to which

⁴⁸ Olorogun triumphant entry into Ojude Oba in obanta Newsday Nov-Dec.2007

they have adhered to from time immemorial.⁴⁹ The church need to adopt a faith based social transformation. Faith based social transformation is the process of positively changing an environment for the better using faith-based principles. This includes efforts to positively influence a nation's culture by working to improve the value-based system and ethical mindsets in its key strategic fronts and spheres.⁵⁰ Faith in Africa has been brought through the medium of western/Christian culture. Faith can find a home in an African culture and indeed open up its new home to new challenges. Faith, because it has its own life, its own norms, will necessarily transform the host culture so that it becomes of that culture and yet not of that culture.⁵¹ This is considered the strategy available to the church in Ijebu-Ode and it is believed that if the church could rise to the challenges, there is the possibility of Christians using their participation in this festival to win lost souls for Christ.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Having studied about Ojude Oba and its implication to Christianity in Ijebu-Ode, the following recommendations are made with the aim of advancing the course of Christianity in the ancient city. It is our considered opinion that if these are properly and prayerfully implemented, Christianity will regain its lost ground.

1. It is essential that the leaders of the church emphasis the need for genuine conversion among the members. Also after conversion, quality time should be

⁴⁹ Oyelaran, Paul Kayode, Christianity and socio-cultural Transformation in Africa, in Fatokun S. A. Christianity and African society, Ibadan: BookWright Publishers. 250

⁵⁰ Oyelaran, 246

⁵¹ Oyelaran, 245

set aside to mature the converted ones, so as to make them functional members of the church.

2. As Christian leaders, missionaries and evangelists must emphasis godly standard, they should allow for the leading of the Holy Spirit and Godly wisdom in handling any sensitive case.
3. Church leaders and ministers are the mouthpiece of God, saddled with the responsibility of feeding, nurturing and leading the members. God places many responsibilities on them, therefore the need for them to wake up and intensify the various evangelistic endeavours of the church, to win more souls and thus liberating them from the shakles of Satan
4. The church should focus on discipling her members, through discipleship programmes. A well disciple member will not abandon the church programmes for social event.
5. Christian can use the opportunity of the festival to propagate the gospel. Christian denominations can join forces together to organize open air crusade in the evening of the festival at strategic venue that can pull crowd. Features such as film show and musical display should be the main focus, then a powerful word ministration can be given after the attention has been created.
6. The church and the ministers must be relevant, there is need to be authentic. We need to be disciples before we become ministers. We must first be disciples before our ministry will be authentic and acceptable.
7. The church should engage in social programmes to touch the life of her members and the people of the community. The faith should be made

meaningful to the people. Church should preach, teach and symbolize love. If the church shows and demonstrates the love of Christ, the gospel will be readily accepted and the members will not be in help outside the church.

8. The church needs to teach her member about financial prudence, indebtedness and godly economic wisdom, because this is creating unnecessary burden on the church. If the members are not well taught, it can bring shame and disgrace to the church and an injury to one is an injury to all. The member must be taught on how to invest in the things of God than worldly things and its profitability.
9. Generally, Ijebu people are social and fun loving people, the Christian faith must be presented to them in a way that is meaningful to them. We must not be too dogmatic in the way and approach we present the message to the people in order for it to have acceptance. The history of man as enshrined in his past, present, and future revolves around his culture and heritage. Man's culture and traditions are symmetrical to his meaningful developments.
10. The body of Christ in Ijebu-Ode needs team up with the cooperation of the Asiwaju Onigbagbo of Ijebuland (the number one Christian in Ijebuland) who is also the Olori Omo Oba of Ijebuland (head of all Princes and princesses in Ijebuland), Otunba Tunwase Subomi Balogun to venture into paying homage to the Awujale at least twice every year, (Easter and Christmas). Also, during the Ojude Oba festival, they can organized special programme and prayer at the palace, with time such programme will attract great attention, as such the Christian can regain the land for Christ.