MPRI-JHLAR | INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES, LITERATURE AND ART RESEARCH
VOL. 02 NO. 1 OCT-2023 ISSN: 1116 - 2619

IKEJI FESTIVAL OF ARONDIZUOGU: HISTORY, ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL BENEFITS

UBAH CHUKWUDI NELSON , Ph.D
Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Abia State University, Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria.

Abstract

Arondizuogu is the most famous of the numerous Aro settlements. More so, Ikeji festival is one of mask, masquerades and entertaining cultural festival celebrated by the people of Arondizuogu in propitiation and thanksgiving to God and to the ancestors. The researcher adopts qualitative approach as the study used only secondary data; hence information were collected from published sources. This work reveals that Ikeji is not just a merry making festival, but one which can augment the social and economic life of Arondizuogu and entire nation if the government, business organizations and individuals invest more in the festival. Ikeji festival has over several years stood like a colossus over the socio-cultural, political and economic life of the people of Arondizuogu. Furthermore the Ikeji festival has aid the people of the community both home and diaspora to unite and promote the development of their community. The work recommends that large business organizations should join hands in the promotion of Ikeji cultural festival. Furthermore, the people of Arondizuogu should utilize opportunities provided through Ikeji period when many people come home to promote all aspects of community development.

Key Words Arondizuogu, Ikeji Festival, Culture, History, Economic and Socio-Cultural Impacts.

Introduction

Cultural is the way of life of the people. Arondizuoagu is known for promotion of culture and tradition. For that, Ikeji festival of Arondizuogu is one of the most popular, entertaining, respected, recognized and well-known cultural carnival in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. Geographically, Arondizuogu is located in the Northern region of Imo State, Nigeria. It is made up of several autonomous communities covering an extensive area within Okigwe and Orlu senatorial zones. It was founded at a fertile territory watered by the Imo River, out of the twenty-seven local government areas of Imo State, Arondizuogu spreads across three local government areas of Ideato North, Okigwe and Onuimo respectively. Generally, Aro people attach great value to culture and tradition and the people of Arondizuogu are not exception; hence the promotion of Ikeji festival. Different communities in Igbo land are known for certain culture and festivals (Anabogu, 2018). One of the earliest cultural festivals which emerged in Igbo land and which has exhibited remarkable influence is the Ikeji festival of Aro, which is the most prominent annual festivals celebrated during the month of March or April in Arondizuogu. This means that different Aro settlers in different communities in Igboland celebrate Ikeji at different time/month of the years depending on certain social realities affecting them. For example, the Arochukwu cerebrate Ikeji within August/ September. 'Ikeji' is said to be a shortened form of "Ikeji isi" (to detach a tendril of the yam).

The word Ikeji (pronounced Ikeeji) means harvesting of yam which is a significant food crop among the Igbo (Ohia, 2014). The significant of Ikeji festival of Arondizuogu is that it involves masquerading and serves as a

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

forum to bring back Aros in diasporas (Aro uzo) in a massive homecoming to join the home base and thank God for the successes of the year . It is characterized by general merry making by the people and sacrifice to "Chukwu" (God) for keeping them alive. It is a fascinating and irresistible festival that is filled with pulsating rhythm and cultural performances.

Aro and Arondizuogu

According to Okoro (1985), the Aro is one of the first known and recognized community in Igboland. In Igboland, Aro settlements abound, and the largest among these include: Arondizuogu, Ndikelionwu and Ajali. With time, most of the Aro settlements became increasingly more tied to localized communities where they are then to Arochukwu. One important thing about the Aro is that they distinguish themselves whenever they settle in Igboland, hence they still attach Aro to their name. They are still referred to as Umuchukwu (children of God). The Aro refer to themselves as "Aro oke Igbo (i.e. Aro the great male Igbo). Basically, Arondizuogu is the most significant and dynamic settlements founded by the Aro. Arondizuogu is a town whose remote ancestor is Mazi Izuogu Mgbokpo whose father Obunukpo the son of Akuma Nnachi hailed from Amankwu community, Arochukwu in the present day Abia State. Izuogu's mother Mgbokpo hailed from Ohafia. Ndizuogu literally means Izuogu's people. Mazi Izuogu was a big time itinerant trader who traded in several ancient trade routes.

He traded in variety of commodities such as cloths, salt, dyes and also slaves but never settled outside Arochukwu (Nwanna, 2015). Although Ndizuogu was undoubtedly the first of the numerous Aro settlements founded in the west hinterland, the precise date of its foundation is presently unclear, and various dates have been advanced. It is also clear that long before this date, Aro traders had used the trade route which traversed Ndizuogu as a convenient through fare in their commercial intercourse with Nkanu and Enugu areas (Ohia, 2007). Basically, Ndizuogu was founded by Mazi Izuogu's trading lieutenant; Iheme who originally came from Isiakpu Nise since Izuogu rarely settled in the area named after him, he stationed and depended on Iheme to facilitate and secure his commercial interest in the area. Yet, the credit would be to Izuogu who since by virtue was Iheme's master.

Iheme and Izuogu maintained a mutually beneficial symbolism which reflected in the two traditional realms of Ndizuogu and Ndiheme which together constitute Arondizuogu. Arondizuogu is a community established by Mazi Izuogu's and Iheme's descendants. Geographically, Arondizuogu is located in Imo State. It is made up of several autonomous communities covering an extensive area within Okigwe and Orlu senatorial zones. The fact that Arondizuogu are not entirely contiguous makes it virtually impossible to determine the precise surface area. As one travels from Okigwe town on the Okigwe –Akokwa –Nnewi-Onitsha road, Arondizuogu communities line both sides of this route for a total distance of 30 kilometers as inland to varying distances of some 63 squares kilometers. This area is thickly populated by Nigerian standards and heavily cultivated with some 650,000 inhabitants.

Ikeji Festival of Arondizuogu

Ikeji festival of Aro dates back to 5BC; however, the exact date for Ikeji arondizuogu is not clear, but researchers has pointed that it stated in 18th century when Mazi Izuogu was moving to different Igbo areas/communities in search of good and slaves. Today, Arondizuogu has become more well known on account of its Ikeji than for any other social or cultural practice. Historical evidence, however suggest Ikeji began as a ceremony to mark the end of one planting season and the beginning of another (Nwanna, 2015). Ikeji is said to be shortened form of 'Ikeji ji isi' (to detach the tendril of the yam) which is usually done in preparation for the farming season or for preservation of seed yams in the yam barn. Ikeji had two dimensions, ritual and entertainment involving sets of obligations to God, ancestors, superior, elders and grandchildren. In its modern form, Ikeji festival is essentially a festival of appeasing and thanksgiving which fits into a carnival of immense proportions involving exhibition of extremely energetic display from both individuals and masquerades. In Arochukwu which is the ancestral home of Arondizuogu people, Ikeji is held in the month of September. But in Arondizuogu, it is held in March or April. According to Ohia (2007), since

the festival involves display of masquerades, the best season is the dry season which is suitable local condition.

Until the mid 20th century, Ikeji Festival was held separately by various towns and villages of Arondizuogu, Ikeji grew to become a unified festival celebrated universally throughout the length and breadth of Arondizuogu. Empirically speaking, Ikeji Arondizuogu is the greatest carnival of masks and masquarades. It was partly for this reason that Ikeji was catalogued and gazetted by the Federal Ministry of Commerce and Tourism as a national festival during the tenure of Dr. Emmanuel Udogu as minister in the era of the General Sani Abacha Junta. In 1997 and 1998 celebration Ikeji festival was held from Wednesday 26th April being Eke market day to Sunday 30th April being Eke market day (Ohia, 2014). In practice, the Akajiofor (Eze in council) are the ones with the sole responsibility of fixing both Ikeji Iheme and Ikeji Izuogu. Akajiofor radiated from the younger to the senior and customary paying of homage known in Arondizuogu as Ibu Ihu. Arondizuogu Patriotic Union has a duty of promoting and organizing the festival.

Festival Days and their Significance

Historically, Ikeji is a four day festival of propitiation, thanksgiving and total cultural cerebrations. Reckoned by the Igbo calendar, the period its equal to one native week which corresponds to the four Igbo market days of Oye (Orie), Afor (Awho), Nkwo and Eke. Each of these days has a special significance and represents one of the several dimensions of Ikeji. The festival days as presented by Ohia, 2014/2007, and Nwanna (2015) are discussed below:

Eke Odu Ikeji: This is the day when livestock's and births are purchased at various Eke market together with the necessary foodstuffs and condiments. Around Ndizuogu, the most important is Eke Obinikpa also known as Eke Izuogu. Youths and people from outside Arondizuogu do come to this market and this is when you also see people clutching fowls or struggling with goats along the road. However, the birds and livestock's are not due for slaughter until the next day which is Oye.

Day 1: Oye: This is known as Oye Egbugbu. Oye is the first day of Ikeji because it is reserved for the religious dimension of the festival. It is the day of merriment and thanksgiving to almighty God, our forefathers or ancestors by killing what we bought from the Eke Odu. Oye Egbugbu, literally means "Oye of Slaughter". Unlike how these livestock were used before 1960, these days the birds and animals are slaughtered, cooked and consumed after thanksgiving to God at home or in nearby churches. These days, most Christians also act and engage in the act of thanksgiving whereby a religious minister prays over the bird or animal and food items before they will consume them. During Oye Egbugbu days, there was a masquerade known as "Agu-Mmonwu" that makes a noise at night of the Orie Egbugbu, which shows that Ikei has started proper for masquerade display. On the day of Oye Egbugbu, only new masquerade(s), and the ones accompanying the new masquerade(s) are expected to come out and entertain people for the first time. Basically, each of the new masquerades will have one old masquerade showing it road.

Day 2: Afor (pronounced Awhor) is the first day of masquerade displays. It is called 'Afor-oso-mmonwu'. This is the day filled with captivating parade of assorted masquerades and groups accompanied the masquerades. The masquerading display starts as early as 7am till 8 pm. The masquerades and its followers visit homes, friends, and go to designated markets to entertain people. The Afor markets for masquerade displays are Afor Ndiawa, afor ndidubuisi, Afor Ohianchu, Afor Ofeimo and other big Afor markets. Both new and old masquerades appear on Afor day. This is also the day masquerade go for home visit to prominent members of the community receiving gifts from them.

Day 3: Nkwo: This is the carnival day when all masquerades assemble at the central arena. It is the day that masquerades pursue individual spectators in the race known as "Oso mmonwu" the purpose is for them to deliver a stroke of the whip known as "Mgbajara". This is the day of masquerades display, countless masquerades groups, enchanted participants, flutists display, dramatic actors, comedians and surging multitudes. From all villages and towns beyond, large number of exotically dressed masquerades accompanied by their followers trudge out towards Nkwo Achi, Nkwo Pericomo, Ama Edward and other arena singing and dancing.

Day 4: Eke: Traditionally, **t**his is the final day when the festival is brought to an end officially. The day is marked with more masquerade displays on Eke day at various Eke markets within the communities. The arenas for masquaredes on Eke day usually the popular Eke market at Ndianiche Uno (Eke Obinikpa) and Aniche Uwakonye. At the end of the displays, all masquerade are expected to discard their whips (mbgajara). This day is regarded as Eke nwusa akapata (Eke for the discarding of whips). There are centers where they gather known as Ezumezu mmonwu after their display.

Other days: The entertainment nature of Ikeji has made the people of Arondizuogu, especially the youths, and communities (that feel that their own market(s) has not been cerebrated) to continue Ikeji after its original traditional four (4) days. It is therefore very important to note that after the official end of Ikeji festival on Eke day, in practice, however Ikeji continues for another four days as the masquerades take part in Izu ahia mmonwu (masquerade display in markets). This constitutes the traditional concluding part of the Ikeji festival. It is important to note also that the abridgement of Ikeji to a four day festival illustrates the dynamism of Igbo culture.

Masquerades and their Roles

Generally, among the Igbo people of south eastern Nigeria, masquerades are surrounded by myth and treated with reverence. Masquerades embody the spirit of ancestors manifesting in physical form to mingle with the living. One of the most important element in traditional Arondizuogu is the phenomenon of "mmonwu" or mmanwu popularly translated as "the masquerade. It is covered by cloth like fabric like human dressing, but the fabric/attire is referred to as "Aworo mmanwu" rather than Uwe-mmonwu. We are meant to believe that "mmonwu" appears in the human society through the ant hole i.e. Onu ahuhu, notwithstanding the fact that mmonwu is so large and bulky in dimension. Masquerades bear names by which they are known with and hailed. Arondizuogu masquerade are of six main types.

1. **Abunya or Nwabuuja:** This masquerade entertains women and children mostly. It is known for its story telling and funny tales. It is regarded as the mother of masquerades.
2. **Ojionu**: This is the athletic, whip wielding and fear inducing masquerade that chase people around. It shows agility and vitality of youth. Some can be appeased with a token while some prefers delivering a stroke of the whip. Ojionu displays energetically known as "Imeokwe".
3. **Mgbadike**: This is the nna mmonwu (father of masquerades). It exhibit physical strength and fearlessness. Presumably dumb and highly energetic. It always holds an axe or cutlass instead of whip.
4. **Okwomma**: It is regarded as the king of all masquerades in Arondizuogu just as ijele of Anambra state. It does not appear every year.
5. **Mmonwu Igbada or Ogba Igbada:** This masquerade engages more in dancing. It performs more often at funerals and social ceremonies. At Ikeji, it may appear at some arenas to entertain selected audience.
6. **Other ceremonial masquerades**: These masquerades are one that visit from the neighbouring communities. Most times they are massive, majestic and expansively decorated. It is important to note that there are many displays by individuals who add colour to Ikeji festival, they are Obu ngwungwo, Atu Ojiabo and Mbedindu ndi be Ekweghikaekwuru.
7. **Onye kurum or Onye kurie:** this is not seen by people who do not know mmonwu. It is a night masquerade. This masquerade exposes the secret of indigenes who engaged in nay indiscretions or criminal acts. Perhaps the most perplexing myths surrounding onye kurum is its ability to translate. When its voice is heard in one village in a small time its voice will be heard in a distant part.

The Role of Mmonwu Beyond Ikeji Festival

1. It provides entertainment to the people, giving psychological relaxation both during festive and non festive moment such entertainment is staged in the village square i.e. "Obi" or "Ama" or "Ogbor".

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

2. Mmonwu is a prominent disciplinary agent in the administration of the community for enforcing village rules, laws and regulations. It is the duty of the town crier to make public announcement but when the issues is serious, he is accompanied by an mmonwu.
3. Traditional child- rearing practice of Arondizuogu includes the telling of folklore to the young minds. Children are constantly reminded that if they misbehave, mmanwu will punish them or even take them to an unknown land. Similarly for the Arondizuogu setting the fear of being harassed by mmonwu is veritable component of fostering good behaviour among children.
4. As the Igbo saying goes "Ugwo eji onye nwuruanwu bu ili ya" meaning that the debt we owe to the dead is to bury them in the ground. Therefore mmonwu add colour, honour, value and credibility when someone dies. Just as the notable musician Oliver –De Coque said Ana enwe obodo enwe" and "Onwelu and Obodo jiri biri", these are persons whose presence guarantees safety to the rest, therefore when they die, mmonwu has a role to play. Some help in bringing out to the people the evils of the land such a infidelity in marriage, child abuse, stealing, incest etc.

Initiation into the Masquerade Group

The process of initiating youths and adults into the mmonwu society is referred to as "Ima-mmonwu" being one of the Igbo traditional cultural events that constitutes the transition from childhood to adulthood. Anyone who has not been initiated into the mmonwu society is referred to as "Ogbudu". The age bracket of children to be nominated and presented to the Out mmonwu is 12-15 years. They are being initiated at the Oni mmonwu. Ima mmonwu, essentially consist of orientation in the art of masquerading. The rules, the regulations and unveiling the identification routines known only to the inducted which is known as Ikpa-akwukwo mmonwu (decoding the masquerades). The new inductees are also advised against what is known as "Itikwo Isi mmonwu" (literally, breaking the mask or unmasking the masquerades) which is regarded as a taboo.

Agbara nwanyi or a woman who is up to 50 years can be in the masquerade group to enable them serve visiting masquerade group. The initiation is normally done at night time; the location is the bush of forest away from normal habitation. Variety of items are required from intending members such as palm wine, some cash, kola nuts, sizeable cock etc which will be utilized in involving the spiritual word to release an mmanwu which will take part in the initiation. The initiate is being given some or a few stroke of the whip to truly inoculate him into the society by the other members. One important thing to note is that one has to be nominated and presented to the Otu mmonwu by an initiated member in good standing at an occasion dictated by the Otu mmonwu.

Economic and Social Benefits of Ikeji Festival

The impact of cultural festival on the economic and social good of the people cannot be neglected (Ogbualu, 2011). In Igboland, there are many festivals, some of which date to the period before the arrival of the major religions in this culturally diverse society. Ikeji festival which is a cultural festival of masks and masquerades is one of the festivals in Nigeria and this festival has also brought about economic development as well as social exposure to the people of Arondizuogu of South –Eastern Nigeria.

Economic benefits: Before the festival commences, the various markets in Arondizuogu experience huge patronage as people go to market to purchase what they need during the festival. Besides being fun, well managed festivals and events offer a lot of economic benefits to communities. These events are meant to be entertaining to visitors and attendees. And for the organizations and communities that host them, they are meant to be profitable. In addition to making profits for the organizers, festivals can have a significant economic impact on the local community and the business within it. Over the years people from Arondizuogu and others who go to Arondizuogu for business during Ikeji have confirmed that Ikeji festival helps to boost the economy.

Arondizuogu people and their neighbours like Akokwa, Uzii, Umuobom, Osina, Umualoma, Umuchu, Umulolo, Amuro, and others engage in serious market transaction within this period. It is also very pertinent to note

that people from Arondizuogu can as well travel to places like Aba and Onitsha in order to buy goods in bulk for transaction within this period which they make huge and reasonable profits from. The money accrued from or during the time of the unveiling of the festival by various individuals and sponsors are used for the expansion of the event and also for establishment of some social amenities under the auspices of the (APU). Efforts by the Arondizuogu Patriotic Union (APU) to rebrand and internationalize Ikeji festival attracted Telecom giants - MTN - with some facilitation by Mazi Chidi Okoro and Mazi Chris Okoro (signor) who made pioneering efforts to attract corporate sponsors into Ikeji.

For a period of over five years MTN showed presence at the Ikeji festival as part of the MTN Direct Community Connect which targets is to take MTN to the grassroots. In 2013, the MTN team was led by Mr. Dan Nwankwo, Zonal Manager (South-East). MTN gifts, souvenirs, T-Shirts, raffle draw, band stands and open platform performances and exciting parties have added a new dimension to Ikeji festival. Global Com has also showed substantial interest in Ikeji festival homecoming. Within the Ikeji period call cards are sold in large quantities by individual marketers in Arondizuogu thereby enhancing the economic strength of such individuals.

On every Eke celebration held in different markets, as early as 6: am, marketers and shoppers had started arriving the market which had previously been swept clean women organizations days before marketers come from within Arondizuogu as well as from neighbouring towns. The livestock section of the markets is always over stocked with goats, sheep, poultry and general food item section are equally over stocked with yams, vegetables, dry fish (notably Okporoko). People come out in their best civil or casual wear and the "Omu Aro" cloth is worn by a fair number of established women and men. This set thereby helps to promote individual and individual farms of goat keepers, pigs, fowls etc. this therefore promote market economy as a result of the transactions between the traders of Arondizuogu and her neighbours.

It is also a known fact that before the festival of each day starts, masquerades visit the homes of notable members of the community. When they visit these notable men and women, they are been given gifts, also during the display at the various markets and squares in Arondizuogu. They also receive gifts at the 'Oso mmonwu from people who do not want the masquerade to whip them. Some big masquerades such as Okeke Idiagbo, Nkwakwaka, Anuamadi Eziukwu, Tiger Okpurisi etc end up racking over half a million naira yearly in the course of the Ikeji festival due to their popularity eccentric cultural displays. This they use to enrich themselves thereby promoting the economic strength of the masquerade and its followers.

It is also important to note that during the Ikeji festival display at the various markets since the markets are on rotator base, people troop out to the market square from their homes. Each market experience huge sales of drinks, call cards, chicken and turkey, goat meat etc. It creates an adhoc market for hawking. We must also recognize the fact that these individuals who come to Arondizuogu are not only Arondizuogu people but people from various parts of the country. As people will always try to dress well during this period especially spectators, they will buy clothes from the various markets. Also apart from masquerades and their various regalia, there are individuals who display some non- masquerade acts that add colour to carnival. Some carry earthen pots belching with smoke on their head. Some acts consists of a man carrying palm wine in a small which he sips from, you can also see someone bathing with soapy water or detergent going through the motion of a dance.

Some carry baskets on their heads filled with hot drinks, live fowl, tortoise, machetes etc. All these are gotten from the market. This helps to boost and promote the market economy of Arondizuogu. More so, Ikeji festival creates an avenue for the sales of the already waxed music from various Ikeji festival music Icons both before, during and after the festival. For instance, there are various records produced by Late Pericomo Okoye (Ichie Mezuo, Arusi Makaja 1 of Igboland); Ugochukwu Nwankwo Okoye (Ebube Izuogu), Prince Edi Ngene, Nkporoko Onu, Nwatadibia Ofoma, Eze Witch Gold, etc. Also, each Ikeji festival provides opportunity for people to make money in the sense that the videos of the event when produced are being sold thereby enhancing the economic growth of the people and the community. From the activities that take place in a particular Ikeji festival, records are being released in line with that after the festival.

Socio-cultural benefits: One interesting fact about the Ikeji festival is its ability to attract Lovers of African Culture in their thousands to Arondizuogu. Arondizuogu is now an annual tourist centre. People from other

continents of Europe, Africa, Asia and North America troop in to experience the African culture in its best form. There are also various hotels in Arondizuogu for instance; Home Diamond hotel, Green Manor, Hometown resort, Motel Plaza etc. during the period of Ikeji festival since it is now a tourist event which was catalogued and gazzetted to the Imo State Tourist Calendar under Emmanuel Udogu, a son of the soil during Gen. Sani Abacha's regime, people from far and near lodge in these hotels in order to experience the Ikeji festival.

Recently, the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture wrote the Arondizuogu Patriotic Union to inform the good people of Arondizuogu of the inclusion of Ikeji festival on the Ministry's National Festival Calendar. This has so far recognized the efforts of Arondizuogu to preserve and promote Nigeria and Africa's rich cultural heritage. This is a great feast worthy of applause. Using the Ikeji Festival as a platform, the Arondizuogu Patriotic Union have gained the attention of the Federal Government. The former Minister of Works Dr. Chris Ngige was present at the 2017 Ikeji festival while the former Federal Minister of Information Lai Mohammed graced the Ikeji festival in April 2018. This has afforded the community the opportunity to table their problems to the Federal Government.

In conclusion therefore, it is very important to note that Ikeji festival is an annual homecoming festival of Arondizuogu people just like other festivals in Nigeria has become so prominent that is not just a festival for merry making alone but it has also over the years and over the years brought about economic development and socio-cultural impacts on the community unlike other festivals like Ogidi Akeme and New yam festival in Arondizuogu. Just like other events associated with culture and tradition, Ikeji festival had enjoyed some misconceptions often emanating from ignorance. It is therefore very important and crucial to note that early Christian Missionaries, who could not understand Ikeji in typical Eurocentric style, regarded it wide suspicion and went to the extent of ascribing it to paganism in a bid to discourage their adherents from participating in the festival. However, Ikeji was able to survive this early colonial Christians.

Still, misconception about Ikeji festival continued to evolve despite the overzealous Pentecostalism which tends to view every cultural expression as Christians. It is therefore important to note that Ikeji festival today has become widely accepted as a cultural heritage worthy of preservation, hence it is celebrated with great aplomb. Clergy (especially those of the Orthodox Church) participate in Ikeji and enjoy Ikeji festival. With time, hopefully and the creation greater awareness will become more obvious that Ikeji festival is not in conflict with any aspect of the Christian religion or any religion for that matter. If not for any other matter, people will understand that Ikeji festival represents a practical demonstration of the love and thanksgiving that is associated with all religion.

Conclusion

From the above study, Ikeji festival has over several years stood like a colossus over the socio-cultural, political and economic life of the people of Arondizuogu. Ikeji festival has helped to bring the people of the community both at home and in diaspora to unite and to promote the development of their community as the Igbo adage says "Igwe bu ike". Arondizuogu has become well known on account of its Ikeji festival. The "Njima" musical group and other musicians like Late Pericomo Okoye, ebube izuogu and Edinigene etc including Arondizuogu Patriotic Union have played important roles in promoting Ikeji festival.

Although there exist two schools of thought concerning the impact of Ikeji festival. The first school of thought is of the view that the festival has not made any impact to the community while another school of thought posits that Ikeji festival have brought development and success not minding they are still looking forward to greater development economically and otherwise. So, if there is any impediment to the growth of Ikeji festival as a tourism product with immense potentials. It is the lackluster attitude of government to the festival. The thrills and frills of Ikeji festival are such that no one can ever attend the carnival ever forget the merriment friendliness and the rich display of culture and tradition.

Recommendations

1. There is need for the Imo State and Nigeria governments to encourage the growth of Ikeji by promoting it as a full cultural carnival. The governments also need to improve the security situation

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

within Arondizuogu in particular and Nigeria in general so that people can be free to travel for the cultural festival more than how it is before now. The government has to improve infrastructural development, especially roads and electricity within Arondizuogu communities and their environs.

2. Large business organizations should join hands in the promotion of Ikeji cultural festival.
3. The people of Arondizuogu should utilize opportunities provided through Ikeji period when many people come home to promote all aspects of community development.

REFERENCES

Anabogu, I. (2018). *The making of the modern Nigeria.* Awka: Selly Oak International Company.
Nwanna, O.C. (2015). *Arondizuogu lectures and essays.* Owerri: Ark Publishers.
Ogbualu, F. (2011). *Igbo institutions and customs.* Onitsha: University Publishing Company.
Ohia, U. (2007). *A history of Arondizuogu Patriotic Union.* Aba: Silverduck Services Limited.
Ohia, U. (2014). *Ikeji festival: An introduction.* Owerri: Silverduck Services Limited.
Okoro, G.J. (1985). *A brief history of Arondizuogu.* Aba: Precision Graphics.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]