

Traditional Religious Festivals and Modernity: A Case Study of Female-Oriented Cults Annual Festivals in Ijebuland of South Western Nigeria

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Abstract

Festivals are celebrations of important events in every human society which bring together people from all walks of life. In Ijebuland, traditional festivals are observed by the adherents of the traditional religion to mark important social and cultural events in the lives of the people and these are culminated in series of performances, entertainments, rites and rituals. Through these festivals, the values and beliefs of the people are demonstrated, they give meaning to the social, political and religious life of the people celebrating them. They are vital mainsprings in the traditional education and the remit of the people's culture. However, generally speaking some festivals are no longer celebrated to bring out the values in them. It is obvious that the practice of traditional religion is declining rapidly particularly in the area of worship and cultic activities. There is a preponderance of female oriented cults in Ijebuland in which women occupy important and significant positions. During various cultic activities and celebration, women participate fully, and at times, they are the sole officiates. Though some of these festivals are no longer celebrated with all pomp and pageantry with the advent of Christianity and Islam in Ijebuland, like in other places. Yet, there is persistence in the observances of some certain festivals in spite of social change brought about by the foreign religions and modernity. This paper, therefore, argues that despite the incursion of foreign religions, science and technology, there are still some adherents who through persistence and resilience have to continue till today the celebration of traditional festivals. The paper will further enlighten non-adherents concerning the worship of divinities and veneration of ancestors through festivals and other cultic rituals vis-à-vis social and cultural values inherent in such celebrations. The female-oriented cults in Ijebuland are discussed as a case study.

Keywords: *Traditional Religious Festival, Modernity, Female Oriented Cults, Ijebuland*