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RESEARCH ARTICLE

AMIDST WESTERN INFLUENCE: A STUDY OF THE POST-COLONIAL EZZA EZEKUNA NEW YAM FESTIVAL (OKE AKU)

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Abstract

The Ezza New Yam Festival (Oke Aku) is a significant cultural heritage and event that projects the identity and values of the people in the area. The event marks the end of planting yams, and the beginning of harvest and the new year in the Ezza indigenous calendar. With the increasing influence of Western culture, however, the festival's traditional practices and significance are faced with various challenges. Using the Cultural Imperialism Theory and Cultural Hybridisation, the study examined the impact of Westernisation on the festival's cultural heritage and its enduring relevance in the post-colonial Ezza. Using the theories, qualitative approach, and content analysis, the study explores the perceptions of the people regarding the festival's significance, the changes that have occurred as a result of Western influence, and the ways in which the Ezza are adapting to these changes while maintaining their cultural identity. The findings of the study reveal the resilience of the Ezza people's cultural heritage and the essence of preserving traditional practices in the face of globalisation. This study contributes to the understanding of the complex dynamics between cultural tradition and modernity, highlighting the need for cultural preservation and promotion in the face of Western influence.

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Introduction:-

The Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival (Oke Aku) is a significant cultural event in Nigeria, marking the end of yam planting, and beginning of the harvest season and New Year. As a result of the increasing influence of Western culture, the festival's traditional practices and significance are faced with challenges. The festival is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the Ezza. Ezza is a part of Northeastern Igbo in the Southeastern Nigeria. The unmitigated distortions suffered by the festival's traditional practices and significance made it vulnerable to destruction. The fact that the festival is as well, a symbol of identity, peace, unity and cooperation, and a cultural heritage was considered immaterial to the Western Culture. In the post-colonial Ezza, the festival has undergone certain changes resulting

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from Westernisation, Christianity, and modernisation. Despite these changes, the festival remains strongly and essentially attached to the Ezza culture, attracting people from far and near, including tourists. The impact of Western influence on the Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival is explored in the study, pointing at the extent to which the traditional practices and essence of the festival have been affected. By so doing, the dynamics of the culture and modernity would be laid bare, and it would establish the need for preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the Ezza.

Theoretical Framework: -

Cultural Imperialism Theory and Cultural Hybridisation are adopted in the analysis of the study, *Amidst Western Influence: A Study of the Post-Colonial Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival (Oke Aku)*. According to Herbert Schiller, the theory of cultural imperialism suggests that Western cultures exert a dominant influence over other cultures, leading to the suppression of their traditions (Zhang, 2016). Anchoring the research on this model indicates imposition of Western cultural values, norms, and practices on non-Western societies, such as Ezza in Southeastern Nigeria. At first, it opens for cultural assimilations, which results in the replacement of certain local cultures with Western cultures. This fundamentally presents a new background and cultural form, enabling the blending of the Western and the local cultures.

This framework is used to analyse the extent to which Western cultural values, norms, and practices have influenced the Post-colonial Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival. It would further investigate how cultural homonisation is exerted on the seemingly weak culture (*Oke Aku*) of the Ezza. Through the process of cultural assimilation, a local culture, such as that of the Ezza cultural heritage, is combated for displacement, suppression, and replacement. In the long run, the theory helped to uncover the fact that the processes to suppress and replace the culture of the New Yam Festival in Ezza opened the area to cultural hybridisation. It is on the basis of this that the Cultural Hybridisation becomes relevant in the lens of analyzing the study. This framework upholds the process of blending different cultural practices, values, and traditions to create a new cultural form in a given place (Tuncer, 2023). In this regard, the Western culture and the local culture of Ezza developed, blending attributes that created a new cultural form in the sphere of Ezza New Yam Festival.

Statement of Problem: -

The Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival is a cultural and traditional heritage of the Ezza in the Northeastern Igbo, Nigeria. With the arrival of Europeans of different groups of traders, British officials, and Christian missionaries, and their consequent colonisation of Nigeria, Western influence on the indigenous cultural heritage became increasingly conspicuous in various parts of the country, including Ezzaland. Be that as it may, the festival took its share of the challenges posed by the Western influence. Its traditional practices and significance were being eroded, and there arose the risk of losing the cultural heritage. This became apparent through altering the festival's cultural identity, leading to a loss of traditional values and practices up to the post-colonial era. It is, however, the aim of this study to investigate the impact of Western influence on the Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival, exploring the nature, changes, continuity, and the means of sustaining the cultural heritage in the realm of modernity.

Research Methodology: -

In conducting this research, historical sources, consisting of primary and secondary sources were explored. The primary source material utilised is oral evidence. The secondary source materials utilised include books and journal articles. Really, there are very few scholarly works and local commentaries on the Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival. The study depended mostly on the oral evidence drawn from a number of elders and critical stakeholders from Ezza and Ebonyi State, at large.

During the research, some interviews were phone-recorded, while in others, notes were taken down. Some of the interviewees were left to exhaust themselves on each question asked; before they were asked certain questions structured in such a way to expatiate more on any part of the topics that were either left out or scantily discussed. On the part of secondary sources, such as books and journal articles, the researchers derived ideas from related and relevant works on the area and topic of study to improve the quality of the work. Generally, this study relied on a thematic approach and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. By skillfully employing the Cultural Imperialism Theory and Cultural Hybridisation, the study explored and analysed *Amidst Western Influence: A Study of the Post-Colonial Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival (Oke Aku)*, unfolding the nature of the festival, changes and continuity over time, alongside the means of sustaining the cultural heritage in Ezza.

The Nature of Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival (*Oke Aku*) Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival is as old as the days of Ezekuna and his family members. The festival is meant to monumentalise yams as the leading crop and symbol of agriculture in Ezzaland. Agriculture, however, was the main sector of the local economy that employed almost the entire population of Ezzaland and provided them with the means of survival. Recognising the role of yams, among other crops, the people chose to capture yams as a symbol for celebrating all crops that sustained people in the area. The Ezza are people who believe in the power of God and His agents in all aspects of their culture and civilisation (Chukwuma, 2003). So, they believe in the power of nature or God in success or a bountiful harvest in agriculture, especially in growing yams. To that effect, the progenitor of Ezza, Ezekuna designed the period as when to appreciate God for productivity and richness of crops, and good health and protection for farmers (the Ezza). During the period, the people demonstrated thanksgiving to the agents of God (gods and goddesses), such as the god of yams (*Nja Ji*), and the god of hunting and war (*Obasi*). These agents of God were fed with cooked and grated yams with a mixture of oil only. Apart from the oil, no other ingredient is traditionally and religiously allowed to be added to the food for the said agents (Ongele & Anyigor, 2025).

The annual festival usually occurs in July. This month is captured by the Ezza Calendar as the month of the Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival (*Onwa Oke Aku*). It is during the month that the council of elders (*Ochi Mkpuru*) gathers at the home of Ezekuna (*Okpoku Ezekuna*) and fixes the date of the festival, using the Ezza Calendar. One thing is certain: the concerned people fix it, one week (four days) to the Eke Market Day for preparation (*Eke Azuta or Eke awha du ebo*). At midnight, nature passes and ushers the people to the New Year with a loud voice. This is when people echoed in prayer; let a bad year go in vain (*ejo awha gbaru eka la*), while drumming or beating gongs. The Orié Market Day, following the *Eke awha du ebo*, becomes the main day for the celebration. Before daybreak to give Ezza the main day, the oldest elder of each home in Ezza cuts an unripe palm head, a chick, and four fruits of pepper and mounts them at the yam compost (*Ishi neswhe*) at the beginning of a farm and entrance of the compound. For the Ezza, the manner in which the living celebrate the festival, so the dead celebrate it. To that effect, the items mounted at the yam compost (*Ishi neswhe*) are meant to be used by the dead who died childless for the celebration. Those who had a child or children before death are believed to have their spirits celebrating with the living during the event (Njoku & Nworie, 2010). At the yam compost, peels from yams only are traditionally allowed to be disposed of there.

Before the main day of the celebration, people tidied up their homes and the village square as part of the preparation. The Orié Market Day, after the Eke Market Day for preparation (*Eke azuta*) is the actual day for the celebration of the festival (*Oke Aku*). It commences with pleasantries and compliments, such as *Anyi Aboo*, meaning we have survived. Response: *Awhaa laburu awha oma*, meaning this year shall be good for us. Contextually, the compliments depict the fact that the festival marks the end of the planting year, and the beginning of harvest and a new year. It further conveys the people's prayer for favours and fruitfulness of the year (C. Ugota, personal communication, 24th November, 2025). In this regard, the Ezza started with prayers and appreciations to God for His care and protection in their various homes.

Before morning, the women would have finished preparing pepper oil (*uza ukpara*). The pepper oil is usually hosted for the celebration in a covenant plate (*ukpara*). Other significant items include cola-nut, alligator pepper, bitter cola, cocoa-nut, groundnut, palm kernel, and yam. On presentation of these items, the oldest male elder among the family members led a prayer session as others responded, *isee* (Amen) at different stages of the prayers. At this point, one of the kinsmen that have traditional and customary knowledge of sharing items starts sharing the items with the cola-nuts. By custom, the cola-nut or a lobe of cola-nut that is used for the prayer belongs to the leader of the prayer session. An additional lobe or part is usually attached to it. The attached part of the cola-nut is usually and customarily used to appreciate the person who shares the items (C. Ugota, personal communication, 24th November, 2025).

In sharing the assorted presents for the celebration, the yams and palm kernel were shared on bare ground, while others were shared on the covenant plate that must be placed on the ground as people made their choice accordingly. Where the covenant plate is perceived to be inadequate for the sharing, an additional tray could be of support. As the sharing is completely done, members of the gathering or assembly are to choose accordingly. During this celebration, visitors are welcomed and given some parts of the items shared. This demonstration and procession are observed in all families of kinsmen. This implies that the assembly of elders, youths, and children moves from one compound to another, observing the celebration of the festival. During this period, people visited their relatives with gifts of prepared food, cola-nut, old yam tuber, pepper oil, cocoa-nut, banana, plantain, among others. It marks a

time for renewal of family bond, friendship, and relationship for peaceful co-existence in Ezzaland (Njoku & Nworie, 2010). Many people of Ezza dissent and non-residents of Ezzaland returned to their ancestral homes in Ezza. The Ezza in diasporas send delegations to represent them in the celebration at the ancestral home of Ezza (*Okpoku Ezekuna*). Among the people that gathered for the celebration at the ancestral home were the Ezza from Ezza North and South, those from other local governments of Ebonyi State, those from other states of Nigeria, alongside overseas delegations. In this regard, all communities of Ezza are represented. As communities bring the presents for the celebration, individuals or groups support the programme voluntarily.

One week (four days) later, the grand finale of the festival is observed to mark the completion of the annual festival. As the event ends ceremoniously, new yam tubers begin to appear in markets in Ezza. The first Eke Market Day in the unacquired calendar year is known as *Eke Okpobe ochita* (the day farmers bring their new yam tubers to market without the intention to sell them). They bring and display them as wares, but cannot sell them to any customer. It marks the opening of markets in Ezza for the distribution of new yam tubers (H. Nwanga, personal communication, 24th October, 2025). At this point, an increasing harvest of new crops is witnessed among the Ezza.

Changes and Continuity in the Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival: -

The fact is that the people and their cultural heritage, the New Yam Festival, faced challenges emanating from Western influence. This influence and Christianity could not wholly obliterate the cultural heritage, Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival, as attempts to harvest yams or introduce them to Ezza markets before the festival were always visited by mysterious eventuality. At first, those who were converted to Christianity abandoned the cultural heritage completely, alleging that it was idolatrous. Bearing in mind that mysterious forces unleash disaster on defaulters of the tradition, the Christians waited uninvolved until it was observed before going to either harvest their yams or introducethem to Ezza markets (Odey, 1986).

To accommodate people in all religions and categories, and keep up with the pace and needs of modernity, the period under discussion witnessed the festival undergoing some changes. Some of the changes are conspicuous in the areas of offering sacrifices to gods and goddesses during the festival. Since the people are mainly known as traditional worshippers, Western influence and involvement of Christians made modification of some of the rituals of the festival unavoidable (Odey, 1986). Traditional worshippers of the area celebrated the festival by observing the rituals holistically. They retained offering sacrifices to the gods and goddesses, which are not limited to the god of yams (*nja ji*), the god of peace and home security (*aliobu*), and the earth goddess (*enya ala*) during the festival. Some Christians, especially members of the orthodox churches of Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist among the people, resorted to observing the festival in their churches by bringing similar items to Church, and organising mass or prayer sessions in honour of the event. Among the educated non-Christians or Westernised people of Ezza, the festival is embraced as a way of upholding their cultural heritage and identity, getting involved enthusiastically and actively in the areas of merriments and entertainments.

These merriments and entertainments project the colourful features of the annual festival. In all of these, praying with and hosting relatives in different homes with cola-nut, pepper oil (*uza ukpara*), alligator pepper, bitter cola, groundnut, banana, palm kernel, and yam remain uninterrupted. Use of wrestling, masquerade, cultural dance and music equally subsists alongside the newly introduced modern entertainment of engaging live bands, public address systems, conducting competitions such as football and dancing, among others, during the festival. These competitions and entertainment programmes are mainly conducted by the youths. The practices in the contemporary standpoint attract more youths, Christians and Westernised people, disapproving and dispelling parts of the festival that seem idolatrous and unfashionable (C. Ugota, personal communication, 24th November, 2025). The greeting styles during the festival undoubtedly persist. People greeted their neighbours, saying *anyi aboo* (happy new year) as the greeted responded *awhaa la buru anyi awha oma* (the year shall be good to us or the year shall favour us).

The return of civilian rule to the government of Nigeria in 1999 provided more opportunities for the mobilisation of people to make the event more colourful. Some of the politicians in Ezza and other parts of the state supported the programme to attract the people's support to their political ambitions. Others saw it as their cultural and customary obligation that must be strictly observed. So, involvement of political office holders, and wealthy people of Ezza Ezekuna in the event, alongside efforts of some church priests to facilitate blending of the Western and local cultures promoted the modernisation of the event (R. Ujebe, personal communication, 24th October, 2025). Currently, politicians, businessmen and women, teachers, farmers, and priests of different religions with their adherents are deeply involved. The event developed to become an all-people's affair. Both uneducated, Westernised, non-

Christians and Christians celebrate the event together in their homes and churches. Cultural dances and music, wrestling, and masquerades are also involved in the celebrations in either churches or homes (Ongele, 2024). The fact is that churches insist that such cultural dances and masquerades should not be attached to shrines, but could be blessed in churches as parts of the symbols of culture and identity in Ezza.

Fundamentally, certain practices of the cultural heritage could not be neutralised. Examples include, no one could dismiss the fact that it is an annual event, the Council of Elders (*Ndi Ochi Mkpuru*) maintains the right of fixing the date of the festival, using the Ezza calendar; it must be observed during *Onwa Oke Aku* (July in the modern calendar), the festival must be held on Ori Market Day, which precedes *Eke Azuta*. The event lasts for one indigenous week (four days), and ends with a grand finale. The people of Ezza and or their representatives reconvene at *Okpoku Ezekuna* (home of Ezekuna). While the elders gather and pray with cola-nut at *Nchonu* (Sacred Altar of Ezekuna). Young people and politicians organise and close the ceremony ceremoniously at the Ezza civic centre. The first Eke market day after the event endures as the new yam introduction day (C. Ugota, personal communication, 24th November, 2025). The introduced yams to the market are not meant to be sold or bought. It is, however, important to note that most of the rituals of the event, as identified above, are strictly conducted or led by the Council of Elders. Many from far and near, including tourists, observed the ceremonies at different stages with happiness. All these are observed in response to the essence of the dynamics of tradition and modernity in efforts to preserve and promote the cultural heritage.

Economic Impact of the Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festivals (*Oke Aku*)

The festival remains impactful in virtually all sectors of the Ezza economy. In the first place, it promotes agricultural activities in the area and beyond. Before and during the event, people of Ezza bought numerous farm produce that were used to grace the programme. It is, however, more noticeable from the early 21st century when most of the Ezza politicians, and wealthy people from different parts of the state are attracted to procure gift items such as yams, cola nut, cow, goat, and groundnuts. The items, and sometimes a gift of cash, are used to support the people of Ezza during the festival. Ezza philanthropists like Chibuike Orogwu and Darlington Ugota use the festive period to provide youths of the area with empowerment items, such as sewing machines, garri processing machines, motorcycles, cars, and hair dressing equipment. In most cases, the people funded their apprenticeship (E. Njoku, personal communication, 14th December, 2025). These are made to strengthen the people to become self-reliant in the area.

Sometimes, traders had insufficient wares in Ezza markets as a result of increasing demand for their products during the festival. Most of those wares were farm produce. To that effect, markets that are located in other clans in the state serve as the extended sources of the items for satisfaction of the festival. The increasing demand for the scarce farm produce, that are not limited to yams, palm oil, palm kernel, kola nut, goat, and fowl resulted in selling them at high profit margins. To this effect, farmers and traders maximise flourishing profits from the farm proceeds. It therefore encourages the people to be more committed to their agricultural enterprises to enable them to make an exploit during the festival in the area. The festival equally supports crafts and industries in Ezza and Ebonyi State at large. This is evident as numerous outputs or products of crafts and industries are also important in conducting various activities during the programme. The products of sculpture, for example, covenant mortar (*Ukpara*), native tray (*Okwa*), mortar and pistol are increasingly needed during the period. Again, intensifying agricultural activities in Ezzaland encourages more dedication, commitment, and hard work in the sector. This development equally results in more demand for products of crafts and industries, facilitating blacksmithing, weaving, pottery, sculpture, among others, to enable the availability of tools that are not confined to hoes, cutlasses, baskets, head pans, masks, and figurines (E. Njoku, personal communication, 14th December, 2025).

Apprenticeship is equally promoted in Ezza as in other parts of Igboland. This is done to enable people to acquire the required skills for the enterprises. Of course, some of these crafts could not be conducted by the people without having closely observed a master craftsman as he or she carries out the functions at different stages for a period of time. It is after completing this period of learning that the apprentice secures the opportunity to take full responsibility. This practice remains an additional source of income for the master-craftsman and a source of skills and support for self-reliance for the apprentice. In all, the cultural heritage has a far-reaching impact on the local people of the communities. The local traders sell their items ceaselessly because of the influx of people (customers) who are usually willing to patronise them. The local bank in the place, United Bank of Africa, Onueke branch, is often filled as people come for their respective transactions that border on withdrawal and depositing of funds. This festival additionally offers rooms for small and medium-sized businesses to thrive. Stalls of local vendors, street

markets, and fairs usually become active hubs for economic activities during the festive period (B. Uche, personal communication, 18th December, 2025). Such enterprises endeavour and focus more on efforts to provide the people with all the materials that are required to ultimately celebrate the festival. The programme often calls for an additional workforce to enable effective management of the various sections of the events. So, enough hands are usually needed in areas of security, hospitality, welfare, transportation, and entertainment. The surge in demand often results in the creation of temporary jobs and employment opportunities, which many among the people are often exploited by many people. Although the jobs of such a category are seasonal, it is factual that they boost the income of the people and improve their livelihoods.

It has been established that the arts and cultural life of a place are also principal determinants of quality of life through shaping the people's economy. The arts combine with the more traditional quality-of-life, including safe neighbourhoods, strong infrastructure, and accessible recreational and outdoor attractions, to create more viable, desirable and livable communities. Just as in other places, the festival promotes teamwork and team building, advances visual skills and encourages problem-solving in Ezzaland. It is believed that festivals support the people in the areas of achieving human capital and cultural resources to generate economic vitality, improve the quality of life, expand businesses, and tax revenue-based; and making communities more attractive to entrepreneurs, knowledge-based employees, and thus stimulating new forms of knowledge-intensive enterprises in the area.

As part of the programme, there are competitions during the festival. They (the competitions) are demonstrated in the areas that are not restricted to wrestling, masquerade, dancing, football, dressing, and drama. Youths mainly conduct these activities to make the festival more colourful. The entertaining ventures, therefore, promote cooperation, unity and teamwork among the communities of Ezza. Each of the teams and communities worked assiduously to win prizes attached to the competitions during the event. Such practices indeed encourage the people of Ezza to build strongly on the development of their talents and skills. In the long run, the talents and skills made some of them employable in the entertainment industry, for example (B. Uche, personal communication, 18th December, 2025). So, the festival emerges as a potent force in the economic life of the people and assumes a significant role as a direct and indirect contributor to the economy.

Sustaining the Cultural Heritage (Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival):-

To sustain and promote the Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival in the post-colonial era and amidst the influence of Christianity and modernity, various measures are required. It is obvious that the festival is a significant cultural heritage in the area, projecting the richness of Ezza culture, and upholding its image, identity and values. A period that is meant for celebrating harvest, survival, achievements, peace, unity, and thanksgiving is indeed worthy enough to be preserved through community involvement. Local farmers, community leaders, such as traditional rulers, leaders of town development unions, women leaders, youth leaders and their respective groups should be encouraged to participate actively to ensure preservation and promotion of the festival's values (U. Utobo, personal communication, 20th November, 2025). Engagement of these groups in the communities of Ezza would equally support passing down this cultural heritage and values from generation to generation.

Ezza should engage in cultural documentation. This exercise would enable the effective collection of various festivals in Ezzaland. Their respective significance and relationship with one another toward sustainable socio-cultural growth and development would be unveiled. The new yam festival, for example, is one of the festivals in Ezza. Its development to emerge as an all-important event in Ezza underscores its essence. Of course, its history, traditions, and cultural significance should be traced and documented to strengthen preservation and promotion of its heritage (C. Mgbada, personal communication, 19th October, 2025). This document will provide researchers, foreigners, Christians, among others, the opportunity to comprehend the real nature, practices, and significance of the festival, thereby dispelling wrong notions of people about the cultural heritage.

The festival should be designed to develop sustainable economic models that can accommodate and favour entrepreneurs of various categories in the area. No doubt, yam is identified in the event as a symbol to monumentalise crops. The essence of the festival should be broadened to shape economic models that would be potentially supportive to the growth and development of all the sectors of the economy in the area (C. Mgbada, personal communication, 19th October, 2025). In this regard, entrepreneurs, such as farmers, artisans, and traders, could be empowered to contribute more significantly toward economic development. This could be achieved through engagement of extension services for local farmers, subsidisation of farm inputs, introduction of new and rich breeds of crops and animals, provision of storage facilities in Ezza, and establishment of a hybrid skill

acquisition centre at *Okpoku Ezekuna*. Development of eco-tourism initiatives in the area to demonstrate the festival's cultural significance, local cuisine, and natural attractions would help raise the festival to become economically oriented (Honey, 2009). In this regard, it would develop more employment opportunities and increase revenue generation through cultural exchange. Shaping the festival to develop eco-tourism attributes would attract more tourists to Ezzaland. To strengthen this, the cultural heritage, consisting of traditional music, dance, and art, should be developed and strongly incorporated in the rituals of the festival. This would, however, promote harnessing of the festival for economic growth and development.

The people should be adequately educated on all about the event through, among other things, conducting enlightenment campaigns, seminars, workshops, and introducing heritage studies in schools (Bello & Garba, 2022) in Ezzaland, and Nigeria at large. It is through these means that visitors and people of the area would be helped to acquire knowledge of the festival's history and cultural values. This approach is important because many were already misinformed about the godliness and purity of the cultural heritage. Even as some, especially Christians, and visitors who are re-informed about the cultural, social, economic and political importance of the festival are beginning to embrace it enthusiastically, many are still sceptical about the essence of the programme.

The people of Ezza should seek partnerships and collaborations with the government, Non-governmental Organisations, companies, international organisations, groups, and individuals to facilitate access to resources, expertise, and funds for supporting growth, development and sustainability of the festival. These key factors would energise the people to introduce new ideas in the rituals and practices of the festival, thereby making it both creative and innovative on all fronts. Indeed, creativity and innovativeness in conducting the events and their rituals will broaden the scope of its promising potentials and participation of people in the area. On the part of the government, for instance, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism should facilitate the enactment of favourable policies to cultural growth and development. The designed policies should be enforced efficiently to attract government investment in the rich cultural heritage. Wherein the people of Ezza open and lobby for such collaborations, the cultural heritage would be potentially sustainable.

Conclusion: -

Ezza Ezekuna New Yam Festival is one of the cultural heritages of Ezza in the Northeastern Igbo, Southeastern Nigeria, that suffered distortions from Westernisation, Christianity, and modernity. Of course, the festival is a vital part of Ezza culture, symbolising hardwork, tradition, identity, and thanksgiving. Despite the distortions, the festival continues to thrive defiantly, adapting to changing times while preserving and retaining its core values. Its character of unleashing mysterious destruction on defaulters sustained it, and its adaptability is promoted more strongly by the civilian rule since 1999. The politicians are baited to its promotion as a means of attracting people's support to their political ambitions. In this process, other critical stakeholders, such as businessmen and women, religious and community leaders, queued, supporting the annual festival. Measures to preserve and sustain the festival are necessary, and are not limited to documentation of Ezza culture, partnerships and collaborations, community engagement, and education and awareness campaigns.

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