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CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE OLD CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AWKA: A REVIEW OF THE *MMANKA* CULTURAL FESTIVAL CONFLICT IN UMUDIOKA NENI, 1978-1985

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the conflict between the Old Catholic Diocese of Awka and the autochthonous people of Umudioka Neni in respect of the revival and celebration of the Mmanka cultural festival between 1978 and 1985. The objective is to analyze the cultural festival that provoked so much tension between the Catholic Church and Umudioka Neni; and to investigate as well as evaluate the processes of the conflict resolution mechanisms used in the resolution of the conflict. This work adopted the multi-disciplinary research methodology in analyzing data obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The findings show that Mmanka cultural festival caused a great rift between the Catholic Church of Old Awka Diocese and Umudioka community of Neni town in South East Nigeria. The work studies the pre-colonial celebration of the festival, its deterioration with the advent of Christianity, and the revival in the late 1970s that led to a fall-out with the Catholic Church of Old Awka Diocese. The paper forges ahead with the analysis and evaluation of Conflict Resolution mechanisms employed in resolving the conflicts. Both parties in conflict employed various strategies to swing the pendulum of victory over to their sides without recourse to standard Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) spectrum that will produce a win-win resolution. The implication was that the strategies employed to resolve the conflict failed to rest the matter properly because they were deficient and did not align with standard ADR practices. This study recommends that recourse to standard ADR procedures will remedy conflicts of this nature, engender positive peace and bring forth lasting solutions.

Keywords: Conflict, Conflict Resolution, Festival, Culture, Religion

Introduction

Generally, festivals are an expressive way to celebrate glorious heritage, culture and traditions. They add structure to our social lives and connect us with our backgrounds, helping us to remember the important things and moments in life. They are means of passing legends, knowledge and traditions onto the next generations. All festivals; national, religious or seasonal, are all cultural in one way or another. Cultural festivals celebrate the traditions of a particular people or place. The *Mmanka* or *Nkadioka* Cultural Festival of Umudioka Neni is one of such festivals that not only celebrated traditions and legend, but also brought happiness to the

Umudioka people and strengthened their sense of community. However, conflict arose when Umudioka people were involved in a misunderstanding with the Catholic Church in their community over the celebration of *Mmanka* from 1978 to 1985.

This paper handles the conflict between the Catholic Diocese of Awka and the Umudioka Neni community in respect of the celebration of the *Mmanka* Cultural Festival. The study's objective is to analyze the cultural festival that provoked so much tension between the Catholic Church and Umudioka Neni; and to investigate as well as evaluate the processes of the conflict resolution mechanisms used in the resolution of the conflict. To achieve this objective, the paper studies the origin and history of Umudioka Neni while highlighting the special features of the people. The work looks at the celebration of the festival before the advent of Christianity in Neni, as well as the move towards the revival of the festival in the late 70s and the consequent fall-out with the Catholic Church in Awka diocese. The paper forges ahead with the analysis and evaluation of Conflict Resolution mechanisms employed in resolving the conflicts, and with its findings recommends that recourse to standard ADR procedures will remedy conflicts of this nature, engender positive peace and bring forth lasting solutions.

Research Method

This is a qualitative research. The work adopted the multi-disciplinary research method in analyzing data. Data were sourced through primary and secondary sources. The primary sources comprised majorly of face to face interviews and archival material. The secondary sources were majorly journal articles, books, internet materials and other relevant materials.

Findings

Brief Ethnography of Umudioka Neni

Umudioka is one of the ten villages that make up Neni town in Anaocha Local Government area of Anambra state. The other nine villages are: Umueze, Eziaja, Etitinabo, Ezineni, Umunri, Umuabani, Umukabia, Okofia and Ugwudunu. Neni town, with the following geographic coordinates; 6" 09' 00 North, 7" 02' 00 East, is the headquarter of Anaocha Local Government Area. The villages in Neni have their peculiar and distinct histories of origin and migration before settling with the others as a conglomerate to form the present Neni. Our focus here is on the Umudioka community of Neni.

History has it that Akikpo was the progenitor of Umudioka Neni (Ezenne, 2005), and that his four children founded the four large families of Umudioka. These families or kindreds are Umueze-Imeke, Umuojiaku, Umuakolom and Obuone. Akikpo descended from Dioka or Okaichi, the fourth son of Dunu of Okofia (Dunukofia) (Mgbataogu, 2014). According to Mgbemena (2018), Akikpo set out on a journey with his wife and only child, Imeke in order to save his family as a result of the persecution he suffered from his people. Imeke is the head of Akikpo dynasty in Neni today. On his arrival at Neni, Akikpo settled at the present Amakpu square located within Ndiagu Umudioka. He was later blessed with a second male called Anaekwe. Later he married a second wife

from Ezennaboye family of Etitinabo village Neni from whom he got two other sons; Akolom and Onee. Akolom and Onee are the forebears of Umuakolom and Obuene kindreds. Akolom begot Onyekuba who also begot Ogbuewu and Izu. Izu begot Ojiaku, Akpu, Dimasua and Ezenwoye. Anaekwe later married Ojiaku, an act that led to the loss of his name from history. Ojiaku being a rich, fearless and tough woman bequeathed her name to her descendants, hence the Umuojiaku kindred. Akikpo later relocated to the present Umuezeimeke as a result of the invitation of his in-laws for protection against their rival settlers. This relocation accounts for the dual settlements of his descendants in both Ndiagu and Obuno sections of the Umudioka village.

Literally, Umudioka means 'the Children of Dioka'. Apart from hunting and farming, Dioka chose Igbu-ichi (facial scarification) as his profession. With the blessing of his father Dunu, he travelled all through Igbo land and beyond and plied his trade. His father gave him the '*Mmanka'*(a sharp-knife used in this scarification—Igbu-ichi made by Awka blacksmiths [Mgbemena, 2018]). So in the entire Igbo land, it was Okaichi/Dioka and his children that had the *mmanka* and are the only ones that gave the ichi marks. Note that ichi marks are not the same as tribal marks. By the virtue of their profession, Dioka and his children were great travellers equalled only by the people of Awka (blacksmiths). The ancestral home of Umudioka people is located in the present day Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State. It is located at about twenty five kilometers from Onitsha town along Onitsha-Enugu road (Okoye, 1982). However, as a result of the itinerant nature of the occupation of the Dioka lineage, they spread and settled in various communities of Igbo land. Hence, Umudioka people are found in Neni and seven other towns among the Igbo (Agbo, Onuorah & Basu, 2019). These other towns are: Awka, Orlu, Awkuzu, Okija, Nzam, Achalla and Obote (Mgbataogu, 2014). All of these towns except Obote (Ngwa land in Abia state) and Orlu (Imo state) are in Anambra state. They are historically known as specialist surgeons who carried out the Igbu Ichi and Isu Nki Scarification, Itu Mbubu(body-marking from neck to belly) and Iwa eze (tooth filing) (Agbo *et al*, 2019). Igbu Ichi was the most prominent among the occupation of Umudioka. It is a kind of facial mark cut all over the forehead down to the two sides of the face (Ezenne, 2005). Describing the importance of Igbu Ichi and its benefit to the Diokas, Udeze (2018) explains that "Umudioka community Neni are famous in this area of tattoing "Igbu Ichi, Itu mbubu, Isu nki na Iwa Eze"… Before the advent of Western Civilization, Umudioka were travelers and were noble, disciplined, trusted and respected people who could not be killed, abducted for slave trade or poisoned by anybody, town or otherwise because of their natural gifted occupation. Only Umudioka by its Nwadioka would confirm the initiation of any intended title holder by tattoing such a person before his initiation. It was a taboo for any person to be initiated into the title-taking without being tattoed by Nwadioka. Even up till today, if you have that mark on your face, no security agent could disturb you or disgrace you. The trade is well destined to Umudioka by the Almighty God".

The implication of the above explanation is that the Diokas were taken as a special breeds in Igbo land because of their craftsmanship embedded in their God-given art of Igbu Ichi. In the olden days, Igbu Ichi was the requirement for Ozo title taking. No one can be admitted into the Ozo title class without first obtaining the Ichi tattoo. Again, anyone with the Ichi tattoo is regarded highly anywhere. Infact, it is a mark of royalty *per se*. As a result, such a person cannot be sold into slavely, poisoned, kidnapped or harmed by anyone in any way since the person is considered to be enjoying the protection of the Gods.

Figure I: Picture showing the Only Surviving Titled Man in Umudioka Neni with Ichi Scarification Marks; Chief Odidika Chidolue alias *Oke Iwe Adi Mma* (Excessive Anger is Never Good) with one of the Researchers.



Source: Picture taken by the Researcher after an Interview Session with Chief Chidolue at Neni, 10 July 2021.

The *Mmanka* festival is a way Umudioka celebrates herself and their ancestors. Mgbemena (2018) calls it a festival of renaissance and a reminder of the great Umudioka heritage. It is a celebration of the Umudioka occupational art of Igbu ichi. Ezenne (2005) highlights that *Mmanka*/*Nkadioka* festival is a thanksgiving ceremony by Umudioka sons to their ancestors for granting them success in their occupation during the year. It was also an opportunity for a head count of all Umudioka sons and daughters who have travelled far and wide to perform their professional duties. This is why all Umudioka indigenes must come home for the ceremony. If anyone is found missing, a search party was sent to locate him. Let us focus on the festival in the ancient times in order to appreciate the point of crisis with the Church in modern times.

Pre-olonial Celebration of *Mma-Nka* Cultural Festival:

Explaining *Mmanka* festival, Mgbemena (2018) writes that it was held once a year. The festival was like a feast of Passover of the Israelites. Traditionally, the Umudioka people of Neni traversed all parts of Igbo land performing the art of Igbu Ichi, Itu Mbubu and Iwa Eze. These crafts placed them as the richest village in Neni and its environs. So once a year, they would gather and pay homage to Imeke, the first son of Akikpo. At this point in time, Akikpo was also lost in history just like the second son Anaekwe. They made a big carving of Imeke with his wife adorned with corper hat and ornaments respectively, and were celebrated with pump and pageantry. Their appearance at Oye market day signaled the end of *Mmanka* for that particular year.

The *Mmanka* festival was celebrated before the advent of the white man in Igbo land. The celebration is as old as the people. The original name was *Mmanka* festival. It was later changed to *Nkadioka* after the conflict with the Church. The festival was initially a four-day annual celebration done in the month of November. According to Ezenne (2005), the season is heralded by a specially styled and well recognized cry of a bird called *Ekwulo* from its habitat in *Ofia Udo-Ojilike* (Udo-Ojilike forest), usually in the first week of November.

The festival is kick-started with ancestral worship with the purpose of purifying and cleansing the people for the occasion. This religious act was performed as a mark of thanksgiving, honour and glory to the ancestors for protection and kindness shown to the people all through the year. In this religious ceremony, *Imeke*, the leading ancestral spirit of Umudioka, as well as other ancestral spirits; *Udojilike*, *udo-okam*, *Aputu* and *Ogwugwu* were worshipped.

After the signal of the beginning of the season was given by the cry of the *Ekwulo* bird, the fixing of the date for the festival was then done by the *Isi-Mmanka*, comprising the first eight oldest Ozo titled men with *Ichi* marks. These men in the company of their wives visited the shrine of *Imeke* with sacrificial items. There, they prayed and sacrificed to the ancestral spirit, they feasted and then fixed the date. After the date was fixed, the news was spread to all Umudioka people. The next group that visited the shrine were the oldest non Ozo titled men with the *Ichi* marks (the *Isi-Mano)*, they went with their sacrificial and prayer items, accompanied by their wives and performed their own prayers and sacrifices. During the celebration proper, all the people of Umudioka will gather at the *Imeke* shrine for the ceremony accompanied by their wives and their children, with sacrificial items, *mmanka* and other implements they used for cutting the *ichi* marks on people. There, they thanked and worshipped the ancestors for their blessings, asked for more blessings, performed their own sacrifices and then went home to celebrate and attend to their friends. This was the practice before the advent of Christianity in the Old Catholic Diocese of Awka.

Figure II: Picture of an Artefact of *Mmanka/Nkadioka* Cultural Festival Showing an Ichi Scarified Face and Tools for Cutting Ichi Marks.



Source: Umudioka Neni Cultural Museum, Umudioka Civic Centre, Neni.

The Catholic Church and *Mmanka* Festival in Umudioka Neni: The Conflict

The conflict between the Umudioka Neni and the Old Catholic Diocese of Awka over the *Mmanka* festival took place in the late 1970s to mid 1980s. The festival was the most important social event in pre-Christian Umudioka Neni, but in the 1960s and early 1970s, it declined greatly (Agbo *et al*, 2019). However, in 1978, during the period when R.O. Udeze served as the President of Umudioka village, the *Mmanka* festival was revived (Udeze, 2018). This revival was credited to the events that transpired during the election of a new traditional ruler (Igwe) in Neni in 1976. At the election organized by Neni Community, B. N. Mgbemena of Umudioka village, despite his advantageous position as the then Head of Agulu-Aguinyi clan with headquarters at Neni lost to Iweobi Enemuo who eventually became the Igwe. Mgbemena's loss became a matter of serious concern to Umudioka youths. The Umudioka Joint Action Committee (UJAC) led an inquiry into the reasons that prompted Umudioka elders to vote against their own Mgbemena. This inquiry then revealed that some of these elders have been neglected, and they, in fact, felt abandoned both by Mgbemena who headed the Agulu-Aguinyi clan, and by the then Chairman of Umudioka, Francis Ibekwe (Uzondu, 2021). UJAC, therefore, made moves that led to the formation of a new government in Umudioka community of Neni which saw R. O. Udeze as the President of Umudioka from 31st December 1977 (Udeze, 2021). As recommended by UJAC, especially in order to restore peace to Umudioka and to pay homages due to the Umudioka elders and the retired Diokas, Udeze set up the committee for culture headed by Augustine Ezeani (now late) to arrange for the revival of *Mmanka* to be celebrated on or before November 1978. On this cultural revival, R. O. Udeze (2018) explains that God Almighty made Umudioka Communities throughout Igbo land to avail themselves with homage, free education and

empowerment to the deserved ones. In Umudioka Community Neni, there is pension scheme called homage and the young Nwadioka pays such homage to the retirees whenever he returned from his journey… The homage was abridged by the Western civilization; otherwise Umudioka as a race had from their creation introduced pension scheme, hence the revival of this famous festival.

It should be noted that during this period, the entire Neni Catholic Community was still under Adazi Parish with Monsignor Joseph Orakwe (now late) as the Priest-in-charge. When the news of the up-coming festival got to the Priest, he challenged the motive. He saw it as an attempt to revive an already phased-out idolatrous practice. The attempt to explain the motive of the festival to the Priest also proved abortive. Udeze (2018) explains that despite the fact that he made several approaches to the Rev. Gentleman to allow the community to explain to him their aims but he (The Reverend Father) blatantly refused, saying that his order must be obeyed… the worst of all and the most insult[*sic*] to the community was that he said that Umudioka Neni people were pagans.

This encounter with the Parish Priest led to an emergency meeting where Umudioka decided to hold the festival in defiance to the priest's objections, with the reason that once the festival was held, the world should now judge what was and what was not idolatrous in the culture they were reviving. Some members of Umudioka surreptitiously took the resolutions of the meeting to the priest at Adazi (Uzondu, 2021). This disagreement was to consequently aggravate to a full blown crisis.

The community went ahead and held the festival in November 1978, resulting in further crisis with the Catholic Church. The Church took what it felt were good measures to remedy the situation against her members. Some of these measures included applying sanctions against those who participated in the festival: they were ostracized and banned from the sacraments (baptism, reception of Holy Communion, wedding and Christian burials) for seven years, and were subjected to public penance before re-admission into the Church (Igwilo, 2019). While the crisis raged, the Neni Catholic Community became an independent parish under the rubric of St. John's Catholic Church Neni, with Samuel Ezeibekwe (now late) as the Parish Priest. With the new Parish Priest resident in Neni Community, various means were then devised to assuage the crisis. The next session shall look into these measures that were taking by both parties to resolve the conflict.

Resolution of *Mmanka* Festival Conflict at Umudioka Neni

As narrated in the last chapter, the *Mmanka* crisis in Neni disturbed the foundations of the community, especially the Umudioka village. Because both sides stuck to their guns, it was difficult to find common grounds for the resolution of the impasse. Most indigenous people felt that the *Mmanka* festival was their heritage and ancient tradition that had no idolatrous import and that it was a super-imposition for the Catholic Church to attempt to stop the continuation of such a heritage. The Catholic Church intensified efforts to

punish those who the Church in her thinking described as renegades and apostates as well as their collaborators. These measures included writing to parishes in towns and cities where indigenes of Umudioka had sojourned; these letters instructed such parishes not to recognize the membership of such persons as *bona fide* Catholics (Ezenne, 2005; Udeze, 2021). The Catholic Church also insisted that the so-called apostates who wished to return to the fold must undergo public penance. It should be noted that one factor that was factorable in the prolonged nature of the crisis was the fact that Neni as a community for much of the period was under Adazi parish. Some of the priests who served the community from Adazi might, therefore, not have had a frontline understanding of the Neni people since they were not domiciled among the people. However, on 27 December 1981, St. John's Church Neni was officially created an autonomous parish. There is no doubt that this development had a significant impact on the resolution of the crisis. With the Church and priests closer to the people and armed with further information on the crisis, the Church moved into dialogue with the people on how to absolve the festival of all pagan features.

However, this was to result in more serious disagreement that lasted for years. The Umudioka Neni people resorted back to their contestation that what they were doing was just re-enacting their culture and not any idol or ancestor worship. The disagreement was to reach a defining point when some members of Umudioka Neni proceeded to invite the Orthodox Catholic Church into their village to serve the pastoral and religious needs which the Catholic Church denied them for seven years. This group that seceded from Catholic Church liaised with the Orthodox Church authorities in Ukpor town in Anambra state and brought the Orthodox Church into the town on 30th April 1983 (Igwilo, 2019; Udeze, 2021). Therefore, those who did not agree with the Catholic Church's stand joined the Orthodox Church. Udeze (2018) narrates that what finally became the last straw that broke the camel's back that made the community embrace the Orthodox Church was that when one Mr. James Chidolue wanted to take his wife to the Altar of God, the Church refused to wed him unless he confessed that he sinned by taking part in *Mmanka* (festival). Throughout Lagos, Ibadan, Onitsha, and Neni rejected his intention until he came to me at Enugu [*sic*], which the two parishes registered for announcements refused to give him the authority letter saying that the diocese of Awka wrote them to void any marriage proposal from the Umudioka community that participated at *Mmanka* festival…[*sic*]. Udeze explained that it was the night of the above-described incidence in 1983 that he received a revelation to introduce his people to the Orthodox Church. Igwilo (2019) concurred that it was then that the community made inquiries and invited Orthodox Church at Ukpor Community in Anambra state who came and established their station at Umudioka Neni.

It was the arrival of the Orthodox Church that stirred the authorities of the Catholic Diocese of Awka to rethink some of their methods and as well speed up the peace process. Three different Parish Priests worked for a resolution of the crisis at different times. These included the Late Rev. Frs. Samuel

Ezeibekwe and Eugene Iloghalu, and Rev. Fr. (now Bishop) Paulinus Ezeokafor, the sitting Bishop of Awka Diocese. The then Bishop of Awka, Most Rev. A. K. Obiefuna waded into the crisis in 1983. Mgbemena (2021) believes that it must have been the Holy Spirit that directed the Bishop to get personally involved in finding the solution to the Neni challenge. Although, as suggested earlier, the Bishop's involvement may have been as a result of the new challenge posed by the arrival of the Orthodox Church.

Bishop Obiefuna challenged the Umudioka Neni people to change the name of the festival to *Umudioka* Day because *Mmanka* sounded like the *Imeke* ancestral spirit worshipped during the ancient practice of the festival (Chidoluo, 2021). The Church also thought that the name of the festival originated from the *Imeke* ancestral spirit; but Umudioka did not budge. Explaining Umudioka's reaction to the call by the Church to rename the festival, Udeze (2018) said, "when the very lone Church observed that the festival was a success and had come to stay, the Awka Hierarchy of the Church diverted their attention to the name of the festival to be Umudioka Day, but the Umudioka Neni angrily rejected that useless order and wanted to tear the document, but I quickly intervened and pleaded with the secretary not to tear the letter. The community petitioned all the dioceses of that lone church in Nigeria and Rome, but only the diocese of Awka and Lagos replied to our petition".

The consenting parties began working towards a common goal of resolving the conflict with the posting of Rev. Fr. Paulinus Ezeokafor to Neni. He created the ambient environment for the two sides of the divide to iron out some of the grey areas of the conflict. With a greater emphasis on understanding the position of the other side, the Church arranged for some nuns from Igboukwu to come to Neni to discover if there were truly idolatrous dimensions to the *Mmanka* festival. Although the report of what the nun-scholars thought of the festival was not a public record, one can deduce from what transpired afterward, that they possibly did not find anything utterly unchristian about the festival (Uzondu, 2021; Ezennia, 2021). The *Mmanka* conflict was resolved around 1985 through dialogue with some stakeholders in the town. After the resolution, some who left the Catholic Church came back, while others remained in the Orthodox Church as well as other denominations. The bans placed on those referred to as apostates by the Catholic Church were lifted by the Church and the name of the festival was later changed by the community to "*Nkadioka* Arts and Cultural Festival" (Mgbemena, 2021). Whatever suggested idolatry in the festival was also removed such that the festival now does begin with Christian prayers and had no allusions to ancestral worship. Udeze (2021), one of the persons at the forefront of the fight for the preservation of the Umudioka culture, explains: "in our attempt to revive this great art, we have taken the necessary steps to pre-empt and avoid anything that might appear or border on paganism and worship of idols to accommodate the various religious sects in the Umudioka community of Neni". With the above steps taken by both the Umudioka community and the Catholic Church, the

Mmanka festival conflict was permanently resolved.

Evaluation of the Resolution of the Conflict in Umudioka Neni between the Catholic Church and Community

This evaluation shall be approached from two fronts. The first is the presentation of the basics of conflict resolution in general and the outlining of the standard spectrum of conflict resolution. The second front will evaluate the resolution of *Mmanka* conflict in line with the outlined standard ADR principles.

Conflict Resolution/Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Conflict Resolution is a broad concept used in the description of activities which go beyond shallow probes into conflict backgrounds. It comprises of the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict. It engages the root causes of conflict with the aim to treat them. In conflict resolution, the aim is not to avoid conflict but rather to deal with it in a way which minimizes the negative impact and maximizes the positive potential inherent in conflict within the framework of the values of peace. It is a conflict solving approach where causes of conflict are probed and addressed so as to build new and lasting relationship between aggressive parties. There is the suggestion that the inadequacies discovered in the formal process of resolution (litigation) were what led to the search for Alternative Dispute Resolution, Appropriate Dispute Resolution or Amicable Dispute Resolution, which covers the whole range of alternatives to litigation or arbitration.

Among numerous works on Conflict Resolution, the *Conflict Management and Resolution of* Ho-Won Jeong (2010) specially captures the interest of this researcher. Jeong designed his work to examine how to manage and resolve conflict, in part, by shedding light on the styles and methods of communication in overcoming differences along with the efforts to minimize the harmful aspects of struggle. He opined that one of the primary tasks of conflict resolution is to avert the recurrence of destructive conflict. This is done by qualitatively altering antagonistic relationships leading to mutually acceptable outcomes. It is then these same outcomes that fund remedies for power imbalances and inequitable social and economic relations which are often the main source of grievances, and as well respond to a few other manifest contentious issues. He attributed to conflict resolution the quality of having strategies that undertake serious examination of the real sources of grievances without which the same type of conflict can reoccur. These strategies clarify issues representing points of confrontation and explore opportunities for forging new relationships by facilitating peaceful change and reconciliation. The process of resolving conflicts entails synchronization in the alteration of underlying behavioral patterns designed to end violence in tandem with improved communication. When conflict has been handled constructively (resolution), all the parties are better off than before.

Following the trails of Burton (1997) and Mitchell (2002), Jeong (2010) observed as a precautionary measure that the fundamental

nature of social conflict focuses on the social norms and political processes in question beyond motives and other psychological environments. Therefore, conflict in a given system cannot be resolved without changes in institutional processes and structures required for responding to the root causes of problems such as forced annexation of territories and denial of rights to use an ethnic language among other factors. However, there are needs that are non-negotiable. Therefore, the premise of conflict resolution has been based on the understanding that differences in non-negotiable needs and cultural values are not something to be divided but have to be accommodated. Jeong also made a list of successful conditions for conflict resolution which are: commitment of parties to problem-solving, openness to a win-win solution and readiness to shift grounds/negotiation of material based interests. While taking note of the above, one must understand that conflict resolution needs to be assessed in terms of an outcome as well as a process which can enhance a prospect for warning parties to abide by their agreements. The following spectrum of Conflict Resolution describes various processes of addressing conflicts in a bid to arrive at a win-win outcome.

Spectrum of Conflict Resolution refers to the different strategies and mechanisms available for the resolution of disputes outside of litigation. These can be considered as different tools in a dispute resolution tool box. Ogunyannwo (2005) presented 12 variants or spectrum of ADR which are categorized under three sub-headings, thus:

Variants of Litigation and Arbitration
Judicial Appraisal
High-Low Arbitration

Binding Decisions from a Third Party
Adjudication
Expert Determination
Ombudsman
Med-Arb
sxArb-Med

Non-Binding Third Party Involvement
Mediation
Executive Tribunal
Neutral Fact Finder
Early Neutral Evaluation ('ENE')
Conciliation

Other processes included in the spectrum are: Negotiation, Peer Mediation, Multi-Door Court, Community Conferencing, Collaborative Law, and Negotiated Legislation.

Synopsis of Conflict Resolution as they relate to this work are:

Mediation: This is a voluntary non-binding private dispute resolution process in which a neutral person helps the parties to try reaching a negotiated settlement. It is a process widely known for neutral third party assistance in reaching agreement (Jeong, 2010). It is characterized as "a form of assisted negotiation" or at least is seen as "a catalyst for negotiation" (Touval & Zartman, 2001). The attributes of mediation are clearly outlined in the fact that it is regarded as a process whereby a neutral third party, acceptable to all disputants, facilitates communication that enables parties to reach a negotiated settlement. Ogunyannwo (2005) emphasizes the voluntary nature of the process when he explains that mediation is voluntary in the sense that in the majority of cases it takes place as a result of the parties

agreeing to enter the mediation process. It cannot happen if one or more of the parties refuse to participate. There are also cases where mediation is non-voluntary. For instance, when a contract or court order requires the parties to mediate before arbitration or litigation, the process then happens non-voluntarily, thus affecting the willingness of the parties to participate in mediation and reach settlement.

Neutral Fact Finder: Neutral fact finding is a process where a neutral third party, selected either by the disputing parties or by the court, investigates an issue and reports or testifies in court. The process is particularly useful for resolving complex scientific and factual disputes. It is loosely defined as a fact-finding endeavour in which those conducting the investigation are neutral with respect to the conflict at hand (Schultz, 2003). While employing this process, it must be ensured that the fact finders are actually neutral. In other words, they are to be transparent and have no stakes in the outcome of the resolution. They are also to ensure that ground rules are established as to how the fact-finding efforts will correspond with the conflict management processes. Neutral fact-finding is restricted to clarification of particular issues and is non-binding since the neutral does not normally make an award (Ogunyannwo, 2005).

Early Neutral Evaluation (ENE): This is generally used to access the likely outcome of a legal action. It provides a quick method of obtaining a neutral advisory opinion which may assist the parties in their negotiations. Here, a court attorney, usually a retired judge or an experienced lawyer is appointed by the parties to review a case before it is formally presented for trial. The essence of the practice is to review the merits of the case and encourage the parties to come to an agreed resolution instead of going on with litigation. When settlement fails with this process, the attorney enlightens the parties on how to proceed to litigation and his opinion on the possible outcome.

Conciliation: This is a third party non-adversarial intervention process, where an intervener conducts a form of shuttle-diplomacy between disputing parties in a bid to achieve a mutually acceptable terms of conflict resolution for them. In this process, the conciliator takes messages to and fro the disputants who probably are not in talking terms, or who may resort to violence if given the opportunity to meet one-on-one. The process is usually employed to restore communication where such has broken down. Conciliation, at its best, can lead to resolution of conflict. On the other hand, it can just restore communication and prepare the disputants for a later mediation session.

Negotiation/Bargaining: This is a joint problem solving process where two or more persons hold a discussion with the view of arriving at a mutual agreement over an issue of common disagreement. Bargaining or negotiation is an everyday exercise that involves back and forth trading of compromise and concession of needs and interests on the issue of disagreement. Negotiation is positional when the negotiator insists on his literal or outward demand rather than his real interest. It is interest-based when the bargainer realistically bases his bargaining on his interest or need. While a

soft bargainer is always ready to accept most terms and conditions, a hard bargainer hardly accepts any condition except on his own terms. Both approaches make negotiation difficult. However, the best approach to negotiation is that by a principled negotiator, who agrees on fair, just and merit grounds, thus realizing a creative and win-win negotiation outcome.

Community Conferencing: This is a sort of planned or structured dialogue involving all members of a community (perpetrators/offenders and victims, etc) who have been in one way or another affected by a conflict or crime led by a facilitator and aimed at restoring peace and making amends.

Having established the basics of conflict resolution upon which the resolution of *Mmanka* festival conflict shall be evaluated, this work shall evaluate the resolution of this conflict based on the standard principles of ADR.

Evaluation of the Resolution of *Mmanka* Cultural Festival Conflict

From the above discussions, it is evident that *Mmanka* cultural festival conflict was fuelled by so many factors including the indisposition of the Church's hierarchy to dialogue with the people of Umudioka Neni in order to understand the aim of the revival of the festival and procedure for the celebration, as well as the Umudioka Neni people's unflinching quest to revive and celebrate their culture by all means. The situation ended up creating a scene where the parties (the Catholic Church and Umudioka) were seen flexing muscles in projection of their ego, which led to great losses on both sides.

The measures taken by both parties in addressing the already escalated conflict situation posed great challenges to peaceful resolution of the conflict. First was the imposition of sanctions by the Church. It was the Church's view that sanctions that ranged from ex-communication, ban from the sacraments (Baptism, Holy Communion and Matrimony[weddings]), and denial of burial and funeral services would make the people bend to the Church's will and rescind their stand. This however was far from bringing forth the expected resolution. This sanction of ex-communication held sway until one made a public confession in the Church that he/she had sinned by participating in *Mmanka* festival, and asked for forgiveness. Only then would such a person be re-admitted into the Church's fold and had access to all that were hitherto denied the person. This move was adjudged by this work to be a great challenge to the resolution of the crisis. With the sanction in place, the affected persons felt maltreated and abandoned especially since they clamored for fair hearing but were not given the opportunity.

The upgrade of Neni town to a parish status with the parish priests now domicile in Neni in 1981 did not help the matter too, since the priests (Late Frs. Samuel Ezeibekwe and Eugene Iloghalu) in their interventions upheld the sanctions already placed by Late Msgr. J. Orakwe who was the Parish Priest when the crisis started in 1978 with Neni under Adazi parish. Though the priests put in further measures including the re-registration of faithful Catholics in order to ascertain who

were and who were not in good standing with the Church (Efobi, 2020), however, without the revocation of the sanctions placed on Umudioka Neni people, they were not able to return peace to the community.

On the other hand, the letter by Bishop Obiefuna to the community to change the name of the celebration could not be honoured by the community who already felt the Church had greatly slighted them by not bending down to reason with them. Dialogue at first instance could have enhanced both parties' understanding of the situation on ground and would have led to mutual agreement and adaptations.

Lastly, solution came in a very unorthodox manner through the secession of the aggrieved party who felt neglected for nearly seven years with ex-communications and sanctions placed on them. They decamped from the Catholic Church and founded the Orthodox Church in the community. According to Udeze (2021), the establishment of the Orthodox Church brought the much expected resolution. Hence, those who were for the Catholic Church remained in the Catholic Church, while those who did not want to go back to confess as sin what they never considered sin moved over to the Orthodox Church. With the passage of time, brothers and sisters reconciled and peace returned to the community not minding that split had already occurred in the Catholic Church causing the Church to lose members to the new Orthodox Church.

It is clear enough that this matter was not resolved in accordance with ADR principles. It could be said to have died off on its own. The implication is that those who moved to the Orthodox Church still nurse the wounds inflicted on them by the Catholic Church hierarchy, while the members of the Catholic Church in the community see the Orthodox congregation as dissidents. No reasonable move was made in the light of ADR to attain a win-win resolution in the matter. Hence, though the conflict no longer exists, the matter was not adequately handled.

Recommendations and Conclusion:

The *Mmanka* Cultural Festival conflict is evident of a situation where both parties were not willing to work towards problem solving being the first requirement of a successful conflict resolution according to Jeong(2010). In this conflict, the Church in her characteristic manner, threw in force from every corner rather than employ any dialogue or fact finding procedure. And while the conflicting parties (the Church and the Umudioka Neni community) were at each other's neck, a conciliatory process, community conferencing, the services of an independent fact finder, and a mediator would have saved the negative peace outcome which resulted in the instant case. A combination of the above Alternative Dispute Resolution processes if properly applied would have ensured that the root causes of the conflicting issues were identified, a veritable solution proffered and the lost of the aggrieved members of the church prevented.

This study recommends that positive peace resulting from a win-win resolution can be restored in the Old Awka Diocese between the Catholic Church and the autochthonous

people of Umudioka Neni through appeal to ADR in handling the conflicting issues. The strategies that would restore lasting peace would include the involvement of Initial Fact Finders whose neutrality and independence would have produced a better report of the real situation on ground; the employment of a conciliation process that would bring the conflicting parties to the table to seek solutions; appeal to community conferencing and a properly arranged mediation or arbitration process among others. It is the belief of this study, that the issues of this socio-*religio*-cultural conflict in the community would be arrested through one or more of these measures.

More so, this work observes that the remote cause of the conflicts lies in the mentality or worldview of the European missionaries that evangelized the Igbo nation, and specifically the Old Awka Diocese. Their approach was that of religious exclusivism, a theory and outlook that sees nothing of value in other religions or cultures. Hence, their condemnation of everything the people held sacred; the attempt to impose their religious and cultural practices upon the Igbo with the belief that the people should accept the indoctrination hook, line and sinker; and the attendant resistance and fight for survival by the indigenous people in order not to be completely annihilated and separated from their roots or lose their cultural heritage. In contrast to what this work observes as the remote cause of the conflicts in the Old Awka Diocese, the work recommends religious inclusivism, a religious outlook and approach of the Catholic Church since the Vatican Council II of 1962-1965: a theory of religious dynamism that is all-inclusive; seeing something of value in every religion and culture while priding itself as having the greatest value. This approach should characterize every religion versus culture (Church and Society) relationship.

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