

**IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON AKWUKWU-IGBO PEOPLE OF DELTA  
STATE**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND  
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## CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this research work was carried out by **ROSELINE CHINEDU BIOSAH** in the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City under my supervision.

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## **DEDICATION**

I specially dedicate this project to Almighty God, the creator of Heaven and Earth who made it possible for me to successfully complete this work and for the knowledge and understanding he gave me throughout the cause of my academic pursuit in the University of Benin.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### **Introduction**

The first attempt at the establishment of Christianity in Nigeria can be traced back to the fifteenth century, when the Portuguese priest from the diocese of Lisbon were sent by the king of Portugal along with Portuguese traders to evangelize the Benin kingdom. The period was seen as the age of exploration.<sup>1</sup> However, this was a failure largely due to their method of evangelization.<sup>2</sup>

The second attempt covers the years 1788-1900 and was linked with the movement for the abolition of slave trade and European desire to trade with the African interior. During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, a new enlightenment swept through Europe and this enlightenment originated with Christian and humanitarian groups as well as American and French revolutions. They insisted on the “Rights of man” everywhere. This gave new life to the church of the day which resulted in the formation of missionary societies that founded the Christian missionary society (CMS) in 1799.<sup>3</sup>

However, the effective establishment of Christianity in Nigeria began in the nineteenth century after the failure attempt by the Portuguese Roman Catholic Missionaries to establish Christianity in the fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the coming of Christianity to Igbo land occurred during the latter part of nineteenth century and the pioneers were British Church Missionary Society, within the Anglican Church. According to F.K Ekechi, Christian missionary enterprise in Igbo land was as a result of

economic and political changes that has taken place in Europe.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the missionary movement was as a result of political movement and commercial undertaking. It was as a result of this that led to one of the expedition which laid the foundation for future C.M.S missionary work on the bank of the Niger which began in 1841. The expedition was as a result of the idea of one of the humanitarian, Fowel Buxton, who opines that the best way to stop the slave trade and regenerate Africa was to establish legitimate commerce with the African rulers by the introduction of commerce, civilization and Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of this expedition was to introduce trade and Christianity but was faced with little or no success; other expedition was organized and carried out in 1854 and 1857 by the British government, Macgregor Laird and the C.M.S. The 1857 expedition championed by Dr Baike was very successful. It led to the establishment of the Church Missionary Society at Onitsha on the 26th July, 1857.<sup>7</sup> After the establishment of the mission in Onitsha, the representatives of the mission travelled to other towns on the lower Niger in order to open more centers. This therefore, led to the introduction of Christianity in Oshimili in 1875 by Sierraleonean of the Church Missionary Society.<sup>7</sup> Though the first attempt was made in September 1873, when Rev John Buck went to Oshimili but achieved nothing. Two years later, he was assisted by Obi Igweli to get a piece of land for a mission post.<sup>7</sup> The Church Missionary Society which was under the supervision of Reverend (later Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther) in Igbo land was established by Rev John Christopher Taylor of the Church Missionary Society.<sup>8</sup>

As earlier noted, the first attempt to establish Christianity in Oshimili was led by the Roman Catholic Church but recorded little or no success. Further attempt was still made to the point when it was interested to the Society de Mission Africaines under the pioneering work of missionary congregation founded in Lyons, France on December 8, 1956 by Bishop Melchior de Marion Bresillac which succeeded in planting the seed of Catholicism in Nigeria.<sup>9</sup> The Society de Mission Africaines missionaries were also responsible for the spread of the Catholic church in Oshimili through Fr. Carlo Zappa who found the mission at Asaba,<sup>10</sup> through the invitation of Sir James Marshall who was a high court Judge and an employee of the Royal Niger Company. The Mission in Asaba was formally inaugurated on the 17th of June 1888; and the establishment of Christian missionary spread from one community to another in Oshimili and these communities includes Akwukwu-Igbo, Achaia, Ezukwu, Idumuisagba, and Okpanam/Ugbolu. According to the interview with Chief Okolo Agbamuche, narrated that Christianity consolidated more in Akwukwu and Okpanam than any other community in Oshimili, and this affected their socio-cultural existence.<sup>11</sup>

However, over the years, this long aged culture and beliefs system had become the cultural identity of the Akwukwu Igbo which had passed from one generations to another not until the coming of Christianity in Akwukwu-Igbo in the 20th century. Christianity brought a lasting impact in the social, cultural and religious life of the Akwukwu-Igbo people, as Christianity replaced the traditional form of worship. Today,

the Akwukwu-Igbo people have embraced Christianity as the major religion in the general Oshimililand.

However, on the account of the coming of the early Christian missions in Oshimili land, it should be noted that the Akwukwu-Igbo people had not direct contact with the early missionaries. Their neighbours, Ibusa, Nsukwa, Oko-Okwe, Okpanam, and Ugbolu had already established contact relations with the early missionaries during the early decades of the 20th century. It was through trading with the Asaba that the early missionaries discovered that the Akwukwu-Igbo traders came from the same region. Thus, these missionaries were determined to penetrate into Akwukwu-Igbo and propagate Christianity in this new found region. This led to the introduction for Christianity into Akwukwu-Igbo in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through trading contact.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of Christianity in Akwukwu-Igbo land”, specific objectives;

- i. to examine briefly the history of Akwukwu-Igbo and its geographical location;
- ii. to discuss the coming of the Christian Mission areas into Akwukwu-Igbo;
- iii. To examine the missionary factor which attracted the people of Akwukwu-Igbo to Christianity.
- iv. To survey the impact of Christianity on the Akwukwu-Igbo.

## **Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study is to reveal the impact of Christianity in Akwukwu-Igbo community as well as consider how the socio-cultural and religious structure of Akwukwu-Igbo community had undergone some changes starting from the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. However observations and findings gotten from a word of this type will offer an expository account of how the various forms of fetish customs and primitive superstition got to this modernized stage.

## **Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study covers Akwukwu-Igbo community in Oshimili North Local Government area of in Delta State in Southern Nigeria. This project covers a period from pre-colonial times to colonial time 1900-1960. This work focuses Christianity activities in Akwukwu-Igbo community. However, this research intends to examine the activities of these aforementioned missionaries, and their impact in Akwukwu-Igbo up to the 1960

## **Research Methodology**

This study adopts the historical research methodology which depends on secondary, primary sources as well as oral interviews which would be clearly stated at the end of my project work. The primary source contains oral interviews, newspaper. While the secondary sources contains articles in edited books and articles in journals.

## Literature Review

There are useful works on the impact of the Christian mission in Igboland which provides us with essential information on Asaba before the coming of the missionary, the advent of the missionary and the impact of the Christian mission. They provide useful insight to the study and include the following:

It is on this note that this present writer tends to explore to the best of her ability “The Impact of the Missionary Activities in Akwukwu-Igbo with a Special Focus on the CMS and Roman Catholic Mission”.

However, Elizabeth Isichei in her work *History of Western Africa since 1800* posits that one of the most interesting aspect of West African history up to 1800 concerns the expansion of Christianity<sup>12</sup> According to Isichei Christianity came through the trans sahara trade route. Isichei went further to explain that there are two reasons for the failure of Christianity to bear fruit as anticipated during this period which are in the fact that the missionary activity only took place at infrequent interval and the fundamental contradiction between Christianity which aim to convert Africans and the slave trade which aimed to buy them<sup>13</sup>. More so, Isichei buttress on the problems which was the tension between the African traditional culture and Christianity. This work is important to this present research because, it aid us to understand the direction through which Christianity spread into Western Africa, the problems created by Christianity amongst others.

Gideon Chukwumalobim Ikenwe book *Akwukwu-Igbo Kingdom Culture: Ancient and Present Perspective*,<sup>14</sup> the book focus on the culture of Akwukwu-Igbo, trace the origin of Akwukwu-Igbo and make a brief but interesting historical excursion before exploring its culture. The author capture how Akwukwu-Igbo kingdom came into existence circa 1504, during the mass movement of the Ezechimas comprising Onitsha (in Anambra State), Onicha Ugbo, Obior, Iseele-Uku, Onicha Olona and Ezi, from ancient Benin kingdom down to the present location of Aniocha North in Delta State of Nigeria.<sup>15</sup>

K.O. Dike, in his work titled *Origin of the Niger Mission 1841-1891* states that missionary activities in Nigeria cannot be viewed without the mention of European invasion of the West African territories from the advent of the Portuguese<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, Dike gave a holistic account of the establishment of the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) in Nigeria but the vision of the CMS as at a point dented by slave trade and other factors but because of the idea of Buxton and the zeal of Samuel Ajayi Crowther to spread the gospel, the vision was kept alive. The work is very relevant to this research because we cannot talk about the impact of Christian Mission in Akwukwu-Igbo without the understanding of origin of expedition to the Niger from 1841-1819. However, the work gives a better insight of the advent of Christian Mission in Igboland especially Onitsha and how it spread to Akwukwu-Igbo.<sup>17</sup>

Kanayo Nwadiolor, in his article titled “Christian Missionary Enterprise and the Background to Nationalism in Nigeria, 1870-1960,”<sup>18</sup> argued that Nationalism in

Nigeria began within the Christian missionary circles, which start operating in the territories that later became modern Nigeria since the 1840s. For the activities of the missionaries helped to break ethnic prejudice and from the second half of the Nineteenth century, these Christian converts featured prominently in the political, economical and social scenes of the nation. He further posited that the missionaries contributed to the struggles which put Nigeria on the road map to self government. The missionaries did much to awaken the spirit of modern Nationalism in the people of Nigeria.

Kanayo also highlighted the contributions of the earlier Christian convert in Nigeria to the awaking of the spirit of nationalism in Nigeria and show that the 1914 Amalgamation was only a ‘finishing touch to the process.’<sup>19</sup> This work is relevant to this study because it shows the positive impact of the missionaries in Nigeria which this area of study is inclusive.

E.A Udo, in her work titled “The Missionary Scramble of Influence in South-East Nigeria, 1900-1952,”<sup>20</sup> explains how various denominations of Christian missionaries struggled for spheres of influence in south-east Nigeria, thereby likened it to the British political officers. Though the partitioning of south-eastern Nigeria was peacefully carried out by these missionaries. The Anglican (CMS), the united free church of Scotland, the Qua Iboe and the primitive Methodist Missions. But the French holy ghost fathers who founded a mission station at Onitsha in 1885 and some others refused to recognize the mission boundaries and established churches and schools in any town or village that welcomed them.

Udo further posited that, prior to 1884, the Christian Missionaries had the well being of the Africans at heart but all that changed in the era of political imperialism in 1884 as the later breed of missionaries were agents of imperialism, for they scrambled for territory and in various conferences between 1904-1932 divided the area into mission spheres of influence without consulting the Africans.<sup>21</sup>

As a result of this, Udo termed the legacies of these various missions as agents of religious disunity, which aided Social and Political disunity of South-Eastern Nigeria till date. This is a very good work though it has no significant to this present study but it points the reasons underlying why some denominations of Christian faith are concentrated in different part of Nigeria as well as the negative effects these spheres of influence have caused and still causing till date.

K.L Nwadiolor, in his article titled “Christian Missionaries and Civilization”<sup>22</sup> reveals the contribution of various missionary bodies to the civilization and development of southern Nigeria since the nineteenth century. He posited that since the 1840s various missionary bodies have done a lot to evangelize different part of southern part of Nigeria thereby bringing civilization and development of various forms in the area; from Yoruba land to the Efik land under the church of Scotland mission and then to the Igboland in 1857 spearheaded by Methodist, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches.

He further made an highlight of what southern Nigeria used to be before the arrival of the missionaries but with the civilization policies such as the missionary education which constitutes their fundamental contribution to the civilization of southern

Nigeria. Through this education, the missionaries gave the people good education and opened their eyes to knowledge devoid of superstition and trained a new set of elite that eventually secured the independence of Nigeria.<sup>23</sup>

This is a good work that is relevant to this present study because it shows the impact of the Missionary activities in southern Nigeria and how they contributed to the independence of Nigeria through their educated elite.

Kanayo and Ikenna, in their work “Missionary Factor in the making of a Modern Igbo Nation, 1841-1940,”<sup>24</sup> demonstrated how missionary activities contributed to the development of modern Igbo nation. They asserted that whatever the missionaries had gained in Igboland cannot be compared to what the Igbo people benefited from the missionary activities such as freedom from slavery, freedom from fear and superstition, freedom from disease and poverty and freedom from ignorance through missionary education which has transformed Igboland from the Nineteenth century. He said, the missionaries has helped developed the Igbo language and alphabets formulated. They tried to show that the missionary enterprise in Igboland as well as Nigeria were not just seen as ‘destroyers’ as often emphasized by nationalist historiography, they were builders as well, for they have directly and indirectly contributed to the making of an Igbo nation.<sup>25</sup> This work is relevant to this present study, because it explained the positive impact of missionary in Igboland which is within the scope of the study.

Okpalike and Kanayo in their work, “The Missionary Twist in the Development of Igbo Identity”,<sup>26</sup> investigated the extent to which Igbo identity changed as a result of

Christian Missionary propaganda. He tried to show whether the Igbo have lost their identity as they acquire a new religion, language or new style of living and social organization, or with the introduction of formal system of education. For the advent of missionaries and Christian religion was loaded with potential of social change in Igbo societies. Nevertheless, the Igbo was able to resist the change of identity to a great extent even when they embraced Christianity and westernization with enthusiasm, as it was not at the expense of their own identity by deserting their ancestral culture in all its forms.<sup>27</sup> This is very relevant to this present study because it shows that in spite of the missionary activities and impacts in Igboland, the people did not give up on all of their ancestral culture which is very much applicable to this present day.

V.A Nwosu, in his article “The Growth of the Catholic Church in Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province”<sup>28</sup> accounted for the arrival and the growth of the Catholic Mission in Onitsha. He stated that the Catholic Mission began on what is known as Onitsha in December 1885, after a brief visit from Lagos by two Roman Catholic Missionaries; Father Chausse and Holley of the SMA in 1883 but left without the establishment of any mission because the area was not within their jurisdiction. He also point to the fact that, prior to the Catholic mission arrival, the CMS had occupied the area since 1857 which was led by Ajayi Crowther and Christopher Taylor and has made formal occupation of the neighboring towns such as Asaba in 1874 among others.

He also stated that the CMS enjoyed unchallenged advantage until the arrival of RCM. However, the RCM suffered antagonism from the Protestants as well as not been

British nationals. But in spite of these obstacles, Roman Catholic impacts on the people were felt through the method adopted such as redemption of slaves, care of the sick and destitute, distribution of charity and establishment of schools. This is very important because it buttress the method used by the Roman Catholic Mission in Onitsha that made them to outlay the Christian Missionary Society which came before their arrival. With this, a better understanding can be derived about the growth and spread of Roman Catholic Missions in Asaba.<sup>29</sup>

According to C.A Imokhai, in the “Evolution of the Catholic Church in Nigeria”<sup>30</sup> shows how the Catholic Mission was established beginning from the first attempt in the fifteenth century which was unsuccessful and since then, so many missions had attempted to establish the Catholic faith in Nigeria beginning with the Portuguese mission, the Spanish capuchin mission, the Italian capuchin mission but all attempt came to a void, not until the Society de Mission Africanes (SMA) successfully planted the Catholic Church in Nigeria pioneered by Bishop Melchior de Marian Bresillac.<sup>31</sup> This is a very important work to this present writer as it gave an insight about the establishment of the Catholic Mission in Nigeria by the SMA.

It could be seen from the above review of literature that none of the existing literature has critically analyze the Impact of Christian Missions in Akwukwu-Igbo. This does not mean that the Christian missionaries that visited the area have not done anything remarkable. Therefore, this study is set out to investigate the Impact of Christian Missions (C.M.S & R.C.M) has created on the land and people of Akwukwu-Igbo.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **GEOGRAPHY AND TRADITIONS OF ORIGIN OF THE AKWUKWU-IGBO PEOPLE**

#### **Introduction**

The study of traditions of origin of Akwukwu-Igbo People is a recurrent theme in Nigerian history. It is an issue which touches the very foundation of the group identity of a people. This is specifically so in a plural society like Nigeria with many central tendencies and in which access to limited resources, political offices and employment opportunities is largely determined by ethnicity.<sup>1</sup>

This is a traditional social history of two communities. Their culture, customs, values, beliefs, norms, music, literature, art, practices, and language kept and preserved by the people from generation to generation. Showing their life style, social economic behaviour political structure and religion.<sup>2</sup> The rich culture and tradition of Akwukwu-Igbo people generally.

#### **The Geographical Settings of Akwukwu-Igbo**

Akwukwu-Igbo fondly called the Akwukwu-Igbo of the Niger Delta occupy the area lying approximately between longitude 6°6 and 6.42 east, latitude 6°31 and 5.25 North and they constitute a political division in Delta State of Nigeria.<sup>3</sup> Akwukwu-Igbo, is the headquarters of the Oshimili North Local Government Area of Delta State of Nigeria. Located in the Delta North senatorial zone of the state. The occupation of the locals are mainly farming and fishing. It is made up of several quarters which include Ogbe -Ani, Ogbe-Onihe, Umu Onai, Ogbe Obi, Ogbe Iyase, Umuekeke, Achala, Umu-

Olum, Umu-Opu etc. This land is sometimes called "Land of Desert Warriors". Akwukwu-Igbo is a community in Oshimili North Local Government Area in Delta State, it became the headquarter of the local government area immediately after the creation of the local government on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1996 by Sanni Abacha's military Junta.<sup>4</sup> Oshimili people are located in the Delta senatorial district of Delta state which is referred to as "Anioma". There are dozens of towns and villages in Oshimili land thus making it the second largest ethnic nationality in Delta state. Oshimili land is bothered on the North by the Benin Division (fondly called the industry Oshimili) on the West by her neighboring Edoid Settlers (the Urhobos) on the East by the River-Niger, and on the South by her inherent brothers (Akashizda clan).<sup>5</sup> The Geographical position of Oshimili North places it within two belts, Delta swampy forests which occupy the southern and South Eastern coastal towns and villages, and the tropical rain forest situated in the Northern part of the territory. In the swampy region, numerous creeks and impassable dense forest abound.<sup>6</sup> The area also has adequate rainfall all year round and the vegetation is a mixture of evergreen forest and savannah grassland with very fertile soil. The major Rivers in Oshimili North land is the Ethiope River which has its source at Umuaja and Akoku.

### **Tradition and Origin of the Akwukwu-Igbo Peoples**

Akwukwu-Igbo originated from Nri, of the Igbo tribe. Adaigbo (Odaigbo), a Prince of Nri kingdom committed an abomination, the penalty on which was death. His father, Agu, the King, loved him so much that he could not bear to see him beheaded, He

therefore prepared him to leave the town surreptitiously by night. His younger brother, Okolie Agu who loved him so much, decided to go with him.<sup>7</sup>

Adaigbo's half-brother was asked to carry a medicine pot on his head with the instruction that wherever the pot fell, there they should settle. They left and the pot fell in the present day Ogwashi-Ukwu, and there they settled. Okolie Agu was a great Hunter, and hunted in the jungle after Umu Opu, a small town with their own king.<sup>8</sup> When he came back from his hunting, he rested at Umu Opu before going back to Ogwashi-Ukwu. After some years, Okolie Agu, asked the king of Umu Opu to give him a place to settle, instead of going back to Ogwashi- Ukwu each time he came back from hunting.<sup>9</sup>

The king then pointed out to him, Akwukwu ( the old farm) to settle. That was how Akwukwu was founded. The “Igbo” was added to it later to distinguish it from another town in the area called Akwukwu- Akumazi. The town, Umu Opu, diminished so much because it was alleged that they annoyed a medicine man (Dibia) who cursed them.<sup>10</sup> Umu Opu, a town that had their own king until not too many years ago, is now a village in Akwukwu-Igbo. Adaigbo's half-brother who carried the medicine pot was asked to go and settle between Ogwashi-Ukwu and Nri so as to alert them if they came after them from Nri. That was how Igbuzo (changed to Ibusa by the colonial masters) was founded.<sup>11</sup>

Another oral traditions history traces the origin of Akwukwu-Igbo to a man named Eri, who according to its close ethnographer, *Jeffrey 1934, the Divine umudri kings of Igbo land, Dissertation, I.A.I archives*, came down there from the sky, where he

found himself in a flood land morass. He begged the Great God (chukwu okiki abiana) to make dry land which Chukwu did and Eri sat upon it. Eri and his family thus Founded this community, located at the northernmost end of a line of hills that here meets the vast Anambra floodplain.

However, there are various versions of how the people of Akwukwu-Igbo migrated to the region they found themselves today, But the most widely accepted version is the one linked to Israel when it was said Abraham is the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob (Israel), Jacob the father of Gad who was the seventh son of the former, Gad is the father of Eri (genesis 46:16) while Eri is the father of Agulu-eri.<sup>12</sup>

The origin and migration of Akwukwu-Igbo people could be linked with those of the whole Igbo race, as a school of thought traced the origin of the Igbos from the Jews who migrated from Egypt centuries ago. The word Igbo is assumed to be a resemblance of the name Hebrew. When the Hebrews left Egypt after four hundred years of servitude, they crossed the river Jordan and wandered about in the Arabian desert for forty years. Some of them who did not reach the promised land found their way to Africa, south of the river Nile, and then into Nigeria. The settlers at the confluence of the Niger and Benue were a group called the Igalas.<sup>13</sup>

Then Eri the son of Gad who was a warrior and hunter migrated with his followers from the Igala land and settled near the bank of the river Anambra (omambala). He built his camp called Eri-aka near Odanduli stream, a place which lies between Ivite and Igboezunu Aguleri. It is also believed that Gad the father of Eri founded a shrine in a

place called Obu-Gad now called Obuga in umuenini, Enugu aguleri central square. In the course of time, Eri went out on war raids and captured many men and women and gradually his settlement began to grow. He was married to Nono who bore him six sons namely: Akwukwu, Menri also called Nri, Onogu(igbariam), Nteje, Nsugbe, and Amanuke and also a daughter called Adamgbo. Having only one daughter, Eri refused to give her out in marriage but housed her to bear children for him.<sup>14</sup>

After the death of Eri, his descendants increased enormously and to avoid overcrowding, they dispersed too far off places. The children of Akwukwu who was the first born remained at their grandfather's residence according to customs and with the children of Adamgbo, Eri's daughter built up Akwukwu. Menri's children established at Nri and expanded into the three groups of villages namely: Akamkpisi, Agukwu and Diodo and later to Umunri towns of Enugu-Agidi, Abagana, Nawfia and Oraeri. Onogu's children took their residence at Igbariam. Nteje's children lived at Nteje. Nsugbe's children resided at Nsugbe and Amunuke's children established at Amuke.<sup>15</sup> A son of Menri by name Riamu, because of some misunderstanding with his people, left them to trace his way back to the original home of ERI. After passing through Nsugbe, he came to a beautiful site where he then settled and called it Nneyi. Later some of Adamgbo's children who were being maltreated at Akwukwu left Agulu's children and joined Riamu's children to live at Nneyi. Since the children of Adamgbo and Riamu were off shoots of Eri, they called themselves Umuli-Eri.<sup>16</sup>

According to oral tradition, a descendant of Eri named Onoja whose mother was Oboli migrated from Idah in Igalaland and settled in Umunkiti. He was a giant and was said to have had six fingers in each hand and six toes in each foot. Onoja Oboli made raids single handed in various towns depriving people of their properties. After living there for many years and having children, he was carried away by a whirlwind just like Elijah the prophet.<sup>17</sup>

Another oral tradition was the migration of a famous and influential woman called Igwedo who came from Enu-ani (Asaba) and after settling successively at Onitsha, Ogbunike, Awkuzu and getting children in each place, she came over to Umuleri and was received by Riamu's children for whom she also got children. After some years she continued her trek and lived at Nando where she married to Nnamuva and got children too. It was therefore not surprising that the towns to which Igwedo trekked have a great feeling of relationship and call themselves Umu-Igwedo.<sup>18</sup>

## **Conclusion**

From the above, emphasis has been laid on the origin of the people of Akwukwu-Igbo, which pointed out that they originated from Israel, and this is also affirmed by all Igbos in general as the latter agrees that they all share the same common ancestry from Eri who is the founder and ancestor of the Akwukwu-Igbo which also stands as the Ancestral home of the Igbo people. Also, as a result of their geographical location we can say Akwukwu-Igbo is a gift of the Anambra river just as Egypt is a gift of the river Nile. Furthermore, because of the annual overflow of the Anambra river, making it to leave

rich soils on the lands which eventually becomes fertile, Akwukwu-Igbo becomes the envy of her neighbouring communities. She is often referred to by some of her neighbours as Ndi-azu-na-ji, which literally means “people of fish and yam”. It is the food basket of Anambra state and thus contributes to the Economy of the state. Also the presence of crude oil in Akwukwu-Igbo makes it important in the struggle for Anambra state to the given the status of an oil producing state. Today Akwukwu-Igbo community is one of the few communities that can boast of being blessed with abundant mineral resources.

## Endnotes

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## CHAPTER THREE

### ADVENT OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN AKWUKWU-IGBO

#### **Introduction**

One of the greatest events in the history of Nigeria is the coming of Christianity into Akwukwu-Igbo and other communities in Delta state. It seems very pertinent to first look at the advent of Christianity in Nigeria before turning to the coming of Christianity in Akwukwu-Igbo, which is the geographical scope of this work. Christianity contact in Nigeria occurred in the fifteenth century when Catholic missionaries from Portugal came to evangelize Benin. Benin was a large kingdom with great power.<sup>1</sup> The Oba had many chiefs and petty rulers under his authority. The missionaries did everything to convert the Oba on the premise that with his influence, the `lives of his subjects would be affected. To some extent, however, the Oba subjected himself to Christianity, which was seen in his sending one of his sons with the sons of some chiefs, in 1516, to be baptized by the missionaries.<sup>2</sup> When direct Portuguese contacts in the region were withdrawn, however, the influence of the Catholic missionaries waned and by the onset of the 18<sup>th</sup> century had disappeared.

#### **The Anglican Mission (CMS)**

The coming of Christianity into Akwukwu-Igbo, Ibusa and Okpanam would not have been possible without the opening of the Niger. However, the opening up of the River Niger began with the 1841 expedition, after the exploration of the Niger by the

Lander Brothers in 1830. The reason for the exploration of the Niger was to open up the country to lawful trade, civilization and Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

Though prior to the 1841 expedition, Macgregor Laird, sent out two ships with over forty men in 1832 comprised of John and Richard Landers, Dr Oldfield, Lieutenant Allen and Laird himself. Unfortunately, the party was attacked by fever and Laird returned to England, while Richard Lander to Fernando Po, which rendered the expedition a failure. This resulted to a lot of discouragement in England but Thomas Buxton revived the courage of the merchants and the interest of the British Government. In 1839, He founded the Society for the extinction of slave trade and the civilization of Africa, which got him the support of many important people. Thus, the result of these efforts was the Niger expedition of 1841.<sup>4</sup>

The 1841 expedition as earlier noted was organized in response to the ideas of Thomas Buxton, a humanitarian who believed that the best way to stop the slave trade and regenerate Africa was to establish legitimate commerce with the African rulers, by the introduction of commerce, civilization and Christianity. The expedition was organized under the aegis of the British Government by the society of extinction of the slave trade and the civilization of Africa of which Sir Thomas Fowell was a leading member. Alongside were two protestant missionaries, under the Christian mission society founded in 1799, J.F Schon a German and Samuel Adjai Crowther a Yoruba ex-slave and Simon Jonas a liberated slave from Sierra Leone of Igbo parentage who acted as an interpreter.<sup>5</sup> However, the 1841 Niger expedition was short lived as a result of high

mortality which took forty eight from the one hundred and forty five Europeans that had died of malaria. As a result of this, the 1841 expedition has always been seen as a total failure to the British Government and Commercial firms. Though for the missionaries, it was a partial success as they were able to establish a personal link with Obi Ossai, the ruler of Aboh, as well as preached the Gospel to him and his people<sup>3</sup>. That is why Ajayi noted that inspite of its failure, the Niger expedition of 1841 marked the beginning of the missionary enterprise in Nigeria.<sup>6</sup>

The next expedition which was the 1854 expedition initiated by Macgregor Laird took another thirteen years largely because of the failure of the 1841 expedition by the British Government and Commercial Firms. And the missionaries of the CMS made no attempt without the cooperation of the British Government and Commercial Firms. However, the 1854 expedition was carried out under Dr William Baikie, and Samuel Crowther as the CMS representative. The expedition which was made up of four Europeans and fifty four natives recorded success with no disastrous mortality among the members of the expedition through the discovery and use of quinine.<sup>7</sup>

After the 1854 expedition, the next and last expedition up the Niger began its journey in 1856 when the CMS in cooperation with Macgregor Laird undertook another expedition under the command of Dr Baike, while Samuel Crowther was appointed the leader of the CMS Niger mission, alongside African volunteers from Sierra Leone, who were recruited as pioneer missionaries and interpreters and commercial agent. This expedition was a successful one which led to the establishment of the Church Missionary

Society at the lower Niger (Onitsha) on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 1857.<sup>8</sup> However, after so many years of CMS propagation of the gospel at Onitsha, they decided to carry the gospel to the other side of the Niger where they established outstations and formal occupation which landed them at Asaba, in 1875. Some years after the CMS in Asaba, the Roman Catholic through the SMA followed in 1884 by Fr Florentino, who was replaced by Fr Carlo Zappa in 1886. It should be noted that the mission initially started at Lokoja but was administered from Asaba. But as Fr Zappa became the overall head of the Niger Mission, he shifted the center of the mission to Asaba.<sup>9</sup> Therefore Christianity in Asaba began through the CMS in 1875 while the Roman Catholic through the SMA was formally inaugurated in 1888.

As earlier stated, the history of Christianity in Akwukwu-Igbo, Ibusa and Okpanam began from the Establishment of the Church Missionary Society, also known as Anglican in Onitsha as far back in 1857. From there it spread to the other side of the Niger and reached Akwukwu-Igbo in 1875. Christianity therefore took eighteen years before it was entrenched into Akwukwu-Igbo. However, the planting of Christian began effectively in 1875 with the first church that was established at “Otu Enenia” also known as John Holt Beach, from there they carried evangelism into the town of Akwukwu-Igbo. The land on which the first church was established was properly bargained for, purchased and paid for with ten pieces of grey cotton baft in value about five Sterling, Rev M. Romaine from Obi Igweli, a chief of the first rank in Akwukwu-Igbo.<sup>10</sup> During the period, Akwukwu-Igbo had a separate settlement for slaves in the town. They were used as a

labour force or/and a sacrificial lambs of the society. This explained the reasons why the CMS missions gained Accessions from the freed slaves who gladly attended church “merely to please the oyibos” who had delivered them from death. Since the ideals of Christianity was focused on individual freedom and Rights, the equality of all persons before God and the universal brotherhood of human kind.<sup>11</sup>

In Akwukwu-Igbo, the young men and women were the first group to be attracted to the church, while the older members of the society were reluctant, because of fear of public opinions and been laughed at and also because the missionaries preached and kicked against polygamy, the idea of one man to many wives, for they encouraged one man and one woman. Though some of the older members were sympathetic to the new religion (Christianity) therefore, they encouraged the young ones to attend to the teachings of the missionaries so as to shake off many of their idolatrous and expensive customs and they attended Sunday services occasionally.<sup>12</sup> They equally refrained from performing some of the religious orgies in public. These resulted to them being called traitors who wanted to sell their country. Despite all these, they did not really accept Christianity largely because of the aforementioned reasons especially the idea of one man to one woman. Equally because of the CMS refusal of providing them with arms to fight their neighbors whom they were always at war with, as the CMS mission was for peace not for war.<sup>13</sup>

However, for those who accepted the new religion(\*Christianity) especially these ones, /did so on the basis of what they observed from the changes from the converted Christians at Onitsha which led them to declare

“we have seen what changes are taking place among the Onitsha young men who went to church and school, who have become carpenters, coopers and have become useful to other employment at that station. We shall not be kept in our father old state all our days<sup>14</sup>

Also, those Christians at Onitsha go to no doctor, they make no sacrifice yet they do not die like us who do all those things. Still the older men were constantly persuaded to come to church but they declined saying that church were meant for children, that they were big men and as such, they do not need to attend church.<sup>15</sup>

By and large, towards the end of the first year of ministration at Akwukwu-Igbo, it was recorded that Crowther reported that a few persons were “timidly coming forward to hear the word of God on the Lords day but fear of domestic persecution and mockery kept them back from making an open confession of Christianity. Though a small congregation of thirty (30) persons assembled each Sunday, nine (9) of them were candidates of baptism. Subsequently, the congregation of converts grew slowly and it witnessed the conversion of some red cap chiefs such as Chief Thomas Nwanukwu, Lazarus Odibosa Onyia, Nkadi Monu among others. By 1879 the missionaries were pleased to see a gathering of what they described as “some fifty to eighty humble worshipers who a few years ago had no knowledge of their maker. As members increased in number, the need for another piece of land arose for building a bigger church. And that

was provided by one of the converted red cap chief, Thomas Nwanukwu of Umuaji Quarters in 1830, and this is where Holy Trinity Church stands today.<sup>16</sup>

After thirteen years of continuous missionary activity at Akwukwu-Igbo, the CMS could boast of more than a handful of free born converts, even though these converts were drawn from strangers, outcast and slaves. The strangers were soldiers and laborers of the Royal Niger Company who in 1888 attended services on a regular basis. The outcasts were those who had been accused of some crimes or those who were believed guilty of some shameful act, while the bulk of the first convert were from slave population. However, the CMS missionaries continued to strive for success in Akwukwu-Igbo. They arranged their work under “Sunday duties school work, visiting and intenerating, which they judiciously adhered to for the converts of the Akwukwu-Igbo people (both free born and slaves) and also neighboring villages, before the arrival of the catholic mission.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Roman Catholic Mission**

The church missionary society monopoly of mission work on the Niger ended in 1884 when the Upper Niger was established. The SMA missions decided to establish a station when the river was still an antenna of Anglo-French company.<sup>17</sup>By 1888, Sir James Marshall, the RNC Chief Justice Invited the Fathers to Akwukwu-Igbo; Fr Julius Poirier and Fr Carlo Zappa of SMA mission became the pioneers of the Roman Catholic Mission. This was after the conquest of Akwukwu-Igbo. The town at this time was the headquarters of colonial government and Poirier established Akwukwu-Igbo as mission

headquarters. It was reported that after nine strenuous years, Poirier returned to France as a result of his failed health.<sup>18</sup> Hence, Fr Carlo Zappa became the Prefect Apostolic of Akwukwu-Igbo.

Shortly after the SMA arrival, they invited “Our Lady of Apostles Sisters”(OLA) who joined in the work of evangelism. As Fr Carlo Zappa and his team were struggling to attract male converts, the Rev Sisters were active with women. They assisted the women to grow in their Christian faith; they taught them catechism and visited them at home to encourage them. They equally assisted in the training of young girls and encouraged them in the service of God. However, Fr Zappa first Baptism was the baptism of a condemned murderer.<sup>19</sup> And some of their earliest converts were the employees of the RNC, others were slaves. Among the red cap chiefs was Obi O.M. Okwuosa of Idumu-odikpe who renounced the Eze title and he contributed to the teaching and strengthening and spreading of Catholicism in Akwukwu-Igbo and environs.<sup>21</sup>

Fr Zappa was known among the Benin People as Fada Ozokpokpo- The father with quick but firm footsteps. He worked so hard that the people of Akwukwu-Igbo petitioned the Pope that Zappa should be their Bishop but Fr Zappa in humility rejected the petition by requesting the Pope to send him a Bishop. In 1919, He died and was buried in Akwukwu-Igbo according to his wish, a year after his death, the vicariate of Western Nigeria was established in 1918, with the headquarters at Akwukwu-Igbo and Bishop Thomas Broderick was enthroned at Akwukwu-Igbo as the first vicar Apostolic of the Vicariate. He continued from where Fr Carlo Zappa stopped and helped greatly to

ensure that the catholic faith spread within his vicariate. He died in 1933. Thus, after the death of Broderick, Bishop Lee Taylor of the SMA was consecrated Bishop of Asaba and Akwukwu-Igbo in 1934, though his tenure was short because he returned to Lagos in 1939 to assume the position of archbishop of the Lagos jurisdiction. During his tenure in Asaba, Bishop Taylor continued with the policies of his predecessors.<sup>22</sup>

Following the creation of Benin province which included Akwukwu-Igbo Asaba, with headquarters in Benin City, Bishop Taylor transferred the headquarters and St. Paul inter Vicarial major seminary from Akwukwu-Igbo to Benin city. He was succeeded by Bishop Patrick Joseph Kelly who returned to Nigeria after his episcopal ordination. In 1943, the vicariate was renamed the vicariate of Akwukwu-Igbo Benin and some years later in 1950. It was erected into the diocese of Benin City with Patrick Joseph as the first Bishop. He was Bishop until 1960 up to 1973.<sup>23</sup> However, These mission bodies used various strategies in winning and converting the people of Akwukwu-Igbo, such as offering of material gift, educational strategy, health care strategy, use of creative art and Christian village.

#### *Offering of Material Gifts*

Offering of material gifts *was an* important and useful way of converting the people. In an interview with Anwasia, He said that some of the natives rushed to embrace Christianity because the missionary shared gifts of all kinds, such as beads, drinks, walking sticks among others. Through this, many responded but only to withdraw after they had collected their share of the gifts. However, it is not out of place to state that this

strategy worked to excite and motivate the people into accepting Christianity though it was temporal to some but got some converted.<sup>24</sup>

### *Health Care Strategy*

Healthcare Strategy used by the missionaries, especially the RCM made themselves known to the natives by means of medical services. They went about administering drugs to the sick, and also visited the natives in their houses to treat the sick among them. This act of visitation got one "Thomas Okolo" converted to the Catholic faith, as he was pleased with the missionaries act of visitation to the sick. He was one of the first Faithful Adult to get converted.<sup>25</sup> The missionaries have from inception placed healing on the forefront of their activities. From the early beginnings, the Mission has carried on a ministry of healing through attending to the sick, the suffering and the dying. One of the primary areas of work for the missionaries has been to get the people healed both spiritually and physically. In those early days of Christianity, there were rampant diseases found within the area under review and beyond. Medical attention was much needed then because there was very high mortality rate. The missionaries then were seen as a "panacea" to disease problems. The missionaries took it upon themselves to take care of the health problems of the people. Many people who had health problems thronged the premises of the missionaries and most of them were healed and this continued to attract people to Christianity as well as spreading it.<sup>26</sup>

### *Educational Strategy*

Educational strategy was an important handmaid of the Gospel. The missionaries made use of Education as means of bringing the people to accept the new religion being introduced. That is why Crowther categorically advised the missionary at a new station that “they would have to teach more when they visit the people”.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the CMS basically used the method of education to bring the people of Akwukwu-Igbo into Christianity by educating them and eventual establishment of schools in the community. Though, Fr Zappa of the SMA was at a point against the strategy of education as a means of conversion. He opined that there will not be genuine conversion of the people.<sup>28</sup> Subsequently, he got converted to education as a means of evangelization but the policy was fully adopted by his successor Bishop Broderick, who wholeheartedly used education as a strategy in his mission work by establishing a number of primary and post primary schools in Akwukwu-Igbo and environs as well as other stations within his jurisdiction. This is because the schools were the means of evangelization.<sup>29</sup>

### *The Use of Creative Art*

The use of creative Art as a strategy was adopted by the Roman Catholic missionaries in their evangelical work though it was reported to be applicable where it was found useful in winning converts to the catholic church. That was why the convert school established under the superintendence of Rev Zappa for women and girls were thought needle work, cookery and child care among others.<sup>30</sup> This got some of the CMS convert and others attracted to the catholic mission. And the Rev Sisters who were

directly in charge of the convent did much to educate the women as they combined these educations with the teaching of the catholic doctrine.

### *The Christian Village*

The Christian village was also another method employed by the missionaries to end slavery and slave trade. For Akwukwu-Igbo was known to be highly involved in the movement of slave trade. They bought and sold slaves primarily for burial ceremonies and manual labour. Therefore as a way to end slave trade, the missionaries established Christian village near Asaba.<sup>31</sup> This further explained why some of the first set of missionaries convert were drawn from the slave community.

### **Conclusion**

It should be noted here that all the afore-mentioned strategies of evangelisation were employed by Presbyterian Church as they carried out the propagation of the gospel among the people of Akwukwu-Igbo and beyond. To say the gospel truth, God has through all these ways made the gospel to see the light of the day and souls saved from perishing in the Akwukwu-Igbo community. Thus, this also impacted on the people socio-economic and political institutions. This would be discussed in the next chapter of the study.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE AKWUKWU-IGBO PEOPLE'S

#### Introduction

The pre-Christian society of Akwukwu-Igbo was dominated by the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the society. Their belief or religion, determined and influenced the value system and served as the principal means of integration, cohesion and unity of the community.<sup>1</sup> But following the advent, activities and impact of the missionaries same cannot be said of Akwukwu-Igbo and environs because the impacts of Christian missionaries in Akwukwu-Igbo came with so many development. And these developments were felt economically, politically, socially, Religiously, and Educational wise.

Thus, Educational development was pivot for planting of Christianity in Akwukwu-Igbo, quite a number of developments had taken place. Christianity brought about some visible changes in the peoples institutions and ways of life. The introduction of education brought about enlightenment to the people, teaching them how to write and read especially the Bible as well as to learn other trades.<sup>2</sup> Also, the people's attitude to sacred things, works of art and human behaviour have continued to be transformed. Some of their old ways of life have disappeared without trace. They have modified their ways in order to accommodate Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

However, the ground for the material prosperity of Akwukwu-Igbo was prepared by "western education" which especially the mission schools, and commercial

establishment and colonial administration provided.<sup>4</sup> Education was one of the major factors which attracted the youth of Akwukwu-Igbo to Christianity. Recall that some of the youth explained that their decision to embrace the Gospel was based on the visible impact of Christianity on the men of Onitsha who had become carpenters and useful in other developments.<sup>5</sup> Hence the establishment of St Joseph's Catholic primary school in Akwukwu-Igbo by Rev Fr Carlo Zappa in 1888 marked the beginning of formal education in Akwukwu-Igbo and its environs. Among the early pupils of this school was Jacob Nwaokobia Onyemen of Umuaji quarter, Akwukwu-Igbo. He later became the first indigenous catechist of the church named St Joseph's Catholic Church. He assisted Fr Carlo Zappa to compile and publish a directory in French-Igbo in 1907.<sup>6</sup>

### **Cultural Changes**

Culture has aptly been defined as a sum total of a people's way of life, the life-style of a society." The pre-Christian society of Akwukwu-Igbo was dominated by the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the clan. Religion determined and influenced the value system and served as the principal means of integration, cohesion and unity of each community. The belief in the ancestors and the sacredness of Esu gave rise to a system of laws and custom.<sup>7</sup> Everybody was expected to build up his personality according to these laws and customs. But today, things have changed. "Household utensils gradually changed from crude materials to manufactured foreign goods."<sup>8</sup>

Trade by barter was supplemented with the use of money. Money became the medium of exchange as a result of the introduction of Christianity. The Igbo money "*Okpogho*" and "cowries" that were used as money were cumbersome to carry.<sup>9</sup> Isichei says,

Igbo land's currencies similarly reflect the vitality of her economic life. They included cowries shells from the Indian Ocean, horseshoe shaped manilas of copper and brass, popular in southern Igboland and brass rods. We do not know when each of these currencies came into use, though they may have been of considerable antiquity for cowries were used in Benin before the Europeans came there and the Igbo-Ukwu excavations revealed objects very like manilas.<sup>10</sup>

Today, great changes are conspicuous in the system of trading among the Oshimili people in general and Akwukwu-Igbo area in particular as a result of the introduction of Christianity in our land. Their belief in deities has a swell changed.

Akwukwu-Igbo people like other Oshimili communities bear the name of their ancestors because of their strong belief in re-incarnation. They believe that they still need the favours of the ancestors; though not everybody still believes in the association with the ancestors, the coming of Catholic missionaries to this part of the world has been responsible for the change in the ancestral belief. Also the culture of naming people after their ancestors was giving way to the Christian and Jewish name. Even if Igbo names are given which many people prefer today, they are not given after the ancestors.<sup>11</sup>

Such names as Chukwumaobi, Tukwasichukwuobi, Chukwubuikem, Ifeanyichukwu, Onyedikachukwu, Nwachukwu and the rest of them are replacing both

the ancestral and foreign names which most of our people cannot say for sure what their meanings are.<sup>12</sup>

Before the advent of Catholic missionaries in Akwukwu-Igbo, nudity was the order of the day. Gradually, nudity changed hand with the covering of the entire body when the Europeans made clothes. Nudity, today is an eyesore in Akwukwu-Igbo as well as the entire Oshimili and beyond. We can recall earlier when the first Catholic missionaries offered the early converts clothes to cover their nudity. The distribution of clothes to the new converts was one of the means of winning more people to Christianity.<sup>13</sup>

It attracted them to this new religion. As a result of the introduction of this new religion called Christianity, the value of beauty came to be more appreciated by women. The use of beads and a more permanent circlet offspring-coiled brass wire called *anwa-idide*; that is brass worn by the girls had been in use. According to Ukpokolo, "other extra materials for extra beautification of the body came into use, powder, black dye (*tiro*), bangles, earrings and necklace are only a few examples.<sup>14</sup>

The cultural change recorded above among the people of Akwukwu-Igbo was wrought by the introduction of Christianity by the Catholic missionaries. At the birth of Jesus Christ it was said of Him, "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined." Actually the coming of Catholic Christianity to Akwukwu-Igbo enlightened the people.<sup>15</sup>

## **Educational Changes**

Education is another area of change brought about as a result of missionary endeavours in Akwukwu-Igbo. Before the coming of Christianity, Akwukwu-Igbo people like any other Catholic community had no formal education. The informal education was largely unorganised, which was between mother and daughter, father and son, just within the family circle. Children were encouraged to emulate good models and virtues in the society. Learning was by accident because it was never pre-planned. However, Catholic Church brought a tremendous change in the educational arena.<sup>16</sup>

According to Ukpokolo, “the Catholic missionaries came with their own system of education and this revolutionized the entire system of Oshimili culture.” In Oshimililand in general and Akwukwu-Igbo area in particular those who received education from the hands of the missionaries became the bearer's of light among the "dark" cultural areas. Christianity has always borne three objectives in mind while going out to teach, hear and teach/preach. With the establishment of educational institution-s in Akwukwu-Igbo since the inception of Christianity, people have continued to learn new things daily. At the initial stage, it was either in the house of a prominent person in the society or under a tree. Thanks be to God that as things improved,; system of receiving education also improved. These days, children receive their education in classrooms with well qualified specialists called teachers to teach them.<sup>17</sup>

It was the practice of the Church to award scholarships to deserving students who distinguished themselves in one way or the other. There were two main criteria for

this. Intelligence was the first condition. Children whose parents were indigent were sponsored in primary or secondary or even to University level by the Church. Coupled with intelligence and poor parental background, was the factor of moral purity, This qualified a personal candidate even village average intelligence for mission scholarship.<sup>18</sup>

On the establishment of schools by the mission, Adiele says:

The Anglican Mission between 1857 and 1968 succeeded in establishing educational institutions from the primary to the post primary institutions in areas within its jurisdiction. It is also to be noted that both children and adults enjoy organized literacy classes in the Sunday classes on Sundays. More brilliant ones among them enjoyed scholarships. It was mandatory for baptism candidates to pass a rigorous examination in the reading, understanding and interpretation of the Catechism and Bible.<sup>19</sup>

Schools were established at a time when they formed the only centres of enlightenment within a rural environment. The teachers in such schools became sources of knowledge and agents of modernization through their influence on the rural communities; Through the introduction of education in the society, discipline was also introduced. In the view of Adiele,

The Anglican Mission maintained the policy of 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' in moral upbringing of their children. To achieve this, the teachers were subjected to a seeming draconian system of discipline. They tended to be slaves to the rules and regulations throughout their career. This was to inculcate sound moral principles as necessary foundations for any stable society.<sup>20</sup>

It was the Mission schools colleges provided and maintained the mission that produced the greater bulk of educated and political leaders who assumed the task of achieving

political independence without blood-shed. Summarizing the influence of Missionary education on Nigeria's growth and development, Njoku opines;

The Christian missionaries introduced into Nigeria the idea of nation building of contemporary European. They also trained a group of Nigerians who accepted those ideas and hoped to see them carried out, and later began to use those ideas as a standard by which to judge the actions of the British administration. In doing this, the Christian Movement sowed the seeds of Nigeria/-, Nationalism.<sup>21</sup>

The issue was that it was the first generation of the Mission school products that were pre-eminently equipped for a nationalist task by their learning and circumstances of their age. As Kalu puts it;

Unrestricted access to the Bible with its notion of quality, justice and non-racialism, provided the early converts with a valid weapon which they were not reluctant to employ against the missionaries who brushed these ideas aside in Church administration and their relations with the converts.<sup>22</sup>

Through missionary education in Akwukwu-Igbo, the educated elites became whatever they were - whether traders, or teachers, clerks or catechists, politicians or true nationalists. The missionary teaching of equality and brotherhood of all men before God had the effect of generating self-consciousness in the recipients and this in turn made them nurse the ambition for self-expression and self-government as a corollary to the philosophy of equality. The missions built moral edifice among the early recipients of missionary education. In pursuance of this, character training was seen as the cornerstone of all other achievements in missionary endeavour. From the day a child came to school,

his behaviour was monitored with a view to identifying any deviant or un-ethical habit and then negatively reinforcing it.<sup>23</sup>

Christianity provided the foundation upon which the modern education was founded. To sum up the achievements of the missionaries in area of education in Akwukwu-Igbo, Chief Johnson Okechukwu said that, “At the time of reckoning, the era of mission education shall remain a point of reference.” “Many people after their education take to white collar jobs or move to the urban towns in search of wealth with the result that the villages are deserted and farms abandoned.<sup>24</sup>

### **Political Impact**

Of great importance is the contribution of the Christian Mission to the political fortunes of Akwukwu-Igbo people. The political institution in Akwukwu-Igbo before the advent of Christianity was a democratic form of government. It was the source of unity within the accepted customs and laws. Christianity encouraged and enhanced the system. In all the communities in Akwukwu-Igbo, we have the family, *umunna*, village and community levels of political structure. The ‘red-cap’ was only a committee of elders. The delegated authority, which exists, was vested in adults in general and particularly in the older people, men and women, though they run the government separately. The people elected or appointed into these offices of high honour were those who were greatly respected, those who show ability in leadership and of high moral status. The major change that has come into the community level was that it has become more open and less conservative with so many ad-hoc committees.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, by the promotion of education, they helped to produce the Akwukwu-Igbo elites who became the leaders of some the towns within this geographical area. As a uniting' force, it provided a bond uniting people of various towns and formerly hostile communities; in the area. Democracy, as it exists today in the Western world, was full of limitations. Governments take decision that many citizens disapprove of, even among those that elected them. Minorities, even large ones, have little hope of having their political ideals put into practice. The average citizen has effectively no power to alter the network of regulations that govern his life.<sup>26</sup>

According to Isichei, “one of the things that struck the first Western visitors to Oshimili land was the extent to which democracy was truly practiced.”<sup>27</sup> She goes further to say;

..an early visitor to a Niger Igbo town said that he felt he was in a free land; among a free people. Another is the true liberty existed in Igboland, though its name was not inscribed on any monument.<sup>28</sup>

Igbo political institutions were designed to combine popular participation with weighting for experience and ability. As aforementioned, one finds in different parts of Oshimili land different political institutions in varying combinations. One of the political institutions to be included which has spread wide though not universal is the *Age Grade*. Each age grade has defined obligations it in community service. In Akwukwu-Igbo area some of these age grades have contributed immensely towards the development of some town. Some have helped in electrification projects, construction of bridges, hospitals, schools markets and some other veritable projects.

Generally, within Oshimili locality, there was peace, orderliness, good governance as a result of the introduction of Christianity and it is evident till date.

### **Social Impact**

In the pre-Christian days in Akwukwu-Igbo, there was nothing like secular personality models for instance the business tycoon, the influential politicians and the school teachers. In Oshimili land generally, shrines (where oaths were sworn), oracles and taboos were used as a means of social and political control. People with sacred legitimization (e.g. the Ozo titled men, the Ofo holders) played the key roles in each village because they were said to have been selected/chosen by the divinities.<sup>31</sup>

Christians were taught not to accept shrines, oracles and taboos any more as they were rightly regarded as unchristian practices. But in the absence of other forms, it did no doubt constitute the Christians into a "lawless" group in the sociological sense. Such Christians would live under no enforceable code of behaviour against which community sanctions could be imposed. Afigbo commenting on this period says:

The converts in turn became quite fanatical and threw caution to the wind. Indeed, no doubt, by their teachers, the Christians began to cut down the trees in various groves and religious shrines as a test of their earnestness in religious commitment.<sup>32</sup>

Another important area worth mentioning here was the Ozo title taking in the society. It has its social significance. According to Afigbo

The Ozo titleholder occupies a position in Igboland comparable to the peerage in English society with the same social prestige of lords in the society, the man is given a new title name at the successful end of the title taking.<sup>33</sup>

Whatever was its political, social and economic significance, the missionaries understandably educated their converts to have nothing to do with it. Ozo titleholders at conversion must renounce their title and burn the insignia of the title as well as the cult objects associated with it. At the conference held at Onitsha on Tuesday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1914 to consider many aspects of the confrontation of Igbo customs with Christianity, the Ozo title was fully discussed. It was classified as "political custom". Many arguments were made both in favour and against Christians taking the title until the consensus reached seemed to be that "Ozo was idolatrous and therefore no Christian man should have nothing to do with it."<sup>34</sup>

Before the advent of Christianity, the traditional Oshimili society had no opportunity for women to rise to any high social position just as it was in other places. In fact, women were no less regarded as the personal property of the men. But with the advent of Christianity, the ugly phenomenon drastically improved for better. According to Agha

Women can now be seen and heard. They are no longer so much regarded as mere chalets to be given into marriage according to the decision of the parents only. The Christian-church has deeply influenced the marriage system of the people and also the status of women in the society. And fortunately, those educational opportunities have now been extended to women. Girls can now go out of the community to other places to look for gainful employment.<sup>35</sup>

There were many women teachers, engineers, professors, doctors, politicians, and people in all walks of life in Akwukwu-Igbo who can be called at any time in community development. Christianity has played a significant role in the social lives of the people. It has actually improved the social status of women in the society within Akwukwu-Igbo area and beyond.<sup>36</sup>

### **Religious Changes**

Actually, the influence of the Christian religion has changed the system of the Igboman's way of religion. The cult of "Ndi ichie" private or public cult of the ancestors has been declining following the presence of Christianity. Rituals of all types have been condemned as paganistic and backward. Such rituals include birth, puberty; traditional marriage and burial rituals. The missionaries have tried to replace them with the Christian wedding and Christian burial.

The earth goddess (ala) was no longer recognized. The sanctity around which ethical principles, norms and values are built has somehow been relegated to the background. It could be discovered that immortality has escalated among the people. Christians shall never in any way be seen as advocates of high immorality rate, but they maintain that one's immorality is personal and private matter between one and one's god/gods. But in the African context, the position was not viewed the same way.<sup>37</sup> The iniquity of someone rather was believed to be visited on the entire members of the community hence every member of the community strives to maintain law and order. Such Biblical quotation as Ezekiel Chapter eighteen and view four (Ezekiel 18:4) which

states, "Behold, all souls are mine, the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sins shall die" gives the individuals the audacity to do whatever they would do since they are to be held responsible and their actions would not affect the society at large. But in the real sense of it, what one does in a society affects the entire members of the society directly or indirectly.<sup>38</sup>

In short the changes wrought by the missionaries to the entire Akwukwu-Igbo and the whole of Africa cannot be over-emphasized. It can be said to be overwhelming, touching all aspects of life, cultural, educational, economic, social, political and religious aspects. Indeed the people have been influenced profoundly, changed and strengthened by the Christian faith.

### **Challenges Encountered by the Missionaries**

Having traced the advent of Christianity and changes brought by it in Akwukwu-Igbo area, let us now examine some of the problem; encountered by the missionaries in the course of evangelizing the area. It is noteworthy that these problems never stopped them from carrying out their mission. It only succeeded in stunting the progress and stability of missionary activities. The early missionaries irrespective of what they suffered never succumbed. They were encouraged by the statement made by Jesus Christ, the owner of the church while sending his followers on evangelism into the whole world or what we call the great commission, Jesus says; "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . , and lo I am with you always to the close of the age."<sup>39</sup>

## **Language and Communication Problems**

The problem of language or mode of communication was something the missionaries had been grappling with since they came to Oshimili land; and the case of Akwukwu-Igbo was no exception. The mutual problem was considered solved by the use of interpreters. These interpreters again were not from Akwukwu-Igbo. Most of these interpreters had never been to this area for the first time before coming along with the missionaries and in fact did not know anything about the people. They, like the white missionaries could not speak the people's dialect. Commenting on this sympathetic situation, Onwubiko say Interpreters were inadequate to meet the needs of the ever expanding Christian missions. Moreover, speaking through, an interpreter was a defective means of communicating one's thoughts to one's audience."<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, some of these interpreters were not properly educated; hence they often gave the wrong translation of English words. This often aroused reactions from the people which could have been the opposite had the correct interpretation been given.

## **Cultural Problems**

Culture has been defined as the sum total way of life of a people. As the missionaries arrived and started to evangelize Akwukwu-Igbo area, they disorganised the pattern of life of the people they met. One of the problems encountered by them was antagonism on the part of the elders. The elders viewed the missionary penetrator into the area with suspicion. To them, the missionaries and the white men who had disorganised their socio-political structure are the same.

The elders felt that their society was being threatened by the demand of the Christianizing white men; hence they refused to send their children to school. It is worthy of note that despite the warrant chief patronisation of the missionaries, the former did not embrace the Christian faith. This problem was partly caused by the attitude of the missionaries and their local agents.<sup>41</sup>

The warrant chiefs who saw their position being threatened by the preaching of the missionaries started victimizing them and encouraged victimization on Christian converts in some places Christians were forced to clean the shrines or sweep the compound of some gods; failure to do so attracted punishment. Such forced labour caused serious problems. In some communities victimization deterred some people but thanks be to God that more than 80% of the converts stood firm. Almost all the pieces of land given to the Christians for erecting their church buildings were regarded as bad bush and inhabited by evil spirits - they were regarded as unfit for human habitation - all these were meted on the missionaries/Christians in order to discourage them. But all these, efforts against the Christians proved abortive. They stood tenaciously in their faith and conquered. God is always with those who put their trust in Him. Jesus has continued to be with his people and will never abandon them no matter the odds on their way.<sup>42</sup>

### **Political Problems**

During the early missionary activities in Akwukwu-Igbo area in particular and Oshimili land in general, the political institution of the Igbo was largely decentralized. In fact the concept of "*lgbo enwe eze*" reigned supreme. The Igbos has no one as their

ruler/king. Want of affective government sometimes interfered with the comfort of the missionaries at their stations. Because of this issue, there was no security to life and property. There were unkind feelings, engendered by jealousy or misunderstanding. In order to deal with such cases adequately, the missionaries applied patience, and prudence; all these had devastating effect on the evangelisation of the area. Up to date, the Igbos have no one as their leader and adverse political situation effects the process of evangelism but still God is on the throne.<sup>43</sup>

### **Financial Problems**

The poor financial status of the missionaries impeded their progress and posed a threat to their work. It would seem that the missionaries had emptied their purse during the early years of the missionary ventures. By the time they arrived Akwukwu-Igbo area, they had stopped embarking on gigantic projects like maintaining large Christian villages. They could no longer afford to build for themselves good rest houses. Consequently, they depended on the thatched sometimes leaking houses provided by the native converts. The poor condition of these houses was not helpful in preserving the health of these missionaries.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, their poverty mitigated against their efforts and initiates in erecting school buildings as well as church buildings. Most of the time, they left these projects to the natives who often took them very long time to complete the project. Even when completed the missions could not provide enough school church teachers and pastors. In most cases, the converts and the school pupils were asked and tasked to provide funds for

their teachers/pastors salaries. Towns were asked to pay money in advance before they could have a resident school/church teacher, catechist or priest. Such practices hampered the progress of evangelism. Some of the towns that could not pay the certain amount of money were denied resident workers and they could not progress like those that did pay.<sup>45</sup>

### **Conclusion**

it should be noted here that despite the challenges, the changes wrought by the missionaries to the entire Akwukwu-Igbo and the whole of Africa cannot be over-emphasized. It can be said to be overwhelming, touching all aspects of life, cultural educational, economic, social, political and religious aspects. Indeed the people have been influenced profoundly, changed and strengthened by the Christian faith.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

This chapter presents the summary of the investigation into the Impacts of Catholic Missionaries in Akwukwu-Igbo and how the Presbyterian Missionary brought about the development of Primary education and other socio-cultural and economic activities in Akwukwu-Igbo. The chapter includes among others the conclusion, findings and suggestions for further study on the subject.

From the second half of the 19th century, Christian missionaries featured prominently in the series of events that led to the development of Akwukwu-Igbo community, and were able to bring about certain political, economic and technological changes in the region. Their activities helped to break down ethnic prejudices and to bring their converts in loyalty transcending ethnic ties. Patriotic Akwukwu-Igbo came to believe that by practicing Christianity they were paving the way for the creation of the Akwukwu-Igbo nation. The dreams of the Akwukwu -igbo people's was one in which Christianity would flourish, inter-tribal wars would cease and the industrial, technological and intellectual revolutions which had occurred in Europe would repeat themselves in Igbo land of which Akwukwu-Igbo is part of. For a better and more organized research, the study was grouped into five different chapters.

Chapter one centered on the background to the study, statement of the problem, the aim and objectives, methodology, related literatures and the chapterization formulated to establish the significance of the impact of Presbyterian Missionaries activities in Akwukwu-Igbo. The chapter also includes the assumptions of the scope and limitations.

The second chapter attempts to study the geography, life and activities of the people of Akwukwu-Igbo in pre-colonial Igbo, by exploring their activities in the socio-political and economic spheres. The third chapter attempts to highlight the emergence of Presbyterian Missionaries in Akwukwu-Igbo and the changes that have occurred with the advent of Christian religion in Igbo and how Christian religion has altered the activities, status and role of the people in Akwukwu-Igbo. That is; their socio-political activities and status. The fourth chapter attempts to highlight the influence of Christian Missionary activities on the people of Akwukwu-Igbo and their socio-economic activities that is; how Christian Missionary actions have altered their economic status and activities. The fifth and final chapter attempts to give a general summary of the entire research and give possible contributions to the crusade of the humanization, significance and status of the Akwukwu-Igbo people in the society.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher wish to conclude as follows:

The missionaries gave ever increasing number of Akwukwu-Igbo people adherents a powerful weapon through the provision of western education. Within the mission stations education was the main instrument used for establishing and maintaining the new values. By so doing the Missionaries has significant impact on the infrastructural development for primary school education in Akwukwu-Igbo, by way of establishing a Government School in Akwukwu-Igbo in 1905. In 1906 Government School in Ibusa was established in Okpanam, in 1910 Government School Alulu.

The church has significantly helped in the production of manpower for primary school education in the Akwukwu-Igbo, the mission took it as her inalienable right to participate in the education of children and adults. For this reason the Mission embarked on building schools and their examples was a model for the Local Government Authority.

The United Methodist Church has significant impact on the health sector of the people in Akwukwu-Igbo. The Health sector was another area where the people of Oshimili benefited from with the advent of colonialism because the traditional way of treatment was declared as outdated and unhygienic by the British and through the Catholic Mission there was great contribution to the society by the establishment of health care facilities and later on the establishment of catholic hospitals like St. Camillus Hospital in Akwukwu-Igbo which was commissioned in 1917 due to the incidence of terrible skin diseases like yaws, guinea worm, infant mortality amongst others.<sup>30</sup> Aside from tackling the health problems in Oshimili, St. Camillus hospital years after 1960 became a tertiary institution where nurses and midwives were trained, this was an avenue for females to get educated and trained as nurses and midwives. They were also given the opportunity to learn how to prepare western dishes.

With the exposure of Christian Missionaries activities in Akwukwu-Igbo the marriage institution experienced some changes in its cultural practices due to the impact of new beliefs, aspiration and lifestyle because of Western education, and Christianity. For example, the practice of pawning, seizure, and home wife have culturally become

unpopular because it is argued that it borders on the question of fundamental human right of choice and freedom of the brides.

Due to the Missionaries activities and penetration, child marriage was also frowned upon. However, it was discovered that the parents that betrothed their daughters, collected bride price in advance of the consummation of the marriage in the husband's house had spent the money even before the finalization of the marriage. To resolve the issue of high sum of money demanded as refund of dowry when the girl decides to quit the marriage, a definite sum of ten pounds was fixed for the annulment of the marriage.

This study has established that the Christian Missionaries in Akwukwu-Igbo has significant impact on the development of Akwukwu-Igbo people. It would be of academic interest to investigate the role of other established religion on the development in the Akwukwu-Igbo, like the Muslim religion.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the advent of the Presbyterian Missionaries were devoid of some negative impact. As a matter of concern, the development and civilization accompanied with the coming of the missionaries had some negative effect on the people and the community of Akwukwu-Igbo. The peoples customs, traditions, life, death, marriages and family life among others were greatly altered by Christianity. They have and are greatly losing their identity and the bonding factors to western culture and life style. As a matter of fact, the people and their physical environment as well as their culture, customs and social institutions will never be the same again whether positively or negatively.

Therefore, this research work is a continuous process that covers short and long term goals. Therefore, this project to a reasonable extent has been able to bring to the fore the distinguished roles and status of Christian Missionaries activities in the pre-colonial and colonial period, and its impact on Oshimili, using Akwukwu-Igbo people as a case study.

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8	Cukwuemeka Eze	65	Member of the Catholic Men Organization	10/03/2022	Akwukwu-Igbo
3	Gerald Ononiawu	51	Priest of the Catholic Church	16/01/2022	Akwukwu-Igbo
7	Jonas Umalu (Blind)	80	The Catechist of the Catholic Church	28/02/2022	Asaba
5	Moses Nwaonwochu	55	Priest of the Catholic Church	10/03/2022	Asaba
9	Msgr. Stephen Uzoma	76	Msgr. Of the St. Joseph Pro Cathedral of the Catholic Church	10/03/2022	Akwukwu-Igbo
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