

**CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY INFLUENCE IN ONICHA-UGBO, ANIOCHA-NORTH
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF DELTA STATE**

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UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

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

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **Esther Oluchukwu DIKE** with Matriculation number **ART2100537** in the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, under my supervision.

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DATE

DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to Almighty God for His enabling strength, he bestowed in me in completing this work.

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My sincere gratitude to God Almighty who guided me and gave me good health throughout the successful completion of this project work.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Nigeria is lies at latitude 4⁰N and 14⁰N. It is bounded in the North by the Sahara desert and in the south by the Gulf of Guinea, an arm of the Atlantic Ocean.¹ Christianity in Nigeria is a major religion, shaping the country's cultural, social, and political landscape. Introduced in the 15th century through European missionaries.² The Portuguese came to Benin and introduced Christianity. it gained significant traction in the 19th century, particularly in the southern and central regions.³ Real serious missionary work began in the 19th century, as a result of the great revival in Christianity in many countries of Europe, and America towards the end of the 18th century. Their main interest in West Africa was to eradicate slave trade, by introducing Christianity and legitimate trade to replace the slave trade.⁴ The Catholics, through the influence of the Portuguese traders, were the first missionaries to set foot on Nigerian soil. Nigeria at that time was a fertile ground for Christian mission.⁵ Missionary societies which participated in missionary work in West Africa included, the Wesieyan Missionary society, the Baptist Missionary Society, the Glasgow and Scottish Missionary Societies also sent missionaries to West Africa, the North German and Bremen Missionary Society.⁶

From the 1840's various Christian missionary bodies have done a lot to evangelize different parts of southern Nigeria, and also had brought about civilization and development of various forms in the area. In southern Nigeria, missionaries in the nineteenth century sowed seeds of a growth that was to yield abundant fruit in the twentieth century Christianity arrived in the Onicha-Ugbo area, like much of Southern Nigeria, primarily through the efforts of European missionaries in the 19th century. The Roman Catholic were the first missionaries to arrive Onicha-Ugbo. it was the sustained missionary activity beginning in the 19th century that led to significant conversions and the establishment of permanent Christian communities.⁷ The Church Missionary Society (CMS), an Anglican mission, and various Catholic orders, notably the Society of African Missions (SMA) and Holy Ghost Fathers, played key roles in spreading the faith in Igboland and surrounding areas. Onitsha, being a key mission center from the 1860s, played a crucial role in the dissemination of Christianity into the hinterlands, including areas where communities like Onicha-Ugbo are located.⁸

For Onicha-Ugbo specifically, it is mainly a Christian community today, with Catholicism and Anglicanism being the most prominent denominations.⁹ This aligns with the historical pattern of missionary penetration in the region. The establishment of churches, schools, and even healthcare facilities by these early missions often served as entry points for evangelization and significantly impacted the social and cultural landscape of communities like Onicha-Ugbo. The introduction of Christianity often

brought with it Western education, which was a powerful draw for many. This led to the emergence of a literate Christian populace who, in turn, served as catechists, teachers, and clerks, further aiding the spread of the faith and Western influence.¹⁰

However, the advent of Christianity also led to conflicts with traditional cultural practices and sometimes created divisions within communities as new converts challenged existing customs and belief systems¹¹. Despite these challenges, Christianity has become deeply embedded in the lives of the people of Onicha-Ugbo, with many traditional adherents having converted over time.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine and know the impact of Christian missionary influence in Onicha-Ugbo.

The objectives of this study are as follows;

- i) To examine the historical background, origin, geography, people, their political, social cultural, religious and economic system of Onicha-Ugbo.
- ii) To know about the coming of Christian missionary influence in Nigerian
- iii) To know the impact of Christian missionary on Onicha-Ugbo.

Significance of the Study

The significance of these study is to find out the impact of Christianity in Onicha-Ugbo as well as know the changes that Onicha-Ugbo went through since Christianity came to Onicha-Ugbo. To understand the Christian activities that have taken place in Onicha-Ugbo. This study also seeks to know how the political, social cultural and economic aspect has developed since Christianity came. To also know the role that Christianity has played in Onicha-Ugbo. This area of study has not been studied fully by scholars and historians. This overlook has brought the need to find out the impact of Christian missionary in Onicha-Ugbo in the period of study. I aim to throw more light on the history of missionary activities in Onicha-Ugbo.

Scope of the Study

The scope of these study revolves around the time Christian missionaries came to Onicha- Ugbo around 1800's till 1960. It focuses on Christianity in Onicha- Ugbo, Aniocha North local government of Delta State.

Research Methodology & Source

This study is to examine the impact of Christian missionaries activities in Onicha-Ugbo. This study uses the historical method of research and the uses sources like primary and secondary sources and also oral interview.

Primary Source: This include oral interview conducted with the people and residents of Onicha-Ugbo. They include Church individuals, chiefs, elders, historians of Onicha-Ugbo. Information gotten from passed down knowledge is used. This source will help in understanding the origin of the land and also help to know how Christianity came to Onicha-Ugbo, Aniocha North local government of Delta State.

Secondary Source: secondary source includes textbooks, articles, journals, chapters in edited books, and unpublished dissertations and online sources.

Literature Review

In Line with my study, there exist scholarly works that are beneficial to my study. They provide information that are useful to my research work. They include the following:

D. C. Anita work entitled: *The Impact of Christian Missionary Activities in Idumuje-Unor*,¹² talks about the impact of Christianity in Idumu-Unor. She discusses the life of the people before the advent of Christianity and the life of the people after the advent of Christianity, the changes that occur in Idumu-Unor. She also accounts for the first Missionaries to come to Idumu-Unor, Church Missionary Society(CMS) but they later left due to hostilities they faced. The next came Roman Catholic Church who were able to withstand the hostilities of the people. The coming of Christianity also sparked fury among the people as the people had their own religion and culture of that time. She also

highlights the positive impact of Christianity on education, health care, and religion. She also discussed the challenges that occurred when Christian Missionaries came to Idumuje-Unor. This book is relevant to my study because it talks about the advent of Christianity in Idumuje-Unor which is a part of the Anioma communities to which Onicha-Ugbo also belong to.

Elder Mojume book entitled; *The bibliography of Issele-Azagba*,¹³ examines the historical origin of Issele-Azagba. He gives details on the social life, culture, politics and economic activities of the people. He also discusses the Obishop lineage in Issele-Azagba. This book is relevant to the present study because Issele-Azagba and Onicha-Ugbo share same ancestry from Eze-Chima dynasty. It will be of use in understanding the ancestry of Onicha-Ugbo. They also share same culture and traditions. The book differs from this present study in scope and focus. It focusses on the traditions and customs of Issele-Azagba, while the present study focuses on the Christian Missionary Influence in Onicha-Ugbo.

John Nwokolo's book entitled; *Struggle for the Return of Schools to the Mission/Former Proprietors in Nigeria*,¹⁴ focuses on the establishment of Christian Missionaries in Nigeria and explores missionaries in formal/defunct Bendel in which Onicha-Ugbo is a part of in Delta state. He looks at the advent of Christianity in the southern states of Nigeria. He discusses the impact of Christianity and it's impact on Western education in Southern Nigeria and he also identifies the challenges the

missionary faced such as congestion, shortage of teachers in schools, lack of grants and subsidies and also the deteriorating educational sector. He gives suggested solutions such as giving financial aids, this book is useful to this study because Onicha-Ugbo is a part of it and it highlights which school was established in Onicha-Ugbo. It also discussed about how early women education began. It differs from present study because while it focuses on the impact/establishments of Christian missionaries in Southern Nigeria, the present study focuses only on Christian missionary influence on Onicha-Ugbo.

Dan Olisa Dieyi book entitled: *The Realities and Values of Anioma Identify*,¹⁵ examines various traditions of origin, customs of Anioma identify. Dieyi looks at the past and present culture of Anioma people and explores the Anioma identify which reflects on their diverse origins. It is an exciting work that focuses on cultural heritage of Anioma people of which Onicha-Ugbo is a part of. The work gives us details on the historical origin and past and present culture of Onicha-Ugbo people and wider Anioma people. The work differs from current study in scope and focus. It focusses on the social history of Anioma while the current study focuses on the impact of Christianity only on Onicha-Ugbo. The work is relevant to the present study as it looks at the traditions of origin and sociocultural history of Anioma people which Onicha-Ugbo is a part of.

J.F Ade Ajayi's; *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891*,¹⁶ is a foundational text for understanding the historical spread of Christianity in 19th century Nigeria including the Delta region where Onicha-Ugbo is located. The book illuminates the mechanic of

Christian missions, their societal influence and the emergence of a new socio-religious elite. This work provides a critical historical context for the catholic church's origin by detailing the dynamics of Christian missions. It also explores the social, cultural and political impact of these missions offering a framework to certain how the catholic church influenced development through social dynamics and cultural interactions. Furthermore, He discussion of the new elite class formed by Christian missions is relevant for understanding the catholic church impact on educational and leadership structures in Southern Nigeria to which Onicha-Ugbo in Delta state is a part of, as missions were often used in shaping local leadership. This book is very useful in understanding the origin of the catholic church which was the first church to be established in Onicha-Ugbo. It differs in focus and scoop as it looks at catholic church in all parts of the country while the present study focuses on Catholic church in Onicha-Ugbo.

Nwadiakor's work titled; *Christian Missionaries and Civilization in Southern Nigeria*,¹⁷ provides a historical examination of the development of Christianity in Nigeria, tracing its complex journey from initial, often unsuccessful missionary endeavors driven by commercial interest to more dedicated missionary oriented efforts. it highlights the pivotal roles of freed slaves in the establishment of early Christian communities and fostering African leadership. He also details the distinction contributions of various European and America missionary societies including the Methodist, Anglicans,

Presbyterians, Baptists and Catholics and their other notable missions analyzing their strategies challenges and social political context. A central theme is the continuous tension between Western cultural imposition and African world views which ultimately led to the emergence of indigenous Ethiopian churches while these church sought to correct colonial Christianity and assets African agency, they faced limitations in fully addressing the profound spiritual earning of Nigerian Christians setting stage for a continuous search for a mute cultural resonant and existentially relevant spirituality. This would help in this present study as part of it talks about the coming of Christianity to Nigeria and the challenges that Christian missionaries met.

Asadu's work, titled; *Christianity and National Development: The Nigerian Experience*,¹⁸ provides a historical overview of Christianity's contributions to various sectors in Nigeria. It specifically examines Christian religion in promoting national development starting from the late 19th century and details the impacts of missionary activities across different parts of Nigeria. The work primarily looks at how Christianity has contributed to the overall development of Nigeria, with particular attention to the education, healthcare sectors and economic development. Some part of his work will be used this study. While the work focuses on Christianity and national developments in Nigeria, this present study focuses on impacts of Christianity in Onicha-Ugbo. Thus, the book differs from this present study in scope and focus. The book covers the whole of Nigeria, while the present is restricted to Onicha-Ugbo.

Viera P. Vihanova's book, *Christian Missions in Africa and their Role in the Transformation of African Societies*,¹⁹ outlines the stages of the missionary movement in Africa. This movement began in the late 18th century, continued through the 19th century, and eventually led to a major expansion of Christianity in the 20th century, which she terms "the fourth great age of Christian expansion." In their efforts to spread Christianity, gain converts, and bring about societal change in Africa, Christian missions of various denominations established schools and promoted education. A particularly significant contribution was their groundbreaking work in African languages, which involved creating grammars, dictionaries, textbooks, and translating religious texts. Christian missionaries were instrumental in establishing written literature in African languages. Their work was undeniably crucial in the Westernization of Africa. However, Africans were not simply passive recipients of these new cultural influences. Instead, they actively shaped the adoption of Christianity and the cultural exchange process, adapting Christianity to align with African choices, needs, and efforts. This involved rooting the Christian experience within the African context.

In Obaro's; *Groundwork of Nigeria History*",²⁰ examines about key contributions of Gbadamosi and Ajayi on Islam and Christian in Nigeria.²¹ They talk on the progression of Islam and Christianity within Nigeria. It explores how missionaries arrived in various regions and how they interacted with existing religions and the attitudes of traditional rulers. Ayandele investigates the "External Relations of Nigerian peoples with

Europeans" during the 19th Century. Collectively, these 615 pages are structured into three main parts: "Nigeria before 1800," "Nigeria in the 19th century," and "Nigeria in the 20th century." The diverse academic contributions from various scholars on different aspects of Nigerian history are brought together to form this comprehensive work.

In Charles Anyasi's book entitled; *Anioma: Resolving Identity Crisis*,²² explores the effort to establish a cultural identity for the Anioma people. This involves analyzing their role in the Ekumeku resistance against white people and missionaries, who not only dominated trade but also influenced the indigenous people's cultural, social, and political lives. The book also examines the formation of the Baptist Mission, London Missionary Society, and CMS, as well as events that occurred during the Niger and Onitsha missions. The areas were very close to the Delta region and were influenced by their Delta neighbors. This book is relevant to this study because it explores the role of Anioma people in Ekumeku resistance to which Onicha-Ugbo is a part of.

Don Ohadike's work entitled; *Anioma: A social history of Western Igbo People*,²³ focuses on the social history of Anioma people from pre-colonial period to the achievement of independence in 1960. It study the tradition of origin, social, political and economics system of the people of Anioma. It also clarifies the missionary activities in the area which led to the imperial control of the area by the British colonial administration. The work also looks at the social condition of Anioma people during colonialism and their reactions to imperial control which is seen in Ekumeku resistance

movement from 1898-1911. The work differs from the present study in scope and focus, while it looks basically on the social history of Anioma to which Onicha-Ugbo is a part of, present study focuses on the Impact of Christian Missionary Influence in Onicha-Ugbo. Nevertheless Ohadike's work will be used in looking at the historical origin, political, social and economic institutions of Onicha-Ugbo.

Olajulema Olatunbosun Kunle, in his book titled; *The Long-Term Impact of Christian Missionaries on Human Capital*,²⁴ examines the enduring influence of exposure to missionary activities on educational achievement in Nigeria. Using data related to the locations of Christian missions, he concludes that there is generally a significant positive effect of historical exposure to missionary activities on educational attainment in Nigeria is more pronounced in Northern regions and among Muslim populations, compared to their Southern and Christian counterparts. This is attributed to the fact that Western education, initially introduced by missionaries as a means of spreading Christianity, was adopted earlier in the South, while the North initially resisted it. Consequently, recent increases in missionary stations have a limited effect due to this historical context. Furthermore, the research indicates that missionary activities significantly reduce the gender gap in educational attainment, and in some cases, even eliminate it in certain tribes. This book is particularly valuable for its discussion of the role of Christian missionary activities in Nigeria, distinguishing itself from other studies by its unique scope, periodization, and focus.

Alex C. Ochei's book titled; *The Catholic Church in the Development of Asaba, Nigeria*,²⁵ examines the influence of the catholic church in the development of Asaba. He discusses the development of Asaba before the advent of Christianity and after the advent of Christianity, he discusses the impact of Christianity (Catholic Church) in the development of Asaba such as the creation of employment opportunities, creation of schools, improving public health by establishing hospitals, support to unprivileged children, and giving Asaba a stable economy. These activities transformed Asaba leading to the development of Asaba. This book is relevant to this study because it talks about the arrival of catholicism which were also the first missionaries to arrive Onicha-Ugbo. Although it differs in focus and scope, it discusses the arrival of Catholic Church in Asaba and the impact they made. While the present study focuses on Christian missionary influence in Onicha-Ugbo.

Other schools and historians have examined different parts of Christianity, it's Advent, the roles missionaries played and the impact of missionary activities in various parts of Nigeria but my study intends to throw more light on the advent and impact of missionary activities in Onicha-Ugbo. My study brings information on Advent of Christianity in Onicha-Ugbo and the impact the missionaries had on the people of Onicha-Ugbo.

Chapterization

This research work is divided into five chapters, they are as follow:

Chapter One: Background to the Study

This chapter gives a general overview to the background of the study and it contains the introduction, aim and objectives of the study, the scope of the study, the methodology used, the literature review and the organization of chapters.

Chapter Two: Historical Background of Onicha-Ugbo

This chapter gives the Historical background of Onicha-Ugbo, their geographical location, the political system, social system as well as the economic activities of Onicha-Ugbo.

Chapter Three: The coming of Christian Missionaries in Nigeria

This chapter talks about early Christian Missionaries activities in Onicha-Ugbo, the establishment of Christian denominations and key Christian Missionaries figures in Onicha-Ugbo.

Chapter Four: Impact of Christian Missionary on Onicha-Ugbo

This chapter focuses on the impact of missionaries on the political, social, religious and economic life of the people of Onicha-Ugbo.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The chapter deals with the summary and conclusion. Also the endnotes and bibliography are included in this chapter.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ONICHA-UGBO

This chapter looks at the historical origin and geographical location of Onicha-Ugbo. It discusses the political institutions, economic activities, socio-cultural system and religious practices in Onicha-Ugbo.

Origin of Onicha-Ugbo

The origin of the history of Onicha-Ugbo is believed to be numerous as different school of thought have their own version of the origin of Onicha-Ugbo. From centuries to centuries, stories told by forefathers have been passed from one generation to another and the origin of Onicha-Ugbo still remains somewhat of a mystery as there are different sides to it¹. Some believe that the founding Eze-Chima is believed to have come from Arochukwu who then moved from the east to Benin and later on settled in Onicha-Ugbo while some believe that Eze-Chime was from Benin. Some of the prominent of these beliefs are as follows:

- i Those who claim that Eze-Chime is from the east (*Arochukwu*)
- ii Those who claim that Eze-Chime is from Benin (*Idu*)

Those who claim that Eze-Chime is from The East believe that Eze-Chime was a powerful herbalist who went about his profession from one place to another, there was an

issue in the palace (Oba of Benin place) and when thing had been done but there was no solution then one of the chiefs then told the king that there was one powerful herbalist then then the king sent for Eze-Chime and he Eze-Chime was able to solve the issue and as a result a settlement was given to him and one of the daughter of the Oba and he began to live in Benin. After some time Eze-Chime gained popularity, he and his wife became a threat to the king as the king did not have a son, the chiefs became jealous and issues began to rise until he had with the king and at some point to move with his wife in order to avoid the wrath of the king. They had children which are *obior* (the first child), *Onicha-Ugbo*, *Obomkpa*, *Ezi Uzor*, *Onicha Olona*, *Issele-Azagba*, *Onicha Uku*, *Issele-Mkpitime*, *Onicha-Mili* , *Issele-Uku* (last child). *Onicha-Ugbo* is one of the children of Eze-Chime and also known as *Diopkala Eze-chime* (first son of Eze-Chime)².

According to another tradition Eze-Chime came from *Aro-Ndi-Nor* in Abia State. He was a strong Herbalist. He began to travel based on his profession with his younger brother. At a time, Oba of Benin had a serious challenge in which he gathered all his native doctors in the land to find a solution, but nobody to give solution to the issue, someone then said he knew who to get a solution to the solution then the Oba said he should be sent for. Eze-Chime came did some incantation and provided the solution to the problem. Eze-Chime then married the first daughter of the king and got some settlement from the king and he began to live among them. In those days the king's guards could go to anyone farm and harvest and take anything they wanted and no could

question them or else the penalty was death. The Oba's guards went to Eze-Chime farm and carried a lot of things then one of Eze-Chime guard who saw them notified him and they went to fight the Oba's guards, when he got home he told the wife what happened and the wife told him that the penalty is death and said the penalty is death and told him they have to leave their home immediately and they left and got to Orenze (their first settlement), Abuanor was their farm. After a while the Oba discovered that they had ran away and sent his guards after them. The wife of Eze-Chime was cooking and about to serve food to eat when she saw the Oba's guards from a distance and then a gun was shut up signifying war(Kokoko), the wars were fought by the palace chief. So they fled to another place and there give birth to another child which was called Onicha. Onicha then settled there and the town was named Onicha-Ugbo after Onicha.³

The summary of Eze-Chime of Eze-Chime migration is that Eze-Chime and the wife, embarked on a journey associated with dreadful encounters and battle but eventually arrived in Obior where they settled under an Ukpali tree and pitched their tent⁴. Here they had children amongst who were *Ukpali, Onicha, Oligbo and Eziuzo*. These children equally had grandchildren. It was in search of fertile farmland and economic boost that these children founded towns such as *Onicha-Olona, Onicha-Ugbo, Onicha-Ukwu, Issele-Ukwu, Issele-Mkpitime, Issele-Azagba, Ezi, Obomkpa and Onicha Mmili*(Onicha).⁵

Geographical Location

Onicha-Ugbo is a town located within latitude 6°18'N and 6°22'N and longitude 6°20'E and 6°26'E in the northern boundary of Aniocha North Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria.⁶ It is situated on a highland about 40 km from Asaba on the Asaba-Benin Express Road connecting the West to the East of Nigeria.⁷ OnichaUgbo is bordered to the East by Issele-Uku and Idumuje-Unor, to the West by Igbodo and Obior, to the North by Idumuje-Ugboko and Ewohinmi and to the South by Ubulu-Uku.⁸ The area is about 16 square kilometers and lies on a flat topographical terrain at an elevation of 260 m above mean sea level.⁹ There is no solid rock near the surface which is covered with clayey brick red sand. The vicinity of Onicha-Ugbo has no river.¹⁰ The nearest river is the Iyi Ugo in Aniofu and until recently people walked 6 km to the river or 4 km to the Oba-Bioseh spring in Idumuje-Ugboko or the Mkpitime Lake near the Igbodo border in search of clean water. There are five villages in Onicha-Ugbo namely *Ogbe-Obi*, *Umuolo*, *Ishiekpe*, *Ogbekenu*, and *Agba*. ANIOMA is an acronym for former LGAS of the defunct Bendel state which are *Aniocha*, *Ndokwa*, *Ika* and *Oshimili*, *Onicha-Ugbo* is a part of Aniocha-North LGA in Delta state.

Political Institutions

A central form of political organization exists in Onicha-Ugbo, as in other towns in the *Umu-Eze-Chime* fold, contrary to the general belief that the entire Igbo nation is a stateless society. The political institutions are hierarchical in nature, which composes of:

1. The obi: He is the overall custodian in Onicha-Ugbo.¹² Leadership is centered on the monarch who is also called *Eze*. Men of chiefly rank attend political deliberations at the palace and the obi is in constant consultation with them in the performance of his function.¹³ These men along with the obi constitute the Obi-in-council, called Izu-Ani. The traditional war chiefs and the Ikpala-Ime-Ogwa constitute this council. At council meetings, the traditional chiefs sit to the right of the obi in their hierarchical order while the *Ikenye-Ime-Ogwa* sit to the left of the monarch.¹⁴ Tradition permit the first son to take over the throne after his father.¹⁵

2. The traditional chiefs: They perform specific customary and ceremonial functions in the town. The traditional chiefs are made up of Onotu from the five villages in the town. The *Onotu* chiefs are responsible for the defense of the town. They also adjudicate on strategic matters delegated to them by the obi in their respective villages. They are;

i). The Iyase: He is the head of Onotu chiefs and presides at their meetings.¹⁶ It is the responsibility of the Iyase to keep the Obi adequately posted on all matters brought to his notice.¹⁷ His greeting is *Onowu*. The current Iyase of Onicha-Ugbo is *Festus Mafiana*.¹⁸

ii). The Odogwu: The Odogwu is the principal war general.¹⁹ Once the decision to wage war is taken, the Odogwu executes the war plans and reports on the performance of the troops to the Iyase. He ranks next to the Iyase and adjudicate on matters referred to the *Onotu* in *Ishiekpe* village.²⁰ His greeting is *Abi*. The current Odogwu is *Dr. Ibe Kachukwu*.²¹

iii). The Isama: The Isama is the primary advisor on issues involving the town. He is the brother of the Obi.²² He is also a war general and handles disputes requiring the attention of the Onotu in *Ogbe-Obi* village.²³ His greeting is *Akwe*. The current Isama is *Onuwa Deji*.²⁴

iv). The Ozah: The Ozah is the main support of the Odogwu in the execution of war strategies.²⁵ He settles all matters referred to the *Onotu* in *Umuolo* village.²⁶ His greeting is *Okita*. The current Ozah of Onicha-Ugbo is *Azubukwu monsindi*.²⁷

v).Iyase Agba: The Iyase Agba is the second representative of Agba, which for administrative reasons is now regarded as a village in Onicha-Ugbo, in the *Obi-in-council*.²⁸ He also wears the leopard skin on ceremonial occasions. He adjudicate on matters referred to the Onotu in Agba village but he is subordinate to Iyase Onicha-Ugbo.²⁹ His greeting is *Onowu*. The current Iyase Agba is *Alex Oylioko*.³⁰

vi). The Uwolo: The Uwolo is the chief informant among the war chiefs³¹. He is expected to nose out dangers in advance (perform reconnaissance functions) and inform

the Odogwu who in turn, briefs the Iyase. His report could lead to the declaration of war against the enemy³². His greeting is *Ojogba*.

According to Mr Udoka Ogbugo, the Iyase, the Odogwu, the Isama and the Uwolo are said to have fought the war against the Benin and defeated them, so they were known as warlord.³³

3. The *Ikpala-Ime-Ogwa*: They are members of the *Obi-in-council*. They were called to advise the Obi on matters brought before his court and said him in the task of maintaining peace, guarding and preserving the customs and traditions of the people including ceremonial functions. They are made up of;

I). The Onishe: The Onishe is the most senior Okpala or titled man in the town. He ranks next to the monarch on administrative matters. The Onishe also crowns a new Obi. His greeting is *Ogene*. At council meetings, the *Odafe* who is the second in the hierarchy of *Ikpala* and whose greeting is *Ede* sits next to the Onishe.

ii). The Omu: The Omu is the queen mother of the town. By tradition she is the only woman conferred with a chieftancy tittle. She settles market disputes.

iii). Okwelegwe Ani: He is the spokesman of the Obi. If the obi has a message for the town it is the work of the Okwelegwe to inform the town. He is also the head of work force at Town level.

Diopka Nwana examined that all these discussed above are part of the political institutions present in Onicha-Ugbo³⁴.

Succession to the throne is neither elective nor rotated among the ruling houses as is the practice of some communities in Nigeria³⁵. The eldest son succeeding his father when the obi passed on³⁶. Since women cannot succeed as Obi, if a monarch dies without a male heir, the immediate younger brother succeeds him being of the same lineage. It is therefore common practice for Obis to marry many wives to ensure that they sire as many sons as possible in order that at least one of them will succeed on the throne³⁷. Where however, the Crown Prince is underage at the death of his father, a regent (*ochei ndo*) is appointed to perform his functions until he can ascend the throne of his ancestors³⁸. The Obi approves the appointment of the *onotu* and the *Onishe*, appoints other traditional and honorary chiefs who are his ears and eyes and brief him on what's going on in the town³⁹.

Social System

The social system of the people of Onicha-Ugbo highlights the culture and identity of the people, it also shows the way of the people. There are also special guides present in Onicha-Ugbo. The traditional societies such as the *Ikpala*, *Ndi-Iche*, *Ikolo*, *Ndi Omu*, *Uzi* and other societies perform various functions in the societies.

Festival

There are different festivals in Onicha-Ugbo Ugbo, we have the *Ine* festival, *Iwaji* festival, *Fejokwu Ani*, *Ilo Chi Agba* and *Ogbanigbe Uchichi*, and many others. The date of for fixing festivals are influenced by the outcome of the climate conditions of the year.

Fejokwu Ani: During this ceremony, it is expected that planted yam has grown to a reasonable amount then what follows is to sacrifice to *Fejokwu*, the god of yam and harvest. It's chief priest known as *Ohene Fejokwu* performs the sacrifice to *Fejokwu* in the *Obi's* palace and the *Ozama* plays an active part in the ritual. Individuals sacrifice to *Fejokwu* in their own farms⁴⁰.

Ichu Aja Obodo and *Iwa-ji Umu-Ndu*: sacrifice are made for the well-being of the town. This is called *Iwume Ochu-Chu Aja*. This ceremony, which takes place on the next Eke day following the *Ilo Mgbugudu Ani*, marks the eating of New Yam by children. The children in each household are sumptuously feasted with pounded yam from the years harvest.⁴¹

Ilo Chi Obodo, *Iwa-ji Ikposho* and *Ine Uchichi*: This is a day of merriment. On this Nkwor market day, Onicha-Ugbo woman begin to eat the year's new yam. The *Obi's* wife, the *Anasi*, is expected to mark the ceremony first. As soon as this happens, the town is informed by the boom of a canon fire from the Palace. Thereafter other women eat the new Yam.⁴²

According to Dike Theo, The *Ine* festival (new yam festival) is the main festival in Onicha-Ugbo. The festival is held every year in September or October in the town. It is an all day event The ceremony aspect is broken into two the morning and evening part. The morning part - ina aka obi and the evening part- *Idu-Olu*. After this is done, the town prepares for the eating of the new yam.⁴³

Iwa-ji Obi: A day after the men of the town have eaten the New Year, the Obi marks his own new yam eating ceremony. This day, an Eke market day, also called *Eke Obo*, is essentially a day of resting for the rest of the town. It marks the end of the festival season although no burials can still take place until after the priests Ihene have concluded their own annual ritual and ceremonies known as *Igwu-iyi Ihene*.⁴⁴

Marriage

Marriage is a sacred, lifelong institution governed by strict customs and traditions. While its origins are ancient, the practice has evolved significantly with the influence of Christianity and modernization. In Onicha-Ugbo, marriage is patrilocal and descent, patrilineal. Marriage between brothers and sisters and even with cousins is not allowed in the community. Although a patrilineal community, one cannot marry from the family of one's mother or even her quarter(quarter)⁴⁵. Polygamy was the rule rather than exception. Marriage in is a family affair. A woman is regarded as being married to all

members of the family of her husband⁴⁶. Historically, several types of marriage were common in the pre-colonial era such as;

Betrothal (*Ibeme Nwunye*): Advances were usually made leading to the betrothal even before the girls were born. If child turned out to be a girl on delivery, the young boys or their parents presented a large log of wood. Whichever of the log was first split and used to keep the nursing mother and her daughter warm signified the successful suitor⁴⁷.

Direct Wooing: if there was no betrothal at childhood, a suitor would court the girl's friendship in her mother's apartment. Usually the mother would pretend not to notice. The suitor would normally propose to the girl. If she did not like him, she could simply reply that some other man was already courting her and he would desist from further advances.⁴⁸

Wooing by Proxy: As more male indigenous began to live in the urban centers and mostly went home only during their annual vacations, it's became more acceptable for girls of marriageable age to be rude by relations for the Uber drivers on their behalf. It was expected that the young man's parents could not woo an ugly, disrespectful, wayward or lazy girl for him. However irrespective of the method by which a partner is selected, the people invariably investigated the family into which the marriage is to be contracted⁴⁹.

With the Post World War, the rites of marriage underwent a dramatic change the rites now take form of; familiarization (*imiali madu*), courting friendship(*iya oyi*), formal

marriage proposal(*ikpo afa*), appointment of marriage guide(*iha onye ndu*), the knocking on door(*iye aka ekwe*) and thereafter the marriage proper (*Ibu Ego Nwunye*).

Religion

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, *Religion is a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices.*⁵⁰ The people of Onicha-Ugbo believe in the supreme being called *Chi-Ukwu or Chukwu*. He was also called *Chukwu Okike* (the creator) and *Chukwu Abaima* (the almighty).⁵² No one else was powerful than him. It was believed that every individual had a spirit guide know as *Chi* who communicated with *Chi-Ukwu* on their behalf. His name were usually invoked during offerings, at prayers, the breaking of kolanuts and during libations. In pre colonial times, the people were mainly traditional and idol worshiper.⁵³

Each village its own sacred shrines and the deities in practice (elemental being) who, it was believed, could be reached through priests- *Ihene*- who was selected ted by the deities in themselves. These shrines existed until today Although without an Ihene to minister therein. *Mkpitime* shrine is located at *Ogbe-Obi*, *Onicha- Akodi* and *Idigwu (Otutu)* in *Ogbekenu*, *Osenobue* in *Ishiekpe* and *Idumu-Ose* and *Nana* in *Umuolo*⁵⁴. The ihene were prophets of their time in the community⁵⁵. They prophesied good and evil events in the town.⁵⁶

There was also gods and spirit like

i) *Ani* (the earth goddess): spirit of fertility and the dearest of all deities.

ii) *Onkwu*: she is the goddess of the sea.

iii) *Fejokwu*: The God of farm and harvest and more particularly of the yams. It is highly honoured. It is one of the most important gods and is considered to be a male.

iv) *Mkpitime*: it is believed to dwell in lake *Mkpitime*. It is believed that she is a female spirit. No one is allowed to fish or wash clothes in the lake. Also no one was allowed to wear a dark color cloth to the lake.⁵⁷

Some other spirit are *Ikenga*, *Ohaote*, *Ake*, *Ozala* etc. Generally, it is believed that the spirit were believed to link between the people and *Chi* through the *ihene*. They protected the upright and dealt with those who committed abomination or plotted even against their neighbors or members of the community.

Birth

Birth is a thing of joy in Onicha-Ugbo. When a child is born, his/her immediate senior sibling is raised from the ground and his/her head made to touch the ground to indicate that the later entered the world before the new child.⁵⁸ The naming ceremony normally takes place on the fifth day after the child birth called *Izo Ideyi*. The child was then given a name. The naming ceremony was usually solemn, as it is believed that one's

name help to determine(guide) the course of one's life.⁵⁹ In the pre-colonial times circumcision was a part of life but overtime the practice has been stopped.

Traditional Burial Rites

Death is a necessary end to every life. It's a respecter of nobody, class, wealth or race.⁶⁰ Traditional burial rites are an important part of culture in many Nigerian communities.⁶¹ These rites are seen as a way to honor the dead and to ensure their peaceful journey to the spirit world⁶². They usually involve ceremonies, music, dancing, and sacrifices, depending on the customs of the particular ethnic group.⁶³ The family and community play key roles in organizing and participating in these burial activities.⁶⁴ They believe in the duality of all things that is there is a world of men and a world of spirits.⁶⁵ Onicha-Ugbo believe parent should predecease their children and senior siblings, their younger ones.⁶⁶ Burials are performed in two stages. Children of the deceased perform mortuary rites with the eldest son playing the leading role. No person plays an active part in the funeral rites of someone younger than himself.⁶⁷ Immediately after birth, lamentation is forbidden for a few hours for the soul of the deceased may be lurking around the house as it is hoped that it may return to the body.⁶⁸ It is also important to note that burials do not take place during festivals and purposed date of burial are given to the king for approval and if not approved another date is to be decided upon.

Economic Activities

For centuries Onicha-Ugbo has been known to be involved in subsistence economy in which the people only made produce for personal consumption but over the years the people are now going into large scale farming.

Agriculture

The yam is the basis of the subsistence economy on which the people depend on and the activities with which it is associated with its cultivation chiefly determine the pattern of the year. Before new farms are made offerings are made to Ani (*Ikenga Ani*) the god of earth into which they sow their seeds⁶⁹. The size of a man farm is determined by the size of his family. Also crops like corn (*oka*), sugar cane (*ukpete*), cassava (*akpu*), coco yam (*akasi*) okra, groundnut (*apapa*), pepper (*ose*), melon (*egwusi*), gourd (*uko*), beans (*akpaka*), pumpkin (*ugbogwu*) are also cultivated in farmlands.⁷⁰ Historically, the primary tree crops of long standing are the kola, oil, and coconut palms. The cultivation, ownership, and inheritance of these trees are held on an individual basis. Furthermore, yam farming is traditionally the domain of men. The community of Onicha-Ugbo cultivated three distinct yam varieties: *Ji-Ocha*, the yellow *Ji-Okwu*, and the water yam, *ji-mbo*⁷¹

Hunting

In addition to agriculture, hunting (*ije nta or ichu nta*) was a primary occupation for the people. The skills of a hunter were nearly universal among farmers; an individual who farmed but could not hunt was an anomaly. Men universally engaged in trapping animals such as bush pigs, various species of buck, and other small fauna, both to prevent crop destruction and to supplement the community's food source. The collection of other wild resources, including snails, tortoises, and mushrooms, was customarily the responsibility of women. Furthermore, a cultural protocol mandated that the successful hunter of large game—for instance, a bush pig (*Ezi Ofia*), a wild buck, or a leopard—was obligated to present a portion of the kill as tribute. This homage was paid to the *Nze* custodian, who held the title of the most senior Okpala in the quarter (*Idumu*), and to the *obi*. Tradition holds that this practice is the origin of the proverb, "*o-gbu any nshu zi onwe iduh*," which translates to, "he who kills a big game imposes upon himself a trip to distant Idu," referencing the obligatory journey to present the offering. This was outlined by Mr Henry ifeanyinachukwu⁷².

Palm Wine Tapping

Tapping palm wine is traditionally a man's job. There are two main types: one tapped from a standing palm tree (*manya nkwu*), and the other from a felled tree (*manya ozu*)⁷³. While both taste similar, their freshness and clarity depend on the tapper's skill. It is

important to note that the art of tapping wine from standing trees is now quickly disappearing. This is because almost every adult male in the community holds an *Ozo* title, a status that forbids them from climbing trees.⁷⁴

Trade

The traditional economic life of the Onicha-Ugbo people is structured around a four-day, rotating market system. The people had periodic which were held on each of the four market days of the Igbo week called Izu namely Eke, Orie, Afor, Nkwo to engage in trade and commerce.⁷⁵ The principal market day is Eke, which is also a designated day of rest when people abstain from farm work. Instead, this day is dedicated to essential domestic and communal activities, such as mending leaking roofs, repairing cracked walls, and collaborating on public works like building houses and maintaining town roads.⁷⁶

In traditional Onicha-Ugbo society, commerce was the exclusive preserve of women. It was socially unacceptable for a man of any standing to be seen buying or selling in the market.⁷⁷ A man, regardless of his marital status, depended on his female relations to purchase his necessities or sell his goods. While women traded a wide variety of items—including foodstuffs, clothing, cooking utensils, and local products—works of art were typically bought directly from the workshops of their predominantly male makers.⁷⁸ Before the adoption of modern currency, the economy functioned on a system

of trade-by-barter. This was eventually replaced by the use of cowries (*ego-ayaka*) as a medium of exchange, which in turn gave way to the coin and paper money used today.⁷⁹

Art and Crafts

There were skilled men and women engaged in various forms of art and craftwork. These included blacksmiths, sculptors, leather workers, weavers of traditional handmade cloth (such as *akwa ocha* or *akwa olulu*), carpenters, and drum makers. These artisans were organized into guilds: the blacksmiths were known as *Ndi Uzu* (with their customary greeting), while the sculptors and other craftsmen belonged to groups like *Onotu* and *Ndi Inwene*, who greeted each other with *Oka-Onwene*.

The blacksmiths were responsible for producing essential tools and ceremonial items such as cutlasses (*opia* and *mpama*), spears, the ceremonial *ada*, bolts, and a native locking mechanism called *mkpisi* used to unlock doors from the outside through a small hole. They also crafted the metal components of hoes (*egwe*), diggers (*odu*), knives, metal gongs, and guns.

Carpenters and wood carvers created a wide range of wooden items including mortars, pestles, door frames, doors, wooden bowls, and grinders. They also sculpted stools used by Ozo-titled men, wooden boxes, weaving swords, and carved staves that served as symbols of deities and ancestral worship such as the *Ikenga*. Additionally, they made the ceremonial staff of the Ozo-titled men known as *Osisi*, the *Ofor* a symbol of

authority within the family and various carved items used for shrine decorations and children's toys.

Okwuchi Kelechi examined the art and crafts of Onicha-Ugbo town⁸

Traditional Medicine

Skills in traditional medicine practice in Onicha-Ugbo was either acquired from adepts in each of the various field of specialization. Some learnt from their parents, relatives or were apprenticed to the experts.⁸¹ In some cases like arthopedics, the skill was the exclusive prerogatives of only one family- *Idumu- Diagbor* and was passed from one generation through the other as an inheritance.⁸² While from some it was a personal calling with revelation or guidance. It was widely known that to heal patients with certain even unknown elements some adept simply walked into the bush and the necessary herbs and their right combinations would be revealed to them there.⁸³

Traditional medicine come in various forms, suited for various purposes. Some are preventive vaccine while others are antidote or curative urative medicine. A number of them are oral preparation, some are managed into the body or administered as food while others are introduced into the blood stream through incisions.⁸⁴ Traditional medicine are usually prepared from any or a combination ot the following natural ingredients; herbs, roots and barks of trees, seed spices and animals parts and stones. Area of specialization include surgery(*iwa-ife*), pharmacy(*ime-ogwu*), orthopedics(*igba-*

okpukpu), gynaecology and obstetrics (*ine ime*), fortune telling(*igba-afa*), rituals and purification among others⁸⁵.

Soap Making

Soap making was the exclusive preserve of menopausal women.⁸⁷ Soaps are produced from a combination of shells of palm kernel (*ichele*) the Corolla(*oyiliya*) and calyx (*igbegwu*) of palm trees, coconut fiber (*agbugbu akwe oyibo*), banana/plantain stem (*ogwe Ogede*), pawpaw stem and the shrub, elele.⁸⁸ Usually, the items are burnt into ashes in a heap. The ash is then soaked in water and may be left for a few days to allow all the chemical content of the mixture to diffuse into the water.⁸⁹

Endnotes

1. Interview with Mr. Ekene Monye, Businessman, 57 years, at Idumu-Ugbe Quarters, on 9th August 2025
2. Interview with Diopka Okocha N. Steven, Farmer, 74 years, at Idumu-Ose Quarters, on 8th of August 2025.
3. Interview with Mr Udoka Ogbugo, Civil Servant, 42 years, at Ogbekenu, on 10th August 2025
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12. Interview with Mafina Festus, Iyase Agba, 67 years, at Agba Quarters, on 9th August 2025
13. C. Okwechime, *Onicha-Ugbo Through the Centuries* (Lagos: Prime Legacies Limited, 2016), p.91.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Interview with Mafina Festus, Iyase Agba, 67 years, at Agba quarters, on 9th August 2025

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17. *Ibid.*, p 94.
18. Interview with Mr. Ekene Monye, Businessman, 57 years, at Idumu-Ugbe Quarters, on 9th August 2025.
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20. *Ibid.*, p.95
21. Interview with Mr. Ekene Monye, Businessman, 57 years, at Idumu-Ugbe Quarters, on 9th August 2025
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23. *Ibid.*
24. Interview with Mr. Ekene Monye, Businessman, 57 years at Idumu-Ugbe Quarters, on 9th August 2025
25. C. Okwechime, *Onicha-Ugbo Through the Centuries* (Lagos: Prime Legacies Limited, 2016), p.97
26. *Ibid.*
27. Interview with Mr. Ekene Monye, Businessman, 57 years, at Idumu-Ugbe Quarters, on 9th August 2025
28. C. Okwechime, *Onicha-Ugbo Through the Centuries* (Lagos: Prime Legacies Limited, 2016), p.97
29. *Ibid.*
30. Interview with Mr. Ekene Monye, Business man, 57 yrs at Idumu-ugbe quarters on 9th August 2025
31. C. Okwechime, *Onicha-Ugbo Through the Centuries* (Lagos: Prime Legacies Limited, 2016), p.98.

32. *Ibid.*, p.99
33. Interview with Mr. Udoka Ogbugo, Civil Servant, 42 years, at Ogbekenu, on 10th August 2025
34. Interview with Diopka Nwana, Retired, 84 years at Idumu-Ose, on 11th August 2025
35. C. Okwechime, *Onicha-Ugbo Through the Centuries* (Prime Legacies Limited, 2016), p.84
36. *Ibid.*, p.84
37. *Ibid.*, p.84
38. *Ibid.*, p84
39. *Ibid.*, p84.
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42. *Ibid*
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44. C. Okwechime, *Onicha-Ugbo Through the Centuries* (Lagos: Prime Legacies Limited, 2016) pp.127- 132.
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CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN ONICHA-UGBO

This chapter presents the advent of Christianity in Nigeria and the missionary activities as well as the growth of various church domination in Onicha-Ugbo.

Introduction

The history of Christianity begins with Jesus an itinerant Jewish preacher and teacher, who was crucified in Jerusalem c.AD 30-33. His followers proclaimed that he was the incarnation of God and has risen from the dead.¹ The first Christian missionaries were the apostles of Jesus who were commissioned by Jesus to spread the gospel to all nations. The early Christian mission was focused on the spread of the gospel to Jews, and Gentiles, with a special emphasis on reaching out to the Roman Empire.²

The earliest introduction of Christianity was incidental to European trade and exploration. The 18th and 19th centuries also saw the rise of Protestant denominations sending out missionaries to spread their particular version of the gospel.³ The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed the industrialization of mission, the coming of mass communication (print, radio, television), and a major demographic shift in global Christianity. By the early twentieth century, the majority of Christians still lived in Europe and North America. However, by the early twenty-first century, more than 60 %

of Christians lived in the “global South” (Africa, Latin America, Asia) rather than the West.⁴

The arrival of Christianity was a seismic event that fundamentally reshaped Nigeria's religious, social, and cultural landscape. Before its advent, Nigerian spiritual life was anchored in diverse indigenous religions centered on ancestral veneration, divination, and local deities. Christianity introduced a radically new worldview, challenging these existing belief systems and driving profound transformations in education, politics, and social organization. The earliest introduction of Christianity was incidental to European trade and exploration. The global expansion of Christianity set the stage for its spread in Africa, including sub-Saharan Africa. Missionary patterns, colonial networks, and translation into African languages all formed part of that process.⁵ Africa would later become one of the fastest-growing Christian regions in the world a direct legacy of the global missionary movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁶

The Advent of Christianity in Nigeria

Christianity in Nigeria is a major religion, shaping the country's cultural, social, and political landscape. The history of Christian missions in the southern part of Nigeria is in essence the story of the development of various Christian denominations and individual missionaries of Thomas Fowell Buxton's doctrine about the civilization of Africa.⁷ The British Apostles of civilization mobilized all the agencies of civilization-

Government agencies, commerce and Christianity into the interiors of West Africa during their civilizing mission in 1841.⁸ The earliest Christian contact with the territories now known as Nigeria occurred through the arrival of Portuguese explorers along the West African coast in the late 15th century.⁹ These Portuguese traders were accompanied by Roman Catholic chaplains and missionaries who sought to convert local rulers and communities along their trade routes. In 1485, Portuguese merchants reached the Benin Kingdom, initiating both trade and religious contact.¹⁰ Early European contacts had been made with the Benin kingdom from as early as the 1400s it was under Oba Ozolua's reign in the late 15th that a Portuguese expedition led by John Alfonso de Aveiro to explore the bight and established trade contacts with the kingdom arrived in 1485 or in the 1400s.¹¹ The Portuguese missionaries were first to arrive in Benin in 1515 at the request of The Oba of Benin.¹² The Oba of Benin allowed a small mission to be established, and in 1515, a church dedicated to St. Anthony was built in the city of Benin.¹³

Spasmodic missionary activities started in Benin in 1515 when some Catholic missionaries set up a school in the Oba's palace for his sons and the sons of his chiefs who were converted to Christianity.¹⁴ When did Portuguese returned in 1538, the Oba was no longer interested and the reluctance of the Portuguese supply arms as the proposed further declined the missionary efforts.¹⁵ The Spanish capuchin tried to convert the Oba of Benin and spread the gospel but were denied access to the Oba by the Palace chiefs. The Italian capuchins also made attempt to establish missions in Benin in 1655

but they were also denied access and accused of being spies of European powers to infiltrate the commerce of the kingdoms.¹⁶

The first Christian monastery in what is now Nigeria was reportedly built around 1700 CE at Ode-Itsekiri (“Big Warri”), under royal Christian patronage.¹⁷ The spread of Christianity in the Warri region of the Niger Delta was also unpromising.¹⁸ In 1570, the Olu of Warri showed interest in the Christian faith by sending one of his sons, Domingos, to Portugal for education.¹⁹ However, the outcome of this contact was limited between 1570 and 1733, the rulers of Warri merely professed Christianity, and the faith remained confined to the royal court.²⁰ Among the general populace, Christianity gained little acceptance; many feared that baptizing their children would lead to premature death. Christian marriage customs had little effect on local practices, and traditional circumcision rites continued unchanged. Moreover, the irregular presence of clergy meant that the sacraments central to Catholic worship were seldom administered.²¹ In essence, Christianity in Warri left only a faint imprint: its presence was acknowledged, and its name was at least familiar among the ruling elite. Despite the work of Portuguese missionaries based on the island of Sao Tome and later of Spanish missionaries in Benin, it was not until the nineteenth century that the Christian religion was firmly established in Nigeria.

The 1841–1844 Niger expeditions mixtures of scientific, anti-slave, commercial, and missionary aims — were decisive symbols of the new era.²² Although the earliest

expeditions suffered heavy losses from disease, they produced crucial contacts along the Niger and justified further missionary investment. Missionary societies such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Methodist Missionary Society responded by establishing permanent stations at strategic coastal and riverside towns (for example Badagry, Lagos, and later Abeokuta and Onitsha) where schools, chapels, and printing presses could be sustained.²³ Contemporary mission periodicals and CMS proceedings from the 1840s record these early dispatches, personnel lists, and the logistical challenges the societies faced.²⁴

Spasmodic missionary activities started in Benin in 1515 when some Catholic missionaries set up a school in the Oba's palace for his sons and the sons of his chiefs who were converted to Christianity. The Catholics, through the influence of the Portuguese traders, were the first missionaries to set foot on Nigerian soil. The primary objective of the early Christian missionaries was to convert the 'heathen' or the benighted African to Christianity via education. The second missionary endeavor to Nigeria was marked by the advent of the first English-speaking Christian mission in Badagry in September 1842. Despite its growth Christianity in Nigeria, sometimes clashes with the traditional customs and beliefs of the people.

Christianity in Onicha-Ugbo

The coming of the missionaries still remains a very important adventure in the history of Nigeria and the communities in it. The proximity of Onicha Ugbo to Asaba, which was the headquarters of the Royal Niger Company in the first phase of European trade with Southern Nigeria, and to Iseele-Uku, where the company had a garrison facilitated the spread of Christian missionary activity in the town.²⁵ One of the earliest converts was a man called *Nwaezedi* from Idumu-Diagbor quarters he had embraced Christianity in about 1886 when the white Baptist missionaries from the western part of what became Nigeria first visited Onicha Ugbo.²⁶ At that time, the people were not enthusiastic about meeting or association with the whites.²⁷ Besides the reigning Monarch had asked the missionaries to leave the town and not pollute it since he forbade interactions with albinos which he had imagined the white men were.²⁸ As a result of this, the Baptist had to leave then *Nwaezedi* founded his church, it was called *Newaezedi's* Church and the church laid the foundation for the coming of the Catholic mission in Onicha Ugbo.²⁹ Christianity fully arrived Onicha-Ugbo in the 1900's when Roman Catholic entered the town led by Rev. Father Carlos Zappa nicknamed "fada ozo-kpoi-kpoi".³⁰ *Nwaezedi* picked up and taken to Asaba where he was trained to be a catechist and to spread the gospel adequately.³¹ Christianity came with education and also rules and regulations.

Christian Denominations in Onicha-Ugbo

The emergence of Denominations is as a result of the Reformation Movement and which was started by Martin Luther which divided the Christianity into catholic and Protestants.³² The activities of the Christian missionaries were in different dimensions. Onicha Ugbo was evangelized by different evangelical denominations which led to the establishment of different denominations like All Saints Catholic Church, Anglican Church, Jehovah Witnesses, other churches in town today include the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Celestial Church, the Apostolic, Faith, etc. In recent times, there has been a rapid increase in the growth of other churches.

The Roman Catholic Church

The Catholic missionaries arrived Onicha Ugbo through Asaba. All Saints Catholic Church was founded by father Carlos Zappa.³³ After establishing the prefecture of Western Niger, then headquartered at Lokoja in 1886, Fr. Zappa moved to Asaba in 1888 on the invitation of Sir James Marshall, the then Chief Justice of the Royal Niger Company.³⁴ According to Mr Henry Ifeanyinachukwu, The missionaries first stayed at Mr Donatus Oko's house.³⁵ Shortly after, he came to Onicha-Ugbo in 1893 and requested the monarch, Abohgid Obi Aniemeke, to allocate to him a plot of land for a Catholic Mission Centre.³⁶ He was accompanied by Nwazedi, a Catechist from Asaba, who acted as his interpreter. The Obi asked for time as he needed to consult the oracle about the

“Oyibo-White man’s” real intentions. The activities of the expatriate staff of the Royal Niger Company in its heyday gave cause for misperception.³⁷ The new convert congregated under a shed on the premises and they were able to construct a hold of worship.³⁸

The mission center was an outpost, then. In 1904 a bigger All Saints Catholic Church, which doubled as a school was built to serve the community.³⁹ The school under the management of Rev. Father Martin Frederick helped the rapids growth of the church as attendance in the school gain Momentum.⁴⁰ It was approved to be government state in 1910. The school has been renamed Aniemeke Primary School. Oral traditions in Onicha-Ugbo suggest that early converts were drawn from prominent families who valued Western education introduced by the missionaries.⁴¹ It was, however, through the help of Father Zappa that the late Francis Isichei Osege, from Idumu Ugbe, Onicha-Ugbo, was sent to the seminary to train as a priest. Mr. Osege, born in 1889, would thus have been the first Onicha-Ugbo indigene to become a Catholic priest.⁴² At Onicha-Ugbo, Mr. Osegbe oversaw the daily administration of the mission from 1938, while the resident priests stationed at Issele-Uku visited only occasionally.⁴³ This was one substantial was a through which the church grew, they had an indigene running the activities of the church and it brought the people closer. The Catholic mission later established two other primary schools in the town St. Joseph’s Catholic School (1955), now known as Ifeyinwa Primary

School, and St. Agnes' Primary School (1958), which is now defunct, while its premises house the relocated Aniemeke Primary School.⁴⁴

The Church Missionary Society

After the Catholic mission, next came the Church Missionary Society. Unlike the Catholic mission, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) came to Onicha Ugbo through the solo effort of an indigene of the town, the Late Simeon Mordi Chiedu of Ikoko quarters.⁴⁵ According to Mr. Christopher Okafor, Mr. Simeon after he had his primary education he then became a teacher and there after preacher under the CMS mission in Asaba.⁴⁶ Later on he requested for an Anglican church and school to be established in his hometown to facilitate the spread of the gospel there.⁴⁷ Initially the school had for scholarship up to standard two and was located at the site of the former cooperative shop which today house is the magistrate court in the town in 1933.⁴⁸ It's facilities were enhanced to accommodate people up to standard four later, it later moved to its present site along the Onicha Ugbo - Issele Uku road in 1934.⁴⁹ It was through school that they were able to spread the gospel into the land.⁵⁰

The late Simeon Mordi Chiedu had by singular contribution to the development of the missionary activities and education in Onicha Ugbo left an enduring legacy for Onicha Ugbo indigenes in particular.⁵¹ The school which he founded has been renamed as *Gbonoza* primary school. His patriotic efforts at the mobilization of the people for

sustainable development as a missionary, educationist, and the first President General of Onicha Ugbo Patriotic Union are yet unmatched in the history of the town.⁵²

Challenges

Although the missionaries recorded sources, they were also challenges they faced in coming out the activities in Onicha Ugbo. According to chief Mike Eloboi, he explains that a big major issue that the missionaries experienced was the Ekumeku movement/resistance. It was a confrontation between the British colonizers, Christian and natives of Enuani communities. This movement caused issues among the people.⁵³ The Non-Christians believed that Christians were enemies and problems of the community why did Christians believe that the non-Christians were devils and preferred to create info in the community. *Ajumuka* meaning “I reject the church” and *Ekwemuka* meaning “I accept the church”.⁵⁴ This caused serious problems among the people and different communities. Also at that time the kings during the reign didn’t make it easy for the missionaries they were highly resisted, the people also had a firm root in traditional activities.

The missionaries also experienced harsh weather conditions and frequent illnesses posed additional challenges. The missionaries were unfamiliar with the tropical climate and diseases prevalent in the region, making it difficult for them to adapt quickly.⁵⁵ They also struggled with language barriers since they could not communicate effectively with

the locals, necessitating the use of the English language for instruction.⁵⁶ A shortage of manpower further restricted their reach and activities. The Missionaries also encountered numerous difficulties like inadequate funding, limited access to different parts of society, and poor medical facilities.⁵⁷ These shortcomings often compelled the early Christian converts to seek assistance from traditional healers or witch doctors.

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CHAPTER FOUR

IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY IN ONICHA UGBO

This chapter explores the impact of Christianity in Onicha Ugbo through three closely connected dimensions: socio-cultural, economic, and political in order to demonstrate how the religion shaped all facets of community life.

Introduction

The coming of Christianity to Onicha Ugbo marked a significant transformation in the town's religious, social, economic, and political life. Prior to its arrival, the people of Onicha Ugbo like many other Anioma communities adhered to traditional religious practices that revolved around the worship of deities such as Ani, Ogbanigwe, Fejokwu, and Ezechime, as well as the reverence of ancestors who were regarded as moral guardians and mediators between the spiritual and physical worlds.¹ These indigenous beliefs served as the foundation of moral order, guided human behavior, and sustained harmony between the living, the departed, and the divine.² In the pre-Christian era, religion was not seen as a personal choice but as a communal institution that embodied the people's cultural identity and social organization. Every stage of life: birth, initiation, marriage, festivals, and governance was intricately connected to traditional spirituality, which shaped both individual conduct and collective values within the community.³ The Christian missionaries rejected religion of the people and saw it as evil. It is still so even

till this day. The missionaries sought to import Christianity which should be embraced by all mankind and that the Bible and Hebrew names must be something which every Nigerian must be eager to adopt to be transformed.⁴

The impact of Christianity in Onicha Ugbo must be understood within the broader context of Nigeria's colonial and post-colonial development. As a global faith, Christianity exerted both spiritual and sociopolitical influence, transforming indigenous belief systems and altering patterns of community life. Through its institutions particularly churches and schools, it emerged as a major force for modernization, moral discipline, and upward social mobility. According to Kalu, Christianity in West Africa "served simultaneously as an agent of cultural transformation and a means of social cohesion".⁵ The Obi of Onicha Ugbo, Obi Victor Chukwumaliese 1 is a Christian.⁶ Today, In Onicha Ugbo some of the sacrifices which were of high value and a must are no longer encouraged in Onicha Ugbo.⁷

Socio-Cultural Impact

The socio-cultural transformation that accompanied the spread of Christianity in Onicha Ugbo was perhaps its most visible legacy. Christianity introduced new norms, values, and institutions that reoriented people's perceptions of morality, family, gender, education, and community life. The way of life of the people took a shift as previously they were deeply rooted in tradition.⁸

Religious Transformation and Decline of Traditional Worship

Before the arrival of Christian missionaries, religion in Onicha Ugbo was deeply communal. Shrines, ancestral altars, and traditional festivals were integral to social life. According to Mr Henry, gods were never joked with, they were held in high esteem, they believed they heard from them.⁹ The worship of idols was the norm of the day and as result there were a lot of killing and sacrifices.¹⁰ However, the introduction of Christianity led to the gradual decline of indigenous religious practices. The Christian Missionaries began to teach the people how to pray and read the Holy Scriptures.¹¹ Oral testimonies from elderly respondents indicate that many early converts faced persecution and ostracism from relatives who saw conversion as betrayal of ancestral faith. With time, however, the establishment of churches and mission schools facilitated mass conversion, particularly among the younger population. There is at least one believer in every family in Onicha Ugbo.¹²

The new religion replaced traditional forms of sacrifice and divination with Christian rituals such as baptism, confession, and communion. As one respondent noted, “the people began to find peace and confidence in prayer rather than in sacrifices.” Christianity thus transformed personal piety and social morality, aligning them with new ethical standards grounded in biblical teachings. Nmah observes that such transformation “displaced the old cosmological order and redefined African spirituality in Christian terms.”¹³

Marriage, Childbirth and Funeral

The introduction of Christian marriage, monogamy, and formalized rites of passage also restructured family life. Polygamy, once regarded as a mark of social status, came to be stigmatized within Christian ethics. Christianity promoted the principle of monogamy, emphasizing marriage as a sacred union between one man and one woman.¹⁴ In ancient times, Child birth and funerals mandated traditional rituals that involved animal sacrifice and ancestral invocation.¹⁵ Nowadays, a naming ceremony is done for a child born in Onicha Ugbo. Also Christian burial are done for the dead without the need to conduct a sacrifice, previously towards festival period if a person dies such a person would be thrown into the bush.¹⁶ This moral reorientation helped to institutionalize new norms of fidelity, modesty, and sanctity of life.

Mode of Dressing

Before the advent of Christianity, the people wore leaves from palm trees as clothes but when the missionaries came, they introduced European styles of clothing, which converts to the new faith readily embraced, abandoning many of their traditional garments.¹⁷ With this happening the people over time have begun to forget their way of dressing. Even the educated elites within Nigerian society began to adopt European lifestyles in order to align themselves with the values and principles taught in mission schools and through Western education.¹⁸

Educational and Social Development

Christianity's greatest social contribution in Onicha Ugbo lies in the establishment of formal education. Mission schools founded by the Catholic and Anglican missions became centers of enlightenment, providing literacy and moral training. The people of Onicha-Ugbo eagerly embraced the initiatives introduced by Christian missionaries, particularly in the area of education.¹⁹ Despite being largely illiterate and, in some cases, skeptical of the new faith, many parents recognized the value of formal learning and willingly enrolled their children in mission schools.²⁰ In these early institutions, Christian Religious Knowledge formed the cornerstone of the curriculum, and pupils were required to participate in evening catechism sessions on designated days as part of their moral and spiritual instruction.²¹

The Catholic mission expanded its educational influence in the town by establishing two additional primary schools St. Joseph's Catholic School in 1955, now known as Ifeyinwa Primary School, and St. Agnes Primary School in 1958, which has since become defunct, with its premises now occupied by the relocated Aniemeke Primary School.²² Furthermore, All Saints Catholic School, which later attained autonomous status, began as an annex of Isioji Primary School in Ogbekenu Village in 1978. In collaboration with the Onicha-Ugbo Patriotic Union (OPU), the mission also founded the town's first secondary institution, St. Pius Xth Grammar School.²³ Equipped with Western religion and education, the emerging literate and semi-literate class of the

early twentieth century found new opportunities that prompted migration to urban centres in pursuit of colonial employment. Most of these positions were within the civil service and public institutions such as the Nigerian Railway Corporation, the Public Works Department, and the Police.²⁴

Education was not only an evangelistic tool but also an instrument for upward mobility. Through Christian education, Onicha Ugbo witnessed the emergence of a literate class that bridged traditional authority and modern governance. This development echoes Ayandele's assertion that "the missionary classroom was the cradle of the African intelligentsia."²⁵ Christianity also redefined gender roles. Mission schools admitted girls, challenging patriarchal norms that confined women to domestic labor. Women trained in Christian schools became teachers, nurses, and petty traders, thereby contributing to the town's economic and social transformation. Women's groups like the Catholic Women Organization (CWO) and Anglican Women Fellowship emerged as agents of moral reform, charity, and education organizing literacy classes, visiting the sick, and offering scholarships to orphans. Prominent figures from Onicha Ugbo are late Chief Francis Okoro, also known as late kamezi, Dr Ibe Kachiukwu etc.²⁶

Cultural Adaptation and Identity

Christianity in Onicha Ugbo did not completely eradicate traditional culture but rather led to its reinterpretation. Indigenous festivals, songs, and symbols were adapted

into Christian liturgy. For example, traditional dance and drumming styles were incorporated into church worship, giving rise to an indigenous Christian identity that blended faith and culture.²⁷ Nevertheless, Christianity also provoked cultural conflict. Some traditionalists accused Christians of abandoning ancestral customs and weakening communal unity. According to Mr Henry, he said “Festivals were never joked with, they were held in high esteem as it tells the story of who the people really were, now our festivals once brought everyone together; now people attend only church programs.”²⁸ This sentiment reflects what Ekeh described as the emergence of “two publics” one based on indigenous communalism and the other on imported Christian civility.²⁹ Over time, however, this newly formed elite gradually became detached from their indigenous cultural roots and traditional values.

Despite these tensions, Christianity fostered a new sense of collective identity anchored in morality, education, and civic responsibility. Church membership became a marker of respectability, while Christian weddings and funerals became symbols of modernity. As Isichei notes, “the new faith created new bonds of solidarity that transcended lineage and clan.”³⁰

Economic Impact of Christianity in Onicha Ugbo

Christianity’s economic impact in Onicha-Ugbo was evident through its contributions to education, vocational training, agriculture, and welfare-oriented

institutions. Missionaries and later indigenous churches championed the dignity of labor and the moral virtue of hard work, fostering new avenues of economic engagement and productivity.³¹ The establishment of mission schools and not only provided essential services but also created employment opportunities and introduced organized economic systems. Teachers and catechists received training and remuneration through church funds, thereby circulating income within the community. Additionally, the construction of churches and mission houses generated work for local artisans, bricklayers, and carpenters, while church celebrations and festivals stimulated petty trading and other small-scale economic activities.³²

Moreover, Christian ethics encouraged integrity and thrift. The teachings on stewardship and accountability promoted savings culture and discouraged wastefulness. Weber's theory of the "Protestant ethic" that religious values can inspire economic progress finds resonance in the experiences of Onicha Ugbo's Christian farmers and traders who combined faith with enterprise.³³ Christianity also influenced the emergence of community-based economic initiatives. The Onicha Ugbo Catholic Cooperative Society, founded in 1998, provided small loans to traders and market women. This initiative reduced dependency on moneylenders and expanded local entrepreneurship. These loans helped fund small businesses, pay school fees, and build houses.³⁴ Church-based agricultural programs further promoted food security. During the 1980s and 1990s, parish priests encouraged youth groups to engage in cassava and maize cultivation on

church lands. Proceeds from such ventures funded youth fellowship projects and scholarships for indigent students.³⁵

Furthermore, Christian organizations contributed to poverty reduction through social services. Churches organized medical outreaches, distributed relief materials during the COVID-19 pandemic, and provided support for widows and orphans. These activities reflect the broader trend in African Christianity, where churches function as “alternative welfare states” filling gaps left by government neglect.³⁶

Work Ethics and Social Responsibility

Christian teachings emphasized diligence, honesty, and communal service. Sermons frequently invoked biblical passages such as 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (“He who does not work shall not eat”) to encourage industriousness. Consequently, Christianity helped instill a sense of moral responsibility in economic life, the Christian emphasis on honest labor reduced corruption and dishonest trading. However, the proliferation of prosperity-preaching churches in recent years has introduced materialistic tendencies. It believed that the pursuit of wealth now overshadows the older missionary values of humility and service. Yet, as Nmah argues, this phenomenon reflects the “Pentecostalization of African Christianity a shift toward experiential spirituality and material progress”.³⁷ Overall, Christianity has been instrumental in shaping a modern, ethically grounded, and socially responsive economic order in Onicha Ugbo.

Political Impact

Christianity and colonialism did not also fail to leave their scar on the traditional administration of Onicha-Ugbo as it did to most societies with an organised political system.³⁸ Before the advent of colonial rule, the Obi was the highest political authority in the town. He was highly respected. Colonial rule, which was consequent upon missionary evangelism, however, heralded the gradual decline of the influence of the monarch in the society.³⁹ Gradually the Obi has become a ceremonial monarch with limited scope as a ruler in his domain.⁴⁰

The political implications of Christianity in Onicha Ugbo are equally significant. The Christian faith reshaped local governance, leadership ethics, and civic consciousness, fostering a new orientation toward justice, accountability, and participation. Christian missionaries played a pivotal role in laying the foundation for civic responsibility within indigenous communities by teaching the principle of human equality before God.⁴¹ This Christian doctrine subtly challenged the deeply entrenched traditional hierarchies that had long defined social relations, promoting instead a sense of collective dignity and mutual respect among all members of society. Through this new moral framework, individuals began to recognize the importance of shared responsibility and accountability in community affairs. Moreover, the church evolved into a vital public arena where congregants not only gathered for worship but also deliberated on social, political, and ethical matters. In this way, Christian missions nurtured a culture of participatory

governance and moral consciousness that reshaped leadership values and strengthened communal cohesion.⁴²

By the 1950s, educated Christians began to occupy positions in local administration under colonial and later post-colonial governments. Their exposure to Christian ethics informed their approach to governance, emphasizing honesty and transparency. Falola observes that Christianity in Nigeria “moralized politics by introducing a discourse of conscience into public life.”⁴³ During Nigeria’s struggle for independence, Christian institutions across the country played crucial roles in mobilizing nationalist sentiments. In Onicha Ugbo, mission schools and youth fellowships taught civic values such as freedom, justice, and equality, which later influenced the political awareness of local elites. These values persist today, as churches continue to preach against corruption and voter apathy.⁴⁴ Furthermore, church leaders often mediate political disputes and promote peace during elections. Despite these positive contributions, Christianity’s involvement in politics is not without controversy. Nevertheless, Christianity continues to serve as a moral compass in Onicha Ugbo’s political life. Church teachings on justice and compassion inspire leaders and citizens alike to pursue the common good. The town’s political stability and high level of civic engagement can thus be partly attributed to the ethical foundations laid by Christian institutions.⁴⁵ Christianity’s impact on Onicha Ugbo has been far-reaching and transformative. It redefined the people’s worldview, introduced new systems of education and morality,

promoted economic and social welfare, and enhanced civic participation. While certain aspects of indigenous culture were eroded, the fusion of Christian and traditional values produced a distinct local identity one rooted in faith, education, and community development. Christianity in Onicha Ugbo stands today not merely as a religion but as a socio-cultural force that continues to shape the community's destiny.

Endnotes

1. Interview with Mr. Ejiofor Cletus, 55 years, Trader, at Idumu Ose, on 23 August, 2025.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. O. Ikime, (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigeria History* (Ibadan; Heinemann, 1980), p.309.
5. Ogbu U. Kalu, *The History of Christianity in West Africa* (London: Longman, 1980).
6. Interview with Diopka Okocha N. Steven, 74 years, Farmer, at Idumu-Ose Quarters on 8th of August 2025.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. Interview with Mr Henry Ifeanyinachukwu, 61 years, Farmer, at Idumu-Ugbe Quarters on 9th August, 2025.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
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13. E. N. Nmah, “The Impact of Christianity on Igbo Traditional Religion”, *OGIRISI: A New Journal of African Studies*, 9, 2012, pp. 53–71.
14. Interview with Chief Mike Eloboi, 61 years, Businessman, at Ogbe-Obi Quarters, on 9th August, 2025.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Interview with Mr Henry Ifeanyinachukwu

17. C. Okwechime. *Onicha Ugbo Through Centuries* (Lagos: Prime Legacies Limited 2016)
18. Interview with Chief Mike
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22. *Ibid.*
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24. *Ibid.*
25. Emmanuel Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria* (London: Longman, 1966).
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31. Interview with Mr Anene Joe, 66 years, Businessman, at Idumu-Ugbe Quaters on 6th August, 2025
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34. Interviews with Mr Anene Joe

35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. C. Okwechime, *Onicha Ugbo through Centuries* (Lagos: Prime Legacies Limited 2016)
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. Interview with Mr Ejiofor Cletus
42. *Ibid.*
43. Toyin Falola, *Christianity and Social Change in Africa* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2005).
44. Interview with Chief Mike
45. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The introduction of Christianity into Nigeria in the nineteenth century represented a major milestone in the country's spiritual, cultural, and social evolution. Brought through the missionary activities of European religious organizations such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Roman Catholic Mission, and other denominational bodies, Christianity emerged not only as a new religion but also as a transformative agent of civilization. Although the early missionaries began with the sole aim of spreading the gospel, their work gradually expanded to include education, healthcare, and social reform. As the faith moved from the coastal regions of southern Nigeria to the hinterlands, it introduced new systems of learning, literacy, and moral instruction that altered existing traditional structures and provided the foundation for modern development.

Within this national transformation, the spread of Christianity to Onicha Ugbo followed a similar pattern. The new faith confronted and eventually reshaped the traditional religious order that had guided the community for generations. Through the establishment of schools, churches, and mission stations, Christianity became a means of enlightenment and social mobility. It reoriented the moral outlook of the people, discouraged idol worship, and emphasized virtues such as honesty, discipline, diligence, and communal service. Christian education, in particular, played a central role in

producing the first generation of literate elites in Onicha Ugbo, who later contributed to leadership and administrative development within both church and society.

The political and economic implications of Christianity were equally profound. Churches introduced democratic principles by promoting the belief that all individuals were equal before God, a teaching that subtly challenged traditional hierarchies and autocratic leadership patterns. In the social sphere, Christian values such as integrity and hard work inspired a strong work ethic and reduced corrupt practices, laying the groundwork for sustainable community growth. Through these teachings, Christianity helped redefine the relationship between faith, morality, and productivity, fostering a culture of accountability and service.

While the introduction of Christianity was initially met with resistance from practitioners of traditional religion, its persistence and adaptability enabled it to take deep root in the community. Over time, the religion absorbed certain cultural elements, resulting in a harmonious blend of indigenous customs and Christian practices. This synthesis allowed the faith to flourish without entirely erasing local identity, making Christianity a living part of the people's cultural evolution.

In sum, the coming of Christianity to Onicha Ugbo cannot be viewed in isolation from its wider arrival in Nigeria. It was part of a broader religious and social transformation that redefined identity, moral values, and systems of education across the

country. Although some traditional beliefs were displaced, the new faith introduced opportunities for progress, literacy, and ethical renewal. Its enduring legacy in Onicha Ugbo lies in its profound influence on the community's spiritual consciousness, cultural outlook, and socio-economic development. Christianity, therefore, remains a cornerstone of Onicha Ugbo's modern identity and an enduring symbol of transformation, enlightenment, and unity.

Previously only the Obi and chiefs wore animal skin as clothes while the people move around in sack, with the coming of Christianity, the missionaries it brought clothes in which their way of dressing change. Also, during the festival, although Christianity, stopped a lot of rituals, there are still some rituals in which they still partake, in the chiefs still wears leopard skin as in the olden days. During the installation of the Obi, there are still rituals that are still performed even if the king is a Christian and these rituals are regarded as very important. So the king is a Christian but still practices traditional affairs. Also the chiefs even though they have embraced Christianity they still take traditional titles and involve their selves in traditional affairs. Christianity brought about the love for education, it can be said that the people of Onicha-Ugbo are lover of education. Christianity stopped the killing of twins, previously when twins were born they were killed immediately, because it was an abomination, there have been cases where children have been taken from their parents and been killed immediately.

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Akachukwu, Ifeoma	68	Retired Teacher	Via phone	20/9/2025
Anene, Joe	66	Businessman	Idumu-Ugbe Quaters	6/8/2025
Dike, Ndubisi	35	Businessman	Whatsapp	16/8/2025
Dike, Theo	64	Businessman	Idumu-Ose	8/8/2025
Diopka, Nwana	84	Retired	Idumu-Ose	11/8/2025
Diopka, Okocha	74	Farmer	Idumu-Ose Quarters	8/8/2025
Ejiofor, Cletus	55	Trader	Idumu Ose	23/8/2025
Ejiofor, Tobenna	71	Retired Civil Servant	WhatsApp	15/9/2025
Eloboi, Mike (Chief)	61	Businessman	Ogbe-Obi Quarters	9/8/2025
Ezeobiora, Oluchukwu	47	Teacher	Idumu-Ose	17/8/2025
Ifeanyinachukwu, Henry	61	Farmer	Idumu-Ugbe Quarters	9/8/2025
Kelechi Ansley	60	Farmer		12/9/2025
Kelechukwu, Adanna	52	Retired Civil Servant	Ogbekenu	12/8/2025
Mafina, Festus	67	Iyase Agba	Agba Quarters	9/8/2025
Monye, Ekene	57	Business man	Idumu-Ugbe quarters	9/8/2025
Ogbugo, Udoka	42	Civil Servant	Ogbekenu	10/8/2025
Okwuchi, Dumebi	55	Farmer	Whatsapp	17

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