

THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY AND WESTERN EDUCATION IN MBANO SOCIETY OF IGBOLAND, 1912-1990

Mbalisi, Chinedu Nnaemeka, Ph.D

chidonzi@yahoo.com.

Department of History and International Relations, Paul University, Awka

&

Kanayo Nwadiolor, Ph.D

Kl.nwadiolor@unizik.edu.ng

Department of Religion and Human Relations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University,

Awka

Abstract

Christianity and Western education are two colonially induced institutions that emboldened European activities in Igboland nay Mbanjo society. The trajectory of their growth and spread remain unprecedented in the course of social change in the area. The pattern of growth and influence cannot be easily papered over. It is indeed, significant to the overall change and continuity of the history of Mbanjo people. The nexus between Christianity and Western education and impact in Mbanjo can be gleaned from the periscope of their activities that significantly reflected in the lives of the people. These impacts remained unstudied by historians and researchers of auxiliary disciplines. This paper interrogates the growth of Christianity and Western education in Mbanjo and the extent to which their activities influenced the people and their way of life. It demonstrates that much of what is seen as European influence in Mbanjo area remain the relics of Christianity and Western education. The orthodox historical-narrative method is employed and the work is presented chronological and thematically. Sources were distilled from both primary and secondary materials. The qualitative research methodology was explored in analyzing the data used for the paper.

Introduction: Background to the Penetration of Christianity into Mbanjo Area

Freed slaves were instrumental to bringing Christianity and its spread in West Africa and Igboland in particular. Before the permanent establishment of Christianity in Igboland in 1857, series of attempts were made by the collaborative efforts of the British government, C.M.S. missionaries and British traders to bring Christianity and western form of civilization to Igboland. In their expeditions of 1841 and 1854, Aboh, an Igbo community on the western bank of the Niger in the present day Delta state, was the centre of activities until 1857 when, due to great water inundation and certain economic considerations, the

expedition team relocated from Aboh to Onitsha. In 1841 and 1857, Simon Jonas, an Igbo ex-slave from Sierra Leone and a veteran of the Niger expedition, preached the gospel at Aboh. It was for this reason the Elizabeth Isichei referred to Simon Jonas as the apostle of Igboland. So Aboh stands as the first Igbo community where Christianity was preached, while Onitsha takes the pride as the first Igbo community where a permanent Christian mission was established. Edmund Ilogu provided in some details, the arrival of Christianity in Igboland and its subsequent spread to the interior thus

The definitive date was 27th July, 1857, when an agreement was finally executed between a missionary group led by Samuel Crowther, and Obi Akazua of Onitsha and his councilors to establish a Christian mission at Onitsha, an Igbo town on the eastern bank of the river Niger.⁴⁴

From Onitsha, Christianity spread further into the Igbo hinterland. Hence, Onitsha has the pride of place in becoming the place of active beginning of the evangelization of Igboland. Before the arrival of Christianity, the Igbo interior was said to be under the grip of Aro and Nri religious and commercial influence. However, Christianity found its route to Owerri and closer to Mbano, Ikeduru and other towns around the area. The way to Owerri was opened during the Aro expedition of 1901-1902, when Owerri was used as the garrison of the colonial army. It was from Owerri that the first column of the Nigerian regiment proceeded to Bende from where Arochukwu was attacked and the *Long Juju* destroyed. Between 1902 and 1905, most towns in Owerri District (Old Owerri Province) were conquered and the rulers, the slave chiefs, subdued and brought under colonial rule.⁴⁵ The colonial government had ordered that slaves held at Arochukwu be released. It was most probably at that point, the ex-slave woman, Nwanmgborie, who first brought Christianity into Mbano at Ezeoke was freed.

But before Christianity came to Mbano early in the second decade of the 20th century, between about 1912 and 1913, the pioneer missionaries, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) at Onitsha, had been in search of a more possible center for mission work in Owerri District. According to A. O. Iwuagwu, the Archbishop of Owerri ecclesiastical Province, in 1904, Leslie Probyn, suggested

⁴⁴For details, see Edmund Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture: A Study of the Interaction of Christianity and Igbo Culture*. Onitsha: University Publishing Company, 1974, pp.148-149

⁴⁵ A.O. Iwuagwu, *The foundation of the Anglican Church in Imo State, Nigeria, 1905-2000*, Aba: Nwamara Publishers Ltd. 2002, pp.8-9.

to Tugwel, the Bishop of Western Equatorial Africa, in charge of Yoruba Mission and Niger Mission, that Owerri might prove a possible center for mission work in the District. Leslie informed the Bishop that the purest Igbo language was probably spoken in Owerri Isuama area. After the initial hesitation, Archdeacon Dennis and an Igbo catechist, A.C. Onyeabo, visited Owerri in April 1905 through Oguta. On arrival, the missionaries were received by Harold M. Douglas, the District Commissioner at Owerri. The arrival of the C.M.S in Owerri marked a change in the general pattern of missionary enterprise in Igboland. After a long period of search for a suitable town in Owerri, Archdeacon Dennis preferred Egbu close to Owerri. The movement of the C.M.S to Egbu was facilitated by the decision of Eze Njemanze and his cabinet.⁴⁶ It was from Egbu that the missionaries spread to other towns within Owerri Province including some parts of Okigwe District.

Christian missionaries first visited Mbano area early in 1910, but they were unable to establish a Church. A. O. Iwuagwu states that "at Anara, the gospel came to Umuokpukpara, now Ezihe as early as 1910 when Rev. Payne and Jeremiah Nkparu of Nnewi visited the town. The Church was not allowed to stay because the visit was not initiated by Chief Osunwa. For this reason quarrel ensued between Osunwa and Ekpemandu who brought the earlier Church".⁴⁷ A second attempt at establishing Christianity in Mbano through Anara also failed. Bishop Iwuagwu writes that, the African Church was brought from Kalabari to Anara in 1912 by Anara indigenes. But that Church was not allowed to survive because Chief Agbugba and his people (Chiefs) did not welcome it. The early converts were imprisoned by Agbugba because they were alleged not to have respected the traditions of the land. They were accused of breach of peace because they preached about a new God. But the warning from the British Resident at Calabar and the fear of losing the Church and his Warrant compelled Chief Agbugba to restore the Church.⁴⁸ It seemed that the warning by the British Resident at Calabar influenced the establishment of the C.M.S at Ezeoke and from where Christianity began its spread in the area.

The Arrival, Establishment and Spread of Christianity in Mbano

The formal establishment of Christianity in Mbano began with the story of an ex-slave woman by name Nwanmgborie Iwundu of Ezeoke. She returned from

⁴⁶Iwuagwu, *The Foundation of the Anglican Church*,... pp.9-10

⁴⁷Iwuagwu, *The Foundation of the Anglican Church*,... p.104

⁴⁸Iwuagwu, *The Foundation of the Anglican Church*,... p.103

Arochukwu in 1912, and lived with her sister Munonye, the wife of Chief Nwachukwu Nwadigo. She had been sold to Obinkita in Arochukwu; was liberated by the Church of Scottish Mission and was converted a Christian. Enchanted by the Christian message and promises of eternal life, peace and education and fame, she was inclined to bring the same “good news” to her own people back home at Ezeoke.⁴⁹ Nwanmgborie had converted her family members and sister Munonye, the wife of Chief Nwachukwu. Munonye had informed her husband that “his throne could be better boosted by his embracing the new religion called Christianity with its blessings and promises.”⁵⁰ Chief Nwachukwu showed keen interest. He agreed and arranged with his people to send his first son, Daniel Nwachukwu and some young men to Arochukwu to ask for a Church. He was encouraged by Ambrose, the District Officer at Okigwe. Bishop Iwuagwu stated that

After collecting €12 (twelve pounds), the young Daniel Nwachukwu and Nwanmgborie, led a delegation to Arochukwu, for this mission. There, they met a Presbyterian minister, Rev. Richardson, who re-directed them to Rev. A.C. Onyeabo at Egbu near Owerri with a letter. Daniel Nwachukwu and his group returned and planned to go to Egbu, but were duped by a man who claimed to be a church teacher. The man promised to lead them to Egbu, but after he received the money, he was not seen again.⁵¹

As a result of the burning desire of the Chief and his people, a fresh collection was made and a delegation was sent to Egbu. While at Egbu, Rev. A. C. Onyeabo directed them to Ozala C.M.S. headquarters in Onitsha for a teacher. The journey was made and on August 13, 1913, they returned with Joseph Chiejina as their first Church teacher.⁵² The Church was St. Paul’s Ezeoke (now the Cathedral Church Ezeoke and headquarters of Okigwe South Diocese).

St. Paul’s Ezeoke developed rapidly and became the mother church of converts for many Churches in Mbano, Etiti and Ekwereazu. From Ezeoke, the C.M.S. spread to Ikperere, Lowa, Onicha Uboma, Umuowa and Umunakanu in 1916;

⁴⁹I.D.E Anyadike, “The Advent of Christianity in Igbo Heartland” in church of Nigeria Silver Jubilee Commemorative Album 2004 Edition, Owerri Ecclesiastical Province, pp.13

⁵⁰Anyadike, p.87

⁵¹Iwuagwu, *The Foundation of the Anglican Church*,... p.87

⁵²Iwuagwu, p.87

Agbaja, 1916; Umuezeala Nsu 1917; Nzerem 1918; Umunachi-Onicha 1921; Umunumo 1924; Umueze II 1918; Umualumaku 1937, Umuopara-Owerre 1942, and Umuopara Nsu 1970.⁵³

However, the Ezeoke experience did encourage chiefs from other Mbano towns, to bring Christianity into their communities. The situation was such that the conversion of a chief in some cases ensured the chief would retain his warrant. Hence, chiefs began inviting the missionaries into their communities. For instance, in 1912, Chief Agbugba of Anara in Osu-ama clan applied for the C.M.S via Rev. A.C. Onyeabo of Egbu. It was granted with Emmanuel Chikwendu as the first church teacher. In 1915, with the visit of Rev. Payne to Oka Ugiri, a young *juju* priest – Mazi Onuegbu Onwuka, became converted to Christianity, and was renamed Samuel Onwuka. Rev. Payne, Spencer and other mission teachers had visited Oka in 1911.

In Oka, initial efforts made to bring Christianity was said to have failed because, the people opposed the missionaries. Mazi Azubuike, the community leader of Oka, was compelled to ask for a Church teacher. It was the second visit by Rev. Payne in 1915 to Oka, that the St. Stephen's Church was established with a school. The colonial government disarmed Oka as they did to Atta and other places. During the initial persecution of the early converts, the Church teacher's property was destroyed and some converts were imprisoned for taking the chief's subjects to Church. One of the converts named Edenji died in prison at Okigwe. For that reason, Chief Azubuike's warrant was suspended for three years. From Oka the C.M.S evangelization was extended to Umuoziri Inyishi, Obollo, Ugiri, Ogor, Umuneke, Ibeme and other surrounding places.

⁵³ Iwuagwu, p.87

The Churches established by the C.M.S are shown in table 6 below:

S/N	Villages	Name of church and year
	Oka	St. Stephen's 1915
	Obollo	St. Paul's (later Holy Trinity Church) 1916
	Umuneke	Emmanuel Anglican Church, 1916
	Ibeme	St. Mary's, 1926
	Umunkwo	St Stephen's, 1915
	Amaraku	St. Peter's, 1917
	Amuzari	St. John's, 1917
	Anara	St. Andrew's, 1915
	Ezihe	St. John's 1919
	Okwelle	St. Andrews', 1915
	Ezumoha	C.M.S., 1918
	Okohia-osu	St. Michael's, 1917
	Eziama	St. Michael's, 1919
	Umueze	St James, 1917
	Umuihim -Etit	St. Cyprian's, 1916/1920
	Umuawuchi	St. Paul's, 1916
	Umuduru	St John's, 1918
	Ihiteafoukwu	St, James', 1918
	Umukabia	St. Philip's, 1919

Table 1: Churches Established in the Mbano and its Neighbours

These churches were located within Mbano, Ekwereazu, Ihite Uboma Okwelle and Etiti. Within the Ikeduru axis, a number of Churches were established through Egbu. A similar scenario in terms of resistance and conflict situations played out. Christianity reached Amawo-Atta in Ikeduru in 1911. At the time

also, two Ikeduru chiefs namely Chief Nwigwe of Umuhu Atta and Chief Njoku Nwanshi of Akabo had been oppressing their people. As the news about happenings in neighbouring communities reached the Amawo youths (age-grade), they invited the C.M.S Church to Atta. The C.M.S was at the time described as "Egbe Ada" (or the Church that stops shooting war). Some persons from Amawo-Atta had visited Abazu where they met with the foreign missionary, Mrs. Hensley, sister of Archdeacon Dennis. Atta people were impressed by the preaching of the mission, the education which Abazu converts received at the time, and the peace the presence of the C.M.S brought to neighbouring Ogwa community. The Amawo elders therefore approached Chief Esiemeje of Abazu, who connected them with Chief Oparaeke of Abazu Mbieri. Oparaeke willingly accompanied Amawo elders to Egbe where they met with Rev. Brown. Following the request by Amawo people, Jacob Opara was posted to St. Mathews Amawo Atta, in 1911 as their first Church teacher. Christianity at Atta at its early stage faced some difficult times because Chief Nwigwe Mbachu, of Umuhu Atta made life miserable for the new converts. He opposed the Christian religion because of its attack on traditional religion. He punished early converts such as Mr. Azubuikwe, Mr. Nwoleke, Mr. Iwuchukwu, Mr. Abunachu and Mr. Ezete. Chief Nwigwe also subjected others to all sorts of hard tasks. Mr. Nwoleke and Iwuchukwu had died in the prison. In spite of persecutions, converts at Atta and its environs continued to practice their newly introduced Christian religion. From Amawo, the Church spread to Umuhu, Umuafa, Ikembara, Inyishi, Iho, Amaimo, Umuri, Umunkwo and other towns. However, with time Atta produced the first indigenous Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Owerri- His Lordship Bishop Nwankiti.⁵⁴

The following Churches were established in the area over the years; St. Mathew's Amawo-Atta, 1911; St. Paul's Umuhu-Atta, 1918; St. Barnabas Umudim, 1917; St. Jude's Umuafa Atta, 1918; Holy Trinity Iho Dimeze, 1916; St. John's, Owu-Amakohia, 1912 (the Church was brought by the trio of Afufunwa Nwibe, Ihejirika Nwagwu, and Asogu Ikemenogo, who on their way to the shrine of *Igwekala* in Umuneoha saw a C.M.S. sign board, "Egbe Ada"). Others were St. Andrew's Umuoti Inyishi 1914; St. Peter's Umuoziri 1916; St. James's Amaimo 1917; St. John's Umuri 1921; Emmanuel Church Amaimo 1932; St. Simon Ugirike 1916, (where the Bible was described by the people as "*ukwu nri ewu*" - bunch of

⁵⁴Iwuagwu, pp.59-60

goat feed); St. Stephen's Amaeke Inyishi 1917; St. Philip's Ikembara 1917; St. Andrew's Uzoagba 1914, and St. Andrew's Akabo 1916.⁵⁵

The fast spread of Churches in Mbanjo and its neighbours, especially between 1914 and 1919, during the World War 1 years, was, as Nwadike contends, attributed to an overzealous court clerk, Stephen Oranye. He worked with Mr. C.A.B. Cochrane, the District Officer in Okigwe Division. Oranye arbitrarily announced to the Chiefs of Okigwe that any of them who failed to establish a Church in his area of jurisdiction ran the risk of losing his warrant. This triggered an unprecedented enthusiasm as the chiefs went all out and brought Christianity into all communities within Mbanjo territories, Ikeduru, Etiti and Ekwereazu.⁵⁶

These early Churches were mainly built with red mud and thatch. Some chiefs' houses were used as Churches until their community was able to erect one. For instance, in Ugiri clan of Mbanjo, in 1917, the Roman Catholic Mission (R.C.M) on its arrival was the first to establish in Umuebie Quarter of Ugiri town within the compound of Chief Duruokwara. The Church was attended by all and sundry who professed the Roman Catholic doctrine within and around Ugiri clan.⁵⁷

Growth of Christianity and Western Education in Mbanjo Area

The establishment of Christianity, as noted earlier, was not without resistance. Resistance in Mbanjo came mainly in respect to the provision of land for the citing of Church buildings. It also took the form of individual communities resisting attending Churches in the houses of chiefs. The R.C.M. at Umuopara Ugiri was one such example. Bones Ojiah writes that:

Early in 1926, the young Catholics of Umuopara Ugiri described as the "The Boys" felt that the distance they were covering to attend Church services, 'mass', and other committed activities was not conducive to their health, especially, during rainy season. Of course this situation coupled with non-availability of enough space to accommodate them in the church hall triggered off crisis between "The Boys" and Chief Duruokwara. Eventually, the church building was demolished and

⁵⁵ Iwuagwu, pp.59

⁵⁶ Anyadike in "The Advent of Christianity in Igbo Heartland...", p.13.

⁵⁷ C.O. Bones, Ojiah, *Early History of Ugiri Clan...*, p.59.

later, another new church building was set up at Nkwo Mbaa.⁵⁸

The coming of the Church in some communities created conflict situations which impacted on inter-group relations. There was a clash between the new religion and traditional religion, custom and cultural festivals, values and societal norms. The years 1920-1960 witnessed the establishment of mainly the C.M.S. and R.C.M and other denominations in almost all communities in Mbaano and those of the neighbouring communities. Each community had its own Church, but was grouped under different parishes and dioceses. The impact of Christianity on inter-group relations was largely felt through various Church activities such as youth programmes, conferences, and anniversary celebrations, among many others. Through these activities, people from different communities, who attended such programmes, came into contact. It was indeed, an avenue for interaction between people. Such interactions helped build relations among individuals and communities over time. It is also instructive, that, the missionaries, alongside the Churches, introduced Western education. One of the most revolutionary influences operative in Nigeria since the beginning of the European intrusion has been Western education.⁵⁹

From the very beginning, Western education was a virtual monopoly of the Christian missions. A.V. Murray, observes that,

To all intents and purposes, the school is the church. Right away in the bush or in the forest, the two are one, and the village teacher is also the village evangelist. An appreciation of this fact is cardinal in all considerations of African education.⁶⁰

Ozigbo correctly stated that Europe or the Christian missions did not bring the concept and practice of education to Igboland. The Igbo had their traditional

⁵⁸ Ojiah. p.59

⁵⁹The concept "Western Education" (as distinguished from Traditional African Education) is employed herein to refer to formal and systematic instruction in subjects characteristics of the curricula used in western countries (reading, writing and arithmetic as core subjects, to which are added courses in the Humanities, Arts and Science). This system of instruction was designed to standardize the training of young people not only in the values of modern industrialized and necessary skills for meaningful participation in that society.

⁶⁰ A. Victor Murray, *The School in the Bush*, London: Penguin Books, 1929, p.65

system of education. What the Europeans brought was the Western type of education.⁶¹

He further explained that, long before 1858 in Igboland, traditional system of education was largely informal, in that it had neither fixed venues (schools) for its practice nor professional teachers or graded durations (classes 1,2,3,etc; years 1,2,3 or intervals of rest/ holiday). It was also non-literate in that, it did not utilize reading of books or writing. It transmitted knowledge and skills orally through parents and adults, relations and acquaintances to the young, adolescents and adults. The teaching profession in Igboland, he stated, was an adjunct of school education which had spread from Onitsha to other Igbo areas through the agencies of the CMS and the RCM especially. Schools spread to Igbo areas like Awka, Udi, Nsukka, Abakaliki, Owerri, Orlu, Aba and Okigwe, etc⁶². Education was under the direct control of missionaries. As late as 1942 they controlled 99 percent of the schools and more than 97 percent of the students in Nigeria were enrolled in mission schools. By 1945, there were comparatively few literate Nigerians who had not received all or part of their education in mission schools.⁶³

The first school built in Mbano was St. Paul's Mission Schools, Osu (later Osu Central School), built by the C.M.S about 1914/15. Pupils attended the school from different communities in Mbano, such as Obollo, Ogbor, Amaraku, Mbeke, Umunkwo, Oka, Amuzari and Okwelle in Onuimo etc. Many people trekked to St. Paul's Osu due to the perceived dividends of being educated as in colonial Nigeria. The expected dividends encouraged other communities to establish schools. The communities contributed both in human and material resources for the purpose. By 1930, for instance, the six towns in Ugiri clan -Ugirinna, Obollo, Umuneke, Ogbor, Oka, and Ibeme- had an elementary school each under the management of the Nsu parish priest, Rev. Father Howell.⁶⁴ The schools were built by the communities. In 1933 and 1942, Rev Fr. Howell who managed the six R.C.M. schools transferred the Central School at Ibeme to what was considered a more central place, that is, at Umuebie Ugiri (a village in Ugiri town) where they got a communal virgin land. The land was regarded as *ajo ohia*, evil forest. The Catholic Christians of Ugiri cleared the area for the transfer of the Central school

⁶¹ R.I. Ozigbo, *A History of Igboland*..., p.119

⁶² Ozigbo, *A History of Igboland*, ... pp. 119-120

⁶³ For details see, *Ten Year Educational Plan*, Nigerian Session Paper No. 6./1944, p.13

⁶⁴ Ojiah, *Early History of Ugiri Clan*... p.119

at Ibeme. The school was established at its present location as St. Michael's Central School Ugiri at Umuebie.

The relocation of the school to Umuebie was strongly opposed by Ibeme people. However, the efforts to retain the school at its earlier site proved abortive. In a swift reaction to the re-location, Ibeme people approached one Mr. Port-Johnson at Port-Harcourt, who promised to establish a branch of his Enitonia School at Ibeme. Consequently, on February 28, 1944, it had the traditional ruler of Ibeme, Chief/Eze Christopher Ohiaeriaku Okorie, Isiala¹¹ of Ibeme as its manager; Chief Stephen Ihekaire, as its proprietor and Mr. Jonah Ngigia, a native of Tombia in River State, as its first headmaster. In 1947, the government took over the administration of the school. In 1949, the school produced its pioneer standard six certificate holders who included some people from Ibeme who later became prominent. These were His Lordship, Rev. Dr. Gregory Ochiagha, former Bishop of Orlu Catholic Diocese, Justice J. Ihekaire, former Chief Judge of Imo State and Mr. Louis Nwanguma, to mention these few.⁶⁵

By 1932, the C.S.M. had built the Central School, Obollo and the R.C.M built St. Theresa's School (later Community Primary School, Obollo) in 1935. The District Officers conducted regular inspection to ensure the hygienic condition of the schools. In 1948, the year the eclipse of the sun occurred, tragedy struck at Central School Obollo. According to C.C. Opara, who was a pupil and an eye witness, "it was announced that government inspectors were coming to inspect the school facilities. The pupils were asked to dig a pit toilet for the school. In the process, the toilet caved in and a number of pupils were buried alive. However, some people were rescued including Mr. Joseph Onyekebi."⁶⁶ Mr. Onyekebi who confirmed the incident, died a few months after the writers field work in 2011.

Many other primary schools were established by the missionaries within Mbano and its neighbours. Some of these schools include Central School Umueze 11, built by the C.M.S. (popularly called 'School Nwobiji'). Nwobiji was the Chief who attracted St. Stephen's Church at Duruegwele community) in 1920; St. Andrew's Mission School, Okwelle in 1920 built by the C.S.M. and St. Charles in 1921, built by the R.C.M., under Rev. Fr. Folly. In 1920, Central School Eziam

⁶⁵ Ojiah, p.119

⁶⁶ C.C. Opera interview cited in C.N. Mbalisi, "Change and Continuity in Isiala Mbano...p.79

was built, and later in 1922, Isiala Primary School Oboh, was built by the R.C.M. There was also the Group School Eziamma built in 1944.⁶⁷

It is instructive that most of these primary schools occupied the same compound with the Churches. Some of the schools developed with time and came to their peak in the 1940s and 1950s.

However, by 1960, there were many elementary schools located in Mbanjo communities. Most communities had one, while others had two or more. There was no secondary school in Mbanjo before 1960. But from the 1960s to 1990, almost all communities in the area had a secondary school. The first secondary school in Mbanjo was the St. Thomas Aquinas Model Secondary School located in Anara. The school was built in 1962.⁶⁸

Impact of Christianity and Western Education in Mbanjo

The introduction of Christianity and Western education brought remarkable changes in the socio-political, economic and cultural relations.

Ozigbo rightly pointed out

Since man is mortal, every society must perpetuate itself physically by procreation and socially by process of education. Through education, the customs, values, beliefs, skills and so on, are passed on from generation to generation. Without this, the society would disintegrate. The new generation must be taught the way of thinking and behaving which preserved the society in the past and are believed to keep it in the future. The function of education is to mould individuals to the social norm. ⁶⁹

This situation applies to the area of this study. But it was not everyone who desired to be educated had the privilege. The few who did had mainly elementary and secondary education. The reason was that the colonial administration had no interest in tertiary education. Those who acquired

⁶⁷The details see, Bones Ojiah, *Early History of Ugiri Clan...*, pp.101-125., A.O Iwuagwu, *The Foundation of Anglican Church in Imo State, Nigeria, 1905-2000*, pp.156-166.

⁶⁸Chief Innocent Ikemenogo, c. 68 years, retired teacher, interviewed at Umulolo Oboh Osu-ama, 24/08/2010.

⁶⁹ Ozigbo, *A History of Igboland*, ... p.119

secondary education went to Owerri, Umuahia or Ife Grammar School. Among such people were people like Chief John Onyenze of Obollo, Samuel Mbalisi, Chief Egbuziem, Peter Ekezie, and Senator B.C. Agunanne. Ozigbo observed that, the Christian missionaries, who were the main providers of Western education in Igboland, were generally not interested in tertiary education. It was not until the 1960s that the first tertiary institution was opened in Igboland, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.⁷⁰ Mbano and its neighbours like most other Igbo rural communities began to have secondary schools in the post-colonial era.

Infrastructure Development: Health and Pipe-Borne Water

Provision of health facilities and pipe-borne water were part of colonial infrastructure. According to Ozigbo, “a veritable revolution occurred in medicare services in 20th century Igboland. Its history, in fact, dates back to the 1890s. It was the Christian missionaries who pioneered the introduction of Western medical practice in Igboland.⁷¹ Before the arrival of British administrators in Mbano in 1906, the people depended on herbs, native doctors (*dibia naborogwu*) and diviners (*dibia afa*) for their health related concerns. Women gave birth in their homes, under the supervision of older and experienced women. The medical needs of the people were settled through the use of herbs gathered from the bush and forest. Different types of roots were used to cure diseases and other sicknesses. It is a truism that the Christian missionaries brought Western medical practice into Igboland. However, it took quite a significant long period of time, before it spread to all parts of Igboland and indeed Mbano area. Ozigbo writes that the missionaries built health facilities in some cities around Igboland. For instance, the Roman Catholic Mission built a dispensary at Onitsha in 1886 and began attending to sick people in 1890: the Mary Slessor Hospital was built at Itu in 1906, by the Presbyterian Church. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital was built at Umuahia by the Methodist and Anglican Churches,⁷² in the 1950s.

Before 1906, there were neither hospitals nor dispensaries in the area. Herbert Oguine noted that the thing we call health centers and hospitals today were not known here. It was when the ‘white man’ came, in fact, when churches were built in the 1920s, that maternity homes were cited in some places. The first was at Umuduru where the ‘white man’ lived. It was that early maternity that later became Mbano Joint Hospital in the 1960s. Communities in Mbano with the help

⁷⁰ Ozigbo, *A History of Igboland*, ... p.123

⁷¹ Ozigbo, *A History of Igboland*, ... p.128

⁷² Ozigbo, pp.128-129

of the colonial administrators and missionaries⁷³ jointly built the hospital. People who had one minor health need or the other had a missionary maternity within Mbandia to attend. Many with severe health problems were referred to Queen Elizabeth Hospital at Umuahia. The C.M.S was largely instrumental in establishing maternity homes in Mbandia communities from the 1920s. These maternities were supervised by British doctors and trained nurses from Iyi-Enu, Ogidii where the Medical Mission, Onitsha was relocated in 1907. Bishop Iwuagwu noted that, such doctors extended their services to maternities in Owerri Province. For instance, in 1942, Dr. Rosevera worked at Egbu from where he also inspected the maternities in parts of Owerri District. In the 1950s, Dr. Dorothy Dykes also worked faithfully at Iyi-Enu. The nursing school at that mission hospital has also played a major role in the training of nurses and other para-medical staff sent to the maternities. It was only in the 1950s and 1960s that other hospitals were set up to support the health care delivery provided by Iyi-Enu and the Queen Elizabeth Hospitals.⁷⁴

The C.M.S established some maternity homes in some Mbandia communities and those of its neighbours with limited number of beds. These include Atta Maternity (Atta Parish) with 8 beds; Amainyi Maternity (Etiti Parish) with 8 beds; Ekwe maternity with 4 beds⁷⁵ *et cetera*. A few of other maternity homes were said to have been closed down because of lack of patronage, scarcity of patients and unhealthy rivalry. Besides, each of the maternity homes got trained midwives who helped the mothers from neighbourhood in child delivery and baby care. From the beginning, there had always been Medical Officers or supervising midwives that supervised the health centres. They inspected the cleanliness of maternities, the performance of the midwives, and of the maternity, and made their reports to the missions.

The establishment of these maternity homes marked a paradigm shift from the nature of health care in the area. It was yet another addition to colonial infrastructure. Its impact on inter-group relations was quite enormous. For instance, people from Ogbor, Obollo, Amaraku, Isu, and Anara etc went to Umuelemai to receive medical attention. Sometimes people from Ogbor trekked to Obollo to board cars to Umuelemai. As people went to the health centres, they met and interacted with others from different communities. The meeting of the

⁷³ Herbert Oguine Interview cited.

⁷⁴ A.O Iwuagwu, *The Foundations of Anglican Church...*, p. 169

⁷⁵ Iwuagwu, p.170

people contributed in building new friendly relations between peoples. In fact, the movements of people to and from the health centres constituted forms of interactions among the people. The maternities attended to the converts, who were in need of health challenges. Mbanda was not as lucky as some Igbo areas that enjoyed large presence of colonial infrastructure in terms of secondary schools and hospitals. For instance, the only maternity home at Obollo Ugiri served Ugiri, parts of Mbama, Osu and Ehime clans in 1942. According to Bones Ojiah,

The idea of establishing the Maternity Home at Obollo in the year 1942 was propounded by Ugiri, Osu, Ehime and Mbama chiefs, councilors and the tax payers themselves after holding several meetings. The District Officer in-charge of Okigwe Division at the time was Mr. D.A.F. Shute who after consulting the appropriate medical authorities and got the establishment approved.⁷⁶

Following the completion of the maternity block, it was agreed among all the groups of towns and parties concerned (the Native Authority) that the R.C.M Emekuku be invited to take over the management since they had the man power and other resources to sustain the Maternity Home in the face of the World War II. Eventually, the Catholic Mission Authorities Emekuku took up the supervision till the end of the war. Controversy over the management of the Maternity Home arose between Ugiri Progressive Union (U.P.U) and the administrative set up of the maternity. It was the religious politics over the control of the Maternity Home between the R.C.M. on the one hand and the C.M.S on the other that caused the relocation of the Maternity Home to Umuelemai in 1949 under Mr. L.T. Chubb, the Ag. Resident.⁷⁷ More health centres and hospitals were built in the post-colonial era in the area by government and individuals.

Another colonial infrastructure introduced into Mbanda was pipe borne water, though not widespread until the post-colonial era. E.E. Obilor observed that,

⁷⁶ Bones Ojiah, *Early History of Ugiri Clan...*, pp. 135-137

⁷⁷ Ojiah, pp. 137-139

Pipe-borne water in the length and breadth of Mbanjo during the colonial era was a rarity. It was the 'Nwa DC' (the name given to the colonial officers in many Igbo communities) that established the first type of pipe-borne water at Umuduru in the late 1940s. The establishment was for the colonial officers and his administrators.⁷⁸

The main source of water supply to the local people remained the streams and springs found in many Mbanjo communities. Examples of such springs are Oramiriokwa in Ugiri, Agbaja and Umuelemai in the 1920s. There are many streams in almost all the communities in Mbanjo and its neighbours. These streams served the water needs of the people.

However, Bones Ojiah noted that, the colonial officer erected a water reservoir at Umuelemai. Pipes were installed to carry the water into the DO's residence. The youths provided the labour.⁷⁹ In fact, the coming of Christianity and Western education contributed to the gradual development and modernization of Mbanjo area.

Conclusion

It is a fact of history that Christianity and western education are two colonial institutions of note that brought significant changes in Nigeria, Igboland and indeed Mbanjo society. The arrival of both institutions challenged the foundation of African culture and life style. To say the least, Christianity and Western education had both negative and positive consequences on the society and its people. For one, they introduced western infrastructure such as church buildings, schools, Hospital/maternity homes built and owned by the Church. There are also such things as pipe borne water, motorable transportation and European styled houses and dress code. There was the introduction of European banking system and salaried white collar jobs, European goods and service and Christian organisations into Mbanjo area. These institutions largely influenced the attitude of the people towards their culture and tradition. On the second hand, Christianity and Western education relegated Igbo traditional belief system to the background. This provided the nexus for the total disregard for Igbo culture, tradition, norm and value systems. In fact the negative influences witnessed in aspects of Igbo life are attributed to activities of these two

⁷⁸ E. E. Obilor interview cited

⁷⁹ Ojiah, p. 78

institutions. Nonetheless, Christianity and Western education contributed to the contours and dynamics of modernisation and infrastructural development in Mbano society and Igboland at large with its attendant distortions in the culture of the people.