

## THE PRESENCE AND IMPACT OF CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY IN NGWO CLAN, ENUGU IN EASTERN NIGERIA 1917-1930

Ani, Uchenna S. Ph.D., MHSN

Department of History and Strategic Studies,  
Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo, Nigeria

[uchennaani05@yahoo.com](mailto:uchennaani05@yahoo.com)

&

Ezeonwuka Innocent-Franklyn O. Ph.D., MHSN

Department of History, International Studies & Diplomacy,

Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, Nigeria

egbuacho@gmail.com, +2348033096134

### Abstract

*The penetration of Christian Missionary activities into the hinterland Igbo societies where Ngwo belong started after the colonial conquest of the societies and full establishment of colonial administration. In Ngwo for instance, missionary activities was triggered by economic and political activities that followed the discovery and exploitation of coal in their farmlands. Their mission was not only to preach the message of Jesus Christ and enforce repentance and conversion of the people from African Traditional Religion to Christianity; but also to transmit the white mans' knowledge of reading, writing and numeracy to the people. It is the opinion of this paper that the people that masterminded the establishment of Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Ngwo Clan are not in themselves Christians; and they did not covert to Christianity when it has taken root in the clan. That the interest of majority of the people was not in the acceptance of the message of Jesus Christ and repentance from traditional practices but in learning the white man's knowledge through the schools which will give them and their children opportunity in taking advantage of economic and political realities of colonial activities in Enugu Township. In the period under review, most adherents to Christianity had the liberty to indulge in a syncretic mix of Christianity and traditional customs of the land, this invariably strengthened African Traditional Religion in Ngwo Clan. This work drew heavily from primary sources which are comprised of oral tradition collated through random sampling mode, granted by reliable informants, intelligence report and other materials collated from National Archives, Enugu. Secondary sources include books, Journal articles and other materials which provided useful information on the subject matter. Available facts were analysed historically using qualitative research methodology.*

**Key Words:** *Missionary Activities, Traditional Religion, Syncretism, Colonialism*

## **Introduction**

The church missionary society was introduced in Ngwo clan on the 17<sup>th</sup> January, 1917 by Rev. Isaac Uzowulu Ejindu; a missionary priest born in 1882 to the families of Mr. and Mrs. Aje Ejindu of Ugamuma in Obosi in present Anambra State.<sup>1</sup> His arrival in Ngwo marked therefore, the first contact Ngwo people had with Christianity.<sup>2</sup> In the period, Colonial activities were strongly taking shape in Abgaja Area of Old Udi Division where Ngwo belong. The relevance of Udi Division had become very high owing to the discovery and eventual exploitation of coal in Enugu-Ngwo.<sup>3</sup> The massive exploitation of Coal in Enugu-Ngwo was occasioned by the First World War which distorted not only mining but other economic activities in Europe.

As Enugu Ngwo coal was certified suitable enough to sustain the energy purposes of Nigeria and other British West African colonies, aggressive mining strategy was put in place by the colonialists which involved bringing in labourers from western Igboland, western Nigeria and other African groups,<sup>4</sup> who had earlier come in contact with Euro-Christianity and westerns education. The influx of these diverse groups into Enugu- Ngwo gradually shifted Ngwo society, which over the years had adhered to Africa Traditional Religion from homogeneity to heterogeneity. There was need therefore, for the establishment of Euro- Christianity which had become the religion of, not only the colonial officers in Enugu- Ngwo but also of the African groups who had come in contact with colonial activities, earlier than the hinterland Igbo where Ngwo society belong.

The Church Missionary Society was the first to be established in Ngwo clan and the impact was felt in the society in diverse ways. This paper will first of all draw our attention to the origin of Ngwo and the religions and cultural practices prevalent in the society before the advent of Christianity. It will be followed by the establishment and spread of CMS in Ngwo clan; a survey of the impact will be made, then comes the conclusion. 1917, the year CMS outpost was planted in Ngwo was chosen as the commencement point of this paper, it will be terminated in 1930 the year the pioneer missionaries were posted out of Ngwo in continuation of their missionary work.

## **Traditions of Origin**

It is difficult to reconstruct the early history of a pre-literate people, especially the Igbo of South Eastern Nigeria. This is because the Igbo did not evolve

*(A Publication of Tansian University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies)*

large empires and Kingdoms to the magnitude of Kanem-Borno, Oyo, Benin etc. They remained decentralised, therefore making the documentation of its history difficult. Lack of conventional records of early Igbo history has raised scepticism about the possibility of the study of Igbo history.<sup>5</sup> Some writers have written of the Igbo as if they did not exist before the 16<sup>th</sup> century, at which time, it would appear they suddenly came into existence.<sup>6</sup> Some scholars of Igbo history too have also lumped the history of Igbo societies together; the assumption was that what happens at a particular area should be happening at some other areas. This was what informed Anyanwu's idea of studying the Igbo history at the level of micro-societies.<sup>7</sup> This study on Ngwo, a micro-society in the Old Udi Division of present Enugu State follows this perception.

Agbodike noted that in pre-literate African societies, the making and transmission of tradition was not the work of the historian as in the modern times.<sup>8</sup> In the largely structured states especially those with centralised monarchical administration such as Dahomey, Kanem-Borno, Oyo empires, etc, where political and legal implications of tradition were of everyday importance; the transmission of oral tradition was easier as it was controlled and as well regulated by chroniclers, selected priests and elders.<sup>9</sup> But in highly segmented societies like the Igbo generally and Ngwo in particular, where roles were not sharply differentiated and where activities varied from one town to the other, oral tradition especially as regards the origin is difficult to reconstruct.

Foreigners have made incursions into the origin of Ngwo, when Mr. O'Conor, the then resident of the Old Onitsha Province of which Ngwo was part of, described Ngwo as decentralised villages scattered on the hill without a definite common ancestor.<sup>10</sup> But as Afigbo had put it, no matter what contributions outsiders might make, recent events teach that Igbo history has to be written by the Igbo themselves.<sup>11</sup> That is to say that nobody knows a people better than they know themselves. No legend can therefore explain better the origin of Ngwo people except an indigenous legend. A certain Ngwo legend has attributed the origin of Ngwo to the Ehum.<sup>12</sup> The Ehum were said to be people that came from a distant area as far as Uburu and Igalaland. The protagonists of this legend believed that the ten towns of Ngwo did not originally come from one man; that the people who formed Ngwo society were numerous in number when they came.<sup>13</sup> It is also stated that the people were also of equal status without a definite leader. This explains why Ngwo did not have a central administrative structure up to the early 1980s.<sup>14</sup>

The legend also explains why the uniqueness of Ngwo is very clear among her neighbours. Due to the fact that they, (the Ehum), came from as far as Igala and Uburu which did not have any cultural resemblance with other towns or clans that border it on all sides, they (Ngwo) could not identify with any of her neighbors, therefore, they stood alone. The exponents, of this legend also believed that the Ehum were not culture conscious,<sup>15</sup> that was why they embraced almost all aspects of culture they encountered in the area. Ngwo therefore adheres both to *odo* and *maa* cults unlike her neighbours. The legend of origin that is widely accepted by Ngwo people is the Ngwo-ako legend. This legend explains that Ngwo originated from a farmer and hunter known as Ngwo-ako,<sup>16</sup> who came from an unknown place to settle at Ishi-Okpoto. The legend has it that Ngwo-ako married two wives, the first from his northern neighbour Ojebogene out of whom he had three sons: Ameke, Amankwo and Uboji; while he married his second wife from his eastern neighbour Nkanu out of whom he had seven sons: Enugu, Etit, Amachalla, Amebo, Ukaka, Okwojo and Umase. It is the ten sons of Ngwo-ako that fathered the ten towns of Ngwo.<sup>17</sup>

But tracing the origin of different communities and kindreds that made up Ngwo contradicts the Ngwo-ako legend to a large extent. For instance the Ngwo-ako legend traces Enugu-Ngwo to be the first son of the second wife of Ngwo-ako and Umuode as the eldest son (village) of Enugu. But that same Umuode is said to have migrated from Ojebogene, hence the popular saying. *Umuode Ojebogene, ndi o ji ji egbuogene, kaobu n'osisi adighin'ofia*. When rendered in English it is: Umuode Ojedogene the people that beat the gungs with yam tubers as if there were no sticks in the bush. Thus alluded to their dexterity in yam cultivation. The argument is that, if Umuode, the first son of Enugu migrated from Ojebogene, it means that the other kindreds and hamlets that made up the town might have migrated from different places.<sup>18</sup> In Ameke too, the three hamlets that made up the town are said to have migrated from different places, for instance Umuezeani migrated from Ukana, Ifueke migrated from Egede and Ibute migrated from Ebe.<sup>19</sup> But in the opinion of many elders in Ngwo, the legend of Ngwo-ako should be adhered to because that is the only legend that relatively weilds the people together.

Further inquiries were made as to when Ngwo-ako came to limelight in the history of Ngwo. It was traced to the colonial period, at the time when Chief Onyeama of Eke was the most influential warrant chief in the whole of Agbaja, Ngwo, Nkanu and part of Nsukka areas. At the period the native court that administered the affairs of Agbaja and Ngwo was situated at Eke; Ngwo people in protest on Chief Onyeama's overriding influence at the court,

argued that Ngwo people would no longer sit in the court at Eke and that the jurisdiction of the court would no longer cover Ngwo that Ngwo was not Agbaja, but Ngwo-ako, and should therefore have its own separate native court.<sup>20</sup> They buttressed their argument by emphasizing that Ngwo adheres to the *Odo* and *Maa* cult unlike the Agbaja people. This prompted Mr. Peking the then resident officer of Udi Division to intensify the study of all the clans in Agbaja area which at the period was already in progress. In the end, it was understood that Ngwo was entirely different from the other clans almost in all areas of life. A native court was therefore approved for Ngwo people which was opened at Isi Okpoto.<sup>21</sup>

If Ngwo-ako out of which the legend of Ngwo-ako was formed, came into limelight of Ngwo history during the colonial period, one can safely say that it is not strong enough to sustain the history of the origin of Ngwo. To Ikenga John Agu Agbo and many other elders of Ngwo, the legend is as old as Ngwo but not to the knowledge of many especially non Ngwo indigenes until the colonial period when events as noted earlier brought it to limelight. But just like the Bayajida legend in Hausaland, which, saddled with many shortcomings, scaled through as the generally accepted legend of the origin of Hausa people, the Ngwo-ako legend should, inspite of its shortcomings be accepted as it serves as the only unifying factor for all the towns in Ngwo.<sup>22</sup>

### **Religious and Cultural Practices in Ngwo before the advent of Christianity**

Prior to the coming of Christianity, Ngwo people were adherents of African Traditional Religion; this includes veneration of the land deity.<sup>23</sup> Afigbo noted that with the coming of agriculture, the Igbo became dependent on the land out of which food is produced for sustainability, they had to evolve a whole new system of rules, laws and rituals to control land use.<sup>24</sup> Because the land feeds her children, it came to be conceived as a woman, a mother. And because of the way it transformed crops when sown, god-like powers were attributed to it leading to its deification.<sup>25</sup> In Ngwo the land goddesses reside in the village squares of all the ten towns that make up Ngwo clan. Their shrines are characterized by very tall trees and an altar of worship concealed in a small shelter with red and white cloth. That is where the priest of the land performs ritual consecrations and sacrifices.<sup>26</sup>

Afigbo also noted that the deification of *Ala* in turn required working out a system of relationship between it, the ancestors and other gods recognized by the community.<sup>27</sup> This condition is synonymous with Ngwo of the period. Everybody is connected to the land goddess of their individual villages in several ways. For instance, the umbilical cord of every child as soon as it is

detached from the navel is deposited at the shrine of the land goddess of their particular village.<sup>28</sup> This practice signifies a strong bonding between the people and the land goddess of their respective villages. Also during the feasts of the *Aju* festival, series of consecration and sacrifices which requires the sprinkling of the blood of animals are performed yearly to strengthen the bonding among the people and as well, their accountability to the land goddess.<sup>29</sup> For instance during *Igo-Okpa* (leg consecration by men who participates in farming for the season) all the men assemble at the shrine of the land goddess at the village square with each extended family, according to their capacity, presents an offering of either goat, ram, or cow to the goddess. The priest of the land performs the ordinances which include slaughtering of the animals to the shrine, with the people seated on the ground; the blood of the animals is smeared on their legs one after the other with chants and incantations by the priest. The people will also be dedicated afresh to the goddess for protection and guidance.<sup>30</sup>

Ancestor worship had also permeated the fabrics of Ngwo society in the period under review. As P.A. Tablot posited,

Perhaps nowhere in the world is the influence of the dead stronger than in West Africa, nowhere is the dividing life between the dead and the living less definite. No one can hope to appreciate the feelings and thought of the black man who does not realise that to him, the dead are not dead but living.<sup>31</sup>

To Ngwo people, their ancestors are ever alive influencing the society as their guardians of morality. The ancestor is the rallying point for the family, extended family, kindred and even the community. The basis of the *Chi* (personal family god) in Ngwo cosmology is purely to worship and venerate the ancestor. They believe that the ancestors were the ones mediating and interceding for them before the *Chiukwu* (supreme god). In other words, their dead do not actually die; rather they depart to live again.<sup>32</sup>

Every morning prayers are offered through the ancestors to the supreme god, *Chiukwu* for blessings and protection of every member of the family. But once in every year during the first *Aju* period, *Igo-Nna* the feast of commemoration of the ancestors is performed.<sup>33</sup> It is a feast of reunion where every member of individual families returns to their root, even the ones married outside the town return with their children. Sacrifices and prayers are offered through the family shrine on behalf of every member of the family. Vengeance is also requested for any offence against the family members.<sup>34</sup> C.A Obi posited that the Igbo of Onitsha at the period of the early missionaries believe that every

*(A Publication of Tansian University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies)*

material thing has a spirit that animates it. For the men, it is *Mkpulu-Obi* (seed of the essence or of the principle of man) which gives him life and which lives on after death.<sup>35</sup> The spirit of the grandfather could be transmitted to a child in the process of *Ino-uwa* the belief in re-incarnation or *Igba-nje-uwa*, commuting between the material world and the world of the spirits.<sup>36</sup>

In Ngwo of the period, there is prevalence of male to male, female to female and male to female re-incarnations. Re-incarnations are always traced when a child is affected with strange ailment or condition that defies several attempts on medication. A *dibia* (diviner) is consulted to search the spirit of the gods and trace the incarnator.<sup>37</sup> The gods will in turn make their demands known through the diviner to the family. Sacrifices (*Igba-aja*) are made by the family in accordance to the demands of the spirit and offered at required location where it will be accessible by the spirit of the incarnator. When that is done, the person gains total freedom.<sup>38</sup> The dead in Ngwo especially the aged are not buried outside the family compound. This is because the spirit of the dead lives among the people and intercedes for them in the presence of the *chiukwu*.<sup>39</sup> After the burial of such people, a cockerel is strangled at the head position of their coffin, the head of the fowl and its feathers will be buried alongside the dead. That will enable the spirit of the dead to return and dwell among his people for good.<sup>40</sup>

Other aspects of the peoples culture include veneration of other gods which had relationship with the ancestors of the people for instance *Ugwuenechi*, *Ikpa*, *Amuma*, *Nome*, *Ezata*, *Ekwulu*, *Ugwuakulu* etc.<sup>41</sup> All these deities are venerated alongside the land goddess resident at the village squares of all the villages that make up Ngwo clan. These deities also took vengeance against individuals and families in the event of commission of abomination.<sup>42</sup> At death, such people (who committed abomination) are not buried but deposited in the evil forest such as *Be Okwobun'agu* and *Be enyaka nti*.<sup>43</sup> Their will be multiple calamities and deaths in such families which only stops when a *dibia* is consulted to search the mind of the spirits concerning the requirements necessary for the performance of ritual cleansing of the abomination. As noted by Nwaezeigwe, the sacrifice of abrogation of any law or cleansing of abomination has to be performed by the priest of the ground who offers sacrifice when any of such laws are violated.<sup>44</sup> In Ngwo, the priest of those deities offer sacrifice of appeasement at the shrine of the particular deity offended before the final ordinance is performed to the land goddess at the village square. The cleansing takes the blood of animals and sometimes humans, depending on the enormity of the abomination.<sup>45</sup>

Other traditional practices include *Odo* and *Maa* traditional institutions. Though they were borrowed from other clans in the environs and even far away from Ngwo, it became part and parcel of Ngwo traditional practice. It is used as an agent of social control, implementation of policies and avenue of measuring social standing. For instance before an adult male becomes a bonafide member of the extended family, he must be an initiate of both the *Odo* and *Maa* traditional institutions; therefore, abiding by the tenets of the institutions fosters social control.<sup>46</sup> Most parents took it as their statutory obligation to initiate their children early, in most cases when they are still teenagers. Therefore, before the coming of the CMS missionaries, almost all the men in Ngwo are initiates of the *Odo* and *Maa* traditional institutions.

### **The Coming of CMS in Ngwo Clan**

The initial attempt at the establishment of Christianity in the Agbaja area of Old Udi Division was in 1913 when Chief Onyeama (the paramount ruler of Eke and the speaker/head of all the warrant chiefs in Agbaja area where Ngwo belong requested Mr. N.C Duncan, the British colonial officer at Udi to help him transmit the white man's knowledge and wisdom to his people by way of establishing a church and a school at Eke where the indigenous people would be instructed in English Language.<sup>47</sup> Chief Onyeama had travelled with Mr. Duncan to London for the Empire Day celebration on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 1912. He was fascinated at the level of development he saw and decided to replicate same in his home town.<sup>36</sup> In that regard, Mr. Duncan, (himself an adherent of CMS) invited Rev. G.T Basden who was in the period, the education secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Onitsha Province,<sup>49</sup> for inspection and establishment of a school. Rev. Basden posted Rev. Daws after the inspection to open a CMS church and school at Eke. After the establishment of the school, Rev. Daws decided to instruct the natives in the Igbo language instead of the English language and every effort made to change the did not work.<sup>50</sup> Owing to this, Chief Onyeama did not only stop Rev. Daws and the operations of CMS but proscribed its establishment in the whole of Agbaja Area. That same year, (1913), he (Chief Onyeama) invited Rev. Father Joseph Shanahan of the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) who established RCM church and that is, St. Paul's Catholic Church and School at Eke. That was why the CMS did not have a strong presence, especially in the Northern Agbaja area up to Affa and Akpakwume/Nze.

In 1917 conscious effort was made both by Mr. Duncan and Rev. G.T Basden to see if CMS can be re-established in Agbaja Area, this time at Enugu-Ngwo. As earlier noted, coal mining operations which started in 1914 and the activities of the Eastern Railway and even the influx of other European firms

*(A Publication of Tansian University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies)*



had transformed Enugu-Ngwo. The influx of people from all parts of the country and even beyond had transformed the town into a plural society. The Warrant Chiefs of Ngwo, under the leadership of Chief Onyeama still oversaw the affairs of Enugu-Ngwo Township.<sup>51</sup>In 1915 Rev Basden met with Mr Duncan requesting him to use his position as the District Officer to help establish CMS in Enugu-Ngwo. Duncan fearing that Chief Onyeama who equally doubled as the colonial government's land agent in Enugu-Ngwo might detect the presence of CMS if opened in Enugu-Ngwo township preferred establishing it in Enugu-Ngwo village where their activities can be concealed.<sup>52</sup>The chiefs were divided in accepting the proposal for the establishment of a C.M.S outpost especially, those loyal to Chief Onyeama. Ozo Chime Ukwuani, the Warrant Chief, representing Ekagbani which was comprised of Enugu, Etit, and Amachalla bowed to the pressure of the protagonists and quickly contacted Ozo Nnadi Nwagu who promptly released his compound for its establishment. Rev. Isaac Uzowulu Ejindu who had taken over from Rev. Daws was invited to start a CMS church in Enugu-Ngwo on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 1917.<sup>53</sup>

### **Impacts of CMS Missionary Activities in Ngwo Clan.**

**Education and Medical Impact:** Ngwo is a society that accommodates people of diverse groups. Since 1909 when coal was discovered in their land to 1914 when exploitation commenced in full commercial capacity to 1915 when the Northern and western rail lines were extended to Enugu Ngwo to 1917 when a trunk "A" road was constructed across their land with a major cross road linking the Northern and Western Nigeria at the centre of their locality; Ngwo people has been accommodating people of diverse groups. Their liberal mindedness afforded then the opportunity to learn and as well benefit from the people they come in contact with the situation was not different from their experience with the CMS missionaries led by Rev. Isaac. Ejindu.

The missionaries arrived Ngwo, passing through Awlaw, and Ozalla on evangelical mission.<sup>54</sup> Ngwo, being a highly religious people, Rev. Ejindu devised a plan for penetrative evangelism. He came with a monkey which many people went to watch, he also came with a guitar and a flute with which he played music to the delight of the people that gathered to watch his monkey. His activities gradually changed the major pastime of the people, especially in the evenings when most people must have been through with the day's activities. People who could have relaxed in their neighbourhoods after farm work to enjoy evening palm wine and play local games trooped to the village square to watch his performance. He toured the whole of Ngwo clan with his monkey and music, his presence always attracted a large number of

*(A Publication of Tansian University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies)*

spectators who, after being entertained with music, had the gospel preached to them. As the number of his spectators kept increasing by the day, he devised a programme for formal education and bible lessons for them. Onwubiko noted that the most spectacular achievement of the missionaries in West Africa is in the field of education,<sup>55</sup> the Christian missionaries, regarded education as the indispensable hand maid of evangelization and also promoted it from the onset of their activities.<sup>56</sup> On arrival at Ngwo clan Rev. Ejindu the lead missionary came with Mr. John Eze Nwoye, a seasoned school teacher to pioneer the establishment of schools in Ngwo clan.<sup>57</sup>

They first established St. Mary's Primary school in Enugu Ngwo.<sup>58</sup> pupils were instructed in English Language which of course is very new in Ngwo clan. Pupils were thought how to both read and write in English Language. Parent too did not hesitate in releasing their children to the established schools. As the church and school expanded rapidly in the compound of Ozo Nnadi Nwagu, the missionaries demanded for a land to permanently site the church and school. An abominable piece of land known and referred to as *Be enya ka nti* which means a place where one seas for himself rather than hearing. It was a land where numerous atrocious, things were deposited including dead bodies.<sup>59</sup> At the completion of the permanent site of the church and school in September, 1917, enrolment of pupils into the school especially from a Akagbani section of Ngwo Clan increased drastically.

Pupils from Amankwo were trekking very long distance to attend classes and other church activities connected to the school. Their devotion and dedication to the activities of the missionaries reflected in their knowledge of writing, reading and communication in English language. The pupils were clearly distinguished from their mates who were not making such sacrifice, trekking that long distance to gain western education. It was in this regard that community leaders in Amankwo, Ameke and Uborji under the leadership of Chief Ozofor Nwaozalor of Okwe, Amankwo applied for the establishment of a church and school for Ngwo Uno section of Ngwo Clan in November, 1917, St. Paul's church and school was planted at Amankwo.<sup>60</sup>

In 1919 people from Ime-Ama section of Ngwo which is comprised of Okwojo, Ukaka, Amebo and Umuase through their leader Chief Ugwu Ozonyia requested for the establishment of their own Church and school. They provided the land and erected the building by themselves as St. Peter's church, Okwojo.<sup>61</sup> the schools established in all the sections of the clan were all junior primary schools, the standard were not high because they lacked qualifies teachers. It was low grade teachers that pass instruction to the

pupils.<sup>62</sup> But with the proliferation of pupils in the schools the extent that facilities and teachers could no longer contain, the missionaries applied to Ngwo clan for land for the establishment of a standard primary school in Ngwo. In 1922, a parcel of land at 7 miles (Seven miles) that stretched from Ukaka to Okwojo was released both to the CMS and RCM (Roman Catholic Mission) which, in the period was rapidly spreading at Ngwo Uno section of Ngwo.<sup>63</sup>

On that land the CMS established the Central School in Ngwo. The school in the period was the best primary school in the whole of Agbaja Area of Old Udi Division, High profile teachers were posted from Onitsha to run the school. The standard of the school was very high to the extent that when primary school leavers in the whole of Onitsha Province competed for a very competitive entrance into the prestigious Denis Memorial Grammar School (DMGS) Onitsha; a son of Ngwo clan and a graduate of the central school Ngwo, Mr. Isaac Nwangwu scaled through as a pioneer student.<sup>64</sup>

The missionaries also opened a vocation training centre for men located at *Be Okwobu N'agu*- a land deserted by its owners because of the presence of an evil spirit called *Nomeh* the spirit not only tormented people, it as well mysteriously killed children.<sup>65</sup> a flourishing industrial training centre was established in it, where converts were trained either as carpenters or masons. The lead instructor was Mr. Arinze from Obosi.<sup>66</sup> The vacation centre for women was located at the site of St. Mary's church. It doubled both as a vocation centre and a maternity home. Mrs. Celina Nwosu was in charge of taking care of orphans, twins and pregnant women, the missionaries worked hard to stop the killing of twins and female genital mutilation. Mrs. Mercy Nwere was in charge of the centre for skill acquisition and home making.<sup>67</sup> Some wives of the new converts to Christianity were sent to St. Monica's Vocation Training School at Ogbunike in present Anambra State to train in catering, seamstressing, Home keeping as management. The participants include Mr. Bernice Eze, Mrs. Agnes Aneke and Mrs. Onoh. On their return, they became instructors in the vocation school established at St. Mary's Church where they train young Christians and even non-Christian girls on different areas of home making. Graduates from the centre were resourceful. It therefore became a breeding ground for young men in choosing their wives.<sup>68</sup>

### **Religious and Cultural Impact**

The primary objective of missionaries' activities in Africa generally was to evangelize the people and convert them from their traditional forms of

worship to Christian way of life as belief. As noted earlier the missionaries came with a monkey, guitar and flute, they are attractive to the people and will always pull ground to the places they go to evangelize. Their teachings were in total variance to the pre-existing traditional beliefs and practices. For instance, ancestor veneration, usage of *Ogwu* charms to ward off death, sickness and misfortune. The economics of the new teaching was also, to an extent, a point of attraction to some converts. The goats, yam and other articles that exchange hands in supplicating to the deities serve other vital economic purpose since the Christian God does not require any of such, except prayers and faith. Dedication of people and their resources to the land deity as the basis of success started losing edge while worshiping the invisible God gained momentum. <sup>69</sup>

The new converters owing to the persecution they faced in the period because to their preference to Christianity relocated from their homes to the deserted land of industrial mission where an industrial training center had already been established. The early settlers include Mr. Nathanael Aneke, Mr. Paul Ugwu, Mr. Simeon Nwani, Mr. Hezekiah Onoh, Mr. Philip Onoh, Mr. Amos Aneke, Mr. Appolos Aneke, Mr. John Nnadi, Mr. Timothy Ugorji. Their descendants still reside in Industrial Mission as at the time of this writing.<sup>70</sup> Industrial Mission became a melting point where Christian culture diffused into other parts of Ngwo Clan. It is pertinent to say here that through the adherents to Christianity were many, passive adherents who combined traditional practices with Christianity were more in number. The Warrant Chiefs who influenced the establishment of churches and schools in different parts of Ngwo Clan were not themselves Christians; rather they strongly engage in traditional practices. Apart from few devoted elderly people, the bulk of the truly devoted people were more among children and teenagers who were not up to the age of initiation into the traditional institutions of Ngwo Clan.

## **Conclusion**

The CMS Missionaries made giant strides in Ngwo Clan in the period under review. The people both converters and non-converts to Christianity embraced Christianity in one way or the other. There was a general belief that the missionaries came with mere civilized knowledge and the people did not hesitate to embrace it in one way or the other. Parents gave their children free hand to attend both school and church activities. The school did not only confer greater wisdom in the pupils, it placed the Clan on a better position to benefit from the greater possibilities that accompanied colonialism. Lots of them eventually secured placement in government departments, parastatals

*(A Publication of Tansian University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies)*

and corporation in Enugu. Graduates of the Vocation Center and Industrial Training Institute became resourceful and self-sufficient. They as well trained younger people who contributed meaningfully to the development of the Clan.

Some ancient traditional practices like killing of twins and human sacrifice reduced drastically. The tenants of Christianity was advanced by the missionaries in Ngwo Clan to a large extent freely and unmolested. But unfortunately, Christianity remained poorly internalised and superficial. Most adherents were passive in their belief. They combined Christian tenets and traditional practices. Most of their interest revolved around intellectual development which will offer their children the opportunity of taking advantages of the economic and political realities of the colonial activities in Enugu Ngwo township and not in the advancement of Christian teachings and ethics. Be that as it may, the legacies left behind by the CMS Missionaries in their 13 year apostolate laid a firm foundation that sustained the advancement of Ngwo Clan.

### **End Notes**

1. Brochure of the Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony of Ejindu Memorial Church Center, Enugu: Edilo Press 2009, p,22
2. J.O Ahazaem, "The Nigerian Coal Industry and the problem of failing Coal Consumption in Nigeria" *Nsukka Journal of History Vol 1, No 1*, Nsukka: Meks Unique Publishers 1989,p.337. see also A. Akpala "The Background to Enugu Colliery Shooting Incident in 1949" in K.O Dike (etal), *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol 3, No2*, Ibadan: University Press, 1965, p.337.
3. Sydney Aneke, c.77 retired civil servant and church teacher, Diocesan Historian, church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion, Missionary Diocese of Enugu North, interviewed 28/07/11. U. Ani, "Social and Political Change in Ngwo, 1909-1983", M.A Thesis, Department of History and International Studies , University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2008 pp. 44-45
4. N.A.E/ P.E.H Hair, *The Story of Enugu*,
5. A.E. Afigbo, "Igboland before 1800" in O.Ikime (Ed) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980) p.74.
6. A.E Afigbo, "Igboland before 1800" ...
7. U. Anyanwu, *Igbo Society in Transition: The Ezza Example*, (Nsukka: Great A. P. Express Publishers Ltd, 2005) p.5.
8. C.C. Agbodike, *Sources and Traditions of African Historiography*, (Awka: Nuel Publishers Ltd, 2004) p.12.
9. C.C. Agbodike, *Sources and Traditions...*
10. J.O. Agu, *Ngwo: Its People and Culture ...* p.4.  
(A Publication of Tansian University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies)

11. A.E. Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture*, (Ibadan: University Press, 1981) p.4
12. J. O. Agu, *Ngwo: Its People and Culture ...* p.4.
13. J.O Agu, *Ngwo: Its People and Culture...* pp.4&5. Also, aspects of these forms the opinion of the present writer, this arose from his in-depth inquiry into the Ngwo origin. He arrived at this point when he ventured into the studies of different towns, villages, kindreds and families that makeup Ngwo. He came to a conclusion that the people that make up Ngwo Clan were to a large extent not only the descendants of Ngwo-Ako.
14. J.O Agu, *Ngwo: Its People and Culture...*
15. J.O Agu, *Ngwo: Its People and Culture...*
- 16 S.N Agu, c.71 Retired Civil Servant\Politician\Community Leader, interviewed at Ameke, 26th December, 2007; also, Pa Joseph Nwangwu, Elder Sydney Aneke and many other Ngwo elders believed in the legend of Ngwo-Ako, not because it is strong enough to sustain the tradition of Origin of Ngwo people, but because it is an instrument of unity that bound Ngwo into one entity.
- 17 S.N Agu, Pa Joseph Nwangwu,etc, interviews cited
- 18 Ikenga John Agu Agbo, interview cited.
- 19 Nze S.N Agu, interview cited
- 20 Ikenga John Agu, interview cited.
- 21 NAE, ONDIST 20/1/269, Intelligence Report on Ngwo Clan in Agbaja Area, Udi Division of Onitsha Province. With Correspondence, Registered, 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1933. See also, interview with Ikenga. John Agu Agbo.
- 22 Nze Stephen Agu, Pa Joseph Eneje Nwangwu and Ikenga John Agu Agbo among other Ngwo elders were of the opinion that inspite of the short comings of the Ngwo-ako legend; it still sustains the history of origin of Ngwo people.
- 23 A.E Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture*, Ibadan; University Press 1981, p.45
- 24 A. E Afigbo, *Ropes of Sand...*
- 25 Pa Ude Nweze, c.88, trader, traditionalist, culturist, community leader, interviewed, 17/07/2009
- 26 Pa Ude Nweze, interview cited.
- 27 Ichie Sam Chime c.63, civil servant, businessman/community leader, interview,

(A Publication of Tansian University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies)

- 28 19/12/2007. See also Ikenga John Agu-Agbo , c.81, businessman/community leader interviewed on 17/12/2007.
- 29 Ichie Sam Chime and Ikenga John Agu-Agbo, interview cited.
- 30 Pa Ude Nweze, see also Pa Joseph Eneje Nwangwu c.86 retired colliery staff, craftsman, community leader/traditionalist, interviewed on 01/01/2008
- 31 P.A Talbot, *Peoples of Southern Nigeria, Vol 2, Ethnology*, London; Oxford University press, 1926, p.438.
- 32 Pa Ude Nweze, interview cited, see also Nze Christopher Ogbodo, c.77 retired civil servant, culture expert and community leader, interviewed 29/7/2004.
- 33 Ikenga John Agu-Agbo, Nze Christopher Ogbodo interview cited.
- 34 C.A Obi, "Conflict and Continuity between Igbo Religious Practices and the Holy Ghost Fathers of Onitsha 1885-1930", Seminar Paper Presented to the School of African Studies, University of London, 1980, p.1.
- 35 C.A Obi, Conflict and Continuity...
- 36 Part of the materials used for sacrifice sometimes include, pot shield, egg, day old chick, local chalk etc. Udeani Nko-Agu was one of the notable diviners in Ngwo of the period. He was consulted both within and outside Ngwo clan. He performed ordinances and sacrifices required in tracing incarnators, he also destroys the "Ogba-nje spirit in people's lineage. See also Ikenga John Agu-Agbo, Nze Christopher Ogbodo and Pa Joseph Eneje Nwangwu interviews cited.
- 37 Ikenga John Agu-Agbo, Nze Christopher Ogbodo and Pa Joseph Eneje Nwangwu interviews cited.
- 38 Ikenga John Agu-Agbo, Nze Christopher Ogbodo and Pa Joseph Eneje Nwangwu interviews cited.
- 39 Pa Ude Nweze interview cited.
- 40 Ikenga John Agu-Agbo and Nze Christopher Ogbodo interviews cited
- 41 Ikenga John Agu-Agbo and Nze Christopher Ogbodo interviews cited
- 42 Sydney Aneke interviewed cited.
- 43 N.T Nwaezeigwe, *The Igbo and Their Nri Neighbours: A Study in the Politics of Igbo Culture and Origins*, Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 2007, p.125
- 44 Ikenga John Agu-Agbo, Nze Christopher Ogbodo interviews cited
- 45 J.O Agu, Ngwo: Its people and culture... p.27
- 46 D. Onyeama, Chief Onyeama: *The Story of an African God*, Enugu: Delta Publications, 1982.
- 47 Sydney Aneke, interview cited.
- 48 The Church Missionary Society (CMS) came into Ngwo on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1917. The advent of which came out of a failed attempt by

- Rev. Daws in 1912 to establish the CMS at Eke. This was as a result of the misunderstanding that ensued between him (Rev. Daws) and Chief Onyeama, the paramount ruler of Eke, who was also the *Okwuloha*, that is, the speaker of all the warrant chiefs in the Agbaja Area of the Old Udi Division. CMS had to wait for another five years before it was established in Enugu-Ngwo by a missionary priest from Obosi, Rev. Isaac Uzowulu Ejindu. From that period, CMS spread like wild fire from Ngwo to its environs even as far as Awgu. See N.A.E/ONPROF 7/4/ 8, Application for Mission Site in Udi Division 1917-1925. See also Sydney Aneke, c.77 retired civil servant and church teacher; Diocesan Historian, Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion, Missionary Diocese of Enugu-North, interviewed, 28/07/11.
- 49 NAE, ONPROF 7/4/8, Application for Mission Site in Udi Division, 1918-1921.
- 50 Brochure for the inauguration of the Missionary Dioceses of Enugu-North, Published by Cheston Agency Ltd. Enugu, March 2007 p.30
- 51 NAE,CSE 1/85/6114, Intelligence Report on Ngwo Clan, in the Agbaja Area of Udi Division, Onitsha Province, Compiled by I.J Clerk, 1933.
- 52 Sydney Aneke, interview cited, see also Brochure for the Inauguration of the Missionary Dioceses of Enugu North etc. p.30.
- 53 "History of St. Mary's Parish Ngwo", Published on the Occasion of year 2003 SYNOD, 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> June 2003.
- 55 K.B.C Onwubiko, *History of West Africa, 1800- Present Day*, Zaria: Africana FEP Publishers Ltd, 1973, p.211
- 56 K.B.C Onwubiko, *History of West Africa...*
- 57 Brochure of the foundation stone laying ceremony....
- 58 J.O Agu, *Ngwo: Its People and Culture...* p.39
- 59 U. Ani, "Missionary Activities of Rev. Isaac Uzowulu Ejindu in Ngwo Clan Abgaja Area of Old Udi Division, 1917-1930" in D.I. Ajaegbo Etal, *Perspectives on Igbo History and Culture: Festschrift in Honour of Mazi Prof Okoro Ijoma*, Enugu: Snaap Press Nig Ltd 2015
- 60 Brochure of the foundation stone laying ceremony...p.39
- 61 U. Ani, *Missionary Activities of Rev. Isaac Uzowulu Ejindu...*
- 62 J.O. Agu, *Ngwo: Its People and Culture...*p.39

*(A Publication of Tansian University, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies)*



63 NAE ONPROF 7/4/8 Application for mission site in Udi Division, 1918-1922

64 J.O Agu Ngwo: *Its People and Culture...*

65 Sydney Aneke, Interview Cited

66 U. Ani, Missionary Activities of Rev. Isaac Uzowulu Ejindu... p.7

67 Brochure of foundation stone laying ceremony...

68 U. Ani Missionary Activities of Rev. Isaac Uzowulu Ejindu... p.8

69 Sydney Aneke, Interview cited

70 U. Ani, Missionary Activities of Rev. Isaac Uzowulu Ejindu...