

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN OGIDI, 1892-1992

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Abstract

The advent of the Anglican Church in Ogidi in 1892, undoubtedly, turned everything around positively for the people and thereby created an immense opportunity for social, political and economic growth of the town. Using qualitative methodological approach, this paper attempts to investigate the contributions of the Anglican Church in Ogidi, between 1892 and 1992. It adopts the use of several sources of information which cut across primary and secondary sources to capture the contributions of the Church in different sectors of Ogidi. The findings of the paper reveal that the Anglican Church brought not only the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ, but also social and political reforms, Western education, modern medical services, economic development, and other social services. This study also identifies that from 1892 to 1992, the Church penetrated the four quarters of Ogidi with the Anglican brand of Christianity; established Churches and schools in each quarter, established Iyi-Enu Hospital, provided white-collar jobs for some of the early converts; reformed the political system and facilitated the abolition of some obnoxious cultural and traditional practices in the town. It concludes that the contributions of the Anglican church in Ogidi, between 1892 and 1992 led to the political and economic growth of the town, human capital development, emergence of an elite class of people and the elimination of some superstitious beliefs through western education and modern medical services.

Keywords: Anglican Church, Contributions, Ogidi, Community growth.

Introduction

In recent times, many people have doubted what the Church contributes to the development of the modern society. This line of thought stems from the assumption that the modern America and Europe are *fiat accompli*. Whatever modern America, Europe and some parts of West Africa are today, is a product of the Church. Thomas Alan has argued that the foundation of modern American and European civilization was laid by the Church¹. In the U.S.A, for instance, the role of the Church, particularly the Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Baptist Churches, in the area of evangelism and formal education, has been quite outstanding. Many of the hospitals, schools, colleges and universities in Europe and America are products of the Church and the clergymen².

By the mid-19th century, when the wave of the Christian missionary activities on continental Africa was at its peak, it was the search to save the African soul from “damnation” that propelled the Church Missionary Society (CMS) of the Anglican Church to Igbo land on 27th July, 1857. The coming of the missionaries of the Anglican Church to Igbo land in the middle of the 19th century opened a new phase in the life and activities of the Igbo people; this event, undoubtedly, turned everything around for the people and thereby created an immense opportunity for the social, political and economic development of the people³.

Having arrived in Igbo land in 1857, the Anglican missionaries brought the Anglican Church to Obosi in 1882, and as well brought the Anglican Church to Ogidi 1892 and successfully Christianized these towns. The Anglican missionaries, which brought the Anglican Church to Onitsha and its environs had come with the Bible in one hand and “the plough” in the other, signifying that the Anglican Church is not only interested in evangelism but also interested in community development and commerce⁴.

This paper is structured into six sections. The first section is basically the introduction, followed by the geography of Ogidi and others are prelude to the introduction of the Anglican Church in Ogidi; introduction and Spread of the Anglican Church in Ogidi; contributions of the Anglican Church in Ogidi and conclusion.

Geography of Ogidi

Ogidi is a town situated between kilometres eight and sixteen along the old Onitsha-Enugu trunk “A” road. The old Onitsha-Enugu trunk “A” road, runs nearly vertical through the lengths of Ogidi, while other state roads traverse across the town. These include; the Afor-Nkpor-Seventh Mile-Ogbunike-Umudioka-Umunachi-Abagana and Ugwu Nwasike-Abatete-Oraukwu roads. These roads form the main arteries of road networks connecting Ogidi with other towns within and outside the Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State. On the north, Ogidi is bordered by Ogbunike and Umudioka, on the east, it is bordered by Umunachi, Eziowelle and Abatete, on the south, it is bordered by Oze and Nkpor-Agu. Ogidi has an annual rainfall of 1,100mm and 1,300mm during the rainy season under normal circumstances; this normally lasts from April to October, while the dry season lasts from November to March yearly⁵.

It is believed that much of Ogidi land is low-lying with a spate of up-lands (hills) towards Oze and Ogbunike escarpments on the north-west. Dike Ibemesi is of the opinion that located in the forest zone, the town has its good share of forests and has the Iyi-Enu spring, the Nkpikpa, Akamala and Ododo streams from the Oze hill. Apart from these, most of the Ogidi indigenous people also obtain their water supply from other streams and springs outside Ogidi. These include Isi-mmili and Nwangene and others from neighbouring towns like Ogbunike (Ota, Ochichi and Kisa); Umudioka (Mmili-Agu) and Mgbuke-Umunachi (Onyekazulu). With the sinking of numerous private boreholes in various parts of the town, Ogidi is now served by potable water supply. The 1992 census enumeration estimates in Nigeria puts the Ogidi population at 70,000⁶.

For as long as it can be remembered, Ogidi is divided into villages and families. Hence, there are nine villages in Ogidi (Ogidi Eboteghete), named after the nine sons of Ogidi which are as follows; Ire (the eldest), Abor, Uru, Ajilija, Umuru, Nkwelle Ogidi, Ikenga, Ogidi-Ani and Ezi-Ogidi⁷.

Prelude to the Introduction of the Anglican Church in Ogidi

According to Wellington Wotogbe-Weneka, the word “Anglican Church” is derived from an ancient Latin word, *Ecclesia Anglicana*, which means English Church. That is, a church which arose from and which had its root in England. Therefore, any Church, which shares faith or is in communion with the Church of England is called the Anglican Church. Put differently, the Anglican Church is any church in full accord with the Church of England in doctrine and the church order in any part of the world. The Anglican Church draws its identity and historical roots from the Church of England, which is one of the churches formed during the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century⁸.

After the severance of the Anglican Church from the Roman Catholic Church is 1534, the Church could not move beyond the British confines, because there were difficulties associated with overseas travels and the fact that the Church as it were, forgot “the great commission”. Consequently, the church began to wallow in immorality and spend its time and money in administrative squabbles rather than evangelism⁹.

Agwu Kalu has observed that in the beginning of the 18th century, an evangelical revival and a religious awakening led by three Anglican priests namely, John Wesley, Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, broke out in the Anglican Church and it swept across Europe. This evangelical revival led to the formation of missionary societies such as the society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), London Missionary Society (LMS), Church Missionary Society (CMS) and others, with the sole ambition of carrying the Gospel to the areas of British colonial and commercial influence¹⁰.

Towards the end of the 18th century and early 19th century, there was a great outcry against the evils of the slave trade throughout Europe. In 1840, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, a member of the CMS and the anti-slavery movement, recommended to the British government to sponsor an expedition of the Niger, so as to conclude treaties with local chiefs to abandon the slave trade and start legitimate trade. Besides, Buxton suggested that linguists, agricultural experts and missionaries should be part of the expedition¹¹. In 1841, the British government, in collaboration with the

CMS, sent out the first Niger Expedition with three ships carrying about 144 Europeans and some Africans. No sooner did they set out than the majority of the Europeans died of tropical disease. However, the expedition managed to reach Lokoja, where a model farm was set up. Treaties were also signed with the local chiefs at Aboh and Idah. Even though some scholars viewed the 1841 Niger Expedition as a fiasco, it gave birth to the concept of “African Agency” in evangelism. With the lessons learnt from the 1841 Niger expedition, between 1854 and 1857, the British government in collaboration with the CMS sent other expeditions which were successful.¹²

Under the leadership of Dr. William Baikie, the last Niger expedition arrived at Onitsha on 26th July, 1857, and thus the desired ambition of establishing the Niger mission was attained¹³. On 27th July, 1857, Dr Baikie, Captain Grant, Rev Samuel Ajayi Crowther, Rev J. C. Taylor and other CMS missionaries were taken to palace of Obi Akanzua of Onitsha to explain their mission. During the meeting with the Obi, negotiations were struck and Onitsha became the base of the Niger mission¹⁴. From Onitsha, the gospel started its slow, but steady, journey into the Igbo hinterlands. The Gospel was slow because the missionaries had great and many challenges to grapple with before they could advance to their various destinations¹⁵.

After the gospel had reached Onitsha in 1857, in 1882 it reached Obosi and in 1892, exactly 35 years after, it reached Ogidi, which was eight kilometres east of Onitsha¹⁶. Many reasons have been advanced as to why it took the gospel thirty-five years to reach Ogidi. These reasons included the warlike nature of the Ogidi people, scarcity of human and material resources among the CMS missionaries, insufficient instructional materials for evangelism, geographical and climatic problems, transportation difficulty, and others¹⁷.

However, Chieka Ifemesia observed that it was at the instance of a son of Ogidi, Walter Okerulu Okafor Amobi (later Igwe Amobi 1 of Ogidi) that the Anglican missionaries ventured into Ogidi¹⁸. Amobi was an indigene of Ogidi, but unknown circumstances brought him to live with Obi Ogene of Onitsha. While living with Obi Ogene, he converted to Christianity and was baptized and given the name Walter. Thus, due to his love for Christianity and western education, Walter enrolled for his basic education at the age of about 48years, to study English, Arithmetic and Bible knowledge¹⁹. After his education, he became more influential in the palace of Obi of Onitsha, even though he was not an Onitsha indigene. In 1891, the Obi of Onitsha mandated him to serve as a pathfinder to lead the CMS missionaries to the communities around Onitsha²⁰. Emmanuel Ibezim opined that instead of leading the CMS missionaries to communities that shared borders with Onitsha, as directed, Amobi led the Anglican missionaries to Ogidi because he wanted his kith and kin to experience the transformation and the enlightenment, he already had in Christianity and western education²¹.

Introduction and Spread of the Anglican Church in Ogidi

In early 1892, Walter Okerulu Amobi and five Anglican missionaries arrived at Amafo Aka Odo in Etiti Ogidi-Ani, where his parents were living. In the missionary group were some early Igbo converts such as Thomas D. I. Anyamene, Theophilos B. Akpom, Joshua Kodilinye and George Nicholas Anyaegbunam, while the only priest and European among the missionaries was Rev Henry Hughes Dobinson²². Walter Amobi’s parents provided accommodation for the missionaries, in other words his parents’ home became the first CMS mission base in Ogidi. Ifemesia noted that at first, most people of Ogidi were not friendly with the missionaries and their messages²³. Perhaps, that was why Hilary Achunike has stressed that the titleholders and the traditionalists in Igbo land were at the forefront of those who were aggressive to the early missionaries because they viewed Christianity as a foreign/white man’s religion which had come to deceive their people and destroy their traditional rites, customs and religion²⁴. Ifemesia noted that despite the challenges encountered by the early Christian missionaries in Ogidi, substantial number of converts were made²⁵. However, Achunike asserted that those who were first to accept Christianity in Igbo land were the Osu, the oru, the downtrodden, the orphans, the widows and the sickly²⁶. This was the case with Ogidi, hence, those who converted to Christianity in the town were referred to as *efulefu* (the never-do-well) by the traditionalists²⁷.

Notwithstanding the hostility and unfriendliness of some indigenes of Ogidi towards the early converts, the early converts were unwavering in their new faith. To this end, they formed a small congregation and built a small church at Amafo in 1893²⁸. Ifemesia submits that after Rev. Henry Dobinson left Ogidi because of hostility, the Anglican missionary enterprise was left in the hands of Mr Joshua Kodilinye (one of the early Igbo converts who arrived at Ogidi with Walter Amobi), to carry on the work of evangelism and instruction of the new converts²⁹. Writing on the events of the period, Ibezim has noted that between 1892 and 1895, the missionaries concentrated on winning new

converts. This yielded quick dividends, and on 7th April, 1895, Rev Dobinson came down from Onitsha and baptized the first group of converts³⁰.

In 1896, Rev. Henry Dobinson and Archdeacon Thomas John Dannis (the great missionary/linguist after whom Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha, was named) baptized the second group of converts. In 1898, Rev S. R. Smith baptized the third group of converts; in 1902, he baptized the fourth group of converts. In 1904, he baptized the fifth group of converts and in 1907, he baptized the sixth group of converts in Ogidi³¹. Emmanuel Ibezim observes that considering the number of baptisms administered on Ogidi converts within the first fifteen years of the arrival of the Anglican Church in the town (1892 -1907), it is clear that the stage had properly been set for the entrenchment of the Anglican Church in Ogidi³². Ifemesia opines that between 1892 and 1907, about 200 men and 400 women had been converted and baptized into the Anglican Church in Ogidi. Consequently, the small church built at Amafo, Ogidi-Ani, was unable to contain all the converts during church services, hence, accommodation challenge arose³³.

Furthermore, Dike Ibemesi noted that because of the challenges of accommodation, distance and bad weather, which the early converts had to contend with, especially during the rainy season, the early convert from different quarters of Ogidi started to nurse the ambition of building their own churches in their quarters³⁴. In view of the foregoing, in 1907, converts from Nkwelle-Ogidi built a small church at Okperi, while convert from Ikenga built another church at Anugwu near the “*ube mkpulu aku*” Three year later, in 1910, the Uru-na-Akanano converts built their own small church at Abor-Ogidi, the church was later named Ebenezer Church in 1914. Meanwhile, in 1912, through the joint effort of converts from Ogidi-Ani, Nkwelle-Ogidi, Odida, Ikenga and Igwe Walter Amobi, a large church was built at Akpakogwe, the church was name St. Philip and dedicated in 1913³⁵. Besides, Ibezim noted that in 1971, Mr. Benaiah Nwajo (a renowned catechist) built another church at the Ogbe-Otu, Ikenga area; the church was named St. Paul Church³⁶. To commemorate the historic founding of the first Anglican church in Ogidi, a primary school and church was also established at Ikpo Ogidi-Ani in 1972 to mark the 80 year anniversary of the Anglican Church and that church was named St. Peter.³⁷

In an interview, Ven. Dr. Okey Ukpeke asserted that because of the influence of the Anglican Church in Ogidi, on the 1st of February 1992, the Ogidi Archdeaconry was inaugurated with St. Philip Church Akpakogwe as the headquarters and the late Ven. C. C. Muoghalu (an indigene of Obosi) was collated as the first Archdeacon. The communities under the Ogidi archdeaconry are Umudioka, Umunachi and Eziowelle.³⁸

Contributions of the Anglican Church in Ogidi

Apart from establishing branches in Ogidi, the presence of the Anglican Church has undoubtedly made significant inroads into various sectors of Ogidi life, thereby contributing to a stable polity. The contributions of the Anglican Church in Ogidi are examined below.

Political Contribution

From the dim past to the closing year of the 19th century, when the missionaries of the Anglican Church and the British colonialists arrived in Ogidi, the political system of Ogidi was in the custody of the *mmuo* (masquerade), *alusi* (deities), age grade and title holders in concert with Eze Inwelle³⁹. However, with the arrival of the Anglican Church in 1892, Walter Amobi came into limelight in Ogidi due to the role he had played as a pathfinder for the missionary enterprise. Uzowulu states that in 1895 Walter Amobi officially joined the CMS Niger Mission as a catechist and school teacher, thereby becoming the first indigenous catechist and school teacher in Ogidi. After serving a while with the CMS, he left the Anglican Mission and joined the Royal Niger Company (RNC) as a constabulary officer, after the British declaration of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria on 1st January, 1900. Due to Walter’s diligence and resourcefulness in the Royal Niger Company, he soon caught the attention of the British and he became useful to them, when they mounted the Onitsha hinterland expedition. After the successful expedition, he started serving as an interpreter for the colonialists in Onitsha and its environs⁴⁰.

Furthermore, Ibemesi narrates that Walter also served as a middleman between the colonialists and the four Ezes from the four quarters of Ogidi and it was in the process of serving as an interpreter that the four Ezes ceded, their political rights to govern the four quarters to him, probably because they felt that with his experience, exposure to western education and diplomatic skills, he could lead Ogidi effectively⁴¹. Uzowulu further notes that in 1903 Walter Amobi officially returned to Ogidi and took a chieftaincy title, so that he could be acceptable to the generality of Ogidi. In

1904, the British colonialists recognized him as the paramount ruler and subsequently the first traditional ruler of Ogidi. During his enthronement, he took the title Igwe Walter Amobi 1 of Ogidi⁴². He submits that until his enthronement, the political system of Ogidi was republican in nature. His emergence as the first Igwe thus introduced a monarchical system of government in Ogidi. In Uzowulu's words, "Walter Amobi introduced monarchical system of government in Ogidi because it was obtainable in Onitsha where he spent his adult life"⁴³.

Dike Ibemesi notes that Igwe Amobi's reign lasted from 1904 to 1925, when he joined his ancestors. After his demise, there was an interregnum in kingship system for 19 years. However, in 1944, Benjamin Olisaeloka Amobi, who was also an Anglican, was enthroned as Igwe Amobi II of Ogidi. Igwe Olisaeloka reigned from 1944 to 1973, when he joined his ancestors. In 1975, Dr Benedict Obiora Amobi, yet another Anglican, was enthroned as Igwe Amobi III of Ogidi, he reigned from 1975 to 1985, when he was brutally murdered by unknown assassins⁴⁴.

The death of Igwe Amobi III caused a protracted kingship tussle within the Amobi family, which nearly wrecked the traditional kingship system in Ogidi. However, not too long, after peace was achieved within the Amobi family and in 1993, Walter Ifediona Amobi emerged and became Igwe Amobi IV. He reigned from 1993 to 1998, when he joined his ancestor⁴⁵.

Emmanuel Ibezim has argued that from 1904 to 1998 (a period of 94 years), the Amobi family dominated the traditional kingship of Ogidi and all the kings produced were all Anglicans. He also observes that for the 94 years that the Amobi family ruled over Ogidi, they modified the political structure of the town by creating the following offices:

- i. Onowu - Traditional Prime Minister within the Igwe-in-Council,
- ii. Ajie - Okpala Ogidi (regarded as the first son of Ogidi),
- iii. Owelle - Special Political adviser to the traditional ruler,
- iv. Odu - Second-in-Command to the ruler,
- v. Ogene - Political adviser to the ruler,
- vi. Akaeze - the King right hand man,
- vii. Ichie Okpala - high chief title for Akanano,
- viii. Ichie Urumgbe - high chief title for Ezinkwo,
- ix. Ichie Obodo Dike- high chief title for Ikenga⁴⁶.

The above offices still function and are helpful in the day-to-day administration of Ogidi.

Economic Contributions

According in Obiora Alokwu, the Anglican Church has always contributed to the economy of its host community because the Church believes and practises the Bible and the plough policy⁴⁷. This implies that Christianity can go hand-in-hand with commerce. Prior to the arrival of the Anglican Church in Ogidi, the economy of the town was based on agriculture, trade and crafts. However, with the arrival of the Anglican Church, the Church introduced the Bible and the plough policy in Ogidi and consequently the economy of Ogidi was greatly improved and diversified. The Anglican Church contributed to the economy of Ogidi in the following ways:

Agriculture

Ab initio, agriculture in Ogidi was subsistence, crude and indigenous, hence, Ogidi farmers tilled the ground with locally made tools; they cultivated a limited expanse of land because farming was done manually. However, with the arrival of the Anglican Church, new methods of farming were introduced along with some exotic crops such as coconut, pineapples, pawpaw, onions, rice and others. Therefore, with the introduction of new methods of farming and some exotic plants and crops, farmers in Ogidi were able to increase the quantity and quality of their farm produce; they also had a more variety of farm produce to sell other than before.

Due to this new innovation in the agriculture sector in Ogidi, markets in Ogidi were flooded with enough indigenous crops and exotic crops, hence, neighbouring communities began to visit Ogidi to purchase agricultural produce. Ibemesi asserts that between 1900 and 1960, exotic crops flooded markets in Ogidi and the people from Agulu, Ihiala and Ugwuoba were coming to buy the seeds for cultivation and the fruits for consumption⁴⁸. This introduction of new methods of farming and exotic plants and crops by the missionaries gave a boost to the agriculture sector in Ogidi and contributed to the economic growth of the town.

White-Collar Jobs

Before the arrival of the Anglican Church in Ogidi, most of the people of Ogidi were either farmers, traders or artisans. However, following the arrival of the Church, nursery, primary and secondary schools were established in Ogidi. Wotogbe-Weneka opines that the subjects taught by the early missionary and government schools were English Grammar, Arithmetic, Bible Knowledge, Business Studies, Typewriting, Shorthand, Technical Studies and others⁴⁹. These subjects were used to form the school curriculum so that the missionaries and the colonialists would use them to train a group of people who would serve as classroom teachers, interpreters, office clerks, messengers and catechists⁵⁰.

In Ogidi, the first set of converts to Christianity were those privileged to attend either the primary schools or secondary schools, while those who were fortunate attended both primary and secondary schools. Examples of such fortunate individual were Walter Amobi, Isaiah Achebe, Reuben Okwuosa, Harford Anierobi and others⁵¹. Any convert, who completed either his/her primary or secondary education, was offered an automatic employment either with the missionaries or with the colonial administration. Mr. Tochukwu Chioke revealed in an interview with the researcher that upon the completion of his Standard Six education at the Central School, Akpakaogwe, he was offered his first job opportunity as a messenger for the European doctors at the Iyi-Enu Hospital, Ogidi⁵². He also revealed that when he graduated from Dennis Memorial Grammar School (DMGS), Onitsha in 1966, the missionaries converted him from a messenger to an office clerk⁵³.

Furthermore, Ibezim asserted that Isaiah Achebe (the father of Chinua Achebe) was appointed a catechist and classroom teacher when he finished his secondary school education in 1933⁵⁴. Also, he observes that most indigenes, who embraced Christianity and western education in Ogidi, emerged as office clerks, interpreters, messengers, catechists and some, who went to the theological college, became priests⁵⁵. C. C. Ifemesia is of the opinion that it was prestigious to be working with the missionaries or the colonialists, hence, both the children of the new converts and the children of influential traditionalists ventured into western education so that they could be employed by either the missionaries or the colonialists⁵⁶. He, also, observes that all those who had white-collar jobs dressed in European attires and spoke the English Language, and were consequently called *ndi-olu-bekee* (those who worked for the whiteman)⁵⁷. The white-collar jobs contributed to the economic growth of Ogidi because when these workers were paid, they usually brought back part of their salary for the advancement of the town.

Social Contributions

According to Shed Adiele, most Igbo communities were known for the *Osu* caste system, inhumane widowhood practices, cannibalism, human sacrifices and others, before the advent of Christianity⁵⁸. This was the same case in Ogidi. Obiora Alokwu opined that the Church is the light of the world, hence, it is saddled with the responsibility of eradicating any social ills and obnoxious culture and tradition of its host community by preaching the Gospel of salvation and western education⁵⁹. The activities of the Anglican Church in Ogidi thus contributed to the abolition of some social ills and obnoxious cultural and traditional practices such as the following:-

Abolition of the *Osu* Caste System

According to Charles Ezekwugo, in the Igbo society, there are two classes of people; the slaves and the free-born. The slaves are taken to be the outcasts and are called *Osu*, while the free-born are called *diala*⁶⁰. Ezekwugo goes further to assert that the *Osu* caste system is a social structure dating back centuries under which persons designated as *Osu* are forbidden from any social interaction with those considered as free-born⁶¹. Also, Ubobata Onunwa has argued that an *Osu* is a person dedicated to the gods of the land, either as sacrificial objects or action by the victim in the face of life-threatening circumstances. By this, the unfortunate victim becomes untouchable, an outcast and sub-human, therefore, deemed inferior to the freeborn⁶².

Chijiokem Obi opines that the origin of the *Osu* caste system in Ogidi is out of human memory. However, the practice was prevalent in Ogidi⁶³. He add that anyone identified as an *Osu* was banned from any social interaction with the freeborn in Ogidi⁶⁴. However, the arrival of the Anglican Church set the ball in motion towards the abolition of the system in Ogidi and it was to be achieved through the gospel of salvation, the message of equality of all men before God and negotiation with the relevant authorities⁶⁵.

Dike Ibemesi is of the opinion that even though the early missionaries of the Anglican Church preached against the *osu* caste system, the practice was still prevalent until Igwe Walter Amobi emerged in 1904⁶⁶. Being a Christian, Igwe Walter used his position, power and influence to add force to the move by the Anglican Church to abolish the system. Sadly, his efforts were rejected by the *Ozo* institution and those who practised African Traditional Religion⁶⁷. Until the death of Igwe Amobi I, he combined forces with the Anglican Church to abolish the *Osu* caste system. However, their efforts did not succeed.

In 1944, Benjamin Olisaeloka Amobi who ascended the throne continued in the footsteps of his father by joining the Anglican Church to fight for the abolition of the system⁶⁸. Furthermore, Ifemesia opines that by divine providence, Igwe Olisaeloka Amobi II in collaboration with the members of the Igwe-in Council, the *Ozo* institution, the African Traditional Religion practitioners and the Anglican Church, reached a consensus in 1970 and unanimously abolished the *Osu* caste system in Ogidi and declared all those formerly known as *Osu* as *diala*⁶⁹.

Abolition of Inhumane Widowhood Practices

According to Pat Uloaku Okoye, widowhood is a social status which befalls a man or a woman who loses his/her spouse. However, it is generally used in reference to women who lost their husbands, since most men, who lose their wives soon abandon this status by re-marrying⁷⁰. Okoye argues that in Igbo culture, inhumane widowhood practices are exclusively reserved for widows not widowers. Examples of inhumane widowhood practices are ritual seclusion, sitting on the floor, sleeping or sitting next to the corpse, compulsory shaving of hairs, compulsory wearing of black or white mourning outfits and others⁷¹. All these inhumane widowhood practices were prevalent in Ogidi until 1985, when Late Rt. Rev'd Dr. Jonathan Onyemelukwe (formerly Anglican Bishop on the Niger) set up a cultural issues committee to look into some obnoxious cultural practices in most communities under the Diocese on the Niger⁷². When the committee arrived in Ogidi on 1st November, 1985, one of the obnoxious cultural practices it condemned was the harsh widowhood practices in the town. In order to abolish this practice, the committee engaged the Igwe, the *Ozo* institution and traditionalists in a two-year negotiation, challenging the practice in the light of the Bible and the Nigerian Constitution. On 5th December, 1987, there was a peaceful resolution between the committee, the Igwe, the *Ozo* institution and the traditional and most of the inhumane widowhood practices in Ogidi were abolished⁷³. Ibezim states that with the abolition of inhumane widowhood practices in Ogidi, the Anglican widows are now at liberty to determine how long they would wish to mourn their late husbands and how they wish to mourn them⁷⁴.

Reformation of the Initiation Rites into the *Ozo* Institution

According to Edmund Ilogu, the *Ozo* institution is a social institution in Igbo land which grew out of the need for priests, who would preside over the extended family and lineage worship and supervise the cult of the ancestors and to keep the family staff (*ofa*)⁷⁵. The basic features of the *Ozo* institution are seen in their dress code, which comprised the white dress, the red cap, the *ofa* (staff) and the *ikenga*. To Solomon Okafor, the *Ozo* institution is a social institution and a political class in Ogidi and mostly wealthy men are initiated into it with one of their wives⁷⁶. The institution gives the initiates both political and traditional influence in the town.

Furthermore, Okafor asserts that being a member of the *Ozo* institution is prestigious and glamorous, hence, many men wish to become members. However, the initiation process is expensive, rigorous and involves certain rituals⁷⁷. Dike Ibemesi narrates that with the arrival and growth of Christianity in Ogidi, many Christians, especially Anglicans, wanted to join the *Ozo* institution so as to become part of the policy makers in their villages and foster the interest of Christians and the Church. But they were hindered because some of the rituals involved in *Ozo* initiation contradicted their Christian faith⁷⁸. Furthermore, Ibezim notes that in 1980, the Anglican Church, under the Episcopacy of late Rt. Rev'd Dr. J. Onyemelukwe (formerly Anglican Bishop on the Niger) entered into a dialogue with the Igwe of Ogidi and the *Ozo* institution, so that the institution would exonerate Christians (especially the Anglicans), who wanted to join the *Ozo* institution from some of the rituals involved in the initiation of the new *Ozo* members⁷⁹. Also, he adds that the dialogue lasted for about two years before an agreement was reached. Therefore, in 1982, the leadership of the *Ozo* institution in Ogidi decided to waive some of the ritual practices which contradicted the Christian faith for the Christians (especially Anglicans) who wanted to be initiated into the *Ozo* institution. To this effect, *Ozo Ndi Uka* emerged in Ogidi⁸⁰.

Medical Contribution

Before the advent of Christianity and the British colonialists in Igbo land, diseases and sicknesses were treated by indigenous traditional medicine. According to Joseph Ojo Mume, indigenous medicine represents the sum of the people's medical knowledge as well as beliefs, skills and practices used in diagnosing and treatment of physical, mental or social sickness⁸¹. Before the establishment of the Iyi-Enu Hospital at Ogidi in 1907, certain sicknesses and diseases in Ogidi were viewed to have either a spiritual cause or a physical cause⁸². Those sicknesses diagnosed to have a physical cause were treated by *dibia-ogwu* (medicine man) with roots and herbs, while those sicknesses diagnosed to have a spiritual cause were handled by the *eze-mmuo* (chief priest), who would perform certain rituals and appeasements to the gods and the ancestors on behalf of the sick person⁸³. However, Udobata Onunwa observes that certain sicknesses such as skin ulcer, leprosy, tuberculosis, elephantiasis of the leg and scrotum were incurable by the indigenous traditional medicine. Anyone who suffered from them was, therefore, viewed to have offended the gods or have committed a taboo. Those who suffered from such sicknesses were abandoned in an evil forest to die⁸⁴.

With the arrival of the Anglican Church in Ogidi and the establishment of the Iyi-Enu Hospital in 1907, the superstition surrounding most diseases and sicknesses began to fade away because the aforementioned diseases were treated at the hospital. Consequently, people from different parts of Igbo land, who had such sicknesses travelled many miles to receive medical treatment at Ogidi⁸⁵.

Furthermore, Ibemesi has observed that upon the establishment of the hospital, the medical condition of the people living in Ogidi and its environs was made to improve considerably, while superstitions surrounding certain sicknesses were eliminated or minimized because most sicknesses thought to be either untreatable or caused by the anger of the gods were treated at the hospital⁸⁶. Ibezim posits that Iyi-Enu Hospital effectively pioneered many areas of medical care in Ogidi and brought healing and hope to the people through the eradication of certain diseases such as polio, yaws, meningitis, tuberculosis and others, hence, there was no need to visit *dibia-afa* (diviner) or *dibia-ogwu* (medicine man) when one became sick⁸⁷.

Contribution to Education

According to Babs Fafunwa, education in Igbo land was not a colonial invention. Until the coming of the early Christian missionaries and the colonialists and the subsequent introduction of western education, traditional educational system had existed in Igbo land. The enduring role of traditional education in every society was to prepare individuals to participate fully and effectively in their society⁸⁸. Fafunwa also asserts that it prepares young people to be active and productive members of their societies by inculcating the basic skills necessary for survival⁸⁹. Jones Akinpelu has opined that traditional education was targeted at producing an individual who would grow to be well grounded, skilful, cooperative, civil and able to contribute to the development of the town⁹⁰. The medium of instruction was the indigenous language, through which systematic instructions were delivered by way of songs, stories, legends and dances to stimulate children's emotions and quicken their perception as they explored and conquered their natural environment⁹¹. This was the kind of education common in Ogidi before the arrival of the Anglican Church in 1892.

Ifemesia is of the opinion that because the Anglican Church in Ogidi was geared towards a holistic salvation, hence, they established churches simultaneously with schools⁹². Chijiokem Obi observes that the first school established in Ogidi by the Anglican Church was the central school Akpakogwe, Nkwelle-Ogidi, located within St. Philip Church and was founded in 1889⁹³. Until 1940, the Central School at Akpakogwe was the only primary school in the town. Therefore, as parents and guardians became aware of the need to acquire western education, which was a major criterion for employment with the missionaries and colonial administration, there occurred a population boom in the school⁹⁴. Consequently, a second primary school was established at Ilo-Igwe in 1943; the school was named Iyi-Enu Primary School.

Furthermore, in 1954, the Anglican Church established a third primary school at Ebenezer Church, Abor, named Uru na Akanano Central School and in 1979, the Anglican Church established the fourth primary school at Ikenga, known as the Community Central School, Ikenga, Ogidi⁹⁵.

With the passage of time, there was no secondary school in Ogidi. The result of this challenge was that many sons and daughters of Ogidi, who had passed the Standard Six, were compelled to attend secondary school at Onitsha or Asaba⁹⁶.

Due to the absence of a secondary school in Ogidi, as Ibezim has observed, the Anglican Church conceived the idea and quickly set the machinery in motion for the establishment of the first secondary school in Ogidi.

In 1957, an approval was given by the Ogidi Union (Nigeria) to the request of the Anglican Church to provide land for the building of a secondary school. The selection of an appropriate site was granted to the Uru Quarters and subsequently, a girl's secondary school project was commenced on the land by early 1958⁹⁷.

It has been said that the schools established by the Anglican church in Ogidi ushered the western style of education in the town. Western education in Ogidi has helped to facilitate the emergence of an elite group of people in the town. These include persons like Late Prof. Chinua Achebe, Prof. Chieka Ifemesia, Prof. Vincent Okwuosa, Prof. Okey Ikpeze, Barr. (Mrs.) Catherine Uju Ifejika (nne Ikpeze), Dr. Dike Ibemesi, Rev'd Canon (Dr.) Emmaunel Ibezim, Ven. (Dr.) Okey Ukppeke, Mr. Harford Anierobi and others. Dan O. Chukwu summarizes the episode in the following words:

Those who acquired functional education in our clime are known to have over time had a head start over others. They sometimes do not possess as much material resources as the other members of their community, yet they seem to be the leading lights wherever they are found. They are patrons of the saints and ambassadors of peace; they are also the spokes persons of their communities⁹⁸.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the investigation, the mission of the Anglican Church in Ogidi between 1892 and 1992 significantly contributed to both human capital development and the overall progress of the town. The Church should not only be recognized for introducing Christianity to Ogidi but also credited with the establishment of the monarchical system of administration, the introduction and cultivation of exotic plants and crops, the spread of Western education, the abolition of certain harmful cultural and traditional practices, the provision of modern medical services, among other contributions. In light of these achievements, it can be affirmed that the Church played a major role in the enlightenment and transformation that have taken place in Ogidi over the years.

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