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Editorial Note

In compliance with our tradition, in this volume, we bring to you diverse articles that may assuage your intellectual curiosity and advance the frontiers of historical knowledge. We thank you for your sustained interest in Ilorin Journal of History and International Studies (IJOHIS).

Professor S.O. Aghalino
(Editor)

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**SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN IGBOMINALAND: STRATEGIES,
CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES, 1895-1960**

ABOYEJI, Oyeniyi Solomon, PhD.*

Abstract

No matter how economic scholars seem to over-justify the economic motive as the basis of colonialism in Africa, other factors are also tenable as multi-causal theories allow for multiple factors to underpin any historical event. One of the motives of the Portuguese explorations of the coasts of West Africa in the 15th century was the spread of the Christian faith. Hitherto, in most published works on the history of Christianity in Nigeria, enough light has been shed on the abortive attempts in Benin and Warri in the 15th century and the successful establishment of Christianity in Nigeria in the 19th century when it in most cases met on ground, (African) Traditional Religion and Islam. However, the challenges to Christian mission activities via the adopted strategies and consequent indigenous responses often remain neglected. This study examined the advent of Christianity through the agents of its spread, the Christian Missions/missionaries and their adopted strategies. The data used in this historical research were mainly from primary and secondary sources. Findings reveal that there were pockets of the Igbomina in the Diaspora who were already Christian converts before Christianity found its way to Igbominaland, noticeable as from 1895. The efforts of liberated indigenes or early converts cannot also be swept under the carpet. Challenges, however, became inevitable but not insurmountable. To the first generation of missionaries, expansion was hindered by innumerable forces, in addition to the Islamization of many traditional Igbomina. Consequently, responses to Christian Mission activities took different patterns. It is concluded that though the enduring nature of Christianity in the face of challenges and hostilities made modifications and syncretism inevitable, it has played a distinctively civilizing and transformative role in Igbominaland.

Keywords: Spread, Christianity, Igbominaland, Strategies, Challenges, Responses.

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Introduction

Christianity is one of the most widely spread religions in the world, having substantial representation in all the populated continents of the globe. Christianity as a religion is traced to Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The minimum content of the Christian faith derives from faith in His life, death and resurrection. The Christian religion rests upon belief in divine revelation and through Christ; God is believed to have brought about the salvation of mankind. The knowledge of God and the service of God are the double themes of Christianity.²

Christianity is a very important factor in the history of contemporary West Africa. The activities of the agents of its spread (the missionary) served as a good complement to the history of West Africa in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era. For instance, in the pre-colonial era, the missionaries appeared as agents of civilization through their avowed aim of introducing 'the light' (Christianity) to the Africans whom they believed were in 'darkness'. Although, they served as the spiritual arm of the imperial powers during colonial era, their importance in the evolution of the modern West African States cannot be over emphasized.

Evidences reveal that efforts of the missionaries can be traced to the 15th century when the Portuguese who were Catholics attempted to spread the Catholic faith by first converting kings and chiefs. This they did to the Chief of Gambia in 1456, king of Fetu (Gold Coast) with many chiefs/people in 1503, Benin between 1485-1520 and the Kingdom of Warri in Nigeria. However, unfavourable climate, hostile environment, scarcity of priests, health and other challenges made the early missionary efforts to fail. The area of the converted chief of Gambia in 1456 where few conversions followed was quite close to the frontier of Islam. Moreover, the conversions did not last long because many of the converts were not sufficiently instructed before baptism; so they lapsed back to their old pagan religion as early as they had accepted the Christian faith. These factors combined discouraged other missions from venturing into a region termed as *Whiteman's grave* until the fresh and successful moves were made by the European Missionaries in the 19th century.

Vis-à-vis the penetration of Christianity, three events of great historical significance in Europe (i.e. evangelical revival of the late 18th century, the formation of Christian Missionary Societies and the abolition of slave trade), paved way for its introduction in West Africa and eventually in Yorubaland in the second half of the 19th century. The first missionaries (the Methodist Mission) arrived in Badagry in September 1842. From this cradle of Christianity in Nigeria, the missionaries turned their attention to Abeokuta after a protracted negotiation in 1846.³ The Church Missionary Society (CMS) under the leadership of Henry Townsend, Samuel Ajayi Crowther and Gollmer embarked upon pioneering missionary activities in Abeokuta. Schools and churches were built by the CMS, the Methodist Missions and others joined later. From Abeokuta, Christianity spread to other Yoruba towns, thus making it the gate way of the missionary activities in Oyo and Ogbomoso areas and later down to Igbominaland evidently as from the 1900.

The Igbomina: A Periscope

The Igbomina are heterogeneous sub-group of the Yoruba race, who evidently migrated to their present sites from different locations at different times as from 14th -17th centuries.⁴ Immigrant groups include: Igbomina of Ile-Ife stock, 'y' stock, Nupe stock, Ketu and Fulani/Hausa settlers who have been assimilated into the Igbomina traditions. Igbominaland is thus a convergence of groups of Yoruba on one hand, the Fulani and the Nupe on the other hand. The Igbomina occupy the southeast of Ilorin within Longitude 8° and 9° North and latitude 4° and 6° West.⁵ They share boundaries with Kabba in the North-East, Ekiti in the South-East, Ilorin and Afon in the North-West, Ijagbo and Oyan in the West and Otan Ayegebaju in the South-West.⁶ Igbomina's northern boundary is shared with the Nupe and the southern part is with the Yoruba of Osun State.

The word Igbomina refers to the people, their language⁷ and the land they occupy. Other descriptive remarks say that 'the Igbomina formed at least, three-quarters of the inhabitants of Ilorin Province, occupying a large area extending as far back as Ila-Orangun in Oyo Province (now in Osun State)...They are pure Yoruba';⁸ 'Ila is the most southerly town of this area to the north of the Ijesha and the Ekiti, and east from Oyo live the Igbomina; 'the Igbomina area was said to have included Ilofa, Ekan, Odo-Owa, Osi, Oshin, and Obo whose people are no more particularly keen in joining their Igbomina brethren'.⁹ Natively, the Igbomina predominantly consists of the communities located in Ila and Ifedayo Local Government Areas of Osun State and Ifelodun, Irepodun and Isin in Kwara State; they are however, found in almost every part of Nigeria and overseas.

Establishment and Spread of Christianity in Igbominaland

As earlier established, missionary activities in Nigeria in the 19th century began in Yorubaland. In the 1830s, many freed slaves of Yoruba origin returned from Freetown to Badagry, Lagos, and Abeokuta. The C.M.S. Mission took the lead in 1842 (when Thomas Birch Freeman in Gold Coast visited Badagry and Abeokuta) and other missions (the Baptist Mission, the Sudan Interior Mission, the Church of Scotland, the Roman Catholic Missions, etc) followed. A Methodist Mission was opened at Badagry in 1842, another in Abeokuta in 1848. Baptist Mission stations was opened in Ijaye in 1852. Similarly, and at Ogbomoso in 1855. Society for African Missions' first station established in Lagos in 1868, among others.

Worthy of note is the fact that some Igbomina in diaspora had earlier accepted the Christian faith before Christianity found its way to Igbominaland at different times. Christianity started and spread at different dates in Igbomina communities (i.e. 1895 in Ora-Igbomina, 1912 in Oro Ag?, 1913 in Esi?, 1917 in Owu-Isin, 1922 in Oke- Ila, 1924 in Iwo, 1926 in Omupo, and so on.¹⁰ At Ila Orangun, Orangun Olajojo Agboluaje hearing of the civilization associated with the religion in some Yoruba communities invited the missionaries in late 1857. W.H.

Clarke of the American Baptist Missionary arrived and preached for a couple of days before leaving for ? ffa.

The efforts of some liberated indigenes or early converts cannot be over-emphasized: Samuel Lasehinde, a freed slave, evangelized in ? ra- Igbomina in 1894; Joshua Oyew?le got converted in Ibadan and came back to evangelise in Ila ? rangun in 1904; Bamigboye, a liberated slave from Ipetu Igbomina, relocated to Omu-Aran and did evangelism. Ora-Igbomina at early period became one of the cradles of education and Christianity in Igbominaland. Christianity was brought to Ora -Igbomina (an ancient Igbomina town in Ifedayo LGA of Osun State) in 1895 by the CMS missionaries led by a son of the soil- a returnee from the slave trade named Pa Olasehinde. Consequently, St. Stephen Anglican Church was established in 1895 and St. Stephen's Anglican Primary School in 1912.¹¹

Revd Guy Playfair (popularly called *Òyinbó Òrò*) under the Sudan Interior Mission introduced Christianity in 1912 at Oro Ag? and its environs. Christianity began in Oke-Ila in 1922 with the establishment of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Adaramola O. Ogundana (who later became Balogun of Oke-Ila Orangun) invited his friend, Od?dunmoye from Ile Alapinni Oke-Ila to Ipoti on a visit where they stumbled on David Babcock (an American Missionary, who brought the Adventist Faith to Nigeria in 1914) holding an evangelical crusade. The young men got magnetized by the Christian faith and wasted no time inviting Babcock to Oke-Ila. The Baptist denomination also entered Oke-Ila with the help of Chief Emmanuel Adek?ye Babal?la, the Obaala of Oke-Ila) in the early 1930s. Other denominations (Anglican, CAC, Christ Apostolic Mission, CCC and Deeper Life, and CCC) joined at later dates.

Christianity began in Iwo (Isin LGA) with the start of the first church in Pa James Salami Oguntade's house in 1924. Earlier in 1923, one Mr Ajit?ru from Iji-Isin, who had the knowledge of *ABD* alphabets adopted by the CMS in 1856 came to live in Iwo as a pawn to a money lender. He preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to his friend, Agbelese Oladimeji. Shortly after, Ajit?ru introduced his good friend, Seweje (a Christian trader and *ABD* instructor) who lived in Owu-Isin, to Agbelese Oladimeji. Agbelese, (later joined by some others like Od?diji, Salami, Awodaodu, Deji Ajide, Bale Oke Ag? Olomu), started trekking to Seweje in Owu-Isin to learn how to read the Bible in Yoruba and write *ABD* alphabets. These and other indigenes in diaspora who had earlier embraced Christianity (in places like Lagos, Badagry, Sagamu, Ejirin) teamed up to start Christianity in Iwo in 1924.¹²

Successively, Christianity entered every Igbomina community either via the missionaries like in the case of Revd Guy Playfair of SIM in Oro Ag? and its environs or native agents. Generally, the spread of Christianity, which had its influence on the spiritual growth, numeric growth, physical structures and other activities were similar in outlook. The vernacular Bible was the most potent factor in the spread of the religion. The religion was self-propagating by means of the people

learning to read the Bible in their own tongue. The missionaries helped to train Igbomina Christians as clerks, artisans, carpenters, farmers, husbands and wives. They became envied by the non-Christians who watched them sing, differently dressed, go for house to house evangelism. They watched in admiration as they distribute tracts, organise set days for open crusades with emphasis on salvation and healing and engaging in some other fascinating different activities. They sang different Christian choruses as well as hymns which were direct translations from the English tunes. The adoption of Yoruba music and instruments aided the spread of Christianity.

Mission schools were established one after the other across Igbominaland. These schools no doubt, blazed education trail, with Christianity as the ultimate aim. Enrolled children to Christianity and as time progressed, many of these converts in turn became advocates of the new religion in Igbominaland.

Modern churches were built for Christian worship. The larger churches were crowded on Sundays and the more active church members attended prayer meetings, choir practices, Bible Study, evangelism, committee meetings, and rites of passages on other days as well. Many Igbomina Christian families began to hold early-morning prayers in their homes/compounds. The time table on Sundays included main services such as the Sunday School, which was attended by both children and adults. This also featured the service (worship), and the group (?gb?) meetings.

The spread of Christianity in every community was therefore possible through the fundamental unit of organization within the church (?gb?). The number of ?gb? varied from church to church and new members usually joined the one belonging to their own age-group. In some cases, some age groups had more than one ?gb? and membership was based on the level of education. The women had their own associations. They met weekly to raise funds for the welfare of members and church development; discuss church affairs; settle disputes among the members; etc. The significance of these church groups extended beyond the church. They visited at leisure hours, attended each other's rites of passage and celebrated Christmas and Easter together, exchanged gifts and the like.¹⁵

The sense of common interest was further strengthened with practical bonds: government and traders provided security, transport grants-in-aid, credit facilities, means of communication and other services on which the survival and progress of evangelism depended. The sincerity of the converts and the firm hold on the religion attained had been fully tested by several bloody persecutions endured for the faith, through which they came out triumphantly. To mention but a few were: Pa Olasehinde (a slave returnee) from Ora-Igbomina; Revd David Ishola Olatayo and Clyde Jamu Adeniyi from Oro- Ago; Pa Abraham Buremoh from Oke-Oyan; John F. Oniyide from Okedaba; John GbenleEkunrin from Oke-Ode, Peteru Alao from Igbaja; etc.¹⁴

Since then, the Igbomina Christians have not only accepted the Christian faith, they are found across the globe serving as evangelists, ministers, administrators, prophets, church planters/founders¹⁵ and elders. Christianity has thereby grown and expanded in trust as the one family of God. Some renowned general overseers (worldwide) and ministers of God from Igbominaland include: Bishop David Oyedepo of the Living Faith (Omu-Aran), Prophet Samson Ayorinde of the World Evangelism Bible Church (Rore), Pastor J. Taiye Aboyeji of The Potters' Porch International (Isin), Retired Reverend Solomon Adeniyi Babalola of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (Oke-Ila), Prophet Timothy B. Gbadeyan of Christ Temple Church of God International (Owu-Isin) among others.

Of course, different beliefs or varying interpretations of some modes and matters over time, inform the various denominational differences (doctrines) or Christian church groups (blocs) evidently established across Igbominaland, like elsewhere. To ensure internal unity among many churches with their differential backgrounds as well as to successfully and faithfully carry out its (spiritual and political) duties, a strong team spirit, under a national or interdenominational body (CAN) became necessary. Consequently, the primary, recurrent and ultimate objective of CAN (though not a political organization) is to act as watch-person of the welfare, in its totality, of the Church and the Christian Faith in Nigeria. Providing a background to the just said, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN),¹⁶ for the purpose of independence and cooperation of member churches, as contained in Article 7 of CAN constitution,¹⁷ has conveniently classified the numerous churches as follows:

1. **The CSN:** Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria.
2. **CCN:** Christian Council of Nigeria comprising the Anglican Communion, Baptist Convention, African Church, Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church.
3. **CPFN/PFN:** Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria. The CPFN comprises of Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) and The Apostolic Church while the The PFN component includes all other charismatic/Pentecostal Churches such as Deeper Life Church, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Living Faith Church, etc.
4. **OAIC:** Organization of African Instituted Churches comprising non-white Missionary founded Churches such as Cherubim and Seraphim Church and former Aladura Group of Churches, etc.
5. **NEF:** Nigerian Evangelical Fellowship recognizes ECWA/TECAN Fellowship Mission minded Churches in the category of ECWA, UMCA, etc.

Christian Mission Strategies in Igbominaland

On a general note, Christian missionary activities across Nigeria became successful through contact, trade, persuasion, intimidation, compulsion and war. Unlike the latter two religions, indigenous religion was more or less passive and

provided the background against which the two proselytizing religions contended. It was natural that the two non-indigenous religions should recognize each other as opponents and react to one another with suspicion, verging on hostility. Consequent on this, Christianity was more aggressive of the two for reasons such as: its association with the colonizing race; the belief of the European Christians in the superiority of not only of their religion but also of their civilization; its being the late-comer to the country, which called for the haste and zeal to win as many souls as possible; and the acute rivalry between the different Christian denominations.

The primary objective of the various Christian Missions was the propagation of their respective doctrines through the mass evangelization to the people with whom they would come into contact. They had the mission "to fulfil the Lord's command, to teach all nations, to raise the sacramental signs of salvation amidst the people and to manifest the outflow of God's spirit in the Christian community".¹⁸ They equally desired to increase the knowledge of their new converts and their children in the Bible by providing them with Christian education which would involve their ability to read and understand the Bible, sing hymns and recite catechism and extend such opportunity to others. Revd Thomas Dove of The Methodist Mission Church said, '...so that gospel of God our saviour may be preached...that schools may be built, that the Bible may be sent.'¹⁹ For example, in 1923, a vernacular Bible school called Agunjin Bible School of the Sudan Interior Mission was established upon the transfer of Rev. Davis to Agunjin. Later in 1925, those at Egbe were eventually merged with those who had been in SIM Bible School, Agunjin earlier. The first set of students in Agunjin Bible Training School in about 1923-1925 include: David A. Kayode from Mopa (in present day Kogi State), Samuel Omokore Afolabi from Mopa (in present day Kogi State), Paul Asala Ajayeoba from Odo-Ere (Kogi State), Andrew Ayodele from Ejiba (Kogi State), Silas Ekundayo from Odo-Eri (Kogi State), Abraham Buremoh from Oke-Oyan (Kwara State), Clyde Jamu Adeniyi from Oro-Ago (Kwara State), Paul Ogundele from Okeya (Kwara State), Malachi Adegboye from Iyamerin (present day Kogi State), Moses Kolawole from Ejiba (present day Kogi State), Robert Oni Awe from Egbe (Kogi State). Also in 1938, William Crouch (an American from California) came to Nigeria, precisely Igbaja to start a Bible training school which later became Igbaja Bible College and Seminary. Upon reopening the school in 1941, he started with 14 male students but only 7 of them made the first graduation list: Late Rev'd Samuel Omokore Afolabi, Late Rev. Dr. David Ishola Olatayo, Late Rev. Samuel Olaosebikan, Late Pastor Moses A. Sanni, Late Rev. David Oyelerere, Late Rev. Fred Adeyanju, Late Rev. Luke Jamu Asonibare, and later, Late Rev Dr. Stephen Bayode Ogunmola and Late Rev David S. Moody.²⁰

Another suitable strategy adopted by the Christian Missions to spread Christianity among the Igbomina was the factor testified to by Johnson that 'the Bible in the vernacular was the most potent factor in the spread of the religion.'²¹ Yoruba language was one of the earliest African languages whose orthography was

transcribed in European scripts. Its study dates back to the middle of the 19th century, when the Christian Missions were struggling to establish themselves among the native speakers.²² Hence, Yoruba language found its way into the curricula of schools not only as a medium of instruction but as an academic subject. It is worthy of note that Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a former Nigerian slave became the first to translate the Bible into Yoruba and publish a Yoruba dictionary in 1843.²³

The establishment of mission schools/stations whose syllabus content was virtually religious in nature started outside Igbominaland (i.e. Badagry-1842, Abcokuta-1846, Creek Town-Calabar-1854, mission station along the coast in Lagos-1854, Ogbomosho-1856, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society's institution for the training of catechists in Ibadan -1869, etc). The school was the instrument for mobilising support for Christianity and also for soliciting cooperation with the British Colonial Administration based in Ilorin as they were taught to be meek and humble. By the end of the 19th century, virtually all the Missions had established schools to train their new converts in Bible knowledge as catechists and teachers. These primary schools and the latter ones in Igbominaland and elsewhere became one of the most potent agencies of evangelization as the curriculum was tailored to meet this goal. Such mission schools in Igbominaland include: ECWA School, Oro Ago (1921); St. Michael School, Esie (1929); St. Andrew School, Oro (1930); St. Michael School, Omupo (1938); All Saint School, Oke Onigbin (1941); St. Paul School, Omu Aran (1942); Baptist School Isanlu-Isin (1945); Baptist School, Ajase-po (1950); ECWA School, Olla (1950); Baptist School, Iji-Isin (1950); Home Economics Centre, Omu-Aran (1952 by ECWA Mission); Mt Carmel School, Oro (1958); Baptist School, Igbaja (1960); and post-secondary schools such as ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja (1941); ECWA Igbaja Teachers' College (1946); ECWA Women Teachers' College, Omu Aran (1948); etc.²⁴

All the missions in Igbominaland also recognized the potent values of medical services in expressing Christian 'love' in action. Health centres (dispensaries, clinics and hospitals) were established in Oke Igbala, Omu Aran, Iwo, Oro Ago, Igbaja, Owu, Ila, etc and other establishments. Though mission schools, churches, hospitals, radio stations (i.e. Radio ELWA in Igbaja-on Jan.1954), orphanages (in Oro Ago in 1916), Christian education bookshops (i.e. African Challenge in 1948), women's sewing classes and other 'hand-maid' institutions were established and provided for the same motive of evangelism; responses were either positive or negative. Acceptance suggests the success of the mission strategies adopted by the missionaries. Getting the bulk of the people who were neck-deep into the values and practices of the indigenous religion became a hard nut to crack. When the mission bodies (Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, SIM/ECWA, CMS, the Seventh Day Adventist Mission, the Baptist Mission), etc that opened stations and gathered some people of the locality together discovered that the response, especially, from the core of the traditional societies was slow, they focused much attention on the so called recalcitrant, rescued orphans and twin babies, and some

Spread of Christianity in Igbominaland

other ostracized people of the society. Again, many of the traditional and Muslim parents shielded and prevented their children from such training or-baits. In Edidi for example, Abolarin attests:

When the Omu School was established, children from polygamous families, whose mothers were hated by their husbands were sent to attend Omu School, but with the introduction of western education by the Christians, most of the parents became more hostile in sending their children to school. This was so because they entertained the fear of conversion. More than that, they feared that, they might lose their farm labour...As learning to read was not an easy thing, there were many truants among the children.²⁵

There were also mission schools almost everywhere in Igbominaland which provided other attractions. New converts were made to change their outfits from *Kijipá* and *ibànté* to beautiful European dresses especially on Sundays and during evangelism. There were few instances where a ruler of a community invited a mission by himself and, in this case, it was easier for mission work to diffuse in the society. This was the case of W.H. Clarke (American Baptist Missionary) who was invited by the then ? rangun of Ila (? ba ? lajojo Agboluaje) in 1857 and founders of TITCOMBE College, ?gb?; Playfair Memorial College, Oro Ag?; Teachers' College, Igbaja (now ECWA Secondary School); Teachers' College, Wokowomu (now ECWA Girls' College), etc. The recalcitrant and the indolent (in farm work) were voluntarily given out to live with the missionaries. These sets of people were taught the 3Rs and thus, became interpreters, clerks, converts and agents of the whites who were later envied by their colleagues and even Muslims. Such people given out to the whites were Clyde Adeniyi (Oro Ag?) to Guy Playfair, Gbelese ? ladimeji and David ? lainipekun (an orphan) were offered to attend school on mission scholarship, and many others. Agbakin ?kunday? in Isanlu-Isin in 1898, though an itinerant trader, taught people who were willing to learn Yoruba alphabets and known for going along singing Christian songs. When Seweje and his wife (both natives of Ilesa in Osun State), came to Owu-Isin in 1917, he demanded that children be taught Yoruba alphabets but with the hidden motive of getting them converted to Christianity. Children released for this purpose included: Adey?ye Joshua, ? d?wale Samuel, Af?labi Yusuf, Adeniran Joel, Oyedun Peter, Akanbi Salasi, ? m?lanb?, Ogunl?w? Joseph, Gbadeyan Jacob, Ogunrinola David, Oyew?le Matthew, Baba Matthew. Others included Gbadeyan Thomas, Alayande Joseph, Atoyebi Joshua and ? d?kunle.²⁶ The missionary gave Thomas Oladimeji some Yoruba pamphlets to read and posters to hang on their door posts in Isanlu, the core of Agbaasin traditional worship.

With the establishment of schools, literacy rate increased considerably. Graduands were later sent to Bible and Mission schools such as SIM Bible School, Agunjin (1923); Bible School Lagos (1929); and later seminary colleges where they

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could go for advanced pastoral studies in Kaltungo(1931), Igbaja (1941), Kwol (1942), etc. Young men were also trained as local pastors as from 1923 in Bible School, Agunjin. Paul Taiyeoba, one of the 27 graduates who got converted in 1910, propagated the gospel in remote areas like Okedaba, Omugo, Iraboh, Owa Kajola and Olla; David Adeniyi assisted Guy Playfair in Oro Ago; etc. Seminary Teachers' Colleges were later established in Igbaja (1944), Kagoro (1947), and Kaltungo (1951). Vernacular was adopted where necessary in preaching the gospel. In 1918, Rev. Guy Playfair (popularly called *Oyinbo* Oro Ago) established a Bible Training Institute in Agunjin near Oke ? d?, under the directorship of Norman Davies. It was a vernacular educational institution significantly designed to produce indigenous pastors and Sunday school teachers needed to assist the expatriate SIM missionaries in spreading Christianity throughout the Lafiagi District.²⁷

Aside the opened stations were the efforts of the itinerant missionary preachers. Faced with various challenges, they saw the native agents indispensable.²⁸ Likewise, the remarkable influence of the *Osomalo* traders from Ijesaland in the propagation of the gospel in Igbominaland cannot be overemphasized. Omotoyo reports that:

The imposition of colonial rule in 1900 assisted the Christian missionaries in the propagation of Christian religion. In the pre-colonial era, some efforts were made by some itinerant Ijesa textile dealers known as *Osomalo* in propagating the gospel in Ilorin and Igbomina areas. Many of them were converted Christians from their country home. The construction of railway from the south to the north also contributed to the propagation of Christianity in Ilorin³¹. Some of the employees from the south were Christians from their towns and villages. The traders and the railway workers collaborated and started holding Christian fellowships on Sundays in Ilorin. The worship was interdenominational because the Christians were from different denominations. The meeting venue commenced in the house of a man named Mr. Ajia alias "Baba Ijesa."²⁹

Christian missions had some other potentials or advantages such as experience, knowledge, moral and financial support of their foreign sponsors, growth of overseas trade and the establishment of British power which helped to enhance the position of Christianity.

Challenges to Christian Mission Activities and Indigenous Responses

Part of the challenges faced by the missionaries was the language factor which led to lack of co-operation and proven hostility by the natives. The missionaries realized in good time the indispensability of the natives in achieving their aims for such reasons as language barrier, policy of self-governing and self-training churches. This, Ade Ajayi rightly puts that, "it will be difficult for the

missionaries to go forever supplying priests who take a long time to understand the people's way of life and even in the time of persecution are easily recognized, arrested, driven out to put to death.³⁰ Hence, as the use of natives became an indispensable tool in the spread of Christian missionary activities, it collaboratively bridged the gap between the missionaries and the hostile indigenes in Igbominaland. The indigenous and liberated slaves were used as interpreters in that regard.

Another challenge was the unfavourable colonial policy. After 1906, it became obvious that the administration in Northern Nigeria was anti-missionary because the missionaries began to suffer persecution in the hands of both the Emirs and the Residents. In fact, the Residents used the factor of Islam to discourage the missionaries. The Igbomina fell under a heavy yoke of Ilorin Emirate, hence, the colonial government did not want Christianity to have a place in Northern Nigeria – as it was considered repugnant to the doctrine of Islam. Ayandele attests that “the administration used the phantom of Mahdism to counteract the influence of the missionaries. Lord Frederick Lugard, the High Commissioner for Northern Protectorate (1901-1906) further reinforced this phantom by saying that “whatever threatened the Muhammedan religion threatened the authority of the Emirs and so, imperiled the organization of indirect rule.”³¹ He, therefore, succeeded in diverting the attention of the missionaries to non-Muslim areas with the insistence that religious preachings will make for “the equality of the Europeans and the natives, which however true, from a doctrinal point of view is apt to be mis-applied by people in a low stage of development and interpreted as abolition of class distinction.”³² This is not to however, assume that the British Political Officers had the condition of service 100% palatable. Apata argues that:

Like the Nigerian staff, they were not entirely pleased with their conditions of service in many instances, they were bitter with the cold attitude of the Colonial Office to their problems. They also detested some obnoxious colonial regulations and often found the policy and style of the Northern political leadership unpalatable and cumbersome. In spite of stiff sanctions against erring political officers, entrenched in the British colonial civil service general order, many of them refused to remain silent over issues that ran counter to their interests.³³

Evidence still reveals that each mission needed to extend its influence (schools, churches, medical services) in definite areas among the existing Igbomina communities, in order to avoid competition and unhealthy rivalries such that could jeopardize Christian activities. For instance, for a long time, the SIM/ECWA was entrenched in and still dominate Iwo, Owu, Odo ? ku, Oke Aba, Oro Ag?, ? Ila, Aran ? rin, Omu-Aran, Oke Igbala, Oke ? de, ? ra, Igbaja, Id?ra, Owode ? faro, Oke, etc; the Baptist Mission dominate Isanlu Isin, Ijara Isin, Iji Isin, Pam?, ? ba, etc; the Catholic Missions occupy Oro; the Anglican Mission in Esi?, Edidi, Omupo, Iludun-Oro, Agb?nda, Oke-Onigbin, Omu-Aran, Ij?mu-Oro, Arandun, etc; the Seventh

Day Adventist (SDA) is dominant Omu-Aran, Anglican, Catholic and Baptist missions are popular Ila-? rangun, among others.

Furthermore, the mistaken notion that missionaries and colonialists were all the same, proved to be an arm-twisting device. Some resisted the incursion and stuck to the gods of the fathers. Polygamist converts found it difficult to send away their other wives. Others wavered, first parleying with the missionaries and later recovering their balance and bolting back to the ancestral gods. Some accepted literally what they had heard, being mostly frightened by the doctrine of heaven and hell which was emphasized in the preaching of the early missionaries. For instance, heaven had been more elaborately defined in Christianity as home for believers in Christ, saved by faith and works as against the traditional belief where they viewed death as more of a continuation of life here on earth in a better environment, where relatives would re-unite in the midst of plenty of food and other pleasures of a good and comfortable life. This belief of *bí wón tiún se láyé ni wón se lórún* “as it is in heaven, so it is on earth” explains the idea behind burying their kings with material things, slaves and others very close to him who would continue to serve him in the world beyond.

One of the most prominent consequences of colonialism along with missionary activities in Nigeria at large was the emergence of conflicts and contradictions within the colonial state, the new social classes that developed as well as the condemnation and adulteration of indigenous beliefs and practices. Very much unlike the usual protests to the stringent political and economic policies adopted by the colonialists, where Mazrui and Rotberg's classification of protest include: *Protest of Conservation* which is aroused by a sense of threat to an established order/custom; *Protest of Restoration* against destroyed and disrupted past and wrong grouping under Ilorin in the Northern region; *Protest of Transformation* which attempts to change an existing unsatisfactory condition which the Nigerian nationalists engaged in the decolonization era for a total change from colonial rule to self-government; and the *Protest of Corrective Censure* which is an *ad hoc* demand for a particular modification in a system or in the bid to at least make corrections of some imposed obnoxious aspects of a system.³⁴ Reactions to Christian Mission activities in Igbominaland took patterns such as:

i. **Outright Rejection:** Coded or symbolic communication (*àròkò*) and proverbial messages pregnant with meanings were sometimes sent via proverbial gifts or bearers, which were easily decoded by the recipient. There were use of charms, witchcraft, sorcery, diabolism, invoking of spirit of ancestors and other forms of hostilities. An SIM missionary, Miss Josephine Bulifant, while making a general description contended that “for forty odd years, the people of the north eastern tribe of Yorubaland were in the hands of Satan being filled with unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, murder, cannibalism, human sacrifices and witchcraft (which) made life a terror.”³⁵ This Eurocentric view was rather a mis-representation of the indigenous people who had their traditional deities; demonstrated moral and

religious values and did everything to preserve their religious practices. Between 1908-1910, the then Esi? of Esi? who had earlier embraced Islam collaborated with the Ilorin Emirate (NA) authorities in frustrating the mission's (CMS) plans. He and his subjects often had difficulties with local Christians (natives who had embraced Christianity from the southern towns) who refused to take part in communal work such as road construction and so argued that 'A mission in the town would lead to the influx of Christians from the southern towns- many of whom he described as undesirable elements'.³⁶

II. Restrictions/Frustrations: Attempts by the various missionary bodies from 1900-1919 to establish mission stations and introduce western education recorded an insignificant level of success. For instance, in February 1905, Revd J.M. McKay of the CMS visited Igbaja town in search of a site for a mission station and an elementary school.³⁷ McKay indeed sought to establish western education throughout the Ilorin Emirate but Captain Anderson, the British colonial representative (D.O.) in the District maintained that McKay had to obtain official permission from the Provincial Resident, P.M. Dwyer before he could implement any missionary activity. It was at the time Lugard gave a categorical administrative directive to the Ilorin Provincial administration that Christian missions wishing to penetrate and establish themselves among the 'pagans' in the Ilorin/Lafiagi emirates had to obtain official permission from the Emirs through the provincial administration. Earlier, Lugard had supported the idea of unfettered missionary penetration and activity among the 'pagans' in the plural emirates of the north generally but he quickly abandoned it when he saw the vehement reactions of most of the Emirs and their Mallams to it.³⁸

After consulting with the Emir of Ilorin, Hon. Dwyer disapproved Revd McKay's official permission; arguing that the indigenous population would adhere only to the existing Koranic system of education rather than the Anglo-Saxon School system. Similarly, in 1905, Revd A.W. Banfield and his American Evangelical Mission received a hostile official reaction when they arrived Shar? and the CMS at Esi? and its environs between 1908 and 1910. Also, Revd J.M. McKay, the first CMS agent, was initially given a site to establish a mission station and a school for Omu-Aran and its environs by the Olomu of Omu-Aran in 1916. He was driven away by the combined forces of the Native Authority and Provincial Administration the following year having noticed that the early Christians caused profound disturbances as they despised traditional religion, sundry work, wore better clothes and condescended.³⁹ Besides, many of the officials of the NA preferred the more gullible and docile traditionalists to those educated Christians who could become a thorn in the flesh. Gbadamosi and Ajayi on a general note support the claim that:

The spread and establishment of Islam in the country became a matter of considerable concern to Christian evangelists. In the north, Christian missionaries were check-mated or frustrated so much by the pro-Islamic attitude of the Government by the indifferent, superior or hostile attitude of the confirmed Muslims. Right under the nose of the Christian

missionaries, Islam was gaining more ground, even in the south-west. The Christian missions therefore, became very much concerned: all the more so as their conversions in the field were, by their own estimates, in inverse proportion to their endeavours and relatively insignificant compared with those of their Muslim counterparts.⁴⁰

iii. Syncretism versus Demand for New Life/Transformation: Christianity demanded a convert's complete rejection of his beliefs, customs and a reversal of his philosophy of life. It was therefore, natural that people tended to be hostile to the new faith. This explains why Christianity made slow progress at the initial stage in some parts of Igbominaland.⁴¹ Islam and Christianity met Igbomina Traditional Religion on ground. Noticeable similarities in their beliefs do not suggest compromises on the part of any. Igbomina society at this period became a multi-religious society and reciprocal influence on one another was inevitable. Many of those who accepted the Whiteman's religion resorted for solace during moments of stress and anxiety to the faith of their forefathers. There were those among the literates who were motivated by the need to preserve their culture, produced books and pamphlets on their local history and customs. These include men like Samuel Johnson, Egbareoba among others in Nigeria. Even in the face of the three religions, the case of Igbominaland proved that different religions can interact peacefully. Christian converts whether overtly, or covertly, participated actively in indigenous religious rites. They often responded with the adage: 'Igbàgbó ò ní kí amá s'orò, áó sorò ilé wa' (meaning Christianity cannot prevent the celebration of indigenous rites). In an undisclosed compound in Owu-Isin, any pregnant woman that is ready to put to bed would pass under the *áká* (hut) to facilitate her safe and prompt delivery. From far and wide, the barren, the pregnant, women with overdue pregnancy or long labour saw the place as a miracle centre. For a very long time in Igbominaland, most of those who put on the *egúngún* masks bore either Muslim and Christian names, while an overwhelming majority of those entertained by the masqueraders were professed Muslims and Christians. Revealing the truth of the matter, Hope Waddell, the man who pioneered Presbyterianism in West Africa, during a conference of Protestant missionaries in Liverpool in 1860 posits that:

...one of the common mistakes made by missionaries was to assume that an enthusiastic reception in a new community meant enthusiasm for the gospel. The crowd may have a thousand-and-one reasons for their enthusiasm other than true interest in Christianity.⁴²

On the genuineness of converts at the time, oral traditions⁴³ confirm what Kalu posit: There were variations of an instrumental approach to religion: some converted so as to gain wealth, new status, knowledge, security, exemption from forced labour, safety and success in competition either at a personal or communal level...At a different level, it could be argued that conversion to Christianity was a reaction to certain elements in the

African world view: a basic instrumentalist approach to religion and the vivid awareness of the demonic forces. These factors produced an overloading of the level of demand made on traditional religion... The structure of ATR therefore had space for the co-option of more potent gods when some failed... Many people took the Christian God to be a more potent god... Thus, Christianity triumphed when the gods of the fathers could no longer protect.⁴⁴

iv. Covert rejection and hostility: The pioneering Christians were arraigned in the Native Court for alleged murder cases while in some cases, they found it difficult to secure land from their kinsmen who were adherents of African Traditional Religion. Though mission schools, churches, hospitals, orphanages, women's sewing classes and other 'hand-maid' institutions were established, the strategy did not in good time prove appropriate, considering the forbidden lands (groves) they were reluctantly given by the natives, the vast area and population to be covered. In fact, many of them were not only intimidated with the problem of penetrating through the "impenetrable jungle" said to shelter mosquitoes, but were also established in places separate from where the people ordinarily lived. Abolarin attests that:

...both services and the lessons took place at Jacob Seweje's residence... Seweje's residence was the first church and school building in Isinland. Later when the number increased, a demand for a church land was requested from Oba Olaoye of Owu, which he granted along Iji road in 1928. ...the Christians were first given a plot of Ogbaiye burial site for the construction of the church building.⁴⁵

However, there were few exceptions where a ruler of a community invited a missionary. In this case, it was easier for mission work to diffuse in the society. Even then, evidence shows that the material aspect was given more encouragement than the religious aspect; people may be more interested in the school work than in the church aspect.⁴⁶ Until much later, when the natives were recruited and trained as interpreters, catechists and teachers; many early missionaries were said to have preached for hours without positive response from their audience. Many were said to be only more interested in the physical appearance of the missionaries whose (white) complexion was rather different from theirs.

v. Persecutions- As Tommie Titcombe's experience in Sophie de la Haye's *Tread Upon the Lion*⁴⁷ revealed the series of persecutions faced in Yagbaland, several missionaries (like Guy Playfair in Oro Ago) and sometimes, their agents/converts also in Igbominaland, were kidnapped and imprisoned, offered poisonous foods, got their huts razed down, openly threatened with *juju* (charms) by the traditionalists and sometimes by the Muslims. Describing the situation of the disbanded Christians (i.e. Agbakin Ekundayo, Thomas Oladimeji, and others) in Isanlu Isin, Abolarin attests thus:

The Christians, having seen that their lives were in danger in Isanlu community, and having been convinced that they could no longer abide by the rules and regulations of the community against the Christian Mission ran for their lives. Thus in 1923, Thomas Oladimeji and his group fled for their lives and found their way to Lagos to look for job. This was how the first attempt of planting Christianity under the auspices of the Seventh Day Adventist Mission failed in Isanlu and the entire Isinland...⁴⁸

vi. Boycott of Western Education: Education was the Christians' surest means of making converts. Characteristically, children find it easier to accept change than adults. Parents found it difficult to release their children for school. Igbominaland was a rural farming area where human labour was the only means of production. Thus, children were economically useful. While the adults work on the farm, the children fetched water and firewood, tended the babies, ran errands, helped to carry produce and in various ways are useful to their parents. Releasing them for school meant much sacrifice and the benefits of school education were not so apparent as to make such sacrifices worthwhile. For this reason, some parents demanded to be paid for allowing their children to attend school.⁴⁹

vii. Resentments and suspicion by the Islamic clerics: It was said that the CMS in its 1908 Conference resolved that "the rapid growth of Mohammedanism in Yoruba country calls for serious consideration and prompt action on the part of the church."⁵⁰ Islamic clerics who realized early enough the implication of Christianity and its civilization did house to house campaign to Muslim parents to disallow the missionaries from preaching to them. As the traditionalists eventually resorted to diabolic attacks, the help of *Isabi alfas* known to be seers was sought, in order to frustrate the efforts of the missionaries, and puncture the zeal of the early converts. This was evident in Ila Orangun, Oro, Isanlu- Isin, Oro Ag?, Omu-Aran, Arandun, Ajas?, Omupo, Igbaja, etc. As a result, like previously noted, most Muslim parents prevented their children from imbibing the western education and their daughters from getting married to a Christian convert. Some Muslim girls that clamoured for western education had to escape from their parents' houses to Girls' College (a boarding school), in Oro Ag?, with the hope that they would be protected against any form of persecution. Many of such Muslim girls ended up becoming Christians. Among these i.e. were Mrs Comfort Balogun (Iwo), Mrs Ebul Olawoye (Oro Ag?), Late Mrs Margret Abejide Oniyide (Oro Ag?), Late Mrs Deborah Akanbi (Owu), Late Mrs Mary Alege Oni (Oro Ag?), etc.⁵¹ Some of them were denounced by their parents because of their new faith. This was in accordance with the situation elsewhere captured by Fafunwa that:

The Muslim leaders and many of their followers rightly sensed the motives of the Christian Missions and therefore opposed Christianity-oriented education for their children. The Muslims knew even as far back

was the 1840s that if their children went to Christian schools they would return home as Christians.⁵²

vii. Establishment of alternative (Muslim) Schools: When most Muslim parents realized they could no longer afford to prevent their children from being educated and "westernized", the only alternative was to establish their own schools. This development was partly attested to that 'In some parts of Igbomina, there have been demands by Moslems either for Moslem religious trainings in schools or for 'community schools i.e. schools not under missionary control.'⁵³

Hence, some joint Islamic schools were established, where education took the form of memorization and recitation of Arabic words commonly called *Koranic Schools* (*Ilé kéwú*). These schools included: Ansar Islam Primary School, Edidi-Alla; Jama'at Nasir Primary School, Owu (owned by Iwo, Owu, Iji, Pamo, Oke-Aba and Ijara); Qur'anic schools at Owu, Iwo, Oro, etc. In the later years, Islamic Secondary Schools were established i.e. Ansarul Islam Primary School Edidi-Alla; Jama'at Nasir Primary School, Owu (jointly owned by Iwo, Owu, Iji, Pamo, Oke-Aba and Ijara). This development consequently pacified majority of the dissatisfied Muslim parents on the one hand and both healthy and unhealthy rivalries between the Christian and Muslim schools.

viii. Strangeness of Christianity's condemnation of polygamy: The preaching and teaching on monogamy and the stark reaction to this stringent development shook the church. The Church for instance, specified crystal clear that any man who wished to be baptized or married had to abandon all his wives but one. Many 'adherents' of the new faith, who could not forsake the age-long practice, left some denominations to some more liberal denominations because polygamy to them had received the blessings of men fold in Africa. Ayandele justifies that 'wives of a polygamist in traditional society do not feel themselves injured or denied of any freedom, nor were they unhappy with their lots.'⁵⁴ In her own view, Christine Obbo bluntly agrees with her respondent that:

It is better to be married to a man with many wives because it gives each woman more control and autonomy since the man cannot control them all. In a monogamous marriage, the man claims all your labour, sometimes he may even bring home illegitimate children.⁵⁵

On another hand, the conspicuous relaxation of the doctrine for the eminent personalities in the traditional Igbomina society (i.e. ? *bas/Baal's*), generated resentment on why the *one-man, one wife* and the *for better for worse* doctrines binding on the faithful commoners should let go the VIPs. This consequently made many converts to be superficial in their faith.

ix. Indigenization/Africanization of Religion- Following the Christian awakening, there emerged two mainstreams within the Christian Church in Africa at large: the *mission church* and the *indigenous church*. African Independent Churches (*Aladura*

Church i.e. CAC, Cherubim and Seraphim) emerged much later with the aim of relating the indigenous experience to Christianity. The native founders were at one time in their Christian life being members of the mission churches but separated from them due to doctrinal differences. In the light of this, some writers have tended to describe indigenous churches as separatist, sectarian, pagan revivalism or 'Pentecostal'; others see them as anti-white, political or racialist.⁵⁶ The trend of Protestantism (Independent Church Movement) since the colonial era reveals the setting up of indigenous churches under their indigenous leaders (*Alàgbà/Bàbá Ìj?*) and forms of worship, which bring elements of the independent culture into Christianity. Such practices introduced include clapping of hands, dancing, singing, use of traditional instruments and tunes (*juju, apala, sakara* and folk proverbs), praise singing (tributes to founders), use of water/candles to pray, etc. This is in line with Otite and Ogionwo who reveal that:

Christian-religion has faced a high degree of Africanization especially in recent years not only in relation to the hierarchy of pastors, priests, bishops, etc but also in relation to the form of worship. Masses and communions may now be conducted using indigenous languages in place of Latin in the Catholic Church. African drums may be sounded with songs in the local language to give the flavour of an African setting, similar to the religion of the Aladuras.⁵⁷

Conclusion

The paper discussed an epoch in Igbomina history and the incursion of Christianity in Igbomina land, C.1895-1960. The period examined marked when the various Christian missions propagated the gospel and their doctrines via evangelism, establishment of mission stations, schools, medical services, radio stations, orphanages, Christian education bookshops, entrepreneurial skills, scholarships, gifts to converts, etc. It was however, strongly argued that Christianity in the region did not have a smooth sail across the bay. This is because it encountered numerous challenges and negative responses from the natives, colonial administrators and Muslim clerics. Ever since, Christianity and its civilization had a direct influence on Traditional Religion as well as Islam from which it drew its adherents. Traditional Religion, once powerfully entrenched in Igbominaland, has declined under pressure of more vigorous missionary religions, European culture and modernization. In a situation where Islam and Christianity on the one hand, and the European culture on the other hand, had the literacy which indigenous religions lacked, the incursions of these foreign faiths into the traditional societies were generally unstoppable. This is because the attractions they brought could not be ignored, as they were really formidable. This explains the fact, that in spite of all efforts to generally Africanize Christianity, the strength of the religion still prevailed, as the foundation of African socio-cultural life had been shaken to its core.

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GLOBALIZATION MATRIX IN EXACERBATION OF ARMED BANDITRY IN NIGERIA: THE ZAMFARA STATE EXPERIENCE, 2011-2020

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Abstract

Fundamentally, a country overwhelm with democratic governance birthed by globalisation tends to be affected and distressed with plethora of armed banditry activities. This is because globalisation matrix in Nigerian States has spawned and foisted an act of cultural universalisation of ideas and ideologues antithetical to good governance. This created serious dichotomies between the 'haves' and 'have not,' and directly and indirectly consequence in deepening impoverishment due to unusual and unequal gains. Over the years, the north-western part of Nigeria which Zamfara State is a part has been dastardly shrouded with numerous pugnacities arising from armed banditry, kidnapping etc. Its corollary has climaxed to breakdown of law and order. Armed banditry is a vague concept of criminality, and in modern usage, it is synonymous to gangsterism, brigandage, marauding and thievery. Their incursion rears its ugly head in Zurmi in 2011 and its spill-over effects are felt all over Zamfara State and beyond. Since then, armed banditry has been likened to conventional business of raiding in various unimaginable dimensions for their survival. Up to 2020, banditry has remained an organized crime committed by outlaws typically involving threat such as forceful extortion, rustling, robbery and murder either as an individual or group. Others constitute sexual assault like rape and defilement, and people are killed for no reason with farm produce destroyed. Consequently, the sordid and deplorable situations culminated to displacement of abled-bodied youths, men and women as well as redirection of the State and country's limited financial resources towards conflicts mitigation and mortification. This inhibited the achievement of meaningful development in Zamfara State unattainable. Against the foray, apart from the introduction, the study investigated the underlying causes and operation; nexus between globalisation and banditry; provenance of armed banditry membership and funding; globalisation matrix and exacerbation of armed banditry, and finally the conclusion. The methodology

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