

**CHRISTIANITY DISPUTES AGAINST AWKA TRADITIONAL
RELIGION 1889-1904**

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2019044021

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

FACULTY OF ARTS

NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA

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TITLE PAGE

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**A SPECIAL RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL
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**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMNETS FOR
THE AWARD OF A BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE.**

SUPERVISOR: MRS NGOZI OKWUOSA

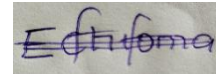
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CERTIFICATION

I, Chukwudozie Chioma Delight (with Reg No, 2019044021) hereby certify that, I am responsible for the research entitled “Christianity disputes against Awka Traditional Religion 1889-1904”, submitted to the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria and this is an original work which has not been submitted to the university or any other institution for the award of a degree or diploma.

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CHRISTIANITY DISPUTES AGAINST AWKA TRADITIONAL RELIGION 1889-1904.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty and also to my parents Mr and Mrs Chukwudozie, and to my siblings, Onyeka, Chinedu and Ebele Chukwudozie for their moral support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere appreciation goes to Almighty God for the gift of life as well as giving me the strength to undergo this work.

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Also, the success of this work goes to my parents Mr and Mrs P.I. Chukwudozie, and to my siblings Onyeka, Chinedu, Ebele and Chisom.

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CHUKWUDOZIE CHIOMA DELIGHT.

ABSTARCT

This work research digs into the historical Christianity disputes against Awka traditional religion, with a focus on Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State. It examines the religious conflicts that occurred in Awka from 1889-1904. The study utilizes data collected from primary and secondary sources, including oral interviews, textbooks, journals, and magazines. It provides an overview of the brief history of Awka, its people, and their traditions. Additionally, the research explores the factors that led to the arrival of missionaries in Awka and highlights their significant and contribution to the community, in order to Christianize Awka. Furthermore, it investigates the role of Awka elders in defending their traditional beliefs against outside influences, as they perceived the traditional way of worship as the true form of homage to “Chukwu”. The study also reveals how these historical disputes continue to influence present-day religious practices, with some individuals or families practicing both Christianity and traditional beliefs in an attempt to reconcile conflicting spiritual allegiances.

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MAPS OF AWKA SHOWING DIFFERENT LOCAL GOVERNMENT



CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The concept of dispute in Awka in terms of religion has been a historical one, having a major impact. The word dispute can mean to quarrel or argue, but it can also mean to take exception to something. A dispute can be sensed in two different forms either in positive form or negative form, but it is perceived as a negative approach because it tends to use an aggressive manner to sort out things that ought to be resolved either through dialogue or a mediator.¹

The word *tradition* itself derives from the Latin word *tradere* meaning to transmit, to hand over, to give for safekeeping. Tradition is a system of beliefs or behaviors (folk customs) passed down within a group of people or society with symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past, traditions can persist and evolve for thousands of years through oral transmission down to generations. Awka as of the early days were known to be a traditional state, where various forms of idol worship was strictly inherent to, this traditional act was part of their daily lives and cease not to influence their decisions, this traditional act was passed on from their fore father's or ancestors to generations and today, it is majorly seen that this practices are still in taking place in some homes.²

Christianity (/kristʃiˈænti/) is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus. It is the world's largest and most widespread religion with roughly 2.4 billion followers, comprising around 31.2% of the world population. Its adherents, known as Christians, are estimated to make up a majority of the population in 157 countries and territories. Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God, whose coming as the Messiah was prophesied in the Hebrew Bible (called the Old Testament in Christianity) and chronicled in the New Testament.³

Christianity was introduced in Awka in 1903 by the Church Missionary Society.

Specific disputes that arose as a result of the advent of Christianity in Awka, a town in southeastern Nigeria, may not be extensively documented in historical records. However, it's possible to generalize some of the common tensions and dispute that often occurred when Christianity was introduced to traditional African communities:

Religious Tensions: The introduction of Christianity to Awka created religious tensions. Traditional religious practitioners and leaders viewed Christianity as a threat to their indigenous beliefs and practices, leading to debates and disputes over religious authority and truth and also the destruction of the Agbala oracle, which was an idol that meant so much to the people, for instance, the traveling Aro merchants and the Awka blacksmith do consult the Agbala oracle to guide them on their journey, this oracle was feared and revered by the neighboring town, but the Missionaries destroyed this oracle and this led to the religious

dispute. The acquisition of land for churches and missionary activities could have led to disputes with local communities, especially if this land was traditionally used for other purposes.

Cultural Clashes: Traditional practices, rituals, and cultural norms often conflicted with Christian teachings and values. For example, aspects of traditional ceremonies or rites of passage or the aspect of traditional burial rites and things akin to them were termed paganism and seen as incompatible with Christian doctrine.

Conversion Efforts: Christian missionaries typically sought to convert local populations. The process of conversion led to resistance, especially among those who wished to maintain their traditional beliefs. Some individuals and communities may have resisted conversion efforts.

Social and Political Dynamics: The introduction of Christianity had an influence on social and political dynamics in Awka. Traditional leaders and authorities may have been challenged by the influence of Christian missionaries and their followers, leading to power struggles because the socio--political system that existed in Awka before the advent of Christianity was known as Genealogy which means power was concentrated to families, kindred, lineage, etc.

Syncretism: In some cases, people attempted to blend elements of both traditional religion and Christianity, creating syncretic belief systems. This syncretism tends to lead to tensions within both religious communities.⁴

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Generally, the dispute in Awka deteriorated the economic, social and political development in the society. This dispute brought about insecurities and misunderstandings among the people in their community. This work tend to tackle and reconcile issues which generated as a result of physical contact between the traditionalist and Christianity religion based on the available historical fact and date. Traditional religion in Awka was the pillar of strength for the people and acted as a unifying factor, but when this religion was threatened, the people naturally reacted against any form of encroachment placed on their religion by external influences.

Before this dispute was solved or looked upon, the very ugly incident it caused did bring about a feeling of insecurity in the Awka community, during that period Awka indigenous people were known for their festival activities and blacksmithing. The traditional and Christian dispute in Awka is seen as a product of struggle and control of the real ownership of the affairs of the community and their land. Thus, the traditionalist believes that interference by Christianity would jeopardize their chances of obeying the law of their fatherland and their cultural activities. They believe that the same way the Westerners had their

own culture and religion is also the same as that of the black man, everyone has their own religion that suits them so therefore no one should interfere with each other practices or religion. The major work of this research is to analyze the basic problem faced by the indigenous people of Awka resulting from the advent of Christianity and provide how this problem was solved.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This project work aims to unveil the remote and immediate causes of the conflict between the early 90's in the Awka community. This work also tends to elaborate more on the relationship between the parties involved in the crises and the communities that started the dispute. The dispute encountered did show some positive and negative impacts in which there was a period of restoration of peace between the two religions and some segregation between them.

SIGNIFICANT OF THE STUDY

The aim of researching and unveiling the remote dispute led by Christianity towards Awka traditional religion is to enlighten the people who might not have the slightest idea of these dispute which took place. The importance of this work is also to analyze the problem and recommend a possible solution to this problem and how this solution ought to stop the future reoccurrences of such religious segregation from happening and also harmonies these two religions to have a good relationship in the communities.

Although this work is not in any way claiming to have done all the required findings are but at least it has made a significant impact in bringing out an ugly relationship between the two religions. This research work can also be of great benefit to all other communities who are still struggling to find a balance between one religion or the other.

SCOPE OF STUDY

The research focuses on the Christianity disputes against Awka traditional religion. The study covers the period of 1889 to 1904. It also represents the period of the reliable oral tradition given by the trusted elders of the Awka community. Attempts were also made to provide facts concerning this issue and to point out areas of problems generated as a result of this dispute. It also covers the area of resolution and peaceful handling of the affairs of the communities.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The method used in bringing out the facts of this work involved recording and interpretation of data collected from the indigenous elders of the Awka community. I also did get to read written records of distinguished scholars on African traditional religion with particular attention in Awka.

This research carryout met some challenges which is basically common in this field of work. While undergoing this research work, the researcher was confronted with problems in terms of oral interviews and not keeping to the appointed schedule fixed due to financial challenges. Some elderly men in the community sometimes refuse to provide adequate and concrete information due to forgetfulness (old age) which would have made this work easier. Also, there was a lack of sufficient funds to travel to different places in search of information, especially to different locations/villages in Awka town.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study combines thematic and chronological methods of historical data presentation in the process of carrying out the study. The data were collected from two major sources. These sources include primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data were accumulated based on oral interviews conducted with some of the notable and knowledgeable men and women in the Awka community. The secondary sources are information generated from textbooks, magazines, online journals, and archives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review has been designed to address the various implications encountered on this subject matter regarding the disputes between the traditional religion and Christianity in Awka. There are numerous perspectives relating to the traditions and Christianity in Awka.

Amaka Okafor in his work "*The Awka People*" noted that Awka people of Anambra State in South-Eastern Nigeria were traditionally itinerant blacksmiths of the Igbo ethnic group, The Awka man guarded his craft jealousy and also tend to leave his home in search of a market for his skills and returns yearly. ⁵

According to Basden, G. T. "*Among the Ibos of Nigeria*" covers the customs, beliefs, social structure, and religious practices of the Ibo people, he also observe Ibos forms of marriage customs, family life, and economic practices. In terms of religion of the Ibo people, they place their importance on ancestral worship and Christianity practices.⁶

M. O. Ene "*The fundamental of Odinani*" emphasize that Odinani means Earth Deity, in which the Igbos worship in form of chineke. The Igbo attitude towards Chineke is unlike that of Euro-Christianity: Chineke has been a form that humans can conceive nor perceive. Odinani is about doing the right things, following

the dictates of our personal providence, Chi. Failure to do so, Agwu or other potent evil forces takes over such person, but once we are peace with Chi, we shall be on our way to our destiny. Which is why the Igbo say: “I buru Chi gi uzo, I gbagbue onwe gi n’oso” (if you walk before your Chi, you will do the race of your life).⁷

Emmanuel Nnachor “*The meaning and significant of Otite Anambra Festival*” emphasized on the mode of celebrating Otite Anam, because farming is the main occupation of the people, our fathers used Otite Festival day to offer sacrifices to their ancestors, thanking them for the bumper harvest of the year or, in the year of scanty harvest, sued for the reversal of the harsh year in the following years ahead.⁸

Mary Blossom Chinyelum “*Theatre of life Rituals, Transition and progression among the Igbo*” emphasized the ritual rite in Igbo communities, which bring about the real flavor of every Igbo performance. Rituals reflect life in action, and this rite were seen as a form of identity to the Igbos which also serve as a form of purification and sanctification. The Igbos ritual were involved in the mood of burial, marriages, childbirth, title taking, and festival period as it was a form of praising the gods for the good deeds in the land.⁹

Patrick Enoch Nmah “*Christianity and Awka Socio- Religion Cultural identity crisis*” emphasized on problem of religious and cultural conflict, the issues involved in conflict were the Imo Awka festival, burial rites (ikponye aja n’illi- dust- to- dust rite), and okuko onye uwa (hen sacrificed to family deity to validate a marriage bond). It was recommended among others that the church and the Awka people should in the way of resolving conflict situation use the least expensive method without much acrimony.¹⁰

According to Emmanuel Ikechukwu “*Resurrecting Igbo cultural values through folklore: Egwu Onwa*” emphasized on Folklore as a fundamental aspect of the Igbo traditional culture, which refers to the traditional art, literature, knowledge and practice that are disseminated largely through oral communication. Long before our societies transited into global villages, egwu onwa-moonlight activities were rich sources of not just entertainment but education and training of the younger generation. It remained a repository source of knowledge that deepened and transmitted the grandiose cultural values, worldview. Nightly activity, ‘egwu onwa’ ranks among the treasured aspects of folklore among the Igbo people in Nigeria, whereby many decades ago before the invention of cinema, gramophone, radio, television, and internet services. This people reopens conversation moonlight games. Through samples of moonlight games collected in Nise, a town in Awka South LGA of Anambra State, in the Eastern part of Nigeria, the study reexamines these moonlight activities in the light of their communal importance and seeks to re-establish their relevance in our present day society motivated by the dearth of moonlight activities.¹¹

According to Onukwube Alfred in this book “*Christianity in Awka: faith or syncretism*” emphasis on difficulties encountered by Awka region, which has resulted into the practices of vain syncretism by those who profess Christianity today, whereby having a mixed belief in terms of adding their Christianity with

sorcery, witchcraft, moon gods and animal dieties. This book also emphasized that Christian faith in Awka should be based on total Christo-centric and Sola scriptura.¹²

END NOTES

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CHAPTER TWO

LOCATION AND PHYSICAL FEATURES OF AWKA

Oka (Awka) means Okacha (The Greatest), before the advent of the White man, the Awka people were forced to reckon with the economic and social history of Igboland in the pre-colonial period. Like the Aro, they were oracle agents and long-distance traders who traversed the whole of Igboland and beyond unmolested in the pursuit of their business, but in contrast to the Aro, the Awka-Igbo were metal smiths, who were reputed as the major manufacturer and suppliers of farming tools and military hardware to many communities in Igboland and beyond. There is also a suggestion that Awka people were the pioneers of iron technology in Igboland and would also appear to have played a considerable role in the spread of technology to many parts of Igboland and to many places as far away as the Venue Valley to the North and Isoko area in the Niger Delta.

Awka, being the capital of Anambra state of Nigeria is situated 72 kilometers South-West of Enugu, it is also located about 35 kilometers North-East of Onitsha, the commercial nerve center of South-Eastern Nigeria. The town is one of the earliest towns in Igbo land, also Awka is roughly enclosed by longitudes 70114 and 70814 east and latitudes 60104 and 6015 north.

The town is bounded on the North by Amansea on the West by Okpuno, on the East by Isiagu, on the South-East by Nibo, and on the South by Nawfia. It is on an elevation of about 153.9 meters feet above sea level. It covers an area of approximately 25 square kilometers.

Awka is completely dominated by the Awka-orlu uplands. These uplands form part of the main scrap land of southeast Nigeria.¹

The north part is on a higher elevation than the southern part. The principal rock groups are sand, stones, and laterites. The rocks have been modified by erosion, resulting in an undulating landscape and Mang gullies, prominent among these gullies are those of Imoka and Nnioku. Obizi and Obibia are the most important rivulets, the former flows from the southeast and the latter from the southwest, and both flow to the northeast, where they join the Mamu River, a tributary of Anambra.

The soil in Awka is now said to be acidic and poor, the poverty of the soil is reportedly due to the fact that it has a poorly developed profile which is structurally unstable and therefore readily given to degradation and erosion.²

Furthermore, there is the problem of intensive cultivation with little or no effort made to replenish the soil, the burning of bushes and farmlands has considerably contributed to the destruction of the soil nutrients, in addition to the problem of soil destruction which is also caused by over farming, resulting from the increase in population.

The Igbo attitude to land alienation has been understood from pre-colonial Nigeria, in the sense that most people regarded land as a form of capital made available and also serves as a means of livelihood, this land was jealously guarded.³

In Awka, the rainfall begins in April and ends gradually in the month of November, they are heaviest between the months of June and September. The total annual rainfall is about 175cm. The end of the rainy season also marks the beginning of the dry season, when the annual temperature falls below 80F. From late November to early February, Awka people experience the cool weather known as **Ugulu-harmattan**.

The entire Awka is located in the tropical rainforest belt of the North equatorial region of West Africa, but the rainforest has virtually disappeared owing to over-civilization, forest burning, and clearing for settlement.⁴

However, it is also stressed that some patches of this forest still exist today in groves that mark the shrines of local deities. Prominent among these is **Olulu Imoka** (Imoka Grove). However, open palm forests interspersed with various species of trees as well as open grassland still exist.

The open spaces are always found in the center of the villages with compound doors opening into them the view from the air, one would find a rectangular mud house with thatched roofs radiating from large open spaces used as playgrounds, marketplaces, public squares, or sites of village festivals. To quote Sir Henry Johnson, " Igbo towns have a character with rectangular well-built houses of clay and thatch." The head of the family is often married to many wives. There are two major divisions in Awka town, which are **Ezi** and **Ifite**. Ifite comprises **Ayom na Okpala, Nkwelle, Amachalla, Ezi-Awka, and Agulu** villages while the Ezi section occupies the low land (Ngbede) of Awka. The Ezi section consists of three quarters, Amikwo, Agulu, and Ezioka. Each village is further divided into maximal lineages. In total, there are thirty-three maximal lineages: these lineages are well linked by a network of roads. Awka people belong to the Igbo whose distinct cultural features are highly developed based on **Eze** or **Ozo** title.⁵

2.2 ORIGIN AND MIGRATIONS

Awka, also known as Oka, is the capital city of Anambra state in Nigeria. It was declared the capital on August 21, 1991, after the creation of Anambra and Enugu state, which moved the capital from Enugu to Awka. The city has an estimated population of 301,657 as of the 2006 Nigerian census and over 2.5 million as of the 2018 estimate.⁶

Available evidence indicates that Awka has been inhabited for centuries. However, the story of Awka's origin cannot be plotted in a straight-line graph. From the present state of our knowledge of Awka history, three theories of our Awka origin have emerged. The first one suggests that the Awka people originated from the East (Egypt, Israel, and Arabia), while the second holds that they were originally of Nnobi extraction. The third theory, which is popular among the people, talks of independent generation or autochthony. According to Leanald, Basen, and Afigbo, one may conclude that the Awka area has been permanently and continuously settled by the same group of people. If that is so, it can be concluded that Awka people have been living in the same area for centuries, maybe from the Neolithic period.

Although the second theory of Awka origin suggests that the Awka people were originally of Nnobi extraction, it is deficient in a number of important particulars. No date is given when the ancestors left Nnobi for Awka. The theory is also silent about the leader of the emigrants and possible routes of migration. It also does not state whether or not the emigrants stopped on the way.

On the other hand, most of the other informants did not support this theory. Instead, they maintain that Awka people have always been in the place they have been inhabiting and that the story of Nnobi should be ignored. Other informants suggest that Awka-Nnobi has nothing to do with Nnobi. They show that Awka derived her name from Okacha. From the foregoing, it would appear that the Awka people did not originate from Nnobi. This also becomes clearer if we look at a work on the Nnobi history written by C.C. Ezenyem.⁷ Awka is one of the oldest settlements in Igboland, established at the center of the Nri civilization, which produced the earliest documented bronze works in Sub-Saharan Africa, around 800 A.D., and was in the cradle of civilization at large. The earliest settlers of Awka were the Ifiteana people, renowned as farmers, hunters, and adept ironworkers, who indigenously inhabited the banks of the Ogwugwu stream, in what is now known as the Nkwele ward of the city.⁸

There are thirty-three patricide villages in Awka, except for Umudioka and Agulu village. No one knows where the thirty-three villages came from due to the lack of evidence containing the migration tradition. Some of the men in town say that "Awka has been in existence from the beginning of the world." Even the two villages (Umudioka and Agulu) with traditions of migration claimed their origin from neighboring core Igbo areas. All indications are that these villages with no tradition of migrations amalgamated into one for the sake of defense, good neighboring, and conscious relationships.

2.3 SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND COMMUNITY PATTERN IN AWKA

In general, Awka is an undulating land fairly conducive to compact settlement. Considering that the North end has a slightly higher altitude than the southern end and that the land arises sharply at the southeast end and gradually from the northeast with the north descending a stretch of marshland and leaving the west an almost continuous level land punctuated by brooks to topography is that of the land. The only major stream is the **Obibia**. It is a distributary of Ezu, a tributary of River Niger. The settlement pattern by the Awka people brought about changes in their socio-political organization in the community.⁹

THE COMMUNITY PATTERN

Awka is a predominantly urban area with a growing population which has experienced significant urbanization and infrastructural development in recent years, with a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional areas. The community pattern of Awka can be seen in several aspects:

1. **Building pattern:** Awka buildings are typically made of cement and conjugated iron sheets.
2. **Educational Institutions pattern:** Awka is home to several educational institutions, including universities, colleges, and schools. The Nnamdi Azikiwe University, one of Nigeria's foremost federal universities, and Anambra State University (Igbariam) are located in Awka. The presence of these educational institutions contributes to the intellectual and academic remark of Awka, which has attracted various non-indigenous people.
3. **Market Pattern:** Awka has several markets that cater to the needs of its residents and visitors, serving as important economic and social centers within the local government area. Here are some notable markets in Awka:
 - **Eke-Awka Market:** The largest and most popular market in Awka, located in the heart of the capital city of Anambra State. The market operates on designated market days and offers a wide variety of goods, including foodstuffs, clothing, household items, electronics, and more.
 - **Ose Okwodu Market:** A bustling market located in Okpuno, a community within Awka. The market offers a wide range of goods, including fresh produce, food items, clothing, household goods, and more.
 - **Nkwo Mma Market:** Situated in Amawbia, a town within Awka, Nkwo Mma Market is known for its agricultural produce, including fresh fruits, vegetables, and other food items. It also offers a variety of other goods, such as clothing, fabrics, kitchen traditional Igbo dishes and international cuisines like Nni Oka (white yam pottage), Onugbu soup, and Ofe Nsala (white soup). These markets in Awka provide a vibrant

and bustling atmosphere, where vendors and buyers come together to engage in trade and commerce. They not only serve as economic centers but also provide opportunities for social interactions and cultural exchange utensils, and more.

4. Food Pattern: Awka offers a diverse culinary scene, with a variety of

It is important to point out here that the community pattern of Awka is as old as Awka itself.

2.4 POLITICAL ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

Awka before the coming of the British government in 1905 was a city-state having its own government laws and social organization. Before we go into an analysis of government and politics in pre-colonial Awka, it is necessary to outline the political structure of the town as this would lead to a better understanding of the subject matter. Awka is made up of several villages. Each village is divided into **Onuku** (maximal lineages) and its members regard themselves as descendants of the founding father of the village. Though they have a common name, intermarriage is also possible not within one maximal lineage. Each maximal lineage had no market of its own, but the members shared common rituals and shrines and combined them for administrative purposes. Each **Onuku**, according to evidence is divided into two or more obu (major lineages). Here again, as in the case of the maximal lineage, the people believed themselves to have been descended from the sons of the founder of the maximal lineage. The

Obu is further divided into two or more **Umunna** (maximal lineage). The **Umunna** is in turn divided into **Ezi-na-uno** (nuclear family). Awka political organization may have some features that are common to other Igbo communities, yet there are some differences. However, there is no evidence to assert that the Awka people came under a powerful king, emperor, or overlord. It is also clear that there is much centralized authority in the village and the village-group, because whenever a number of individuals or units form a political community anywhere there must be a certain degree of centralization of authority.

The smallest unit of political organization in Awka was the **Ezi-na-uno** (nuclear family). The unit was made up of a man, his wife or wives, his married sons and their wives, his unmarried sons and daughters, and then of course, house servants and slaves, if he had any. The head of the family is usually addressed as Nnanyi (our father). He is basically powerful in his home and reserved the right to discipline members of the family. One of the roles of the family head is basically to settle disputes and command respect and reverence. The family head in conjunction with the adult members, could also make rules to regulate the behavior of members of the family, also when a serious matter arises that could not be resolved between the families, such matters are mostly referred to the **Umunna** (minimal lineage).

The **Umunna** is usually headed by the oldest man within the lineage who is looked upon as the representative of the ancestors on earth, hence he is held in high esteem. At times the **Umunna** tries to settle disputes privately, but whenever he fails, he would summon a meeting of the elders of the lineage in his house. At

the meeting, both sides would be allowed to state their cases, after hearing from both sides a general consultation will take place and the head would announce the decision decided among themselves.

Apart from the meeting of the elders of the lineage, there is also a general meeting of all the male adults which could be held to apportion farmlands for the coming season or discuss religious or other matters that might arise before the lineage. The usual venue for both the meeting of elders and the general assembly was the Obu (ancestor temple), where the attention and assistance of the ancestors might be invoked through the lineage deities.

Matters that could not be dealt with by the minimal lineage were usually referred to as the Obu. In the case of Umunna, the oldest man is the head. He also stood in the same political position as the head of the Umunna. He presided over the lineage executive council usually comprised of heads of nuclear families and minimal lineages as well as other elders, which generally meet among other things, to settle disputes. However, when there was no unanimous decision, or neither party got to accept the decision of the Umunna, the matter is usually brought before the Onuku (maximal lineage), in order to make these parties to concede to one decision.¹⁰

Like in other units of political authority already discussed, the oldest man was basically the head of Onuku. The Onuku was almost autonomous, and it was the most effective unit of political authority in Awka. Almost all unsolved matters between individuals, families, and lineages were resolved. The cases were usually settled by the executive council of the lineage which usually comprised the elders, the age-grade next to the elders, and Ozo men. In doubtful cases, the decisions made were made through oath-taking. This is done by requiring those concerned to swear to the truth of their statement or claim upon any Alusi (deity) eg Ofufe or Ajana (Earth deity). Also, the party that called for the meeting had to provide palm wine and kola nuts for all who were represented.¹¹

The village group executive council was probably the highest court of the land. In the council, every village had equal right to decision and weren't forced to accept decisions they never wanted or agreed with. The council could also discuss relations between Awka and her neighbors. The council was usually headed by the Otochalu-Awka, the traditional head and the oldest man in Awka. Apart from the village group council, a general meeting of the entire Awka people in the pre-colonial era was a rare emergency measure, taken only when there was an external menace, such as impending conflict. Traditions indicate that there were elements of kingship in the ideas and practices relating to the traditional head of Awka a situation which contradicts the view generally held that the Igbo, excepting few communities, do not have kings (Igbo-enwe-Eze). According to our evidence, the traditional ruler of Awka in the precolonial period was the oldest man in the town. He was addressed as the Otochalu-Awka or Nnanyi (kings). He forms the symbol of unity in the community.

The traditional head of Awka in the precolonial times received tributes called Ifenru .Thus, certain designated parts of certain animals killed at any time by the Awka people were given to the Otochalu-Awka. He also received voluntary gifts from those who went to him to ask for his blessing as the oldest living Awka man.

The succession to the throne of Otochalu-Awka was not done by election or inheritance. When the traditional head died, he wasn't regarded as officially dead by the Awka people until one year from the actual date of his death. When the time was due to declare the Otochalu-Awka, the oldest man of the most senior age set would declare himself as the Otochalu-Awka at the mass meeting of the Awka people. Usually, there was no rival against the position of the Otochalu because the candidate was generally known to be the oldest in the age set in Awka. The Otochalu-Awka designate then gets to invite all Awka men to his compound to celebrate his first formal appearance and the presentation of his Ofo (staff of office), these men are entertained with palm wine and kola nut. The Otochalu-Awka was a constitutional monarch.



Another institution embracing all Awka people apart from the Otochalu-Awka was the title associations, they included Amanwulu, Chi, Ifejioke, Ajaija, and Ozo. Of all these associations, the highest was Ozo.

In order to obtain any of these titles in the precolonial period, one had to pay a stipulated amount of money, apart from Ozo, other titles were taken either at the village or the lineage level. The Ozo title was open only to free-born citizens. An aspirant was normally sponsored by an Nri man, after having paid the necessary fees and giving a sufficient amount of palm wine to the existing members of the Ozo society, the aspirant had to go through the enabling ceremony to qualify as an Ozo man. The aspirant also changed his

name, choosing another name due to the circumstance, and by that, he would henceforth be saluted. Ozo titled men played an important role in the precolonial Awka politics. They helped to bring elders to deliberate on the affairs of the community. They also act as both judges and administrators. In times of crisis, most Igbo communities will rely on Ozo members for leadership

Another Awka institution was the age set (**Ulo**), which was organized into the age grade (Otu). The age sets and the age grade was vested with the executive functions of the Awka government. They act in the in the aspect of keeping the road clean, building and repairing of bridges and in times of war they defend the town. From the above analysis of the government and politics in the precolonial Awka, it would be seen that what was obtained in Awka does not appear to be exactly the same in other Igbo communities.¹²

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CHAPTER THREE

3.1 TRADITIONAL LIFESTYLE OF AWKA PEOPLE BEFORE THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY

Livelihood in Awka was based on simplicity, the houses, the general environment, the dependence upon local natural resources coupled with the easy-going spirit of the village folk and fosters had maintained a life full of extreme simplicity. Everyone aimed for a life of extreme simplicity as they were confronted with primitive conditions. In Awka every village has its village square which serves as a public meeting place. Meeting relating to various purposes was held in an open space to address any issues between an individual, groups, and organization. Also, the village square serves as a marketplace where various commodities are bought and sold.¹

Mostly, the public space serves as a playing ground for the people, particularly in the evening when the children, young men, and women come out for the moonlight play or storytelling, most times they sing, dance, and engage in other recreational activities. Another major traditional lifestyle in Awka is known as the Oso Oro. This is known as the Oro racing. A large cycle is usually made on the ground and all the playmate are invited to occupy it when a signal is given, every inmate run away from it leaving the Oro person who is the guard whose duty is to prevent the playmate from reoccupying the crude.²

Life among the Awka people is a gift from Chukwu-Okike/Chukwu (God-the-Creator). So, no matter how uneventful life may turn out, it is celebrated with elaborate rituals in thanksgiving and to keep the Igbo in favor of Chukwu. This statement sums up the Igbo view of life which begins at the time of conception. From the time a woman conceives (and all through the entire gestation period) until about six month post-delivery, she is regarded as sacred because she is carrying and nurturing a new life. Her happiness and well-being are the primary responsibility of her entire family and community who take great care to ensure that her physical and spiritual health are sustained. She is shielded from all fearful and ugly sights, for example, she is discouraged from viewing corpses or grotesque masquerades because the Igbo believe that fetuses are impressionable, and as such have the ability while in the formation stages to copy the attributes of things and people that the mother sees. As such, both the expectant mother and unborn baby are actively protected from harm from some diabolical forces. The expectant mother's diet is carefully chosen and she is closely monitored by her two mothers (her own and her mother-in-law), to ensure that she does not eat anything that may later on hurt the baby. For instance, pregnant women are advised against eating snails as they are believed to produce excessive salivation that will make the baby drool.³

Furthermore, she must be spoken to in the kindest of manners so that she may not become upset. She is exempt from any chores that she does not wish to engage in. Age commands great respect among the Igbo and while for the pregnant women, she is accorded the same respect and love only reserved for the elderly. Hence a pregnant woman is fondly referred to as Agadi nwanyi (old woman) a summation of the amount of love, care, and respect her state confers on her. The gestation period is also a time for active consultation with various deities, oracles, and ancestral spirits to enlist their protection for the expectant mother, all this is done to ensure the safe delivery of the infant. There are folktales and songs to celebrate nearly all societal events in Awka. The lyrics in the songs portray the feelings of the community in response to such events. This kind of event is carried out alongside amorous and emotional songs that reflect the joy with which the event was received during the celebration of the arrival of a newborn baby.⁴

Furthermore, they believe that the birth of a child is Chukwu's prerogative - and that it is not dependent on what material attributes couples may possess. For example, it is a common belief that no matter how intelligent, powerful, rich, beautiful, or brave couples may be, they cannot influence Chukwu into giving

them children, nor can they influence his decision about the sex of their children. So the Igbo would use names given at birth as a testimonial to affirm the pre-eminence of children. For instance, Ginikanwa (What gift is greater than a child?), Ifeyinwa (nothing compares to a child), Maduka (a person is more important than riches) and to acknowledge God as the giver of life, and names like Chinwendu (God owns all life), Chinenyenwa {God gives a child), Chinyelum (God has given this child to me) demonstrates this fact. Moreover, the Igbo are patrilineal and as such, male children ensure continuity, and couples who seek a particular sex may or may not have their wishes fulfilled. ⁵

The most popular cultural festival in Awka is the Imoka festival. During this festival, Awka people both home and abroad members are expected to participate in the festival. Masquerades from various villages in Awka are expected to assemble at Imoka shrine at NkwoAmaenyi market. The women celebrate their own a day before the men's day. On the women's day, masquerades are not allowed to perform that day while on the men's day which is the actual Imoka day masquerades are allowed to perform. It is also pertinent to point out that the Imoka festival takes place four days after the visit to the Umuokpu shrine. One of the sacred animals in Awka is the enweImoka (black monkey) which is venerated and cannot be killed by the people. This is because of the people's belief that the black monkeys are the Imoka children and that Imoka used them to inform Awka people that war is approaching Awka if there is a threat of such. ⁶

3.2 TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN AWKA BEFORE THE ADVENT OF CHRISTIANITY

It is accounted for that the religious practices in Awka involve the worship of the spirits, they believe that there is a great spirit Muo that created the world and everything in it which is known as Chukwu or Chukwu- Keluwa known as God the creator of the earth, there is also another spirit known as Alusi this spirit (god) derives its power from God. It is generally accepted by the people that these gods reflect the power of the creator who made them for certain purposes.

It is also accounted for that Awka people also believe in Chi. 'Chi' is a personalized providence from God, a spark of divine being given by God to man. 'Chi' is a guardian spirit, an individual's invisible self, a man's over soul, but in Awka Chi was a title; but it also meant a festival devoted to mothers, that is in honor of all Oka mothers. On the performance of Chi title, the Oka man had taken the first step on the ladder of social eminence. He then selected his first title-names, by which he was agreed. He acquired the right to carry as a staff called mkpalo, which was the small side-tooth of an elephant, beautifully carved in the Oka fashion.⁷ Awka people also believe that when a man dies, his physical existence is changed to that of a spirit to meet Muo and continue to exist in the spirit world. They believe that the spirit world and the physical world intermingle so that even though a person is dead, he can still be alive in the spirit world. In essence, they believe when a man dies, he is still alive and does not die forever that is why sacrifice, purification and kola nuts are made in appeasement to the spirits.⁸

Some of these gods do take the form of certain features which include: trees, rivers, iron staffs, mud pillars, thunder, fire, or stones. Although these objects listed are not the gods themselves, as some people thought, they are the dwelling places of the deities in which the deities find expression, because these deities are essentially spirits and have no form of mobility.

The Awka people have symbols that they use to represent their ancestors, these symbols may be in terms of iron staff or mud pillars. The staff is handed down from one generation to another.⁹

Awka also celebrates a yearly festival called Otite in August in honor of all the ancestors. Awka is the synonym for "Iwa ji". Ceremony elsewhere in Igboland which is popularly referred to as The New Yam Festival This festival also enables them to check and know if anyone is missing and if anyone stays away

without attending the festival will be taxed to pay a heavy fine. The first Sunday of August, (the sixth month -*onwa isii*- in our local chronological time) falls on Eke day, as the date for the yearly Otite Anam Festival, it was formerly celebrated on any chosen Eke day in August. Akputakpu is worshipped every eight months of the year (onwa an asato). During this festival, many offerings are made to the deity. The sacrifice used to be in the form of offering kola nuts, food, and drinks to their ancestors *ilo mmo* imploring them to intercede for them through their *deities* (gods) to the Almighty God (*Chi-Ukwu*).

Since the inception of Otite Festival up till today, Otite Festival day has been a day of giving gifts and alms to the less-privileged, the infirm, widows, and the aged. Today, no matter where any married daughter of an Anam man is, it has become a sacred obligation for such a daughter to send to her father and mother (whoever is still alive) mainly, four tubers of yam, fish, or (money instead of fish) and drinks at least a day, before Otite Festival day. Some well-to-do daughters even buy goats in addition to yams and drinks as well as some items like clothes, beds, and bedding, etc, and send them to their parents during Otite Festival. In turn, the Otite festival the chief priest gives each person a white chalk or izu. The izu is a representative of the Alusi and serves as a protector and help in needs. Another great festival well known in Awka is the Imoka festival (Imo Oka or Imoka festival) is an ancient cultural event that is celebrated annually by the people of Awka kingdom in May to venerate their gods. This festival features a lot of masquerades from all 33 villages of Awka which tend to last for about one week. There is also the women's festival which is during every second month of the year, most of the cultural activities within this month cater to the well-being of the women folk.¹⁰



3.3 TRADITIONAL RULES IN AWKA

There are three major rules implemented in Awka as of the Pre-colonial era, they include:

1. Iwu Rules
2. Alu Rules

Iwu Rules: this major form of rule stipulated that it was an offense for a woman to reveal the secret of masquerades, and also it is an abomination for a man to impregnate a lady without due proper marriage,

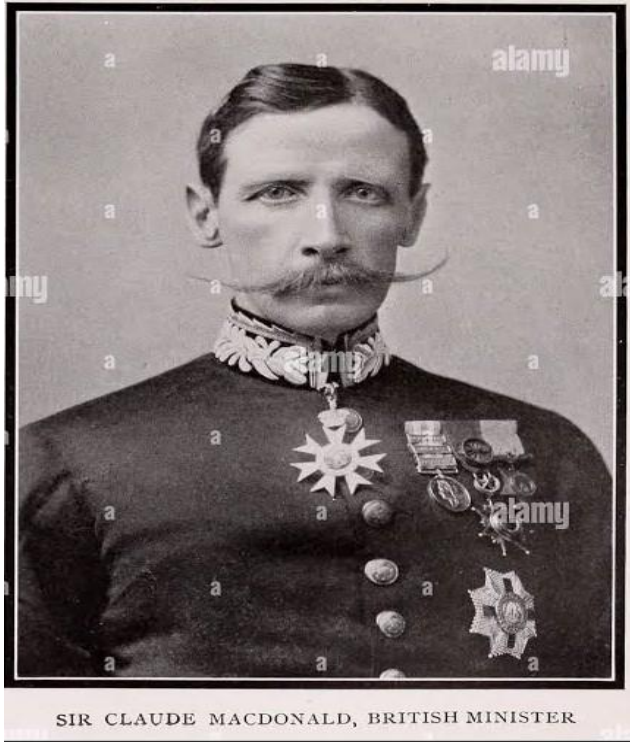
also in those it is an abomination for a lady to climb a kola nut tree. It is also an offense for a person to tamper with someone else property after it has been forbidden or banned by the people. These are ordinary regulations made to regulate ordinary affairs. They had no religious sanction or religious penalty.

Alu Rules: This is a conduct that is prohibited, for instance, a child who developed upper teeth before the lower teeth is passed over to a Nri man as one that had committed an abomination. The birth of twins was also a great abomination. In the sense that the twins were killed and the mother will be carried out for purification. Also, it is an abomination that when a woman is in labor, the child's feet come out first because the rightful means by which a child should come into the world is through the head and not the feet. These were acts prohibited which touched the very existence of Awka, by being disruptive of society, such as a man having carnal knowledge of his blood relation or betraying his town and so on. Anyone committing Alu was not forgiven but was visited with severe punishment including death. Alu could only be cleansed, after the person had suffered the penalty, by a ceremony conducted by Nwanri. Nwanri meant Nwoke-Nri, which meant a man from Nri town. The Nris did all the cleansing ceremonies of Alu in Awka town.

In pre-colonial Awka, there were separate rules of conduct and societal norms guarding the people, even though during that period there were no means of education to enable these forms of conduct to be written down and also taught to the people as this made Awka people to find it hard to keep to these customs and laws due to inability to comprehend or remember most of the customs rules. Some people in Awka still follow their forefathers' traditions because they understand the consequences attached to not obeying them.¹¹

3.4 THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY IN AWKA

Trade was the first form of contact that brought the Europeans to Africa. Trade between Europeans and Nigeria began in the 15th century, and by the 19th century, Europeans sought direct control over the southern-eastern world, including Awka, to sell finished products and purchase raw materials. Thus, the appointment of Sir Claude Macdonald in 1891 as commissioner and consul general for the oil rivers protectorate (of which Awka formed a part) marked the first serious attempt by the British to establish effective rule in the former Eastern region of Nigeria. Awka people were known all over Nigeria as great travelers and blacksmithing. These qualities were said to have attracted the early missionaries to Awka in 1889, with the hope that those converted would help in the spread of the Gospel, but the missionaries' attempt to christianize Awka failed as they lack the basic support from the elders to carry out their plans. Although, the first attempt to christianize Nigeria was the Portuguese between the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries which was a failure as well. After this, no meaningful attempt was made to sow the seeds of Christian religion in Nigeria until the nineteenth century.



SIR CLAUDE MACDONALD, BRITISH MINISTER

On 20th January 1899, another team of missionaries was led by Dr S.R. Smith which did visit Awka. Reverend Smith was popularly known by the Awka people as Uzu. Smith's team reached Awka from Onitsha through Awkuzu Ukwulu and Enugu Agidi, following the Hensleys route. During the first formal meeting between the missionaries and Awka People, they were quartered at Mr. Owes's compound in Umuanga village, after ten days of deliberations with the elders of Awka. They returned to Onitsha which was their base (settlement). The missionaries were of the Anglican Communion, They preached the gospel to the crowd and promised that they would come again.

In 1903, the missionaries visited Awka for the second time. This time Bishop Tugwell was among the missionaries. The elders received them with open arms and showed them a site that was believed to be an evil forest, this was done to scare the missionaries away but failed as Rev.Dr. Smith and his followers gladly accepted the site and sought to start building on the land.

On 11 January 1904, Rev. Dr. Smith completed the building in the evil forest which ought to scare him and he moved into the house, The missionaries also built St. Faith School and St. Faith Church near Udo shrine in Iyokpu quarters, establishing numerous churches in Awka, including the Roman Catholic Church, Methodist Church Nigeria, Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, the Baptist Church, Evangelical Church of Winning All, Deeper Life Bible Church, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, The Redeemed Christian Church, The Assemblies of God Church, Grace of God Mission and others. Six days later Dr. G. Basden joined the missionaries bringing along with him six trainee evangelists. Gradually, the six trainees squarely faced the test award and the training leaders took charge of the incipient Christian congregation.¹² The real missionary work began in a small mud-thatched house that was built for regular Christian worship in Awka Square such as Ezi-ibe, Afor, Agulu, Ezi-ike, Ezi-ogbo, and Afo-Nkpukpa. In 1910 those small churches were amalgamated into one church, now known as St, Faiths church Awka. The land on which this great church stood was given out by the warrant chiefs Onwurah Usoko from the Agulu quarters of Awka, Nweze Okpube from Amikwo quarters, and Mdokwu from Ezi the Awka quarters. The converts

who worshipped in the church were men of great faith. Missionaries in Awka were tasked with teaching and preaching Christianity to educate the Awka people, who were educated in every way. They taught them to read and write, mainly using the English system. However, their efforts led to enlightenment and enslavement of the mind, as they inculcated the idea that the only way to human dignity and full-grown personality was to be like Europeans and dislike their own culture. Christianity arrived in Awka dressed up in European garb, associated with civilization, European fashion, dexterity in European etiquette, and proficiency in the English language.¹³ This disdain for their own culture crystallized into their inability to use their language properly. If anyone had had enough vision to suggest that Awka people did not need to discard their own culture while accepting Christianity, they would have been accused of rank 'heathenism' by European religious educators and stoned by the Awka natives.¹⁴ Today, Catholic, Anglican, and similar churches in Nigeria still follow the norms and standards set by Europe and America, despite the political independence of Nigeria. In essence, the establishment of the church missionary society college in Awka in 1904 also paved the way for the production of ministers of religion and education who promulgated Christianity and education in the Western region and beyond.¹⁵

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CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE DISPUTE

In pre-colonial times, the people of Awka like every other society were bound by a common culture. They had a particular way of life which every Igbo community has, they cherished certain norms and values and had certain institutions and specialized functions.¹

In pre-colonial times the killing of twins in Awka became legal since it was an abomination to give birth to twins, it was also an abomination for a baby to come out from the other womb with feet first also a dead person who has swollen stomach was not mourned better still he was thrown into the evil forest, also a leper was not allowed to live with other people because they are also thrown into the evil forest.

Human sacrifices and slavery were recognized as a way of life by the people. The cult of Osu and Oru was recognized by society, but free-born individuals were ostracized and alienated. They were often sold into slavery or used for sacrifice to deities like Imuoka, leading to their ostracization and alienation.

In pre-colonial times, eating monkeys was considered an abomination punishable by death. The Awka people believed monkeys were sacred to the Imuoka deity, and killing or eating them would result in a curse for themselves, their children, and their grandchildren, leading to their perishance.²

In 1903, Christian missionaries attempted to suppress the Awka people's customs and traditions, viewing them as barbaric and attempting to curb their unity, resulting in a dramatic shift in the Awka people's history. Missionaries attempted to impose allied culture on the people, ignoring the fact that foreign culture and tradition are incompatible and would never reach an agreement due to their opposing forces. The people viewed this as a cultural rape and insult, leading to a conflict between their existing culture and the newly implemented/imposed culture. The missionary culture emphasized the importance of an osu, twins, and out-cast individuals in the Awka people's culture, and the Awka people struggled to understand why these beliefs were included in their tradition and culture.³

This effort put in place by the missionaries started yielding fruit as the people started viewing things differently, this meant that the missionaries had gotten the unifying factor of the people and as a result, the society became socially and religiously fragmented. The effect of the newly imposed religion did not limit itself to the religious life of the people but rather it affected both the social, economic, political, and intellectual life of the people. But by far the attempt to debase the religion of the people had the most profound impact in their lives because the people's religion was the intellect in all facets of their lives because the deities were believed to be involved in their daily activities. For instance, the blacksmiths had a shrine called Akputakpu which was the god of Iron. The religious activities in Awka such as the masquerade cults, the osu, the oru, and the worship of idols, were opposed by the missionaries as they termed it to be the practice of witchcraft and as a child of a primitive culture.⁴

The missionaries preached vehemently against the killing of twins especially Mary Slessor, a Scottish missionary was assigned to these tasks, particularly in the southern region, which then spread to other parts of Nigeria, and with time people started believing in their preaching as it is now seen that a woman who gives birth to twins is filled with joy.⁵ Also, slavery and ancient banishment were gradually dropped. In the field of medicine, the missionaries persuaded the people to stop seeking the help of an herbalist in terms of drugs to be taken but rather the Western form of medicine was introduced to Awka.⁶

The Agbala oracle, a significant idol for the people, was destroyed by missionaries who viewed traditional burial rites as pagan practices. This conflict led to strained relations between the two parties, with mission churches causing protests. The practice of giving to Caesar what belonged to Caesar was not observed by missionaries, causing further conflict. The traditionists believed that each person had their religion, while the missionaries, in the words of an evangelical Hyme, believed that the animists were stupid, wicked, and immoral. The conflict between the missionaries and the natives led to a sourer relationship, with the missionaries arguing that each person had their religion suited to their circumstances.⁷

4.2 DISPUTE OVER MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Marriage rites and ceremonies in Awka were once considered unattainable for the average man due to the introduction of foreign preliminary ceremonies by missionaries. These ceremonies were considered sacred and only allowed the affluent to enter married life. Some young men in Awka chose wives from other places where they could afford the bills, basically this is how their wives dresses during traditional marriage.



When missionaries arrived in Awka, they harmonized the marriage rites and ceremonies to benefit both the poor and the rich. Conflict arose due to the abolition of certain rites before the ceremony, leading to Awka boys going to neighboring towns for lower bride prices. Also in respect of marriage, during separation or divorce, children are given certain rights in their maternal family homes especially where their biological fathers did not perform the traditional rite called the okukuonyeuwa rite. But where the marriage contract is valid through the okukuonyeuwa rite, any child borne to the woman during separation or before the dissolution of the marriage bond belongs to her husband. The okukuonyeuwa marriage rite is another area of conflict between Christians and the natives. The rite is regarded as idolatry by Christians. In Awka, marriage without a bride price, okukuonyeuwa rite, and blessing from their parents will build a house of conflicts which shall eventually lead to separation. Failure on the side of the groom to perform these rites, especially the okukuonyeuwa rite shall result in the man losing the right to own his biological children. It is a practice where a fowl is sacrificed to the family deity before a woman leaves her maiden home. The woman and her husband are then made to consume the fowl sacrificed with some form of incantations. This rite is considered by Awka people as the wedding proper and without it; there is no valid marriage. Okukuonyeuwa rite is a ceremonial meal that seals the marriage contract between the two families involved in the marriage. Hence the fowl soup and pounded yam must be served to the two families. It is also said that after that meal has been prepared with the things brought by the husband's people, the girl then automatically becomes their wife. Thus okukuonyeuwa rite is the only thing that makes the marriage contract valid in Awka. That is why any man (bridegroom) who paid only the bride price will be deprived of the children during separation or at death because he did not complete the marriage rite. To Awka people, okukuonyeuwa rite seals the marriage and enhances the marriage bond between the two families. Missionaries sought to understand the factors contributing to the high cost of marriage in Awka and make recommendations to eradicate them.⁸ They found out that the marriage rites and ceremonies were not uniform in Awka, despite attempts to unify them before the missionaries' arrival. Some approved items included minerals, mmanya nkwu, mmanya ngwo, whisky, beer, and tobacco. These items were critically examined and implemented by the missionaries to suit the needs of the rich and poor in meeting marriage requirements. Missionaries promoted voluntary changes in marriage, allowing both the poor and rich to conform. This change significantly impacted the world, as seen in the Awka society, which transitioned from polygamy to monogamy.⁹

4.3 DISPUTE IN THE AREAS OF MARRIAGE (POLYGAMY)

Polygamy is the custom of having more than one wife at a time, polygamy is a way of life and it was considered as a yardstick for measuring status. A man in Awka communities could marry more than three to six wives. The more wives he married, the more he was highly recognized and respected by the members

of the communities. In Awka, men marrying a wife must select people from their relation and other desired parties to arrange the dowry, 'iru onu nwanyi'. The number of people involved is not usually fixed, but in most cases, it is too small. Today, the method of marrying a girl has changed, with the 'ikpota Nwanti/ibu nkwu nwanyi' becoming more important and attracting many friends and relations. One of the major reasons for having many children is to have enough labor for farming, which is their major occupation.¹⁰

The coming of the missionaries in 1903, made everything change as they advised and preached against the marrying of many wives as it was against their Christian faith and stated that God has instructed that a man should only have one wife in which the two (husband and the wife) shall become one flesh and this is biblical, and they also preached about the consequences of not abiding by the instruction given by God. This doctrine created conflict and discontentment because monogamy was introduced, at first it sounded strange to the Awka people but as time went on they were faced with reality, and they did get to see the Importance of replacing polygamy with monogamy. Also in Christian churches like catholic, holy-communion is not given to those who have more than one wife or more than one husband.¹¹

4.4 DISPUTE OVER FUNERAL CEREMONIES

A significant tragedy in a family or community is the death of a member, often due to supernatural or diabolical causes. This can be due to betrayal, poisoning, or misdeeds by the individual, their parents, or another family member. In the Awka community, a child's death is believed to indicate a dishonest person's reincarnation, reappraising the child's parents. In the past, the child's remains were dragged around a compound, sprinkled with ash or ants, and buried without proper clothing. Such a child is considered an "Ogbanje" and is considered a reappraisal to the parents.¹²

In Awka, male adults undergo various funeral ceremonies, including the burial of charms and native medicines in their homes. The house and compound are cleaned and prepared for sympathizers. The main music during the funeral ceremony is the deceased's wife, recalling their good or bad deeds, and the ceremony is performed to honor the deceased. Before the deceased is buried, a white cock is killed and the blood is sprinkled all over the deceased body. This is done to cleanse him of all evil deeds and make him acceptable to his ancestors.¹³ When sacrifice is offered in Awka during a funeral ceremony, part of the meat is given back to the worshippers to hold a feast just as during the period of Imoka and okukuonyeuwa rites. At such a feast it was always held that the god himself was a guest. Also, it is often held that, after the meat has been sacrificed, the god Ogirisi: himself was in it and that at the banquet he entered into the very bodies and spirits of those who ate. In other words, a sacrificial meal formed a real communion between the god and his worshippers. The person who sacrificed was in a real sense a sharer with the altar; he has a mystic communion with the gods. Paul believed in these sacrifices rendered to demons; he called them principalities and power. His point of view was this an idol was nothing and stood for nothing, but the

whole business of idol worship was the work of the demons; through it, they seduced men from God. When they were worshipping idols, men thought they were worshipping gods; they were being deluded by these malignant demons. Idol worship brought a man into contact, not with God, but with demons; and anything to do with it had the demonic taint on it. Meat offered to idols was nothing, but the fact remained it had served the purposes of demons and was therefore a polluted thing.¹⁴

When a man's wife dies in Awka, the burial rites differ from the husband's. The husband announced her death to the people, and the funeral ceremony was held in both the matrimonial home and her ancestral home. After her body was taken away, the ceremony began in her ancestral home.¹⁵

Also, it is stated that in Awka the funeral ceremonies of dead relatives that were not done in the past (due to one reason or the other) are organized before that of a relative who died recently. Also, the aspect of widowhood rites and practices involves drinking water used in washing the husband's corpse, crawling over the husband's corpse, long mourning and restriction period, loss of right of inheritance (if she has no male child), sitting on bare floor during the period of mourning, a widow not having bath until eight market days (28 days), and so forth. Christianity frowns at such practices and warns its members never to partake in them. These are some of the areas where the two religions conflict. From the above conflicts, we can see that although Christianity has made some impact on Igbo people, it has not changed their worldview.

At this point, the conflict that did arise in the traditional rites of the Awka people led to the abolition of some ritual rites regarding funeral ceremonies. The missionaries especially the Roman Catholic Church perceive the traditional burial rite as a pagan practice that ought to be set aside.¹⁶

4.5 DISPUTE OVER TITLE TAKING

The Awka community's great title-taking was a crucial socio-economic function, where the title holder would consult their head before the main initiation ceremony to communicate with the rest of the community. In the Awka community, men were highly respected based on their titles, and those without traditional titles were prohibited from public speaking with titled men or participating in gatherings where titled men were present, fearing heavy fines would be mounted on them.¹⁷



Christianity has significantly impacted Awka, leading to conflicts and a change in the situation. Missionaries in Awka condemned title-making, particularly the Ozo, due to associated rites and initiations, which had a dramatic impact on the region. The idea of missionaries was met with opposition from the Igbo people, who claimed it was their culture, leading to a conference at Awka main hall to discuss the clashes. Missionaries at Awka town hall argued that the title taking, particularly Ozo, was idolatrous and therefore, no Christian should be involved in it. The Awka people argue that title-taking, particularly Ozo title, is a political custom in the country without any idolatry or superstition also the increase in the number of the new elite and the emergence of the community improvement union finally eroded the powers titled holders to meet and make decisions on important matters affecting all the people. The new elite took an active part during such deliberation in the council and even influential decisions.

The missionaries later worked out a system where faithful dedicated persons could take the Ozo title in a Christian way. The missionaries believe that there is a difference between the traditional Ozo title and the traditional title-making in the Awka community. ¹⁸

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary of the whole chapters of this study, we can tell or better still acknowledge that Awka is a community closely bound together by customs and traditions before the advent of the Christians religion. Awka is also a land based on norms and value which tend to guide the people's daily activities.

Chapter one of this study focuses on the background of the people before the advent of Christianity in Awka land. The people of Awka were bound by norms, human sacrifices, ritual rite, marriage rite were regarded as a way of life recognized by the people in the pre-colonial era.

Chapter two of this study also looked at the location origin and settlement pattern of the people. Awka as noted is the headquarters of Awka Local Government Area of Anambra State and also the state capital. The entire Awka is located in the forest belt of the North equatorial region of West Africa, but the rainforest has virtually disappeared owing to over cultivation. Some scholars said that Awka has been inhabited in the centuries ago by people.

Chapter three is this study shows the traditional life before the coming of Christianity, traditional religion and the rules of conduct of the people. In general, Awka people believe that there is a great spirit "Muo" that created the world and everything that makes up the world, they also call this spirit "Chukwu". The roles of Iwu and Alu are regulation which tend to guide the people about their daily lives.

Chapter four of this study discussed the origin and nature of the disputes, disputes over marriage, title taking, and ritual rite. Thus the dispute of the western and traditional cultures were caused by the imposition of Christianity on the traditional people of Awka. The missionaries preached vehemently against the killing of twins and other pagan practices, also the introduction of monogamy was also introduced.

CONCLUSION

The study have examine the dispute between the Traditional Religion and Christianity in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State. The study unveils among other things the major dispute that was carried out which include, burial rite, marriage rite, title taking etc, and how the missionaries tried to change the principles and existing protocol which was been practiced in Awka, this study also shows that this dispute also affected their economic, political and social sphere not just the religious aspect. The study have also demonstrated that Christian and traditional worship are now worshipped jointly which means family now have duo religion.

Also in order to allow peace reign in most family this duo worship is now generally acceptable by most family, a situation whereby the grand parents are idol worshippers and the grandchildren are Christians, most cases people view the advent of Christianity as a good one which has changed their lives and made them view God in another dimension, before you did get to worship the oracle based on sacrifices which cost a lot but with Christianity one tend to have easy access to God without cost and with ease. All this has made room for satisfaction as duo religion still exist today.

RECOMMENDATION

The presence of Awka elders meddling in the affairs of missionaries brought about order and protection to the missionaries. The people of Awka was made to feel the negative and positive impact of the presence of the missionaries in their communities. Thus with the presence of the elders such as Umunna and otochalu in this act, helped to reduce the dispute which would have amounted to a great war through dialogue and negotiation, whereby the missionaries made offers to the community that could better their lives such as infrastructural amenities which include schools, bridges, road etc, with this offer and with the interferences

of the elders the dispute was handled peacefully and today Awka people could feel the positive impact of Christianity as they tend to practice this religion, and also other forms of evil act reduced drastically as people got converted and leaving these forms of practices behind such as the killing of twins, offering of sacrifices to the gods etc.

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Akwobu Theresa	76	Retired farmer	Awka	Direct	11/10/23	Reliable
Chukwu Joy	50	Trader	Awka	Direct	4/11/23	Reliable
Chukwudozie Peter	58	Trader	Awka	Direct	9/11/23	Reliable
Chuma Joy	67	Retired servant/ civil holder Title	Awka	Direct	18/11/23	Reliable
Judge Anthony	60	Retired servant/ civil holder Title	Awka	Direct	20/11/23	Reliable
Oke Samson	60	Retired servant civil	Awka	Direct	27/11/23	Reliable
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