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*CITATION

Ojone, J. E., & Philemon, J. (2024). Analyzing the Influence of Christianity on the Evolution of Anyigba Community in Dekina Local Government, Kogi State Nigeria. *Journal of Current Research and Studies*, 1-8.

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Analyzing the Influence of Christianity on the Evolution of Anyigba Community in Dekina Local Government, Kogi State Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the influence of Christianity on the evolution of Anyigba community in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State. Previous researches of this sort focus on the history, people and geographical location of Anyigba. This paper is tilted towards examining the influence of Christianity to the development of Anyigba community. The adopted methodology for this study is historical, sociological, and analytical. It discusses the history and socio-religious life of Anyigba community, analyzes the impact of Christianity on the development of Anyigba community. In view of this, oral and secondary sources of data was utilized. Findings from this research shows that there is more that has been achieved with the influence of Christianity in Anyigba than its perceived challenges. The study concludes that when the positive impact of Christianity is harnessed coupled with proper religious education, Anyigba community stands a better chance for positive growth and development in Igalaland.

Keywords

Education, Evolution, Historical analysis, Sociological analysis

1. Introduction

There is no community with hope when development is absent. Religion would ever remain an agent of societal development as evident in many Nigeria communities. There can be a trace of this at the advent of the early missionaries in Nigeria through Lagos, Benin, Onitsha environs and other places. Anyigba in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State cannot be exceptional as the advent of the early missionaries in Igalaland precisely Anyigba in Dekina Local Government when Hewstone, Malcom, Gilmore brought Christianity which was embedded with moral, spiritual teachings, education, health centers and infrastructural development. Hence, this study centers on the impact of Christianity in the development of Anyigba community in Dekina Local Government, Kogi State. It gives appraisal to the positive impact of Christianity, challenges encountered as a result of Christian influence in the community and further proposed some remedies to the negative influences in Anyigba community.

This research covers the following areas in Anyigba community; Abuja area, Kaduna-Efekpe, Obehia, Omajatenu, Agu-doko, Sabogeri, Eti-aji, Ogane-aji, Ane-jodo, Back of University or NTA, Ofeko, Old Egume road.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Christianity

This religion is based on the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. In studying a brief summary work on Christianity, Matt explains that:

Christianity is a major religion stemming from the life, teachings, and death of Jesus of Nazareth (the Christ, or the Anointed one of God) in the 1st century C.E. It has become the largest of the world's religion and geographically, the most widely diffused of all faiths. It has a constituency of more than two billion believers. Its largest groups are the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern orthodox Churches and the Protestant churches. And Esther orthodox from the middle of the 5th century until the late 20th centering because of a dispute over Christology which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ's nature and significance. (50).

Matt submits that the nature and development of Christianity as a religion is based on the person of Jesus Christ. The position of Christianity in the world, the relation, among its divisions and denominations, its missionary outings to other people and its relation to other world religions are parts of the author's submission. The churches in the entire world served as a means of spreading Christianity to other parts of the world.

According to Ogbuehi (in Boer 15) Essentials in the study of Religion, Christianity is understood as "an offshoot of Judaism, it originated from Palestine (Israel). The date of the beginning of Christianity is unknown. However, some people claim that Christianity began at Pentecost". The weakness of this position is that the life and ministry of Jesus before the Pentecost are undermined. There was no way Christianity could have been from the life and ministry of Jesus, since he was a Jew not a Christian. However, it is better to say that Christianity arises from the life and ministry of Jesus but it was inaugurated at Pentecost.

Christianity has its faith foundation in and on Abraham who was the first to display faith that would be integrated and metamorphose to a national faith. Jesus often times linked Abraham to his mission with Israel and the entire world. Abraham displayed a faith that

would be absolutely an example to Christians. Judaism, Christianity and Islam would always be incomplete without father Abraham's faith dissension and application. Christianity is one of the religions that has a great influence on the inhabitant of the world. Though, some see it as a western religion, but research has proven that Christianity is for the entire world including Africans, because Africans had early contact with Christianity. In reviewing Christianity (Iheanacho 44, and Anderson 12) observed that: "Christianity by the adherents, increased intellectualism in the western society, lack of satisfaction of affluence and technological development." Christianity is an agent of socialization and booster of intellect. The authors limit the intellectualism of Christianity to only the west, but it is not only about the west, but the universe as it has always encouraged education that any where it is preached.

2.2 Religious Development

Religious development cannot be overemphasized as it has brought rapid growth and social change in Anyigba community this is particularly to the Christian group which is the focus of this paper. The Christian focus of development is holistic in nature. It has been seen in various aspect of human endeavours. Okpe affirms that:

Development means the sum total of that which makes the human credited by nature. In other words, development refers to the sum total of social factors by which the human being is the focal point of progressive undertakings (3).

Therefore, for Okpe, development has to do with a total sum of social factor with humans as the focal point. The progress is on humans. The potentials are credited to nature. Nature is a free gift of God to humans to explore and be creative with it.

2.3 Brief Survey of Anyigba Community

Atodo, in his work titled "Anyamgba, Anyigba, Ayingba or Ayangba? Historical Origin and Development of one of the Foremost Settlements," asserts that, Anyigba just like some communities originally was not a dwelling place but a junction that connects other communities in Igalaland. It used to be a forest and a junction where people passed through (270). He established that:

In the olden days, the place currently known as Anyigba was not a human settlement but just a junction where deferent roads intersected within the thick forest as people only linked the Anyigba through Idah, Ochaja, Ankpa, Dekina, Bassa and other neighborhood/communities. It was just like a traveling rout, centrally located and with a favorable weather condition for way-farers... there was a mentally derailed old woman called Anyi by name who lived within this forest/junction, apart from hunters who dotted the forest mainly for game, she was the only human person usually seen around the thick forest/junction that linked the major towns in Igalaland. The woman always indulged herself in sweeping and keeping clean all the foot parts and roads linking all the places without any compliments or inducement as a result of her psychological disorder (270).

A community can be named after anyone no matter the sex and place of origin. Although, there are times when political considerations also become a cogent factor in the naming of a place. Anyigba is structured by leadership offices to help the traditional government as Atodo further explains that:

Anyigba town is ruled by the figure/leader called "Ogohi Attah" earlier instituted by Akogwu Akpele one of the sons of Ameh Ohiega who founded the town. Akogwu Akpele's main domain when they earlier arrived Anyigba was Obeya unlike his other brothers that pitched their tents at other locations within the town. The Ogohi stool which was recently upgraded to the status of a first-class chief now known as the "Ogohi Onu Anyigba" is the supreme ruler and the traditional head of the people of Anyigba" he is also the custodian the people's tradition and culture, he is being assisted by appointed Gagos and Madakis, who oversee the day-to-day affairs and activities of the different composite section of Anyigba town where they live and reports to the 'Ogohi- Onu' respectively (275).

The Ogohi Onu Anyigba relates with members of his cabinets in order to execute their power of leadership. He calls meetings to deliberate on issues boarding the community. The Gagos and Madakis handle matters within their domain but can only move matters beyond

their control to the Ogohi Onu for deliberation that could give a lasting solution to the problem in question. He works along with the security agents in the community to ensure peace and order. He initiates local security agents who listens and reports to him when necessary. Though, they report to the police when it becomes needful. The traditional leadership is a political, cultural, religious position and also ensures the security consciousness of the community.

According to Akwu, in a Seminar paper titled: "The proliferation of Churches in Anyigba Town: Impact and Challenges" comments that:

The founders of Anyigba are said to have come from Idah, from the royal family of Attah Idah Igala; the descendants of Akogwu-Akpele, son of Akumabi to settle here in-the 3rd-4th centuries ago. The traditional chief Head of Anyigba is the "Ogohi Anyigba", he presides over the Anyigba traditional council of chiefs and his subordinates are Gagos who presides over their various sub-locations. Anyigba metropolis has the following sub-locations spearheaded by the subordinate traditional chiefs. These locations are Obeya, One do, Abuja area, zamfara, Ajetachi, Eti-aja, bobo, fAfioku Omajetenu Egbili, Omata, Agwa Mushiri Kaduna Efekpe, Oganaji, KSU Village and its environs, Agudoko Ijih, Ofe- Uloko, Atenegoma, Ofe- Iko, Olofu, Agala-Ogane (4).

All of the above-mentioned streets in Anyigba used to be peaceful, and Christianity, Islam and Traditional Religion are all represented in these areas. Anyigba is a commercial community where people from various areas in Dekina and other local Governments in Kogi state and other states are represented in the community, various institutions like plicate Nursery /Primary schools, Secondary Schools College of education, polytechnics and public institutions like the university of the state, primary and secondary schools and lots more have commercialized Anyigba. It has an estimated population of 189, 976 persons. Anyigba has strategic areas that are easily described to visitors as they get into the city for easy drop. These areas are: the Kogi State University, Igala unity square round-about, the Igala unity house, A government general hospital now known as university teaching hospital as well as numerous infrastructures. The predominant language spoken is Igala with minors like Hausa, Igbo, you Ebara, Bassa. Anyigba town is bounded by Ologba to the

North, Agbeji to the South, Egume to the East and Ajiolo to the West (Akwu 5).

Anyigba town has two seasons that is, the raining season and the dry season. It has often six months of rainfall (April-September), but sometimes crosses to October. The dry season starts in November to March that is five months. This is also known as Harmathan period. Anyigba has a major lake called Ofu-river which passes through Agbenema. The city of Anyigba and its environment is an agrarian and the advent of Kogi state university brought about employment in other sectors aside agriculture which was the dominant occupation. Agriculture in this area comprises of crop agriculture, forestry, oil palm production and livestock farming. There is also civil service, public service, financial institutions, wholesale and retail trading and informal private sector (transport, auto mechanic, masons, electricians etc), (Ifatimehin, Face book post)

According to Ifatimehin, Anyigba has various factors that make what it is today. The city is therefore attentive as a commercial city that accommodates various business and other jobs. A careful observation of Ifatimehin's submission explains that Anyigba has a moderate weather, booming environment needed for an agrarian society with Igala as the major tribe. Anyigba has strategic operations where people can easily drop and identify. All of these submissions have explained both Anyigba and the people. They practice African religion, Christianity, and Islam. There are cultural festivals for people who venerate Ibegwu. The festival involves the worship of their ancestors or spirits of the dead. This means they are cultural and religious people. Economically, Anyigba is attractive as many activities flow.

Anyigba is a Junction that connects Abejukolo, Dekina-Bassa, Lokoja, Ankpa to Benue. It is the food basket of Igala land. It is used to be a troublesome area some decades by thugs, cultists, and vices, but currently, there is relatively peace in the community as they are able to go about their normal businesses without security threat or violence. Security by the local vigilante group, police, state and federal security agents have intensified their search and arrest of criminals. So peace is restored; though, not in totality as there is no perfect society under the earth surface. The researchers in all, discovered that Anyigba as a community is habitual.

This town "is a town in Dekina Local Government area of Kogi State located between latitudes 70: 15' N-7 0

29' N and latitudes 70 11'E- 7 0 32'E. With an average altitude of 385 meters above sea level and total land mass area of 420 59. Km. It has an estimated population of 189, 976 persons" Anyigba has strategic areas that are easily described to visitors as they get into the city for easy drops. These areas are: the Kogi State University, Igala unity square round-about, the Igala Unity House. A government general hospital now known as university teaching hospital, there are numerous infrastructures. The predominant language spoken is Igala with minors like Housa, Igbo, Yoruba, Egbira, and Bassa. Anyigba town is bounded by Ologba to the North, Agbeji to the south, Egume to the East and Ajiolo to the west.

2.4 Impact of Christianity in Anyigba Community

The impact of Christianity to the society is enormous. Christianity as one of the major three religions in Nigeria society has both positive and negative effect on Nigerians, and on this, Anyigba community cannot be excluded. On the positive side, Anyigba community has witnessed tremendous changes as Christianity has always brought about goodies to any community it birthed. Christianity in Anyigba milieu has given birth to (a) Spiritual and moral impact (b) Educational impact (c) Health care delivery (d) Political impact (e) economic impact and lots more. These all have been enjoyed by the inhabitants of Anyigba community as did other communities in Nigeria society. The impact of Christianity to Anyigba are as follows;

- i. **Spiritual and Moral Impact:** The spiritual and moral organization of the early and later missionaries has created reverence for God and good relationship to one another. The spiritual and moral teachings were organized in the form of discipleship classes for the enhancement of their spiritual growth. In Anyigba, the early missionaries organized their converts and taught them spiritual and moral rules for living a Christian life (Edegbo Interview). The Christian teachings go along with the moral standard as they always help people's relationship in Anyigba environs. Akwu explains that: "Anyigba community is cool today as a result of the power of the gospel and increase in security stability, because it used to be so dangerous to live; but thank God that the gospel has captivated so

many who would have been so cruel” (Interview).

- ii. **Educational Impact:** Education that is formal or informal is a social institution that changes the perception of Anyigba community though, not all, but so many have been influenced by the education. The Roman Catholic mission established schools like: Our Lady of Schools Anyigba, where the former teacher’s college was located, Christ the good shepherd, the (CMML) Christian Missions in Many Land (CMML) established nursery and primary schools opposite Dunamis Church, Ile-cholubo nursery and primary schools behind Agudoko Ojuwo Anyigba, CMML secondary school Ogana-aji Anyigba. Then CEFN also has boarding secondary school, these are all owned by missions whose names they bear, and there are more individual or private school established by Christians in Anyigba environs. The impact of education in Anyigba community is enormous as many have graduated today and are serving in various capacities across the nation and some are lawyers, engineers, medical doctors, academic doctors, business men and women. None Christian religious individuals who attended mission schools in Anyigba community have also benefited from Christian establishment. (Ogohi Interview). It is also said that many prominent men in Anyigba community today are product of education established by Christian denominations and therefore should reciprocate the good gesture by supporting the schools that made them elites (Negedu Interview).
- iii. **Health care Delivery:** It is often said that “health is wealth”. Christian individuals and groups have always contributed to sound health in Anyigba community. This is evident in the establishment of private clinics, hospitals, chemist and others. The researchers discovered the following as Christian establishments: Christian Missions in Many Lands (CMML) hospital Ojuwo Anyigba, Grimard hospital Anyigba, Christ the Good Shepherd Hospital along Ankpa road, Marria-Goretti, Blue House Hospital along Idah road, Mrs. Cilina clinic along Agala Ogane road, Agape Hospital along Old-Egume road, Peace Hospital along old Egume road, Pacific

Hospital, Amazing Grace Hospital and there are numerous chemists owned by Igbos, Igala, and other unknown Christian tribes in Anyigba community. Some critical health challenges have been solved in these Hospitals and clinics (Musa Interview). It was also observed that there are Christian herbalists who use local herbs to cure even some diseases that could not be cured medically; example, poison in the body that passes through the vein, Poisonous unhealed wounds after medical attention, the problem of barrenness has been cured by Christian herbalists in Anyigba community example Dr. John Apeh Grace Christian College Anyigba, Emmanuel Ndazhaga, engineer Emmanuel, a disciple to Dr. John Apeh. There are some who are not publicly known (Gabriel Interview).

- iv. **Political Impact:** On the aspect of Local Government politics, Christians like Joshua Igono a pastor, politician, and a lawyer once served as the chairman, and Benjamin Okolo served Anyigba community, and others have served as secretaries, treasurers and other many Christians have served in various political offices resulting in the development of Anyigba community. Some indigenous Christians from Anyigba community have occupied political offices at the state and federal level. Their impact provided economic growth to the community.
- v. **Economic Impact:** Economy is always the pride of a nation. Anyigba community has attracted a lot of wealth as a result of her economic growth. It has been observed that in the entire Igala land, Anyigba is the most booming community that attracts people of different calibers. “It has numerous institutions as in governmental and non-governmental organizations where money is been made, e.g Schools, health centers, transportation, businesses of different kinds.”(Daniel Interview). Also companies are been erected for productions, cashew Warehouses all around Anyigba are also being set up for storages.

2.5 Challenges of Christianity to Anyigba Community

The coming of Christianity to Anyigba community is without doubt a blessing to the community as it has evolved positively, resulting in several developmental projects. This is not to say that it has no toll on the indigenous people and their culture. The following factors are considered to be challenges of Christianity to Anyigba community;

- i. Abuse of ancestral spirits (Ibegwu): African religion has always been considered by some as evil, fetish and savage. The Christian religion sometimes undermine the beliefs, tradition and culture of Anyigba community. At the advent of Christianity, some stopped going to the farm with their parents considering them unbelievers, not eating with relations as communal activities were all seized. The most challenging one is the Ibegwu festival. They see this unique festival in Anyigba community as evil and sometimes hinder people from celebrating their dead relations (Attabo Interview). It has been observed that eating of meat sacrifice to the people's ancestors was considered to be evil. Christians often see masquerades who came from the dead to the physical planet, to be disturbances on the roads, especially during market days in Anyigba. The stigmatization on the inhabitants made them to stay back in fear. This later resulted into spiritual problem from their ancestors leading to bad luck, severe illnesses, mysterious death in the family, transfer of punishment to the children and grandchildren. This relegation of the indigenous tradition and culture has affected burial rites; many could no longer perfectly organize burial ceremony for their parents as they ought to have done. Christianity came with good intentions, but its approach has both positive and negative effects on Anyigba community (Okolo Interview).
- ii. False Prophets: Jacob (7) opines that, "In religion, a false prophet is one who falsely claims the gift of prophecy or divine illumination or who uses gifts for evil ends". Often someone who is considered a "true prophet" by some people is simultaneously considered a "false prophet" by others even

within the same religion. There are large numbers of prophets in Anyigba community; almost every streets has prayer houses led by prophets. Proliferation of churches is never a problem but the prophets and pastors themselves. Ocholi submits that some have been caught several times telling lies, having sexual intercourse with married women and young ladies in the name of praying and taking off their perplexing problems (Interview). Prayer houses are on the increase on daily bases causing quarrels, fights among family members as some family members are mentioned to bewitching others. Some of these prophets divorce their wives or keep concubines outside their homes, at times uses ladies for rituals. They exploit members who out of fear give them money for prayers. In the case of some ladies, the prophet would have sex with them, get money from them and divide their homes. All of these are done after hypnotizing them. This is therefore, one of the negative impacts Christianity has on Anyigba community.

- iii. Fanaticism: It is a concept that has to do with a person extremely enthusiastic about something; a person who holds extreme or dangerous opinions. It is extreme beliefs or behavior especially in connection with religion or politics (Hornby 421). Anyigba community has been witnessing numerous religious activities that are both positive and negative. Some Christian groups behave extremely religious and hold rigid views not to have anything to do with other religious groups, refusing to accept the truth about being a singular community that is expected of uniting to have a better community. Rigidity births fanaticism. Some Christian religious group cannot tolerate people of other faiths and also do not give room for religious dialogue in order to ascertain a peaceful co-existence in the community.
- iv. Denominationalism: Anyigba town is now a religious competitive community where some destroy others using the sword of the mouth during preaching, teachings in and outside the church just to place themselves as being more spiritual than others. Proliferation of churches is on the increase because of denominationalism. Anyigba community faces

a lot of denominational challenges. This to some extent has affected the relationship between denominations. Love is absent, superiority, judgmental view. Some denominations refuse to be part of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), simply because of unresolved issues. This sometimes has effect on Christian homes as hatred towards one another and individuals grows.

2.6 Ways of Ameliorating the Challenges of Christianity in Anyigba Community

Religious Tolerance: Religious tolerance has to do with understanding and accepting one another's religious belief without compromising one's faith. Not attacking the opposite religious' difference. Intolerance can possibly lead to fanaticism which houses terrorism. In solving the problem of abuse of other religious false prophets, fanaticism, denominationalism, and misplacement of priority in Christian home, Christians are to embrace the spirit tolerance that helps one or a particular adherent to only be focused on his or her own religion.

Religious Education: Religion is a united system of beliefs and practices relatives to sacred things that is to say things set apart and forbidding. Beliefs and practices which unites into a single moral community called a church all these who adhere to them. Durkheim in (Ogbuehi 5). It is very obvious that most of the challenges in Christian settings are as a result of lack of proper education. This causes huge damages to religious adherents. The researchers enjoin readers and various religious leaders and educators to use proper religious education as a sanitizer to their religious groups in order to reduce or avoid destruction from ignorance. The doctrines should be taught to achieve peace, unity and progress of Anyigba community. The goal of religion is to build a relationship and to unite members of the religion to work for the peace, unity and progress of a nation. When proper religious education is theoretically and practically taught, the society will become a better place. Religious education should not be for the purpose of indoctrination but to groom adherents spiritually, morally, emotionally, materially and socially to be able to relate with people better. Anyigba community is surrounded with various Christian's institutions or establishments beginning from various Churches' Clubs, Children Sunday Schools, Adult Sunday Schools Bible Schools like CMML Trinity

Bible College, CEFN Theological Seminary, Dunamis School of Ministry, Pleroma School of Missions, and lots more are institutions where proper religious education can take place.

Inter/Intra Religious Dialogue: Nigeria is a multi-religious nation so it is with Anyigba Community. It has both African religionists, Christianity and Islam. Therefore, for development to take place, there is need to educate religious groups especially Christians to learn and practice dialogue with other religions. In doing so, understanding one another's differences will be spelled out and tolerated. In the case of intra dialogue which involves members of same faith or religion, avenues can be established where each denomination understands that they all belong to a single whole and the goal is make heaven rather than enforcing disputes. They should work to ensure a common ground.

3. Conclusion

From the forgoing, the researchers looked into the impact of Christianity in the development of Anyigba community in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State and also observed that the spiritual, moral, educational, Political and Economic impact as well as quality health care delivery, were as a result of the missionary effort and the goodies that came along with the Christian religion. This however, led to some other challenging aspects as observed in the work such as the abuse of traditional religion, false prophets, fanaticism, and denominationalism. This implies that every advantageous scenario has its disadvantage, but it can never put a hold to the positivity that has been experienced. In this sense, religion has proved beyond doubts that it is not only a spiritual affair but a tool for societal development hence, this paper arguably establishes the impact that Christianity's presence brought to Anyigba community.

Recommendations

The researchers recommends that Anyigba community should keep to the practice of spiritual and moral sanitization which Christianity introduced so as to keep the community sanitized and progressive. This is because spirituality and morality build a good relationship between man and God; between man and his fellow humans.

Education is the bedrock of a nation, so it should be encouraged in order to continue to produce citizens with sound mind. Ignorance is costly, so education should be embraced as it creates elites and job opportunities.

Health care delivery is significant because health is a man's wealth in any human society. Anyigba community needs more health care centers and personnels in order to do more in saving lives. Christians can do more by establishing more centers and equipped them with drugs.

Christians in politics should be fair and godly, approaching it with a clear conscience and work hard towards contributing politically and ensuring the development of the community. There should makes laws that are capable of setting the right pace thereby curbing some ills in the community.

Economically, there should be creation of more business activities, so goods can be in circulation and further enhance more job opportunities; micro credit schemes can be introduced by Christian organizations to enable more members of the community embark on businesses that would enhance the development of Anyigba community.

There should be no abuse of some traditional rites and cultural beliefs. Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God. Christians in Anyigba and traditional religionists should be tolerant of each other and embrace unifying beliefs capable of promoting understanding in the community

Prophets and other Gospel ministers should be trained for proper knowledge and they should reverence God in their activities. They should avoid false prophecies, teachings and avoid any attitude that dents the image of Christianity.

Fanaticism is a killer of religion, Christians are to be moderate in their practices, not extremist. They should be liberal and objective not subjective in their thinking and beliefs. Pride about denomination should be avoided, there should be humility not arrogant and thinking of superiority in doctrine and biblical knowledge. Understanding and accepting one another is necessary for both the church and community development.

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